

Interpreting the *Vajra Rosary*:
Truth and Method Meets Wisdom and Method

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ABSTRACT

Interpreting the *Vajra Rosary*: *Truth and Method* Meets Wisdom and Method

David R. Kittay

This essay, accompanied by the first full English translation of the *Vajramālā* or *Vajra Rosary*, one of the explanatory Tantras of the Buddhist *Guhyasamāja*, or *Secret Community*, Tantric system, and a partial translation of Alampakalaśa's *Commentary*, sets out a novel hermeneutic method by which twenty-first century scholars of religion might approach the interpretation of the Tantra and other texts.

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Abbreviations

<i>Alaṃka</i> or <i>Commentary</i>	<i>Alaṃkakalaśa's Commentary on the Vajra Rosary, Śrī-vajramālā-mahāyogatantra-ṭīkāgaṃbhīrārtha-dīpikā-nāma; Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng ba'i rgya cher 'grel pa zab mo'i don gyi 'grel pa zhes bya ba</i>
<i>BIL</i>	<i>Tsong kha pa's Brilliant Illumination of the Lamp of the Five Stages, Rim pa lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me</i>
<i>CG</i>	<i>Tsong kha pa's Supplementary Annotations Properly Disclosing the Words and Meaning of [Candrakīrti's] "Brightening of the Lamp," the Extensive Explanation of the King of All Tantras, the Secret Community, Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa sgron ma gsal ba'i tshig don ji bzhin 'byed pa'i mchan gyi yang 'grel</i>
<i>CMP</i>	<i>Āryadeva's Integrated Practices, Caryāmelāpakapradīpa; Spyod pa bsdu pa'i sgron ma</i>
<i>DK</i>	<i>Sde dge edition of the Bka' 'gyur</i>
<i>DT</i>	<i>Sde dge edition of the Bstan 'gyur</i>
<i>LK</i>	<i>Lhasa edition of the Bka' 'gyur</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Candrakīrti's Introduction to the Middle Way, Madhyamakāvatara</i>
<i>MMK</i>	<i>Nāgārjuna's Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way, Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i>
<i>PU</i>	<i>Candrakīrti's Brightening of the Lamp, Pradīpoddyotana</i>
<i>PK</i>	<i>Nāgārjuna's Five Stages, Pañcakrama</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Stog Palace edition of the Bka' 'gyur</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Snar Thang edition of the Bka' 'gyur</i>
<i>Toh.</i>	<i>Tōhoku catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, Sendai</i>
<i>VR</i>	<i>Vajra Rosary, Śrī-vajramālā-abhidāna-mahāyogatantra-sarvatantra-hṛdaya-rahasya-vibhaṅga-nāma; Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng ba mngon par brjod pa rgyud thams cad kyi snying po gsang ba rnam par phye ba zhes bya ba</i>

Acknowledgements¹

Twelve years ago, I looked up Bob Thurman and sent him an email, “I’d like to find out what the Tibetans know, and learn Tibetan as a way in.” I had discovered Buddhism in 1969 at the age of seventeen, like many of my generation, reading D. T. Suzuki’s *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, followed by Alan Watt’s *The Way of Zen*. Shortly thereafter, before any of the disturbing cultic activities that occurred later, I started visiting occasionally Chögyam Trungpa’s Tail of the Tiger, meditating and wondering with my friend Richard Getler whether the world and various things we experienced were “full emptiness” or “empty fullness.” It was the early 70’s, and before long I found myself in Gloucestershire with J. G. Bennett, the Alps in a cave with Pir Vilayet Khan, Istanbul with Sheik Muzzafer Ozak of the Helveti-Jerrahi Sufi Order, and, later, in Konya with Suleyman Dede, Sheik of the Mevlevi dervishes, who taught me how to whirl.

Meditation came easily to me, but, on my return to the U.S., I felt that my experience in the world was lacking, and that, in order to deepen my spirituality, I needed to become more worldly, to be more “incarnated,” as I put it to myself. So, thinking this was an entre into the “world of men,” as Chuang Tzu called it,² I became a lawyer. Meanwhile, I fell in love with and married Jan; worked on Wall Street, liked the intellectual aspect of the work, hated the politics; we had Leigh, then Bear; moved to the

¹ Part of my argument, *see* I, B, 3 below, is that, in order to promote the hermeneutic transparency that fosters dialogue, the interpreter, in this case me, should provide within reason some autobiographical information that would reveal his or her individual and cultural biases and preconceptions, analogous to the social scientific practice of researchers journaling their personal reactions to and experiences during studies, and also related to the concept of “common knowledge” discussed in game theory literature

² Chuang Tzu 1964, 50

suburbs; left Wall Street; made good friends; saw good friends die; got sick, got cured; lost my parents..... In short, I got more incarnated.

Then, in the late '90's, I woke up, and I said to myself, "O.K., now I'm incarnated, where was I?" Which is when I sent Bob Thurman the email. Shortly after receiving it, Bob replied, "Lozang Jamspal guides out beginners." So I called Jamspal, a Ladakhi lama who had come to Columbia and earned a PhD and was teaching classical Tibetan there. I went to his apartment; we talked; he said come back next week. From that point, except for infrequent times when one of us was out of town, I have studied with him (and enjoyed his fine cooking) every week for twelve years. We started with the Tibetan alphabet. The next week, we started reading and translating Pha dam pa sangs rgya's *Ding ri brgya rsta ma*. Then we moved on to Dharmarakṣita's *Blo sbyong mtshon cha 'khor lo*, the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras, and other texts. After a few years, we started on Sanskrit, reading Āśvaghoṣa, Prajñākaramati, Jetari and others in Sanskrit and Tibetan, often reading the Tibetan in Genla's "ancient way."³ I asked Jamspal after the first few weeks, "What is dharma?" He thought for a second, and replied, "Benefitting others." For all of these years together, I have watched him do just that.

After a few years studying with Jamspal, I decided that if I was serious about learning about Tibetan Buddhism, I needed some structure. So I applied to the doctoral program at Columbia. There, I was exposed to a different way of thinking about religious and philosophical issues. Reading the classics in the field, and some of the newer material coming out of the study of religion and consciousness, I started to think

³ For many years, Jamspal has been a tireless advocate of reading Tibetan religious texts in the "ancient way," *i.e.* pronouncing all of the letters, including those usually silent in modern Tibetan, to promote greater literacy and understanding of the teachings and reduce rampant spelling errors, particularly of the next generation of monastics

about the vast differences between the study of religion as a discipline and the practice of religion. Wayne Proudfoot's *Religious Experience* got me thinking about how religious experience has been shielded from critical thought by what Wayne calls a "protective strategy," which later came home to me in teaching Contemporary Civilization in the Columbia Core Curriculum, where I saw the profound difficulties students have in thinking critically about the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and Qur'an as contrasted with their virtuosity in handling Plato, Aristotle and Kant. Encountering Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* in Bob's *Central Philosophy of Tibet* and in Joe Loizzo's Theory and Method class made me realize that "Buddhist" philosophical insights need not come only from the East, and that realization was deepened as I explored the writings of Plato, Richard Rorty and many others from the Western philosophical tradition.

All the while though, my training as a lawyer and years of practice in that field made a deep impression on me of the virtues of settled rules of conduct, and the very practical aspects of how, with the aid of the rules of evidence, judges and juries generally make good decisions about complex issues that might otherwise seem intractable. My experience as a litigator, bankruptcy trustee and SEC receiver also made me more than a little skeptical about people but, at the same time, having interviewed and cross-examined thousands of people, it paradoxically has reaffirmed my faith in the generally good behavior of humanity, even under trying circumstances. Especially instrumental in my legal training were Richard Weiner, John Walsh and John Nabors, and my good friend Geoff Brown.

In the Spring of 2004, with Jamspal, I attended the Kālacakra teachings and initiation given in Toronto by H. H. the Dalai Lama, and subsequently attended various

other Tantric teachings and initiations given by the Dalai Lama and H. E. Rizong Rinpoche, H. E. Denma Locho Rinpoche, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Gelek Rinpoche. Earlier, I had taken bodhisattva vows with H. H. Sakya Trizin. To “acknowledge” the contributions of these eminent teachers to this project is a little like acknowledging the atmosphere for providing the air we breath, for without them and the other holders of Buddhist and Buddhist Tantric lineages, there would be no Tantra to write about. So, without involving them in any of the many mistakes, misstatements and erroneous views that undoubtedly follow and are strictly my own fault, I acknowledge them, as tradition rightly recognizes, along with Professors Thurman and Jamspal, as being more precious to me in this project than Buddha himself.

It is perhaps here that I should note that I don’t view my initiations, vows and veneration as impeding in a material way my pursuit of truth as a scholar. I don’t know whether this comes from observing what appears to me as the seamless coexistence of Jamspal’s faith, honesty, humor, skepticism, scholarship and iconoclastic insight at close range for so many years, or whether this reveals my own inability to fully commit to guru yoga. Perhaps a little like the Dalai Lama says about science, if I had to choose between Buddhism and truth, I would take truth. So far, I have not found so much of a conflict, but where I have, such as, for example, in some instances of the Buddhist tradition’s treatment of women, I haven’t had a problem in raising it. On the other hand, as a relative newcomer to this worldview, I admit to having some of the enthusiasm and tunnel-vision of the newly converted.

In the Fall of 2004, shortly after I started the doctoral program, I was sitting in Bob’s office with Kālacakra scholar Jensine Andersen. Bob said, “What do you want to

do your dissertation on?” I said that I didn’t know. Bob said, “You like Tantra; why don’t you do one of the *Guhyasamājā* Explanatory Tantras.” I said, “O.K.” Jensine said, “He could do the *Vajramālā*.” And, subject to my looking over the text, that was that.

I started reading the *Vajra Rosary* with Bob in the Buddhist Texts seminar, then with Jamspal. Over the course of the next six years I either read or went over my translations of the entire Tantra with Jamspal. His help was invaluable, to understate the matter, and the *Vajra Rosary* served as a vehicle for my learning not only the text, but much about Tibetan and Indian culture, supplemented with stays the Himalayas and India, where often I would be in the company of Jamspal’s extended family.

Contemporaneously, over the course of hundreds of hours, I also read parts of the Tantra, and the majority of Alaṃka’s much more lengthy *Commentary* with Bob, learning from and immensely enjoying his observations about things esoteric and mundane. No one could have had a more giving and supportive advisor than Bob. Professors Thurman and Jamspal have each given me unstintingly of their time, wisdom and friendship. Whenever I had a question, indeed, sometimes even when I didn’t have a question, I received a direct answer. If there is anything worthwhile here with respect to my translation of and commentary on the *Vajra Rosary*, it is at least inspired by if not directly taught by them.

In May 2005, in light of the Dalai Lama's statements that translating authoritative Tantric texts was permissible, I asked H.E. Rizong Rinpoche whether it was permissible to translate the *Vajra Rosary* into English.⁴ At first, Rinpoche said that the *Vajra Rosary*

⁴ See, e.g., T. Gyatso 1977, 17. In his *The Economics of Ecstasy*, John Urban wrote that undergoing initiation in an esoteric tradition requiring secrecy would compound the academic author’s “epistemological and ethical double bind – a hundredfold.” Urban 2001, 15-19. Many of the methodological problems identified by Urban are obviated by the Buddhist tradition’s recent modification

had things that were stated indirectly because they were secret, but then that it might be an exception. He then thought about it, and said that since it had been translated into Tibetan, and existed in Tibetan, there was no reason why it couldn't be translated into English. In October 2010, now as Dga' ldan khri pa, spiritual head of the Ge lugs order, at Jamspal's request, Rinpoche gave a *lung*, an oral transmission, on the first five chapters of the *Vajra Rosary*, and ritually consecrated my translation (in a ceremonial way, with no approval of its correctness since he was reading the Tibetan only). Undoubtedly aware of my utter lack of qualifications to undertake the study of this Tantra, he said we would continue in future lifetimes. I'd like to say that we will do so, but have to admit that I don't know whether there are future lifetimes. I hope there are, for there is much to be done. About this, Jamspal says "We have to have faith."

In 2006, H.E. Denma Locho Rinpoche gave the *Guhyasamāja* initiation at a retreat undertaken by Gelek Rinpoche and Jewel Heart, with Geshe Lobsang Negi translating. In 2008, Rinpoche taught *Paths and Grounds of Guhyasamāja According to Ārya Nāgārjuna*, also with the assistance of Geshe Lobsang Negi, and agreed to meet with me to answer whatever questions I wanted to ask. He also prayed for my success in the translation of the *Vajra Rosary*. The next year I visited Rinpoche in Dharamsala, and he again graciously answered my questions about the *Vajra Rosary* and related matters. I thank Rizong Rinpoche and Locho Rinpoche for their care, teachings and inspiration. I wish I had asked better questions!

I am also very grateful Geshe Lobsang Negi of Drepung Loseling and Emory University, whose support and insight were and continue to be invaluable, along with my

of its attitude towards secrecy although, in the end, the interpretation of requirements of secrecy is a hermeneutical problem that can only be resolved by the interpreter alone

friends at Drepung Loseling. And I acknowledge a fundamental and deep debt of gratitude to the lineage holders of the Tantric traditions, starting with Buddha himself and extending through Atīśa, Zhi ba ‘od, Alaṃkakalaśa, Tsong kha pa and many, many others, and to the Indian and Tibetan cultures that made these traditions possible. And I also thank my colleagues at the Tibetan Translators Guild of New York, particularly Natalie and Philip Hauptmann, Margot Jarrett, Irene Cannon-Geary and Kyle Fischer a/k/a Thos pa ga, for their friendship and support.

Over the years, so many of my colleagues at Columbia were beacons of insight and support. I thank my friend Paul Hackett, a wellspring of knowledge of Tibetan literature and all things technological. Whenever I needed text or tech, some bucking up or some off-color humor, Paul was there. I also thank with great affection my colleagues Chris Kelley, John Campbell, Roy Tzohar, Annie Bien, Annabella Pitkin, Marty Jiang, Abby Kluchin and Joel Bourdeaux, and from the professorial ranks, Joseph Loizzo, Roosevelt Montas, Tenzin Norbu, Wayne Proudfoot, Rajiv Sethi, Mark Taylor, Gary Tubb and Tom Yarnall. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Defense Committee members Courtney Bender, Bernard Faure, Rachel McDermott and Gray Tuttle, along with Bob Thurman, whose searching comments and vigorous response to the first level of the algorithm made me question my tentative conclusions, reaffirming the power of the algorithmic method to reveal our prior common and uncommon factual assumptions and attitudes. And I thank Noel Bohl-Fabian for her carefully proofing the first chapter and for her insightful comments.

I also acknowledge my enormous debt to the previous and current generation of scholars in our field. Truly I aspire to even reach their shoulders, much less stand upon

them. Three in particular deserve special mention. Alex Wayman, whom I got to know at the end of his career, was a trailblazer in the field of Buddhist Tantra, and his insights were enormously instructive. After I settled on the *Vajra Rosary* as a dissertation topic, Gene Smith, whom I had never met, sat with me for a very long time, setting out what I should look for. Several weeks before Gene left us this year, I presented an outline of my dissertation for Gene and about a dozen scholars at his Tibetan Buddhist Research Center, including my nascent hermeneutic algorithm, which put a big smile on Gene's face. And Ronald Davidson's work, though I disagree with some of his conclusions, has been more than a foil for some of my arguments here. His scholarship and dedication to the task of recovering the historical groundwork of Indian and Tibetan Tantra is also inspirational. For providing copies of electronic texts used in this research, I also wish to thank the Asian Classics Input Project.

Along the way, I had so many fine teachers, both in and out of academia. Mary Williams taught me about faith. Tom Lynch told me after some episode of misbehavior that I had something valuable to give to humanity. Ben Elbirt guided me into the world of Russian, and culture in general. Anthropologist Zekiye Eglar helped me study three languages at once, and told me I needed something more. Richard Wiener told me my problem was "Ready, fire, aim." Still is, I think. Arthur Handler taught me how to negotiate, and Michelle Gershfeld and Judy Siegel kept the wheels of law and commerce turning. And I thank Emma Matsubara and Miho Uchida for their translating several of Yukei Matsunaga's Japanese articles.

My Dad, Bill Kittay, a prince among men, taught me, "What you love you understand," and, though somewhat of a pessimist himself, having lived with, and loved

with extraordinary care and tenderness, *the* great optimist, my mother Rhoda, told me, “The optimists always win.” Mom herself was my biggest fan and, until Jan, Leigh and Bear, with my Dad was my most loving support. In a way, she introduced me to Tantra, because, looking through her eyes, I could do no wrong. Mom and Dad, how can I ever repay you? Any intellectual accomplishment and any good character on my part comes not just from your genes, but from your gentleness and inspiration.

I also thank, for bearing with me and for sharing their own joy, accomplishments and struggles, *i.e.* life: Deb and Josh and family; Jan’s folks and her brothers Steven and Mark and family; my friends from the old neighborhood, especially Dr. Richard Brunswick, who actually read this manuscript and, in light of my fragile emotional state at the time, refrained from making jokes about it, Mike Roberts, a rock if there ever was one; and my old philosophical friend Buzz Anderson. And I thank my students over the years for their fresh insights.

I am also fortunate to have the most loving, and most interesting and inspiring children anyone could have, Leigh and Bear. We took care of them; now we all take care of each other.

Most of all, I thank from the bottom of my heart my loving wife Jan, my partner, best friend and inspiration, teacher, Renaissance Woman, sculptor, ceramicist, pianist, designer, general contractor, protector of animals, and tireless supporter of me, Leigh, Bear, and all who are fortunate to know her. For so many years, she has put up with me while I pursued this or that idea or project, and then showed me how to make a life, all the while being as true as true can be, just Jan.

Preface

This essay is in large part a thought experiment, exploring how and proposing a method by which we, twenty-first century scholars of religion, might approach the interpretation of a Buddhist Tantric text, in this case, the *Vajramālā* or *Vajra Rosary*, one of the so-called explanatory Tantras of the Buddhist *Guhyasamāja*, or *Secret Community*, Tantric system. The first complete English translation of the *Vajra Rosary*, constituting the longest part of this dissertation, is found in Appendix A; excerpts from Alampka's *Commentary* in Appendix B; and a description broken down by subject matters of the Tantra and the entire *Commentary*, with some of my own commentary, constitutes Chapter Three.

A study like this one could start with the text itself, translating it, and then move on to suggest what is distinctive about the text, interpreting it and noting the existence of other interpretations. Translation itself is always a major hermeneutic enterprise. While this ancient text *is* the main engagement here, I am going to begin the discussion with something more familiar: the interpreters themselves, or, I should say, ourselves, starting with a look at how we on the one hand and Indian and Tibetan Buddhists on the other have interpreted Tantric and non-Tantric texts in the past and today. Situating ourselves in this way will, I hope, provide an initial level of hermeneutical self-awareness, a foundational exercise required by both traditional Buddhist Tantric hermeneutics and modern Western theories of interpretation. I am also approaching the task in this way, emphasizing our hermeneutic choices, because I think that, given the erosion in our field

and in twenty-first century culture of the traditional barrier between the interpretation of religious experience and the placing of religious practice in its social context, it is time for a fresh kind of approach to the interpretation of at least religious texts.

The field of Tantric studies is an emerging one in Western academia. With such a vast corpus to explore, it has not been difficult for scholars to uncover new material, either through the study of one text or through selection of one or more themes from texts and non-textual sources, in order to make generalizing conclusions about the whole. In recent times, disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, economics and gender studies have been brought to bear on the study of Tantra, and, along with those, the focus of the field of Tantric studies began to shift away from the religious experience that is the ostensible primary subject of the Tantras themselves and towards integration of Tantric studies with other fields in the Western academy. So today a growing emphasis in the field is on the review of various aspects of Tantra, illustrated by excerpts from selected texts and of the lived experience of religion, through the lenses of these other fields.

Sometimes, in the case of Buddhist Tantra, such analyses focus on one or several aspects of the relevant history or economics involved while bracketing or even subordinating Buddhist Tantra's function in the system of Mahāyāna soteriology and Buddhist Tantra's role as a means for individual psycho-physical transformation. This has widened the gulf between the traditional Buddhist and the Western academic interpretations of Tantra, the two often coexisting in a schizoid way, sometimes within a single Western Buddhologist. The seeming inability of contemporary critical hermeneutics with its focus on power relations to engage and give weight to religious experience, and the corresponding inability of traditional religious hermeneutics to weigh

worldly factors reflects that what Wayne Proudfoot calls a “protective strategy” regarding religious experience is still with us. However, I will argue in Chapter One that, given both the inroads and insights that academic critical historical writings have made and contributed, and the embrace of scientific methods by traditional Buddhists as shown by, for example, the present Dalai Lama’s *The Universe in a Single Atom* and Emory University’s science initiative in Dharamsala, the paradigm is beginning to shift, and the time has come to overtly and consciously *weigh* religious and non-religious considerations, with each other and against each other, in assessing and discussing conflicting interpretations.

In Chapter One, I propose one such methodology, to promote and deepen dialogue and to test the validity of interpretations, drawn from, among others, Emilio Betti, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Daniel Dennett, Richard Rorty, Umberto Eco and Michel Foucault, as well as Buddhist and Buddhist Tantric hermeneutical principles. The method involves provisionally determining, at the outset of a multi-step formula whose aim is to promote discussion followed by greater insight, a “center of gravity” for texts, conditionally grounding them in an *algorithm*, a scale for weighting both religious *and* non-religious considerations, blending their *prima facie* plain meaning, author’s intent and intellectual history, intended audience, commentarial tradition, function and power dynamics. The algorithm also has a reflexive self-critical aspect, to account for the interpreter’s bias.

I do not intend this algorithm as a definitive test for some ultimate “meaning” of a text, but rather as a more structured methodology than we presently use to engage in and then broaden the discussion of the validity of different characterizations of texts, a way to

identify their conceptual, factual, and cultural underpinnings. Particularly in today's relativistic culture, I hope that the notion of an algorithm related to meaning is sufficiently striking that it will engage the reader, who should not fear that the results of applying the algorithm are the end of the hermeneutic story, for they are really only the beginning.

For each interpreter, the algorithm will initially determine which interpretations are well grounded and which are "outliers," out of the mainstream. This is not to disparage outliers, for today's outlier is tomorrow's received wisdom. Rather, the main purpose of the algorithm is to bring polarized hermeneutic approaches into dialogue, towards "the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves,"⁵ so dialogue will be increased, arguments more transparent, and research ultimately more productive.

Working through the algorithm to determine the provisional "main meaning" of a text, and in the process expanding and lifting up one's understanding of the original text, is the first step of a method that proceeds like an hermeneutical helix or corkscrew. It is followed by opening one's self to, debating and incorporating the meanings advocated by others, the steps of the algorithm broadening and deepening the discussion, with the hopeful result, among others, of the eliminating or narrowing of factual disputes. Then one reflects on what differences in opinion remain, which should provide insights into one's own personal and cultural biases and preconceptions. Having gone through this process, one is better equipped to enter the hermeneutic circle again, with the same text, another text, or even something not a text at all.

⁵ Gadamer 2004, 305

In Chapter One, I will also explain that I am using the methodology of a case study, and I will discuss, drawing from other disciplines such as political science, what that entails. Case study methodology, like many other research methods and like the proposed hermeneutical algorithm itself, is a safeguard against the predations of Umberto Eco's "empirical reader" and *ad hoc* selections of excerpts that may be consciously or unconsciously used to advocate a point of view that misrepresents the text as a whole. I will discuss why most case studies are covertly normative, and that the fact/value distinction supposedly safeguarding interpretive case studies from bias is chimerical. For this reason, rather than pretend that a case study is presented from an objective viewpoint, it is more productive to embrace overtly David Thacher's concept of a normative case study.

Because the hermeneutical methodology proposed in Chapter One requires as searching an exploration as is possible of the relevant historical facts regarding the text, in Chapter Two I will situate the emergence of the *Vajra Rosary* historically in light of divergent emic and etic approaches to it, and will give context as to its place in Buddhist Tantric literature. At the outset, there will be a problem: hermeneutic uniformity in our field is so strong that what has become a received view of Buddhist Tantric history occupies the field. This view mirrors, like any other interpretation, our biases and preconceptions, in this case, I will argue, in favor of written Tantric works as opposed to Tantric practices. In order to open up some perspectival space on the issue, I will try to sketch an alternative interpretation. I will also challenge another aspect of the predominant view of scholars today, which view is, in part, based on the writings of Buddhist scholar Yukei Matsunaga concerning what he finds is an effort by Buddhist

Tantric scholars of the end of the first millennium to privilege one practice lineage over another by (what we would call today, fraudulently) adding the last chapter of the *Vajra Rosary* incorporating terminology from the famous *Pañcakrama* or *Five Stages*, which the Buddhist Tantric tradition attributes, to the Madhyamaka philosopher Nāgārjuna, circa 200 C.E.

While we know virtually nothing about who first created or taught the *Vajra Rosary* apart from the Buddhist tradition that says it was Buddha Śākyamuni, in Chapter Two I will survey what we know about the life and times of the *Vajra Rosary*'s translators and sponsors, particularly the King or Prince and monk Pho brang Zhi ba 'od of the kingdom of Gu ge in Nga ri, Western Tibet. Zhi ba 'od (1015-1111) was the grand nephew of King Ye shes 'od (947-1024). Ye shes 'od decreed Buddhism as the state religion in Nga ri and sent Rin chen bzang po to India to gather texts, key events in the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet, which laid the foundation for Tibetan Buddhism as it exists today. Zhi ba 'od's older brother, Byang chub 'od (983-1077) invited the famed Indian scholar-abbot Atīśa to Tibet. The great temple and translation center built by Ye shes 'od and Rin chen bzang po at Tho ling in Guge—where Zhi ba 'od translated the *Vajra Rosary* from Sanskrit into Tibetan—was among the vital centers of the so-called “Tibetan Renaissance.”⁶ Ye shes 'od, Atīśa and Zhi ba 'od have generally been considered by Tibetan and Western scholars alike to have been “neo-conservatives,” interested in promoting a less antinomian version of Indian Buddhism than we see in some of the Tantric literature. We will see if this characterization is accurate.

⁶ See Davidson 2005

Because it is the *Vajra Rosary* we are interpreting, a searching exploration of the text itself is crucial: what the lengthy *Vajra Rosary* actually says in its entirety, on its face and as interpreted in the one commentary written exclusively about the *Vajra Rosary* by the Indian twelfth century pandit Alamkakalaśa. This will be presented at length, along with my and others' observations on the subject matter and its systematization, in Chapter Three.

Having proposed and defended an hermeneutic methodology in Chapter One, having explored the historical circumstances surrounding the emergence of the text in Chapter Two, and having discussed in detail the text itself in Chapter Three (as supplemented by the translations in the appendices), in Chapter Four I will apply the algorithmic methodology to the *Vajra Rosary* itself, focusing on Ronald Davidson's interpretation of Tantra as primarily involving "the paradigm of dominance, hierarchy, and regal power" as an example of a contemporary interpretive approach to Tantra, and see if that interpretation initially passes muster (for me, as the initial interpreter) as applied to the *Vajra Rosary* under the hermeneutical algorithm or whether the center of gravity of this text lies elsewhere. The scoring of the algorithm in that regard, important as it is in order to focus and broaden the interpretive discussion, is just the initial step in the hermeneutic process I am advocating. It is followed by the equally important second and third steps of identifying alternative interpretations and then reflecting on the shortcomings of one's initial interpretation and what it tells us about one's own personal and cultural biases and preconceptions.

Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is the classic modern text in the tradition of Western hermeneutics. *Wisdom* and *Method* are the two entities combined in the practice

of Buddhist Tantra. This essay will attempt to bring all of them, truth, method, and wisdom, Gadamer and Buddhist Tantra, together. Indeed, the indifferenciability of truth, wisdom and method is one of the definitions of *vajra*,⁷ which is what our text, the *Vajra Rosary*, is all about.

⁷ T Gyatso, 1977, 23

Introduction to the Text

The *Vajramālā* or *Vajra Rosary*¹ is one of the so-called explanatory Tantras of the Buddhist *Guhyasamāja*, or *Secret Community*, Tantric system. It is found in the Tibetan *bka'* 'gyur, the collection of works attributed to Śākyamuni Buddha that were translated into Tibetan mainly in the last part of the first millennium, and compiled by the Tibetan scholar Bu ston in the fourteenth century. Despite the importance of the *Secret Community* system in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, and the *Vajra Rosary* in particular, except for relatively brief quotes from the *Vajra Rosary* included in translations of other works, until now it has not been translated into English or any other Western language from the extant Tibetan texts.² The Tantra describes how, after the prerequisite preparations and realizations of the Bodhisattva path, through further intense, lengthy and subtle practices of meditation and other activities, one can become a completely enlightened Buddha.

In the beginning of the *Vajra Rosary*, Vajrapāṇi poses eighty-two questions to Buddha, principally about perfection stage, also sometimes called completion stage, yoga. The perfection stages is the second of the two main phases of Tantric practice, the stage actually leading to Buddhahood, the first stage being the creation or generation

¹ The *Vajra Rosary*'s full title is *Opening the Secret Essence of All Tantras: The Clear Expression of the Great Yoga Tantra, the Glorious Vajra Rosary*, in Sanskrit *Śrī-vajramālā-abhidāna-mahāyoga-tantra-sarvatantraḥṛdaya-rahasya-vibhāṅga*, in Tibetan *rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng ba mngon par brjod pa rgyud thams cad kyi snying po gsang ba rnam par phye ba* Toh 445, Ca 208a-277b. The explanatory Tantra *Vajra Rosary* must be distinguished from the *Vajra Rosary of Maṇḍala Rituals* by Abhayākara Gupta (*dkyl 'khor gyi cho ga rdo rje phreng ba zhes bya ba; vajrāvalināmamaṇḍalavidhī*; Toh 3140), which is also commonly called the *rdo rje 'phreng ba*.

² Unlike the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, the *Vajra Rosary* was apparently not translated into Chinese. Tsong kha pa refers to an "Indian book of Pandita Mantrakalaśa" of the *Vajra Rosary*, perhaps indicating that a Sanskrit version was extant at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Tsong kha pa 2010, 62.

stage, where, among other things, the practitioner imagines what he or she will be doing later in the perfection stage. The answers to Vajrapāṇi's questions are given in sixty-eight chapters, which include detailed discussion of yogic meditation and practice involving principally the first stage within the perfection stage, that of vajra repetition or "speech isolation,"³ but spanning all of the levels of the perfection stage up to the stage of integration, or Buddhahood. One of the Tantra's specialties is describing how to open the heart chakra's "knot" or nerve complex, the key to all of the higher stages; and it also describes how to name and move the subtle neural energy-winds in meditation and how those energy-winds manifest during the cycles of life and death. It covers, among many other things: the initiations of the perfection stage; "great bliss" and the four ecstasies and how they are produced through rarified forms of sexual yoga; the use of mantras; the *Secret Community* body mandala of thirty-two deities; the uniting of the various channels; the six yogas of the perfection stage; the twenty rituals of the creation stage; and the crucial role of emptiness in the overall system.

The leading exponents of the *Secret Community* tradition, Nāgārjuna and, later, Je Tsong kha pa, divide the perfection stage into five divisions: speech isolation; mind isolation; illusory body; clear light; and integration, and there is at least fifteen hundred years of literature on the practices for attaining these states. In so doing, all of these texts follow the *Vajra Rosary*. In his masterwork on the perfection stage, the *Brilliant Illumination of the Lamp of the Five Stages* ("BIL"), Tsong kha pa praised the *Vajra Rosary*:

The savior Nāgārjuna, in condensing the perfection stage into the five stages, follows this Tantra, and also follows this Tantra in the three samadhis, the

³ So called because at this point, ordinary speech is isolated from its ordinary appearance and the energy-wind that is the source of speech from its ordinary flow. Lodoe 1995, 54

four yogas, the thirty-two deities and so forth on the creation stage. Therefore, when His Holiness [Nāgārjuna] in the *Condensed [Sādhana]* becomes an [alchemical] churner, he ‘churns the ocean of hidden waters of the *Esoteric Community* with the churning stick of the *Vajra Rosary*.’ Thus his statement about finding the art of the practice of the *Community* was not just referring to the creation stage. It explains the many stages of creation and dissolution of the body in terms of the channel-structure, wind-energy-movement, and enlightenment-spirit-substance as a factor in the decisive ascertainment of the internal and external life-energy controls for bringing forth the four voids and the magic body, depending on the life-energy controls of the outer seal of the hidden discipline of desire and of the vajra recitation, and so on. Beyond those two techniques, it further explains the limitless ways for the dawning of realization, and so forth. It also declares many things such as the scheme of consecrations for attaining receptivity for the path condensed into twenty rites, the schemes for condensing the creation stage, and the determinations of the sequence of the two stages. Especially, the sixth chapter explains the keys for the life-energy-control vajra recitation to open up the knot of the heart channels, and the twenty-second chapter section which collects the definitive meaning mantras of the three syllables explains how the unraveling of the heart-channel-knot is the supreme unraveling of a channel-knot of all the wheels [of channels]. It seems that such excellent elucidation is rarely seen. . .

The statement from the translator’s colophon of this text that “among explanatory Tantras a better one than this has not previously appeared,” still seems to be just how it is.⁴

In the English language literature, the *Vajra Rosary* is known primarily for its explication of the initial "forty syllables" of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*⁵ and for being the source of the famous *Lama Chöpa*, or *Guru Puja*, prayer,⁶ known by many Tibetans by heart and practiced daily in Dge lugs pa monasteries. Significant as they are, these aspects of the *Vajra Rosary* comprise a small part of its import.⁷ The text is a

⁴ Tsong kha pa 2010, 64-65

⁵ *Evam mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye bhagavān sarvatathāgatakāyavākcitta hṛdaya vajrayoṣidbhageṣu vijahāra*, translated by Freemantle as "Thus have I heard once the Blessed One was dwelling in the vagina of the Vajra Consort of the Essence of the Body, Speech and Mind of all the Tathāgatas " Freemantle 1971, 27

⁶ T Gyatso 1988, 11

veritable encyclopedia of completion stage Tantric practice and Tantric ritual, widely quoted in later commentarial works.⁸

The *Secret Community* or *Guhyasamāja* Tantra is commonly known as the “King of Tantras.”⁹ “Without relying on its path there is no way to attain supreme enlightenment.”¹⁰ Although many Tantras say that they reveal things found in no other

⁷ For example, in his October 2006 lecture at Columbia University, David Gray noted that, for Tsong kha pa, the true “secret” of the *Chakrasaṃvara Tantra* was the union of bliss and emptiness, emphasizing that there was no basis in at least the *Chakrasaṃvara Tantra* for this proposition. This union of bliss and emptiness, however, is explicit in the *Vajra Rosary*.

The characteristic of illuminating all things is asserted as emptiness. Because of that, great bliss wisdom is the utter purity of clear light, due to which it enters the avadhūtī. It is asserted as perfect emptiness. Expanding the appearance of the conceptuality of all things, it severs all conceptuality. That easing of the conceptual winds is explained as emptiness.

VR 47B. Indeed, the present Dalai Lama's book on the *Lama Chopa*, which, as mentioned above, is based on the *Vajra Rosary*, is entitled *The Union of Bliss and Emptiness*. T. Gyatso 1988. Because the *Vajra Rosary* is considered by the tradition to be foundational for both “Father” Tantras such as the *Secret Community* and “Mother” or “Yoginī” Tantras such as *Chakrasaṃvara*, the *Vajra Rosary* could well have been the source of Tsong kha pa's statement.

⁸ As described by Pan chen bsod nam grags pa in his *Overview of Buddhist Tantra*,

The special theme of the *Garland of Vajras* [*Vajra Rosary*] is to reveal and clarify the hidden meaning of the 40 introductory syllables of the root Tantra. The remaining chapters all amplify this basic theme as well as teaching 20 rituals for the empowerment and 49 “suchnesses” for the generation stage, together with six yogas, four yogas, and three meditative stabilizations. For the completion stage, the root Tantra is explained by means of five stages, and this is the particular way in which the *Garland of Vajras* teaches the root Tantra. Such a system is not found elsewhere.

Dragpa, 57

⁹ See, e.g., Smṛtijñānakīrti, *Commentary on the King of Tantras, the Glorious Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Śrī-guhyasamāja-tantra-rāja-vṛtti; rgyud kyī rgyal po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i 'grel pa), Toh 1914, Ānandagarbha, *Extensive Commentary on the Great King of Tantras, the Glorious Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Śrī guhyasamāja mahātantra rāja ṭīkā; rgyud kyī rgyal po chen po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa), P. 4787, Tsong kha pa, *Extensive Explanation of the King of All Tantras, Guhyasamāja, a Supplementary Commentary of Annotations Revealing the Actual Meaning of the Words of [Candrakīrti's] “Clear Lamp”* (byed pa'i mtshan gyi yang 'grel rgyud thams cad kyī rgyal po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa sgron ma gsal ba'i tshig don ji bzhi). And, as pointed out by Robert Thurman, another reason for the appellation, “King of Tantras” is that the *Secret Community* is the only system to have explanatory Tantras that are themselves revelations of the Buddha. Thurman 1988, 129, 133.

¹⁰ E.g. Lodoe 1995, xvi, quoting Khedrup Je's *Ocean of Attainments of the Generation Stage* (Bskyed rim dngos grub rgya mtsho), Lessing 1968, 8.

Tantra, it is generally acknowledged that the *Secret Community* system is explained in more detail than other Tantric systems, which look to the *Secret Community* to explain Tantric theory and practice that is not addressed in other systems.¹¹ The *Secret Community* system consists of a root Tantra and a number of “explanatory Tantras” (Skt. *vyākhyā* or *ākhyā tantra*; Tib. *bshad rgyud*), of which the *Vajra Rosary* is one. Tibetan scholars consider that there are two main *Secret Community* traditions, the *Jñānapāda* Tradition (*ye shes zhab lugs*), named after *Buddhaśrījñānapāda* (circa 900 C.E.) and the *Ārya* or Noble Tradition, so-called after Nāgārjuna, who is often given the epithet, “Noble One.”^{12 13} Indeed, the efficacy and importance of the explanatory Tantras as a bridge between the deeply coded *Secret Community Root Tantra* and the personal instructions of the guru is a hallmark of the Noble Tradition.¹⁴

To my knowledge, the “original” Sanskrit text of the *Vajra Rosary* has been lost, with the exception of the “forty verses” explaining the initial forty syllables, which is quoted in Candrakīrti's *Pradīpoddhotana* or *Brilliant Lamp* (“PU”), some brief quotations in Āryadeva's *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa* or *Lamp That Integrates the Practices* (“CMP”), and some parts of chapter sixty-eight which are parallel to chapter four of Nāgārjuna's *Pañcakrama* or *Five Stages* (“PK”).¹⁵ There were several translations into

¹¹ Tsong kha pa 2010, 65

¹² See, e.g., Lodoe 1995, 8, Wedemeyer 2007, 7

¹³ In the Noble Tradition system, the other explanatory Tantras are considered to be the *Tantric Appendix* or *Uttaratantra*, Toh 443 (ch 18 of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, Toh 442), the *Caturdevīpariprechā*, Toh 446; the *Samdhyaṅvyākaraṇa*, Toh 444, and the *Jñānavajrasamucchaya*. Toh 447 Outside of the Noble Tradition, depending on the commentator, the number of explanatory Tantras varies from four to nine. Nāgārjuna's *Pinḍikṛita Sadhana*, according to the present Dalai Lama, “expounds the main theme of the Guhyasamāja root Tantra based on the interpretation of the explanatory Tantra *Vajra Rosary*” T Gyatso 1988, 13

¹⁴ Wedemeyer 2007, 6

Tibetan, the latest of which appear to date from the eleventh century. As of Tsong kha pa's time, there were several translations of the *Vajra Rosary* into Tibetan,¹⁶ the one I have translated is by Sujana Śrījñāna and Zhi ba 'od.¹⁷

Although the *Vajra Rosary* is widely quoted from and cited, the Noble Tradition commentaries that elucidate one particular text focus on Candrakīrti's *PU*¹⁸ rather than the *Vajra Rosary*. In the *bstan 'gyur* there is just one direct commentary on the *Vajra Rosary*, by Alamkakalaśa, whom I will affectionately call Alamka in most of this essay.¹⁹ His *Commentary* is incomplete, covering only the first forty-five of the *Vajra Rosary*'s sixty-eight chapters.²⁰ It is written in the *pañjika* style, and thus comments on all of the words and phrases of the root text, as well as providing more general explanations of the

¹⁵ My efforts to locate parts or all of the Sanskrit text of the *Vajra Rosary* are ongoing

¹⁶ In his *BIL*, Tsong kha pa mentions the Zhi ba 'od translation, Tsong kha pa 2010 at 62, the Zhi ba 'od translation edited by Dar ma brtson 'grus, *id.*, the translation by Sujana Śrījñāna and Zhi ba 'od, *id.*, the "old translations" of the *Vajra Rosary* [and the *CMP*], *id.* at 232, and, referring to a verse concerning the life-energy energy-wind, notes that there are "many different translations" of the verse "in other translations of the *Vajra Rosary* and in [other texts] where it is cited" *Id.*, 258

¹⁷ Toh 445 I have translated the Lhasa recension of this Tantra, which is attached as Appendix A to this essay I have also edited the Tibetan of a good part of the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* (not attached this essay) to show how the text that Alamkakalaśa was commenting on at some points differs significantly from the Zhi ba 'od version Freemantle noted similar problems in her translation of the Root Tantra Freemantle 1971, 10, as did the translators of Klong chen rab 'byams's *A Treasure Trove of the Scriptural Transmission*. Rabjam 2001, 453-54 I am in the process of preparing a full critical edition, and ever searching for the full Sanskrit text

¹⁸ Pan chen bsod nams 'grags pa lists six commentaries on the *PU*. Dragpa 1996, 61

¹⁹ *Commentary on the Profound Meaning: A Detailed Commentary on the Great Mahāyoga Tantra, the Glorious Vajra Garland* (Śrī vajramālā mahāyoga tantra ūka gambhīrārtha dhīvika nāma; Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng ba'i rgya cher 'brel pa zab mo'i don gyi 'grel pa zhes bya ba) Toh 1795

²⁰ When editing the Sde dge *bstan 'gyur*, Si tu pan chen chos kyī 'byung gnas (Choky Jungney, 1699 or 1700-1774) noted in his own *karchak* that he was still looking for the rest of Alamkakalaśa's *Commentary*, that it goes to 202 *dpe cha*'s, but only gives commentary up to the 47th chapter of the *Vajra Rosary* He noted that he was still looking for the rest Personal Communication with Gene Smith, July 5, 2005 As noted below, the *Blue Annals* says that Alamkakalaśa died after translating two-thirds of the "*Mahāvibhāṣā* (*Bye-brag bshad-pa chen-po*).” If that text is this *Commentary*, we have an explanation for its being left off in the middle See Roerich 1978, 1053-54

subject matter.²¹ The *Commentary* itself was translated into Tibetan by Alamka himself and Steng lo tsā ba a/k/a Tshul khriṃs byung gnas (1107-90). According to Tsong kha pa, Alamkakalaśa's *Commentary* is reliable in that it “does accord with the Noble Father and Sons.”²²

²¹ Farrow 1992, viii-ix

²² Tsong kha pa 2010, 83. Tsong kha pa does, however, criticize Alamka's teaching that various types of Tantra are meant for the various castes. Tsong kha pa 1977, 154-55. David Gray notes, however, “Buddhist authors such as Alamkakalaśa were surely aware of the orthodox Vedic formulations, and their correlation of the Tantras to the social classes can be seen as an attempt to re-map the social structure in such a way that the brahman's [*sic*] privileged position is undermined. These attempts probably failed to have much effect in India, but that does not make them less subversive.” Gray 2001, 354-59.

Chapter One

Interpreting Tantra

How should we understand and interpret Buddhist Tantra? Are its practices to be taken literally or are they symbolic? Are its goals primarily political or polemical, meant to elevate one group of practitioners over another? Is its central motivation economic, candy to attract donors and patronage? Is it largely a reaffirmation of gender roles and the subordination of women? Is its yoga efficacious, or, like some assert about heaven or reincarnation, is it myth, with its primary function to provide valence for an ethical system? Is it all of these things, and, if so, what aspects predominate? In other words, what is Buddhist Tantra, mainly?²³ And what, if anything, should we do about it? And, most importantly, how should we go about answering these and other similar questions?

