Practicing the "Threefold Mystery": Rethinking a Shingon Ritual from Dichotomy to Dialectic

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Abstract: *After a century and a half of focus on Buddhist doctrine, academic attention is increasingly being paid to practice.[1] What remains undertheorized, however, is the relation between the two. An example of this is the idea that tantric practice is simply a ritual technology, separate and autonomous from doctrinal formulation. This is a persisting academic trope, one that conceptualizes doctrine and practice dichotomously. The effect that dichotomizing doctrine from practice has on the study of contemplative practices is considered in this essay, which first introduces the trope and then explores its supports in Western intellectual culture. Despite its prevalence, the dichotomous representation of doctrine and practice is methodologically dysfunctional. As an alternative, it is proposed that the relation between doctrine and practice is better understood as dialectical, sometimes represented in Buddhist literature by the image of "the two wings of a bird."[2] This relation is explored by examining a particular tantric ritual, a Shingon homa.*

INTRODUCTION

What can be said about objects of scholarly inquiry is conditioned, even determined, by how they are conceptualized. This essay considers one such conceptualization—that the relation between doctrine and practice is dichotomous, meaning that each is autonomous from the other. Dichotomizing doctrine and practice is only conceptually possible if both of the two, as well as their relation, are abstracted. Inquiry that follows from dichotomizing tends toward a top-down approach, where concepts are defined and the objects of study are divided into two separate categories—doctrine and practice—with these categories (often) being treated as natural rather than as having been constructed in academic discourse.

Dichotomous conceptualization is particularly evident in descriptions of tantra as (just or even merely) a form of ritual technology that is separate and distinct from doctrine. The particular instance motivating this inquiry is the way that tantra has been described by several scholars as (merely) ritual technology. This characterization involves a semiotic pairing of tantra as practice with Mahāyāna as doctrine, itself often represented as a semiotic pairing of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra specifically characterized as philosophical enterprises. In most cases, this also privileges doctrine, treating practice as derivative. Such privileging is problematic as it depends on the intellectualist fallacy that thought causes action—that is, the arrow of causality goes from doctrine to practice. This compound conception is often untheorized, left implicit, and treated as natural. In

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place of a dichotomy between doctrine and practice, this essay proposes that the two are more accurately understood as interacting dialectically. This moves scholarly discourse out of the realm of the abstract and into the realm of Buddhism as a lived and living tradition, validating practical as well as didactic learning. Central to an understanding of Buddhism as a living tradition is the practice of ritual, such as the tantric *homa* ritual.

Homa are votive rituals in which offerings representing the emotional and intellectual obscurations are burned and thereby purified. Rooted in Vedic ritual culture, these rituals today pervade tantric traditions. This inquiry particularly focuses on the "threefold mystery," a compound of contemplative ritual acts in which the practitioner's body, speech, and mind are identified with the body, speech, and mind of the deity evoked in the ritual. The dialectic relation between doctrine and practice in this ritual is given greater specificity by indicating the milieu of Mahāyāna conceptual tools within which the practice was developed and is performed. Because of the academic context of this essay, the analysis necessarily highlights conceptual aspects of ritual practice. Learning through ritual practice, however, is effected by the practical experience of performing the ritual, though it may also include didactic learning in an ancillary function.

I. DICHOTOMY: DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE AS SEPARATE AND AUTONOMOUS

The claim that Buddhist tantra is simply a ritual and yogic technology persists as an academic trope. A suggestion of this idea can be found as early as Ratnākaraśānti's (ca. 970–1045) assertion that tantra's superiority is a consequence of its superior methods rather than for any doctrinal reason.[3] Although this essay focuses on Buddhist tantra, the question of how to understand the relation between doctrine and practice is found in Hindu tantric traditions as well.[4]

Louis de la Vallée Poussin expressed a version of the dichotomous understanding of the relation between doctrine and practice in 1898, asserting that

> the virtue of the [tantric] ceremonies . . . resides entirely in the spiritual state which the faithful practitioner realizes (*utpādayati*) under the influence of the dogma that is meditated or by the exterior excitation of the ritual. The mystique of our tantras can easily be reduced to the fundamental principles of the Mind Only school or of the Madhyamaka. The axis of religious thought is not displaced: tantrism has become Buddhist.[5]

Here at an early point in the study of Buddhism in the West, we find the idea that as doctrine (dogma) and practice are distinct, tantric practice was made Buddhist by subsuming it under Yogācāra and Madhyamaka doctrinal systems. Representing medieval Buddhist thought by two canonic schools is reductive. Characterizing the privileging of abstract systems of thought, this pairing is often repeated when Mahāyāna doctrine is juxtaposed to tantric practice. Such repetition obscures the unique character of ritual identification as tantric, rather than as a Yogācāra or Madhyamaka concept.

David Gray has called attention to Jean Filliozat's expression in 1968 of this idea, saying,

> While we might debate which elements of tantric practice might be included in a definition or taxonomy of Tantrism, it should be noted that tantric traditions of all sectarian

affiliations, be they Buddhist or Hindu, are characterized by a strong focus on ritual and meditative practice. From a certain perspective, Tantrism is, as Jean Filliozat stated, "merely the ritual and technical aspect of Hinduism." . . . In Buddhism, tantrism originated simply as the ritual facet of Mahāyāna Buddhism as it came to be practiced in India around the mid-first millennium CE.[6]

More proximately, versions of this characterization are found in the work of Alexis Sanderson, David Gardiner, and Robert Sharf. Although largely specializing in Hindu tantra, Sanderson has been influential for the study of Buddhist tantra and has asserted that tantric Buddhism is a "form of religious practice which is distinguishable from the rest of Buddhism principally by its ritual character, only secondarily by its soteriological doctrine, and hardly at all by specific theories of ultimate reality."[7] The sequence of three categories would seem to reflect the common intellectual and academic valorization that attributes greater status to "philosophy" ("specific theories of ultimate reality") than to "religion" ("soteriological doctrine"), and higher status to both of those conceptual and doctrinal categories than to physical activity ("ritual").

The dichotomy is more explicit in David Gardiner's assertion that

> Vajrayana emerged out of Mahayana Buddhist contexts, likely both lay and monastic, and it generally adheres to the bodhisattva path grounded in the two truths (ultimate and conventional) and affirms all beings' capacity for achieving buddhahood as a union of perfected wisdom and compassion. Vajrayana practice grafts onto this Mahayana core a variety of rituals, including the recitation of mantras, the use of mudrās (symbolic hand gestures), the creation of mandalas (painted or made of colored sand) and, perhaps most importantly, a sacred initiation rite (*abhiṣeka*) that empowers an individual to engage in the practice.[8]

Histories of tantric Buddhism commonly identify Śubhakarasiṃha (637–735), Vajrabodhi (671–741), and Amoghavajra (705–774) as the "founders" in China of the tradition known there as Zhenyan (真言, sometimes glossed as "true word," and referring to mantra, also known as mizong, 密宗, "esoteric school"). According to Geoffrey C. Goble, it was Amoghavajra who formulated the lineage as having been established by Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and himself. This formulation was "adopted in elite Tang society and by subsequent Chinese Buddhist exegetes" because of Amoghavajra's "enormous prestige and influence in the second half of the eighth century."[9] The emphasis on these three figures influenced the formation of Shingon sectarian historiography, and this carried forward into Western language histories as well.[10] In his critique of this version of the history of tantric Buddhism in East Asia, Robert Sharf speculatively attributes a version of the characterization of tantra being simply a technology to a hypothetical Tang dynasty (618–907) audience, saying that "the teachings of Śubhakarasiṃha and his countrymen [viz., Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra] were most likely viewed as a powerful new technology for gaining control over supernatural forces rather than as an independent or competing lineage, school, or vehicle."[11] More explicitly, Sharf asserts that

> if it makes sense to talk about a pan-Asian phenomenon of Tantra at all—and this is a big "if"—then I believe it is better approached not in terms of thought ["meanings"] but of

practice ["actions"]. If the term Tantra has any cross-cultural referent, it is to a body of technological expertise comprised of certain powerful tools—mantras, mudrās, icons, altars, esoteric implements including ceremonial weapons, and so on—and the arcane procedural knowledge necessary to wield them. This technology could be, and apparently was, appropriated by diverse religious traditions and transmitted independent of any theoretical or doctrinal overlay.[12]

Each in their own fashion, these examples dichotomize the relation between doctrine and practice. Abstracted as it is, the dichotomy cannot be evaluated as true or false. It can, however, be evaluated heuristically. From that perspective, it is inaccurate, misleading, and unproductive. It is inaccurate to the extent that it does not reflect the actual circumstances of lived religion but instead is only about abstracted concepts. It is misleading in that it limits Indic Buddhist thought to formulaic understandings of the canonic versions of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. And it is unproductive because it is simplistic and static, incapable of reflecting the changing relations that characterize the history of tantra. Despite these flaws, the dichotomous representation is rhetorically convincing. The question then is, why?

II. INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND: WESTERN RELIGIOUS CULTURE

Characterizing tantra as a ritual technology that is separate and distinct from doctrine logically follows from treating thought and action as two distinct categories, a distinction that is so very comfortable, so familiar in the context of Western academic thought that the distinction itself deserves to be questioned. In the field of Religious Studies, Catherine Bell problematizes conceptualizations of ritual that are dichotomous in this fashion.[13] Central to her project is an analysis of the role of mind-body dualism in structuring academic conceptions of ritual. As Bell explicates the effects of this distinction, it is Western scholars who engage in the conceptual activity of theorizing ritual. In contrast to their own theorizing (mind), Western scholars have tended to characterize the practitioners of ritual as simply engaging in physical activity (body). For the field of Religious Studies, Cartesian dualism is the proximate source for the contrast between ritual as bodily activity and theorizing as conceptual activity. Historically more distant, but for that reason more deeply embedded, is the rhetoric of the Protestant Reformation. Although only a rough generalization, one of the consequences of Reformation-era rhetoric is a sharp conceptual division between faith and works—or in contemporary academic terms, proper doctrine (orthodoxy) and proper action (orthopraxy). Although naturalized in much of the academic study of religion, the orthodoxy-orthopraxy binary has its own trajectory through the history of Western religious culture.[14] A set of parallel and mutually reinforcing dichotomies (faith-works, mind-body, spirit-matter, doctrine-practice, thought-action) leads to the identification of doctrine with the realm of mind, while action is identified with the realm of body. In the discourse of contemporary English-language Buddhist studies, this same mind-body dichotomy is framed as an opposition between meditation as mental and ritual as physical.[15]

Extending these dichotomies is the idea that thought causes action and analogously that doctrine determines practice. Historically, the Western academic study of Buddhism has privileged doctrine, and (at least implicitly) thereby perpetuates a dichotomous and hierarchical relation

between doctrine and practice. The idea that thought causes action is, however, an analytic artifice maintained out of habit, which, despite appearing to be explanatory, has been problematized by work in cognitive science.[16]

The idea that tantric practice exists autonomously, independent of doctrine, is only epistemologically meaningful when both practice and doctrine are considered abstractly, as analytic artifacts. The disjunction between doctrine and practice, such as Sharf's distinction between "any theoretical or doctrinal overlay" and "technological expertise," reflects the long-standing disjunction of thought and action in Western cultural history.[17] As Bell has noted, however, "In the final analysis the results of such a differentiation between thought and action cannot be presumed to provide an adequate position vis-a-vis human activity as such."[18]

Characterizing technology as independent of ideology builds upon the bifurcation of thought and action. The metaphor that theory is an "overlay" reflects the presumption that technology is context-neutral and value-free, that it only takes on those meanings that are given to it.

III. DIALECTIC INSTEAD OF DICHOTOMY

Tantric Buddhist praxis spread throughout the Buddhist cosmopolis—from the subcontinent, through Southeast, Central, and East Asia and now globally.[19] The transmission of tantric Buddhist rituals across temporal, linguistic, and cultural boundaries does not, however, mean that these practices existed as a context-neutral and value-free technology. Carl Bielefeldt notes that practitioners need their practice "to make Buddhist sense" and theorists "want the truth of their theories to be validated in the experience of practitioners. Held by this mutual need, theory and practice circle each other throughout Buddhist literature in a complex dance."[20] Because practice and doctrine are each fluid and dynamic, the relation between them is also. Further, the significance of each changes in relation to changes in the others. Bielefeldt's "complex dance" is a dialectic.[21]

Drawing an analogy between tantric ritual and tools demonstrates the complexity of these relations. A hammer does not exist in isolation from a complex system that includes not only its own manufacture but also the manufacture of nails. That system includes not only the skills involved in wielding hammers, an "arcane procedural knowledge," but also the systems of construction in which hammers and nails are employed. The system implicated by a hammer also includes the intentions, extended knowledge sets, commitments, expertise, and beliefs of not just those who wield the hammer but also those who employ them, those who contract the hammer wielder's employer, banks, mortgage companies, and so on. A hammer is not an isolated tool, much less a context-neutral and value-free technology to which meanings can be arbitrarily ascribed. It is, rather, an object that is deeply enmeshed in social and ideological systems.

Abstracting practical knowledge as context-neutral also obscures the lived reality that the practitioner develops increasing degrees of expertise. For the young monk in a training temple, following a ritual manual may be simply a form of procedural knowledge. But that situation is its own context, one in which the procedural knowledge being acquired is perhaps a step toward initiation and status. Practical learning in a lived context is developmental, such that with increasing performative skill, the practitioner moves beyond rote adherence to the procedural steps described in the manual.[22]

Practice is always enmeshed in some conceptual framework, which is only sometimes articulated explicitly as doctrine, and doctrine is always enmeshed with practices. Indeed, the relation between practice and doctrine is a dynamic, changing one, sometimes weighted more toward one end than the other: practice, for instance, being more predominant in some particular times and places, while doctrine may be more predominant in others.[23]

If one reads through ritual manuals, with their lists of actions and contemplations, or observes a trainee following a manual, tantric practice certainly appears to be a kind of procedural knowledge.[24] That, however, is an interpretation even when treated as a methodologically established fact. Despite systematically eliding any broader context from either the manual or the trainee, the interpretation itself then exists in the context of abstract academic discourse.

Even a meditative practice as simple and foundational as counting the breath, found throughout the Buddhist tradition, is enmeshed with broader conceptions such as how the mind works and the structure of "ground, path, and goal"—that is, conceptions of human existence (ground), the activities conducive to awakening (path), and the goal of awakening itself. While differing contexts are not the only factor, presuppositions regarding the mind, human existence, practice, and its effects contribute to the differences between the instructions for breath-counting found in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (*Path of Purification*), in contemporary Zen, and in modern mindfulness.[25] Although enmeshed with different presuppositions, at the same time a historical arc can be traced that connects them. Being adopted into a new context entails the constitution of a new system of praxis, as the new context includes different presumptions regarding such questions as efficacy and the goals of practice.[26] Relocated in a new context, breath-counting will still trail behind itself connotations pointing to its previous instantiations.[27] Tantric ritual practice is no more free from that kind of contextual enmeshment with doctrine than is breath-counting.[28]

Although tantric literature is "rather technical . . . relating details of ritual and contemplative practice,"[29] some sources, such as the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra* (*Awakening of Vairocana*) and the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* (*Supreme Bliss of the Wheels*), do provide explanations and justifications for practice.[30] Like the *Awakening of Vairocana*, the *Supreme Bliss of the Wheels* employs many Mahāyāna doctrinal concepts—such as the triple body (*trikāya*), the "gnosis of a buddha" (*buddhajñāna*), and the "nondual union with Śrī Heruka," that is, ritual identification.[31] Both works devote the vast majority of their attention to instructions and explanations for ritual performance, explicating practice rather than interpreting doctrine. And these explications do not treat practice as derivative of doctrine. Although commenting on Tibetan developments later than the Indic tantric period, Matthew Kapstein notes the importance of the context of practice:

> The fourteenth century saw deepening interest in topics associated with the so-called "third turn of the doctrinal wheel": Buddha-nature or the "matrix of the tathāgata" (*tathāgatagarbha*), the "consciousness of the ground-of-all" (*ālayavijñāna*), and the "luminosity of mind" (*cittaprabhāsa*) foremost among them. There can be little doubt that the effort to elaborate satisfactory intellectual frameworks for the investigation of these and related topics received its impetus in part from the spread of contemplative and yogic

techniques, which made use of these same concepts in the practical context of spiritual disciplines.[32]

In other words, it was "in part" the spread of practices that motivated the exegesis of doctrine. A dialectic view, in which doctrine and practice mutually affect each other over time, provides a more adequate way of conceiving the history described by Kapstein than would a dichotomous view in which doctrine is primary and practice derivative.

