The Sanskrit term mudrā is an important “term of art” in tantric Buddhist literature, given the fact that it has special meanings in this context, distinct from its customary usage. While it retains its ordinary sense of “seal,” the term also has several other special meanings, including the well-known “hand gesture” as well as the lesser-known “consort” or “sexual partner.” In this talk I will endeavor to explore the history of this term in tantric Buddhist literature, and in so doing shed some light on the history of the development of tantric Buddhist traditions in India.

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