A. The Problem: Polarized Interpretations of Tantra

Since British and European scholars first encountered Tantric Buddhism in the nineteenth century, scholars have struggled to find ways to reconcile the transgressive practices they found with what they considered to be less problematic, indeed admirable, philosophical and ethical Buddhist doctrines. Initially, their focus was the study of Tantric texts,²⁴ prompting disgust by some at descriptions of ritual accepted as literal, and

²³ As Gadamer, put it “Rather, the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal, the text—i.e., to understand what it says, what constitutes the text’s meaning and significance” Gadamer 1975, 320

²⁴ We see this also in the study of Hindu Tantra, in Sir John Woodroffe’s translation and publishing of Tantric texts

apologies by others construing Tantric practice as mainly figurative and metaphoric.²⁵

Today, although some important work is still being done on the textual and philological side, the analyses of Western²⁶ academics increasingly focus on the social, economic and historical setting of Tantra,²⁷ leaving the engagement with the practices described in the texts and descriptions of religious experience to Tibetan lama practitioner exegetes and their Western practitioner students. Perhaps this is not surprising, reflecting the rise of the natural and social sciences and the academy's discomfort with religion.²⁸

But such a dichotomy is problematic. How can we make qualitative and quantitative judgments about the meaning or meanings of texts and other cultural phenomena without taking into consideration the force of the subjective religious worldview and practices that are much of the ostensible content of the object of interpretation? To answer the questions posed above requires a *weighing* of radically

²⁵ For an excellent summary, see Wedemeyer 1999, 27-72

²⁶ When I use the term, "Western," I am including "Eastern" commentators expressing views similar to those views that are products of Western philosophy and culture. On this subject, see Wedemeyer 2001, Wedemeyer 1999, 4 n 6

²⁷ See, e.g., Bjerken 2005, Davidson 2002, 2005, Faure 1998, 2003, 2009, Lopez 2002, Urban 2001, White 2003, 2007. David Lawrence recently addressed some of these issues in the context of Hindu Tantra Lawrence 2008, 8-10

²⁸ See, e.g., Nagel 2001, generally and at 130, Nagel 2009, Dawkins 2006. Emblematic of this is John Urban's observation that "it became equally apparent that, even if I did have access to a living oral tradition, or even if I were to undergo initiation, this would by no means resolve the epistemological and ethical double bind [that the only way to get accurate information about esoteric traditions is to obtain initiation, which comes with vows of secrecy]. If anything, it would only *compound* it a hundredfold." Urban 2001, 16. Urban's *Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* is largely about such secrecy. In the case of Buddhist Tantra, the explosion of printed formerly secret esoteric materials after the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's pronouncement that it was better for these materials to become public in order to counter misinformation about Tantric practice has largely obviated this concern, although there are still the traditional requirements of secrecy following initiation. Given the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's pronouncement, these requirements can be viewed as prudential and common-sense, consistent with the traditional Buddhist notion of *upāya* or skill in method, rather than as categorical in the sense Urban discusses.

different meanings. The making of such value judgments requires *both* a judgment about the usefulness and efficacy of the religious practices *and* their setting in the world of economics, politics and history. We seem to lack the tools to consider these factors together, and this is reflected in a kind of schizophrenic separation of the discourses regarding meaning of Buddhist Tantric texts and practices on the one hand, and their social settings on the other.²⁹

Ronald Davidson's *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* and his *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture*, as their titles indeed indicate, are emblematic of the contemporary approach that embodies this kind of discourse-separation. Focusing on the history and social context of the emergence of Buddhist Tantra in medieval India, Davidson has an opinion about the central function of Tantra, here Buddhist Tantra, but in large part does not address the religious function and impact of the practices and worldview he is describing on the actors which are the subjects of his study, ending before it begins any conversation about the weight to be given religious (in this case yogic and soteriological) versus socio-political functionality. Davidson writes:

[E]soteric Buddhism is a direct Buddhist response to the feudalization of Indian society in the early medieval period, a response that involves the sacralization of much of that period's social world. Specifically, this book argues that the monk, or yogin, in the esoteric system configures his practice through the metaphor of becoming the overlord of a maṇḍala of vassals, and the issues of scripture, language, and community reflect the political and social models employed in the surrounding feudal society.³⁰

²⁹ John Makransky notes, "Buddhist Studies scholars have been taught how to critically analyze traditional Buddhist understandings of text, lineage, tradition, etc., but only to 'bracket' (and therefore leave unexplored) what underlying truth or value in Buddhism may be left untouched by the critiques, or may even be better revealed through such critique." Makransky 2000, 1-2

³⁰ Davidson 2002, 2 (emphasis added). As noted by David Lawrence, "What makes these traditions [Kaula, Krama, Spanda, and Trika, the Vaisnava Pāñcaratra and the Buddhist Vajrayāna] Tantric? Probably the most generic and distinctive feature of these and other traditions that contemporary scholars call Tantra is

And,

Fortunately we only need read the texts and examine the rituals to determine that Mantrayāna has built into it a sustaining metaphor [T]he central and defining metaphor for mature esoteric Buddhism is that of an individual assuming kingship and exercising dominion. Thus the understanding of such terms as tantra in Buddhist India would invoke, first and foremost, the idea of hierarchical power acquired and exercised through a combination of ritual and metaphysical means. Based on this power, the varieties of understanding and of personal relationships become subsumed to the purposes of the person metaphorically becoming the overlord (*rājādhirājā*) for the universal ruler (*cakravartin*).

* * * *

As Mahayanists, [monks] also took the vows of the bodhisattva, received bodhisattva ordination, and envisioned themselves as saving all beings through their practices. The esoteric system acts as a third level to the monastic life, in which the others are not discarded, but all are somehow integrated into the regimen.

*In my reading of the material, however, I have been consistently impressed by how these other issues are subordinated to the paradigm of dominance, hierarchy, and regal power.*³¹

The first part of the quote above—making the point that the Tantric yogi's esoteric practice reflects models from the surrounding society—is unremarkable. It is true of course that social practices, be they religious or not, reflect the social matrix in which they arise.³² Thus, Buddhism has many Indian features because it arose in India.³³

the pursuit of *power*” Lawrence 2008, 6. Lawrence, however, criticizes the excesses in this view, of David White in particular, as “exaggerated and prejudicial” *Id.*, 9.

³¹ Davidson 2002, 121-23 (emphasis added)

³² Davidson recognizes this as well, comparing his central metaphor for Tantra to “the appropriation of a democratic structure by the early Saṃgha, based on similar structures in the political lives of the Śākyas and Licchavis” Davidson 2005, 12.

³³ Gendun Chopel puts it humorously: “It is known through detailed analysis that the attire of the *sambhogakāya* and of the gods is the attire of ancient Indian kings [I]f the Buddha had been born in China, it would certainly be the case that the *sambhogakāya* of Akaṃsthā would have a long shiny beard and would wear a golden dragon robe. Similarly, if he had been born in Tibet, there is no doubt that in

It is the conclusion at the end of Davidson's second quote – "I have been consistently impressed by how these other issues are subordinated to the paradigm of dominance, hierarchy, and regal power" – that is hermeneutically significant because it is there that Davidson takes an interpretive stand. It is a stand that, to his credit, it refreshingly overt. While there is a great deal of history in *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* and *Tibetan Renaissance*, it is noteworthy that in drawing the conclusions quoted above Davidson in large part steps out of the historical perspective of analyzing what Indian Buddhists thought they were doing and into the role of a contemporary hermeneut reading and interpreting ancient texts: "Fortunately we only need read the texts and examine the rituals to determine that Mantrayāna has built into it a sustaining metaphor."³⁴ While his conclusion is buttressed with historical examples, these are not examples of historical persons agreeing with his characterizations; rather, he is interpreting history through the lens of his present-day hermeneutics. And Davidson's historical account, perhaps not surprisingly, focuses on examples supporting his hermeneutic stance, although to his credit and as noted below, he does recognize that many of his subjects, such as 'Brog mi, had soteriological motivations along with worldly objectives.

Using a different present-day hermeneutic, one could equally argue that, rather than being primarily a "response to the feudalization of Indian society in the early medieval period," esoteric Buddhism *was* and *is* "a direct Buddhist response" primarily to the problematic aspects of the human condition in general. This hermeneutic would

Akanistha there would be fresh butter from wish-granting cows in a golden tea churn five hundred yojanas high, and there would be tea made from the leaves of the wish-granting tree " Lopez 2006, 53

³⁴ Davidson 2002, 121, 123

conclude that esoteric Buddhism succeeded, in this case prevailing not only over non-Buddhist religious forms but also over exoteric Buddhism, because a large number of religious practitioners thought that its response to conditions of instability—*i.e.* the sufferings of old age, sickness and death—was more effective than other approaches. As David Lawrence asks in the context of Hindu Tantra, “While the achievement and enjoyment of practical advantages have long been acknowledged among the possible benefits of the Tantric realization of power (*Śakti*), why should we assume that soteriology and philosophy are epiphenomena?”³⁵

Davidson, aware of a similar line of argument, observes: “Specifically Buddhological writing has occasionally suffered from the supposition that the rise of literary and institutional systems occurs with scant concern for the social world. According to this model, developments in the doctrines or meditative traditions of Buddhism occur principally or exclusively because of internal circumstances.”³⁶ He

³⁵ Targeting one of David White’s more provocative statements, Lawrence responds with incredulity (“Some of the most brilliant, erudite, and inspired writers in world history, along with centuries of their followers, are assimilated to the commodified banality of contemporary bourgeois bohemian culture”), asserting that White “may be blinded, ironically, to an insidious hegemonic Orientalism or ‘ethos-centrism’ in our critical reductions of other cultures ” Lawrence 2008, 9-10 Lawrence was addressing White’s statement that “Abhinavagupta’s ‘packaging’ of Tantra as a path to ecstatic, exalted god-consciousness was pitched at a leisured Kashmiri populace whose ‘bobo’ profile was arguably homologous to the demographics of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century New Age seekers who treat ‘Tantric sex’ as a consumer product ” White 2003, *xiii*

³⁶ Davidson 2002, 8 Davidson is addressing the “internalist” hermeneutic while the argument I am describing here, while it has some internalist aspects, arguably primarily emphasizes different social factors than Davidson’s the social factors of old age, sickness and death and so forth versus Davidson’s “feudal” instabilities This raises such issues as the extent to which a strict dichotomy between “internal” and “social” is a false one and whether old age, sickness and death would be as problematic for us if there were no other people involved At this point, however, we are defining a set of hermeneutic approaches with a heuristic rather than a deconstructive focus

Of course, there is a balance to be drawn here Social concerns influence the form of institutions and meditative practices As Geoffrey Samuel puts it, “The lotus of spiritual enlightenment, as Indian traditions themselves so often remind us, grows out of the mud of everyday life ” Samuel, 2008, 11 My point is that there always must be *some* form, and that form will and must always be drawn from the surrounding social and biological facts But it is not those facts that the institutions or meditations are addressing, it is the more basic human condition underlying those facts sickness, old age, death, and the first two of the Four

notes that that this kind of hermeneutic was understandable as a corrective to the “diffusionist” view whereby certain scholars found developments in the Buddhist world to be primarily drawn from other religious traditions, but insufficiently reflects the Indian (and then Tibetan) social context.³⁷ His scholarship is a large step towards redressing that imbalance. But, without a good deal more support and analysis, his hermeneutic stance, like mine and like Lawrence’s are all conversation-stoppers to the extent they would subordinate one hermeneutic approach to the other without articulating why.

Another potentially problematic element of Davidson’s pronouncement of the subordination of bodhisattva practices to the paradigm of dominance, hierarchy, and regal power is that he doesn’t say explicitly to what extent these practices are subordinated. Is it a close call? Or are the bodhisattva practices and ideals mainly window dressing in service of power and domination?³⁸ In pragmatist terms, what is the “practical cash-value”³⁹ of those practices and ideals contrasted with the cash-value of power and domination? Even in the rarified world of the academic study of medieval Indian

Noble Truths, suffering and its origin As we will see in Chapter Four, Davidson’s argument to the contrary has some merit, what I am seeking here is a way for those initially holding whatever view to better converse with one another and understand their own preconceptions and biases

³⁷ *Id.*, 8-9

³⁸ In the conclusion of *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, Davidson does not discuss the efficacy or the effect on the actors’ behavior of the bodhisattva practices or ideals, or any spiritual efficacy of the practices or literature He states that Buddhist monks’ “imperial paradigm clearly supported an egoistic perspective,” while the other aspect of esoteric practice, that of the siddha traditions, “also imported a politics of dominion and control, but for the benefit of the single siddha and not necessarily for the betterment of the surrounding community ” Davidson 2002, 337 I am not saying that Davidson is not to some extent correct, but we should *also* look at the bodhisattva ideal as supporting an ego-less perspective and the siddha traditions as importing techniques of achieving subtle meditative states in which reality is grasped in a different way, with concomitant effects on behavior with impacts in the “real” world These two sides of the question of meaning *are* in dialogue, and we ignore either at our peril if we want to have a more complete understanding of the subject

³⁹ James 2000, 28 (“But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such word as closing your quest You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience ”)

literature and spirituality, “How much?” is a crucial question. For, as in many other spheres of life, based on the answer, we decide whether to buy something or not: be it a pair of shoes; an idea; a spiritual path; a career; a political movement; or a culture.

While, in the conclusory fashion quoted above, Davidson quantifies the importance of domination and so forth, stating that it predominates over the altruistic motivation engendered by bodhisattva vows and practices, what is missing from his analysis—and in this he is typical of not only present day scholarship, but scholarship on religion in general over the past several hundred years—is a determination of the *weight* to be given the soteriological factor. While Davidson acknowledges that there is a soteriological aspect to the behavior at issue, he simply subordinates it to his modernist interpretation focusing on worldly power, largely absent from the traditional Tibetan Buddhist hermeneutic of Tantric practice, without discussing the *weight* of the paradigm of power against that of soteriology.

This is not to say that soteriological and worldly motivations operate in separate spheres. As discussed in depth by Pierre Bourdieu and others, the two are deeply related and interdependent. Soteriological values are formed *within* a social context and not somehow separate from it.⁴⁰ And this is also not to say that Buddhist hermeneutics rigidly divides the soteriological and worldly spheres: the Mahāyāna ideal of the bodhisattva is by definition that of an intensely social being, and, as we shall see,

⁴⁰ Gray Tuttle, Personal Communication, 5/10/11. A crucial distinction in any hermeneutic exercise such as this one is that between the closely related concepts of, on the one hand, the meaning of a text, and, on the other, the effect or function or use of a text. While hermeneutics is coextensive with meaning, meaning certainly includes, but is not coextensive with effect, function or use. This is because, as we shall see in constructing an algorithm to yield meaning(s), the meaning of a text encompasses more than its effect in the world, it also is comprised of the intent of the author, the reader, and the semiotic content of the words of the text, among other things.

Davidson is correct in asserting that Tantra “sacralizes” the social world.⁴¹ Yet this does not mean that we are unable to distinguish between the two spheres, interrelated as they are. Indeed, we cannot even discuss the relatedness of the soteriological and worldly, the soteriological and social, the soteriological and economic, or the soteriological and political and so forth, without distinguishing the one sphere from the other and carefully noting and weighing their differences.⁴² This is also not to say that the only way to slice the pie as it were is between the soteriological and the worldly. While this particular dichotomy, somewhat reductionist as any such dichotomy must be, is one way to approach something as multifaceted as Tantra, there are many other ways as well.

In *Tibetan Renaissance*, Davidson extends his basic interpretation of the main function of esoteric Buddhism to the events in Tibet during and after the second propagation of Buddhism there. His conclusion there is perhaps slightly more accepting of the soteriological factor, noting that “the doctrine of awakening in its various guises became the social, intellectual, and spiritual catalyst for the renaissance of Tibetan culture.”⁴³ However, despite his generally accurate summary of Tantric literature and ritual,⁴⁴ he argues that the primary function of the translators of the esoteric scriptures

⁴¹ In a similar vein, we might say that thinkers such as Marx and Bourdieu “materialize” the social world

⁴² This is also a different question from the historical one of whether Indians of the first or Tibetans of the second millennium distinguished the soteriological from the social. As discussed below, I believe that they did, as shown by the basic definition of what constitutes dharma and what does not (fame, gain, pain and blame etc.) But in assessing how *we*, today, do and should interpret texts such as the *Vajra Rosary*, the distinction between the two related spheres is a real and important one, much a part of *our* thinking and culture. *We* are (unavoidably) the ones doing the interpreting now

⁴³ Davidson 2005, 376

⁴⁴ Davidson 2005, 36-44. There are some issues here though. For example, Davidson’s description of the secret initiation assimilates that ritual to ordinary sexuality with his assertion that the teacher “copulated with the woman and the resulting ejaculate was consumed by the disciple.” *Id.*, 37. As we shall see, in the *Vajra Rosary*, ejaculation is considered to be a “fault.” See *VR* 91A-91B, ch. 62, vv. 25-26

was a social one: in some cases to achieve “the de facto aristocratic status that some could not obtain by birth,”⁴⁵ and, more generally, that “the translators’ efforts were driven mainly by the overwhelming social value placed on the new forms of knowledge to which Tibetans were exposed.”⁴⁶ In concluding that social factors predominate, Davidson ascribes little or indeterminate value to the yogic or soteriological value of the practices embodied in the scriptures or to the personal transformation contemplated by them.⁴⁷ In so doing, Davidson brackets and therefore depreciates both the explicit language of the scriptures and the soteriological and ethical role of Tantra.

Let us take another example. In his *Esoteric Indian Buddhism*, Davidson contrasts Munidatta’s commentary on Virūpa’s *Drinking Song*, which appears in the *Caryāgītikośa* with the text of the *Drinking Song* itself, concluding, “Many of Munidatta’s readings of the *Caryāgītikośa* poems appear forced and implausible....” and noting that “the forced interpretations of Munidatta are somewhat transparent....”⁴⁸

Per Kvaerne’s translation of the text of the *Drinking Song* with Munidatta’s Commentary is as follows (the text of the song is in italics; Munidatta’s Commentary is in brackets, prefaced by “M”):

⁴⁵ Davidson 2005, 2

⁴⁶ Davidson 2005, 155

⁴⁷ This is not to say that Davidson is not an admirer of the dynamism and creativity of the Tibetan Tantric system. For example, in discussing the role of esoteric Buddhism in the Mongol court, he criticizes prior scholarship for its “solely functional assessment” of the role of ‘Phags pa and the relationship between the Sa skya pas and the Mongols, stating “while any discussion of the nature of religious conversion movements must take into account their sociopolitical functions, the nature and dynamic of the system that ‘Phags pa offered surely must have affected the manner of its reception. In reality, the Mongol patronage of Tibetan and Indian Buddhist masters was an important moment in the spread of arguably the most successful form of Buddhism to have matured in India.” Davidson 2005, 9

⁴⁸ Davidson 2002, 259-62

One is the liquor-girl [M: avadhūtī], (*yet*) *she enters* [M: joins, i.e. causes to enter the central channel] *two houses* [M: Sun and Moon, whereby the svādhiṣṭāna is made firm]; (*she has*) *neither yeast nor (powdered) bark*, (*yet*) *she produces* [M: binds, by means of the Clear Light] *liquor* [M: bodhicitta, i.e. seed, in the aperture of the peak of the Vajra-Jewel].

Making (it) naturally [M: Simultaneously-arisen Bliss] *firm* [M: by means of the Bliss of Cessation], *produce* [M: bind] *liquor* [M: the relative bodhicitta by means of the Bliss of Immobility in the svādhiṣṭānacakra], *so that having become free from old age and death, the body (becomes) incorruptible*.

Having seen the sign [M: of the Joy of Great Passion] *at the Tenth Door* [M: the Door of Vairocana], *the buyer* [M: gandharvasattva] *has come*, (*yet*) *he himself has brought...* [M: having entered by that door, he delights in the drinking of the juice of the Lotus of Great Joy].

In the sixty-four pots [M: in the nirmāṇa-cakra with 64 petals] *the display* [M: the seat...] *is arranged*; *the buyer* [M: gandharvasattva] *has entered*, (*but there is*) *no egress*.⁴⁹

Consonant with his view that the new Tantric scriptures consisted of “rather pedestrian ritual exercises” only, turned “into highly challenging intellectual exercises” by subsequent interpreters like Munidatta,⁵⁰ Davidson assumes from the outset, without much discussion, that the *Drinking Song* is “a humorous acknowledgment that the famous saint preferred to spend time in a bar rather than in religious environments.”⁵¹ He therefore concludes that Munidatta is engaged in “interpretive ballet”⁵² “to explain away the great saint’s unfortunate preference in dining establishments.”⁵³ Kvaerne himself is more circumspect, noting that “whether the ambiguity with which the words are thereby

⁴⁹ Kvaerne 1977, 81

⁵⁰ *Id.*, 262

⁵¹ *Id.*, 258

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*, 261 Davidson makes a similar observation about a different poem in the *Caryāgītī* “[T]he verse is a relatively transparent allegory, in which the Śābara stands for the esoteric yogin, engaging in promiscuous intimacy with emptiness. Yet the commentator Munidatta cannot leave it there, for his tortuous explanation runs the spectrum from excessive to obsessive, interpreting each item as if it must denote some aspect of the yogic process.” Davidson 2002, 228

invested [by Munidatta] was originally intended by the authors of [the *Caryāgītikośa*], cannot be definitely ascertained, although one may perhaps suspect that this in fact was the case.”⁵⁴ It is important to emphasize that Davidson doesn’t maintain that the *Caryāgīti* verses have no connection to Tantric yoga, for he recognizes their provenance within the Tantric Buddhist tradition.⁵⁵ Rather, it is a question of emphasis, of the *weighing* of the importance of different factors; whether Munidatta is “overdoing” it.

It is easy to imagine the arguments supporting Munidatta’s and opposing Davidson’s reading of the *Drinking Song*: that Virūpa isn’t any old drunk; and that according to the *Caturaśītisiddhapravṛtti* (although reliance on that text is not without significant problems⁵⁶), he is the *mahāsiddha* Virūpa, a monk-yogi famed for his practice of the Vajrayoginī contemplations, who devoted himself to that practice for twenty-four years and only started drinking after being commanded by Vajrayoginī to let go of ordinary conceptual thoughts and attaining the state of the Great Seal.⁵⁷ Even

⁵⁴ Kvaerne 1977, 17. Kvaerne states that while it was not necessary in his study “to determine whether the songs originally contained an esoteric message or not, the *probability* of the songs’ having an esoteric aspect will be pointed out in the course of this study.” *Id.*, xi (emphasis added).

⁵⁵ For example, he notes the frequent use of the esoteric term *sahaja* in these kinds of texts. Davidson 2002b, 47.

⁵⁶ The *Caturaśītisiddhapravṛtti* has been translated by Dowman as *The Hagiographies of the Eighty-four Siddhas*. Dowman 1985. The *Caturaśītisiddhapravṛtti* is far from the last word on the subject, if a last word there is. Davidson notes “Indeed, one of the problems of this era’s historical presentation has been the scholars’ willingness to rely on certain Buddhist compendia of the saints’ lives, especially the *Caturaśītisiddhapravṛtti*. This work must be handled carefully, however, and the present work emphasizes instead the far greater number of individual hagiographies that have circulated in India, China, and Tibet.” Davidson 2002, 3. Davidson in fact contends that the *Caturaśītisiddhapravṛtti* “represents the personalities of esoteric saints in an extreme and fictive manner.” Davidson 2002b, 46.

⁵⁷ Dowman 1985, 43-52. Davidson notes variations of this story from individual hagiographies. Davidson 2005, 52. In his *Tibetan Renaissance*, Davidson reviews the hagiographic evidence about Virūpa at some length, but then concludes that “Virūpa would have been a failed monk, probably not excessively learned, and given to hanging around with the wandering bards for whom composition in Apabhramśa was the norm.” Davidson 2005, 54. The problem is that, unlike his research on the hagiographic material, Davidson gives no citation or other explanation for his conclusion. *Id.* He does note, however, that “the surviving works attributed to Virūpa reveal a siddha concerned with many of the same issues as were the

disregarding problematic hagiographical descriptions of Virūpa and looking at the text itself, one cannot help but notice what a strange bar this is: the barmaid enters “two houses” and produces liquor though she doesn’t have any ingredients; the liquor makes one free from old age and death; the sign is at the tenth door and the liquor is arranged in sixty-four pots, coincidentally the number of channels in the navel chakra that is the key chakra for generation of *tummo*, the key to the higher levels of Vajrayoginī practice. From the perspective of the completion stage yoga described in the *Vajra Rosary*, the chance that this is just about the drinking of an otherwise saintly yogi, hermeneutically retrofitted to fit Tantric practice, seems as slim to me as Munidatta’s gloss seems to Davidson.

Clearly, these dramatically differing views are the products of differing hermeneutic approaches. Davidson’s is based upon, among other things, “the humanist historical methods generated during the Florentine Renaissance,”⁵⁸ while Munidatta’s is based upon the Buddhist Tantric hermeneutics of the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ In his approach, Davidson explicitly bifurcates “engag[ing] this material with the critical faculties at our disposal...from that required by traditional Buddhism by understanding that reflexive historical awareness is different from direct spiritual experience.”⁶⁰ In dividing a critical from a religious approach, separating historical “facts” from religious “values,” Davidson is employing a time-honored “protective strategy” segregating

other siddha singers of Apabhramśa songs the evil of non-Buddhist practices, the importance of the guru, the fact that realization is beyond learning, and so forth ” *Id.* at 53

⁵⁸ Davidson 2002, 7

⁵⁹ Wedemeyer 2007, 14, Kvaerne 1977, 2

⁶⁰ Davidson 2002, 14

religious experience from other experience.⁶¹ As Hilary Putnam notes, “The worst thing about the fact-value dichotomy is that in practice it functions as a discussion-stopper, and not just a discussion-stopper, but a thought-stopper.”⁶² The problem with Davidson’s approach is not so much his unremarkable assertion that Western historical awareness is different from Buddhist spiritual experience but his not attending to their connection, which spawns his de-emphasizing the importance *in history* of such spiritual experience.

Yet Davidson acknowledges the limitations of an overly reductionist approach – even one using his “historical epistemology”.⁶³

[S]pirituality and its institutionalization seemingly cannot be reduced to naked politics, economics, or power... For its part, esoteric Buddhism and its hagiographical representations were not hatched on the back stairs of a Buddhist monastery a little after midnight, with the purpose of political dominion, economic gain, or the subordination of subalterns at all costs.⁶⁴

So the difference in interpretation in this case does not stem from a simplistic and easily marked failure to grasp that there is another side to the argument, but from a difference in the weight given to, simply put, the political versus the spiritual. And this difference is not at all explained, but, to the contrary, is obscured by Davidson’s assertion of the integration of the two: “Buddhist monasteries were not hermetically sealed and isolated from the outside world—indeed, if anything they frequently appear intensified microcosms of that very world in which they dwelt.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ See Proudfoot 1985, *xvi*, and discussion *infra*.

⁶² Putnam 2002, 44

⁶³ Consisting of five basic sources of evidence—documents, epigraphs, archeology, coins, and, peculiar to India, sealings from monasteries, kings and merchants—To this Davidson adds familiarity with the descendants of those under investigation—Davidson 2002, 21-22

⁶⁴ Davidson 2002, 23

⁶⁵ Davidson 2002, 24

How can these diametrically opposing views—of Tantra in general, the intention of the Tibetan translators or this particular *Virūpa's Drinking Song*—engage each other, and how we can decide whether a particular interpretation is well founded or not? If we take a traditional Tibetan Buddhist view, how can we relate to Davidson's interpretation, and if we take a modernist or post-modern academic (etic) view, how can we relate to traditional commentary? How can a semiotic proposition be so clear to Davidson, when its opposite is so clear to Munidatta and me, another so clear to White, while the opposite is so clear to Lawrence? Are these differing views reconcilable? If not, how do we go about determining for ourselves, other than by "gut feeling," which views are *right*? How can proponents of these radically differing views better discuss them with each other? Is there a hermeneutical method that would promote these goals?

B. Hermeneutic Systems in Conflict

Let us take a closer look at the development of the two hermeneutical systems most relevant to understanding the *Vajra Rosary*, and, by extension, any Buddhist Tantric text: Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditional exegesis (which I will call, for now, "theirs") and post-Enlightenment modern or post-modern hermeneutics ("ours").

1. "Theirs": Buddhist and Tantric Hermeneutics in the Indo-Tibetan Tradition

Perhaps largely because of Buddha's lengthy teaching career in which he encountered a plethora of students and teaching situations, the long period prior to the creation of written scripture during which Buddha's teachings were transmitted orally,

subject to the vagaries of memory, and the explosion of canonical scriptures ascribed to Buddha himself emerging with the Mahāyāna movement, hermeneutics is central to Buddhism. Which of the many views found in Buddhist scripture is correct? Final? Is there a “self,” as taught in many sutras, or a “non-self” as taught in the *Perfection of Wisdom* Sutras? Should sense pleasures be avoided, as stressed in the *Vinaya*, or embraced, as stressed in Tantra? These issues arose at the outset in Buddhism, in the earliest writings, “raising a very unique case within the history of religions, wherein the founder of a religion is himself aware of exegetical and hermeneutical difficulties regarding his own doctrines.”⁶⁶ The distinction between interpretable texts and definitive texts is found very early in the Mahāyāna sutras. Lamotte notes that the *Mahāpadesāsūtra*, in which textual authenticity is discussed, “appears in the earliest collections of the sutras and vinayas.”⁶⁷ The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* discusses why the bodhisattva should rely on definitive sutras,⁶⁸ and the hermeneutic discussion explodes with texts like the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*. At the apex of Buddhist philosophy in Tibet, Tsong kha pa’s major work, the *Essence of Eloquence, Drang nges legs bshad snying po*, deals almost exclusively with hermeneutics.⁶⁹ And, as we shall see, the *Vajra Rosary* itself is self-aware when it comes to hermeneutics.

⁶⁶ Katz 1984, 192, citing Thurman 1978, 22. For this proposition, Katz cites the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, addressing the question of how to interpret the claims of other Indian religions, and Buddha’s discussion with Ānanda in the *Samyutta Nikāya* which he explains to Ānanda why he has taught Vacchogotta that there is indeed a self.

⁶⁷ Lamotte 1988, 11.

⁶⁸ See Katz 1984, 194.

⁶⁹ See Thurman 1984.

Complicating the picture is the primacy in Buddhism of *upāya kauśalya*, *mkhas thabs*, “skill in method.” If teachings are geared to the nature of the student, since students differ so dramatically in circumstances and needs, by definition there will be different teachings for different students. This is “the first principle of Buddhist hermeneutics: a teaching is directed in all cases to listeners at a particular stage of spiritual development.”⁷⁰ Indeed, one could make the argument that *upāya*, method, is the ultimate principle in Buddhism, trumping all others.⁷¹

A Buddhist hermeneutics must be sensitive to the central notion of tolerance of differing teachings, and differing interpretations of the same teachings. Indeed, the notion of *upāya* in a sense contradicts the notion of hermeneutics itself.⁷² In a way this is a very modern problem, for as society has become more complex and traditional national and cultural barriers have dissolved, we are faced with a similar problem: the prospect of

⁷⁰ Tatz 1994, 5 The sole exception to this notion is where the intended audience would benefit from a categorical, non-provisional presentation of doctrine, philosophy or institutions, which of course is not an exception at all

⁷¹ See generally Kittay 2005 for a full presentation of this argument While I understand the serious controversy involving the views of Alexis Sanderson, who asserts that, generally, Buddhist Tantra is a borrowing from Śaiva sources, Sanderson 2009, nothing would be more *upāyic* than doing so Indeed, Alamka notes that the *Vajra Rosary*’s count of the chakras refers to “the nature of counting the chakras known from the systems of others because it is explained in most cases as due to sentient beings living with faith in that ” 24A (*gzhan gyi grub pa’i mtha’ las grags pa’i ’khor lo rnams kyi grangs kyi ngo bo de la mos pa’i sems can rnams*) While that controversy is beyond the scope of this thesis, I note that one of Sanderson’s arguments is that “the requirement that candidates enter a state of possession (*āvesah*) at the time of their initiation is the hallmark of initiation in the Śaiva Kaula systems, setting them apart from all others [fn omitted] ” *Id.*, 133 However, that such states spontaneously arise during initiation as the result of good meditation, Personal Communication with H E Rinzong Rinpoche, 5-29-05, seems to support Ruegg’s argument that many of these elements are pan-Indian rather than strictly arising within one tradition or the other See Ruegg 2008 As I argue below, the phenomenological realm cannot be ignored in assessing the meaning of Tantric practices

⁷² This hermeneutic problem is not unique to Buddhism It is found in the hermeneutics of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, among others As noted by P Heath, “This statement typifies the hermeneutic approach of the great medieval Muslim philosophers It contends that religion’s truth is expressed hierarchically, since men themselves have various levels of intellectual capability ” Heath 1989, 191 Heath observes, however, that this approach remained a minority opinion among Muslims, and even those great philosophers had to remain circumspect in the expression of their hermeneutic opinions *Id.*, 194

an overriding, nihilistic relativism that defeats any hermeneutic prioritizing. As Nietzsche put it, “it is precisely facts that do not exist, only *interpretations*...;”⁷³ “There are many kinds of eyes...and consequently there are many kinds of ‘truths,’ and consequently there is no truth.”⁷⁴

In fact, Buddhists were keenly aware of the difficulties posed by views similar to Nietzsche at least one and perhaps two millennia before Nietzsche. This is because Buddhist understandings of karma, epistemology and ontology deal directly with the problem of subjectivity, illustrated in the classic example of a glass of liquid that functions as nectar for the gods, water for people and pus for hungry ghosts.⁷⁵ Given the emphasis on function in many Buddhist philosophical systems, the liquid actually functions as the different substances for the different beings. Because of the relatedness of subject and object, one’s subjective worldview *literally* determines what is objectively “out there.” The same considerations, though perhaps not so dramatic, would apply to the interpretation of texts. Although mainly humans are involved in that task,⁷⁶ due to their karmic differences, different people have differing capacities and therefore interpret texts in different ways. The purpose of Buddhist practice and the Buddhist path is to increase human capacity; deployment of *upāya* ensures that the teachings are effective right up to the point of Buddhahood.

⁷³ *Notes* (1888), Nietzsche 1968, 458 Elliot Wolfson comments “Even the proposition that there is only interpretation cannot be taken for granted as a principle of truth” Wolfson 2005, 114

⁷⁴ Nietzsche 1888, Sec 540, 80

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Newland 1999, 78-79

⁷⁶ According to tradition, gods and nāgas etc. are sometimes involved, although one of the signature features of being human is that we have the leisure, capacity, and opportunity to engage in this kind of activity

Buddhist hermeneutics evolved and accommodated this tension between the heuristic and the absolute at its very heart.⁷⁷ Thus, Donald Lopez' statement that "it is the experience of the Buddha's enlightenment that provides final validity in interpretation" reflects the need for a Buddhist hermeneutics, for "those who are not yet enlightened must interpret."⁷⁸ And Robert Thurman, noting the diverse, contradictory teachings of Buddha, abandonment of any of which would constitute a grave sin, writes:

And yet a practitioner must settle on one method, technique, or discipline. One can hardly set out to win liberation and enlightenment, or even to live properly in an ethical sense, until one has decided which of these teachings is right, and what ways lead to their realization. Thus it is clear that the hermeneutical enterprise in this tradition is an essential part of practice on whatever level, an essential vehicle on the way of enlightenment⁷⁹

Thus, because the underlying objects of Buddhist practice, liberation, skill in method, the understanding of reality in terms of relativity and the two truths doctrine, among others, while not entirely alien to Western thought,⁸⁰ differ significantly from it, Buddhist hermeneutics employs principles both familiar and unfamiliar to those of Western hermeneutics. While a fulsome treatment of Buddhist hermeneutics is beyond the scope of this discussion,⁸¹ I will give a brief summary of the basic principles of

⁷⁷ As noted by Donald Lopez, "Seeking to determine this final view became an overriding concern in Buddhist hermeneutics, and it is not surprising that the doctrine of upāya, of the buddha's skillful methods in teaching the doctrine, which caused such problems in the interpretation of scripture should itself become a principle by which that interpretation was undertaken " Lopez 1988, 5

⁷⁸ Lopez 1988, 7

⁷⁹ Thurman 1984, 113

⁸⁰ See, e.g., McEvilley 2002

⁸¹ See generally Lopez 1988, for a good overview, and Thurman 1984 for Tsong kha pa's masterly treatment of the subject

Buddhist and Buddhist Tantric hermeneutical principles so that we can appreciate how those traditions approach the interpretation of texts.

As is the case with Western hermeneutics, we can speak of “Buddhist hermeneutics” in a narrower sense, as primarily concerned with the interpretation of texts, or in a broader, philosophical sense, as concerned with the interpretation of experience generally. Nathan Katz notes in this regard:

It could be and has been argued that, in Buddhism, the problems of hermeneutics are the problems of life itself Such a view has much to offer, but to accept it would lead to holding all of Buddhism as precisely a hermeneutic of awareness by virtue of which subjectivist domination of experience is overcome, turning hermeneutics into everything, and thereby reducing discrete fields of inquiry such as psychology or epistemology into hermeneutics. In keeping with the field parameters given by the Buddhist tradition itself, I prefer to use the term ‘hermeneutics’ specifically in the context of textual interpretation and of reflection upon the nature of this interpretation.⁸²

When Katz speaks about the “parameters” of the Buddhist tradition, he is, of course, simplifying the matter.⁸³ Historically, there are a myriad of “Buddhist” approaches to hermeneutics, and today, Buddhism itself is evolving in many ways, as it always has.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most basic overall Buddhist hermeneutical scheme is found in the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* and many other Mahāyāna texts:

Rely on the teaching, not the teacher;
Rely on the meaning, not the letter;
Rely on the definitive meaning, not the interpretable one;
Rely on wisdom, not on consciousness.⁸⁴

⁸² Katz 1984, 189

⁸³ His article focuses on Tsong kha pa’s treatment of the *yāna* problem in Buddhism

⁸⁴ Lopez 1988, 3, Thurman 1984, 115

Equally well known is Buddha's admonition, found in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and other Sūtras that one should rely on his own experience in testing the teachings, as a goldsmith assays gold, by cutting, burning and rubbing it.⁸⁵

These hermeneutic guidelines on their face apply to both the narrow and broad conceptions of hermeneutics. The reference to the "letter" makes it clear that written texts are included, while the balance could apply to both writings and experience generally. The peak of this hermeneutic scheme is "wisdom," which is generally regarded as the wisdom of emptiness, the lack of inherent existence of persons and things demonstrated through reason,⁸⁶ or, in the Tantric context, non-dual knowledge of relative things through the five Buddha wisdoms.

Buddhist Tantric hermeneutics has been treated as a special case by both Indian and Tibetan exegetes and by Western commentators. Unlike in exoteric hermeneutics, where the principal issue is whether a textual reading is definitive (*nītārtha*, *nges don*) or interpretable (*neyārtha*, *drang don*),⁸⁷ esoteric hermeneutics encompasses a more complex approach. Within the Indo-Tibetan tradition, there are different hermeneutic schemes set out in various Tantras and commentaries for each of the four types of Tantras: action; conduct; yoga; and unexcelled yoga.⁸⁸ For unexcelled yoga Tantras such

⁸⁵ The *Vajra Rosary* has its own version of this hermeneutic instruction, interestingly in the context of the guru's testing the disciple "Just as one tests/ A jewel by rubbing/ And gold by burning./ Similarly, he tests the disciple/ For twelve years" Ch 2, v 11 Alamka explains that this testing is mutual, the disciple also tests the guru in this manner Alamka 36B

⁸⁶ Thurman, following Tsong kha pa, argues that "'critical reason' is the major authority in Buddhist hermeneutics, in virtually all its systems or schools" Thurman 1988, 119

⁸⁷ Thurman 1984, 253 Tsong kha pa aligns these in the *Madhyamaka* tradition with ultimate and conventional realities, respectively *Id.* 257-58

⁸⁸ Kongtrul 2005 has a good summary of these at 279-300

as the *Secret Community* and its explanatory Tantras, including the *Vajra Rosary*, the leading commentary on hermeneutics is Candrakīrti's *PU*, which expands on the “seven-ornament” system introduced in the *Secret Community* Explanatory Tantra *Vajra Wisdom Compendium*.⁸⁹ It should be noted that this hermeneutic system is inherently polysemous, setting forth a hierarchy of meanings for persons of different levels of understanding.

The seven ornaments as set forth in the *PU* are:⁹⁰

1. The Five Preliminaries (*upodghāta*): the Tantra's (1) name; (2) audience; (3) author; (4) size; and (5) purpose;
2. The Four Methods (*nyāya*) for becoming a Buddha in accord with Śākyamuni's biography, respectively expressed for the dispassionate and the passionate disciple: (1) lineage, being born as a human, or, for the passionate, generating one's self in the lineage of the five Buddha families; (2) basis, *i.e.* becoming a renunciant, or recognizing that the Buddhas in union are all of one family, (3) definitive word, *i.e.* following the *vinaya* precepts, or accepting the Tantric vows, including pure conduct in the union of vajra and lotus; and (4) means, *i.e.* meditation, or using great bliss in the path of desire;
3. The Six Parameters (*koṭi*): (1) interpretable meaning, generally relating to the creation stage; (2) definitive meaning, generally relating to the completion stage; (3) ulterior statement, for the sharpest disciples, *e.g.* “slay living creatures” as meaning “block karmic energy-winds;” (4) standard statement, for disciples of lower faculties, to teach them the creation stage; (5) literal speech, concerning the three lower Tantras; and (6) symbolic speech, the use of words coined specially for Tantric practice, as found in chapter sixty-three of the *Vajra Rosary*;
4. The Four Procedures (*naya*) of Interpretation (*vyākhyā*): (1) literal meaning, for ordinary people; (2) general meaning, for exoteric Buddhists, lower Tantra practitioners and creation stage yogis;⁹¹ (3) concealed meaning, involving practices of the

⁸⁹ *Jñānavajrasamucchaya*. Toh 447

⁹⁰ This summary draws on the Tibetan text of *CG*, and Thurman 1988, Kongtrul 2007, 279-91, and Campbell 2009

⁹¹ Jamgön Kongtrul notes that the modes of general meaning counteract regret or reluctance on the part of practitioners of *sutra*, the lower Tantras of the creation stage of unexcelled yoga Tantra. With respect to the latter, Kongtrul says that instructions to meditate on the tip of the face nose are for those disciples not qualified yet to hear the concealed teachings on sexual desire. Kongtrul 2007, 289

yogi and yoginī involving sexual desire, and involving vajra repetition and speech isolation, the three luminances of mind isolation, and the illusory body, *i.e.* the first, second and third of the *PK*'s five stages; and (4) ultimate meaning, relating to the fourth and fifth stages of clear light and integration.⁹²

5. The Two Forms, of public (*satravayākhyāna*) and individual (*śiṣyākhyāna*) teachings;

6. The Five Persons (*pañcapudgala*), from the superior jewel-like disciple to the more challenged sandalwood; and

7. Performance (*sādhana*) of the two truths, in the context of the illusory body and integration.

At the beginning of his *Commentary*, addressing the first words of the *Vajra Rosary*, *evam mayā śrutam*, etc., *Alaṃka* sets forth an interpretive hermeneutic similar in some respects to that of the *PU*: an introductory framework, corresponding to the *PU*'s first ornament; a Four Mode system that seems similar to that of the *PU* in nomenclature but different in application; a reference to the Six Parameters (*mtha' drug*); and additional categories for "internal" and "external" meanings:

[F]irst Vajrapāṇi and Mañjūśrī, the compilers of the *Vajra Rosary Tantra*, having in mind all of the meanings of Tantra, having another framework for the **introduction**, spoke the first words, "**These words**"⁹³ and so forth. For this *there are three meanings: the necessary words of introduction; the condensed meaning of the introduction; and its subsidiary meaning*. As for that [**introduction**], first, the teaching to the distinguished audience [has] the nature of putting the person who is the listener at ease, cultivating the command of the Lord, and attaining trustworthy personal teachings. The so-called **condensed meaning** has the five perfections. As for that, by "these words," etc. that to be taught is perfect. "**I heard**" and so forth [means] a brief explanation of the perfect retinue. "**At one time**" and so forth [means] the perfect time. "**The Lord**" and so forth, the perfect teacher. "**Was dwelling in the vaginas of the Vajra Queens, the essence of the**

⁹² The distinction between literal, exoteric and polysemous esoteric meaning is also found in Ibn 'Arabī's *Bezels of Wisdom* "It is know that when the Scriptures speak of the Reality they speak in a way that yields to the generality of men the immediately apparent meaning The elite, on the other hand, understand all the meanings inherent in that utterance, in whatever terms it is expressed " Ibn 'Arabī 1980, 73

⁹³ The Tibetans translated *evam*, usually rendered "thus," in English, as in the famous "Thus I have heard," as *'di skad*, "this word" or "these words "

body, speech and mind of all Transcendents" and so forth is said to be the perfect place.

As for that, *there are two types of subsidiary meanings: the first is the Four Modes of Interpretations; the second is* the division of explanations by nature of being *internal or external*. As for [the four types of explanations], on the occasion of explaining the **[1] literal meaning**, it is explained by the five types of perfections. By the divisions of suchness [truth body], moon [beatific body], seed [syllable] and body [mandala], the Lord dwelled in the measureless mansion said to be "perfect." Following the explanations of the Six Parameters, you will know and understand.

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By the nature of the seed [syllable], whatever is emanated is the supreme chakra of the gods [protection chakra]. The time of supreme ecstasy is explained as "**at one time**." The Lord of the eight masteries dwells in the place of great bliss. His five aggregates are victors; they are all Transcendents! The essence of his body, speech and mind vajras is great bliss! The well-purified queen is the great seal! The well-purified lotus is the *bhaga*! Vajradhara dwells there, "abiding in the form of a drop" etc. So saying, he taught the meaning by the explanation of the **[2] general meaning**. As for the **[3] secret meaning**, following the fifty-ninth chapter, I will explain the "holy wisdom of E" etc. later. As for the **[4] ultimate meaning**, following the *Explanation of the Intent Tantra* [*Saṃdivyākaraṇa-nama-tantra*], [in] Tantra, "**I heard these words**" is explained as "it was a time of a certain clarity" etc.