Although they may frequently employ familiar doctrinal concepts, the tantras are not doctrinal treatises as such,[33] and identifying the ideological orientations of tantric praxes is not a straightforward matter of following established associations of canonic texts, accepted authorial attributions, or authoritative interpretations of concepts. Instead of a narrowly defined lineage of texts and teachers, the cultural milieus in which tantric praxes were created are more like a liquid solution in which concepts and practices are floating, crystallizing, and falling out of solution in the form of a ritualized practice, such as a ritual contemplation (*sādhana*) or sacrifice (*pūjā*), or as a text compiled as a reference source for praxis.[34] In some cases, therefore, interpretation requires looking indirectly, from practice to the doctrinal concepts supporting practice. In other cases, it can be relatively simple and straightforward—for example, the first chapter of the *Awakening of Vairocana Tantra* appears to have been added as a kind of ideological preface to the balance of the text.[35]

Some of the doctrinal concepts employed in relation to tantric practice are readily recognized, such as emptiness, the dynamics of consciousness, and inherent awakening—each discussed more fully below. Although a sectarian (or "philosophical") perspective might mark these concepts as somehow belonging to Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and tathāgatagarbha strains of Mahāyāna thought, respectively, it is important to understand that these concepts were widely available in the milieus in which tantric praxes were developing. Jacqueline Stone has argued that thinking of Buddhism

> as a set of resources helps us to understand how, together with local variation, remarkable thematic continuity is to be found across Asia. . . . The Buddhist repertoire includes doctrines, cosmologies, and schemas that have proved capable of drawing together elements from multiple traditions into their explanatory frameworks. . . . Buddhism's preeminence . . . has rested in no small measure on its conceptual capacity to encompass disparate elements within a compelling, if not always internally consistent, ritual program.[36]

From the perspective of tantric Buddhism as a lived tradition, concepts such as emptiness are not best understood as part of canonically privileged and philosophically consistent doctrinal systems. They are instead conceptual resources available in particular cultural milieus and employed to explain practice. In some cases, they may explain how tantric practice is effective, or they may describe the insight to be actualized by means of tantric practice, whether contemplative, ritual, or yogic.

While tantric Buddhist praxis employs a variety of doctrinal resources, the central action of many tantric practices is enacting identity of the practitioner's body, speech, and mind with the body, speech, and mind of the deity evoked in the ritual, referred to here as ritual identification.

By considering ritual identification as a conceptual configuration distinctive of tantric praxis, the supportive role of other doctrines in the conceptual milieu can be discerned. In this regard, we can consider one specific kind of contemplative practice: visualization. Visualization is both a stand-alone practice and a key element in more complex contemplative practices in tantra. It thus provides a test case for conceiving the interaction between practice and doctrine dialectically, as is being argued for here.

Identity of Practitioner and Buddha: Visualization

Understood broadly, visualization is found throughout the Buddhist tradition. For example, in the *samādhi* section of his *The Path of Purification*, Buddhaghosa lists a number of objects of meditation, several of which are visualized.[37] These include simple circular objects (*kasiṇas*) as well as more complex ones, such as a decaying corpse. These may be distinguished from contemplations in which the practitioner does not form visual images, instead focusing attention on ("recollecting," *anussati*) such exalted objects as the buddha, dhamma, and sangha.[38]

One emic explanation of the efficacy of visualization practice is given in the *Amitāyus Visualization Sūtra*.[39] This text was popular in the early medieval development of Chinese Buddhism broadly[40] and is one of the set of six texts known as the "contemplation sūtras."[41] The *Visualization Sūtra* is also categorized as one of the Pure Land sūtras.[42] Seeing the text as existing in the overlap of the two categories—contemplation sūtras and Pure Land sūtras—subverts exclusive sectarian designations that would foreclose consideration of it in relation to tantric Buddhist praxis.[43]

Stepping back from taxonomies based on sectarian classifications, we can instead consider what the text says about the efficacy of visualization practice and, for the issues being raised here, the function of ritual identification. The frame narrative of the sūtra is the story of Prince Ajātaśatru. Ajātaśatru desires the throne but is advised that regicide is impermissible, so he imprisons his father, King Bimbisāra, intending to starve him to death. Queen Vaidehī keeps Bimbisāra alive by smuggling food into the prison, but learning this, Ajātaśatru imprisons her as well. Wondering if there is a better world into which she might seek rebirth, she is visited by the Buddha Śākyamuni and Ānanda. At the core of the *Visualization Sūtra* is a thirteen-step visualization sequence that Śākyamuni teaches to Queen Vaidehī so that she can see and consequently be reborn in Sukhāvatī, Amitābha's Land of Bliss. The sequence begins with visualizing the setting sun and proceeds to build up a complex image of Sukhāvatī, complete with streams, lakes, jeweled trees with birds, and celestial musicians. Following the twelfth step, visualizing the lotus throne of Amitāyus, the Buddha explains the rationale for this practice:

> The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī, "After you have seen this, next visualize the Buddha. Why the Buddha? Because Buddha Tathāgatas have cosmic bodies, and so enter into the meditating mind of each sentient being. For this reason, when you contemplate a Buddha, your mind itself takes the form of his thirty-two physical characteristics and eighty secondary marks. Your mind produces the Buddha's image and is itself the Buddha. The ocean of perfectly and universally enlightened Buddhas thus arises in the meditating mind. For this reason you should singlemindedly concentrate and deeply contemplate the Buddha Tathāgata, Arhat, and Perfectly Enlightened One.[44]

The visualization is explained as effecting the identity of buddha and practitioner. In the sūtra, the thirteen-step visualization and the idea of the identity of practitioner and buddha are presented as integral to one another. This is directly comparable to ritual identification, the contemplative ritual act central to many tantric rituals, as discussed below.[45]

Tantric practice developed more complex visualizations, for example, "visualization-based deity meditation" (i.e., deity yoga). The Dalai Lama has called deity yoga "the essence of tantra" because it is "the simultaneous unification of method and wisdom in one consciousness—the appearance of oneself as a deity, such as Vairocana, coupled with realization of emptiness."[46] Dusana Dorjee notes that long-term practice of deity yoga is associated not only with "the usual signs of progression in Shamatha practice—increased clarity and stability of meditation—[but] they are also accompanied by phenomenological shifts in terms of connection with the qualities of the deity."[47] Increasing compassion and awareness of emptiness are the specific examples she gives of these changes.

Employing visualization as part of more complex practices, such as the *homa* ritual examined below, tantric Buddhist praxis demonstrates this same integral relation between practice and doctrine as is found in Buddhaghosa, in the *Visualization Sūtra*, and in deity yoga.

Ritual Identification

Within the many strands that form the loosely coherent whole of tantra, one of the strands that runs the longest is the practice of ritual identification, the central ritual action in which the identity of the practitioner (*sādhaka*) and the deity is enacted.[48] In many Shingon rituals, the deity is evoked in the center of a ritually enclosed altar that is also the deity's maṇḍala and frequently has a stūpa at its center.[49] For performances of the *homa* ritual, the altar has a hearth instead of stūpa.

As a set of contemplative actions, ritual identification expresses the idea that the practitioner is always and already inherently awakened. This idea is central to many tantric conceptions of the ground, path, and goal. One of Kūkai's most important texts, "Attaining Enlightenment in This Very Existence" (*Sokushin jobutsugi*), presents the idea that the practitioner and the Dharmakāya Buddha Mahāvairocana are identical.[50] "According to Kūkai, the six elements that compose all things are the body of *dharmakāya*, and through the practice of the three mysteries, one is able to fully realize the fundamental nonduality of practitioner and buddha reality, attaining Buddhahood in this very body."[51]

Both the practitioner and the buddha are composed of the "six great elements" (*mahābhūta*, rokudai 六大), and both are present to each other in the threefold form of body, speech, and mind.[52] The unity of the six elements and of the threefold body, speech, and mind of buddha and practitioner means that one is already awakened from the very start—the ground is identical with the goal. In this formulation, practice is the expression of identity, this already and always awakened state. Practice does not create it, though it enables one to be increasingly aware of it. The path, then, is the way of realizing—literally, making real—that always and already awakened state, and ritual identification is a key to this realization. By enacting the identity of practitioner and buddha, the practitioner actualizes his or her own buddha-potential (buddha-nature, *buddhadhātu* or *tathatāgatagarbha*).

