The Evolution of Tantric Ritual
March 14-16, 2014
Abstracts

Ronald Davidson, Fairfield University
Pre-Tantric Traditions, Ritual Fluidity, and the Problem of Mudrās

*Mūlyamantra, T. 1007, is reputedly the earliest systematic articulation of mudrās in Buddhist history. The text's biography reflects the vagaries of Buddhist literature: it has been suffixed to another text, the Mahāmaṇivipulavimānasupratiṣṭhita-guhyaparamarahasya-kalparāja, has Gilgit fragments, three Chinese and one Tibetan translation, none of which agree. The mudrā section of the text is a microcosm of that disagreement. The paper will begin the process of investigating the development of mudrās in Mahāyāna Buddhism, as these set the precedent for their use in tantric Buddhism.

Saturday, March 15, Alumni House
Panel 1: Brahmanical Roots (9:30 -12:00 pm)

Shingo Einoo, University of Tokyo
Ritual Devices to Become a God in Vedic and post-Vedic Rituals

A ritual device to become a god is a very important ritual element in tantric ritual. It serves as a preparation to worship a god. But this phenomenon is not exclusively peculiar to tantric ritual. In the Vedic and post-Vedic rituals we have several similar cases. For example, he who is consecrated comes near to the gods and becomes one of the deities (ZB 3.2.2.10); the yajamaana for whose sake the aajyazastra is recited becomes one who is composed of divine elements and of deities (AB 2.41.1-11); the yajamaana who performs the viSNukrama becomes viSNu and obtains these three worlds (TS 1.7.5.4), and so on. There are more examples. In this paper I discuss the cases I have found in the Vedic and post-Vedic, non-tantric ritual texts and try to show that this phenomenon or this idea originated in the Vedic tradition and was handed down through the ritual tradition.

Marko Geslani, Emory University
The Dreams of the King: On the Overnight Structure of Royal Consecrations

The paper will explore potential non-"tantric" parallels for ritual details in tantric initiation and image installation rituals. I examine the overnight structure of royal consecration rites as they developed in pariśiṣṭa-level and astrological sources, paying special attention to the motif of dream divination, described most fully in the yātrā works of Varāhamihira.

Shaman Hatley, Concordia University
The Sword's Edge Observance (Asidhārāvrata) and the Early History of Tantric Coital Ritual

This presentation investigates the historical development of tantric coital ritual through analysis of the "sword's edge observance" (*asidhārāvrata*). Originally a Brahmanical ascetic practice, a version of the *asidhārāvrata* appears to be the earliest sexual ritual attested in Śaiva tantric sources. I will examine

descriptions of the *vrata* in non-tantric religious and literary texts, and then trace its adaptation and development in Śaiva *tantra*s of the Siddhānta, Vidyāpīṭha, and Kaula streams. I will also suggest that the observance belonged to the repertoire of "proto-tantric" *vrata*s of the Śaiva Atimārga. Study of the *asidhārāvrata* highlights the roles of *vrata*s in early Śaivism, transformations in the contexts and aims of tantric ritual, and the diversity of coital practices which emerged by the second millennium.

Panel 2: Tantric Intertextuality (1:00 - 3:00 pm)

Ryan Damron, UC Berkeley
Purāṇic Inflections: Visions of the Mahādevī in a Buddhist Yoginī Tantra

Passages from the tenth-century Buddhist *Mahāmāyā Tantra* suggest that its authors were influenced by the Purāṇas and their cosmogonic depictions of the Great Goddess. The *Mahāmāyā Tantra* thus reveals a complex interaction of a vision of the feminine divine that is neither Buddhist nor tantric, with an evolving Buddhist tantric system in which feminine principles were moving increasingly to the fore. This paper will explore the presence of the purāṇic goddess in this unexpected context and offer preliminary speculations on the reasons the text's authors drew her into a Buddhist tantric text.

Paul Hackett, Columbia University
On the Construction of a Sādhana from a Root Tantra: A Case Study in the Guhyasamāja System

When comparing a root tantra to subsequent ritual "practice" (sādhana; sgrub thabs) literature, the apparent near complete lack of correlation between the contents of the two is often striking. This paper presents preliminary research into the development of such ritual texts (sādhana) in the context of the Guhyasamāja system, and the use of commentarial (vyākyā) tantras as a bridge between root tantra and sādhana.

Kurt Keutzer, UC Berkeley
Evolution of Bon Ritual around the Figure of dBal-chen Ge-khod

The rituals surrounding the Tibetan Bon deity dBal-chen Ge-khod are interesting not just because they illustrate the evolutionary development of a matricidal mountain-deity into a spontaneously perfected *yi-dam* of the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung, but also because both of these different roles are accommodated in a variety of rituals practiced to this very day. This paper aims to document key stages of this evolution and to consider what this might tell us about the changing identity of Bon.

Panel 3: The Tantric Body (3:15 – 5:30 pm)

Péter Szántó, University of Hamburg/University of Oxford
How to Organize a Gaṇacakra?

With the exception of a Japanese monograph by Haruki Shizuka (2007), to the best of my knowledge there has been no comprehensive overview of the gaṇacakra, a defining communal rite of later tantric Buddhism (750-1200 CE). Some discussions are available in Ronald Davidson's Indian Esoteric Buddhism (2002) and a relevant chapter from an important early ninth- century treatise, the Sūtaka of Āryadeva, has been translated by Christian Wedemeyer (2007). The present paper wishes to review some of the opinions expressed in the above publications. First, some further available material in Sanskrit will be discussed, such as the Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinījālaśaṃvara, the Catuṣpīṭhatantra, as well as some

hitherto unstudied manuals (the Gaṇacakravidhi attributed to Ratnākaraśānti, the anonymous manual of the Ngor codex, and some fragments from the National Archives, Kathmandu). Combining the information from these sources as well as from the Tibetan translations of Indic works already studied by Shizuka, I shall attempt to re- construct the choreography of the rite, paying attention to both the overall meaning and to what I think are hitherto misunderstood, but nevertheless important details. At the same time I shall try to sketch out the historical development of the gaṇacakra, from the earliest occurrence to the later standard manuals.