Here also, because this Tantra is usually to be explained in common with [other] Tantras, following the *Mahāyoga* and *Yoginī* Tantras, I will comment on the introduction. As for that, by "**these words**" [tending] towards **[5] external explanation**, by the conjunctive phrase that teaches the whole meaning of Tantra, he spoke the condensed meaning of Tantra according to the wishes of the Compiler. Thus, "**EVAM**" is just like that in how it compresses, having "a meaning that is not reification or repudiation." "**I**" means by the audience of which I am the main one, including the Transcendents, the Consorts, the Sense Goddesses, the Bodhisattvas and the forms of the Fierce Ones.

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When the Lord sits upon a sun and moon seat, which is above a measureless mansion which is generated from the transformation of Vairocana, who is above a mandala of wind, fire, water and earth, which is from the transformation of Amogasiddhi, the Lord of Speech [Amitābha], the Lord of Mind [Akṣobhya] and Ratnasambhava, together with [their] consorts,

who are generated from the transformation of the seed [syllables] *YAM*, *RAM*, *BAM* and *LAM*, [which are] above the seal of the Reality Source generated from the transformation of Great Vajradhara after meditating on voidness, that is the meaning of "**at that time I heard.**" "**Dwelling**" means residing by means of the four magical dwellings. As for that, the four magical dwellings means, if someone asks, "the place of teaching and the place of the behavior and the place of meditative equipoise and the place of perfect focus within." As for that, all from the speech of the Lord means the Teacher Presence. All the enlightened activities of body means the Behavioral Presence. All types of mental actions are naturally equipoised in the entrancement in contemplation and concentration are the Entrancement Presence. All actions of mind in entering equipoise in whatever contemplation or concentration by nature are placing in equipoise is the Place of the Equipoise of Those. Naturally purified mental activities regarding the approaching etc. of deities etc. is Inner Focus Presence. That is the [6] *external explanation*.⁹⁴

Alamka also engages in an interpretive/definitive hermeneutic analysis of most of the thirty-two deities in the Noble Tradition *Secret Community* mandala that closely corresponds to that of the *PU*, with the definitive meaning referencing the higher of the five stages, particularly that of clear light and the ecstasies, and the interpretive meaning more geared to the creation stage and more dualistic conceptuality.⁹⁵ In interpreting the *Vajra Rosary* as having layers of hermeneutic significance, Alamka was not making any sort of bold move; the *Vajra Rosary* itself plays constantly with different levels of

⁹⁴ Alamka 4A-6B The non-italicized bold words are those from the *Vajra Rosary* that Alamka is commenting on, the italicized words indicate the hermeneutic structure as stated by Alamka. It is not clear here whether Alamka means this interpretive scheme to only apply to the introductory words, the *mdāna*, of the Tantra. Even though the nomenclature of the Four Modes as used by Alamka is identical to that of the *PU*, there appear to be disparities between the content of those four categories, as discussed below.

⁹⁵ For example, in discussing the names of various of the Terrifics, Alamka explains, "**Yamantakṛt**" [meaning] the Terminator of Yama. ["Yama"] is a hell being. He is called that because he is the terminator of concentration through great anger. [This is] the interpretive meaning. ["Yama"] is ignorance. He is called that because he perfects through the actuality of clear light. [This is] the definitive meaning. "**Prajñāntakṛt**" [means] Knowledge Terminator. ["Prajñā"] is called that because by eliminating knowledge he terminates addiction. [This is] the interpretive meaning. Because of its nature of completely transforming the active consciousnesses, it is ["knowledge,"] [and] because it ["perfects"] by entering clear light, it is the Knowledge Terminator. [This is] the definitive meaning. "**Padmāntakṛt**" is the Lotus Terminator. By being untainted by the addictions like a lotus is untainted by [muddy] water, because of terminating them, he is called that. [This is] the interpretive meaning. ["Padma"] is the place of birth. ["Anta"] is the middle. Because of making [kṛt] bliss for him, *Padmāntakṛt*. Alamka 160B.

hermeneutic awareness. At the very outset of the Tantra, after watching Buddha's magical displays and emanation of the *Secret Community* mandala, the very first observation of the gathered bodhisattvas is "Oh my! Great Vajra Family! You teach the *meaning* of the Vajra Rosary!"⁹⁶ Vajrapāṇi's first question to Buddha Vajradhara is: "I would wish to ask/ A little about the secret/ Of all Buddhas,/ The *concentrated meaning*/ Of all Tantras/... Please teach me/ The *hidden meaning*/ Of Tantric yoga!"⁹⁷ Buddha's response is unequivocally hermeneutical: "The answers to [your] questions,/ The supreme secret,/ Not spoken of anywhere/ In the Action,/ Performance/ Or Yoga Tantras,/ *I will explain clearly and definitively.*"⁹⁸ The very notion of an "explanatory Tantra" in the Noble Tradition system is hermeneutic, as shown throughout the *Vajra Rosary*: "The *Vajra Rosary's clear meaning*/ *Is totally hidden* in the Tantras..."⁹⁹ Throughout the Tantra, Buddha Vajradhara makes statements like this: "The very explicit reality of mantra,/ The supreme secret reality,/ I haven't taught to anyone./ Because of the thought that / No one deserved it, I hid [it] in all the Tantras. // But now I'll teach, / So listen up!"

A good illustration of the playful self-awareness of the *Vajra Rosary* of the hermeneutic polysemy involved in its explanations are the thirteen levels of interpretation of the "union of vajra and lotus," explicitly laid out in chapter fourteen of the Tantra:

⁹⁶ *VR* ch 1, v 34 (emphasis added)

⁹⁷ *VR* ch 1, vv 41, 44 (emphasis added)

⁹⁸ *VR* ch 2, v 2 (emphasis added)

⁹⁹ *VR*, ch 3, v 1 (emphasis added)

TABLE 1. Summary of *VR* Ch. 14's "Union of Vajra and Lotus"

<u>Vajra</u>	<u>Lotus</u>
1. Energy-wind discerning <i>A</i>	8-petaled heart chakra
2. Energy-wind overcoming the 8 consciousnesses	The 8 conventional consciousnesses ¹⁰⁰
3. Compassion	Emptiness
4. Light rays of the vajra "sun" (penis)	Lotus that opens to them (vagina)
5. Enlightenment spirit (semen)	Crown chakra
6. Speech of the teacher	Listening of the student
7. Serenity (<i>samata</i> , <i>zhi gnas</i>)	Insight (<i>vipassana</i> , <i>lhag thong</i>)
8. Great bliss in the mouth of the yoginī	The mouth of the student
9. <i>Lingam</i>	Yoginī's vagina
10. The 72,000 channels	The channel through which the enlightenment spirit descends
11. Vajra seat above the moon maṇḍala	Yourself as Vajradhara
12. The supreme empowerment ¹⁰¹	The disciple
13. The syllable <i>E</i>	The syllable <i>VAM</i> ¹⁰²

Various scholars have made observations on particular aspects of comparison of Buddhist and Western hermeneutics, but none has made an in-depth study. Michael Broido notes that, "[I]t seems wholly plausible that we shall be able to make sense of the Buddhist hermeneutic enterprise by seeing it as founded upon intention-ascription."¹⁰³ Robert Thurman observes that because awareness of the teachings is a "direct personal process," the Tantric Buddhist hermeneutical circle takes into account both the

¹⁰⁰ *VR* 26B, ch 14, vv 2-3 The eight conventional consciousnesses (the six sense plus the addicted and foundational) engaging in cyclic existence are overcome and united by the energy-wind vajra *Id.*

¹⁰¹ The Tibetan here, *dbang bskur*, literally "bestowing power," obviously supports the term "empowerment," however, this is a translation of the Sanskrit *abhīṣeka*, from the root *śic*, to sprinkle in the sense of anointment See, e.g. Onians 2001 at 164 I use both "initiation" and "empowerment" to describe particular initiatory rituals depending on the context, but, particularly given our sensitivity to power relationships in this context, we should be aware that "empowerment" is very much a loaded term With that awareness, we can proceed

¹⁰² *VR* ch 14, vv 2-18

¹⁰³ Broido 1988, 87

relationships between the original author and the original audience and the current teacher and current audience.¹⁰⁴ Thurman notes a number of significant differences between Tantric Buddhist hermeneutics under the Seven-Ornament system and modern Western hermeneutics:

There is no “romantic” attempt to reconstitute the subjectivity or intention of the teacher via elaborate historical interpolation. Nor is there any idea of the nihilistically relativistic use of the text to constitute an entirely new personal meaning locked away in the subjectivity of the hearer.¹⁰⁵

In reviewing the above brief summary of Buddhist and Buddhist Tantric hermeneutics, it should be clear at least that the traditional Indo-Tibetan esoteric hermeneutic scheme is not something familiar to the typical Western scholar of religion, much less to a typical intelligent Westerner. One thing is conspicuously absent: there is no hermeneutic principle directed at uncovering meanings associated with “dominance, hierarchy or regal power,” or the socio-political, economic, or gender issues of the time.

But we should not be misled by a lack of terminology. Traditional Indian and Tibetan commentators were unaware of the misuse of the Tantras in pursuit of worldly ends. Indeed, this has been the case from nearly the beginning of the migration of Buddhist Tantra to Tibet from India, as we shall see in Chapter Two illustrated, for example, by Ye shes ‘od’s tenth century *Proclamation* and Atīśa’s *Lamp*, for it seems that for almost as long as there has been Tantra, there have been “sinister yogis.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the traditional Indo-Tibetan hermeneutic system set forth in such texts as the *PU*

¹⁰⁴ Thurman 1988, 135-136

¹⁰⁵ Thurman 1988, 135

¹⁰⁶ See White 2009

and Alampka's *Commentary* are intended, in part, to *avoid* such misuse of the teachings by these sinister yogis:

Having not discovered this great way of sealed import, O Lord of Secrets (Vajrapāṇi), but grasping the literal meaning, they find they will always enter evil paths in their pride of intellect. They rejoice saying, "We are the yogis." ... Such persons do not understand the *Guhyasamāja*, the great Communion, they do not preserve the secret as is required to maintain their vows, and they show off to all beings. They despise their guru, who is clearly like the buddhas, and they do not honor him. They become furious in an instant and also lustful in an instant. They have intercourse with unsuitable persons such as mother, sister, and daughter. They kill father and mother and also kill other animals... They will achieve those mantras and mudras to make a living wherever they can get some profit. They will teach the dharma for personal profit. In order to protect them, the esoteric teaching is declared with ulterior intentions.¹⁰⁷

However, in arguing that the *main* meaning of Tantra is a worldly one, modern commentators like Davidson turn the traditional view completely on its head, arguing in effect that the primary function of Tantra is precisely the "showing off" that the tradition says the Tantric practitioner should not do. It is hard to imagine a less deferential attitude towards an indigenous tradition,¹⁰⁸ and a greater gap between the modern academic approach and that of the tradition. Yet, on the other hand, recognizing that the tradition itself was aware of the potential for Tantra to be cynically employed for worldly benefit opens a window for dialogue between the two views.

¹⁰⁷ Thurman 1988, 127, quoting from Tsong kha pa's *PU Commentary*.

¹⁰⁸ Even Christopher Hitchens, perhaps the most extreme critic of religion writing today, who writes eloquently about the misdeeds of religion in the worldly sphere, recognizes "Religious faith is, precisely *because* we are still-evolving creatures, ineradicable. It will never die out, or at least not until we get over our fear of death, and of the dark, and of the unknown, and of each other. For this reason, I would not prohibit it even if I thought I could." Hitchens 2007, 12

While some Buddhologists explore the hermeneutic of revealing the social, economic and political settings of Buddhism and Buddhist Tantra, “unmasking” it,¹⁰⁹ others have sought to emphasize the validity of the traditional Buddhist and Tantric Buddhist tradition.¹¹⁰ For example, Robert Thurman writes:

When I completed my degree several years later and began to teach, I was appalled to discover in the Western literature and in my colleagues’ minds a massive and systematic distortion of Eastern civilizations in general, and Buddhist civilization in particular. This misinformation came from the European “authorities” Weber, Freud, Marx, and Durkheim and was perpetuated by contemporary writers, even by translators.¹¹¹

Thurman in fact applies a Tantric sort of hermeneutic to historical and social matters, reversing the cause and effect relationship that Davidson finds so compelling, and painting a radically different picture of the role of monastic institutions. He writes:

The educational institution Shakyamuni Buddha founded is the Jewel Community...It is an alternative social world founded on enlightenment, detachment, and love (the ordinary social world is founded on delusion, greed, and anger)....

Monasticism is the core of the Jewel Community. It is an original invention of the Buddha. It spurs society to acknowledge that its highest collective interest is none other than the self-fulfillment of its individuals....

The Jewel Community operates on three levels in every culture in which it exerts its influence: revolutionary, evolutionary, and fruitional or millennial....

The millennial phase is *pervasively* nondualistic. During it, the society is able to enjoy the universe of enlightenment, and Jewel Community institutions openly take responsibility for the society’s direction....

Tibetan society is the only one in planetary history in which this third phase has been partially reached.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ See, e.g., Lopez 2002, Faure 2009, Davidson 2002 and 2005

¹¹⁰ See Wedemeyer 2007, 389-90, Broido 1988, Gray 2007, and Thurman 1988

¹¹¹ Thurman 1998, 15

¹¹² Thurman 1998, 291-96

While Thurman does concede here that the millennial phase was achieved in Tibetan society only “partially,” his interpretation about what goes on in Tibetan monasteries is the polar opposite of Davidson’s. Is there a way to bridge the vast gulf between these two views?

2. Conflicting and Evolving Western Interpretations of Buddhist Tantra

Before turning to the trajectory of Western and contemporary hermeneutics, inasmuch as *we* have begun and continue to interpret *their* hermeneutic, I’ll very briefly summarize how Buddhist Tantra has been thus far been interpreted by Western scholars.¹¹³ In so doing I will add some of my own thoughts on some of the more recent issues that have emerged, particularly the contention made by some of my colleagues that Buddhist Tantra is “obscure.” Obscurity would indeed pose a problem, perhaps insurmountable, in understanding Buddhist Tantra.

In the early 19th Century, the researches of B.H. Hodgson, which were relied on by Eugene Burnouf, served as the foundation for what Christian Wedemeyer describes as “the first firm distinction between Buddhism as such (‘real Buddhism’) and forms of Buddhism which are said to be characterized by later Śaivite admixture (Tantric Buddhism).”¹¹⁴ Writing about the *PK*, Burnouf states: “It is difficult to describe the kind of discouragement that one suffers in the reading of such a composition. There is something saddening in seeing serious men advance the most bizarre words and syllables

¹¹³ Others have written extensively on this subject. See, e.g., Wedemeyer 1999, 27-72, Lopez 1995, Almond 1988

¹¹⁴ Wedemeyer 1999, 29

as the vehicle of salvation....”¹¹⁵ In 1879, with the publication of Edwin Arnold’s immensely popular *Light of Asia*, lionizing the Buddha as a Lutheresque reformer of ritualized and corrupt Hindu practices, Victorian England was swept with interest in Buddhism, but a Buddhism totally cleansed of the rituals and procedures of Indian or Tibetan Tantric Buddhism.¹¹⁶ Thus, the outset of the modern Western encounter with Buddhism was characterized by a polarization of views.¹¹⁷ Christian Wedemeyer notes that nothing much has changed in this regard:

Buddhist Tantric traditions would seem to offer a distinctive case in which problems of interpretation stand to the fore in a way almost unheard-of in other areas. Though they have been the object of modern academic study for almost 200 years, one continues to confront much confusion and misinformation concerning even the most basic questions of scriptural understanding and religious praxis. Specialist scholars themselves are still divided on the most fundamental issues,...¹¹⁸

Wedemeyer draws the distinction between the “literalists” – the early Orientalists like Burnouf, but also including modern scholars like David Snellgrove and Ronald Davidson, who, for different reasons “have argued quite stridently against those who take such terms to mean anything other than what they literally denote” – and the “figurativists,” like A. K. Warder, who interpret the more transgressive aspect of the

¹¹⁵ Wedemeyer 1999, 40, *quoting* Burnouf, *Introduction*, 557-58

¹¹⁶ Almond 1988, 1-4

¹¹⁷ The pre-modern Western encounter with Buddhism appears to have been quite different. *See, e.g.* McEvilley 2002. Indeed, one versed in Buddhist thought cannot read Plato’s *Republic*, particularly the last chapter discussing the story of Er, and the Stoics without experiencing an overwhelming sense of recognition. But that is beyond the scope of the present study.

¹¹⁸ Wedemeyer 2007b, 384

Tantras as metaphor.¹¹⁹ We can see the distinction clearly in Davidson’s rejection of Munidatta’s interpretation of Virūpa’s *Drinking Song*.

Reviewing this bi-polar approach, Wedemeyer suggests that a better approach would be to consider that the Tantras, or at least the “five meats” ritual in many Tantras discussed in his *Beef, Dog, and Other Mythologies*,¹²⁰ might be better considered as connotative rather than denotative language, *i.e.* a second-order system of signification where complex ideas are indicated obliquely. Thus, the reference to the five meats as part of Tantric ritual is “[f]undamentally... a discourse about purity and pollution... not the special, intrinsic qualities of particular meats and bodily fluids.”¹²¹ This is because what is occurring in the Mahāyoga Tantric rituals is not at the level of denotative discourse, but in the “more visceral, more instantaneous mode” of “the poetical discourse of connotative semiotics,” where the *fact* of the practitioner’s higher consciousness is declared: “the enlightened state of communion? It’s just a fact: look as I savor this soup of beef, dog, semen, and faeces!”¹²² Thus, Wedemeyer concludes that question that has plagued the literalists, “the question which has troubled modern scholarship—is it ‘shit’ or not?—is beside the point.”¹²³

Here, in attempting to steer a middle course, arguing that the Mahāyoga Tantras employ connotative semiotics as opposed to literalism or figuratism, I think Wedemeyer

¹¹⁹ *Id.* 386-89

¹²⁰ Wedemeyer 2007b

¹²¹ *Id.*, 403

¹²² *Id.*, 406-07

¹²³ *Id.*, 407 Ronald Davidson points out that the ingestion of impure substances—such as feces—was an actual practice of great antiquity in India. Personal Communication 2-16-11

has overstated the matter a bit. While his argument that the Tantras do in fact draw upon connotative meanings is persuasive, I think he is wrong if he is arguing that such meaning is *the* meaning. As put, is hard for me to see Wedemeyer's connotative semiotic argument as anything other than a form of figuratism, a different form of apology than metaphor, but an apology nevertheless.¹²⁴ Perhaps Wedemeyer simply overstated his conclusion in contending that the argument over literal versus figurative meaning is "beside the point"; earlier in the article he states that connotative meaning is "*one* of the primary modes of signification used in the Mahāyoga Tantra system."¹²⁵ Here I believe that Wedemeyer was most accurate in recognizing that "the complex, polysemous modes of Tantric interpretation found in the commentarial and hermeneutical literature...sets forth a system of interpretation which allows for multiple, simultaneous readings of individual passages—including, but not limited to, the literal meaning."¹²⁶

Another issue at the core of Western scholarly interpretation of Tantric texts is the concept of obscurity. While scholarly understanding has gone beyond the orientalist notion that in general Eastern thought is "non-rational," this issue still is a live one when it comes to Tantric hermeneutics, and its exploration is key to determining how we should interpret Tantric texts like the *Vajra Rosary*. For example, Robert Thurman, a

¹²⁴ Wedemeyer's explanation, *a la* Barthes, that the second-order meaning of eating the five meats is "It's just a fact look as I savor this soup of beef, dog, semen, and faeces!" *id.* at 406, assimilates this to any and all other creation stage practices, where the meditator imagines himself as deity or deities performing these and many other practices. While this may be *one* of the intended meanings, particularly as related to the creation stage practitioner, perfection stage yogis, beyond the imagination and ritual phase, would presumably relate to such practices in different ways

¹²⁵ *Id.*, 393 (emphasis added)

¹²⁶ *Id.*, 390. Wedemeyer adds that he "does not, however, necessarily mean that these substances were not actually consumed," stressing that for the connotative meaning to obtain "the *possibility* of such consumption must be available." *Id.*, 408 n 40

defender of the Buddhist tradition's respect for critical reason, writes: "[Buddha's] *root Tantra* texts are hard to understand, encoded purposely to be obscure. His *explanatory Tantra* texts clarify the mystery, but in an enigmatic manner."¹²⁷ Similarly, he writes: "To put it very bluntly, if you can say that the aim in the exoteric Centrist and Idealist schools is *clarity*, then the aim in the esoteric Tantric traditions is, 'clearly,' *obscurity*."¹²⁸

David Gray follows Thurman, arguing that Tantric texts "use evocative language, which opens up not one or two but often numerous possible interpretations. This often 'radical use of language' appears to have been a deliberate strategy; Thurman has shown that the Tantras do not even take 'clarity' as their goal, but rather tend toward an obscurity."¹²⁹ Gray finds this strategy to be anti-essentialist, the ambiguity itself employed as a liberative technique:

Tantric language is radical in attempting to subvert the essentialist understanding of language. When it comes to interpretation, the Tantric author, like the poet, would insist that no interpretation is final, due to the multiplicity of meanings inherent in language that is intrinsically unstable. Tantric discourse is not unique in this regard, but only radical: it actively seeks to dispel the illusion of permanence adheres to 'normal' hegemonic discourse. Its purpose here, as Thurman has pointed out, is compassionate; for the Tantric adept all things are theoretically at least conducive to liberation, so it is natural that they would use language as a liberative technique, by emphasizing the poetic, symbolic, de-reifying aspects of language.¹³⁰

Gray's statement that "the Tantric author, like the poet, would insist that no interpretation is final, due to the multiplicity of meanings inherent in language that is intrinsically unstable" strikes me as not well taken. In fact, much of Indo-Tibetan

¹²⁷ Thurman 1988, 129

¹²⁸ Thurman 1988, 121

¹²⁹ Gray 2001, 122

¹³⁰ *Id.*, 123

hermeneutics is precisely about what interpretation is “final” or “definitive.” Gray’s statement that such an author would hold that language is “intrinsically unstable” also seems at variance with traditional commentarial works, which view language as “mere designation,” conventionally real, and, as Śāntarakṣita would say, “beautiful without examination.”¹³¹ There’s a limit to finding post-modern arguments in ancient Indo-Tibetan texts. The *difference* between traditional Indo-Tibetan hermeneutics and modern Western hermeneutics is instructive, and conflating them clouds the issue.

Although Gray mentions this radical use of language in the context of the Tantric critique of the hegemonic ideology of caste, it seems to me that his approach is itself somewhat hegemonic: It assumes that because *we* don’t understand a single clear meaning, it must be ambiguous or obscure. Multivalent speech or writing is, of course, very different from obscure or ambiguous speech or writing. It is easy to understand how multivalence or polysemy is grounded in the doctrine of *upāya*, as expressed in numerous Buddhist sources: Buddha is speaking to each student in her own language. Obscurity is a different matter.

In his *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, Tsong kha pa stresses that even non-conceptual yoga is to be achieved through analysis and reasoning, noting that “the wisdom of individual analysis...is not fit to be forsaken even on the occasion of meditating on suchness.”¹³² Thomas Yarnall notes in his study of that text that “Tsong Khapa and his sources are clear that while there certainly are some unique Tantric techniques...., such special techniques augment rather than replace analysis, and that

¹³¹ Skt *avicāramya*, Tīb *ma brtags nyams dga’ ba*.

¹³² Yarnall 2003, 251

indeed the kind of nonconceptual emptiness meditation integrally involved in Tantric practice does also necessarily entail the critical, analytical examination of reality.”¹³³ Of course, Tsong kha pa was writing several hundred years after the later propagation of Buddhism during the time of Zhi ba ‘od and Atīśa, and the problem he sought to counter was nihilism and relativism; hence his emphasis on the “appearance side” (*snang phyogs*) as contrasted with the “emptiness side” (*stong phyogs*) of reality.

The *Vajra Rosary* has many references to terminating conceptuality through various yogic techniques,¹³⁴ but that is very different than the Tantra itself being obscure. While there is much that is difficult to understand in the *Vajra Rosary*, the difficulty does not arise so much from any obscurity or ambiguity in text as from our own unfamiliarity with the specific states described. These meditative states are only experienced, according to the texts, at very deep levels of concentration and the continuous practice of mantra.¹³⁵ Generally speaking, perfection stage yoga (the subject of the *Vajra Rosary*) follows mastery of the subtle creation stage, where one can hold one’s attention fixed on a single object visualized at one of one’s nose tips, often described as a complete mandala

¹³³ *Id.*, 249

¹³⁴ E.g. *VR* 13A, ch 4, v 7 (“By terminating all conceptuality Great bliss is produced”), 14A, ch 5, v 14 (“Logicians misled/ By conceptuality,/ Deluded by ignorance,/ Do not know the ultimate/ And hold conventional words/ As a treasure”), 23A, ch 12, v 9 (in vajra repetition, “you reverse the energy-winds [and] abandon conceptuality”), I count twenty six references to non-conceptuality in the tantra Chapter thirty-six of the Tantra is entitled “The Characteristics of Non-conceptuality” and says that “When the non-conceptual/ Energy-wind arises,/ He who knows/ Will attain/ The good state/ Of Vajrasattva ” *VR* 57B, ch 36, v 1

¹³⁵ E.g. *VR* ch 3, vv 14-15, contrasting the ignorance of the logicians with the yogi who practices yoga and contemplation “with supreme subtlety,” *VR* ch 6, v 3, stating that for those lacking meditative concentration, “the Buddhas are difficult to obtain,” *VR* ch 6, v 50 and ch 14, v 6, stating that constant repetition of mantra for six months is a prerequisite to opening the heart lotus, which is done as described in *VR* ch 12, v 11 in the first month alone by counting 21,600 breaths in the day and night for twenty-seven consecutive days, followed by even more subtle meditative concentrations described in the balance of chapter twelve, and the subtle measure of internal time described in chapter sixteen

the size of a mustard seed, uninterruptedly for four hours. That is clearly not an easy task, and not something that many people in any culture, let alone ours, have mastered.

I am not arguing that ambiguity or obscurity could not be used as *upāya* in order to release overly literal-minded students from such addictions, like a Zen *koan* used to free a disciple from conceptual thought, but it seems to me that, at the very least, such an *upāya* would be specialized and not of general application. And it should be noted that the use of obscurity is only one method for loosening the hold of conceptuality. The *Vajra Rosary* has a number of such methods.¹³⁶ Thus, given the ubiquity of *upāya* and the creativity of those employing it, while I would certainly recognize "the uses of *obscurity* in the art of liberating beings,"¹³⁷ before reaching the conclusion that such an *upāya* were behind what appears to us to be obscure language in the Tantras, I would want to explore the possibility that this language simply reflects the multivalence of an "enlightened" or at least a very subtle mind, a mental paradigm differing from ours, something not ambiguous or obscure in the least.

Gray cites Thurman's *Vajra Hermeneutics*, in which Thurman concludes that "this hermeneutic of compassion, this vajra hermeneutic, encompasses the uses of *obscurity* in the art of liberating beings."¹³⁸ But nothing in Thurman's article supports the notion that the Tantras are in any way *objectively* obscure, only that they are meant to be *subjectively* obscure for disciples not ready for exposure to all of their multivalent meanings. It is one thing to say that a disciple needs to have her reified sense of "clarity" shattered by an

¹³⁶ See, e.g., *VR* 65A, ch 46, v 8

¹³⁷ Thurman 1988, 144

¹³⁸ Thurman 1988, 144

obscuring teaching; another to say that that teaching is itself obscure.¹³⁹ Indeed, the assumption is that this disciple's sense of clarity was not really clarity, which is why it needed to be undermined. “Hidden” is not obscure;¹⁴⁰ “ulterior” is not obscure;¹⁴¹ “mysterious” is not obscure.¹⁴² That a disciple might need a dose of obscurity because he needs “to break free from his dependency on the guru's authority”¹⁴³ makes logical and common sense; but it is not obscure in the least. As Barthes put it, almost as if he were writing about Tantra, the term itself often described in the literature as deriving from Sanskrit *tan*, “weave,” “The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, *a woven fabric*).”¹⁴⁴ Tsong kha pa's comment that Buddha teaches “mysteriously” to all in order to require reliance on a guru¹⁴⁵ does not mean that the teachings are obscure. It just means one needs a key to open the lock.

Western scholars are just beginning to become familiar enough with the subject matter of the Buddhist Tantras to start to apply “our” hermeneutical outlook to the

¹³⁹ Thurman 1988, 126 To the extent that Thurman *is* saying that the Tantras are objectively obscure, which he may be, Personal Communication 1-25-11, I think he is wrong. No one stresses more than Thurman the importance of reasoning in the Buddhist tradition, and while Tantra can be confusing, it is subject to logical rules and practices and is only effective in the context of understanding the philosophy of emptiness, again, which Thurman emphasizes is the product of reason and, among other things, the law of the excluded middle. Thurman 1984, 140

¹⁴⁰ Thurman 1988, 125

¹⁴¹ Thurman 1988, 127

¹⁴² Thurman 1988, 138

¹⁴³ Thurman 1988, 138

¹⁴⁴ Barthes 1977, 159

¹⁴⁵ Thurman 1988, 138

Tantras themselves.¹⁴⁶ At the same time, while Tibetan Buddhist teachers have now been in the West for many years, and, with the current Dalai Lama in the forefront, have begun to think deeply about how a scientific approach impacts Buddhist principles and teachings, I am unaware that any have begun to think about how Western hermeneutic principles might apply to Buddhist Tantra. It is time to start thinking about that.

3. “Ours”: *Western Legal Hermeneutics and the Methodology of Emilio Betti*

Hermeneutics has a long history in the West, starting with Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*, or even Plato’s *Ion*.¹⁴⁷ Paul Ricoeur noted that, prior to what he calls the “deregionalization” of hermeneutics, which he ascribes to Schleiermacher, there were two specific domains of hermeneutics, the philology of classical, mostly Greco-Roman, texts, and the exegesis of the Bible.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, in antiquity most interpretations of religious texts were figurative rather than literal,¹⁴⁹ but biblical interpretation gave rise to an almost unlimited variation of methods and theories, which extend right up to the present time. Furthermore, because of its long history in our culture, and the impact of science and the scientific method on biblical hermeneutics giving rise to such issues as

¹⁴⁶ Many Western Buddhist scholars mention, mainly in their introductory remarks, Western hermeneutics, with a nod to Gadamer and Derrida, but I am not aware of anyone who has written in depth on the subject *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, edited by Donald Lopez, (Lopez 1988) is a step in that direction, but, as its title indicates, its subject is mainly *Buddhist* hermeneutics. Davidson’s invoking of Petarch in Davidson 2002 is also a step in that direction, and, as argued in this essay, he is certainly making arguments based on some Western hermeneutical principles, but those principles are not spelled out, and they are not considered in the context of what might be a unified hermeneutical approach to the meaning of Buddhist Tantra

¹⁴⁷ See Russon 1995

¹⁴⁸ Ricoeur 1981, 45

¹⁴⁹ Yarchin 2006, *xii*

the nature of the historical Jesus and its relation to faith, that history has much to teach scholars of Buddhism.¹⁵⁰

Until fairly recently, the principal domain of non-biblical hermeneutics had been legal hermeneutics, which existed, as long as there have been law and facts, by virtue of the nature of the application of law to fact. For example, the very notion of equity requires interpretation. As Aristotle wrote in *Nichomachean Ethics*: “When the law speaks universally, then, and a case arises on it which is not covered by the universal statement, then it is right, where the legislator fails us and has erred by over-simplicity, to correct the omission—to say what the legislator himself would have said had he been present, and would have put into his law if he had known.”¹⁵¹ In his hermeneutic studies, Gadamer recognized, and in fact titled his discussion of the subject, “THE EXEMPLARY SIGNIFICANCE OF LEGAL HERMENEUTICS.” He observes:

Legal hermeneutics is, then, in reality no special case but is, on the contrary, fitted to restore the full scope of the hermeneutical problem and so to retrieve the former unity of hermeneutics, in which jurist and theologian meet the student of the humanities.¹⁵²

Where legal hermeneutics differs from theological or general hermeneutics is that, in many cases, there is an immediate cash value associated with the interpretation that is considered correct. The judgment or verdict is for the prosecution or the plaintiff, on the one hand, or for the defendant on the other: the defendant goes to jail or suffers some

¹⁵⁰ Most of which is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it remains a very fertile area for exploration. See, e.g., Makransky 2000, 20

¹⁵¹ Aristotle 1998 at 133. Not surprisingly, the relationship between law and equity in Roman law was expressed by the term, “interpretation.” Bruncken 1917, 149

¹⁵² Gadamer 1975, 325. Because, for Gadamer, application is an element of understanding itself, because they both apply the law, “mediating between history and the present in the act of understanding itself,” he puts “the legal historian and the practicing lawyer on the same level.” *Id.*, xxix

other punishment or has to pay money or take an unwanted action. Because the stakes are high, rules of interpretation must be viewed as fair and consistent, so we have evidentiary rules such as hearsay and the best evidence rule, and jury instructions. I think that we in academia can learn something from this.¹⁵³

From biblical and legal themes, over the past two hundred years Western hermeneutics has leapt, like John Wilkes Booth, from the balcony to center stage. On the one hand, Heidegger's "ontological turn" brought hermeneutics into every act of human understanding, while, on the other, Foucault's theory that "power is everywhere"¹⁵⁴ brings that hermeneutic, well, everywhere. Meanwhile, Ricoeur's "hermeneutic of suspicion" has become second nature to any Western academic. Stepping back from an historical vantage point and looking at the substantive content of Western hermeneutics as a collection of approaches to interpretation, one can see a tension between two major views: on the one hand, the mostly modern approach of seeing the process of understanding as an open-ended or "philosophical" process (most associated with Heidegger and his student Gadamer), which, misunderstood, verges on a nihilistic relativism; and, on the other hand, a rule- or principle-based approach, that, if it ignores the open-ended nature of any text, devolves into wooden formulas that lack general applicability.¹⁵⁵ In our era, this tension between the "philosophical" and methodological approaches was best exemplified in the dialogue between Gadamer and the legal historian Emilio Betti. Because I submit that our primary problem today falls in the area of

¹⁵³ As discussed below in the context of Eric Hirsch's writings, any hermeneutical method or rule would be counterproductive were it to eliminate creativity in solving problems. The law takes account of this by the operation of equity on the civil side and jury nullification and the pardoning power on the criminal side.

¹⁵⁴ Foucault 1978, 93

¹⁵⁵ *See generally* Hirsch 1967, 198-207

relativism rather than dogmatism, I believe that we have much to learn from Betti's approach, tempered of course by Gadamer's openness and creativity.

Betti, the practical jurist, was quite aware of the virtues of the modern approach, even while seeking useful hermeneutic rules:

The fact that the hermeneutical task can never be completed entails that the meaning contained within texts, monuments, and fragments is constantly reborn through life and is forever transformed in a chain of rebirths; but this does not exclude the fact that the objectivated meaning-content still remains an objectivation of the creative force of an Other, to which the interpreter should seek access, not in an arbitrary way, but *with the help of controllable guidelines*.¹⁵⁶

While Betti and Gadamer sparred over the correct approach,¹⁵⁷ Gadamer in general praised Betti's efforts:

Betti seeks the mean between the objective and the subjective element in all understanding. He formulates a complete canon of hermeneutical principles, at the head of which stands the text's autonomy of meaning, according to which the meaning—i.e., what the author intended to say—can be gained from the text itself. But he also emphasizes with equal clarity the principle of the currency of understanding—i.e., its adequacy to the object. This implies that he views the interpreter's being inevitably tied to a particular perspective as an integrating element in hermeneutical truth.¹⁵⁸

For his part, Betti criticized Gadamer's *Truth and Method* because it failed to provide for any kind of methodology and jeopardized the objectivity of the interpretation reached.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Betti 1990, 173 (emphasis added), Bleicher 1980, 68-69

¹⁵⁷ Gadamer wrote that Betti wrongly "follows the 'psychological interpretation' founded by Schleiermacher, to the extent that his hermeneutical position is constantly in danger of becoming vague. That he can conceive the problem of hermeneutics *only* as a problem of method shows that he is profoundly involved in the subjectivism which we are endeavoring to overcome." Gadamer 1975, 512, 513 (emphasis added)

¹⁵⁸ Gadamer 1975, 511

¹⁵⁹ Palmer 1969, 54

According to Betti's hermeneutical method,¹⁶⁰ there are two "objective" and two "subjective" canons, relating respectively to the object of interpretation or to the subject who interprets:

- Object-related: 1. Hermeneutical autonomy of the object;
 2. Totality and coherence of hermeneutical evaluation.
- Subject-related: 1. Actuality of understanding;
 2. Harmonization of understanding.¹⁶¹

The first of the two object-related canons, the hermeneutical autonomy of the object, is "objective" for Betti in the sense that it must "be understood with reference to that other mind that has been objectivated" in the "meaning-full forms," *i.e.* the text, which are thus "autonomous." The meaning-full forms of the text

should be judged in relation to the standards immanent in the original intention: the intention, that is, which the created forms should correspond to from the point of view of the author and his formative impulse in the course of the creative process; it follows that they must not be judged in terms of their suitability for any other external purpose that may seem relevant to the interpreter.¹⁶²

In short, then, Betti's first canon is respect for the authorial intent as objectified in the text.

His second canon, "totality and coherence of hermeneutical evaluation," concerns "the relationship of elements between themselves and to their common whole," *i.e.* "the meaning of the whole has to be derived from its individual elements, and an individual

¹⁶⁰ My principle source here is Josef Bleicher's "condensed summary" in Bleicher 1980 of Betti's voluminous *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre als Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften*, published in 1967, which, unfortunately for me, has not been translated into English

¹⁶¹ Bleicher 1980, 37

¹⁶² Bleicher 1980, 58

element has to be understood by reference to the comprehensive, penetrating whole of which it is a part.”¹⁶³ Betti’s rationale for this canon, however, is “the pre-supposition that the totality of speech, just as that of any manifestation of thought, issues from a unitary mind and gravitates towards a unitary mind and meaning.”¹⁶⁴ To the extent that a text is the product of accretion, or is otherwise issued from several minds rather than a “unitary” mind, one might think that this canon would have to be modified in order to be applicable. However, Betti notes that the “totality” of the “unitary mind” can be construed in broader terms:

A comprehensive totality can, in an objective reference, be conceived of as a cultural system which the work to be interpreted belongs to, inasmuch as it forms a link in the chain of existing continuities of meaning between works with a related meaning-content and expressive impulse.¹⁶⁵

Indeed, “interpretations have to be excluded which would conflict with the consistency of a system that has been established,” *e.g.*, in legal hermeneutics, “when the application of particular norms derivable from other legal systems—in accordance with the directives of international private law—has to be excluded in so far as it would conflict with the spirit of one’s own legal order.”¹⁶⁶ Thus, insofar as the text to be interpreted is, as is the *Vajra Rosary*, part of a commentarial tradition (although the Tantra is, in the tradition, the word of the Buddha rather than a śāstra or commentary, by its terms it is commenting on the *Root Tantra*, and is, in turn, commented upon by *Alaṃka* and *Candrakīrti* in the *PU*), the commentarial tradition would be, for Betti, the “cultural system,” the “totality”

¹⁶³ Bleicher 1980, 59

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

¹⁶⁵ Bleicher 1980, 60

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*

with which the various parts of the work must be consistent. To the extent that *Virūpa's Drinking Song* was also part of such a tradition, the same logic would apply.

Betti's last two canons turn to the subject, the interpreter. The third canon, that of "the actuality of understanding," following Rudolph Bultman's *Geschichte und Eschatologie* (and, of course, echoing Schleiermacher),

states that an interpreter's task is to retrace the creative process, to reconstruct it within himself, to retranslate the extraneous thought of an Other, a part of the past, a remembered event, into the actuality of one's own life; that is, to adapt and integrate it into one's intellectual horizon within the framework of one's own experiences....¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Bleicher 1980, 62 This is the point where Betti, according to Gadamer, follows the 'psychological interpretation' founded by Schleiermacher," and "imagines that he is ensuring the 'objectivity' of understanding by this strict psychologism with its romantic flavor, an objectivity that he regards as threatened by all those who, following Heidegger, regard binding meaning to subjectivity as mistaken," running the risk of his hermeneutics becoming "vague " Gadamer 1975, 511-512 Betti's response to this is that "the obvious difficulty with the hermeneutical method proposed by Gadamer seems to lie, for me, in that it enables a substantive agreement between text and reader – i.e. between the apparently easily accessible meaning of a text and the subjective conception of the reader – to be formed without, however, guaranteeing the correctness of understanding " Bleicher 1980, 79 To this, Gadamer replies, quoting from a letter he sent to Betti that Betti reprinted in his treatise, "Fundamentally, I am *not proposing a method*, I am describing *what is the case*. That it is as I describe it cannot, I think, be seriously questioned Even a master of the historical method is not able to keep himself entirely free from the prejudices of his time I regard it as a necessary philosophical task to consider why this failure always occurs wherever anything is achieved In other words, I consider the only scientific thing is to *recognize what is*, instead of starting from what ought to be or could be Hence I am trying to go beyond the concept of method held by modern science (which retains its limited justification) " Gadamer 1975, 512-13 Betti, as noted above, was completely aware of the fallacy of an "objective" reading of a text The main difference between the two seems to be in fact just that difference in purpose described by Gadamer Betti, like Plato in *The Republic*, is describing what *should be*, in the form of a method, Gadamer, like Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, is describing what *is* Harmonizing the two, one might conclude that methods can be useful, and that no method is perfect (See Silverman 1985, 83-84 for a discussion of Gadamer's position on epistemological-methodological hermeneutics) Another, equally valid, way of looking at it is that Gadamer's primary target, like Nāgārjuna's, is reification, eternalism and dogmatism, so he is more interested in deconstruction than construction, while Betti's, like Tsong kha pa's, is relativism, nihilism and existentialism, so he focuses on construction, i.e. method Both are useful Given contemporary academia's embrace of relativism, I would argue that we could benefit from a dose of Betti, who was explicit about his mission

It is here that the questionable character of the subjectivist position comes to full light, it is obviously influenced by contemporary existentialist philosophy and tends towards the confounding of interpretation and meaning-inference and the removing of the canon of the autonomy of the object, with the consequence of putting into doubt the objectivity of the results of interpretative procedures in all the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) It is my opinion that it is our duty as guardians and practitioners of the study of history to protect this kind of objectivity and to provide evidence of the epistemological condition of its possibility

In propounding this canon, Betti tries to steer a middle course between the “objective” approach,” “the attempt of some historians to rid themselves of their subjectivity,” regarded by Betti as “completely nonsensical,”¹⁶⁸ and the overly subjective approach, where:

The danger of confusion increases with the possibility of deriving only what is meaningful and reasonable to oneself and of missing what is different and specific in the Other or, as the case may be, bracketing it as a presumed myth. The objection to this is obvious: the texts...are not to be used to confirm already held opinions; we have to suppose, instead, that they have something to say that we could not know by ourselves and which exists independently of our meaning-inference.¹⁶⁹

Thus, Betti’s third canon, while focused on the subjectivity of the reader, directs us to try to enter into “what is different and specific” in the text, and to fuse it with the reader’s own experience. This is not so different than the Buddha’s advice to examine teachings based on one’s own experience: “Just as a goldsmith would test his gold, by burning, cutting, and rubbing it, so you must examine my words and accept them, but not merely out of reverence for me.”¹⁷⁰ Betti’s emphasis on “what is different” in the text from one’s own experience and his caution against “deriving only what is meaningful and reasonable to oneself” serves as an effective defense against unbridled subjectivism.