While the organization and components of Shingon rituals have changed over time,[53] as practiced in the present day, ritual identification generally comprises three ritual acts: the

identification of the practitioner's body with the body of the chief deity (*honzon*, 本尊; the buddha, bodhisattva, or protector who is evoked in the ritual), the identification of the practitioner's speech with the speech of the chief deity, and the identification of the practitioner's mind with the mind of the chief deity. Taken together these three constitute the threefold mystery (*sanmitsu*, 三密).[54] In Chinese Buddhist thought prior to tantric formulations, this concept primarily referred to "a complex intellectual understanding of the nature of buddhahood"[55] and was used as an intersemiotic schema linking together various categories, such as the three kinds of karma, "the four virtues, five constancies, five fruits, and four bodhisattva practices."[56] While this interpretive use was widespread throughout the medieval period (Nanbeichao, ca. 317–589, and through late Tang, ca. 756–907), in tantric usages it refers more specifically to ritual identification: "the replication of the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha, within the narrower context of ritual involving mantra, mudrā, and meditation performed in new specialized maṇḍala under the auspices of a master to produce enlightenment immediately."[57] In contemporary Shingon rituals, the three ritual acts are performed sequentially: first, the interpenetration of self and deity (*nyū ga ga nyū*, 入我我入); second, the primary recitation; and third, contemplating the wheel (*cakra*) of syllables (*akṣaracakra*, *jirinkan*, 字輪觀). The three parts are also equated with body, speech, and mind, as well as with mudrā, mantra, and maṇḍala.

We can better understand this threefold contemplation by considering how it is performed in a Shingon ritual, specifically here the "Acalanātha Vidyārāja *śāntika homa* of the Chūin lineage" (*Fudō Myōō sokusai goma Chūin ryū*).[58] This is the version of the *homa* that a Shingon priest (*ācārya*, *ajari*, 阿闍梨) learns in the contemporary training program standard on Kōyasan, the main training center for the Chūin lineage of Shingon. Because it is part of the training program, it is the paradigm for other *homa* rituals that practitioners will encounter after completing their training.[59] The title of the ritual manual indicates that the chief deity with whom the practitioner identifies is the "Immovable Wisdom King" (Skt. Acalanātha Vidyārāja, Jpn. Fudō Myōō, 不動明王).

For the first act of the threefold contemplation, "mutual interpenetration" enacts the bodily identity of practitioner and deity. The manual instructs the practitioner to begin by making the mudrā of Amitābha's samādhi (hands folded in their lap with the tips of their thumbs and forefingers touching); the practitioner is then given the following instructions:

> Visualize the syllable *a* above the heart; it changes, becoming a moon cakra; above the cakra is the syllable *hrīḥ*; it changes, becoming an eight-petalled lotus blossom seat; above the seat is the syllable *haṃ*; it changes, becoming the Sword of Wisdom; the Sword of Wisdom changes, becoming Acala Vidyārāja with all the auspicious marks; [visualize that] my body becomes the body of the Chief Deity.[60]

All of the syllables here and elsewhere in the manual are visualized in Siddham script, which is standard for Shingon ritual material as well as being employed in many other Japanese Buddhist traditions.

Next, making the sword and sheath mudrā of Acalanātha, the practitioner gestures with it while reciting the mantra of Acalanātha 28 times:

> NAUMAKU SANMANDA BAZARADAN SENDA MAKAROSYADA SOWATAYA
> UN TARATA UN KAN MAN

This is followed by additional ritual acts and then transitions to the second contemplative act, "primary recitation," enacting the identity of speech. The manual instructs:

> Then, holding his beads in the teaching mudrā, the practitioner recites the mantra of Acalanātha 108 times:

> NAUMAKU SANMANDA BAZARADAN SENDA MAKAROSYADA SOWATAYA
> UN TARATA UN KAN MAN

This is followed by additional ritual acts and then transitions to the third act of the threefold contemplation, syllable cakra contemplation (*jirinkan*), enacting the identity of mind:

> Again forming the mudrā of Amitābha's samādhi, the practitioner contemplates a diagram of the "cakra of the imperishable" (*akṣara cakra*). This is a circular diagram of five "seed syllable" mantras (*bīja mantra*) in Siddham script, the five syllables—*a*, *vaṃ*, *raṃ*, *haṃ* and *khaṃ*—being "the five-syllable *mantra* of Mahāvairocana."[61]

The practitioner recites a short text in which each of the five syllables is associated with the "ungraspability" of a doctrinal concept. Realizing the emptiness of these categories of things, which might otherwise be mistaken as permanent, eternal, absolute, or unchanging, is identical with realizing the emptiness characteristic of a buddha. The recitation is:

> From the syllable *a* [for *ādyanutpāda*, original non-arising] dharmas fundamentally do not arise, therefore from the syllable *va* [for *vāc*, speech] words and speech are incomprehensible; from the syllable *va* words and speech are incomprehensible, therefore from the syllable *ra* [for *rajas*, defilements] impurities cannot be comprehended; from the syllable *ra* impurities cannot be comprehended, therefore from the syllable *ha* [for *hetu*, cause] actions and their results cannot be comprehended; from the syllable *ha* actions and their results cannot be comprehended, therefore from the syllable *kha* [for *kha*, empty space] universal *śūnyatā* cannot be comprehended; [then, in reverse order] from the syllable *khaṃ* universal *śūnyatā* cannot be comprehended, therefore from the syllable *haṃ* actions and their results cannot be comprehended, from the syllable *haṃ* actions and their results cannot be comprehended, therefore from the syllable *raṃ* impurities cannot be comprehended; from the syllable *raṃ* impurities cannot be comprehended, therefore from the syllable *vaṃ* words and speech cannot be comprehended; from the syllable *vaṃ* words and speech cannot be comprehended, therefore from the syllable *aṃ* the fact that all dharmas are not born cannot be comprehended (with the discriminating mind).[62]

This dense and rather obscure text can be explicated by looking at what the *Awakening of Vairocana Tantra* says about the teachings of mantra. This set of five *bīja* mantras appears in fascicle seven, chapter four, "Rules for Recitation," as a bodily visualization associating these five *bīja* mantras with the five cakras. This usage differs from the syllable cakra contemplation in the

homa ritual, but as it conveys the importance given to this set of *bīja* mantras, it is quoted in full here:

> By dwelling in accordance with this method, you will be identical with the honored one [Śākya]muni.
> The letter A, completely golden in color, is used to form a vajra circle:
> It empowers the lower part of the body and is called the yoga seat.
> The letter Vaṃ, [the color of] white moonlight, is in the midst of a hazy mass:
> It empowers your navel and is called water of great compassion.
> The letter Raṃ, like the first light of day, is red and in a triangle:
> It empowers the locus of your heart and is called light of the fire of wisdom.
> The letter Haṃ, like the flames of the [fire] calamity [at the end] of an eon, is black in color and in a wind circle:
> It empowers the place of the white tuft [between the eyebrows] and is called sovereign power.
> The letter Kha with a dot of emptiness (i.e., Khaṃ) becomes all colors:
> It empowers the top of the head and is therefore called great emptiness.63

The set is called the "five kinds of mantra-hearts," and elsewhere referred to as the five "marks of bodhi" (*bodai ten*, 菩提点).64 These also correspond to the system of five bodily cakras found in much of Buddhist thought.65 In another chapter in the *Awakening of Vairocana*, the 34 syllables of the Sanskrit syllabary are treated as *bīja* mantras. There the Buddha Mahāvairocana asks rhetorically,

> "Lord of Mysteries, what is the mantra path of the Tathāgatas? It is, namely, the empowering of these written letters. . . . Lord of Mysteries, in short, with the Tathāgatas' knowledge of an omniscient one, the power of the own-merit and knowledge of all the Tathāgatas, the power of the knowledge of their own vows, and the power of the empowerment of the entire Dharma realm, and in conformity with the variety of beings, they reveal the mantra teachings."66

Each of the 34 different *bīja* mantras is associated with a doctrinally significant term that has the *bīja* as its first syllable. Selecting just the explanations for the five in the "cakra of the imperishable":

> "And what are the mantra teachings? They are: the gateway of the letter *A*, because all *dharmas* are originally unborn (*ādyanutpāda*: 'original non-arising'); the gateway of the letter *Ka*, because all *dharmas* are dissociated from action (*kārya*); the gateway of the letter *Kha*, because all *dharmas* are inapprehensible like empty space (*kha*); . . . the gateway of the letter *Ra*, because all *dharmas* are dissociated from all defilement (*rajas*); . . . the gateway of the letter *Va*, because the path of speech (*vāc*) is cut off in all *dharmas*."67

The two sets are not exactly the same—the order in the list of 34 syllables is that of the Sanskrit syllabary, and the recitation of the "cakra of the imperishable" adds -ṃ (the "dot of emptiness") at

the end of each syllable upon second mention—as in the first quotation from the tantra above. The meanings ascribed to each *bīja* mantra are, however, exactly those found in the recitation of the "cakra of the imperishable" in the *homa* ritual.[68]

It is clear that these meanings have been intentionally ascribed to the *bīja* mantra—the associations may be arbitrary but they are not random. In an earlier chapter of the *Awakening of Vairocana Tantra*, different doctrinal systems' mistaken beliefs regarding the essential, permanent, eternal, or absolute nature of the self (*ātman*) are systematically negated (discussed more fully below). Similarly, the mnemonic associations here are to concepts that may be mistaken to identify absolutes. The most evident of these is *vāc*, speech, which is the eternal source of all being according to the Vedic system of thought. That which is originally unarisen (*ādyanutpāda*), cause (*hetu*), empty space (*kha*), and defilements (*rajas*) have less easily identifiable sectarian affiliations (at least for this author). It is suggestive, however, that in some theories regarding dharmas, empty space (*ākāśa*) is an unconditioned dharma (*asaṃskṛtadharma*), and unconditioned dharmas, including nirvāṇa, are described as "unproduced" (or unarisen, *anutpāda*).