David Gray, Santa Clara University
Body Mandalas in the Yoginīītantras

One of the most distinctive practices in the Yoginītantras, particularly those associated with the Cakrasaṃvara corpus of literature, is the practice of body mandala visualization. In the Cakrasaṃvara tradition this involves visualizing the deities of the mandala existing in points in and on the body, elements of which are also visualized as pervading physical space via the network twenty-four pilgrimage sites which correlate to the twenty-four heroes and yoginīs of the mandala's three wheels. In this paper, I will attempt to show that this is a particularly complex version of the older "purification" (*viśuddhi*) practices in which deities are placed and visualized on various points on the body. This is a practice found in both Buddhist and Hindu tantras, although for the purpose of this paper I will be exploring the Buddhist precedents only.

Yael Bentor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
The Body in Buddhist Tantric Meditations

I have chosen to present certain points in the evolution of tantric meditations on the body mandala. Particular attention will be paid to the ways Buddhist theoretical views are related to these practices. Along the way we will find that there are certain disagreements among Tibetan lamas in their ideas about this meditation. Lastly we will examine notions about the place of meditation on the body within the general context of Buddhist tantric paths to enlightenment.

Sunday, March 16, 370 Dwinelle Hall
Panel 4: The Sexual Yogas (9:30 – 12:30 pm)

Kikuya Ryūta, Tohoku University
Two Steps (dvikrama-) in the Jñānapāda School of Indian Tantric Buddhism

One of the most influential schools of the Guhyasamājatantra in India was the Jñānapāda School (Ye śes shabs lugs) founded by Jñanapāda (ca. 750-800). He systematized the practice of Two Steps (dvikrama-) and Three Initiations, the sources for these being from the Yogottaratantra and Yoganiruttaratantra. The first among the Two steps is the "Steps of generation (utpattikrama, bskyed rim)" and the second is the "Steps of completion (utpanna- / niṣpanna- krama, rdsogs rim)".

In the *Muktitilaka, Jñanapāda distinguishes Four types among the Two steps. Dīpaṅkarabhadra (ca. 880-920), who is highly esteemed as one of the four great disciples of Jñānapāda, explained Jñānapāda´s "Steps of generation" as three types of practices (samādhitritaya-), and also as four types of stages (caturaṅgasādhana-) in the "Rituals of Preparatory Performance(pūrvasevāvidhi)" section of *Lokālokakārikā-maṇḍalopāyikā* (*Guhyasamājamaṇḍalavidhi*). These are 1) Steps of generation of generation, 2) Steps of generation of completion, 3) Steps of completion of generation, 4) Steps of completion of completion. His tradition was transmitted to *Vitapāda (ca. 850-900).

Vitapāda explained Four types of practices; these were 1) Samādhi of ādiyoga- and Maṇḍalarājāgri-, 2) Karmarājāgrisamādhi-, 3) Three binduyoga, 4) *Saptayoga. Jñanapāda and Vitapāda's works are organized in the way these practices were intended to be performed, following the order given above. The order of the steps of generation and completion was not supposed to be changed. *Vitapāda criticizes Thagana on this point. The issue of whether or not the order may be changed has come to be a topic for debate not only in India but also in Tibet. The aim of the present paper is to examines the structure and content of this influential material.

Jacob Dalton, UC Berkeley
Domesticating Sexual Union: A Case Study from Dunhuang

It is sometimes unclear whether the rites of sexual union described in Mahāyoga tantric texts were to be performed "in the flesh" or merely in the practitioner's imagination. This paper examines the writings of a single scribe from Dunhuang, to see how he rewrote two originally Indian *sādhanas* in order to make them more palatable for his tenth-century Central Asian audience.

Christian Wedemeyer, University of Chicago
Ritualization of Transgressive Observances: Vratadānavidhi-s in the Guhyasamāja Traditions

Over the course of the late first millennium, Tantric Buddhists articulated a variety of (frequently transgressive) observances (*vrata*) as part of their praxical and ritual programs. One reads, for instance, of observances such as the *vidyāvrata*, *vajravrata*, and *caryāvrata*. As the initiation ritual of the Guhyasamāja was progressively (re)codified, there emerged particular rites of "bestowing" the practice of these observances (*vratadānavidhi-s*). In the *Vajrāvalī* of Abhayākaragupta, for instance, the bestowal of these three observances appears as a sequential set of rites to be performed between the Fourth Initiation and the subsequent *vyākaraṇa* and *āśvāsa* rites. In commentarial literature, they are likewise often spoken of in the same contexts as these final initiatory rituals. However, earlier surviving liturgies suggest that, as in so many other ways, this tidy presentation was by no means a foregone or universal conclusion. This paper will explore some of the materials that may indicate something of the developmental history of these *vratadānavidhi*-s. Particular attention will be paid to the *vidyāvratadānavidhi*, which appears in a variety of ritual contexts, including one in which it would seem to be equivalent to the *prajñājñānābhiṣeka* itself.

Harunaga Isaacson, University of Hamburg
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