Betti’s fourth and last canon – that of the “harmonization of understanding,” also from the point of view of the subject, is similar to the third canon in its respect for the

Bleicher 1980, 73

¹⁶⁸ *Id.*

¹⁶⁹ *Id.*, 73 As mentioned above, Gadamer notes that “Betti seeks the mean between the objective and the subjective element in all understanding ” Gadamer 1975, 511

¹⁷⁰ T Gyatso 2000, 35

mind(s) that created the text. Betti explains it by stating that “only a mind of equal stature and congenial disposition can gain access to, and understand, another mind in a meaningfully adequate way.”¹⁷¹ This requires technical expertise in the subject matter, which Betti calls “technical-morphological interpretation,” and both humility and open-mindedness. It

involves a stance that is both ethically and theoretically reflective and which can be identified as unselfishness and humble self-effacement, as it is apparent in the honest and determined overcoming of one’s own prejudices and certain attitudes that stand in the way of unbiased understanding; seen more positively, this stance could be characterized as a broad viewpoint and wide horizon, an ability that creates a congenial and closely related outlook in relation to the object of interpretation.¹⁷²

This humility of Betti’s approach is rooted in his belief that,

Any given human being may well try to reap the yield of the past, but he will have come to realize that the treasures of thought accumulated through the gigantic effort of past generations contain meaning-contents which, although they are of human origin, are also of overwhelming meaning and significance¹⁷³

and his view that,

We, in addition, may remind ourselves of the eternal truth expressed by Goethe when he stated that it is only the whole of mankind that is in a position to completely understand a human product.¹⁷⁴

I would assert that this attitude of respect for the text and its author(s) is a necessary bulwark against an overly subjective characterization of a text or of an

¹⁷¹ Bleicher 1980, 84-85

¹⁷² Bleicher 1980, 85 Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” evinces a similar open-mindedness “The process leading to fusion of horizons is more like a posture, or a way of conducting yourself, a willingness to open yourself to the standpoint of another so that you can let their standpoint speak to you, and let it influence you” Koch 1996, 177

¹⁷³ Bleicher 1980, 92

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*, 91

interpretation of a text, whether the interpretation be traditional, as, for example, Alaṃka's *Commentary* on the *Vajra Rosary* or Munidatta's concerning *Virūpa's Drinking Song*, or modern, as found in the works of Davidson, White and Urban. This open-minded focus on the Other is also key to the promotion of dialogue, revealing what the economists and game theorists call "common prior assumptions" and "posterior opinions," whether the subject be ancient religious texts or contemporary political issues like abortion or the proper role of government in health care.

Betti's methodological approach has become the minority view in philosophy given the overwhelming influence of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, the philosophical hermeneutics of which were a negative "reflection about what is going on in using 'methods'" in the sciences.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, methodological hermeneutics has found a home in the social sciences, which require some measure of objectivity, as a research procedure. As noted by one commentator,

Heidegger's and Gadamer's critique of objectivity was particularly challenging for social theorists because empirical social science and normative social theory depend ultimately on the characterization of events and situations. At a minimum, the practical need to assess truth-claims and interpretations had to be reconciled with the critique of objectivity.¹⁷⁶

In research studies based on an hermeneutical approach, whether guided by Betti, Heidegger, Gadamer, or Habermas, there should be a sensitivity to the issue of whose voice is being heard, that of the researcher or that of the subject, as contrasted with a

¹⁷⁵ Koch 1996, 176, quoting Boyne 1988 at 33

¹⁷⁶ Mallery 1986, 11. Apel and Habermas proposed such a reconciliation, finding that an objective hermeneutics was possible, but only with keen attention to social class interests and language. See Mallery 1986, 11.

phenomenological approach,¹⁷⁷ where the emphasis would be primarily on the essence of the subject's experience as taken in by the reader, with the researcher's preconceptions "bracketed out."¹⁷⁸ This necessary focus on the researcher/subject relationship raises a number of practical as well as theoretical issues.

Because the research report necessarily represents a "fusion of horizons" of the researcher and the subject, in order for the reader to interpret the report, it is essential that she not only learn what the subject said, but also she must learn of the preconceptions and biases of the researcher who is reporting what the subject said:

Getting into the hermeneutic circle "properly" relies on maintaining a reflexive journal. Thus the daily journal is essential in recording the way in which my horizon is working. I support the notion that credibility is enhanced when researchers describe and interpret their experience as researchers....

Clearly describing procedures, e.g. theoretical notes, methodological decisions, plans for analysis and interpretive frameworks, is an essential part of this research process. For the purpose of this inquiry, trustworthiness may be established if the reader is able to audit the events, influences and actions of the researcher.... These decisions are recorded in a journal and made available to the reader in the detailed writing of the study. The study's claim to legitimacy is the appeal to an audit process.¹⁷⁹

Not surprisingly, this relates directly to the role of "common knowledge" as promoting public agreement that we see in game theory literature, and also to the importance of case studies and the avoidance of selection bias, both of which will be discussed in the next section of this essay.¹⁸⁰ We do see this kind of reflexive approach to some extent, in a

¹⁷⁷ E.g. following Husserl. See Koch 1996, 175-76

¹⁷⁸ Koch 1996, 176

¹⁷⁹ Koch 1996, 178. This study is of the experiences of older patients admitted to an acute care hospital in England

¹⁸⁰ See discussion at Chapter I, C, *infra*.

vague and unstructured way, in Western scholarship on Buddhism in the form of autobiographical information that is sometimes included even in the most scholarly articles.¹⁸¹ In my experience, this sort of information is helpful in evaluating the author's point of view. Does the scholar have some economic interest in the position espoused? Has the scholar had some negative or positive personal experience with Buddhism that colors her interpretation? How did the scholar select her sources? Is she a god, human, or hungry ghost?

C. *Who Is Right? How to Approach the Irreconcilable*

We can now see the problem more clearly. Not only do we have conflicting interpretations as to the meaning of Tantra, but we have entire systems of interpretation that seem to be at cross-purposes. Davidson sees domination; Munidatta the navel chakra's sixty-four petals. Candrakīrti, "in the night-lily garden of the treatises of Nagarjuna...all illumined by garlands of white light,"¹⁸² is seeking the "ultimate meaning," relating to the fourth and fifth stages of clear light and integration; Foucault is

¹⁸¹ Repeated regurgitation of autobiographical information in every publication would not be necessary, and might give the wrong impression. In a relatively narrow field, this kind of information can be published once or twice. For example, Donald Lopez's "Foreigner at the Lama's Feet," in Lopez 1995, apart from being illuminating reportage, gives insight into some of his high hopes, initial illusions, formative struggles, realizations and disappointments in the field of Buddhist Studies, and is helpful in understanding his subsequent work. Robert Thurman's life-changing experience when, on an errand for his Buddhist teacher, "I experienced a disorienting sensation that I can only describe as the feeling of a push-pressure on my tailbone suddenly dislodging itself—a weight was lifted from my body, a veil removed from my heart. I had begun to break free from my inherited life of bondage to enter a new life unbound, an infinite life," Thurman 2004, xvii-xviii, fulfills the same function. And Janet Gyatso reveals that what drew her to the subject matter of Jigme Lingpa's spiritual autobiographies was that she was "immersed in a perpetual identity crisis—obsessed over questions regarding the self, memory, destiny, independence, and subjectivity." J. Gyatso 1998, xvi.

¹⁸² Thurman 1984, 183, *quoting* Tsong kha pa describing Candrakīrti.

with the prison guards, “being taught the art of power relations.”¹⁸³ How do we choose?

Can we choose?

1. Are Differing Interpretations Compatible?

We don’t have to choose between varying interpretations if they are reconcilable or compatible. As noted by Eric Hirsch,

[E]very interpretation is partial. No single interpretation can possibly exhaust the meanings of a text. Therefore, to the extent that different interpretations bring into relief different aspects of textual meaning, the diversity of interpretations should be welcomed; they all contribute to understanding. The more interpretations one knows, the fuller will be one’s understanding.¹⁸⁴

Many differing interpretations are compatible. My strongest impression of President Obama is that he is principled and intelligent. Yours may be that he is a skilled orator and politician. Someone else’s is that he is black. There is nothing necessarily incompatible about these interpretations. Other differing interpretations *are* incompatible. Hirsch writes:

[N]ot all plausible interpretations are compatible. An interpretation of *Hamlet* which views the hero as a dilatory intellectual is not compatible with one that views him as a forceful man of action thwarted by circumstances. Both interpretations are plausible, and perhaps both are incorrect, but they are not compatible. Nor would their incompatibility be removed by concluding that both traits are present in Hamlet’s character. That compromise would represent a third interpretation distinct from and incompatible with each of the other two.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Foucault 1978, 295

¹⁸⁴ Hirsch 1967, 128

¹⁸⁵ *Id.*

Here, Davidson's interpretation of *Virūpa's Drinking Song* as a simple drinking song is incompatible with Munidatta's interpretation of the song as a reference to Tantric perfection stage practice; his interpretation of the soteriological and spiritual concerns of Buddhist Tantra as subordinate to those of regal power, domination and so forth is incompatible not only with traditional Buddhist hermeneutics but with the Buddhist expressed worldview in general inasmuch as matters concerned with pain, fame, gain and blame are not even considered to be *dharma*. This leads us to the next question.

2. Are Incompatible Views Reconcilable? Information and Bias

a. Why do we disagree?

In economics,¹⁸⁶ where it is difficult to dispute the “cash-value” of the exercise, “it has become an article of faith...that differences in beliefs among rational individuals must be explained by different information.”¹⁸⁷ If Davidson and Munidatta had the same information, *i.e.* what the economists and game theorists call “common prior assumptions” or “priors,” would they necessarily agree on interpretation, *i.e.* have the same “posteriors”?

Robert Aumann's 1976 statement of the theoretical answer to this question has become classic in the field:

If two people have the same priors, and their posteriors for a given event *A* are common knowledge, then these posteriors must be equal. This is so even

¹⁸⁶ In his book on an hermeneutical approach to economics, Don Lavoie notes that the “two intellectual traditions — are at this time almost complete strangers — economics and hermeneutical philosophy. Indeed, it is probably fair to say that very few hermeneutical writers have more than a passing familiarity with economics, and the most economists have never even heard of hermeneutics.” Lavoie 1990, 1

¹⁸⁷ Morris 1995, 227

though they may base their posteriors on quite different information. In brief, people with the same priors *cannot agree to disagree*.¹⁸⁸

Thus, if you and I are in possession of the same facts, then eventually we will agree.

Aumann notes that a prior well-known study

argued eloquently that differences in subjective probabilities should be traced exclusively to differences in information—that there is not rational basis for people who have always been fed precisely the same information to maintain different subjective probabilities.¹⁸⁹

In Aumann's formulation, the requisite "common knowledge" of posterior beliefs of the parties¹⁹⁰ is as crucial as knowledge of prior assumptions. He explains:

The key notion is that of "common knowledge." Call the two people 1 and 2. When we say that an event is "common knowledge," we mean more than just that both 1 and 2 know it; we require also that 1 knows that 2 knows it, 2 knows that 1 knows it, 1 knows that 2 knows that 1 knows it, and so on. For example, if 1 and 2 are both present when the event happens and see each other there, then the event becomes common knowledge. In our case, if 1 and 2 tell each other their posteriors *and trust each other*, then the posteriors are common knowledge. The result is not true if we merely assume that the persons know each other's posteriors.¹⁹¹

Aumann's theory is not merely that identical prior assumptions are the only way for people to agree; even if they have different priors, if they are engaged in the public

¹⁸⁸ Aumann 1976, 1238

¹⁸⁹ Aumann 1976, 1237-38, referring to Harsanyi 1967-68. To the extent that game theory is being employed in the construction of an hermeneutic method, the objectives of each should be considered. Game theory is concerned with rational choices as is hermeneutics, both are deeply linked to common knowledge, but game theory is primarily concerned with action, while, arguably, hermeneutics is concerned with meaning.

¹⁹⁰ "An event is common knowledge among a group of agents if each one knows it, if each one knows that the others know it, if each one knows that each one knows that the others know it, and so on." Geanakoplos 1992, 54. Geanakoplos notes the utility of common knowledge in illuminating many problems in economics, but concludes that "if everyone can think interactively and deeply all the way to common knowledge, then sometimes puzzling consequences may result." *Id.*

¹⁹¹ Aumann 1976, 1236

dialogue and trust each other they will eventually reach public agreement. But whatever the route, exchange of information is key.

While Aumann's theory seemed initially

to have little empirical relevance... further research has found that similar results hold when many of Aumann's assumptions are relaxed to be more empirically relevant. His results are robust because they are based on the simple idea that when seeking to estimate the truth, you should realize you might be wrong; others may well know things that you do not...

One of Aumann's assumptions, however, does make a big difference. This is the assumption of common priors, i.e., that agents with the same information must have the same beliefs.¹⁹²

Aumann nevertheless noted that despite his theoretical finding that exchange of information would always produce agreement, there was still plenty of public disagreement around, so that information exchange could not be the whole story: "People may also be biased because of psychological factors, that may make them disregard information that is unpleasant or does not conform to previously formed notions."¹⁹³ More recent studies have confirmed both the difficulties in ascertaining private information, leading to the breakdown of communications,¹⁹⁴ and to the intractability of bias:

Our analysis suggests some specific and striking conclusions. It suggests that people are not truthseekers, that they are self-deceived about this fact, and that they are self-deceived in overestimating their relative meta-rationality. Furthermore people seem to want to be this way. We refer not only to people in general, but also to most academics, and to ourselves.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Cowen and Hanson, "Are Disagreements Honest?," Unpublished Paper, August 18, 2004 (First version April 16, 2001), 3-4, Sethi and Yıldız, 2009

¹⁹³ *Id.*, 1238 This is consistent with Pierre Bourdieu's writings in which he posits that social agents do not act according to rational choice, but according to *habitus*, their "feel for the game" Bourdieu 1990, 66

¹⁹⁴ See, e.g., Sethi and Yıldız 2009

¹⁹⁵ T Cowen and H Hanson 2001, 3

The notion that agreement can be reached by parties with significantly different levels of prior assumptions on a given subject is supported both by economic and game theory, as well as common experience. Putting aside the question of bias for the moment, the key factor, seems to be the *observability* of the prior assumptions of each party. As noted by Sethi and Yildiz, “the expected value of public disagreement is greater when priors are unobservable than when they are observable.”¹⁹⁶ We see a similar analysis in Clifford Geertz’s points about the desirability of Gilbert Ryle’s “thick description” in doing ethnography.¹⁹⁷ So, mutual education of those with conflicting views on a given subject about the common prior assumptions of each other clearly remains an important element in reaching agreement, whether it be on the meaning of texts or on political issues. It seems unproblematic to conclude that any solution to the problem of

¹⁹⁶ Sethi and Yildiz 2009, 1, 4, 13 The subject of Sethi and Yildiz’s study is largely group-oriented, focusing on the disparate reactions of the black and white communities to the verdict in the O J Simpson case Professor Sethi himself stressed to me the limitations of his conclusions, that they were applicable only when the prior assumptions were not tied to belief in a strong way, particularly religious beliefs Personal Communication 10-28-10 Nevertheless, the application of game theory and economics principles seems quite useful in approaching the problem of scholarly disagreement, or, for that matter, any form of disagreement where the actors are posited primarily as Bayesian rational actors Sethi and Yildiz agree with Aumann on the importance of “systematic biases in computing probabilities, i.e., to differences of priors on the broader state space in which individuals update their beliefs,” as well as differences in prior assumptions in the narrower, factual sense Sethi and Yildiz 2009 at 3

¹⁹⁷ Geertz 1973, 5-10 As for the application to hermeneutics, Geertz notes that, “Doing ethnography is like trying to read a manuscript” *Id.*, 10 John Stuart Mill made a similar point

When we consider either the history of opinion, or the ordinary conduct of human life, to what is it to be ascribed that the one and the other are no worse than they are? Not certainly to the inherent force of the human understanding Why is it, then, that there is on the whole a preponderance among mankind of rational opinions and rational conduct? If there really is this preponderance it is owing to a quality of the human mind, the source of everything respectable in man either as an intellectual or as a moral being, namely, that his errors are corrigible He is capable of rectifying his mistakes, by discussion and experience Not by experience alone *There must be discussion, to show how experience is to be interpreted.*

Mill 1991, 24 (emphasis added)

disagreement must take cognizance of both the prior assumptions, including facts and opinions, of each interpreter, and their respective biases, and should make such assumptions and biases as observable as possible so as to promote a deeper and multifaceted dialogue.

b. *Addressing Bias: Research Methods and the Case Study*

If one interpreter has studied a text or subject in detail while another has not, there will be a significant difference in common priors and thus it may be difficult for them to agree on interpretation unless one party defers to the other in terms of her greater expertise with the text or other object of interpretation. Similarly, if we are talking about a collection of texts, where one party has studied many and the other just a few, we have the same imbalance in prior assumptions. Putting to the side, for the moment, the issue of bias, what steps can be taken to maximize the prospect of agreement on the meaning of a particular text? It seems almost trivial to note that the more each party knows about the text, the more likely it will be that they share assumptions about the text, the common prior assumptions that make common posterior assumptions or conclusions more likely. Here, the social scientific concept of a “case study” is helpful.

A case study is “an in-depth study of a single unit... where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena.”¹⁹⁸ Today, in political science and other social sciences, “the case study occupies a vexed position... apt to be described as a ‘mere’ case study.”¹⁹⁹ In the field of Buddhist studies, case studies of particular texts

¹⁹⁸ Gerring 2004, 1 See also Kaarbo and Beasley 1999, 372-376

¹⁹⁹ Gerring 2004, 1 Compared with other scientific or social scientific research methods, there are significant drawbacks to the case study method For example, “Case studies lack the usual precautions for

are singularly out of fashion. For example, Ronald Davidson, while praising the work of those who “feel safe in simply continuing the arduous procedure of understanding internal Buddhist systems,” notes that the direction of “textual analysis...concerned with the relationships of Buddhas in maṇḍalas, the identity of mantras, and the stratification of texts...has often yielded textual descriptions with a curiously disembodied sense of authorship, and we are left asking questions of audience, language, teaching environments, or patronage.”²⁰⁰

There are various kinds of case studies, depending on the unit chosen for primary emphasis, recalling that by its definition above a case study involves more than one unit where the primary unit is the basis for generalizations about the subsidiary units.²⁰¹ One good example of a recent short case study in our field is Kurtis Schaeffer’s “A Letter to the Editors of the Buddhist Canon in Fourteenth-Century Tibet: The *Yig mkhan rnams la gdams pa* of Bu ston rin chen grup.”²⁰² There, Schaeffer translates a short letter of Bu ston’s about his method for directing the editing and copying of manuscripts, and then makes some generalizing conclusions about Bu ston’s method and motivation and what it says about the Buddhist book production and literature.

minimizing intentional or unintentional error in the sampling and interpretation of evidence (precautions such as double-blind coding) In the typical situation, the solo investigator—who has a political or theoretical ax to grind—searches through the masses of historical evidence and decides which facts to highlight and which ones to downplay ” Tetlock 1994, 520 However, the more rigorous procedures are not available in the context of the interpretation of texts No research method is without its drawbacks, however See, e.g., Gable 1994 (comparing case study and survey methods in information systems research)

²⁰⁰ Davidson 2002, 10

²⁰¹ Gerring 2004, 344

²⁰² Schaeffer 2004

The present study is primarily a case study of the *Vajra Rosary*, generalizing to Buddhist Tantra and, from there, to a more general exercise in the principles of hermeneutics and some observations and comparative analysis regarding perfection stage Tantra. Here, among other things, the in-depth study of the entire text, something that naturally follows a comprehensive translation, will enable me to draw conclusions about the text as an entirety that question the received wisdom of modern scholarship as to the cohesiveness and composition of the *Vajra Rosary* and the relationship between it and Nāgārjuna's *Five Stages*.²⁰³ It will also enable me, for better or worse, to examine and judge the validity of differing interpretations of Buddhist Tantra, particularly insofar as they involve perfection stage texts, by comparing them not only to various elements of the *Vajra Rosary*, but to the text as a whole.

Obviously, the larger the “case,” the greater the potential for selection bias as regards the focus of the research. Davidson's *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* and *Tibetan Renaissance* largely consist of historical overview combined with a number of short case studies that are implicitly or explicitly presented as representative of the whole, from which overall conclusions are drawn. Any methodology of choosing representative examples is open to the danger of selection bias,²⁰⁴ which can undermine the basis for Aumann's “common knowledge.” The instant study, to the extent it takes the *Vajra Rosary* as representative of a genre of Tantra or Tantra in general, is no more immune to selection bias than Davidson's works. As we shall see, modern Western hermeneutics

²⁰³ See especially Chapter II, C, 2, *infra*

²⁰⁴ Davidson's buttressing of theory with vignettes and selections of various Tantras and other works clearly raises the question of selection bias. Even in a case study, “because [it] refers to a set of units broader than the one immediately under study, a writer must have some knowledge of these additional units (a) to choose a unit for special treatment and (b) identify plausible causal hypotheses. Case studies are not immaculately conceived, additional units always loom in the background.” Gerring 2004, 344

has become extremely suspicious of selection bias and social science of the confirmation bias of experts.²⁰⁵ This is not to say that the case study is the only method that is likely to reduce the potential for selection bias. There are a number of recognized research methods with the same objective, such as survey methodologies, peer-review, grounded theory and narrative history.²⁰⁶ Whatever the approach, any hermeneutical method should take cognizance of the interpreter's selection and confirmation biases, and attempt to counter them.

c. The Normative Case Study

Although I have not seen it explicitly applied in the context of hermeneutics, much less in the context of Buddhist or Tantric studies, I think that David Thacher's concept of the "normative case study" is relevant here. While Thacher's call for normative standards to be incorporated into case study methodology may be making a virtue of necessity in the sense that normative biases always have the potential to, and in fact do infect the "objectivity" of any study, it also may be indicative that the paradigm shift towards a fulsome analysis of both critical historical and religious factors that I will discuss in the field of Buddhist studies may be of broader application.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ See, e.g., Tetlock 2006, 2000 and 1994, Derrida 2004, 70, Eco 1994, 8

²⁰⁶ See generally MacCoun 1998

²⁰⁷ Thacher also identifies reasoning parallel to that involved in the normative case study in recent discussions of ethical philosophy and the philosophy of science Thacher 2006, 1634

Normative case studies help determine the ends, not just the means, of the subject of the study.²⁰⁸ Describing its benefits, Thacher states:

Briefly, normative case studies aim to contribute to our understanding of important public values—to ideas, for example, about what a good city neighborhood should provide..., what responsibilities organizational leaders should attend to..., or when military intervention is justified... They make these contributions by bringing into view situations we had not previously envisioned, since normative reflection about such cases can lead us to rethink the ideals to which we are committed if the ideals advise counterintuitive judgments about the case. Because normative case studies combine empirical observation with normative assessment, they are particularly useful for analyzing so-called “thick ethical concepts”—concepts like “courage” that have both descriptive and evaluative dimensions that cannot be disentangled.²⁰⁹

While most case studies are descriptive and contribute to explanatory theory, *e.g.* how residents of a village in Nepal conceive of and apply Buddhism in daily life,²¹⁰ some case studies can and should contribute to normative theory, *e.g.* *should* we accept the traditional Indo-Tibetan conceptions of Tantra as expressed in the *Vajra Rosary* and practice them in twenty-first century America? This is closely related to the hermeneutic enterprise: how *should* we interpret Tantra? Just as “social science can investigate values as well as facts,”²¹¹ the hermeneutical algorithm I am proposing here requires us to place *value* judgments on conflicting interpretations.

²⁰⁸ *Id.*, 1633 This is not to say that normative studies are any less rigorous than interpretive studies “For normative theory as well as explanatory theory, close analysis of the empirical record is essential” *Id.*, 1644

²⁰⁹ Thacher 2006, 1632

²¹⁰ *I.e.* an interpretive case study Geoff Childs’s *Tibetan Diary, From Birth to Death and Beyond in a Himalayan Valley of Nepal* could be interpreted as a case study, yet even there he expresses caution about generalizing his experience in a particular village “[I]t is nonsense to generalize about ‘Tibetan culture’ based on information gathered from a single setting Tibetans are a diverse group whose social practices and cultural beliefs vary from region to region, from valley to valley, and in some cases from village to village” Childs 2004, 5

²¹¹ *Id.*, 1634

Christian Wedemeyer's description of Columbia's Alex Wayman's works illustrates, in an incipient way, what I am talking about here. Wedemeyer writes:

Wayman's approach to the study of Tantra is certainly unique, if not downright quixotic. He makes the rather puzzling claim that the goal of scholars of Buddhist Tantra should be that of "recreating the Tantra as a viable entity to be liked or disliked," claiming that "the trouble with so much of the present writing on the Tantra is that the reader is, or should be, left with a feeling of distancy or bewilderment; he is neither genuinely for or against it." It is not clear why such advocacy (or antagonism) should be the role of academic scholars of religion....²¹²

While Wedemeyer's quotation of the material leaves something to be desired,²¹³ I think that it is fair to say that Wayman was making the point, more subtly perhaps than Wedemeyer indicates, that sympathy or antagonism towards Tantra was inevitable for scholarly writers and a desideratum for readers. In so doing, Wayman makes the commonsense presumption that anyone taking the time to research and write, or read about Tantra, particularly given the unusual and antinomian elements of Tantric practice, should come away with a feeling about it, one way or the other. Wayman is saying: give the reader sufficient information, so that she can make the choice: is she for it or against it? Indeed, reading Davidson, Thurman, Wedemeyer, Lopez, and Wayman himself, to give a few examples, one gets a definite impression of whether those scholars are "for or against it," even if, in some cases, the answer should be prefaced by "It's

²¹² Wedemeyer 1999, 65, quoting Wayman 1991, 52

²¹³ What Wayman wrote was, "The trouble with so much of the present writing on the Tantra is that the reader is, or should be, left with a feeling of distancy or bewilderment, he is neither genuinely for or against it, *because he does not understand it.*" Wayman 1991, 52. Wayman was primarily criticizing the lack of explanation contained in modern scholars' introductions to Tantric works. Wedemeyer's first quotation of Wayman is also out of context. The complete quote is, "To answer the question posed above ['What is an introduction of the ideas and practices of the Buddhist Tantras?'], an introduction should show what the Tantra is all about, the underlying suppositions, the leading instructions, to the extent of recreating the Tantra as a viable entity to be liked or disliked." Wayman 1991, 51, 52. Wayman does note that "[S. B.] Dasgupta was himself attracted to certain features of the manuscripts which he consulted," and that "Benoytosh Bhattacharyya was well prepared to explain elements of the system, which he did in various publications with sympathy." *Id.*, 51.

complicated.”²¹⁴ The problem, and this I believe was Wayman’s main point, is that these stances tend to be veiled and covert, and, ultimately, are confusing for the reader.

Moreover, the epistemological foundations identified by Thacher that buttress the normative case study are similar to those identified by Aumann and that underlie the primarily discursive justification for the algorithmic methodology proposed here:

“Knowledge is the product of reflection as well as observation (for example, we may revise our views without new empirical observations by considering the implications of one conviction for others to which it has not previously been connected), and observation itself may have implications that ripple through our network of convictions to reshape beliefs that are not themselves directly empirical.”²¹⁵ Put another way, reflecting on the prior assumptions of others has the power to reshape not only our own posterior beliefs, but even our biases and preconceptions, which is why exposure to the maximum range of possible interpretations in as transparent a way as possible will result in better knowledge, and consequently better interpretations and value judgments.

I would go one step further than Thacher. He distinguishes the interpretive from the normative case study by noting that the interpretive “typically strikes the detached pose; insofar as it focuses on values, it aims to *describe* the values currently held by the subjects of research”, while the normative case study “strikes the committed pose; it typically tries to convince its readers that theory should *change* the way they think about their values.”²¹⁶ I would argue that ostensibly interpretive studies such as, for example,

²¹⁴ This is another reason why autobiographical information provided in their works by some of these scholars is helpful in understanding their writings

²¹⁵ Thacher 2006, 1634

²¹⁶ *Id.*, 1637

Davidson's or the present study,²¹⁷ cannot help covertly having a strong normative content, and the hermeneutical method I am proposing is designed to make the covert overt, so the subject matter can be thoroughly discussed, and a more open normative judgment can be made: in this case, how we *should* interpret the *Vajra Rosary* and Buddhist Tantra.

d. Lost in Translation?

In such a project as this, where the text to be interpreted is being interpreted contemporaneously with the interpreter's translating the text from another language, the hermeneutic issues are greatly magnified. Indeed, as David Ruegg (among many others) notes, "to translate is to betray (*traduttore traditore*)."²¹⁸ To assess the validity of such an interpretation, one should ideally be in a position to re-translate the text, identifying the various hermeneutic choices made by the translator/interpreter and assessing their validity. This is where the preparation of critical editions and peer review by competent scholars is key.

Here, the translation/interpretive issues are doubled, as the Tibetan *Vajra Rosary* that I have translated into English is itself a translation from the Sanskrit. Indeed, the many etymological exegeses of the Tantra make no sense unless one back-translates the

²¹⁷ Here I am giving Davidson's studies the benefit of the doubt and considering them to be case studies of the social history of Tantra. Thacher's paradigmatic example of the normative case study is Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of the Great American Cities* in which her normative "descriptions of city life helped to clarify the things that are intrinsically good or bad for humans." Thacher 1641. Davidson in fact does this in an eloquent way. "Throughout all their activities, the Buddhist religion provided the correct materials for reconstructing Tibetan society, and the doctrine of awakening in its various guises became the social, intellectual, and spiritual catalyst for the renaissance of Tibetan culture." Davidson 2005, 376.

²¹⁸ Doboom Tulku 1995, 75.

Tibetan into Sanskrit.²¹⁹ The Tibetan *lotsawas* faced many of the same issues we English-speaking translators face today, regarding literalness, uniformity and the like, in addition to their own hermeneutic reflections. With the over-used term “Indo-Tibetan,” we tend to gloss over those issues, assuming a uniformity of hermeneutic approach among Indians and their Tibetan students and successors. Yet, Tibetans brought a host of their own cultural preconceptions and biases to the project, even if their objective was to incorporate an Indian hermeneutic into their own. And those cultural preconceptions and biases were obviously quite different from our own.²²⁰

There are a host of issues regarding interpretation *via* translation, that could certainly take up a large portion of this essay. However, given the space limitations here, I have attempted to deal with some of these translation hermeneutic issues in the notes to the translations.²²¹ Generally speaking, Alamka’s *Commentary* is very useful here because we often see translations into Tibetan of verses from the *Vajra Rosary* that are quoted in the *Commentary* (presumably by Stengs pa lo tsa ba, who worked in tandem with Alamka on the *Commentary*) that differ from the translations of Zhi ba ‘od and Sujana Śrī Jñāna of the Tantra itself.²²² David Ruegg recommends that contemporary translators of Tibetan into English follow the same procedure as was followed in Zhi ba ‘od’s and Alamka’s times: “It seems clear that in many branches of Tibetan studies real

²¹⁹ Chapter three of the Tantra provides many good examples of this phenomenon. See, e.g., Alamka 45A. Alamka’s explanations there and in many other chapters underline the hermeneutic issues involved.

²²⁰ For example, as mentioned above, Tsong kha pa criticizes Alamka’s categorizing the classes of Tantra according to caste, while David Gray finds such an approach “subversive,” which, these days, is something positive. Compare Tsong kha pa 1977, 154-55, with Gray 2001, 354-59.

²²¹ See also, e.g., fn 374, *infra*.

²²² I have prepared, and hope to publish someday, a comparison of Alamka’s and the Tantra’s Tibetan verses from the *Vajra Rosary*.

progress can be made only in close collaboration with Tibetan scholars, following the model, as it were, of the Pandita-Lotsawa teams that produced most of the translations from Indian languages into Tibetan.”²²³ I have attempted to follow this model here by working closely with Professor Jamspal, yet I must acknowledge that this does not necessarily eliminate any hermeneutic issues; indeed one could argue that it compounds them.

Despite the many levels of hermeneutic difficulty, *we* still are left with the text, how to decide what it means, and how to choose among conflicting interpretations.

4. How Do We Determine Which Views Are Right?

Having identified some parameters from the social sciences concerning what features of interpretation make discourse and eventual agreement more likely, we now turn to the issue of how we determine which view or views are right. By “right,” I don’t mean in any ultimate or philosophical sense, but “valid,” as E.D. Hirsch uses that term,²²⁴ in a practical, culturally bounded way. If one argues that no interpretation is “right,” and that we cannot distinguish between them, then there is nothing further to discuss.

Clearly, the issue of whether there is a “right” or “valid” interpretation can be a philosophically sophisticated one, implicating Western philosophical concerns about cultural and other forms of relativism.²²⁵ However, even if one adopts Richard Rorty’s

²²³ Doboorn Tulku 1995, 79

²²⁴ Hirsch 1967, 207

²²⁵ *See, e.g.,* Searle 1995

view that “reality” is in fact “mirrors all the way down,”²²⁶ one can still advocate that an interpretation is “right” in the sense Rorty calls “irony,” in which one recognizes that reality, including one’s “most central beliefs and desires,”²²⁷ is purely contingent, yet (or, precisely because of that recognition) fully engage in the transformation of oneself and society based on that reality, on those same contingent beliefs and desires.

Which interpretation is “right” is a hermeneutical question. But whose hermeneutics? Since the question posed is “How do *we* determine...,” the answer must be *our* hermeneutics. But what do we mean by “we”? Although that question cannot be ignored today as it might have been in Western writing prior to Kant and Hegel, very few academic writers go there, and none that I am aware of in the field of Buddhist studies.

As Donald Lopez wrote in his introduction to *Buddhist Hermeneutics*,

Among the questions left unexplored in this volume is that of the hermeneutical enterprise not of the ancient Buddhist exegete but of the modern western Buddhologist.... *An attempt to become aware of the prejudices and preunderstandings that the modern Buddhologist, alienated from his subject by both time and culture, brings to the study of Buddhist texts remains a desideratum.*²²⁸

The answer to the question of who “we” are is significantly different than it was even twenty years ago, and undoubtedly will be different twenty years from now. How can we ignore the impact of global mass media and the Internet on our ways of understanding

²²⁶ Rorty 1991, 100

²²⁷ Rorty 1989, xv

²²⁸ Lopez 1988, 9-10 (emphasis added)

and pre-understanding? Moreover, particularly in today's multicultural world, even the "we" applied to scholars in a specialized field is problematic.²²⁹

As if all this were not daunting enough, the object of this study is the meaning of a text that is a thousand years old, which, along with other texts from that time and place and genre, has been continuously interpreted at least since it was reduced to writing. In studying *their* tradition, should *our* hermeneutics take cognizance of *their* hermeneutics? Are the two unbridgeably different? Is it still *their* tradition? And, if so, who are *they*? The present seventeenth Karmapa, H.H. Ogyen Trinley Dorje, born in 1983, plays video games on Playstation and listens to hip-hop.²³⁰ In the balance of this chapter, we will examine whether there is an approach that can give us some traction in interpreting these texts and perhaps in grappling with some broader issues as well.

5. *Are "Religious" and Social Experience Commensurable?*

Why is it difficult to find a discussion, much less a determination, of how religious and non-religious considerations are actually weighted in determining the meaning of a text? Is it something about the disciplines themselves – religion and theology on the one hand, and politics, economics and gender studies for example on the other – that they claim sole dominance in their respective spheres? And why does the commensurability and weighing of religious and non-religious perspectives seem an

²²⁹ As Johann Herder wrote, "Not a man, not a country, not a people, not a natural history, not a state, are like one another. Hence the Truth, the Good, the Beautiful in them are not similar either." Herder, collected works, IV, 472 (*On Thomas Abt's Writings*). See Sundaram 1998.

²³⁰ *The Times of India*, Sept. 20, 2009 ("So, for me sometimes it can be a relief, a kind of decompression to just play some video games. If I'm having some negative thoughts or negative feelings, video games are one way in which I can release that energy in the context of the illusion of the game. I feel better afterwards.")

important question now, when, in the past, it was, generally speaking, acceptable to leave each in its own sphere?

As Wayne Proudfoot points out, the terms “religious” and “experience” both have their provenance in the modern West, stemming largely from the work of Schleiermacher.²³¹ Describing the dichotomous relationship between religious experience and other fields of human knowledge that Schleiermacher’s thought embodied, Proudfoot states,

With this idea of religion as an experiential moment irreducible to either science or morality, belief or conduct, Schleiermacher sought to free religious belief and practice from the requirement that they be justified by reference to nonreligious thought or action and to preclude the possibility of conflict between religious doctrine and any new knowledge that might emerge in the course of secular inquiry.

....[In this view,] [a]ny attempt to assimilate religion to nonreligious phenomena is an attempt to reduce it to something other than it is....[A]ny attempt to explain the experience in terms other than those adopted by the subject, is regarded as reductive, and reductionism in any form is to be opposed.²³²

If the *Vajra Rosary* or Tantra in general primarily describes religious experience, then, under the Schleiermacher model, the interpretations of Davidson and others stressing the social, economic and political setting of Tantra would not be relevant, at least insofar as the focus is on the religious experience. This would be the result, as Proudfoot puts it, of a “powerful protective strategy.”²³³ While that protective strategy is grounded in a genuine insight—that the interpretation of experience as “religious” by the subject is a primary cause of that experience being religious for the subject—Proudfoot

²³¹ Proudfoot 1985, *xii*

²³² *Id.*, *xiii*, *xiv*

²³³ *Id.*, *xvi*.

asserts that the argument that the subject's interpretation is innocent of explanatory commitments is not well founded, and that this error, that "religious experience, belief, and practice have their own integrity and can be understood only from the inside,"²³⁴ has characterized the last three centuries of religious thought in the West. Proudfoot concludes: "The authority of religious doctrine or of the religious form of life cannot be disconnected from other concepts and beliefs."²³⁵ Thus Proudfoot offers a strong argument for the relevance of hermeneutically contextualizing a text in the social, economic and political fabric of its times, while allowing for the importance of the subjective religious experience of the practitioner, author or reader.

Proudfoot's fellow Pragmatist, Richard Rorty, finds the notion of commensurability deeply problematic, considering it to be an artifact of the essentialist, representationalist view of Western epistemology he criticizes in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. He writes:

The notion that there is a permanent neutral framework whose "structure" philosophy can display is the notion that the objects to be confronted by the mind, or the rules which constrain inquiry, are common to all discourse, or at least to every discourse on a given topic. Thus epistemology proceeds on the assumption that all contributions to a given discourse are commensurable. Hermeneutics is largely a struggle against this assumption.²³⁶

Although one might ascribe his conclusion to his idiosyncratic use of the terms "epistemology" and "hermeneutics," I think Rorty is subtly conflating a number of issues

²³⁴ *Id.*, 235

²³⁵ *Id.*, 236

²³⁶ Rorty 1979, 315-16 I find Rorty's critique of epistemology masterful and useful. As discussed below, his medicine, and that of "the holistic, antifoundationalist, pragmatist treatments of knowledge and meaning which we find in Dewey, Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars, and Davidson" has been effective, but, as he himself would have recognized, the conversation has moved on

here, and this leads to a negative view of hermeneutical method that need not be the case, even if one subscribes fundamentally to Rorty's approach. I agree with what Rorty says about a *permanent* framework, which is an easy target for him. But, for Rorty, the alternative is a relativistic ongoing conversation, which, I think, misses something very fundamental about the hermeneutic exercise: that for us humans, its purpose is, at least provisionally, to *choose*, and then, again provisionally, to *act* on that choice. Without taking a stand, we lose the focus that energizes the dialogue.

Moreover, there is something curious and, I believe, circular, about Rorty's position that commensurability is purely a function of an erroneous, essentialist, epistemological view. Following Thomas Kuhn, Rorty argues that what one might say are the "scientific" view and the "edifying" (which for our purposes we could also call "spiritual")²³⁷ view *are in fact* incommensurable in normal discourse, and, for that reason, there is little we can do to choose between them:

There is no "normal" philosophical discourse which provides common commensurating ground for those who see science and edification as, respectively, "rational" and "irrational," and those who see the quest for objectivity as one possibility among others to be taken account of....If there is no such common ground, all we can do is to show how the other side looks from our own point of view. That is, all we can do is be hermeneutic about the opposition—trying to show how the odd or paradoxical or offensive things they say hang together with the rest of what they want to say, and how what they say looks when put in our own alternative idiom.²³⁸

²³⁷ Rorty distinguishes between "systematic" revolutionary philosophers such as Husserl, Russell, Descartes and Kant and "edifying" revolutionary philosophers like the later Wittgenstein and the later Heidegger, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. His category of edifying is reminiscent of Pierre Hadot's remark that "for Epicurus just as much as for the Stoics, philosophy is a therapeutics." Hadot 1995, 87. Indeed, Rorty himself writes: "It would be more precise, but perhaps needlessly long-winded, to call my own little sect 'therapeutic Wittgensteinians.'" Brandom 2000, 79 n 1.

²³⁸ Rorty 1979, 364-65.

For Rorty the only way we could choose between the scientific and the spiritual—without such choice being a function of “abnormal” discourse—is if there were a Kuhnian paradigm shift that resulted in a reordering of discourse such that the Kantian and Schleiermachian gulf between them disappeared, to be replaced by a new form of “normal” discourse in which these views were commensurable. In the new normal discourse, there would be “theory, methods and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture....”²³⁹ Thus, Rorty is assuming that the paradigm Proudfoot identifies as Schleiermacher’s “protective strategy” is still fully in effect, and thus normal discourse *cannot* measure the scientific against the spiritual and vice-versa.

I think there are two answers to Rorty on this score. First, I think that in our little field of Buddhist and Buddhist Tantric studies, there is ample evidence that the wall has been breached and the paradigm is shifting. That the dominant writings in the field are by scholars, such as Davidson and others, whose views encompass social scientific, historical and other modern academic disciplines, and who in many (but not all) respects trample any protective strategy, shows this. So does the present Dalai Lama’s emphasis on science, shown by his avid participation in scientific discussions such as the *Mind and Life Institute*, his publication of books like *The Universe in a Single Atom*, and his many statements that science and religion are both valid spheres of inquiry. Indeed, the invasion of a formerly sacrosanct religious sphere has caused the need for a new paradigm, precisely because any intelligent “religious” person considering the matter can no longer ignore the secular point of view. As Kuhn and Rorty note, when there is a new

²³⁹ Rorty 1979, 326, *quoting* Kuhn 1970, 108-09

paradigm, there is a need for a new method which recognizes as normal the commensurability of religious and non-religious, indeed anti-religious, discourse.²⁴⁰

Beyond our little field, this need can be seen in the wider world. In the United States, this issue has emerged in the course of the creationist position, which plays itself out before school boards and courts. Boards and judges must make decisions weighing secular and religious considerations. The abortion debate involves the same conflicts. Both involve the breakdown of communication, because, while the paradigm is shifting, we do not yet have a methodology to even help us discuss, let alone weigh, religious and secular or scientific concerns surrounding these issues. Worldwide, a resurgent, fundamentalist, and politically-energized Islam challenges our fundamental notions about the role of religion, but we do not have a way to talk about it, let alone determine which religious considerations should be legitimate in which spheres, and how to weigh those considerations along with and, yes, even against secular and scientific ones. Secular-minded people can no longer ignore the impact of the religious point of view. Religious-minded people are hard-put, particularly in the age of mass media, the Internet and social networks, to ignore the ubiquitous challenges to their faith. Nowadays, most people must decide, on a daily basis, how much weight to give religion versus other points of view: there is no way around it.

²⁴⁰ In 1999, in his well-known *Orientalism and Religion*, Richard King argued for a confluence if not commensurability of religious and non-religious categories, furthering the paradigm shift in our field

I wish to argue for an awareness of the mutual imbrication of religion, culture and power as categories. This is not to say that religion and culture can be reduced to a set of power relations but rather that religion and culture are the field in which power relations operate. Materialist and cultural analyses are not mutually exclusive, 'either/or' explanations

King 1999, 1

The second answer to Rorty's critique of method is drawn from Buddhist *Madhyamaka* philosophy and Rorty's own writings, and, indeed, the response is fairly obvious from that point of view. Rorty's approach to ontology is quite *Madhyamaka*-esque:

Just as, for the usual Sartrean reasons, there is no perduring, intrinsic character of a human self – no 'real me,' no me *en soi*, for myself to grasp – so there is, for the usual Wittgensteinian-Sellarsian psychological nominalist reasons, no intrinsic character of *any* object to grasp. . . .²⁴¹

And the *Madhyamaka* notion of pure conventionality is very similar to Rorty's "web of belief":

For once one sees inquiry as reweaving beliefs rather than discovering the natures of objects, there are no candidates for self-subsistent, independent entities save individual beliefs -- individual sentential attitudes. But these are very bad candidates indeed. For a belief is what it is only by virtue of its position in a web.²⁴²

Rorty's objections to method evaporate if the method envisioned is considered as part of a conversation, a "reweaving of beliefs," and that is just how I intend the proposed hermeneutical algorithm to function. This, however, does not detract from the seriousness of the proposal, which embodies, in Rorty's words, "a belief [that] can still

²⁴¹ Rorty 1998, 105. Rorty's reference to the "usual" reasons is a compression of a great deal of philosophical history, and his "usual reasons" are, of course, different from those of, for example, Tsong kha pa. One could argue that a full analysis of Sartre's rejection of Husserl's transcendental ego may reveal that, if the basis of Rorty's subjective selflessness is Sartre, Rorty has less in common with *Madhyamaka* than meets the eye. See generally Medidhammaporn 1995. For an argument that Sartre's *en soi* refers to the conventional subjective self and thus is consistent with Mahāyāna, see D. Heyman 1997. The counter-argument, on the other hand, which I think has greater force, is that the reasons underlying and leading to one's apprehension of selflessness may be varied without undermining one's realization. Does it matter whether one realizes selflessness by means of the "diamond smithereens," the "royal reason of relativity," or the "sevenfold analysis"? See Thurman 1984, 137 n 199.