Considered as a sequence of negations of doctrinal concepts, the wheel of syllables visualization is also stylistically similar to the way some of the Perfection of Wisdom literature negates attributing any essential nature to each item in a list of concepts. A familiar example is the Heart Sutra, which effectively negates the absolute status of concepts often considered fundamental to Indian Buddhist thought, such as the five *skandhas*: form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness; the 18 *dhātus*; the 12 links in the chain of causation; the four noble truths—culminating with negating the absolute status of insight, and attainment (nirvāṇa). In just this same fashion, the sequence of negations in the wheel of syllables empties concepts one might otherwise cling to as absolutes.

In this *homa* ritual, ritual identification is with Fudō Myōō (不動明王; Acalanātha Vidyārāja). The threefold contemplation begins with identifying the practitioner's body with Fudō Myōō's body—first declaring the identity, then forming Fudō Myōō's sword and sheath mudrā and reciting his mantra. Identification of speech is done by forming the teaching mudrā with the beads and reciting Fudō Myōō's mantra 108 times. Identification of mind is done by comprehending the intangibility of a set of doctrinal concepts linked mnemonically to a short sequence of syllables. While these doctrinal concepts might be mistakenly reified as permanent, eternal, absolute, or unchanging, the ritual instead points out that they cannot be "grasped." That is, they are empty of any absolute nature. Instead, they are constructs whose existence depends on conditions. Realizing these phenomena are empty, the practitioner's mind is equal to or identical with the mind of a buddha.

As it is in other tantric rituals, the *homa* manual examined here prescribes ritual identification as a complex of actions. These actions can be understood etically as referencing central doctrinal themes from Mahāyāna thought.[69] At the same time those ritual actions introduce a new theme: that practitioner and buddha are always and already identical. In this way, a uniquely tantric conceptual configuration emerges through the practice, expanding on but not reducible to familiar Mahāyāna doctrinal concepts. Interpreting the ritual takes place at a different level of abstraction from performing the ritual. Thus, while the ritual manual does not expound on these ideas didactically, the practitioner learns performatively—that is, by performing the threefold contemplation.

Orienting Concepts of the Mahāyāna

The threefold contemplation can be understood in relation to three concepts found in Mahāyāna thought—impermanence, inherent awakening, and "turning over" at the base of consciousness. These are identified here as a means of assisting our own interpretation of ritual identification in the present day, not as historical antecedents that provide a causal explanation of ritual identification. The following is not, in other words, a reductive approach—reducing ritual identification to authoritative doctrines by analysis (by breaking it down into some set of imagined conceptual elements). The following is, instead, intended to offer an impressionistic conceptual collage for understanding what is learned by practicing the threefold contemplation. It is an interpretation constructed for us in the present. It does not explain what ideas motivated the composition of a ritual, nor what is in the minds of practitioners. Half a century ago, Stephan Beyer explained his focus on ritual structure by pointing out that "we must first ask, simply, what the Tibetans are doing before we can go on to decide the 'real' reason they are doing it."[70] And further, because reasons are contextual there is no one singular "real" reason.

Impermanence as the Necessary Ground for Transmutation

Since everything is empty of a permanent, eternal, absolute, unchanging essence, everything is susceptible to change and transformation. It is, for example, the emptiness of mind that Śāntideva (ca. 685–ca. 763) identifies as key to the status of always and already being awakened. In the ninth chapter of his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which focuses on Madhyamaka teachings, Śāntideva asserts that

> The mind is not positioned in the sense faculties, nor in form or the other aggregates, nor in the space in between. The mind is found neither internally nor externally, nor anywhere else either.

> What is not in the body nor elsewhere, neither intermingled nor separate anywhere, that is nothing. Therefore living beings are inherently liberated.[71]

The concept of emptiness is key not only to Madhyamaka thought but also to locating tantric practice in a Mahāyāna intellectual context. The centrality of emptiness to early tantric Buddhist practitioners is evident, for example, in the prominent place it is given in the first chapter of the *Awakening of Vairocana Tantra*, which David Gray identifies as the "earliest known dateable tantric Buddhist text."[72]

Among a variety of topics, the first chapter addresses the idea that there is a prime cause, which is contrary to the Buddhist conception that the cosmos is an open-ended process of change "from beginningless time."[73] In this historical and cultural context, one way that a prime cause was conceived is by the idea of a self (*ātman*). The text examines this idea through a variety of different interpretations contemporaneous with the text. Speaking to Vajrapāṇi, known as the Lord of Mysteries, the Buddha explains that ordinary people "cling to the notion of 'self' and to the possessions of the self, and differentiate among immeasurable distinctions of the self."[74] Others imagine that the prime cause can be characterized in other interpretations of ātman, such as

the inner self, or [self in] the measure of man, or the completely adorned, or life-force, or *pudgala* (person), or consciousness, or *ālaya* (store[-consciousness]), the knower, the seer, the grasper, the grasped, what knows internally, what knows externally, *jñatvam* (intelligence), mind-born, youngster, what is eternally and determinately born. . . . Lord of Mysteries, such distinctions of the self have since times of yore been associated with [false] differentiation, and [the adherents of these views] hope for liberation in accordance with reason.[75]

Then the text goes on to explain that, beginning a course of practice, ordinary people are able to progress through a set of developmental stages.[76] Eventually, following the instructions of a good spiritual friend, they enter a stage of special practice in which "the wisdom that seeks liberation" arises. This wisdom relates to the teachings of

permanence, impermanence, and emptiness, and they follow these teachings. Lord of Mysteries [Vajrapāṇi], it is not that they understand emptiness and non-emptiness, permanence and annihilation. . . . [Rather,] one should realize that emptiness is dissociated from annihilation and permanence.[77]

In other words, the *Awakening of Vairocana Tantra* is here asserting the middle way—emptiness is distinguished from the two extremes of nihilism (annihilation, *ucchedavāda*) and eternalism (permanence, *śasvatavāda*).[78]

Later, the text illustrates the nature of impermanence with a set of similes closely matching those found in the writings of Nāgārjuna. "If one is to give rise to freedom from attachment to the aggregates, one should observe foam, bubbles, a plantain tree, a mirage and an illusion, thereby attaining liberation."[79] In his *Śūnyatāsaptatī* ("Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness"), Nāgārjuna says that "produced phenomena are similar to a village of gandharvas, an illusion, a hair net in the eyes, foam, a bubble, an emanation, a dream, and a circle of light produced by a whirling firebrand."[80] While not identical, the similarity of the two sets of similes, both of which are used to explain emptiness, indicates a shared pool of didactic similes for key concepts.

What is particularly noteworthy here is that a central doctrine of Madhyamaka teaching—that is, the teaching that emptiness is distinct from annihilationism and eternalism—is not argued for, but simply taken for granted as something that "one should realize." Perhaps most importantly, Madhyamaka thought provided a view in which, because there are no permanent, unchanging essences, everything that exists is subject to change and transformation. Buddhas and tantric practitioners are equal in having no permanent, unchanging essence, and in ritually actualizing this, tantric practitioners enact their identity with buddhas.