²⁴² Rorty 1991, 98.

regulate action, can still be thought worth dying for, among people who are quite aware that this belief is caused by nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstance."²⁴³

Moreover, academic and philosophical arguments aside, I submit that nowadays *we do measure* social, political, economic and scientific concerns against spiritual and religious concerns. We do it most every day in our ordinary lives. Will I eat fish on Friday? Will I call the exterminator to get rid of the mice? Will I have an abortion? Will I drive on Saturday? Will I go to church, mosque or temple today? Will I marry within my faith? Will I say a prayer? What box do I check next to “religion”? Will I meditate or watch TV? How much will I give to charity? Will I relate to this person as a threat or a deity? But we do all of this instinctively, without a vocabulary for discussing it with others or ourselves. What I propose is a step towards bringing those decisions out into the open, where transparency of what the economists call “common prior assumptions” will increase the likelihood of Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons.”

D. Towards A Solution: Algorithm; Alternatives; Dialogue; Reflection

1. Groundwork

Perhaps because in some respects I am a practically-oriented jurist myself, I find much in Betti’s approach that is commendable. The existential relativism that his method addresses is a large part of our culture today, which, paradoxically, is why so many find fundamentalism an attractive alternative. That is exactly why today we need some guidelines to make spoken what is unspoken, but guidelines that are neither

²⁴³ Rorty 1989, 189. Indeed, following Nāgārjuna in his *Commentary on the Middle Way*, the relationality of all things, including beliefs, requires that there *be* method. See Garfield 1995, 293-321.

fundamentalist nor essentialist. So, in this section, I will propose some guidelines of my own, composed to reflect both, as Gadamer would say, “*what is*,” and what Gadamer said Betti said, “*what should be*.”²⁴⁴ There is definitely some normative content in this approach. *What is* will reflect the preconceptions and biases of the interpreter; there will be subjectivity in any application of any guideline. *What should be* will be brought closer by the process of applying the guidelines, discussing the guidelines, and reflecting on the discussion in order that interpreters gain greater awareness of their own subjectivities, whereupon they can apply the guidelines again with a different and better result. In this way, the dialogical hermeneutic circle can rise, like a double helix, towards a deeper understanding of the internal interpretive processes of ourselves and of others.

There is nothing magic or eternal about the guidelines that I am proposing here. They are provisional, for this time and place, and are intended in large part to stimulate discussion and bring us closer to *what should be*. They are meant to be useful rather than in some way dispositive. As noted by Jay Garfield,

We need a more general hermeneutic approach for global scholarship, not a context-free Archimedean principle of universal interpretation—that is chimerical—but a practical guide to talking across borders with the purpose of achieving some mutual understanding. We need nothing transcendent, just a useful guide to productive interchange between persons of good will.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ See n 163, *supra*. Given the crucial role of the interpreter whether the object of interpretation is located in the present or the past, the “historical” question of *what was* is closely related the “hermeneutic” question of *what is*. In the case of Davidson, given his emphasis that “we only need read the texts and examine the rituals to determine that Mantrayāna has built into it a sustaining metaphor,” Davidson 2002, 121, an emphasis that is consistent with depreciating the significance of the commentarial tradition for the determination of the meaning of a text, *what was* seems somewhat open to the predations of Eco’s “empirical reader,” discussed below, who sees everything through the prism of his own world. Davidson compensates for this through his thick historical description of the relevant time periods, but of course those descriptions too are seen through the same prism.

²⁴⁵ Garfield 2002, 233

Consonant with my belief that there is a “cash value” to hermeneutics in that one’s interpretation of a text, *what is*, a culture or an issue determines how one will act: whether one will buy into it, oppose it or ignore it, these guidelines are proposed in the form of what can loosely be called an algorithm. Particular hermeneutic categories are given percentage values or points totaling one hundred. Analysis of each category by the interpreter will yield various point totals for what the interpreter considers to be the primary meaning of the text or other artifact from that hermeneutic point of view. The totals from the various hermeneutic categories can then be added up to yield a primary meaning or center of gravity of the meaning of the text or artifact in question. This is similar to the process that a judge or jury undertakes in order to determine guilt or innocence, a finding for the plaintiff or for the defendant. The evidence—whatever it is, state of mind of the actor, what actually happened, the effect upon the persons acted upon—will be weighed and a decision made.

This primary meaning, as in, for example, “What is the *Vajra Rosary* about, mainly?” is meant to answer that question for us, now, at this time, in this culture. It reflects this culture’s conventional beliefs about how we should go about determining meaning, so as the culture changes, so will the algorithm. The algorithm is also designed in this way to identify interpretations that are outliers, but not in a negative sense, for today’s outliers are tomorrow’s paradigm shifts, and the orthodoxies of next year.

The algorithm is intended to be a stepping-stone towards meaningful dialogue. At the end of the day we may find a multiplicity of meanings, meanings that are multivalent. But unless we initially focus on actually weighing different proposed meanings, a

meaningful dialogue that identifies commonalities and differences in factual contentions and issues of values will be hard to begin.

The benefits of promoting public dialogue and agreement are themselves, of course, merely relative. Agreement is “good,” for instance, when there is too much disagreement, and where dialogue has broken down. I have made the argument that such is the need today. It is not difficult, however, to imagine an alternative situation, where *too much* agreement can easily lead to sterility and groupthink. Imposition of a uniform set of hermeneutic standards in that context would diminish the dialectic of human creativity. Indeed, the celebration of differing views not only has a long tradition in Western thought in the tradition of J.S. Mill, but is also the Tantric way, as espoused in the *Vajra Rosary*.

For this reason also, the guidelines proposed here should be seen as purely conventional, indeed *upāyic*, responding to the needs of particular students with particular needs at a particular time and place. The application of the algorithm should be and is complimented by another guideline, one promoting creativity and the virtue of being *wrong*, an hermeneutical canon in the tradition of ontological, philosophical hermeneutics. It may be no coincidence that this tradition, of Heidegger, Gadamer and Derrida, evolves parallel to the rise of totalitarian states,²⁴⁶ much as Nāgārjuna’s

²⁴⁶ Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s relationships to the Nazi regime are complex and controversial. On the one hand, their focus on the prejudices of the interpreter, for example, the early Heidegger’s writing about the influence of the “they,” tying “understanding to emotionally-charged everyday affairs like minding a business, chatting with a neighbor, answering a threat, or simply feeling bored,” Shalin 2010 at 9, is mindful of the powerful context of groupthink. On the other hand, statements like Gadamer’s that “What is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationship” illustrate a formalism that “suits well interpreters distancing themselves from their own feelings.” Shalin 2010, 20. As Dmitri Shalin writes, “Why shouldn’t the interpreter raise the question about the author’s intent and the audience for which the text was originally written? This is not just a romantic fancy, as Gadamer would have it, it is a sound imperative that goads us not to squint when

ontological hermeneutic method emphasizing emptiness was a reaction against the *abhidharmika* method, the groupthink of his time. Perhaps this is a different, less spoken of, rationale for the critique of methodology.

Before presenting the components of my dialogical hermeneutical algorithm, I will further address two theoretical concerns and one practical one: 1) Should there be method at all, let alone an “algorithm”? 2) If so, must one have a unified hermeneutical theory that justifies one’s hermeneutical method and one’s selection of techniques from the methodological toolkit? 3) Am I seriously proposing an *algorithm*?

Answering the practical question first, I am mostly serious, but in a playful way. As Nietzsche wrote, “The lovely human beast seems to lose its good mood when it thinks well; it becomes ‘serious’!”²⁴⁷ A sense of playfulness is an antidote to being perhaps a little too serious; and in that way, the algorithm is entirely serious: an attempt to restore some balance to an inner and outer dialogue.

Should There Be Method At All?

While there are some powerful arguments against method, particularly in the modern and post-modern period, I think that, mainly, they apply principally to the essentialist, dogmatic use of method, and not the purely conventional, provisional methodology proposed here, a methodology that incorporates the self-reflexive and open-ended attitude expressed by Gadamer, Rorty and Hirsch, among others, and, moreover, is fully consistent with Buddhist hermeneutics and Madhyamaka philosophy.

confronted with the messy socio-historical and affective-somatic realities surrounding the production of a textual product” *Id.*

²⁴⁷ Nietzsche 2001, 182

In his Afterward to *Truth and Method*, as well as in his dialogue with Emilio Betti described above, Gadamer reflected that his critique of method was meant as a corrective, not a condemnation:

In my work, heightening the tension between truth and method had a polemical intent. Ultimately, as Descartes himself realized, it belongs to the special structure of straightening something crooked that it needs to be bent in the opposite direction. But what was crooked in this case was not so much the methodology of the sciences as their reflexive self-consciousness.²⁴⁸

Gadamer emphasizes that his description of “the tension between truth and method” is not meant to repudiate method:

No productive scientist can really doubt that methodical purity is indispensable in science; but what constitutes the essence of research is much less merely applying the usual methods than discovering new ones—and underlying that, the creative imagination of the scientist. This is not true only in the so-called Geisteswissenschaften....

...Here we are in the middle of a hermeneutic problematic—but *this scarcely implies that there are no scientific methods whereby to distinguish the true from the false, to avoid error, or to reach truth*. In the “moral” sciences this is not a whit different from the “real” sciences.²⁴⁹

So, we can comfortably conclude that Gadamer was not against method *per se* and, in fact, recognized its utility and necessity. Arguments to the contrary are based upon a misunderstanding of his position.

A withering critique of the notion of general, universally applicable hermeneutical canons is found in E.D. Hirsch’s *Validity in Interpretation*. Hirsch writes:

What then is the status of the many traditional canons and maxims of interpretation, and what is their purpose? Clearly, they are provisional guides, or rules of thumb...[S]ince any interpretative canon can be overturned by

²⁴⁸ Gadamer 1975, 559. See also Pan 2009, which makes an argument, on somewhat different grounds than mine, for the redeployment of hermeneutic method.

²⁴⁹ *Id.* at 555, 557 (emphasis added)

subsuming the text under a still narrower class in which the canon fails to hold or holds by such a small majority that it becomes doubtful, it follows that interpretative canons are often relatively useless baggage. When they are general, they cannot compel decisions, and even when they are narrowly practical, they can be overturned....

The notion that a reliable methodology of interpretation can be built upon a set of canons is thus a mirage.²⁵⁰

But while Hirsch emphatically states that “there is not and cannot be any method or model of correct interpretation,” he equally stresses that “there can be a ruthlessly critical process of validation to which many skills and many hands may contribute.”²⁵¹ He is able to say this because of his analysis of the hermeneutic process as consisting of two phases. In the first, that of understanding, which is, “at first a genial (or a mistaken) guess”: “There are no methods for making guesses, no rules for generating insights. The methodical activity of interpretation commences when we begin to test and criticize our guesses.”²⁵² The testing, according to Hirsch, is of the “validity” of the interpretation under scrutiny:

[T]he requirements of validity are everywhere the same even though the requirements of interpretation vary greatly with different intrinsic genres. Validity requires a norm—a meaning that is stable and determinate no matter how broad its range of implication and application.²⁵³

The algorithm that I am proposing, because it intended to test, criticize and validate interpretations rather than to formulate them, leaves the creative process of the reader unhindered. Its utility is also found in providing a methodical rather than an *ad*

²⁵⁰ Hirsch 1967, 203

²⁵¹ *Id.*, 206

²⁵² *Id.*, 203

²⁵³ *Id.*, 126

hoc structure, one of articulated reasons rather than unexplained conclusions, to aid in ensuring that no stone is left unturned in applying critical analysis to interpretations that are being advanced, and to promote full dialogue between interpretations.

The algorithm is not meant to dictate at which point of the hermeneutic circle we should enter. If reading the *Vajra Rosary*, one starts with the proposition that this text (or Tantra in general) is so unusual that it must have been deposited on this planet by aliens and hence must primarily be a tool for our future colonization by them, bravo! On the other hand, if one approaches the text, or Tantra, with the idea that it emanates from a feudal society and hence *must* be primarily a function of class oppression, fine. Or, that the main meaning here is transforming ordinary people into superhuman “Buddhas,” o.k. The purpose of the algorithm is not to inhibit those theories but to test them in such a way that the alien theorist, the Marxist, and the Buddhist can have a detailed, reasoned conversation in which each of them listens to the others and learns. The method presupposes an openness to radical possibilities of meaning, and the fact that it is comprised of conflicting approaches is designed to trigger recognition of the previously unrecognized.

Do we each need to have the same algorithm? Of course not, and, part of the didactic function of the algorithm is to generate discussion over its terms, followed by reflection and re-application of the algorithm. But I submit that it would be beneficial and useful to have some algorithmic structure to tease out presuppositions and evidence for propositions about meaning that, particularly regarding religious phenomena and their relationship to non-religious things, has been insulated from reasonable discussion and investigation under the old “protective” paradigm. The broader the algorithm, the more it

takes into account varying points of view, and the more viewpoints it encompasses, the better the discussion will be.

Must Method Be Justified By Theory?

Ronald Farmer answers that question in the affirmative in his *Beyond the Impasse: The Promise of a Process Hermeneutic*, finding in Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy²⁵⁴ an underlying methodology that, he asserts, grounds exegetical methods. He describes his discomfort with using exegetical tools borrowed from differing hermeneutical schemes:

Each hermeneutical approach offered something worth pondering if not adopting, but I did not find any one method that I could embrace completely; consequently, I found myself engaged in "tool box raiding." Although my eclecticism was frowned upon by methodological purists, I found it inescapable. Nevertheless, I was uncomfortable with it myself because my use of these divergent tools was entirely ad hoc. The various hermeneutical approaches from which I borrowed were based on diverse, even conflicting perspectives and presuppositions; I had no undergirding methodological rationalization for my eclecticism. I was at an impasse.²⁵⁵

Farmer stresses that his process hermeneutics does not need to excise problematic elements:

Contrary to many hermeneutical models, a process hermeneutic encourages special attention to those dimensions of a text opposed to its own worldview. There are two reasons for this. First, the entertainment of lures foreign to the interpreter's sensibilities can result in the emergence of a novel pattern large enough to include both the foreign and the familiar in a harmonious contrast. When this occurs, the interpreter's perspective is creatively transformed.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Process philosophy is based on considering events rather than matter as being ultimately real. See Whitehead 1978

²⁵⁵ Farmer 1997, 46

²⁵⁶ Farmer 1997, 124

Ann Taves makes a similar move in her *Religious Experience Reconsidered*.

There, she argues for the creation of a larger novel pattern, but I don't think her pattern is large enough. In her effort to create a framework broad enough to include subjective religious experience and objective measures of the same experience such as are now possible in neuroscience, so "scholars can situate what people characterize a religious, spiritual, mystical, magical, superstitious, and so forth in relation to larger processes of meaning making and valuation, in which people deem some things special...",²⁵⁷ I think she is glossing over the live issue of the commensurability of religious and non-religious phenomena. While her revised nomenclature may obviate some of the conceptual problems occluding the comparative study of phenomena from different religious traditions, she does not address the commensurability issue. The problematic issue—and the solution— is *weighing* the special versus the non-special, and that Taves does not address.

While there is something comforting in an overarching theory, I think that requiring a theory that harmonizes tools from differing hermeneutic viewpoints actually undermines the ability to weigh and measure *incompatible* interpretations. One of Gadamer's main points, and one with which I agree, is that there *is* an aspect of understanding that is beyond method; as he put it, "the act of understanding, including the experience of the work of art, surpasses all historicism in the sphere of aesthetic experience."²⁵⁸ Moreover, the greater is the emphasis on theory as justifying practice, in this case justifying the components of the hermeneutical algorithm, the greater the risk of

²⁵⁷ Taves 2009, 12

²⁵⁸ Gadamer 1975, xxvii

confirmation bias. Philip E. Tetlock's research on expert opinion confirms this.

Summarizing this research, he writes:

If we want realistic odds on what will happen next, coupled with a willingness to admit mistakes, we are better off turning to experts who embody the intellectual traits of Isaiah Berlin's prototypical fox—those who “know many little things,” draw [*sic*] from an eclectic array of traditions, and accept ambiguity and contradiction as inevitable features of life—than we are turning to Berlin's hedgehogs—those who “know one big thing,” toil devotedly within one tradition, and reach for formulaic solutions to ill-defined problems.²⁵⁹

Similarly, a method “drawn from an eclectic array of traditions” will avoid the dogmatism of any one tradition.

This accounts for the eclecticism of the method I will propose, but not for the particular weighting of the algorithm, which I will discuss below.²⁶⁰ Any weighting of one factor over another, indeed any weighting at all, presupposes a value judgment about what is correct, or, more modestly, what is conventional. While there is certainly a virtue in being able to hold in one's mind a large number of incompatible interpretations, and that is certainly necessary in order to compare them, at some point one must *choose*. As mentioned earlier, Derrida says, “[H]e who through ‘methodological prudence,’ ‘norms of objectivity,’ or ‘safeguards of knowledge’ refrained from committing anything of himself would not read at all.”²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Tetlock 2005, 2, *quoting* Berlin 1997, 436-98

²⁶⁰ Sextus Empiricus said in a similar context that he composed his guidelines “without asserting anything about their meaning or their number, because they may be unsound, or there may be more than I shall enumerate.” I’ll try to surpass that standard Patrick 1899, 10

²⁶¹ Derrida 2004, 70 Derrida's hermeneutic approach merits a good deal more discussion, which I hope to do in more fulsome treatment of these subjects. I am focusing here on the groundwork for the proposed hermeneutical algorithm rather than a history of hermeneutics *per se*.

I would submit that the terms of such a choice, whether it be which interpretation to emphasize or conclude is dominant, or how to weight different, conflicting interpretations, or what sources to choose as representative, involves a normative judgment. In choosing a methodology that combines different conventional approaches to reach a conventional result, leaving open the possibility that one could be *wrong* about one's interpretation, I am privileging a sense of radical openness to the possibility that the text, artifact or the world could be utterly different than what one thinks. This normative choice is similar to Thacher's paradigmatic example of the normative case study, Jane Jacobs's privileging of vibrant urban neighborhoods in her *The Death and Life of the Great American Cities*.²⁶² This, then, is a normative case study.

Because I agree with Daniel Dennett that there is no one privileged worldview, the weighting, rather than serving some formula designed to reach some privileged "truth," should, more modestly, identify interpretations that are more or less consonant with hermeneutics as it has been applied across different traditions, as well as serving the overall goal of promoting dialogue and creative transformation. So, I have chosen what I think is a fairly representative sample of possible hermeneutic approaches from different traditions, balancing the Indo-Tibetan (and Schleiermachian) views that stress, among other things, the text, the author and the original reader, with modern hermeneutical concepts like Dennett's functionality and Foucault's appreciation of power dynamics, the latter for me particularly including gender issues.

There is a deliberate arbitrariness in my weighting of these differing approaches, and there certainly can be reasonable debate about this, and, indeed, whether the correct

²⁶² See Thacher, 1641

approaches have been chosen or others omitted. That is good, for it will promote dialogue and testing of various detailed formulae, which is just what I have in mind. I also think that an eclectic approach that is purposefully *not* the product of any overarching hermeneutic philosophy might avoid being easily reduced and discarded before it is tried. There is a better way to “test” the algorithm, and that is by seeing the result obtained. If it seems to work, then we can investigate why. The theorists will always disagree.

2. *The Algorithm*

Plain Meaning

All hermeneutic systems take as their object, if not the sole object, the text or artifact being interpreted. So the words of the text or description of the artifact surely have a place in any method. This is a familiar starting point in legal hermeneutics. A typical statement of the rule is:

It is elementary that the meaning of a statute must, in the first instance, be sought in the language in which the act is framed, and if that is plain, and if the law is within the constitutional authority of the lawmaking body which passed it, the sole function of the courts is to enforce it according to its terms.²⁶³

²⁶³ *Cammett v. U.S.*, 242 U S 470, 485 (1917) While Hirsch is quite skeptical of these kinds of rules, finding that they all have an explicit or implied “unless,” *i.e.* “we ought not to deviate from the common use of the language, *unless* we have very strong reasons for it,” Hirsch 1967 at 202, and holding that “Every practical rule of interpretation has an implicit ‘unless’ after it, which means, of course, that it is not really a rule,” *id.* 202-03, I think Hirsch is being a little too extreme here. Hirsch recognizes that these types of “rules of thumb” are useful “because they hold true more often than not,” *id.* at 203, he just doesn’t think they are *that* useful and reminds us of their provisionality. But this is just the provisional spirit in which I offer it as a part of the algorithm.

Closely related to this rule of “plain meaning” is the familiar evidentiary rule excluding in many circumstances the use of parol, *i.e.* oral, evidence to contradict the terms of a writing:

A court will refuse to use evidence of the parties' prior negotiations in order to interpret a written contract unless the writing is (1) incomplete, (2) ambiguous, or (3) the product of fraud, mistake, or a similar bargaining defect.²⁶⁴

The “plain meaning” concept from legal hermeneutics is substantially identical to the “literal meaning” as described in Buddhist Tantric hermeneutics as the first branch of the *PU*'s second ornament. Although meant primarily for non-Buddhists, Bu ston notes that this kind of interpretation is crucial, for unless it is attended to, they will lose interest and thus not further pay attention to the text, losing interest in dharma.^{265 266}

Intellectual History / Authorial Intent

Few argue that the intention of the author, despite the modern critiques stressing the incompleteness of any text and the interpretation by the reader, is irrelevant to the interpretation of a text.²⁶⁷ Authorial intention is at the heart of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic and is Betti's first canon, the hermeneutical autonomy of the object. Hirsch,

²⁶⁴ Posner 1988, 534

²⁶⁵ Campbell 2010, 154

²⁶⁶ Many texts may be less than clear in whole or in part, opening the door to attempts to resolve ambiguities. Where the ambiguities relate to linguistic terms or are not central to the particular interpretation for which validation is sought, the familiar canon of compositional integrity, that the parts and the whole be consistent, can be invoked without too much controversy. Recalling Betti's rationale for his second canon, “totality and coherence of hermeneutical evaluation,” is “the pre-supposition that the totality of speech, just as that of any manifestation of thought, issues from a unitary mind and gravitates towards a unitary mind and meaning,” Bleicher 1980, 59, we can see that this principle can be applied not only internally within a text, but also in the context of the author's work as a whole, or a culture's presuppositions to the extent that they are uniform.

²⁶⁷ Daniel Dennett and Roland Barthes essentially argue this, but their views are well represented in “function” category of this algorithm.

following Betti, notes: "All valid interpretation of every sort is founded on the recognition of what an author meant."²⁶⁸

I believe, however, that we can focus this canon and make it more consonant with advances in hermeneutic understanding by emulating Richard Rorty's notion of the "intellectual history" of the author in formulating intent.²⁶⁹ Rorty would have us reconstruct a thickly described, "nitty-gritty" "intellectual history" that describes "what the intellectuals were up to at a given time and ... their interaction with the rest of society—descriptions that, for the most part, bracket the question of what activities which intellectuals were conducting," "producing "a sense of what it was like to be an intellectual in that [spatiotemporal] region – what sort of books one read, what sorts of things one had to worry about, what choices one has of vocabularies, hopes, friends, enemies, and careers."²⁷⁰

Construction of a Rortian intellectual history of people who lived a millennium ago in Western Tibet or Bengal, or, in the case of Śākyamuni Buddha, more than two millennia ago, is a challenging task, and in the end will be imperfect. Construing the

²⁶⁸ Hirsch 1967, 126

²⁶⁹ Rorty critiques naive objectivity in divining authorial intent, noting that "successful historical reconstructions can be performed only by people who have some idea of what they themselves think about the issues under discussion" Rorty 1998, 251 n 5. He says that rational and historical reconstruction "should be seen as moments in a continuing movement around the hermeneutic circle, as circle one has to have gone round a good many times before one can begin to do *either* sort of reconstruction" Rorty 1998, 267-68. The "hermeneutic circle" involved in the modern (not limited to Western) study of the development of Buddhist Tantra is still in its relative infancy. If using very broad strokes, one considers the writings of B. H. Hodgson and H. H. Wilson and their successors in what may be characterized as the colonialist/degeneracy trope as the beginning of the first cycle, followed by Arthur Avalon and his successors who were more open to the emic/traditional viewpoint, then we might consider David White and Ronald Davidson, reacting to what they consider to be the excesses of scholars accepting the emic/traditional viewpoint without sufficient objective scrutiny, as the beginning of the second cycle. Of course, one might find smaller cycles within these, but given the very limited access to texts, complicated now by the political situation in China, and to archeological data, it is clear that we are still near the beginning.

²⁷⁰ Rorty 1998, 267-68

intent of the anonymous author of *Virūpa's Drinking Song* is even more challenging. Despite these problems, a modest approach to construing authorial intent as part of any hermeneutic method seems inarguable.

The Model Reader

Another clue to the meaning of a text or other communicative artifact is the audience for whom it is intended. Umberto Eco²⁷¹ has explored this aspect of the hermeneutic process in his description of the “model” as contrasted with the “empirical” reader. For Eco, the “model reader” is “a sort of ideal type whom the text not only foresees as a collaborator but also tries to create.”²⁷² Eco explains: “If a text begins with ‘Once upon a time,’ it sends out a signal that immediately enables it to select its own model reader, who must be a child, or at least somebody willing to accept something that goes beyond the commonsensical and reasonable.”²⁷³ On the other hand, Eco’s empirical reader is

You, me, anyone, when we read a text. Empirical readers can read in many ways, and there is no law that tells them how to read, because they often use the text as a container for their own passions, which may come from the outside of the text or which the text may arouse by chance.²⁷⁴

Grounding interpretation of the text in its intended audience is quite familiar in the Buddhist context of skill in method, *upāya*, and is also an important component of the *PU* and other Tantric hermeneutical approaches. Some texts, of course, such as

²⁷¹ Thanks to Dr Paul Hackett for calling my attention to Eco’s work

²⁷² Eco 1995, 9

²⁷³ *Id.*

²⁷⁴ *Id.*, 8

constitutions and scripture, are intended not only for the present, but also for future audiences, who may be envisioned by the text as being different from the present audience. The same would be true of a letter whose envelope specifies that it is not to be opened until the occurrence of a certain event, such as the writer's death. So all of this should be kept in mind in the application of this guideline.

As Interpreted by Commentary/Discourse

Both Tibetan and Western hermeneutical authorities agree on the importance of traditional commentaries in guiding interpretation. Tsong kha pa writes;

[M]any different interpretations of interpretable and definitive have been declared in the scriptures themselves... The Champions of Philosophy, foretold to discern the interpretable and the definitive in the teachings, elucidated their inner meaning. Hence, *we must seek that meaning by following their determinations (established) by reasonings....*²⁷⁵

Gadamer agrees:

[O]ne of the conditions of understanding in the human sciences is belonging to tradition... This condition is clearly not so much a limiting condition as one that makes understanding possible.²⁷⁶

And,

I shall not deny, however, that—among all the elements of understanding—I have emphasized the assimilation of what is past and of tradition.²⁷⁷

In the context of the interpretation of Buddhist texts, Jay Garfield notes, “A text makes sense only as a response to its predecessors, only in light of its consequences for future texts, and in the end only as seen through subsequent commentary... [A]t the same

²⁷⁵ Thurman 1984, 189

²⁷⁶ Gadamer 1975, 325

²⁷⁷ *Id.*, xxxiv

time the very traditions that determine the significance of these texts themselves comprise precisely the texts they make possible.”²⁷⁸ While this is true to a large degree, to overly stress the role of commentary in ascribing meaning would fail to account for creativity and the fact that no commentarial tradition is static. So there is an important place for it in the algorithm, but not a determinative one.

Function

Having described the more traditional hermeneutic categories, we now move to the more modern hermeneutic lenses, where what we see may conceal a deeper reality, the legacy in our culture of Marx, Freud and many others. Yet this too is not without an analogue in the Buddhist tradition. There in the *Yogacāra* system of tenets, what we see is similarly unreal, a product of the mind only. It is also worth noting Buddha’s central hermeneutic command that in evaluating anything we should rely on our own experience, and that we should prefer the meaning over the letter of a text, so perhaps this guideline is not so modern after all.

Asserting that interpretation based on taking the author’s opinion of meaning as authoritative is based on the “Intentional Fallacy” that “there always *is* a ‘deeper fact’ about what the text *really means*,”²⁷⁹ Daniel Dennett looks to the functionality of texts, (and people, artifacts and organisms) as the best indication of their meaning. Dennett prefaces his article, “The Interpretation of Texts, People and Other Artifacts,” with a quote from Wimsatt and Beardsley’s “The Intentional Fallacy:

²⁷⁸ Garfield 2002, 233

²⁷⁹ Dennett 1990, 180

Judging a poem is like judging a pudding or a machine. One demands that it work. It is only because an artifact works that we infer the intention of the artificer.²⁸⁰

Dennett writes: “[W]e can get *better* grounds for making reliable functional attributions (...that are likely to continue to be valuable interpretation-aids in the future) when we ignore... ‘what the author says’ in the case of texts....”²⁸¹

Dennett treats the reader no better than the author: “There is no ‘privileged access’ to be had in any quarter.”²⁸² He explains:

People buy old-fashioned sad-irons not to iron their clothes with, but to use as bookends or doorstops; a handsome jam pot can become a pencil holder, and lobster traps get recycled as outdoor planters. The fact is that sad-irons are much better as bookends than they are at ironing clothes—at least compared to the competition today. And a Dec-10 mainframe computer today makes a nifty heavy-duty anchor for a large boat mooring. No artifact is immune from such appropriation, and however clearly its *original* purpose may be read from its current form, its new purpose may be related to that original purpose by mere historic accident --- the fellow who owned the obsolete mainframe needed an anchor badly, and opportunistically pressed it into service.²⁸³

Thus, because “utility can change swiftly,” “the user is no more privileged than the author.”^{284 285}

²⁸⁰ *Id.*, 177, quoting Wimsatt and Beardsley 1954, 4

²⁸¹ *Id.*, 194

²⁸² *Id.*

²⁸³ *Id.*, 184

²⁸⁴ *Id.*, 193

²⁸⁵ While Dennett makes a strong case that the function of a text, including the answers to the questions, “Does it work?” and “For what?”, is a crucial perspective for interpreting the meaning of the text, he stresses, with Rorty, that,

We cannot begin to make sense of functional attributions until we abandon the idea that there has to be one, determinate, *right* answer to the question What is it for? And if there is no deeper fact that could settle that question, there can be no deeper fact to settle its twin What does it mean?

Considering *function* as an important component of the hermeneutical algorithm takes into account the insights of such modern thinkers as Marx, Foucault, Habermas and Bourdieu, whose insights as to the importance of the sub-text and con-text, be it economics, various subconscious drives, power, social relations and so forth, are very much a part of contemporary hermeneutics. In the context of Tantra studies, *function* would encompass and legitimate the observations of various scholars about the relative importance of socio-economic, political and gender in construing the function of Tantric texts.²⁸⁶ Some of these theories are totalizing in the sense that they displace other considerations, interpreting human conduct of whatever kind through primarily one lens, and I would anticipate arguments prompted by the dialogical algorithm that the analysis of one or the other thinker should be determinative.

These modern hermeneutic thinkers, however, even in advancing more or less totalizing theories, exhibit a deeply felt sense of nuance. Marx, for example, was perhaps at his most eloquent on the subject of religion, holding that “the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism.”²⁸⁷ While emphasizing that “*man makes religion*, religion does not make man;” and that “[m]an is *the human world*, the state, society,”²⁸⁸ and that it is the task of history to abolish the “illusory” happiness of men by abolishing religion,

Dennett 1990, 194 What I propose to do is to employ Dennett’s insight about the importance of the function of a text, and use it to help determine, as discussed above, not the “determinate, *right* answer to the question ‘What is it for?’” but to determine the *provisionally* determinate, *conventionally normative* right answer to that question

²⁸⁶ In the dominant Indo-Tibetan epistemological tradition, Dharmakīrti ascribes reality to phenomena in accordance with their ability to function Dreyfus 1997, 67-68

²⁸⁷ Marx 1978, 53 (emphases in original)

²⁸⁸ *Id.*

Marx nevertheless recognized that religion plays a crucial active role in constituting human behavior:

Religious suffering is at the same time an *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.²⁸⁹

Further evidence of the paradigm shift and convergence I have been discussing is the fact that the Marxist critique of religion is, to a significant degree, not inconsistent with a Buddhist approach, as the current Dalai Lama has stated. Viewing a picture in Communist Mongolia depicting a monk with a huge mouth into which nomads were walking with their cattle, he said, “There was no need to hide anything from me. There was a certain amount of truth in what the picture was saying.”²⁹⁰

In evaluating function, everything must be on the table: in John Urban’s words, we “should critically interrogate...those phenomena claiming to be eternal or

²⁸⁹ *Id.*, 54 (emphases in original)

²⁹⁰ T Gyatso 1990, 228 While having a problem with Marxism’s materialism, *id.*, 90, the Dalai Lama notes that “my religious beliefs dispose me far more towards Socialism and Internationalism [than capitalism], which are more in line with Buddhist principles The other attractive thing about Marxism for me is its assertion that man is ultimately responsible for his own destiny This reflects Buddhist thought exactly ” *Id.*, 268

There is one passage in Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* that strikes me as Tantric in approach Marx writes that when man is alienated he becomes “lost in his object ” Marx 1978, 88 Only when man becomes a “social being,” *i.e.* connected and relational, does the sense object become a “*social*” or “humanized” object *Id.* 88, 89 Only when man becomes truly human will the senses be liberated

Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man’s essential being is the richness of subjective *human* sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form—in short, *senses* capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of *man*) either cultivated or brought into being For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses—the practical senses (will, love, etc)—in a word, *human* sense—the humanness of the senses—comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of *humanized* nature The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present

Id., 89

transcendent, in the light of their most concrete social and political contexts.”²⁹¹ Our task will be to weigh these theories, compare them, and apply them in the context of Tantric Buddhism. This is a daunting task, and a complete treatment would be well beyond the scope of this study. In a real sense, it is a collective task, and the methodology proposed here is a small step in that direction. The conclusions drawn, as the methodology presupposes, will be provisional.

But *function* when? If we look at function purely in terms of the present, then we would look at Dennett’s sad-iron as just a bookend, his mainframe solely as a potential anchor. This does not seem right, for it would limit interpretation of a text to a context unrelated to that of its creation, and, in the case of ancient texts like the Tantras, unrelated to their interpretation over the course of hundreds or thousands of years. Gadamer observed that, “Historical knowledge can be gained only by seeing the past in its continuity with the present...”²⁹² Looking at this issue from the other end, with respect to the terminology of *sahaja* and its related compounds, Davidson criticizes scholarship that has “indulged in a favorite form of hermeneutics: reading the terms’ application in later texts into the lines of earlier works, and modern scholars have generally privileged the latest and most recently written materials.”²⁹³ For these reasons,

²⁹¹ Urban 2003, 13. Geoffrey Samuel writes, “[E]ven textual scholarship cannot be divorced from a reconstruction of the intellectual, emotional, social and political context of the people who produced those texts, however difficult that might be to achieve. I would go further and state that it is the intellectual, emotional, social and political context which is the real object of study of scholars of Indian religion. Ultimately, it is people and their specific life-worlds that we are attempting to understand.” Samuel 2008, 21.

²⁹² Gadamer 1975, 375.

²⁹³ Davidson 2002b, 52.

we will consider function as a continuum, ranging from the creation of the text, through its uses over the course of its functionality, to its uses today.

The devaluation of authorial intent and emphasis on the relationship between the text and the reader is a hallmark of postmodern hermeneutic theory. Whether one agrees with this or not, this perspective has become a part of the normative contemporary approach to interpreting texts. Hence I am giving it substantial weight among the varying traditional and non-traditional approaches comprising the dialogical algorithm.

Power Relations

Certainly modernity did not invent power; after all, as Kögler suggests, “The question of the exercise of power within understanding and interpretation has played a central role in the human sciences since their very inception.”²⁹⁴ Long before that, Machiavelli interpreted Italian history through the hermeneutic lens of power.

Anticipating Dennett (and Davidson), Machiavelli concerns himself with what is *really* happening: “I thought it sensible to go straight to a discussion of how things are in real life and not waste time with a discussion of an imaginary world.”²⁹⁵ More recently, Foucault writes:

Power’s condition of possibility... must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point... it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable... *Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.*²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Kögler 1999, 215

²⁹⁵ Machiavelli 1995, 48

²⁹⁶ Foucault 1978, 93

In our field, Ronald Davidson and John Urban have written extensively on the issues of political and economic power, and this perspective on interpretation is a crucial one for us to consider.

Another equally important domain of power relations is gender and sexuality, which, we will see, play an important role in the *Vajra Rosary*. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes:

Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.²⁹⁷

In a similar vein, Bernard Faure notes, “In most cases, what is at stake is neither purely consensual sex or individual awakening, but rather collective strategies aimed at the preservation of the lineage.”²⁹⁸ Indeed, he notes, “A consistent feminist critique could well shatter Buddhism in its foundations.”²⁹⁹ We should take a close look at the *Vajra Rosary* and the circumstances of its creation, translation, interpretation and practice in order to see if we agree with Foucault and Faure in this instance.

The same timing issue arises here as with functionality: should we be considering power relations at the time of the creation or translation of a text, or in a subsequent historical period, or today? I think the answer is the same as it is in the context of functionality; we should be looking at a continuum covering all of those time periods.

This last category is different from the preceding ones in that it is grounded in a definite assumption: a significant component of the meaning of any text or artifact will be

²⁹⁷ *Id.*, 103

²⁹⁸ Faure 1998, 63

²⁹⁹ *Id.*, 281

grounded in power relations. If a text is reviewed, and, contrary to expectation, there is nothing or very little of the sort in the language or its surrounding circumstances, then this category can be omitted or diminished, and the meaning of the text determined by tallying up the other categories or giving less weight to this one. But I believe that will be a rare occurrence.

Critical Reader Bias

Having concluded a brief description of the categories of interpretive analysis (the arithmetical components will be described below), there is final algorithmic component designed to correct the ever-present bias of the interpreters themselves, who are often, as Eco would say, “empirical readers.” As Bernard Faure writes in the context of sexuality: “We must also insist on the obvious impossibility of treating a topic like ‘Buddhist’ sexuality—even if it seems culturally external and sufficiently objectivized—without implicating oneself with one’s desires and biases.”³⁰⁰ The problem of the bias of empirical readers is magnified when the reader/interpreter is an “expert.”³⁰¹ In Philip Tetlock’s studies, the lowest scorers tested for accuracy of predictions were the “hedgehogs”—“who ‘know one big thing,’ toil devotedly within one tradition, and reach for formulaic solutions.”³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Faure 1998, 283, 284

³⁰¹ Tetlock 2006, 2000, 1994

³⁰² Tetlock 2006, *quoting* I Berlin 1997, 436-98 In his study, Tetlock tested 284 experts in economics, history, journalism and political science, and rated for accuracy 82,361 subjective probability estimates derived from approximately 27,450 forecasting questions Tetlock 2006, 246 Ronald Dworkin makes a contrary argument in Dworkin 2011

No modern hermeneut surpasses the Buddhists in their appreciation of the importance of the subjective factor, as discussed above in the context of the liquid in a glass appearing to be, and actually being, nectar, water or pus for the god, human or hungry ghost, respectively. A text can serve the same function as a glass of water in this respect. This view would devolve into nihilistic relativism were it not for the fact that, based on the relational status of the liquid or the text, we can conventionally agree that, at least in the human context, on the meaning of the liquid as water, or on the meaning of a text.

I propose to handle the subjective element by a kind of reflexive subtraction: if the interpreter is a Marxist, we will subtract a given percentage from any Marxist interpretation. This preserves the general conventional agreement that we can have about the meaning of a text, while leaving some play for our individual differences—assuming for the present that none of us are hungry ghosts! Because of the efficacy of the case study method, if the interpreter has engaged in a close case study of the object(s) of her interpretation or followed a parallel methodology designed to curb bias, the deduction should be less because the bias is presumably more controlled. While this does give some credence to the expertise of the interpreter, the particular expertise recognized is not that of a particular discipline, the subject of Tetlock's study, but that of intimate familiarity with the text.

* * * *

The point values or percentages of these seven categories or, as Candrakīrti might have called them, ornaments (*ālaṃkāra*), are proposed here in the spirit of moving the overall project forward; they, like the categories themselves, are not set in stone. Indeed,

as mentioned several times (deliberately, given our tendency to reify and reduce) because the primary purpose of the algorithm is to broaden discussion in order to reveal our covert and unspoken judgments about meaning, discussion about the parameters of the algorithm serves that purpose, albeit on a more theoretical plane, as much as application of the algorithm. Yet, mindful of Derrida's reminder about the importance of committing oneself,³⁰³ I have quantified the algorithm as follows.

I think it important that the text-rooted categories of *plain meaning*, *author's intent/intellectual history*, *model reader* and *commentary/discourse* be significant but not determinative, particularly in cases where the function(s) of the text or artifact are different than what was originally intended. So I have given those former categories collectively forty percent (40%) of the total. This leaves sixty percent (60%) for *function* and *power relations*. In ascribing thirty-five percent (35%) of the provisional meaning to *function*, I am giving significant weight to science, practice and Buddha's admonition to rely on our own experience. Perhaps applying some reflexive subtraction already, I am also, to a significant degree, moving away from the romantic hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Betti, even though those formulations have great appeal to me.

Obviously there is some overlap here; function might well encompass power relations. Given our social and philosophical position today, if a text's or artifact's function *and* its connection with the distribution of power in a setting are consonant with an interpretation we seek to validate through the algorithm, then that interpretation should be *prima facie* valid, notwithstanding the words of the text, intention of the author, the text's model reader or any commentarial tradition. The past is longer than the present,

³⁰³ Derrida 2004, 70

yet the present, though an instant, is always with us: so I have given twenty-five percent (25%) to the *past function* and fifteen percent (15%) to the *present function* of the text or artifact.

Power relations are significant to us. Although Marxism is gone from all but the academic scene, multifarious other power relationships have come to the fore in our culture, involving race, gender, globalization, and climate change, to name a few. Given the potential overlap between function and power, if the function of a text or artifact is predominately the distribution or preservation of power and so forth, an interpretation consonant with that should presumptively carry the day. In reserving twenty percent (20%) to *power relations*, I am making a judgment, with Foucault, that power is always at work in a significant way.

As for the reflexive subtraction for *critical reader bias*, particularly relevant in the academy where most interpreters are experts in some field, relying on Gadamer's insights about subjectivism and Tetlock's research concerning expert opinion, I am positing a fairly significant corrective: ten percent (10%) if the person applying the algorithm has done a case study with in-depth review of the subject matter or something with the same (imperfect) safeguards as a case study such as a closely worked peer-reviewed narrative history; and twenty percent (20%) if not.

Thus, we have...

The Algorithm: (TABLE 2)

1. Plain Meaning (Parol evidence) (+10%)
 2. Intellectual history/Authorial Intent (Rorty) (+10%)
 3. Model Reader (Eco) (+10%)
 4. As Interpreted by Commentary/Discourse (+10%)
 5. Past function (Dennett) (+25%)
 6. Present function (Dennett) (+15%)
 7. Power Relations (Foucault) (+20%)
- 100%

(Critical Reader's bias)

Without Case Study or equivalent (-20%)

With Case Study or equivalent (-10%)

= Provisional "Main Meaning"

3. Application of the Algorithm - First Level: Finding the "Main Meaning"

So, assume we are comparing interpretation "A" with interpretation "B." Say the plain meaning, after careful thought and review is determined by the interpreter to be 80% in accord with "A" and 20% with "B," and so on. It would work like this:

TABLE 3 – Sample Illustration

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>
Plain Meaning (Parol evidence) (+10%)	8	2
Intellectual history/Authorial Intent (Rorty) (+10%)	7	3
Model Reader (Eco) (+10%)	6	4
As Interpreted by Commentary/Discourse (+10%)	8	2
Past function (Dennett) (+25%)	20	5
Present function (Dennett) (+15%)	0	15
Power Relations (Foucault) (+20%)	<u>0</u>	<u>20</u>
100%	49	51

Then assume that the person applying the algorithm himself was an advocate of interpretation “B,” but had performed a case study of the text or object to which the interpretations are being applied.

(Critical Reader’s bias)

Without Case Study (-20%)		
<u>With Case Study (-10%)</u>		<u>(10)</u>
= Provisional “Main” Meaning	49	41

In the above example, the bias of the person applying the algorithm causes Interpretation “B,” which would have had a score of 51, to be reduced to 41, and “lose” to Interpretation “A”’s score of 49. Alternatively, we could take one rather than two interpretations, and run it through the algorithm. In the example above, neither of the two interpretations seems particularly dominant, either on an absolute scale or in relation to each other. A preliminary issue is whether all points in a given category should be awarded the “winner” or whether categories can be split. I would say that we can go

either way with this, or both ways. It is important to keep in mind that the algorithm is only a tool, what Hirsch would (disparagingly) call a “rule of thumb,”³⁰⁴ and that dialogue and further exploration are its primary goals. Discussion about whether the rule should be “winner take all” or not in the context of a given text would likely be productive in illuminating hidden prior assumptions of the evaluators. My judgment would be to split the categories, awarding each interpretation whatever percentage the interpreter finds warranted in a given category.