Fundamental Transmutation

Transmutation of or turning over at the base of consciousness (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) is a Yogācāra conception that can also be interpreted as explaining the efficacy of tantric practice. In broad summary, Yogācāra thought divides consciousness into eight: the six sensory realms, the mind (*manas*), and the underlying continuum of consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). Turning over at the base of consciousness—that is, at the level of the *ālayavijñāna*—is the key to awakening. Turning over

at the base frees the practitioner from the delusion of a separate, autonomous self. This is the transformation of dualistic knowledge (*vijñāna*) into wisdom (*prajñā*).[81] The "manas [mind] appropriates the activity of the ālaya-vijñāna as its 'self' (ātman), and then clings to that self as its object. . . . After the *āśraya-paravṛtti*, the . . . *ātmanic* appropriation of the ālaya-vijñāna" is extinguished.[82] This is *tathatā*, which "is not a thing or entity, but a descriptive term for the activity of cognizing things just-as-they-are."[83]

Like emptiness and inherent awakening, the idea of *āśrayaparavṛtti* has its own history and its meaning has changed over time—the details of which are beyond the scope of this essay. Briefly, however, Ronald Davidson's study of the concept indicates that the idea of the "foundation" (*āśraya*) started out as physiological, was then interpreted as psycho-physiological, and was eventually conceived as purely psychological.[84] These different interpretations could be interpreted as corresponding to body, speech, and mind, respectively.[85] In the threefold contemplation, body, speech, and mind—that is, the entirety of a human existence—constitute the basis of transformation. This indicates a complex understanding of awakening, one that entails all three dimensions of human existence rather than only the psychological, as often seems to be presumed in modern and secularized understandings of Buddhist thought.

Considered to be the cofounder of Yogācāra along with his brother Asaṅga, Vasubandhu (fl. fourth century) concludes his *Thirty Verses*, a key Yogācāra text, by saying,

> Without thought, without conception, this is the supramundane awareness:
> The overturning of the root [viz., *āśrayaparāvṛtti*], the ending of the two barriers.
> It is the inconceivable, wholesome, unstained, constant realm,
> The blissful body of liberation, the Dharma body of the great sage.[86]

The "two barriers" are misplaced affections (*kleśāvaraṇa*) and mistaken conceptions (*jñeyāvaraṇa*).[87] Matthew Kapstein explains these: "The affective obscuration (Skt. *kleśāvaraṇa*) includes all dispositions underlying the emotions that bind us to worldly patterns; the cognitive obscuration (*jñeyāvaraṇa*) [is] the inability to penetrate to a full realization of the true nature of things."[88] From the perspective of a practitioner, Ben Connelly explains *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as

> the point at which the entire karmic process in the store consciousness [*alayavijñāna*] is transformed. When . . . the ancient conditioned habitual tendencies of consciousness are transformed. The storehouse is transformed from being the place or process whereby our conditioning manifests and is stored, into a vast mirroring wisdom that directly knows and shows the world.[89]

The conceptual framework of Yogācāra thought presented awakening as this turning over at the base. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that ritual identification, in which the practitioner's basic self-conception is radically transformed, is directly comparable to the "total transformation of the personality called a 'reversal of the basis' (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*)."[90] The idea of such a fundamental transformation would have provided an understanding of ritual efficacy for those composing and performing tantric rituals.

It is not the claim here that tantric practitioners necessarily and consciously employ the philosophical details of Mahāyāna thought as they construct tantric rituals, nor that they

necessarily and consciously contemplate those concepts as they perform rituals. Instead, the claim is that Mahāyāna teachings, such as emptiness, inherent awakening, and fundamental transmutation, have always been familiar conceptual resources available to practitioners in their milieus. In those milieus, these resources provide ways of thinking about how rituals are effective, which is to say how the fundamental transformation of body, speech, and mind is effected through practice—whether through visualization of identity with the buddha as a stand-alone practice or through the complex practices such as the threefold contemplation found in Shingon rituals such as the *homa*.

CONCLUSION

A persistent trope regarding tantric Buddhism is that it is simply a ritual technology probably borrowed from Hindu traditions and made Buddhist by being interpreted to fit into the framework of standard Mahāyāna doctrine. The images employed in presenting this trope imply that two separate things have been linked together—one is grafted onto the other, one is justified by the other, or one is the theory and the other is the application.[91] This conceptual structure is, however, problematic in a number of ways. Fundamental to this view are the presumptions that thought and action are separate and that thought causes action—both uncritically treated as natural or "just the way things are." In Religious Studies discourse, this dichotomy imposes values and preconceptions onto the object of study. These values and preconceptions are largely rooted in Western intellectual history and not native to the history of Buddhist praxis. Although there may be points of correspondence between Western religio-intellectual culture and that of tantric Buddhism, these assumptions tend to highlight correspondences and similarities in an abstracted, decontextualized, and undertheorized fashion. The dichotomous framework lends itself to stilted interpretations where canonic doctrinal views—whether those of classic Indian Buddhist schools or of contemporary philosophy or psychology—are imposed onto the material, rather than allowing the meaning to emerge from it.

The holistic character of the *homa* practice is best understood by considering the practice of ritual identification as a unique conceptual formulation, one that arose in a milieu in which key Mahāyāna concepts—such as emptiness, inherent awakening, and the fundamental transformation at the base of consciousness—were part of the shared understanding of practitioners who both created and performed tantric rituals.

A long-standing tendency in the Western scholarly study of Buddhism has been to focus on its doctrines, often abstracted as philosophical concepts. Decontextualized from both practice and history, doctrines are not infrequently then relocated into the context of modern philosophy and theology, which are themselves historically located (i.e., not universal) intellectual projects with their own concepts, categories, and concerns.[92] Focusing on either doctrine or practice in isolation from each other is not adequate for understanding the lived religion of Buddhists over the two and a half millennia. To understand this history, it is necessary to understand both what people think and what they do, while recognizing that thought and action, doctrine and practice, interact with each other dialectically over the course of that history. This challenges, first, the usual belief that thought determines action and, second, the corollary that doctrine is determinative of practice. Both these unidirectional relations (along with the analogy between them) should no longer be uncritically accepted as natural for the study of religious praxes.

In medieval India, tantric practitioners of various kinds were developing explanations of ritual in terms of the identity of practitioner and deity.[93] Working in a milieu imbued with the concepts of Mahāyāna thought, early tantric Buddhist practitioners formulated a unique configuration of doctrine supporting the concept of the identity of practitioner and buddha. Rather than being expressed discursively as doctrine, however, that new configuration can be discerned in the practice of ritual identification. With its three dimensions—body, speech, and mind—ritual identification points to a holistic transformation of the practitioner realizing inherent enlightenment.

It is only in the abstract that technology and practice exist independently from ideology and doctrine. Doctrines such as emptiness (*śunyatā*), conversion at the base (*aśrāyaparavṛtti*), and the universal potential for awakening (*tathāgatagarbha*) are widely shared within Mahāyāna and tantra. However, ritual identification is a uniquely tantric praxis by which one's already awakened nature is realized.

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NOTES

[1] See for example, Paula Arai and Kevin Trainor, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[2] One source for this image is the Chinese Tiantai master Zhiyi. Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, "Introduction: The *Mo-ho chih-kuan* and the T'ien-t'ai Tradition," in *Clear Serenity, Quiet Insight: T'ien-t'ai Chih-I's "Mo-ho chih-kuan*, trans. and commentary by Paul L. Swanson, 3 vols. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 1:2.

[3] For Ratnākaraśānti's life and works, see Greg Seton, "Ratnākaraśānti," Treasury of Lives, 2019, accessed March 29, 2024, http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Ratnakarasanti/23. For his assertion that tantra's superiority is due to its methods, see Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sutra* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 91.

[4] The terminology used there is *jñāna* and *kriyā*, which may also be rendered as "knowledge" and "action." Hélène Brunner, "Jñāna and Kriyā: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas," in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of André Paoux*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 1–59.

[5] De la Vallée Poussin 1898, 174–175, cited by David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 2002), 118. De la Vallée Poussin's analysis of the virtue of tantric ceremony may be seen as analogous to W. T. Stace's later distinction between introvertive and extrovertive types of mysticism. William Parsons, "Mysticism: An Overview," in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, editor-in-chief John Barton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.55), n.p.

[6] David B. Gray, "Tantra and Tantric Traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Georgios T. Halkias (Oxford: Oxford University Press), citing André Padoux, "What Do We Mean by Tantrism?," in *The Roots of Tantra*, ed. Katherine Anne Harper and Robert L. Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 19n5. Internal quotation is from a review by Jean Filliozat published in *Journal Asiatique* 256 (1968): 267.