4. Application of the Algorithm - Second Level: Identifying Multiple Meanings

In the example above, Interpretation “A,” with 49 points is, for purposes of this particular application of the algorithm, the main provisional meaning of the text, which for these purposes we are calling (conventionally) valid, while Interpretation “B” is subordinate and conventionally invalid. We are making that judgment. Yet, they are both interpretations. Interpretation “B” resonates as valid, at least at the time of the interpretation, with “B’s” interpreter. While post-application discussion and reflection may change the interpretation of either of the interpreters, at any given time multiple meanings will exist. The algorithm takes account of this by acknowledging these meanings and placing them in a hierarchy or scale. A: 49, B: 41, as in an (American) football game. A wins, but B has scored. It was a close game; it could have gone either

³⁰⁴ Hirsch 1967, 203. Hirsch makes the argument that hermeneutical canons, which Hirsch correctly says are “provisional guides, or rules of thumb,” “are often relatively useless baggage” because a general interpretive rule “is more reliable the narrower its intended range of application” and “any interpretive canon can be overturned by subsuming the text under a still narrower class in which the canon fails to hold or holds by such a small majority that it becomes doubtful.” *Id.* Passing that Hirsch’s logic here seems to me to be not well taken, analogous to the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of extension which Hume said “shocked common sense” more than any “priestly *dogmas*, invented on purpose to tame and subdue the rebellious reason of mankind,” Hume 1993, 107, I think that Hirsch’s criticism does not apply to the instant algorithm, which is less about interpretive “canons” than about the subject matters that should be considered in determining meaning or validating interpretations, the latter perfectly proper per Hirsch

way. After discussion and reflection, the next game could go the other way. This is not a problem: the purpose of the algorithm is to get us to commit, and, most importantly, to weigh all of the relevant factors.

In order that the algorithm maximally draws out the full range of possibilities of interpretation, it is imperative that we not discard these alternative, if subordinate, meanings. In exploring the differing perspectives of interpretation, the algorithm is fulfilling two functions: one is the determination of the main meaning, albeit provisional, in a given community so as to be in a position to make judgments that themselves stimulate further energetic discussion (much in the way that Davidson's definitive position on the subordination of soteriological concerns had a large role in stimulating this essay); the other is to identify a broad a range of possibilities in order to open a perspectival window enabling us to engage in the critical self-reflection that is part of the third level of the application of the algorithm.

But there is another factor operative in religious texts, particularly Buddhist texts, and that is polysemy, *i.e.* the author *intends* to deliver multiple meanings to listeners or readers of varying capacities. This is the hallmark of Buddhist Tantric hermeneutics; there is a presumption that there are many meanings in play for a given text. We see this spelled out in the *PU* and many other texts, and *Alaṃkā* applies this hermeneutic of multiple meaning to the *Vajra Rosary* itself; indeed, chapter fourteen of the *Vajra Rosary* *is* such a device. But Buddhist Tantra is not the only place we see this. In Buddhism generally multiple meanings of a teaching are intended for *upāyic* reasons; in literature, this may be done as a plot device; in politics, a politician may want to play to different constituencies.

There is a danger in polysemous communication: the danger of misinterpretation. For example, Candrakīrti's fourth ornament, the "four procedures" are clearly directed towards different readers, "ordinary people" on up, and his sixth, the "five persons" differentiates among the five kinds of disciples. A teaching meant for a jewel-like disciple could be misinterpreted by the more challenged sandalwood disciple, not to mention the kinds of activities condemned by a long line of Tibetan authorities from Ye shes 'od to the present Dalai Lama. So long as these teachings were secret and individually based, the danger of misinterpretation was minimized, but with the change in culture, the explosion of media and the lifting of secrecy, there is potential, sometimes realized, for misuse and harm, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The imperative of choosing an interpretation and the possibility of misinterpretation notwithstanding, the polysemous nature of a religious or other text will be something to keep in mind as we proceed up the hermeneutic double helix. This toleration of cognitive dissonance from Tantric hermeneutics is a valuable tool enabling us to determine meanings while keeping open minds.

5. Application of the Algorithm – Third Level: Reflection and Further Discussion

While, through the application of the algorithm, we may determine the provisional, conventional meaning of a text, and, through identifying multiple meanings, make those meanings common knowledge, we may still be left with differences in interpretation, *i.e.* the subjective factor remains. Our subjective viewpoint, culturally or karmically determined and always operative, may have been slightly changed, hopefully by the better, through the discussion and reflection that accompanies the application of

the algorithm, but it remains nevertheless. If two interpreters, though the algorithmic dialogical process, have revealed most of their prior and posterior assumptions, factual disputes can be mostly resolved, or at least identified and bracketed. If they still disagree on interpretations, the main reason is likely to be their preconceptions or biases, both cognitive and affective. Where factual disputes cannot be resolved because of lack of evidence, it should be apparent that the facts that are the subject of the dispute cannot drive the respective interpretations because they are unknown. That is often the case in determining the context for the interpretation of ancient texts.

So, the next stage in the algorithmic hermeneutic process is reflection on how differing interpretations give insight into the preconceptions and biases of oneself and other interpreters. It is precisely the *difference* in interpretations that is likely to identify the preconceptions and biases. If we agree on most of the important facts, yet still have different interpretations, the source becomes plain: ourselves. If we look closely at *why* we react the way we do to the texts, we may start to see something of ourselves, which, according to Hobbes, is the foundation of knowledge, “[f]or men measure not only other men, but all other things, by themselves.”³⁰⁵

The most difficult bias to identify is one’s own. It is often the case that this bias is culturally dictated, Pierre Bourdieu’s “habitus.” For this reason, cross-cultural studies are crucial in giving us perspectival space from which to view and critically analyze whatever received wisdom we are endorsing. Where differences in interpretation arise among interpreters with similar cultural backgrounds, other factors come to the fore, relating more to our individual experience, be it social, psychological, genetic or karmic.

³⁰⁵ Hobbes 2008, 11

This is another reason why appropriate self-revelation is a good thing; others can help us gain insights. So armed, we can better interpret the next text, or re-interpret the same text.

* * * *

Before applying the algorithm to the *Vajra Rosary*, in the spirit of the case study, the groundwork needs to be secure. First, we should examine existing scholarly preconceptions about Tantra and its origins as well as the historical context of the *Vajra Rosary*, so we will be in a position as best we can given the state of the evidence to evaluate the setting in which it emerged, was taught and was practiced. This will be done in the Chapter Two. Then, we should pay very close attention to what the *Vajra Rosary* says, in its entirety, which will be done in Chapter Three and in the translations set forth in the Appendices. Only following this will we be in a position to see what the proposed algorithm says about the validity of the various interpretations of Buddhist Tantra tested against the reality of the *Vajra Rosary*, as a whole, in context. And thus having completed the first part of our case study, we will be in a position to generalize about the validity of contemporary hermeneutic approaches to Tantra. Following that, we will be in a position to reflect on what the differing interpretations say about ourselves, preparing us to enter the hermeneutic circle yet again.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ It remains to be seen whether this algorithm or a similar one would have wider applicability. While it is not hard to envisage it being applied to *Virūpa's Drinking Song*, could it be applied to religious texts in a broader context, or texts in general, or, with some modification, issues, artifacts or persons? The benefits of the algorithmic method proposed need not be limited to ancient texts. One could argue that the need for more structured and deeper dialogue is greater regarding the meaning of the more contentious issues of the day, government, abortion and terrorism, to name a few. That project awaits.

Chapter Two:

The Background and Origin of the *Vajra Rosary*

A. Who Taught Tantra? Tradition, Received Wisdom, and the State of the Historical Record

The *Vajra Rosary* itself and Alamka's *Commentary* subscribe to the traditional Buddhist view that Buddha himself taught Tantra in general and the *Vajra Rosary* in particular.³⁰⁷ Alamka explains, in accordance with the more or less standard Tantric account of Buddha's enlightenment,³⁰⁸ that Prince Sarvārthasiddha, the pre-enlightenment name for Buddha Śākyamuni,³⁰⁹ was entranced in "an erroneous 'space pervading' concentration"³¹⁰ on the bank of a river:

Thinking to himself, "This is enlightenment," he remained in that state. Then, from the so-called Buddha fields of Abhirati, Akaniṣṭha, Ratnasambhava, Sukhāvatī, and Kusumavatī,³¹¹ [the Buddhas of the ten directions] came and exhorted Prince Sarvārthasiddha, saying "this concentration is impure" and so forth. Then he rejected that mistaken concentration. Then he saw the sky teeming with all the Lords.

³⁰⁷ *VR* 1B-8B, ch 1, Alamka 1B-4A

³⁰⁸ See, e.g., Lessing and Wayman 1968, 37 ("You cannot become a Manifest Complete Buddha by this *samādhi* alone." "Then, how shall I do it?" he implored them. Thereupon all the Buddhas of the ten directions summoned the daughter of the gods Tilottamā and bestowed concretely the third initiation, the Insight-Knowledge Initiation.")

³⁰⁹ See, e.g., Lessing and Wayman 1968, 27

³¹⁰ This probably refers to the first of the four formless absorptions, infinite space, with respect to which Lati Rinpoche notes "The object of observation is the mental aggregates of the meditator, 'limitless space' means that for the meditator's mind, space pervades everywhere." Lati Rinpoche 1997, 114. There is nothing "wrong" with this concentration, which, along with the other three formless absorptions, is not exclusively Buddhist. See Wynne 2009. Here, though, as described below, Buddha mistook it for enlightenment.

³¹¹ The pure lands of Aksobhya, Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi, respectively, although Akaniṣṭha can also refer to the highest of the sixteen form realms."

He prostrated, saying, *Om sarva tathāgata kāya vāk citta pranamena vajra bandhanam karomi*,³¹² and, circumambulating as a preliminary practice, supplicated those Lords to teach the concentration of the actuality of unerring reality. Then those Lords, having preliminarily emanated the Great Seal mandala and performed the preparatory ritual for disciples, mentally resolved on the enlightenment spirit and, having conferred initiation through the four initiations together with the preliminary practices divided into the four initiations, the pledges and the vow of giving, having given individual instruction of the stages wherein are taught the three concentrations, the hundred families classification and the five stages, those Lords departed to their own Buddha fields.

Then, the Lord Lion of the Śākyas, because of his sharp faculties of esoteric knowledge as taught to him by previous Lords, completely awakened at midnight, overcame Mara before dawn, [and] left for Tushita Heaven....³¹³

Then, as Alamka tells it, Buddha emanated the *Secret Community* thirty-two deities from his body,³¹⁴ and taught the twenty-five thousand-verse version, now lost, of the *Secret Community Tantra*. He also taught a briefer version, also lost, of eighteen hundred lines in eighteen chapters,³¹⁵ and subsequently taught a number of other Tantras, culminating in his teaching of the *Vajra Rosary Tantra* (which is referred to as the *Small Vajra Rosary Tantra*) and the other explanatory Tantras that we have today:

After that, for the benefit of the living beings of the Vaishya [merchant] class, who have great attachment and hatred and small obscuration,³¹⁶ teaching principally the four empowerments to the Tushita gods, he taught the *Gathering in Two Stages* and the *Secret Community Tantra*. After that, in the Western Mountains of Oddiyana, the Lord, from the

³¹² “I perform vajra praise by bowing down to the body, speech and mind of all Buddhas ”

³¹³ Alamka 1B-2B Tsong kha pa says this is contradicted by the *PK* and the *CMP*, which say that only the clear light and communion personal instructions were given Tsong kha pa 2010, 482

³¹⁴ Alamka 2B

³¹⁵ That the surviving Tantra is a much shorter version of the original lost tantra is a common trope in the Buddhist literature

³¹⁶ Tsong kha pa says that Alamka’s relation of different Tantras for different castes is wrong Tsong kha pa 1977, 155-56 In defense of Alamka, however, I think that he is merely accounting for the original motivation for Buddha’s teaching the various Tantras rather than saying, as Tsong kha pa assumes, that the various Tantras are suited for practice by the various castes

perspective of the ten Terrifics in the form of glorious Vajrasattva, principally in order to control the ten Directional Protectors, taught the two Tantras: the *Vajra Rosary* in twelve thousand lines and the *Shorter Vajra Rosary*. After that, the Lord who had prayed to the Transcendent, in the form of glorious Vajrasattva, on the snow covered mountain, taught the *Scriptural Indication of the Intention Tantra*³¹⁷ among human beings.

After that, the Lord, who was supplicated by the four goddesses, on the peak of the Vindhya Mountains, taught the *Requests by the Four Goddesses Tantra*.³¹⁸ After that, on the banks of the Ganges, he taught by dividing the major and minor *Vajra-Wisdom Compendium Tantra*.³¹⁹ After that, having relied on living beings connected with the *candala* [outcast] caste of the greatest of the great in desire and hatred and the smallest of the small in delusion, the Lord, in a saintly state, by dividing the major and minor glorious *Chakrasaṃvara* [Tantra], principally taught [to those in] the pure abodes the two stages, principally the four empowerments, together with the four explanatory Tantras which mainly emphasize wisdom, and did not teach, because it was not required here, the classification of the place of the four Tantras.

After that, for the purpose of training the four devils in Magadha in this very India,³²⁰ he taught the teaching of the glorious *Joyful Vajra Tantra* together with the major and minor explanatory Tantras. Likewise, here he did not teach the differentiation of the various places and so forth because it was not necessary. Because of this, having great compassion, here, on top of the peak of Western Uddiyana, the Lord taught from among the five classes of Tantra the *Small Vajra Rosary Tantra*, and taught that which has as its essence the 68 chapters and the 82 questions and answers.³²¹

Interestingly, Alamka gives two versions of the timing of the teaching of the oral personal instructions, and the root, branch³²² and explanatory Tantras: one that they were

³¹⁷ *Samdhivvyākaraṇa-nāma-tantra*; *dgongs pa lung bstan pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*, Toh 444

³¹⁸ *Caturdevi-paripṛcchā*; *lha mo bzhus yongs su zhus pa*, Toh 446

³¹⁹ *Vajrañāna-samuccaya-nāma-tantra*; *ye shes rdo rje kun las btus pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*, Toh 447 The colophon to the text preserved in Tibetan attests to its actually being only the second chapter of a text by that name. The chapter preserved in Tibetan translation is the “Great Bliss” chapter (*bde ba chen po'i le'u*). So, “major and minor” may refer to different, fuller texts. Thanks to Paul Hackett for this reference.

³²⁰ This may be a reference to Alamka's locale at the time he wrote or dictated the *Commentary*.

³²¹ Alamka 3B-4A

³²² According to Longchenpa, “branch” Tantra is one that focuses on one of the ten “essentials” of Tantra outlook, meditation, behavior, initiation, mandala, charismatic activity, commitments, capacities, worship

respectively taught in the four ages or *yugas*; and another that they were all taught by Buddha during this age immediately after the teaching of the brief version of the *Secret Community Tantra*.³²³ Alamka says of the latter, “This view is also agreeable.”³²⁴ Alamka’s ambidexterity in this regard is consistent with Christian Wedemeyer’s argument that Tibetan historians, in particular those writing about the Noble Tradition, were well aware of the historiographical difficulties they confronted and that the traditional accounts were a solution to the more pressing problem of the legitimacy of revelation.³²⁵ Alamka’s easy acceptance of the alternative accounts seems to coincide with Wedemeyer’s conclusion that “to them, the problem was not a *problem*.”³²⁶

Today, in the view of most modern (not limited to Western) commentators, all of the *written* Indian Buddhist Tantric texts were composed between the sixth and ninth centuries C.E., and almost no one argues for an earlier date for Tantra in general.³²⁷

and mantras, while a root Tantra encompasses all of them, an explanatory tantra expands upon and clarifies them Longchenpa 2000, 2

³²³ Alamka 3A (Sde dge) (*de yang sdud pa po phyag na rdo rje 'am dpal gyis brgyud nas mi'i 'jug rten du 'ongs so/ de la rdzogs ldan dang gsum ldan dang gnyis ldan dang rtsod pa can gyi dus su zhal gyi gdams ngag dang rtsa ba'i rgyud dang yan lag gi rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud la sogs pa la 'jug pa zhes bya ba ni kha cig smra'o/ gzhan dag ni rtsod pa'i dus 'di nyid du sems can thams cad rjes su gzung ba'i phyir nyung ngu'i rtsa ba'i rgyud bstan pa'i de ma thag tu bcom ldan 'das kyis yan lag gi rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud la sogs pa bstan zhes zer ro/*).

³²⁴ *Id.* Wedemeyer quotes Tāranātha’s unambiguous statement that the Noble Tradition literature attributed to Nāgārjuna and the *PU* attributed to Candrakīrti “were not spread” and “was not composed and spread” during their lifetimes, but were propagated by a Nāgabodhi who preserved the teachings until late in the first millennium Wedemeyer 2007, 19-20

³²⁵ Wedemeyer 2007, 17

³²⁶ *Id.*

³²⁷ *See, e.g.,* Dalton 2004, 2 Alex Wayman made an argument placing the *Vajra Rosary* in the fifth century, but, closely analyzed, it is not a strong argument Wayman 1991, 96-98 Wayman’s arguments are that (1) Tāranātha reported that the Tantras were held secret for 300 years before being made more public by the siddhas, (2) there is epigraphic evidence from the fifth century for the ten incarnations of Vishnu as to which the *Vajra Rosary* converts the first five into an embryology, some of the text of which is set out below, in the section of this examination on philosophy, and (3) based on his own speculations regarding groupings of the instincts [*vasana, bag chag*] in the Vaisnava system, which he himself characterizes as

Geoffrey Samuel, in his comprehensive recent study of the origin of Tantra, in a move typical of modern scholarship, defines Tantra as “the development of the relatively coherent set of techniques and practices which appears in a more or less complete form in Buddhist and Śaiva *texts* in the ninth and tenth centuries CE.”³²⁸ Steven Weinberger, relying in part on Yukei Matsunaga's work, describes the earliest Tantras mainly characterized by the use of spells and rituals for controlling nature as developing at the latest by the first quarter of the seventh century, followed by texts retrospectively designated as “Action Tantra” dating from roughly the seventh century, and by the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, which presents a three Buddha family structure with the emphasis moving from the Śākyamuni family to the Vairocana family, during the first half of the seventh century. He finds that the *Compendium of Principles Tantra*, the focus of his study, developed into its final form by the middle of the eighth century. The *Compendium of Principles* and texts related to it are characterized by “continued development of distinctly tantric contemplative practices, deities in their wrathful reflexes, and the introduction of practices involving sex and violence,” with the associated mandala expanding the three Buddha family structure to five, with, for the first time, Vajrapaṇi taking a central role.³²⁹ Weinberger finds that the development of the doctrines and practices of the *Compendium* and related texts produced the next phase of Indian Buddhist Tantra, the so-called Mahāyoga Tantras that include the *Secret*

speculative and based on the obscure. As to (1), it makes sense if Tāranātha was right, which is hard to know. As for (2), it doesn't make sense since the *Vajra Rosary* could have predated the embryology or just adopted it at some later date. As for (3), I wouldn't quarrel with Professor Wayman's own characterization. All of this supports Wedemeyer's point made in his dissertation, *see* below, as to the speculative nature of such dating of the Tantras.

³²⁸ Samuel 2008, 9 (emphasis added)

³²⁹ Weinberger 2003, 25-37

Community, which expanded the practices involving ritualized sex and violence.³³⁰

Weinberger concludes:

The tantras grouped together under the rubric of Mahāyoga reflect the continued development of extreme or radical practices found in inchoate form in the *Compendium of Principles* and the family of texts that developed out of it. In particular, we find more advanced forms of wrathful practices and sexual practices (for instance, the *Secret Assembly Tantra* was taught when the Supermundane Victor was residing in the female vagina). It seems unlikely that the introduction of practices involving the subtle body and the manipulation of life-energies at internal psycho-physical centers (and the subtle levels of consciousness associated with them) occurred with these tantras. Certainly the later commentarial traditions include such practices, but the evidence suggests that the earliest traditions of the tantras themselves do not.³³¹

Because the *Vajra Rosary* extensively addresses the subtle body and life-energy practices that Weinberger argues are not present in the "earliest traditions" of the *Secret Community*, which Weinberger dates as "before 746 CE,"³³² presumably he and most scholars would date it rather late, probably in the ninth or tenth centuries, shortly before it was found, as we shall see, by Zhi ba 'od's guru, Mantrakalaśa.

While dating of the revealed Tantras and Sūtras remains controversial, there is a growing scholarly consensus regarding the dating of the Noble Tradition śāstric literature, its interaction with the Tantras and Explanatory Tantras such as the *Vajra Rosary*, and the identity of the authors of the *PK* and *CMP*, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva as being the same persons who authored the famous philosophical works. Consistent with the consensus holding that the Nāgārjuna who wrote the *PK* was not the famous Madhyamaka

³³⁰ Weinberger 2003, 34-36

³³¹ Weinberger 2003, 37 (footnote omitted) Weinberger presents evidence for his argument that the *Secret Community* has many features showing the influence of the *Compendium of Principles*, 272-73

³³² *Id.*, 36

philosopher who lived in the first part of the first millennium, Yukei Matsunaga's oft-quoted and respected textual study of the *Secret Community* Explanatory Tantras, of which the *Vajra Rosary* is one, posits "fabrications made in the interest of various schools of Tāntric Buddhism,"³³³ particularly made by scholars of the Noble Tradition in order to valorize the *PK*. In his 2007 book on Āryadeva's *CMP*, Christian Wedemeyer, while he states that "it seems certain that the development of this [Noble Tradition] school took place in the ninth and early tenth centuries,"³³⁴ differs from the earlier Western scholarship regarding the traditional Tibetan claim. Pointing out that the great Tibetan historian Tāranātha also recognized that the Noble Tradition developed in the ninth and early tenth centuries, Wedemeyer notes how Tāranātha's critical historical awareness could encompass without contradiction the claim that the *PK* and *CMT* were in fact the works of the Madhyamaka "Father and Son," Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, transmitted through visions or through preservation of the teachings by other means.³³⁵

He notes,

Tāranātha's formulation might also (indeed, might better) be understood as a seventeenth-century Tibetan articulation of a widespread pattern of historical understanding evident in a broad range of Indian (and Tibetan) Buddhist contexts since the early first millennium. His presentation encapsulates a set of distinctive motifs that are pandemic in the historiography of Buddhist scriptural production. The theoretical models underpinning his discussion are neither restricted to esoteric nor to Tibetan historiography, but have functioned throughout the Buddhist world as devices for those traditions discursively to digest the conspicuous fact of near-constant scriptural revelation over the course of (at least) a millennium, while simultaneously

³³³ Matsunaga 1967, 844

³³⁴ Wedemeyer 2007, 35

³³⁵ *Id.*, 7-36

validating these revelations by referring their origins to beings of unimpeachable authority: generally buddhas, bodhisattvas, or major saints.³³⁶

In his doctoral dissertation, Wedemeyer had argued that there was insufficient evidence to support what had then become (and still is) the received Western academic perspective that the written Tantras, and Tantra in general arose at the end of the first millennium.³³⁷ There, Wedemeyer traced the fictive narrative structure that had dominated Western academic discourse since William Erskin's 1813 account of “Elephanta” and B. H. Hodgson, concluding that “among the several arguments which have been advanced over the last two centuries purporting to establish the history of Buddhist Tantrism and the Ārya Tradition, not one stands up to critical scrutiny.”³³⁸ Having cleared away this distracting narrative, Wedemeyer turned to the evidentiary record in the hopes of finding some independent evidence on which to base the Tantric chronology. However, he could not, finding that: the lack of traces of Tantra in the historical record proved little; literary analysis was of no help; the physical data, archaeological, numismatic and so forth were inconclusive; and that relying on references to Chinese translations and the reports of foreign travelers was also methodologically unsound.³³⁹ Wedemeyer ended his discussion with a recommendation that we regard the historical data on Buddhist Tantra “merely as an open text—available for multiple ‘readings’.”³⁴⁰ In recommending this, Wedemeyer argued that inasmuch as “one cannot

³³⁶ *Id.*, 26

³³⁷ Wedemeyer 1999, 27-72

³³⁸ *Id.*, 71

³³⁹ *Id.*, 73-150

³⁴⁰ *Id.*, 154

help but find the general absence of early Tantric traces remarkable,”³⁴¹ we should consider the received view as one possible paradigm along with the possibility that the Noble Tradition literature was inspired but not written by the famous Madhyamakas Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva and so forth, “that the traditions might have been initiated by the ascribed authors and evolved over the years as oral texts, gradually incorporating various developments along the way before being textually codified...”³⁴² Finally, Wedemeyer contended that “one may also coherently and legitimately entertain the possibility that the Ārya Tradition literature... was, in fact, written by the ascribed Madhyamaka authors.”³⁴³

Wedemeyer’s 2007 analysis of the dating of the *CMP*, of course, is informed by almost twenty additional years of scholarship. However, his focus in 2007 is the written text of the *CMP* rather than Tantra in general, and I believe that, in the spirit of openness that I am normatively privileging, there continues to be reason to question what has become the consensus view that Buddhist Tantra first developed in the seventh and eighth centuries. If my critique of Matsunaga’s conclusions about the relative dating of the *Vajra Rosary* and the *PK* has merit, then there may also be additional reason to question the dating of the Noble Tradition literature as well, but that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Not much has changed since Wedemeyer’s dissertation; we still know very little. Wedemeyer bases his 2007 conclusion that the Āryadeva who composed the *CMT* was not the Āryadeva who authored the earlier Madhyamaka works on textual references in

³⁴¹ *Id.*, 155

³⁴² *Id.*, 155-57

³⁴³ *Id.*, 157

and to the *CMT*, and relies for the establishment of *termini post and ante quem* principally on the *CMP*'s citation of the works of Kambala and Padmavajra.³⁴⁴ This, along with his conclusion that the Tibetan historians Tāranātha, A myes zhabs and Gos Lotsāwa were aware of the historical problems posed by the conflation of the “Tantric” and “Madhyamaka” Āryadevas and Nāgārjūnas and the revelation of the *Secret Community Tantra* by Buddha, and solved those problems by positing later revelations, analogous to Rnying ma *terma* being uncovered, and the existence of a common literary trope in the literature making the same type of move, appear to be the basis for his position, rather than some new archeological evidence or the like.³⁴⁵

I think that dating issue is not quite resolved. First, the textual references locating the *CMP* in the ninth or tenth centuries apply only to a specific recension of the *written* text.³⁴⁶ As Wedemeyer noted in his dissertation, and as I will discuss in more detail below concerning Matsunaga's findings, despite the profusion of Mahāyāna texts at the beginning of the first millennium and Tantric texts at its end, oral Tantric teachings along the same lines as the written text could have pre-dated the written text by centuries, and the written text itself could have undergone a long evolution.³⁴⁷ As for the Tibetan historians, who were active in the 16th and 17th centuries who wrote *half a millennium* after the events in question, I think that one could use the same skeptical approach about

³⁴⁴ *Id.*, 11-14

³⁴⁵ Wedemeyer 2007, 17-35

³⁴⁶ Wedemeyer states “Taken in the aggregate, the extant evidence suggests that the authors of the esoteric *writings* lived rather later than the homonymous authors of the exoteric *texts*” *Id.*, 9 (emphases added)

³⁴⁷ Reliance on oral transmission is also not without problems. See, e.g. Steinkellner 2004, 6 and discussion below

their views as Wedemeyer used to raise questions about the reliability of the received wisdom of Western scholars about those same events.

What is at stake? What does the hermeneutic of suspicion suggest? Could it be that we are privileging literature over practice?³⁴⁸ Is it coincidental that scholars trained in translation of texts would privilege... the book?

The preoccupation with filiation and dating is characteristic of treating what Roland Barthes calls “Texts” as “works”:

The work is caught up in a process of filiation. Are postulated: a determination of the work by the world (by race, then by History), a consecution of works amongst themselves, and a conformity of the work to the author... [T]he Text... refers to the image of an organism which grows by vital expansion, by “development” (a word which is significantly ambiguous, at once biological and rhetorical); the metaphor of the Text is that of the network; if the Text extends itself, it is as a result of a combinatory systematic (an image, moreover, close to current biological conceptions of the living being).³⁴⁹

To test the received wisdom of defining Tantra as something limited to “works,” we should reflect, as David Thacher suggests, on an alternate view of reality. So I will, briefly, sketch one, treating Tantras as “Texts” rather than “works.” We will see, however, that the paucity of the evidence cuts both ways.

As shown by James Hartzell, although it is important to distinguish between Tantric “ideas that are incorporated into the Tantric system” and “Tantra,”³⁵⁰ there is an abundance of evidence of a Tantric approach which can be found in the Vedas, and is

³⁴⁸ As Donald Lopez points out, “Buddhist Studies has long placed its faith in the text, to be excavated with philology and explicated with comparative philosophy, with no need for living Buddhists.” Lopez 1995, 279

³⁴⁹ Barthes 1977, 161

³⁵⁰ Hartzell 1997, 278-79 n 298

further developed in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads.³⁵¹ Hartzell finds, contrary to Weinberger's assertion that "the introduction of practices involving the subtle body and the manipulation of life-energies at internal psycho-physical centers"³⁵² did not even occur in the Mahāyoga Tantras like the *Vajra Rosary*, that "[t]he evidence pretty strongly suggests the doctrine of the inner winds of the body as personal versions of the Winds—*i.e.* the atmospheric fire as one of the three cosmic fires (along with the solar and earthly fires)--was well established in the early Vedic tradition," and that "although the Tantric subtle-body doctrines are not present in the earliest Vedic literature, the seeds of the ideas were already present."³⁵³ He concludes: "A wide variety of aspects of Tantric symbolism derives—in a more evolved and more complex form, with different philosophical and teleological emphases and underpinnings—from material that was already present in the earliest Vedic literature."³⁵⁴ Forgetting about the *text* and writing about "yogic practice, in the sense of a developed set of techniques for operating with the mind-body complex," Geoffrey Samuel states that "[o]ur best evidence to date suggest that such practices developed in the same ascetic circles as the early *śramaṇa* movements (Buddhists, Jainas and Ājīvikas), probably in around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE."³⁵⁵ Samuel describes the practice, prominent in the Brāhmaṇas, of ascetics accumulating *tapas*, that

³⁵¹ Hartzell 1997, 71-123, 170-71, 577-87

³⁵² Weinberger 2003, 37

³⁵³ Hartzell 1997, 124, 125

³⁵⁴ Hartzell 1997, 125 Hartzell also notes the features of Tantra that do not appear in the *Brāhmaṇas* "in any germinal form," including seed syllable mantras, the aim of liberation as opposed to immortality through these practices, sexual rites not concerned with procreation, the central role of elaborate visualizations of deities (although there is an idea of "entering deities"), male/female couples and Buddhist notions of emptiness and the like Hartzell 1997, 125-27

³⁵⁵ Samuel 2008, 8

seems be identical or very close to the *tummo* practice featured in the *Vajra Rosary* and many other Tantric texts:³⁵⁶ This practice “‘saturates’ the devotee, making him a reservoir of heated potency. This power may manifest itself as a sexual and fecundating energy....”³⁵⁷

Hartzell surveys references to magical and sexual religious rites in the Vedic period,³⁵⁸ quoting L.M. Joshi, who points out that, as in the Tantras, “In the Vedic literature the place for the practice of magic is usually a cemetery or the seat of flesh eating demons,” and mentions the rite at *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 8.4.3.7.8 where men and women play the roles of Gandharvas and Apsarases, and *R̥g Veda* 10.136.6 where the long-haired Muni is said ‘to move on the path of the Gandharvas and Apsarases’.”³⁵⁹ Samuel notes,

Whether or not we use the term “shaman” for the long-haired *muni*, the *vrātya* or for that matter for the *ṛṣis* themselves, it is clear that we have a tradition of figures who communicate with the gods while in ecstatic states, and who have visionary powers as a result of their divine contact. These figures exercise *tapas* in some sense, and this is seen in terms of the accumulation of sexual or quasi-sexual “heat.”³⁶⁰

Samuel also describes the *mahavrāta* ritual described in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Śrauta Sūtras*, which “appears to have involved ritual intercourse between a *brahmacārin* and a prostitute.”³⁶¹

³⁵⁶ Samuel 2008, 155-65

³⁵⁷ Samuel 2008, 156, *quoting* Kaelber 1989, 144

³⁵⁸ Hartzell 1997, 170, *quoting* Joshi 1966 at 118

³⁵⁹ Samuel 2008, 154-65

³⁶⁰ Samuel 2008, 158 This, says Samuel, explains the importance of the celibate, the *brahmacārin*. *Id.*

³⁶¹ *Id.*

If the above conclusions about the very ancient pedigree of Tantra are correct, then it is not a great leap to speculate that after Śākyamuni left the palace, wandering about the countryside, studying under a number of different teachers with multifarious approaches, he would have encountered Tantric-type practices of one sort or another. Buddha certainly witnessed all sorts of strange ascetic practices,³⁶² and participated in some himself: describing his austerities to Śāriputra, he says, “I would make my bed in a charnel ground with the bones of the dead for a pillow.”³⁶³ If the story of Śākyamuni’s life is accurate, before he left palace life, harem, and wife, Śākyamuni would have experienced passion, sex, sensuality and love. Given his emphasis on *upāya* during his forty-five year teaching career, during which he undoubtedly taught students of a "passionate" nature, it is not too hard to imagine that he would have made use of a Tantric-type approach on appropriate occasions. If we take the more or less standard accounts of Buddha’s life and teachings as expressed in the *Nikāya*’s as true, we could conclude that he was the sort of genius who was at least was capable of taking whatever Tantric practices existed at the time and changing their philosophical and teleological emphases, just as he did with the then-existing Indian religion generally. While whether he actually did so is probably a question that we will never have sufficient evidence to answer,³⁶⁴ why should we close our minds to the possibility?

³⁶² *E.g.*, see Ñānamoli 1995, 493-97

³⁶³ *Id.*, 175 Hartzell reports that Buddha knew of practices where sexual union between male and female ascetics was a means of salvation,” Hartzell 1997, 171, quoting Banerji 1992, 29-30, however, my edition of Banerji 1992 does not contain this information

³⁶⁴ “We do not know and cannot know what the historical Buddha might really have said in more than a very approximate way ” Samuel 2008, 32

Although Mark Tatz considers the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra*, dating from the first century B.C.E., as a cautionary tale praising chastity, I think that the Sūtra can just as easily be seen as a rather thinly veiled description of Tantric practice. In the *Sūtra*, Ānanda sees the Bodhisattva “together with a woman on the same couch.”³⁶⁵ Thinking that this is a transgression, Ānanda brings the Bodhisattva to Buddha. While Ānanda is telling Buddha about this shocking behavior, the Bodhisattva levitates to the height of a palm tree, and asks Ānanda whether someone who has transgressed could “sit in the atmosphere.” Buddha explains:

The Bodhisattva great hero who is skilled in means, who is endowed with the thought of omniscience, will seek uninterruptedly for omniscience, even to the point of abiding among a holy retinue of women and enjoying, playing with, and taking pleasure in it.³⁶⁶

Buddha explains that the woman had been the Bodhisattva's wife for two hundred lives, so, when she saw him, “The thought arose in her mind, ‘If the Bodhisattva . . . were to sit with me on a couch, I . . . would generate the thought of supreme, right and full awakening.’”³⁶⁷ Then, according to the Sūtra, the Bodhisattva comes to the woman's house: “He thought about the earth-equivalency—the spiritual exercise of equating the internal and external elements of earth. He took that sister by the right hand, and they sat down on a couch.”³⁶⁸ The story ends with the Bodhisattva reciting a verse to the effect

³⁶⁵ Tatz 2001, 30

³⁶⁶ *Id.*, 31

³⁶⁷ *Id.*, 32

³⁶⁸ *Id.*

that desire is the range of the foolish, and the woman reciting a verse rejecting sense objects and “desires censured by the Buddha.”³⁶⁹

Mark Tatz, who translated the Sūtra, espouses a prudish interpretation of this story:

The point of these episodes, however, is that the Bodhisattva is willing to sacrifice his own spiritual advancement and delay his obtainment of nirvāṇa. He does not stray down the path of “erotic yogis” for whom unchastity is kind [sic] of blessing. Those who maintain celibacy in the *Upāya* are able to prove it by displays of levitation. The older yogic lore that spiritual power is lost by seduction—a lore that is codified in vinaya—is not contradicted.³⁷⁰

Tatz explains in a footnote that in this “earth equivalency spiritual exercise,” “spiritual exercise” is

“literally, ‘dharma door’ (*dharma-mukha*)....In this discursive meditation, the earthy (i.e. solid) components of the (female, etc.) body are conceived as being the same as earth (soil, etc.); the aim is avoidance of lust. See *VM* [*Visuddhimagga*] 11:31, 41; 18:19.³⁷¹

With some trepidation, because Tatz has done a thorough case study of this Sūtra while I have not, it strikes me that there is quite another possible interpretation. First, Tatz’s contentions that this *dharma-mukha* has to do with avoiding lust or denigrating the female body in service of that are not well supported. The sections of the *Visuddhimagga* relied on say nothing about the female body or the avoidance of lust. 11:31 refers to the “internal earth element” as the head, hair, bone etc. of the body, not specifying gender; 11:41 to meditating in retreat on those elements of the body; and 18:19 describes how the meditator becomes aware of the earth element by means of consciousness or contact.

³⁶⁹ *Id.*, 32-33

³⁷⁰ *Id.*, 16

³⁷¹ *Id.*, 94

Nothing in those sections has anything to do with women or lust. However, 11:37 does describe the five “winds” of the body, parallel to the *Vajra Rosary*’s detailed description of the energy-winds named, meditated on and mastered by the Tantric yogi.

Thus, “earth-equivalency” per the *Visuddhimagga* is *at least* simply a meditation on the internal earth element of one’s body rather than one of avoiding lust.³⁷² But, while certainly not conclusive, it is quite possible that in fact this *dharma-mukha* of “earth-equivalency” itself refers to a Tantric practice. Tatz’s translation of *dharma-mukha* as “dharma door” is a highly abstracted one. The primary meaning of *mukha* is “mouth.” The *Vajra Rosary* uses *kha*, the equivalent of Sanskrit *mukha*, or its honorific, *zhal*, in a variety of contexts. One of the most common is to refer to the vagina of the yoginī, as in “The partaking of the mouth/ Of the yoginī/ Is supreme wisdom.”³⁷³ Here we see how the act of translation itself embodies and even magnifies all of the hermeneutic issues we have been discussing.

In addition, while Tatz identifies levitation with celibacy, levitation is also commonly thought of as one of the eight mundane *siddhi* enjoyed by Tantric yogis.³⁷⁴

³⁷² Meditation on the disgusting features of rotting flesh and skeletal bones to counter lust *is* a common practice in Nikāya and Mahāyāna monastic Buddhism, but this does not appear to be such a meditation

³⁷³ *VR* 26B, ch 13, v 27 I am following Alamka here, whose version I have found to be better than the Lhasa text more often than not, who has *zhal* rather than the Lhasa *VR*’s *kun*. I think *zhal* makes more sense. Lhasa has *rnal ‘byor ma kun kun spyod ni*, “partaking of all the yoginīs,” while Alamka’s version is *rnal ‘byor ma zhal kun spyod ni*, “partaking of the mouth of the yoginī.” *Spyod*, “conduct,” has the connotation in Tantric writings of Tantric sexual yoga, the context of the verse is that it concludes the chapter called “Explaining the Term Great Bliss,” relating to the “great bliss” experienced “during the time of innate (or, alternatively translated, orgasmic) [ecstasy]” *VR* 24B, ch 13, vv 1-2. A similar reference in chapter sixty-two of the *Vajra Rosary*, describing the mixing of yogis and yoginīs in the *gaṇacakra* ritual, is even clearer: “By putting together/ [Your] thumb and ring finger,/ You should taste/ The hero and yoginī in succession/ With the tip of [your] tongue / You should always place/ [Your] mind on the mouth [*kha la sems ni rnām par bkod*]/ In the center of the lotus / You should make/ The unexcelled offering!” *VR* 91A, ch 62, v 19

³⁷⁴ Lessing and Wayman 1968, 220 n 13. The *siddhi* in question is listed by Mkhas grub rje as seventh, Tib *zhing skyong*, literally “sky-walking.”

The condemnation of desire at the story's end could well be simply an apologetic, added to protect those not ready for such a teaching or to be on the safe side in a conservative or monastic environment. Thus, I think there is a strong indication in the *Upāyakaṇḍalya Sūtra* of the presence of Buddhist Tantra, employed for liberative purposes, much earlier than the latter part of the first millennium.

Pursuing this line of open-minded inquiry then, one would ask why these teachings would not have been recorded in the councils and then found their way into the textual canon. I can think of two logical responses. First, as noted by Geoffrey Samuel, “Buddha’s teaching to his advanced disciples was likely to have consisted of personal advice appropriate for the specific needs of each person,”³⁷⁵ and may well have been privately given and not heard by anyone else. Secondly, teachings regarding Tantric or Tantric-type practices would have been, at least for a time, closely held. This is stressed in the *Vajra Rosary* and many Tantric texts. As the *Vajra Rosary*, which uses the word “secret,” *gsangs*, eighty-three times, puts it, “It should not be revealed/ In any way:/ That is as well known/ As breathing.”³⁷⁶ One need look no further than the Eleusianian Mysteries to conclude that secret practices, even those involving tens of thousands of people over hundreds of years, can remain secret. As noted by Noel Robertson, “On the following days the new initiates were fully engaged in rites within the sanctuary,

³⁷⁵ *Id.*, 136

³⁷⁶ *VR* 10A, ch 3, v 6 Although clearly there was a proliferation of Tantric texts at the end of the first millennium, there is no indication that such texts were widely distributed prior to the end of the twentieth century

especially in the great hall... What they did from day to day is unknown.”³⁷⁷ If the Greeks were capable of keeping a secret, perhaps, at least until the latter part of the first millennium,³⁷⁸ so were the Indians.

Stein notes that in twelfth century Tibet, “teachers refused as a rule to transmit esoteric teachings other than by word of mouth and in a manner that linked teacher and disciple personally.”³⁷⁹ Given the secrecy in which these teachings, if they existed, would have been held, to conclude that the absence of textual or art historical evidence shows that Tantra did not exist is not logical, but does show our obsessional reliance on texts. Yet, we reject texts that say that Buddha taught Tantra, while we accept texts that say Buddha taught ethics, like the eightfold path, or wisdom, like selflessness. And we accept orality on some matters but not as to others. As noted by Wedemeyer, “There is a clear and consistent lack of early Vinaya manuscripts, and yet, in light of this evidence, scholars are nonetheless happy to hypothesize that in fact these texts were known and followed, albeit preserved in an oral tradition and not committed to writing.”³⁸⁰ These inconsistencies alone should cause us to question our methodology.³⁸¹

³⁷⁷ Robertson 1998, 562. See also Wasson, Hofmann and Ruck 2008 at 19, Mylonas 1947, 140. Mylonas notes that the literature on the subject of the secrecy of the rites was too voluminous to elaborate. *Id.*, 146 n 5.

³⁷⁸ The efficacy of the “sealed” nature of Tantric texts deserves a full-length study. Given the public awareness of “sealed” tantric practices, at least in 9-12th century Kashmir, Hartzell 1997, 492-556, there is a real issue as to whether the culture of secrecy was better observed prior to that time. While the existence alone of written texts does not prove that Tantric practices were publicly known, tying the existence of Tantra to texts does presume a certain level of disclosure at the outset.

³⁷⁹ Stein 1972, 158. Stein quotes some sources, but unfortunately does not identify them. Of course, at a certain point, not later than the tenth century, there is an explosion of esoteric written texts, of which the *Vajra Rosary* is a prime example.

³⁸⁰ Wedemeyer 1999, 109.

³⁸¹ With the excavations of the Dunhuang manuscripts, we have another textual source that allows us to trace the progress of the development of Tantric practice, but also to serve as a touchstone for our existing

If not persuaded by the contents of the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra*, we should consider Asaṅga's fourth century³⁸² *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* or *Universal Discourse Literature*. There, in the course of advocating the “transmutation” of the five sense faculties, Asaṅga says, “In the transmutation of (sensation, even in) sexual union, highest mastery is attained in the station of the buddhas' bliss, while in the unaddicted vision of the consort.”³⁸³ David Snellgrove, referring to this passage, writes, “It is by no means improbable that already by the fifth century when Asaṅga was writing, these techniques of sexual yoga were being used in reputable Buddhist circles, and that Asaṅga himself accepted such a practice as valid.”³⁸⁴ Samuel, considering the verse and Snellgrove's interpretation of it, defines his way out of the problem, the problem being the acknowledging of Buddhist Tantric practice at such an early date:

The point is well taken, but one should also note that there is nothing particularly transgressive in Asaṅga's text. The reference is explicitly to practices carried out in the context of a marital relationship, not by supposedly celibate Buddhist practitioners [fn. omitted]. There is no suggestion here of a context such as that of the *kāpālīka*-style practitioner, with its transgressive use of sexual substances in frightening and dangerous places to attract dangerous female spirits.³⁸⁵

biases In analyzing ritual manuals, Jacob Dalton finds a progression of Tantric practices over some two hundred years at the end of the first millennium that evolve from “the external shrine to the body's interior” Dalton 2004, 26 As we shall see, however, the *Vajra Rosary* has aspects of all three stages, which suggests either that the *Vajra Rosary* is an anthology of sorts, which will be discussed below in part C, 3 of this chapter, or that Dalton's analysis of the three stages being chronological rather than as coexisting strands of practice is wrong In addition, while these ritual manuals certainly show Tantric practice at a particular time and place, they say nothing about whether similar practices were performed hundreds or thousands of years earlier Scholars today generally assume that findings such as Dalton's are generalizable to show that Buddhist Tantra did not emerge until *texts* prove it

³⁸² See Maityanātha/Āryāśāṅga 2004, xiii.

³⁸³ *Id.*, 89

³⁸⁴ Snellgrove 1987, 127

³⁸⁵ Samuel 2008, 275 Samuel's reference to the marital relationship follows Snellgrove's translation of the Sanskrit *dāra* as “wife” We shall see in the *Vajra Rosary* the use of “wife,” as well as “mother,” “daughter,” “sister” and even “mother-in-law” to refer to various kinds of sexual consorts See, e.g., VR 63B-64A, ch 44, vv 11-23 Alamka 218A-219B

The best Samuel can say, grudgingly is, “There is at least a possibility, then that some kind of sexual yoga existed in the fourth or fifth centuries.”³⁸⁶

The above example of Samuel’s reluctance to acknowledge Buddhists engaged in Tantric practices is typical. Even Hartzell makes it a point to distinguish between “Tantra” and “proto-Tantra,” and is reticent to overstate the case for an early dating of Buddhist Tantra: “[T]here are many streams of contribution to what becomes the Tantric tradition—however, that does not mean that when we find instances of these contributing streams in earlier strata of the traditions that we can then conclude that ‘Tantra’ existed already at these earlier dates.”³⁸⁷ The elements of the ninth and tenth century texts that Samuel considers to constitute the “relatively coherent set of techniques and practices” that he uses as a working definition of Tantra is also typical of how scholars define Tantra: “[E]laborate deity visualizations, in which the practitioner identifies with a divine figure at the centre of a *Maṇḍala* ...; fierce male and particularly female deities; the use of transgressive ‘Kāpālīka’-style practices associated with cremation-grounds and polluting substances linked to sex and death, and internal yogic practices, including sexual techniques, which are intended to achieve health and long life as well as liberating insight.”³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Samuel 2008, 276

³⁸⁷ Hartzell 1997, 278-79 n 298

³⁸⁸ Samuel 2008, 9 *See also id.* at 220, where Samuel concludes that practices suggested by the revelation of Meitreyā to Asaṅga is not fully developed as Tantra because “*there is no reason to suppose the employment of sexual practices*” nor are there *indications* of actual identification with the Buddha or other deity” (Emphases added)

We protest too much, I think. Why are we trying so hard to define Tantra in a particular way, to narrow its definition to a specific checklist of attributes found in texts, in order to defer the date of the emergence of Buddhist Tantric practice? One would think that we would be familiar enough with Wittgenstein's concept of the "family relationship" to acknowledge at least some measure of definitional flexibility. Yet, we find ourselves in a definitional shell game: If Buddhist Tantra is defined in terms of a list of attributes set forth in texts, then, since the texts emerged late, Buddhist Tantra emerged late. If Buddhist Tantra is defined in terms of mandalas, then since the political term *maṇḍala* did not describe the political situation in northern India under after the fall of the Guptas,³⁸⁹ then Buddhist Tantra could not have existed until then.³⁹⁰ If creation stage rituals or visualizations as various deities are taken as the *sine qua non*, then the emergence of Buddhist Tantra would be pegged to documentary or archaeological evidence of those particular rituals or deities.

But if we define Buddhist Tantra as harnessing the technology and energies of the body, gross and subtle, particularly the energy associated with sexual union and *tapas* or *tummo*, to produce experiential states for a Buddhist soteriological purpose, which, we will see in detail in Chapter Three is the subject of much of the *Vajra Rosary*, then it seems to me that we should seriously entertain the possibility that Buddhist Tantra was being practiced for centuries before the end of the first millennium or even that the

³⁸⁹ See, e.g., Davidson 2002, 134-35

³⁹⁰ Although mandalas also have an ancient pedigree in India (as well as other cultures such as the Australian aboriginal), Samuel points out that they lack the "critical" features of having a center and non-central components that are emanations of the center. He concludes, "The fully fledged Tantric *maṇḍala* is a model of a specific kind of state. In such a state, in principle, the centre is reduplicated at the various regional capitals, where local rulers imitate on a lesser scale the splendor of the royal court at the main centre." Samuel 2008, 227

Buddhist scriptures may have been correct in ascribing the Buddhist Tantric teachings to Buddha himself. While there is a normative element to such an hermeneutic choice, it seems to me that it leaves undisturbed an open-minded creativity consonant with the better Western hermeneutic arguments described in Chapter One as well as both the traditional Indo-Tibetan Buddhist view and that view as explicated by Wedemeyer in his 2007 book.³⁹¹ While debate on the subject is welcome, at least to me it does not seem that the evidence is convincing enough to foreclose these other possibilities.

Indeed, the point of contention here is based not on evidence, but on the meaning of the *absence* of evidence, a thin reed indeed on which to rely, and one particularly open to the pre-judgment and assumptions of the empirical reader. In law, when evidence is not sufficient to support a factual finding, we rely on presumptions, such as the presumption of innocence. Where these presumptions are substantive, they reflect our deepest cultural values. Here, presuming that there must be written evidence in order to establish the existence of Tantra before a certain date may also reflect such values, which may include both contemporarily laudable values such as a sense of modesty about making factual findings about events in antiquity as well as outright prejudice against antinomian practices. My point is that we should reflect on this and determine what our approach tells us about ourselves.

While I am arguing for an hermeneutically open-minded approach to the history of Tantra, and against over-reliance on the contents or absence thereof in textual “works” as the primary arbiters regarding the existence or nonexistence of Tantric practice, there are some works-based arguments that should be considered and further explored. For

³⁹¹ E.g. Hirsch 1967, 203

example, Hartzell notes, based on literary sources, that “at least after Abhinavagupta,” *i.e.* 1020 C.E.,³⁹² (Śaiva and Buddhist) Tantric practices were hardly secret in Kashmir:

Tantra had become very public due to its patronage in royal courts, and had gained a degree of intellectual respectability.... Certain versions of Tantric practices had apparently worked their way into the upper classes, providing a ready rationalization for husbands and wives to visit Tantric “gurus” at night.... Some of the Buddhist nuns apparently had a less than stellar reputation, since they appear to have been involved in Tantric sexual yoga practices that were no longer entirely secret....³⁹³

If this was the first larger-scale dissemination of at least the outlines of Tantric practice, why do we see it at this time? Is it because prior to this time there was no Tantric practice to speak of, or because only at this time did theretofore secret Tantra become the subject of texts, whose subject matter then found its way into the public domain?

A key issue here is the timing of the explosion of texts that accompanied the Mahāyāna movement and its relationship to Tantric texts. If, starting in the early first millennium, everything Buddhist became the subject of a written text, and Tantric practice in the Buddhist context existed, why don’t we see written Tantras in this early period? Ernst Steinkellner summarizes the transition in Buddhism generally from an oral to a written culture,

When Buddhism first came to Tibet in the 7th to 9th centuries, [fn. omitted] it was no longer a tradition with a primarily oral culture of transmission. Authoritative scriptures had long been developed into various canons, and writing and copying had become part of Buddhist life soon after the beginning of our era. The sacredness of the numerous Buddhas’ words had expressed itself ritually in the Mahāyāna ‘Cult of the Book’. Dogmatic, philosophical, poetic, narrative, didactic, apologetic literatures were composed and transmitted. In short: the written text and its main carrier, the manuscript, had become indispensable. When the great Buddhist universities were founded

³⁹² Abhinavagupta died in 1020 C E, Zhi ba ‘od was born in 1015 C E

³⁹³ Hartzell 543-44

by, for example, the late Gupta and early Pāla kings after the fifth century A.D., libraries and scriptoria were an essential part of these establishments.³⁹⁴

However, because Steinkellner is not writing about Tantra, the evidence on text production in the exoteric venue hardly would be dispositive as to whether the same shift from orality occurred in the esoteric venue, giving us grounds to infer that Tantra, like Sūtra, was primarily a written doctrine and therefore that the absence of written Tantric texts can be taken as persuasive evidence of the absence of Tantra.

It does, however, seem to me that when we combine the evidence of widespread textualism in Buddhism generally with the profusion of textual production of Tantras and the spreading of Tantric ideas in Kashmir, while the burden of proof (or what we call technically that of “going forward with the evidence”) doesn’t quite shift, we should be looking for at least *some* evidence that esoteric teachings existed but were not written down until the end of the first millennium. I do think that we have such textual evidence in the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra* and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* on the Buddhist side in addition to the much earlier textual evidence found in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, and the *mahavrāta* ritual. But unless we are hermeneutically open to the possibility, we would not be looking for that evidence and, even if seen, might not recognize it.

What just about everyone who has written on the subject agrees on is that the currently extant *written* Tibetan text that is found in the *bka’* ‘gyur emerged during the

³⁹⁴ Steinkellner 2004, 6 It is, however, conceivable that esoteric material could have remained in oral form despite the increasing emphasis on written texts

adult life of Zhi ba ‘od in the mid-eleventh to early twelfth century.³⁹⁵ I will continue the discussion there.

B. The Emergence of the Current Text

Encountering Tantra in twenty-first century America is encountering a religious practice in most respects that has been largely removed from its social and cultural setting and isolated from its historical origins. Since, according to the dialogical algorithm we are working with, the meaning of the *Vajra Rosary* will encompass the past and the present, it is important that we have a good understanding of how Tantra functioned in the Indian and Tibetan societies of its origin and development. Clearly, this is a collective task for scholarship in general, and far beyond the scope of this essay. Nevertheless, because the purpose of at least the academic component of this essay is to promote transparency and dialogue with the objective of illuminating common prior assumptions and creating common knowledge, here I will attempt to give an overview of some of the more prominent features of the setting in which Tantra arose.

1. Background: Tantra, Monasteries and State Power in India and Tibet

Generally speaking, monasteries have functioned at the core of Buddhist life and religious practice:

³⁹⁵ The other translators mentioned by Tsong kha pa are either contemporary with Zhi ba ‘od (Marpa) or postdate him (Chag lo tsa ba, Byams pa’i dpal, Zhang lo tsa ba). However, Tsong kha pa does refer to the “old” translations, which could be significantly earlier. Tsong kha pa 2010, 232.

It is well known that the survival of Buddhism has always depended upon the health and strength of its monasteries. Although it soon developed as a religion, the practice of which was available to layfolk, the layfolk have always depended heavily upon monastic communities for the performance of rites and ceremonies, and even more important to note, it is the monasteries that preserve the doctrine in a traditionally acceptable form.³⁹⁶

The great Buddhist monasteries of Vikramaśīla, from whence came Atīśa and Alaṃkakalaśa, Nālandā, Odantapuri and Somapuri had significant land holdings, and housed thousands of students each. While wandering *siddhas* had a critical role in the formation of Tantric doctrine, Tantra was mainly translated, taught, and practiced in monasteries.³⁹⁷

In India and, later, in Tibet, monasteries were economic as well as religious entities. The primary source document for monastic practices in North India during the fifth and sixth centuries, the *Mūlasarvāstivaāda-vinaya*, makes it clear that monks “were expected—even required—to have personal property and private wealth... Some Mūlasarvāstivādin monks, those who were ‘well known and of great merit,’ were even expected to be quite wealthy.”³⁹⁸ The picture painted by the *Mūlasarvāstivaāda-vinaya* is of monks who:

pay debts and tolls and transport taxable goods; own their own furniture and have the means to pay for any damage they might do to that of other monks; carry personal seals; pay for their own medicine and healing rituals; leave estates, sometimes huge; borrow money from laymen inherit property from both other monks and laymen; accept and service permanent endowments; make loans and charge interest; accept and use negotiable securities; provide care for sick and dying laymen, with the understanding that, when the layman

³⁹⁶ Snellgrove 1987, 306

³⁹⁷ Snellgrove 2002, 307 This is also shown by how the *Vajra Rosary* describes mantras only elliptically, decipherable only by one who had knowledge of Sanskrit grammar. Such persons would be found primarily in the Buddhist educational institutions, the monasteries. See, e.g., *VR* 29A, ch 15, v 25, and discussion, *infra*, in Chapter Three, “Secrecy ”

³⁹⁸ Schopen 2004, 5

died, his estate would go to the monastery; and receive precious and semiprecious materials, sell books, receive gold in various forms, accept money . . . , sell the property of deceased monks, hire and oversee laborers, and buy food.³⁹⁹

While scholars have debated whether the monastic economy was parasitic or productive,⁴⁰⁰ like its Indian antecedent, the Tibetan monastery was an economic entity with economic relationships to its monks, patrons and the economy as a whole, trading in what Pierre Bourdieu would call “religious capital.”⁴⁰¹ Primarily governed by the *spyi 'i sa*, “general property,” system, patrons contributed money, produce or land to separate funds maintained by a monastic *nyer ba*, “director,” who was generally free to keep personally the interest or profit made on the fund over and above cost of the religious services provided to the patron. These decentralized treasuries, writes George Murphy, “may have been as important to Inner Asia as that of the double-entry bookkeeping in the West.”⁴⁰² The positive and negative effects of this system were summarized by George Murphy:

There is evidence of misdirection of social savings into private fortunes by corruption and bribery, through the sale of positions and degrees within monasteries. Funds were disbursed in conspicuous religious consumption or monument building which might have gone to capital investment. There was loss of male manpower to the economy, and influence on the demographic characteristics of the population by way of changed fertility rates.

But the monasteries financed by their system of decentralized

³⁹⁹ *Id.*, 15 Schopen points out that these financially sophisticated and potentially monks “did not have much good to say about monks who did engage in asceticism, meditation, and doctrinal learning” *Id.*

⁴⁰⁰ *E.g. compare* Miller 1961 *with* Murphy 1961

⁴⁰¹ “Bourdieu’s concept of ‘religious capital’ is close to Weber’s idea of religious ‘qualification’ It represents ‘accumulated symbolic labor’ and is connected to the ‘constitution of a religious field’ where a group of religious specialists is able to monopolize the administration of religious goods and services” Swartz 1996, 75

⁴⁰² Murphy 1961, 439-440

accounts had positive aspects. They brought some social order and peace to Inner Asia and provided sanctuary for persons and for goods. They concentrated capital and acted as primitive banks. They facilitated travel and trade⁴⁰³

Thus, from the very outset of monastic Buddhism, there has been a strong economic dimension to the provision of religious services to the general population and within the monastery itself. These considerations will be revisited when we look at the function of Tantra in determining its meaning and that of the *Vajra Rosary*.

In the chaos following the fall of the Tibetan empire, monastic life and monasteries were suppressed and then, to a degree, abandoned, and it was not until the tenth century that monasticism started to spread again from the surviving monasteries in Amdo, and in Gu ge in the person of Ye shes 'od, among others. In the late tenth century, economic conditions combined with a conviction among Tibetan Buddhists of the importance of a strong monastic base.⁴⁰⁴ Local temples and monasteries sprung up in Central Tibet during this period, and monk missionaries were given the old temples that had languished since the time of the royal dynasty or were given land for new temples and monasteries.⁴⁰⁵ The smaller temples were often affiliated with larger monasteries or temples, but little is known about how the funding of these institutions worked.⁴⁰⁶

By the twelfth century, however, monasteries were ubiquitous in Tibet, many of them politically and economically powerful.⁴⁰⁷ This had coincided with the spread of

⁴⁰³ *Id.*, 441

⁴⁰⁴ Davidson 2005, 86

⁴⁰⁵ *Id.*, 101

⁴⁰⁶ *Id.*, 104

⁴⁰⁷ Stein 1972, 75

Tantric teachings and the formation of Tantric lineages, described by Snellgrove, Davidson and many others in the academic literature, that gave rise to the four main orders and various subsidiary groupings of Tibetan Buddhism. Given that some of the most prominent distinguishing features of the various orders and groupings have to do not with philosophical view but with Tantric teaching lineages, Tantra clearly had a role in shaping the social and political environment of Tibet.

In his discussion of Tantra and the state, Geoffrey Samuel cites Gupta and Gombrich regarding the increasing role of Śaiva Tantra in Hindu polities, reflected by the increasing importance of Durgā in state religion, citing their statement that “for at least the last thousand years, perhaps longer, the concept of power in its political and social application has been intimately connected with Tantric theology—so intimately, one might suggest, that the one cannot be adequately understood apart from the other.”⁴⁰⁸ He also cites Alexis Sanderson’s assertion that the *Netra Tantra* is “in effect, a manual for a Tantric Śaivite priest to take over virtually the complete role of the royal *purohita* and *rājaguru*,”⁴⁰⁹ and Sanderson’s and David White’s research to the effect that *Kaula Tantra* became virtually the state religion in various parts of South Asia.⁴¹⁰ White writes, “In their seventh-to-eleventh century heyday, these forms of Kaula theory and practice were so compelling, as direct paths to gnosis, power, and godhead, that they won the adherence of some of the great royal houses of the period: the Somavamśis, Candellas and

⁴⁰⁸ Samuel 2008, 297, *citing* Gupta and Gombrich 1986, 123

⁴⁰⁹ *Id.*, 298, *citing* Sanderson 2004

⁴¹⁰ *Id.*, 299

Kalacuris, whose kingdoms stretched across the Vindhya range and beyond from Rajasthan to Assam.”⁴¹¹

As contrasted with his description of Hindu polities, Samuel presents no parallel account of Buddhist Tantra serving as state religion other than in Tibet, and there with some important qualifications, discussed below. Davidson himself observes, “Nor does the evidence support the model that Buddhist esotericism is the pale imitation of Śaivism...”⁴¹² and I have discussed above how Davidson’s theory is rather that Buddhist Tantra only metaphorically “reflects the internalization of the medieval conceptual and social environment.”⁴¹³ Yet, we do see Tantra closely involved with Buddhist political entities in Tibet.

Perhaps the most famous instance of the connection of Tibetan Buddhist Tantra to economic and political power is that of the relationship of the Sa skya lamas, beginning with Sa skya Pandita and expanding dramatically with his nephew, ‘Phags pa, with the Mongols. In 1244, the Mongol prince Godan requested or ordered Sa skya Pandita, whose reputation was renowned for his prodigious scholarship in Sūtra and Tantra, to meet with him in order to arrange the submission of Tibet to the Mongol empire. Sa skya Pandita’s nephew ‘Phags pa deepened the relationship with the Mongols, and the patron-priest relationship was established with the patron using his power to assure Sa skya dominance in Tibet and the lama providing for the spiritual needs of the patron. Tantra was an essential part of this, and in 1253 ‘Phags pa initiated Qubilai Khan, his queens and

⁴¹¹ *Id.*, 299, *citing* White 1998, 198

⁴¹² Davidson 2002, 113

⁴¹³ *Id.*, 115

ministers into the Hevajra mandala. In return, Qubilai gave him Tibet.⁴¹⁴ ‘Phags pa identified Qubilai with Mañjuśrī and as the universal monarch (*cakravartin*), and Qubilai granted the Buddhists tax-exemptions, supplied money for the construction of monasteries and provided artisans and slaves to work on the monasteries’ land.⁴¹⁵ While Qubilai also sought assistance from, and brought to his capital representatives from, many different religions, and the argument can be made that in propitiating Hevajra, he was simply and shrewdly pacifying Tibet, this episode clearly demonstrates the power of Tantric doctrine in the worldly sphere.

Samuel deems the contrast between both Qubilai’s polity and that of the Śaivite kings discussed above on the one hand, and that of Tibet on the other, to be significant. He maintains that, due to its harsh climate and poor communications, Tibet was a very difficult place to maintain central authority, arguing that “traditional Tibet can best be regarded as a *stateless society*.”⁴¹⁶ He notes that after the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet and through the kingships of the seventh and eighth centuries, when there was some measure of state power intertwined with religion until the collapse of the Tibetan state after the assassination of Khri gtsug lde brtsan (Relbachan) in 838 CE, “Buddhism survived and flourished in Tibetan societies because it established itself outside the context of state sponsorship, as part of Tibetan village communities.”⁴¹⁷ There was

⁴¹⁴ Powers 1995, 387-88 This was part of Qubilai’s effort to consolidate his empire, and he also reached out to Moslems in order to lessen his dependence on Chinese advisors and officials, to Taoists, and even to the small Christian community in China Fairbank 1964, 460-64

⁴¹⁵ Fairbank 1964, 462

⁴¹⁶ Samuel 1982, 215

⁴¹⁷ Samuel 1993, 556

indeed power at stake in the adoption of Tantra in Tibet, but, according to Samuel, power in a different context than we post-moderns would usually conceive:

The folk religion... was concerned with power; with defense against the dangerous powers of the physical and social environment, and with the utilization of the beneficial powers of the Buddhist clergy (primarily the lamas) for the good of the community. So, in effect, was the cult of Enlightenment, at any rate as pursued through the Tantras.... Power here was the power of the personal religious teacher, the *tsawé lama*, and of the Buddhist Tantric deities who were accessed through him. Ultimately this power was internalized within the practitioner and became available to help others.⁴¹⁸

In addition, Samuel finds a direct connection between the decentralization of political power in Tibet and the shamanistic form of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism:

Centralized regimes typically have law codes and ethically oriented clerical religions based on a single dominant deity or divine figure who exemplifies their ideal pattern. In the absence of this specification of the bases of social life, the patterns of society and of religion take a different form... In place of one supreme, officially endorsed deity, one typically finds a variety of such figures, each with their own slightly different mode of living. The manipulation of power in such a society involves the manipulation of these individual forces (or powers) just as much as the manipulation of labor-power and of land. This is the essence of shamanism..., and it is what the shamans (the lamas, in the Tibetan case) provide for the clientele. My suggestion is that Tantric Buddhism was adopted by stateless populations throughout the Himalayas and in Tibet in large part because it was believed to provide a superior set of techniques for manipulating those powers.⁴¹⁹

Based on Samuel's research, we can derive two significant points. First, historically we do not see a centralized regime in Tibet as we do in the Śaivite Indian regimes, where there was a direct relationship between Tantra and state power. Second, and this follows from the first point, the interest of those practicing Buddhist Tantra was not a product of pleasing royalty or currying favor with officials, but, particularly if

⁴¹⁸ *Id.*

⁴¹⁹ Samuel 1993, 563 We see both the "white magic" and the "black magic" typical of shamanic power in *Vajra Rosary* chapters sixty-six and sixty-seven

Samuel is correct in his description of the Tibetan Buddhist religious system as essentially shamanistic, was related to manipulating deities, for the good of the community and for helping others. This is not to say that at an individual level Tibetans of all walks of life were not self-interested,⁴²⁰ but it does say that this was in spite of rather than because of their religious practices.

On the other hand, a closer look at Tibetan history reveals some flaws in this argument. While, as Samuel stresses, there was no *enduring* central religio-political authority in Tibet, there were a number of local regimes in which various religious orders and personalities dominated the political landscape in theocratic or ecclesiastical rule. Some prominent examples of this are seen in Sa skya pa rule in conjunction with the Mongols, Lama Zhang, the 'Bri kung bka' brgyud, the kingdom of Sde dge, the kingdom of Co ne,⁴²¹ and Bla brang.⁴²² There were instances of conflict between monastic power centers, including armed conflict, on an ongoing basis.⁴²³

In addition, hierarchies of wealth and status were preserved in the monasteries. Generally speaking, monks from lower classes without their own wealth were foreclosed from the ability to undertake the lengthy studies necessary to obtain high positions in the monastic orders because they were obliged to undertake many of the more pedestrian

⁴²⁰ Davidson focuses on translators like 'Brog mi who were interested in material possessions, but concludes even in 'Brog mi's case that he was primarily motivated by religious factors, Davidson 2005, 208-09. Samuel notes more pedestrian advantages to monastic life such as getting an education or escaping from harsh conditions typical of the Tibetan villager or nomad. Samuel 1993, 558-59.

⁴²¹ See Tuttle 2011.

⁴²² Thanks to Gray Tuttle for pointing out these examples. Personal Communication 5-10-11.

⁴²³ See Stein 1972, 75-82.

tasks necessary to run the monastery, or might serve as the servants of richer monks.⁴²⁴

And, at least in the Dge lugs tradition, since formal Tantric training at the Tantric colleges followed the lengthy dge shes curriculum, the higher Tantric training was also a function of class and social status. And certainly nowhere was that more prominently on display than in Zhi ba 'od's Gu ge.

So, while the picture is complex, economics, politics and worldly status had roles to play within Buddhist monastic institutions and such considerations were, in more than a few cases, intertwined with Tantra and Tantric practice.

2. Overview of the “Second Diffusion” of Buddhism in Tibet

After the fall of the Gupta and Puṣyabhūti dynasties in the mid-seventh century, North India, where Tantra became institutionalized in the various monasteries, was a very unstable place, governed by a patchwork of states with shifting alliances, and enduring military raids from various directions. The overall population declined, as did the merchant guilds, which had been an important source of support for Buddhist monasteries. The adverse conditions in North India resulted in a contraction of the geographic distribution of Buddhist communities, contributing to the importance of the remaining Buddhist monasteries. In the sphere of religion, North India encountered Śaiva cults and deities from the south, including ascetic groups such as the Kaulas, Kāpālikas and Pāsupatas.⁴²⁵ It is this environment that Davidson considers inspired and determined the form of Buddhist Tantra.

⁴²⁴ See Stein 1972, 140-42

⁴²⁵ See generally Davidson 2002 and 2005, Snellgrove 1987

Buddhism had traditionally first appeared in Tibet in 233 C.E.; however the first successful transmission, the *snga dar*, “earlier diffusion,” took place during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po during the first half of the seventh century.⁴²⁶ Buddhism continued to spread in Tibet, mainly among the upper classes, during the reigns of the subsequent kings, including Khri srong lde btsan in the latter part of the eighth century, and Khri ral pa can in the first part of the ninth. Monasteries were established under royal patronage. Tradition has it that Khri ral pa can was so enamored of Buddhism that he neglected his official duties and alienated various factions, leading to his assassination and replacement by King Glang dar ma in 838, reputedly an enemy of Buddhism who destroyed Buddhist images and texts and was himself assassinated.⁴²⁷

Glang dar ma’s demise was followed by a period of political instability in central Tibet, traditionally characterized as a “dark age.”⁴²⁸ However, despite the confusion in central Tibet, interest in and patronage for Buddhism remained strong in Eastern and Western Tibet, setting the stage for the *phyi dar*, “later diffusion” of Buddhism, catalyzed in Western Tibet by the sending of twenty-one Tibetan young monks to India, two of whom returned to Tibet in 978 with scriptures and some Indian scholars. One of those two young monks was Rin chen bzang po, who was soon joined in Western Tibet by

⁴²⁶ Powers 1995, 126

⁴²⁷ See generally Bu ston 1999, 182-203

⁴²⁸ Powers 1995, 133-37. A detailed account of this period can be found in Davidson 2005, 61-83. Davidson points out that Central Tibetans’ support of Buddhism had much to do with the Tibetan perception of empire, their sense of its loss, and the consequent degradation of Tibetan life. “Empire building had become an extension of Buddhism’s ‘magical’ effect and mostly benign domestic influence in early Tibet.” *Id.* 72-73. This view reflects Davidson’s identification of Buddhism, particularly Tantric Buddhism, with modalities of power. Another way to look at Davidson’s theory is through the lens of meme theory: that the meme, *i.e.* cultural gene, of Buddhism or Tantric Buddhism attached itself to that of the memes of power and/or security. See generally Blackmoor 2000.

Aṭīśa, the great scholar and abbot from Vikramāśīla Monastery. The figure who sent the twenty-one monks and thus was responsible for the initiation of the *phyi dar* was King Tsen po kho re, who renounced his throne and became the royal monk Ye shes 'od.⁴²⁹ Subsequently, Ye shes 'od's grand-nephew, the royal monk Byang chub 'od invited Aṭīśa to Western Tibet, where he stayed for a few years before departing for Central Tibet.

Orthodox Dge lugs tradition holds that, although they were sponsored by Ye shes 'od and his successors, Rin chen bzang po and Aṭīśa were the catalysts of the second diffusion and were primarily responsible for reforming Buddhism at that time.⁴³⁰ The more contemporary accounts of Snellgrove, Kapstein and Davidson put less emphasis on the importance of the Rin chen bzang po and Aṭīśa, stressing the earlier penetration of Buddhism,⁴³¹ the importance of the Eastern Vinaya monks,⁴³² or that the *phyi dar* was a "pan-Tibetan phenomenon," respectively.⁴³³

3. *Ye shes 'od and Rin chen bzang po*

Ye shes 'od, along with Rin chen bzang po and Aṭīśa, is the key figure in the Western Tibetan Renaissance and certainly in the *Mnga' ris rgyal rabs*, the *History of Western Tibet*, written by Ngag dbang grags pa, a direct student of Tsong kha pa, in

⁴²⁹ Tibetan history is no exception to the re-imagining of history in light of subsequent events and politics. Davidson's recent work in examining what he contends is the retrospectively granted pre-eminence of events and persons in Western Tibet, as contrasted with Kham, Davidson 2005, 112-115, and Samten Karmay's 2001 essay in which he concludes that King Glang dar ma "personally remained Buddhist and during his reign Buddhism certainly continued to flourish," Karmay 2005, 29, are examples of scholarship on this subject.

⁴³⁰ See, e.g., Tsong kha pa 2000, 42.

⁴³¹ Snellgrove 2002, 473

⁴³² Davidson 2005, 84-116

⁴³³ Kapstein 2006, 95

1497.⁴³⁴ Ye shes 'od sent delegations to Kashmir specifically in search of the *Compendium of Principles, Secret Community* and the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*.⁴³⁵ Ye shes 'od is also famous on account of his royal *Proclamation, bka' shog*, that was made and circulated in 986. It is a sweeping restatement of Mahāyāna doctrine, and condemnation of Tantric practices of the time,⁴³⁶ which Ye shes 'od roundly condemns as non-Mahayanist, even non-Buddhist. At the time, as shown in Table 4, below, Atīśa was four and Rin chen bzang po twenty-eight years old, and Zhi ba 'od would not be born for another twenty-nine years, so one must question the received wisdom we will see on the subject that generally conflates their views.

⁴³⁴ Vitali 1996, 89-95. Vitali notes that the manuscript he translated was incomplete, and the “original ornate title is lost” *Id.*, 89.

⁴³⁵ Weinberger 2003, 313.

⁴³⁶ For a description of these practices, see Davidson 2005, 78-79.

TABLE 4. Selected Chronology of Western Tibet *Phyi dar*⁴³⁷

		<u>YO</u> ⁴³⁸	<u>RZ</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>BO</u>	<u>ZO</u>	(ages)
947	Ye shes 'od born	0					
958	Rin chen bzang po born	11	0				
978	Rin chen bzang po returns to Tibet	31	20				
982	Atīśa born	35	24	0			
983	Byang chub 'od born	36	25	1	0		
986	Ye shes 'od's <i>Proclamation</i>	39	28	4	3		
1015	Zhi ba 'od born	68	55	31	32	0	
1024	Ye shes 'od dies	77	64	40	41	9	
1042	Atīśa arrives in Guge		82	58	59	27	
1046	Atīśa to central Tibet		86	62	63	31	
1054	Atīśa dies		96	70	71	39	
1055	Rin chen bzang po dies		97		72	40	
1076	<i>Chos 'khor</i>				93	61	
1077	Byang chub 'od dies				94	62	
1092	Zhi ba 'od's <i>Proclamation</i>					77	
1111	Zhi ba 'od dies					96	

Ye shes 'od's *Proclamation* starts with a short summary of Buddhist doctrine, summarizing the three vehicles of the *śvāvakā*, *pratyekabuddha* and *bodhisattva*. Then he gets right to the point: "You tantrists, who live in villages, have no connection with these Three Ways."⁴³⁹ He continues:

Imprisoned in the dirt of the five kinds of sensual objects and women,
 It is astonishing to say the "we are Dharmakāya."
 * * * * *
 False doctrine called rDzogs chen is flourishing in Tibet.
 The views of this doctrine are mistaken.

⁴³⁷ Compiled from various sources, including Ngag dbang grags pa, Chattopadhyaya 1999, Roerich 1978, Buxton 1999, Kapstein 2006 and Davidson 2005

⁴³⁸ YO – Ye shes 'od, RZ – Rin chen bzang po, A – Atīśa, BO – Byang chub 'od, ZO – Zhi ba 'od

⁴³⁹ Karmay 1998, 9 Karmay did not find the text of the *bka' shog*. His translation of the *bka' shog* is derived from the polemical response of the Rnying ma Sog zlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552-1624) and is annotated with the latter's commentary disputing many of the passages of the *bka' shog*.

Heretical Tantras, pretending to be Buddhist, are also spread in Tibet.

* * * *

As “sexual rite” has become popular the different classes of people are mixed.

* * * *

By offering faeces and urine,

Semen and menses to pure divinities,

Alas! you will be reborn in a mire of rotting corpses.

* * * *

By way of retribution for indulging your lust in your “sexual rite”,

Alas! You will be reborn as a uterine worm.

You worship the Three Jewels with flesh, blood and urine,

Ignorant of “enigmatic” terminology you practise the rite literally,

A Mahāyanist such as this, will surely be reborn as a demon.

What a strange Buddhist adhering to such practices!

If these practices, like yours, bring about Buddhahood,

Then hunters, fishermen, butchers and prostitutes,

Would surely have attained Enlightenment by now.⁴⁴⁰

As we will see in Chapter Three, every one of these practices is reflected in the

Vajra Rosary.

4. *Zhi ba 'od*

Zhi ba 'od was the first translator in the Tibetan royal family. Although a monk, the colophons to the *Vajra Rosary* and his other translations describe Zhi ba 'od as “King of Tibet,” *bod kyi lha btsan po*, the title used by the early Tibetan kings.⁴⁴¹ As noted by Samten Karmay in his study of Zhi ba 'od's *Proclamation*:

⁴⁴⁰ Karmay 1998, 10-12 (internal footnotes omitted) Roberto Vitali points out that Sog bzlog pa's statement that Ye shes 'od did not oppose *rdzogs chen* was correct, and that Karmay's translation of the passage and his dismissive interpretation of the *Proclamation* “led tibetologists in the past to see Ye shes 'od as a bigot. I believe that the real sense of the *bka' shog* as a pledge to avoid dubious practices in favour of a correct interpretation of the Tantra-s has been overlooked.” Vitali 1996, 230 n 328. Karmay's study of Zhi ba 'od's *Proclamation* is very comprehensive as to Zhi ba 'od's background and the information contained in the various of the colophons to the Zhi ba 'od translations, but Karmay did not have access to Nga dbang grags pa's *History of Western Tibet*, a rich source

⁴⁴¹ *VR* 105B, Colophon. It is unclear to what extent he exercised royal authority after he became a monk. It is possible that he used the title “King” simply as a member of the royal family. But royal he certainly was, and his access to the treasury described by Nga dbang grags pa would support the view that he was King or very close to it. See Karmay 1998, 17-18.

The important role that Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od played in re-establishing Buddhism in Tibet in the second half of the 11th century has rather been neglected by Tibetan Buddhist historians and consequently by Western writers on the history of Tibetan Buddhism.⁴⁴²

One tradition recounted by Ngag dbang grags pa attributes Ye shes 'od's accomplishments and very birth to a prior incarnation of Zhi ba 'od:

During the time when Chos was discarded, after 47 generations [of rulers], the incarnated ... king Srong nge was born, like a second Pun.ta.ri.ka flower, as a son in the line of the protectors (kings). *It is said that, owing to Zhi.ba.'od's previous prayers and the power of his compassion, the incarnation of the divine race of Byang.chub sems.dpa'-s, the manifestation of the king of kings on earth, who abandoned worldly life in order to protect human beings, bla.ma Byang.chub sems.dpa' Ye.shes.'od was born to emancipate human beings in these very mNg'.ris.stod//*⁴⁴³

Zhi ba 'od was the grand nephew of Ye shes 'od: the son of Lha lde, who was the son of Ye shes 'od's younger brother, Srong lde. He was the younger brother of Byang chub 'od, famous for his efforts in inviting Aṭīśa to Tibet. Like his older brother Byang chub 'od, possibly following the tradition started by Ye shes 'od that the younger sons become monastics so as not to challenge the oldest brother's secular authority, Zhi ba 'od became a monk. This is unclear, however, as it seems that he retained a good deal of

⁴⁴² Karmay 1998, 17 (Footnote omitted, emphasis added)

⁴⁴³ Vitali 1996, 108, Ngag dbang grags pa, 51-52 Vitali does not comment on this passage. In the context of the *Mnga' ris rgyal rabs* this statement is surprising, because, although Ye shes 'od, Byang chub 'od and Zhi ba 'od are clearly the heroes of the narrative,⁴⁴³ there is nothing suggesting that Zhi ba 'od had this kind of pre-eminence. And, of course, there is an issue of timing since Ye shes 'od was sixty-eight years old when Zhi ba 'od was born. Thus “Zhi ba 'od's previous prayers” must refer to a prior incarnation, or a previous person with the same name. I believe the former is the case as I cannot find any reference to another person in the lineage with that name, although the possibility of another Zhi ba 'od cannot be entirely discarded given the paucity of the records and our consequent knowledge of the period. Immediately following the life histories of the three, the *Mnga' ris rgyal rabs* inserts

To Ye shes 'od, who had the moral strength of renunciation, to pho brang Byang chub 'od, who was the holder of the treasure of philosophical views (lta) and practice (spyod), to Zhi ba 'od, who bowed to the greatness of masters possessing compassion, to the mes dbon gsum Tibetans pay homage

temporal authority. He was active as a translator and sponsor of translations, and, like his great uncle Ye shes 'od, was the author of the *Proclamation*, in which he detailed a large number of Tantric texts as Tibetan in origin or otherwise inauthentic and not conducive to liberation.⁴⁴⁴

According to the *History of Western Tibet*, it was Zhi ba 'od who heard about the *Vajra Rosary*, searched for it, and then sent his own teacher, Mantrakalaśa, after it with four hundred *zho* of gold. Mantrakalaśa found the *Vajra Rosary* somewhere “in the direction of Oddiyana, *i.e.* Kashmir⁴⁴⁵ or the Swat Valley, and brought it back to Zhi ba 'od, who then translated it with the Indian pandit Sujana Śrījñāna. Because it is the primary source, and apparently was not known to Samten Karmay when he completed his fine studies of the matter, the *History of Western Tibet*'s description of the life and deeds of Zhi ba 'od bears quoting in full:

[Byang.chub.'od's] younger brother Srong.lde was ordained in the fire male monkey year⁴⁴⁶ [and] was given the name Zhi.ba.'od. He was forty-one [at that time]. He survived thirty-four years after his elder brother's (*i.e.* Byang.chub.'od's) death. at that time (*i.e.* at the time of his ordination), since, jointly with his nephew mnga'.bdag rTse.lde, he decided to follow the tradition of the noble deed of their extraordinary ancestors and to disseminate

⁴⁴⁴ Although Sakya Pandita, who is the first source chronologically who mentions the *Proclamation*, uses the verb *zer* to describe it, suggesting at least some measure of hearsay if not skepticism Karmay 1980, 11

⁴⁴⁵ Indeed, for practical purposes connected with Buddhist Tantric texts, "India" meant Kashmir David Snellgrove notes that the "India" to which Srong brtsan sgam po sent Thon mi sam bho ta is usually understood as Kashmir Snellgrove 2002, 386, 416 Sog bzlog pa states “Furthermore, as regards the new translations [made] during *bstan.pa phyis.dar* (sic), the lands Kha che [and] Bal po were the main centres of translation [during the times of] Na ra, Mai tri, Shanti and [later] Dam pa rGya gar [and] Jo bo rje As [the focus of these activities] reached O rgyan, master *pan.chen*-s achieved [important] results [there] ” Vitali 1996, 187 n 264 Vitali concludes “Two phases have thus to be distinguished the first in Bal po and Kha che from the time of Na ro pa until that of Dam pa rGya gar, and the second in O rgyan during a less clearly defined period Sog bzlog pa presumably wished to mean that the diffusion of what was known in Tibet as *snags.gsar.ma* went from Bal po and Kha che to O rgyan ” *Id.* That Mantrakalaśa went first to Kha che in search of the *Vajra Rosary*, then found it in Oddiyana (*O rgyan*) may contribute to shedding some light on this For a detailed picture of Kashmir in the 9th-12th centuries, see Hartzell 1997, 492-556

⁴⁴⁶ *I.e.* 1056 Vitali 1996, 118 n 80

the teachings in an enduring way, he worked at translations of dam.pa'i Chos, and together they established receptacles of the triple jewel. As he had previously invited many Tibetan masters, he paid his respects to them. As he received many teachings, in order to transfer excellent virtue to all human beings, he perfected an unlimited amount of merit and wisdom. Furthermore, he made the three ril.ba-s of the 'jam.ri of the dBu.trse in Tho.gling and a golden mchod.rten with a 'khor.lo hnat Shing.sgra'i rtse.mo.

In the 'og.khang ("ground floor"), he made the complete cycle of gods of the 'Jam.dpal mtshan.brjod dkyil.'khor and, in the bar.khang ("middle floor"), the statue of rje btsun 'Jam.dbyangs chen.po the size of lha.bla.ma's own body, the statue of "jam.dpal smra.ba'i rgyal.po, studded with all kinds of jewels, which was made at mkhar.sgra (i.e. Shing.sgra mkhar) in the style of Central India⁴⁴⁷, seventy-four clay statues and many minor dkyil.'khor-s; [all these] were placed in [Tho.ling] gSer.khang. In the dBu.rtse, he made the complete Bun.rig rtsa.ba'i ("root") dkyil.'khor, the assembly of gods of the Rigs.kyi gzhon.nu.ma'i dkyil.'khor, which were of clay. Masons; carpenters; plasterers of the walls; painters of the murals; sculptors in clay; casters in gold, iron and copper alloys; all together 223 [artists] and their assistants were gathered to [work on] the 'og.khang. In the sheep year⁴⁴⁸, the foundations were planned and laid. In the monkey year⁴⁴⁹, the walls and roof were raised. In the bird year⁴⁵⁰, the clay statues were made. In the dog year⁴⁵¹, the murals were painted. In the pig year⁴⁵², the great painting of the [gods] faces was accomplished. The name "jam.dpal rnam.'phrul bla.med 'Dzam.gling.rgyan was given [to the gSer.khang]. As for gsung.rten, all the works he translated, and the long, middle and short versions of Yum, were written in gold. The jewel in the crown of 'Dzam.gling, the supreme of all learned masters, Dznya.na.shi.mi.tra, the great master A.ti.sha.shri.mi.tra and De.wa.dznya and the great master of Kha.che Ra.han.ta and the great master Gag.tra.ka, [and] many rGya.gar and Kha.che pan.di.ta-s were invited. He (Zhi ba 'od) gave to the great master A.ti.sha in particular a full bre of gold [dust]. As this bla.ma (Zhi ba 'od) was the translator, they together translated dPal.mchog rtsa.'grel; Bud.dha.tsa.ri cha.'grel; Tshad.ma; De.ko.na.nyid bsdus.pa 'grel and tig (ti.ka); Tshad.ma.rgyan 'grel and tig.ka (ti.ka) [and] many major and minor esoteric and exoteric works. As he thought of translating rDo.rje 'phreng.ba, which

⁴⁴⁷ "rGya gar dBus ky1 sku' 1 e Ma ga dha " Vitali 1996, 119 n 84

⁴⁴⁸ *I.e.* 1067 *Id.*, n 85

⁴⁴⁹ *I.e.* 1068 *Id.*, n 86

⁴⁵⁰ *I.e.* 1069 *Id.*, n 87

⁴⁵¹ *I.e.* 1070 *Id.*, n 88

⁴⁵² *I.e.* 1071 *Id.*, n 89

was a secret Tantra (gsang.sngags) [only] transmitted orally (bshad.rgyud) [in mNga'.ris.stod], he sent [someone] to search for it above Kha.che of India (Kha.che thod, i.e. somewhere in the mountainous area overlooking the Vale) [but] it was not found. Later, he provided Man.triga.ka.la.sha with four hundred zho of gold.⁴⁵³ The latter was sent to search for [rDo.rje 'phreng.ba], [and] found it in the direction of dBu.rgyan. As [Zhi ba.'od] acted as lo.tsa.ba for this bla.ma (Man.triga.ka.la.sha), the work was translated and he [thus] performed many great deeds.//

He established the means of support for the forty monks of the dbu.sde ("monastic community") at Sang.dar. He established [the grant of] thirty [measures] of supplies in favour of Tsha.tsa.sgang chos.skor in Pu.hrang. He completed [supplying] innumerable implements for these [temples].