[7] Note that Sanderson's comparative research has largely been limited to the Yoginītantras, which are not the earliest dateable Buddhist tantras. David B. Gray, "The *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*: Its History, Interpretation, and Practice in India and Tibet," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 6 (2007): 695, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00046.x; and David B. Gray, *The Buddhist Tantras: A Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 10.

[8] David L. Gardiner, *Kūkai: Japan's First Vajrayana Visionary* (Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies and BDK America, 2024), 4.

[9] Geoffrey C. Goble, *Chinese Esoteric Buddhism: Amoghavajra, the Ruling Elite, and the Emergence of a Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 17.

[10] See Robert H. Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the "Treasure Store Treatise"* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); and Richard D. McBride, II, "Is There Really 'Esoteric' Buddhism?" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 2 (December 2004): 329–356.

[11] Sharf, *Coming to Terms*, 269.

[12] Robert H. Sharf, "Thinking through Shingon Ritual," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26, no. 1 (June 2003): 57; parentheticals in original. Sharf reiterates this characterization at the end of his essay, saying "what makes tantra 'tantra,' in any critical cross-cultural sense, lies not in its 'meanings' but in its techniques. Tantra is an applied knowledge pertaining to the use of a cornucopia of ritual implements, icons, occult gestures and utterances. These techniques were adopted into diverse religious contexts across Asia and reinterpreted in the light of local tradition" (85). An *argumentum ad absurdum* might be offered by analogy: "If 'Theravāda' is to have any cross-cultural significance, it is simply as a technology of insight meditation, which has been adapted into various settings independent of any doctrinal or theoretical overlay." If this claim is implausible about Theravāda, then the analogous claim regarding tantra is similarly problematic.

[13] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[14] For a more extended treatment of this history, see Manuel A. Vásquez, *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[15] For historical antecedents in Buddhist intellectual history, see Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sutra* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 78–104.

[16] See Susan Pockett, William P. Banks, and Shaun Gallagher, eds., *Does Consciousness Cause Behavior?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

[17] Sharf, "Thinking through Shingon Ritual," 57.

[18] Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 48.

[19] Richard K. Payne, "Globalizing Tantric Buddhism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Georgios T. Halkias (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2021 (online), 2024 (print), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.1043.

[20] Carl Bielefeldt, "Practice," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 235.

[21] Richard H. Davis indicates that Śaiva teachings share this attitude, saying, "Ritual actions like worship are crucial, in the view of this Āgama [the Ajitāgama], because they give rise to knowledge; without ritual practice, the requisite knowledge might never arise. Conversely, the advocates of action recognize that correct knowledge is required for proper comprehension and practice of ritual." Richard H. Davis, "Becoming a Śiva, and Acting as One, in Śaiva Worship," in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of André Paoux*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 107–108.

[22] A trainee will follow the ritual manual as a set of procedural instructions but to then generalize that tantra is nothing more than an arcane procedural knowledge is a fallacy. For a trainee, what it means to be identical with a buddha, to already and always be awakened, is different from what an experienced tantric practitioner would understand that to mean. While we cannot know what is happening in the minds of tantric practitioners (either in the past or present) without engaging in extended practice ourselves, we can consider an argument by analogy. One readily available analogy is television cooking shows, such as the popular British baking competitions. If I were to attempt some of the things that the competitors accomplish, I would need very specific and detailed procedural instructions. (Another familiar analogy might be made with learning to drive a car, including parallel parking.) They with their experience do not. While this analogy may seem to equate awakening with something rather mundane, dismissing tantric practice as merely arcane procedural knowledge trivializes it. Tantric practice is a skill set requiring both practical experiential knowledge as well as a conceptual grasp of what is being done.

[23] Scott Mitchell points out one such moment, exemplifying the role of historical contingency. In the first half of the 20th century, Shin doctrinal teachings were only available in Japanese. Many American-born Shin Buddhists grew up "in a primarily English-speaking context . . . [and] raised in the world of Jōdo Shinshū culture and practice while having very little exposure to Shin doctrine." Scott A. Mitchell, *The Making of American Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 50.

[24] Were one to limit research to the directions given to beginning Zen students (see for example, Soken Graf, "How to Begin Zen Meditation (Zazen)," Wikihow, 2024, accessed May 10, 2024, https://www.wikihow.com/Begin-Zen-Meditation-(Zazen), one might conclude that Zen is simply an arcane procedural knowledge.

[25] Buddhaghosa *The Path of Purification: "Vissudhimagga*," trans. Bhikkhu Ñaṇamoli, 4th ed. (Kandy, LK: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), 272–80; Patricia Q. Campbell, *Knowing Body, Moving Mind: Ritualizing and Learning at Two Buddhist Centers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 79; and Paul Verhaegen, *Presence: How Mindfulness and Meditation Shape Your Brain, Mind, and Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 40–42.

[26] For a contemporary example, consider how *vipassanā* has been adopted as mindfulness in medical settings. Jeff Wilson, *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75–103.

[27] This is the basis for much of the critique of mindfulness as losing something important when it is abstracted out of its Buddhist context.

[28] What context to employ for a study of ritual depends on the inquiry. For example, while Martin Lehnert refers to "the 'technocratic' implemenation of rituals" as essential to the appeal of tantric rituals to the Tang court, he goes on to point out that the context in this case is the "sacral confirmation of social order and governmental

authority." Martin Lehnert, "Tantric Threads between India and China," in *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. Ann Heirman and Stephan Peter Bumbacher (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 272.

[29] Gray, *Buddhist Tantras*, 7.

[30] For the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, also *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, seeTaisho number 848, Derge 494/Peking 126. See Kazuo Kano, "Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi," in *Literature and Languages*, vol. 1 of *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden: Brill, 2015); and for the Cakrasaṃvara, see David B. Gray, *The Cakrasamvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka): Śrīherukābhidhāna: A Study and Annotated Translation* (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies, Columbia University, 2007). See Gray, *Buddhist Tantras*, 18–19.

[31] Gray, "*Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*," 54.

[32] Matthew Kapstein, "Buddhist Thought in Tibet: An Historical Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*, ed. William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195328998.003.0023, 254–255.

[33] Sanskrit has a well-developed and rather specific set of bibliographic terms for different kinds of texts. Doctrinal expositions, *śāstra*, and commentaries, *bhāṣya*, are among those bibliographic categories that focus on explaining doctrine. The argument here is that were the intent doctrinal, we would expect that authors/compilers of the tantras to have used a different term to identify their text. For a summary discussion of the bibliographic terminology, see Stefan Baums, "Commentary: Overview," in *Literature and Languages*, vol. 1 of *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015).

[34] Gray, *Buddhist Tantras*, 6.

[35] Richard K. Payne, "Buddhism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. Susan M. Felch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 177–178.

[36] Jacqueline Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 5.

[37] Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification* (Visuddhimagga), trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (1975; repr., Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 1999), 85–431.

[38] Buddhaghosa, *Path of Purification*, 192–218.

[39] *Guan wuliangshoufo ching*; 觀無量壽佛經; T. 365. Sometimes the title is given as reconstructed from Sanskrit: *⃰Amitāyurdhyānisūtra* or *⃰Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra*; however, Eltschinger indicates that as a Central Asian or Chinese apocryphon, such titles are functionally "imaginary." Vincent Eltschinger, "Pure Land Sūtras," in *Literature and Languages*, vol. 1 of *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 221.

[40] Nobuyoshi Yamabe, "Practice of Visualization and the *Visualization Sūtra*: An Examination of Mural Paintings at Toyok, Turfan," *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies* 4, no. 1 (January 2002): 123–152, 123.

[41] The rendering of "guan" (Ch., "kan" in Jpn., 観) as "visualization" in all usages in Chinese Buddhist literature has been contested. David Quinter reviews the issues and suggests that "contemplation" is generally a more adequate rendering as it can include both visual and other kinds of sensory experiences. David Quinter, "Visualization/Contemplation Sūtras (*Guan Jing*)," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Georgios T. Halkias (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021 [online], 2024 [print]), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.770. Given the central role of what is clearly a visualization practice as more narrowly understood, I have chosen here to refer to this text as the *Visualization Sūtra*. From the perspective of Hindu tantra, see Sanjukta Gupta's comment at the very opening of his essay "Yoga and *Antaryāga* in Pāñcarātra" that in "all Tantric religious practice (*sādhana*), yoga practice, namely visualization in meditation, is an essential concomitant to ritual action." Sanjukta Gupta, "Yoga and *Antaryāga* in Pāñcarātra," in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of André Padoux*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 175.

[42] Kōtatsu Fujita, "The Textual Origins of the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*: A Canonical Scripture of Pure Land Buddhism," trans. Kenneth K. Tanaka, in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 149; and Kōtatsu Fujita, "Pure Land Buddhism in India," trans. Taitetsu

Unno, in *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development*, ed. James Foard, Michael Solomon, and Richard K. Payne (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1996).

[43] The designation of the "three Pure Land sūtras" (Larger, Shorter, and Contemplation) as canonic for a self-identified Pure Land tradition was made by Hōnen (1133–1212). Prior to that time, the three did not constitute a separate sectarian bibliographic category—pure lands of various kinds being mentioned in many different texts—though they do indicate the existence of cults of Amitābha, Amitāyus, and Aparimitāyus.

[44] Hisao Inagaki, trans., "The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus," in *The Three Pure Land Sutras* (Berkeley: BDK America, Inc., 2003), 85; T. 12.343a.

[45] An additional historical connection between visualization and tantric practice is the close connection between visualization and practices of calling on and reciting the name of a buddha or bodhisattva (Quinter, "Visualization/Contemplation Sūtras," 2677), that is, the mantra of the buddha or bodhisattva.

[46] Dalai Lama, "Heart of Mantra," in *The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra, Volume 2: Deity Yoga*, ed. Jeffrey Hopkins (1981; repr. Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 2017), 7.

[47] Dusana Dorjee, *Neuroscience and Psychology of Meditation in Everyday Life: Searching for the Essence of Mind* (London: Routledge, 2018), 112.

[48] Cf. Rae Erin Dachille, *Searching for the Body: A Contemporary Perspective on Tibetan Buddhist Tantra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

[49] "Buddhist invocation rituals" share "family resemblances" with Hindu *darśan*—in both "the supplicant ritually invokes the presence of a deity, and both supplicant and deity behold one another" (Robert H. Sharf, "Ritual," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 257).

[50] "Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence (*Sokushin jōbutsu gi*)," in *Kūkai: Major Works*, trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972). For a discussion of the importance of this concept in the Shingon tradition, see Minoru Kiyota, *On Understanding Japanese Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 194–196. Given that key terms in the title of this work are polysemous, it is rendered variously by different translators.

[51] Aaron Proffitt, *Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 2023), 146–47; and Aaron Proffitt, "Shingon," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Georgios T. Halkias (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022 [online], 2024 [print]), doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.767), 2180.

[52] Buichiro Watanabe, "'Attaining Enlightenment with This Body': Primacy of Practice in Shingon Buddhism at Mount Koya, Japan" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1999), 270. The six elements are earth, water, fire, wind, empty space, and consciousness. This system of six elements extends the classic four elements found in abhidharma analysis and may be uniquely tantric. The six elements of the practitioner and of the Buddha Mahāvairocana interpenetrate, *rokudai muge* (六大無礙), that is, are "not separate."

[53] See Koichi Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Maṇḍalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[54] While this is often rended as "three mysteries," it is in this author's view more accurate to emphasize that as three aspects of human existence, body, speech, and mind are themselves integral with one another.

[55] Richard D. McBride II, "The Mysteries of Body, Speech, and Mind: The Three Esoterica (*Sanmi*) in Medieval Sinitic Buddhism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006 [2008]): 305–355, 307.

[56] McBride, "Mysteries of Body, Speech, and Mind," 351.

[57] McBride, "Mysteries of Body, Speech, and Mind," 355.

[58] Richard K.Payne, trans., *Ritual Directions for the Śāntika Homa Offered to Acala* (Kōyasan, JPN: Department of Koyasan Foreign Mission), 1988.

[59] Richard K. Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan, Feeding the Gods: The Shingon Fire Ritual* (Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1991), 165–167.

[60] Payne, *Ritual Directions*, 31.

[61] Dale Allen Todaro, "A Study of the Earliest *Garbha Vidhi* of the Shingon Sect," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 9, no. 2 (1986): 122.

[62] Payne, *Ritual Directions*, 34–35.

[63] Rolf W. Giebel, trans., *The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2005), https://www.bdkamerica.org/product/the-vairocanabhisambodhi-sutra/, 52b, print: 265, PDF: 238. Note: Giebel's translation appeared both in print and as a downloadable PDF with different pagination. The number following the date is the page and folio number as per the Taishō canon, which are included as marginal notations in both versions, followed then by the page numbers for the print and PDFversions.

[64] Yamashina Kiyoku, ed., *Bon shūji kan* (Kōyasan: Kōyasan Kōtō Gakkō, 1983), 29.

[65] The five cakras are part of a complex system of energy centers (cakras), flows (winds, *prāṇa*), and pathways (*nadīs*) found in variant forms in Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain tantric teachings. For an extensive treatment, see Geoffrey Samuel, and Jay Johnston, eds., *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013).

[66] Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 10a, print 49, PDF 42.

[67] Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 10a–10b, print 49–50, PDF 42–43.

[68] Sharf's overall interpretation of ritual identification as involving an interplay between emptiness and existence in which the deity is both empty and existent is fully consistent with broader Mahāyāna thought, e.g., Madhyamaka two truths. Sharf's more specific interpretation of this ritual act as effecting an awareness that the deity is empty by means of the part–whole relation between *bīja* syllables and a deity's mantra—à la Structuralism or Bhartṛhari—is not supported by the evidence of the ritual manuals themselves. The contemplation is not, in other words, an exercise in eliminative reductionism, in which because something can be taken apart, reduced, it is claimed to not exist, eliminated. This interpretation appears in at least three cases, see: Sharf, "Visualization and Mandala," 185; also Sharf, "Thinking through Shingon Ritual," 84n73; and Sharf, "Ritual," 258–259.

[69] That is, as an after the fact interpretation from an outside perspective.

[70] Stephan Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 3.

[71] Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra,* trans. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 125, ch. 9, vv. 102, 103.

[72] Gray, *Buddhist Tantras*, 10.

[73] While Western philosophy often attributes the idea of an "unmoved mover" or prime cause to Aristotle, the idea was apparently much more widespread throughout Indo-European culture.

[74] Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 2, print 9, PDF 9.

[75] Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 2b, print 9, PDF 9; cf. Stephen Hodge, trans., *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisaṃbodhi Tantra: With Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), §17, 61, and Ryujun Tajima, "Study of the Mahāvairocana-Sūtra," trans. Alex Wayman, in *The Enlightenment of Vairocana* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), 259.

[76] Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 2b, print 10, PDF 9.

[77] Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 2b, print 11, pdf 9–10; cf. Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, §20, 63–64, and Tajima, "Study of the Mahāvairocana-Sūtra," 261.

[78] There is a clear similarity here to what is often thought to be a unique Chinese Tiantai doctrine of three truths: ultimate, conventional, and middle (Ziporyn 2011, 70).

[79] Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 3b, print 15, PDF 13; cf. Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, §24, 72, and Tajima, "Study of the Mahāvairocana-Sūtra," 265. A similar list comprising 10 similes is found a bit later in the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra*: Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, 3c, print 17, PDF 15; Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, §29, 80; Tajima, "Study of the Mahāvairocana-Sūtra," 267.

[80] Nāgārjuna, *Nāgārjuna's Seventy Stanzas: A Buddhist Psychology of Emptiness*, trans. David Komito (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 1987), 94.

[81] Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 317n94.

[82] Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology*, 504.

[83] Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology*, 504.

[84] Ronald M. Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation: *Āśraya-parivṛtti/–parāvṛtti* Among the Yogācāra" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1985), 199–227.

[85] The semantic ranges of these terms—body, speech, and mind—across Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, and English cultural and linguistic contexts differ significantly. For a discussion of the categories of body, speech, and mind in the Shingon context, see Watanabe 1999, 229–230.

[86] Ben Connelly, *A Practitioner's Guide Inside Vasubandhu's Yogacara* (Boston: Wisdom, 2016), 23–24, vv. 29–30.

[87] The glosses given here are my own.

[88] Kapstein, "Buddhist Thought in Tibet," 264n8.

[89] Connelly, *Practitioner's Guide*, 189–190.

[90] Karen Meyers, "Intention in the Pali Suttas and Abhidharma," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Georgios T. Halkias (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 1334.

[91] The theory–application binary is similar to the artificial distinction made between pure and applied science, pure art and graphic design, etc.

[92] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.

[93] See, for example, Davis, "Becoming a Śiva," and Vrajavallabha Dviveda, "'Having Become a God, He Should Sacrifice to the Gods,'" in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of André Paoux*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 121–138.