At that time, he summoned pan.di.ta-s from rGya.gar and Kha.che, and Blo.lidan shes.rab, sGrang.ti Dar.ma snying.po, dBus.gTsang.gi dge.bshes and Byang.chub ye.shes, altogether 121 [masters] including their own disciples. Zhang.zhung.ba rGyal.ba shes.rab was invited [together with] all the dge.bshes-s and mkhas.btsun-s from Pu.hrang, Gu.ge and Mar.yul. For three years (lo.gsum.du), the wheel of Buddhism was turned in Gu.ge. Moreover, since he invited A.ti.sha himself and lo.tsa.ba-s and dge.ba'i bshes gnyen-s, he was the patron of the translations. He was a recipient of religious teachings, a donor, a maker of religious books, gtsug.lag.khang-s and mchod.rten-s; he allocated public funds for each member of the dbu.sde-s ("monastic communities"), innumerable [deeds were performed by him]. Bla.ma Zhi.ba'od was a great patron of offerings to the teachings and the holders of [those] teachings. As he personally carried the banner of the teachings, he safeguarded Buddhism for forty-four years and died in the iron female hare year^{454 455}.

In addition to the *Vajra Rosary*, Zhi ba 'od translated the

Śrīparamādyatantramantra- kalpakhaṇḍa (*Dpal mchog dang po'i sngags*) (Toh. 488);

⁴⁵³ Paying for texts is hardly unusual in this venue. Brog mi offered 500 ounces of gold to Gayādhara for the lam 'bras. Dmar.ston chos.kyi rgyal po, [2001], p. 90: *pan di ta mang 'gar mu gu lung du spyang drangs nas lo lngar bzugs pa dang/ gsung ngag ma lus par gnang bar zhal gyis bzhes/ lo tsa bas lo re la gser srang brgya brgya ste lnga lnga brgya 'bul bar khas blangs nas chos kyi nyan shad byed cing* / Stearns 2001, 91

⁴⁵⁴ I.e. 1111. Vitali 1996, 120 n. 94

⁴⁵⁵ *Id.*, 118-120 (footnotes and parentheticals containing Tibetan equivalents omitted unless otherwise indicated). I do have some issues with Vitali's translation. With reference to the *Vajramālā*, he translates *bshad rgyud* as "[only] transmitted orally [in mNga'.ris.stod]," when *bshad rgyud* is simply the nomenclature of "explanatory Tantra."

with Mantrakalaśa, the *Dpal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad*; (a commentary on the *Śrīparamādyatantramantrakalpakaṇḍa*);⁴⁵⁶ the *Sahajamaṇḍalatrīyāloka* (*Lhan cig skyes pa'i dkyil 'khor gsum gsal*) (Toh. 1539); with Guṇāśrībhadra, the *Tattvasaṃgrakārika*; the *Kalāpalaghuvṛttiśiṣyāhitānāma*, probably the earliest translation into Tibetan of a Sanskrit grammar; and, with Mantakalaśa, he revised the *Paramādiṭīkā* (*Dpal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad pa*) (Toh. 2512).⁴⁵⁷ With Atīśa, he translated the *Dpal mchog rtsa 'grel* and sponsored the translations of several other works.⁴⁵⁸ At or near the same time he was translating the *Vajra Rosary*, Zhi ba 'od translated the *Kalachakra Tantra* with the Kashmiri pandit Dha na ta la.⁴⁵⁹ 'Gos lo tsā ba adds that Zi ba 'od "was a scholar in all the sciences of Buddhist and heretical doctrines."⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁶ K Vol 72, No 3335 See Karmay 1998, 21

⁴⁵⁷ According to the Nyingma Edition of the sDe-ge bKa'-'gyur/bsTan-'gyur, Zhi ba 'od was the translator of Toh 445, 488, 1539, 2512, 4266 and 4284

⁴⁵⁸ Bu ston, 217, Roerich 1978, 37, Karmay 1998, 22-29, Vitali 1996, 107-121, Nga dbang grags pa 51-68 Ngag dbang grags pa's *History of Western Tibet*, completed in 1497 C E, Vitali 1996, 95, is the most detailed primary source on the lives of Ye shes 'od, Byang chub 'od and Zhi ba 'od Being a history of *Mnga' ris*, as contrasted with Bu ston's more general overview of the history of Buddhism in India and Tibet, it is much more detailed than Bu ston's, although the focus is on the royal family and not on important figures such as Atīśa or Rin chen bzang po The *Blue Annals* to some degree relies on Bu ston, Roerich 1978 at viii, although there were other sources 'Gos relied on, such as his "main source," the *Red Annals* (*Deb ther dmar po* or *'tshal pa'i deb ther*) Roerich 1978 Karmay relies principally on the *Blue Annals* and on Ka thog tshe dbang nor bu's *rGyal ba'i bstan pa rin po che byang phyogs su byung ba'i rtsa la bod rje lha bstan po'i gdung rabs tshig nyung don gsal yid kyī me long*, written in 1745 Karmay 1980, 28 (this work is contained in the *Collected Works of Ka thog tshe dbang nor bu*, H P 1977, Vol IV, No 156)

⁴⁵⁹ Vitali writes

Zhi ba 'od's translation of *rDo.rje 'phreng.ba* is associated by *Nyang.ral chos.'byung* with a newly translated version of *Dus.'khor* made by Zhi ba 'od with Kha che pandita Dha na ta la (p 465 lines 16-17 "Zhi ba'od kyis Kha che pan di ta Dha na ta la spyān drangs nas Dus 'khor bsgyur/skad gsar bcad byas/ rDo rje 'phreng ba bsgyur", "As Zhi ba'od invited Kha che pan di ta Dha na ta la, *Dus.'khor* was translated by adopting a new lexicon *rDo.rje 'phreng.ba* was [also] translated") This version of the *Kalachakra* is ignored in *mNga'.ris rgyal.rabs*.

Vitali 1996, 319 n 494

⁴⁶⁰ Roerich 1976, 244

5. Mantrakalaśa

Zhi ba 'od's "own Indian master Mantrakalaśa"⁴⁶¹ was, according to the Nyingma Edition of the Sde ge bka' 'gyur/Bstan 'gyur, the translator of Toh. 488 (with Zhi ba 'od),⁴⁶² 1247,⁴⁶³ 1784,⁴⁶⁴ 1842⁴⁶⁵ and 2512 (filled in missing portions with Zhi ba 'od),⁴⁶⁶ all of which appear to be Tantric works. According to the *Gting skyes rnying ma rgyud*, another collaboration of Zhi ba 'od and Mantrakalaśa was the *King of Mahāyāna Realization, the "Glorious Primordial Excellence."*⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶¹ Karmay 1998, 21

⁴⁶² *Dpal mchog dang po'i snags kyi rtog pa'i dum bu zhes bya ba, Śrī paramādya mantra kalpakhaṭika nāma, Section of the Glorious Supreme Primordial Mantra Realization* According to the Catalogue, the *Sde dge* colophon states that Rin chen bzang po was unable to find the complete text, which was later found and translated, that the translation was done at Tho ling, and that the *Blue Annals* (p. 354) states that Zhi ba 'od worked with many *lo tsa bas* and *paṇḍitas* to translate and fill in the missing portions of the *Śrī paramādya tantra*. According to Weinberger, the *Śrī paramādya mantra kalpakhaṇḍa nāma* that Zhi ba 'od and Mantrakalaśa translated was part of a single textual tradition with the *Dpal mchog dang po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i rtog pa'i rgyal pa, Śrī paramādya nama mādhyānakalparaya*, Toh. 487, translated by Rin chen bzang po and Śraddhakaravarman, and that together the two constitute per Bu ston a concordant Tantra for the root text of the Yoga Tantra corpus, the *Compendium of Principles Tantra*. Weinberger 2003, 92-132. Weinberger contends that the *Secret Community* was the next phase in the development of Tantra after the *Compendium of Principles*.

⁴⁶³ *Lhan cig skyes pa'i rnal 'byor dam pa'i 'grel pa snying po rab tu gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba, Sahajasadyoga vṛtti garbhaprakāśa nāma, Clarifying the Essence: the Commentary on the Holy Sahaja Yoga*, a commentary of the *Sahajayogakrama*, Toh. 1246

⁴⁶⁴ Nāgārjuna's *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud kyi rgyud 'grel zhes bya ba, śrīguhyasamājatantrasyatantratīkā-nāma, Tantric Commentary of the Glorious Secret Community Tantra*

⁴⁶⁵ Lakṣmī's commentary on the PK, *Rim pa lnga'i don gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba, Pañcakrama vṛttārthavirocana nāma, Clarifying the Meaning of the Five Stages*

⁴⁶⁶ Ānandagarbha's *Dpal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad pa, śrī paramādī tīkā*, which is a commentary on the *Śrīparamādyānāmamahāyānakalparāja*, Toh. 487, originally translated by Śraddhākaraśarman, Kamalagupta and Rin chen bzang po

⁴⁶⁷ Vol. 17, Tk. 243. See Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library, www.thdl.org/xml/ngb/showNgb.php?doc=TK_243_bib.xml&mode=tst&l=3v4t. According to THDL (per Steven Weinberger, editor of this portion) "The fourteenth-century Tibetan polymath bu ston rin chen grub (1290-1364) explains in his Yoga Tantra history (*rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings*) that the Indians sh+rad d+hA ka ra bar ma and ka ma la gup+t and the Tibetan rin chen bzang po translated this

Mantrakalaśa is also the translator of Śrī Lakṣmī's *Pañcakrama-ṭīkā-kramārtha-prakāśikā*, which, according to Alex Wayman, was the only commentary he could find other than the *PU* that quotes the famous forty verses from the *Vajra Rosary*'s chapter fifty-nine.⁴⁶⁸ Wayman notes that Mantrakalaśa's translation of four of the forty verses is identical to that of the *PU*, and on that basis concludes that Mantrakalaśa, who Wayman guesses lived in the 12th century, had memorized the verses. Karmay's research establishing that Mantrakalaśa was Zhi ba 'od's teacher provides an earlier date for Mantrakalaśa and a different basis for explaining the identical Tibetan translation.⁴⁶⁹

As we have seen, according to Nga dbang grags pa, Mantrakalaśa obtained the text of the *Vajra Rosary* from Oḍḍiyana. Discussing the various editions of the *Vajra Rosary*, Tsong kha pa refers to “the Indian book of Paṇḍita Mantrakalaśa,” so evidently there was an extant Sanskrit text as late as the early fifteenth century.⁴⁷⁰ Mantrakalaśa was thus deeply familiar with Zhi ba 'od's translation of the *Vajra Rosary*; indeed, he may have been a participant in it, or at least might have been consulted by Zhi ba 'od. One also wonders if the Man triga ka la sha whom Ngag dbang grags pa states was sent by Zhi ba 'od to Oḍḍiyana to find and then purchase the text of the *Vajra Rosary* was this very

text, but the translation was incomplete because parts of the Indian text were illegible and the latter part of the second section as well as the third and fourth sections of the text were missing. After rin chen bzang po died, an Indian text was obtained from the Kashmir region, and the Indian scholar man+tr ka la sha and the Tibetan Prince zhi ba 'od filled in the missing gaps and translated the text from the second section on (that is, from chapter 13 on) " This is the same story as the Catalogue gives for Ānandagarbha's *Dpal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad pa*. See n 391 above

⁴⁶⁸ Wayman 1991, 120

⁴⁶⁹ The intertextuality among the *VR*, *PU*, *PK* and Śrī Lakṣmī's *PK* commentary referenced here and, in part, by Yukei Matsunaga, *see* below, merits a full philological study

⁴⁷⁰ Tsong kha pa 2010, 62 (“Thus, though there appear to be many such variations, the chapter divisions of the translation by Sujana Śrījñāna and Zhibā Od and the Indian book of Paṇḍita Mantrakalaśa seem to be correct ”) Whether Tsong kha pa was referring to a Sanskrit version of the Tantra, or composition of Mantrakalaśa, or was confusing Mantrakalaśa with Alamkakalaśa is intriguing, and unclear

same Mantrakalaśa. Roberto Vitali equates the two in his index, but gives no explanation.⁴⁷¹ I think this is a fair conclusion, and places Mantrakalaśa at the heart of the Tibetan *Vajra Rosary*.⁴⁷²

6. *Zhi ba 'od's Proclamation*

Zhi ba 'od presided over an extraordinary gathering of Buddhist scholars and translators. The temple of Tho ling was the center of learning in Western Tibet. Karmay surmises that Tho ling had "the character of the later Tibetan great monasteries," and that even if Zhi ba 'od were not acting as king, "it would not be far-fetched to assume that [Zhi ba 'od] exercised a certain amount of politico-religious power over the religious establishments of his ancestors."⁴⁷³

The *Proclamation* itself recites that it was composed in the water monkey year (*chu spre*l), which would have been 1032 or 1092 C.E.⁴⁷⁴ Initially, Karmay surmised that 1032 was the year, but then revised his opinion in light of evidence (contradicting the *Blue Annals'* failure to mention Zhi ba 'od in connection with the 1076 C.E. *chos 'khor*, "Religious Council of the Fire Dragon") that Zhi ba 'od was in fact the patron, along with

⁴⁷¹ Vitali 1996, 613

⁴⁷² In my research, I read that Mantrakalaśa was the son of Tārakalaśa and the grandson of Kumārakalaśa, who translated Nāgārjuna's commentary on the *Uttaratantra*, the eighteenth chapter of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Toh 1784A) considered to be an explanatory Tantra, so *gsang 'dus* may have been a family interest. Despite many hours of searching during the finalizing of this thesis, I have not been able to find the source of this. If this was in fact the case, one wonders whether Alamkakalaśa had any connection to this lineage. Kumārakalaśa was at Tho-ling, where he translated the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* by order of Zhi ba 'od's older brother, Byang chub 'od. Roerich 1978, x n 4

⁴⁷³ Karmay 1998, 18

⁴⁷⁴ Karmay 1998, 29-30

King Rtse lde, of the *chos 'khor*,⁴⁷⁵ and because the *Proclamation* stresses the tradition of the *bka' gdams pa*, which did not exist before the coming of Aṭīśa in 1042.⁴⁷⁶

Because its correct interpretation may bear on the question of the authenticity of the *Vajra Rosary* or a correctly nuanced view of Zhi ba 'od's beliefs about the correct application of Tantric doctrine and practice, his *Proclamation* merits close attention. It is mainly a listing of seventy-two “translations” and groups of works or texts with commentaries, with relatively little explanation. The *Proclamation* begins by stating immediately after a short introductory paragraph: “The Tantras (mentioned below), their commentaries and *sādhana*, old and new, composed in the guise of the Word of the Buddha and claiming to be of Indian origin, were written by the Tibetans themselves and are as follows.”⁴⁷⁷ He then lists most of the works, and adds:

None of these provides perfect means, and since they do not help in attaining Buddhahood, no one should take them as a path or even resort to them. Those who have taken vows as monks must observe their monastic rules, and (when) they take up the practice of Mantrayāna they should make efforts to observe the vows of the Tantras belonging to the class of Kriyā, Upayā [sic], Yoga and even the *Guhyasamāja*, etc. without breaking their monastic vows.

Although the Tantras belonging to the group of the *ma rgyud* Tantras are excellent, they nevertheless cause many monks to break their monastic vows as a result of not knowing the implications of certain terminology. Because of this, there is nothing wrong even if they are not practised at all.

In particular, the theories of the Great Perfection are mixed up with those of the Hindu doctrines. So if one practises these, one will be led into evil rebirths. Since they thus obstruct one from attaining Enlightenment, under no circumstances are they suitable for practice.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ Karmay references the account of Lo tsā ba blo ldan shes rab, which he interprets as being a contemporary record of the *chos 'khor* of 1076

⁴⁷⁶ Karmay 1998, 30

⁴⁷⁷ *Id.*, 31

⁴⁷⁸ *Id.*, 37

Read closely, rather than being an across the board condemnation of Tantra or even of certain antinomian Tantric practices, the *Proclamation* seems aimed at keeping *genuine* Indian Tantric practices and scriptures separate from adulterated Tibetan creations or modifications, the “New Age” Tantra of its time.

7. *Translations of the Vajra Rosary*

While I have been working with the translation of the *Vajra Rosary* from the Lhasa *bka' 'gyur*, various sources attest to other translations and revisions. Indeed, Alaṃka's *Commentary* appears to be based on a different translation, and Alaṃka clearly had different versions of the *Vajra Rosary* text in front of him, as noted by his quoting different versions as alternative readings.⁴⁷⁹ Tsong kha pa, in his *BIL*, a summary of completion stage practice as presented in various texts, noted that there are a number of translations of the *Vajra Rosary* circulating during his time, including the “old translations.”⁴⁸⁰

The colophon to the Lhasa *bka' 'gyur* version of the *Vajra Rosary* states:

Translated, edited and finalized by the Indian Abbot Sujana Śrī Jñāna and great text translator, monk Zhi ba 'od, the King of Tibet, in the temple of Tho-ling, *dpal med lhun gyis grub pa*, the sanctuary [of Ye shes 'od], the center of the earth.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ For example, in his commentary on *VR* ch. 13, Alaṃka notes, “The essence of that” is the nature of ecstasy and so forth, because of pervading them. As it is said: “Or, the nature of all of them.” Or, *some [versions of] the text* say, “It is not the nature of that.” (*De 'i ngo bo zhes bya ba ni dga' ba la sogs pa 'i rang bzhin te/ de rnams la khyab byed nyid kyi phyir ro/ ji skad du/ yang na thams cad kun bdag nyid/ des gsungs so/ yang na de 'i ngo bo ma yin pa zhes gzhung kha cig las 'byung ste/*) 96B.

⁴⁸⁰ Tsong kha pa 2010, 232.

⁴⁸¹ *VR* 105A-B. The Lhasa Tibetan reads *thugs dam sa 'i snying po tho ling snying pod pal dpe med lhun gyis grub pa 'i gtsug lag khang du rgya gar gyi mkhan po su dza na shrī dznyā na dang sgra sgyur gyi lo*

The index in the *Nyingma Catalogue* lists Sujana Śrī Jñāna only with respect to the *Vajra Rosary*; he is not listed as the translator of any other works in the *bka' 'gyur* or *bstan 'gyur*.

I believe that it is possible that our “Indian Abbot” is Atīśa, Tib. *Mar me mdzad dpal ye shes*, whose ordained name is usually mentioned as “Dīpaṃkara Śrī Jñāna.”⁴⁸² *Sujana* simply means “a good or virtuous or kind or benevolent person.”⁴⁸³ While this would be a unique appellation for Atīśa, one not found in the *bstan 'gyur*,⁴⁸⁴ it has to be a possibility, since none of the historical sources I have reviewed refer to a “Sujana Śrī Jñāna,” and Atīśa and Zhi ba 'od were together in Tho ling from 1042 to 1046.⁴⁸⁵ In 1042, Atīśa was 86 and Zhi ba 'od 27 years old. While it is curious that I have not found any references to Atīśa in connection with the *Vajra Rosary*, the colophon does refer to “the Indian abbot [*mkhan po*] Sujana Śrī Jñāna.” Alaka Chattopadhyaya reports that the post that Atīśa had at Vikramaśīla was in fact *mkhan po*, and Atīśa is listed as *mkhan po* in various colophons.⁴⁸⁶ However, there were other Indian Abbots who were at Tho ling at the time who were also denominated as *mkhan pos*: Śraddhākaravarman is referred to as *mkhan po* in the Sde dge colophon to the *Abhibodhikramopadeśa*, Toh. 1806; and Mantrakalaśa himself is referred to as *mkhan po* in the

ts̥sha ba chen po bod kyī lha btsan po bla ma dge slong zhi ba'i 'od kyī zhal snga nas bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa.

⁴⁸² Chattopadhyaya 1967, 31

⁴⁸³ Monier-Williams, 1223

⁴⁸⁴ Chattopadhyaya 1967, 32

⁴⁸⁵ See Table 4, *supra*.

⁴⁸⁶ *Id.*, 33

Śrīparamādyamantrakalpakhaṇḍa, Toh. 488.⁴⁸⁷ So it is possible, but not conclusive, that “this lama” for whom Zhi ba ‘od “acted as translator” was Atīśa himself.⁴⁸⁸

In his *BIL*, Tsong kha pa refers once to “the Zhi Ba Od translation revised by Dar Ma brTson ’Grus.”⁴⁸⁹ No one by that name is found as a translator in the *Nyingma Catalogue*, but Dar ma brtson 'grus is Marpa's name, so it is possible that this refers to him.⁴⁹⁰ In several places in *the BIL*, Tsong kha pa refers to the “Chag translation” of the Vajra Rosary.⁴⁹¹

According to 'Gos lo tsā ba, Zhang lo tsā ba, whose birth name was Phur pa skyabs, from an early age obtained numerous Tantric teachings in many lineages from more than seventy teachers. He journeyed to India and Nepal, where he studied Sanskrit grammar and logic with the mahāpaṇḍita Ratnarakṣita.⁴⁹² As for his translations, 'Gos lo tsā ba writes: “He made many translations, including that of the rDo-rje 'phreñ-ba and

⁴⁸⁷ The colophon reads, in relevant part, *thugs dam sa' i snying po tho lding du / rgya gar gyi mkhan po paṇ ḍi ta mkhas pa chen po mantra kā la sha dang* .

⁴⁸⁸ Ronald Davidson advises that, given the paucity of our knowledge of what was happening at this time, and the shaky reliability of Tibetan sources, and the plethora of similar names, it is better to assume that Sujana Śrījñāna was a separate person, not Atīśa. Personal Communication 2-16-11

⁴⁸⁹ Tsong kha pa 2000, 27

⁴⁹⁰ Marpa is listed in the index of the *Rnying ma Catalogue* as the reviser of the translation of Nāropa's *Śrī devīkāli sādhanā*, Toh 1781, and his *Śrī cakrasaṃvara vikurvaṇa caturviṃśatideśapramāṇa śāsana*, and the co-translator of Rājaputra Meghavegin's *Vajrapāṇyanalajihva vṛtti muktāvali nāma*, Toh 2185, *Bhagavad vajrapāṇyanalajihva guhyasaṃveśa sādhanā nāma*, Toh 2186, and *Vajrapāṇyanalajihvapuras sarakalpa yogacaryā mārgāṣṭaka nāma*, Toh 2188. But the *Catalogue* indicates that Marpa was the translator of the *Śrī-jñānavajra-samuccaya-tantra*; *dpal ye shes rdo rje kun las btus pa*, the *Wisdom-Vajra Compendium Tantra*, Toh 450, which is one of the *Secret Community's* explanatory Tantras. Marpa is a key figure in the *Secret Community* transmission, holding many lineages. Pan chen so nam grags pa 1996, 63-64

⁴⁹¹ See, e.g., Tsong kha pa 2010, 259

⁴⁹² Roerich 1978, 447

other texts, as well as composed many hidden precepts, etc.,"⁴⁹³ and notes that, of his many visions, "[w]hen he was translating the 'Phreñ-ba (rDo-rje 'phreñ-ba) [*Vajra Rosary*] wonderful signs were observed."⁴⁹⁴ According to 'Gos lo tsā ba, he died in 1237 C.E., which means that his translation post-dated that of Zhi ba 'od, which of course may suggest that he was unaware of Zhi ba 'od's translation or considered it inaccurate or incomplete.

Bu ston reports that Khro phu lo tsa ba byams pa'i dpal, "the translator of Tho phu," translated the *Vajra Rosary* among many other Tantric and non-Tantric works.⁴⁹⁵ According to Bu ston, Byams pa'i dpal worked with the Kashmiri pandita Buddhaśrījñāna, leading one possibly to surmise that this could be one of the old translations referred to by Tsong kha pa.⁴⁹⁶ However, 'Gos lo tsā ba identifies Khro phu lo tsā ba as Byams pa dpal and Tshul khriṃs shes rab (1173-), the primary interpreter for the mahāpandita Śakyaśrī during the latter's stay in Tibet, beginning in 1204 C.E.⁴⁹⁷ In his notes on the *Vajra Rosary*, Tsong kha pa refers to a translation by Rā: "in the translation of Zhi ba 'Od there is the phrase 'nāma iti,' but there is no *nāma* in the translations of Rā and Dharma Btson 'grus.'"⁴⁹⁸ He also refers to the translator "Rva."⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹³ *Id.*, 448

⁴⁹⁴ *Id.*, 447

⁴⁹⁵ Bu ston 1999, 227-28

⁴⁹⁶ Bu ston was in the direct lineage of Khro phu lo tsā ba, Roerich 1978, 711, within several generations, so one would think that his account would be at least *prima facie* reliable

⁴⁹⁷ Roerich 1978, 710

⁴⁹⁸ Tsong kha pa *Notes* 1A

⁴⁹⁹ *Id.*

While it is possible that Tsong kha pa's reference to the "old translations" is to the *Rnying ma* corpus, I have not found them there, although more research remains to be done. Professor Jamspal suggested that the reference may be to handwritten manuscripts that were discarded or lost after one translation was made with wood block printing, doubting that Tsong kha pa would have been referring to the *Rnying ma rgyud*, as to do so would have been too controversial.⁵⁰⁰ David Snellgrove notes that Tibetan script had been in use since about 630 CE, and suggests that translations of Indian works were attempted earlier than Śāntarākṣita's coming to Tibet in 767,⁵⁰¹ so it is possible that it is that time period to which Tsong kha pa is referring.

8. *Alaṃkakalaśa*, *Stengs pa lo tsā ba*, and *Alaṃka's Commentary*

It is clear that Alaṃkakalaśa based his *Commentary* on a Sanskrit version—and, possibly, on translations other than Zhi ba 'od's—because of the significant differences between Zhi ba 'od's translation and the *Vajra Rosary* as it is quoted in the *Commentary*. That Alaṃka was translating from Sanskrit is very clear in reviewing aspects of the Tibetan that make no sense unless the material is back-translated into Sanskrit.⁵⁰² This cannot be a matter of corruption of transcription errors due to the many substantive differences and use of Tibetan synonyms in the respective versions. The *Commentary's* chapter one makes it clear that Alaṃka had a text that appeared to encompass the entire

⁵⁰⁰ Personal Communication, 2006

⁵⁰¹ Snellgrove 2002, 440

⁵⁰² E.g. Alaṃka 45A (the name of the Tib *lung phyur*, “one hundred million” energy-wind as “realized by A and RA” makes no sense unless Alaṃka was translating the Skt *arbuda*, “one hundred million,” which can indeed also mean “awakened by A and RA”)

Tantra, because he comments on all eighty-two questions, and quotes from all the later chapters of the Tantra, including the last, sixty-eight, with a sort of “sneak preview” of what is to come.

Perhaps because the *Commentary* was never completed, there is no general colophon at the end of the text. Rather, colophons appear at the end of each chapter. At the end of the first three chapters, the *Commentary* states: “Composed by A langka ka la sha de ba.” At the end of the sixth through twenty-second chapter,⁵⁰³ “Composed by Pandita A langka ka la sha.” At the end of the twenty-third chapter through thirty-ninth chapters, “Composed by Pandita A lam ka ka la sha.” At the end of the fortieth chapter, the spelling changes back to A langka ka la sha, then at the end of the forty first through forty-fifth chapter to A lam ka ka la sha. Only at the end of the forty-fifth chapter is there any reference to any Tibetan translator: “Translated by Stengs pa lo tsā ba up to half of the forty-fifth chapter.”⁵⁰⁴

According to 'Gos lo tsā ba gzho nu dpal, Alamka's co-translator, Stengs pa lo tsā ba, was born in 1107 C.E.⁵⁰⁵ At the age of six, Stengs lo had a vision of a country, which many years later, he recognized to be India. At the age of ten, says 'Gos, “he recited some mantras of Acala and was able to cure the ailments of others by blowing on the patient.” He had a troubled home life, and became a monk at age 15. After receiving full ordination, he wanted to go to India, and earned money for the trip, twelve golden *zho*, by copying two volumes of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. He finally reached India,

⁵⁰³ There is no colophon or apparent ending for chapters four and five

⁵⁰⁴ *Le'u bzhi bcu rtsa lnga pa'i phyed bar du stengs pa lo tsā bas bsgyur ba'o*. Alamka 220A

⁵⁰⁵ Roerich 1978, 1052

after, “when he reached Diñ-ri, Ārya Avalokiteśvara in the guise of an old man, showed him the road,” and studied in Maghada under Tsa mi sangs rgyas grags pa. He returned to Tibet, then went again to India again, where he studied Sūtra and Tantra under thirteen scholars.⁵⁰⁶ Then, writes ‘Gos,

After extensive study in India, Stengs pa invited the paṇḍita Alamkādeva (Alamkāradeva), a descendant of the Kashmirian Trilocana (sPyan gsum-pa, a famous grammarian)...He made numerous translations and revised existing translations: ... the Kālacakramūlatantra (Dus-'khor rtsa-rgyud. Probably the Kālacakra-nāma-tantrarāja, Kg. rgyud-'bum, No. 362), and the Cycle of Nāgārjuna (the Guhyasamāja), according to the method of the paṇḍita Alamkāradeva. At that time he spent five years in India. Then having again come to India, he studied for three years the Mahāvibhāṣā (Bye-brag bśad-pa chen-po; there exists a report that half of the Bye-brag bśad-pa had been translated during the reign of Khri-sron lde-btsan). He brought to Tibet the Sanskrit text of this book. After that he and Alamkāradeva translated it, but after finishing two thirds of the text, the paṇḍita passed away.

Instead of a funeral rite, they held a great religious assembly of 48 religious chairs. In general, he possessed a clear vision of the maṇḍala of the sixty-two deities of the Saṃvara parivāra, and of many dharmapālas. He became the teacher of great scholars, such as Gro-luñ-pa chen po and others, and the Master of the Doctrine. He passed away at the age of 84....⁵⁰⁷

Recalling Tsong kha pa's reference to "[t]he commentary made by the pandit Alamkādeva or Alakakalasha on the explanatory Tantra *Vajra Rosary* up to the middle of the forty fourth chapter,"⁵⁰⁸ and considering the partnership between Stengs pa lo tsā ba and the Indian pandit, it appears that Alamkakalaśa, Alamkādeva and Alamkāradeva are

⁵⁰⁶ *Id.* 1052-53 Gendun Choepel notes that many of the Indian manuscripts preserved at Ngor have the Sanskrit version of Steng lo's name [Śīlākara] written on them (as a mark of ownership) *Id.*, 1053

⁵⁰⁷ *Id.*, 1053-54

⁵⁰⁸ Tsong kha pa 2000, 44 As noted, the *bstan 'gyur* commentary goes up to the forty-fifth chapter Stengs pa lo tsā ba's colophon, in which he says he translated Alamkakalaśa's commentary *up to* half of the forty-fifth chapter suggests (1) Alamkakalaśa may have completed the *Commentary*, but it was only partially translated, and/or (2) Tsong kha pa erred in saying that the *Commentary* ran to the middle of the forty-fourth chapter *or* Tsong kha pa was using a different translation, now lost, that was a chapter short on the translation

the same person. Indeed, the Sde dge recension has Alangkakalashadeva (in the Tibetan, *a langka ka la sha de ba*, and Peking and Snar thang have Alaṃkadeva (in the Tibetan, *a lam ka de ba*).⁵⁰⁹ Pan chen bsod nams grags pa describes Alaṃkakalaśa as

“Alaṃkakalaśa, Alaṃkara-upādhyāya or Prajñākaragupta of Vikramaśīla, *circa*, 1200

A.D. Contemporary with Kālacakra-pāda the elder,”⁵¹⁰ and he is listed in the

bibliography as “Alaṃkārakalaśa,” so it appears that this pandit is known by at least six names.⁵¹¹ With Nyi ma grags, he is the translator of Nāgabuddi's

Kramāntarbhāvanopadeśa-nāma-prakaraṣa,⁵¹² a commentary on the *Pañcakrama*. The

Nyingma Catalogue lists Alaṃkakalaśa as the translator of the *Commentary*, Toh. 1795

and the *Kramāntarbhāvanopadeśa-nāma-prakaraṣa*, Toh. 1812; Alaṃkadeva as

translator of the *Ucchuṣmajambhalsādhana-nāma*, Toh. 3743, the

Bhagavatyaṃnāyānusāriṇi, Toh. 3811 and the *Haribhaṭṭajātakamāla*, Toh. 4152; and

Alaṃkāradeva as translator of the *Vinayasūtravṛṭtyabhidānasavyākhyāna-nāma*, Toh.

4119; and Prajñākaragupta (*Shes rab 'byung gnas sbas pa*) as the translator of the

Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra, Toh. 4221 and the *Sahāvalambanirṇaya-nāma*, Toh. 4255.

There is also an Alakakalaśa who is the commentator on the *Yoginīsanjaratantram*. The

(Hindi) introduction to that work states that there is no indication that Alakakalaśa and

our commentator Alaṃkakalaśa are not different persons,⁵¹³ and the Library of Tibetan

⁵⁰⁹ See, e.g. Alamka 33B

⁵¹⁰ Dragpa, 108

⁵¹¹ "Alaṃkāra" is listed in the *Nyingma Catalogue* as the author of the *Ten Principles of Suchness* (*de kho nyid bcu pa; daśatattva*, Toh 1895), but there is no indication that this person is Alaṃkakalaśa

⁵¹² Toh 1812

⁵¹³ Alaṃkakalaśa 1998, 23

Works and Archives seeks further information on whether these *mahapanditas* were in fact the same person. There may be good reason to think so based on the style of the two commentaries. Both authors have colophons at the end of each chapter, in much the same wording. And the introduction to each succeeding chapter is in the same style.

Go lo tsā ba's history, referring to “the Cycle of Nāgārjuna (the Guhyasamāja), according to the method of the paṇḍita Alamkāradeva” suggests that there may have been more commentaries by Alamkakalaśa on the *Secret Community*, and even an overall system. In his *Source of the Ocean of Deeds*, 'Jam mgon a myes zhabs notes that the *Secret Community* in India had seven commentarial traditions: Superiors (Ārya); Buddhaśrījñānapāda (Jñānapāda); Śāntipa; Lalitavajra; Smṛtijñānakīrti; Āndagarbha; and Kālacakra-Guhyasamāja.⁵¹⁴

C. *Placing the Vajra Rosary in Context*

1. *Was it an Indian Text or a “Gray” Text?*

Because its translation was a collaboration between a Indian and a Tibetan, the text itself was procured from Oddiyana,⁵¹⁵ and it has an explicit discussion of sexual yogas and references to the Yoginī Tantras and even to the supposedly later-composed *Kalachakra Tantra*,⁵¹⁶ the *Vajra Rosary* could be a paradigm of what Ronald Davidson

⁵¹⁴ A myes zhabs 1985, 198-201. Further research would hopefully determine the lineage of the “method of Alamkāradeva.”

⁵¹⁵ Tradition holds that the *Secret Community Tantra* was revealed to King Indrabhūti of Oddiyana. Freeman 1971, 13.

⁵¹⁶ *VR* 45A, Ch. 23, v. 49; 84B, ch. 58, v. 6. Tradition has it that the *Kalachakra*, like the other Tantras, was preached by Buddha. Modern commentators, arguing for a late date for the *Kalachakra*, generally rely on the *Kalachakra*'s references to Islam as evidence. The argument made here as to the progressive

calls a “gray” text.⁵¹⁷ Nga dbang grags pa’s account of the procurement of the *Vajra Rosary* does raise some questions. Why was the *Vajra Rosary* so difficult to find? Interestingly, the colophon to the *Śrīparamādyatantra- mantrakalpakaṇḍa*, Toh. 488, translated by Zhi ba ‘od and Mantrakalaśa, states that Rin chen bzang po couldn’t find the text and so didn’t translate it, but Zhi ba ‘od did,⁵¹⁸ so the instance of the *Vajra Rosary* is not the only one where the efforts of Zhi ba ‘od and Mantrakalaśa to find a lost text were successful. So we need to ask, having sent Mantrakalaśa off to find the *Vajra Rosary* in Oḍḍiyana, what kind of transaction ensued? Was this *Vajra Rosary* composed for Zhi ba ‘od, on the basis of a memorized text or out of whole cloth?

Davidson addresses a similar situation involving the *Root Text of the Mārgaphala*, the most important and most secret text of the Sa skyā tradition, attributed to ‘Brog mi. He surmises that Gayādhara, “exactly the kind of Indian paṇḍita that Rongzom noted in his contemporary criticism of the Sarma system: Rongzom claimed that Indian Paṇḍitas find out whatever Tibetans wanted and composed new works en route to Tibet,”⁵¹⁹ may have produced the text for 500 ounces of gold by augmenting a general text in his possessions with specific esoteric instructions. Davidson supports his thesis by noting some duplicity practiced by Gayādhara, who “was certainly not above creating an

development and emendation of texts amplifying Buddha’s original teachings meets this and other such arguments

⁵¹⁷ Davidson 2005, 119, 148-51

⁵¹⁸ The colophon of the Sde dge recension states *dpal mchog dang pol as rtog pa’i rgyal pot hams cad kyi mchog rdzogs so// // thugs dam sa’i snying po tho ling du / rgya gar gyi mkhan po paṇḍi ta mkhas pa chen po mantra kā la sha dang / sgra bsgyur gyi lo tsā ba lha btsan po dge slong bla ma zhi ba’i ‘od kyi zhal snga nas bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa // // lo tsā chen po rin chen bzang po yis // dpal mchog dang po’i rgyud ‘di bsgyur ba la // bar bar dpe ma rnyed pas ma ‘gyur nas // bdag gis ‘bad pas dpe btsal rnyed pas bsgyur.*

⁵¹⁹ Davidson 2005, 187

artificial persona for himself, a persona that would provide him with esteem, income, and access to the great clans....”⁵²⁰ Davidson finds ‘Broḡ mi’s complicity in this to be only a remote possibility because, “having reviewed his oeuvre in some detail—that he was a scholar of extraordinary ability and intellectual integrity, more so in fact that Gayādhara.”⁵²¹

Davidson’s evidence here, though impressively marshaled, is circumstantial. Character evidence, the key to Davidson’s surmise, is generally problematic: even the most depraved among us spend most of our time in ordinary activities. For this reason, in general, the law does not permit even live testimony about character to establish that a person acted in conformity therewith on a particular occasion.⁵²² While we are not in a court of law here, as Professor Davidson himself told me, we really know very little about what really happened in Tibet a thousand years ago,⁵²³ so in speculating on thin evidence there is fertile ground for Eco’s “empirical reader” to run riot.

Here, Tsong kha pa’s mention of Mantrakalaśa’s “Indian book” of the *Vajra Rosary* may be an indication of authenticity, although I suppose—though such a practice is not included by Davidson in his description of “gray” texts—that Mantrakalaśa or someone else could have composed the entire text in Sanskrit. And, unlike Davidson’s findings relating to Gayādhara’s character flaws, I have found no such indication

⁵²⁰ *Id.* According to Davidson’s research, Gayādhara appears to have been a shady character indeed “Gayādhara is also depicted by all the sources as having significant difficulties in telling the truth, for on his second trip we find him masquerading as Maitrīpā, deceiving the translator of the Guhyasamāja system, Go-lotsāwa Khukpa Lhetse, until Gayādhara was recognized by one of his own disciples” *Id.*, 178

⁵²¹ *Id.*, 188

⁵²² *See, e.g.*, F R E 404 (a)

⁵²³ Personal Communication 2-16-11

regarding Mantrakalaśa, although I have not done extensive research in that regard. Moreover, as mentioned above, in his *BIL*, Tsong kha pa references the “old translations” of the *Vajra Rosary*. In addition, Zhi ba ‘Od’s *Proclamation* strictly limiting the categories of “authentic” scriptures⁵²⁴ would seem to indicate that he was most zealous in assuring the authenticity of texts. It is reasonable to presume that, given his role in finding and translating the text, Zhi ba ‘od was knowledgeable of the circumstances of the *Vajra Rosary*.

So, while further research remains to be done, at this point there is no reason to assume that the *Vajra Rosary* is not an authentic Indian text.

2. Were the Five Stages Added Later, to Validate the Noble Tradition? Yūkei Matsunaga’s Theory

Citing Yūkei Matsunaga’s 1964 article, “A Doubt to Authority of the Guhyasamāja-Ākhyāna-Tantras,” Christian Wedemeyer puts it delicately: “[T]he current state of research on this topic suggest that these explanatory Tantras were still in a formative state at the time the Noble Tradition works were redacted.”⁵²⁵

In his oft-cited short article, Matsunaga asserted that in the first sixty-seven chapters of the *Vajra Rosary* there were no references to the five stages of Nāgārjuna’s *PK*, and that references to the five stages only occur in the *Vajra Rosary*’s last chapter,

⁵²⁴ Davidson notes that in the *Proclamation* Zhi ba ‘od excludes not only Tibetan creations but “works of excellent Indic pedigree are castigated as well” as “not conducive to liberation.” Davidson 2005, 153-154

⁵²⁵ Wedemeyer 2007, 42. Wedemeyer seems to take Matsunaga’s analysis at face value. *Id.*

the sixty-eighth.⁵²⁶ Based on this and that three verses of the *Vajra Rosary* were identical to the *PK* and were in prose and not metered verse like the surrounding verses of the *Vajra Rosary*, he concluded that the *Vajra Rosary*'s chapter sixty-eight had taken the three verses from chapter four of the *PK*, and that, therefore, chapter sixty-eight had been added to the *Vajra Rosary* only *after* the composition of chapter four of the *PK*.

Matsunaga also found that the first chapter of the *PK* had been added to the *PK* *after* chapter 68 of the *Vajra Rosary* had been added.⁵²⁷ Based on these findings, Matsunaga asserts:

Why were such additions repeated so often? We may say it was because the school wanted to increase the authority of the Pancakrama. The system of "Five orders" of the Pancakrama is found neither in the Guhyasamaja-tantra nor in the first 67 chapters of the Vajramala-tantra. But it was necessary for the Pancakrama to have its authority in the Tantra. Then the scholars of the Saint school added the 68th chapter which is closely connected with the system of "Five orders" to the 67 chapters, of the Vajramala-tantra which are the basis of the Pindikrita-sadhana, but not of the Pancakrama. And, moreover they interpolated into the Vajra-japa-krama some verses which they pretended to be the quotation from the Vajramala-tantra with a view to empowering the Pancakrama by the authority of the Akhyana-tantra.⁵²⁸

I think Matsunaga's conclusions are questionable for a number of reasons. Given the propensity in Indian and Tantric literature for the emendation of texts, and the process of accretion, the intertextuality cited by Matsunaga is not surprising. As noted by Jan Nattier in her study of *The Inquiry of Urga*, because many texts were memorized, as they still are today, it was common for a scribe working on a text to be recording it based on

⁵²⁶ Matsunaga has a number of other observations about the relative chronology of the *Secret Community* explanatory Tantras, the *PK*, the *Pindikṛta-sadhana* and the *PU*, but, in light of what I am arguing below, I think these all need to be reexamined

⁵²⁷ Matsunaga 1967, 843-44

⁵²⁸ Matsunaga 1967, 842-43

someone's orally transmitted recollection of a text that might be written *somewhere*, but is not in the possession of those creating the text.⁵²⁹ The many versions of slightly varying texts in the Tibetan canon attest to this as well.⁵³⁰ This is frequently overlooked by modern scholars, who are so focused on the written text. In addition, there are a host of other kinds of textual interpolations that can cause confusion in the relative dating of texts, including multiplication of epithets, completion of standard lists, recalling a passage from another scripture, filling in blanks, giving additional or different examples, changes in the order of material, or, on occasion, adding new material intentionally.⁵³¹

In this case, I believe that the textual analysis Matsunaga relied on is not correct, and that, indeed, the opposite conclusion can be drawn. He argues:

A few years ago I studied the interaction between the Vajramālā-tantra and the Pañcakrama. The main point of that thesis is as follows. We cannot find any reference to the system of the 'five orders' of the Pañcakrama [PK], either in the Guhyasamāja-tantra or in the chapters 1 to 67 of the Vajramālā-tantra. But in the last 68th chapter of the Vajramālā-tantra, the system of the 'five orders' appears. In that chapter three verses are irregular in syllabication, and the same verses are found in the fourth order of the Pañcakrama. In the Vajramālā-tantra the verses before and after the three verses just mentioned are regular in form, while in the Pañcakrama the verses before and after the three are irregular. This indicates that the Vajramālā-tantra took the three verses from the Pañcakrama. It is therefore presumed that the 68th chapter of the Vajramālā-tantra was added after the Pañcakrama had been written.⁵³²

⁵²⁹ Nattier 2003, 58-59

⁵³⁰ In his autobiography Denma Locho Rinpoche tells of being beaten by his less than sophisticated teacher for sometimes substituting synonyms in his recitation of memorized texts. Yeshe, <http://www.loselingmonastery.org/index.php?id=58&type=p>

⁵³¹ Nattier 2003, 51-57, 61-63

⁵³² Matsunaga 1967, 843-842. Matsunaga cites an earlier article, "On the relations between the Vajramālā-tantra and the Pañcakrama," Bunka, 20-4, 1956, pp. 24-37. However, the article appearing there does not concern the Vajramālā or the PK. I am attempting to find the earlier article, but have not been successful so far. It may be that in the earlier article Matsunaga has given additional reasons for his thesis that may undercut my arguments here. However, he does give "the main point of that thesis" in his 1964 article.

First of all, both the *Vajra Rosary* and the *PK* were Sanskrit texts before they were translated into Tibetan. Matsunaga's argument that someone (presumably Zhi ba 'od and Sujana Śrījñāna) took the Tibetan translation from the *PK* for those verses and inserted it into the translation of the *Vajra Rosary* says nothing about the Sanskrit versions. At most, assuming that the Matsunaga's argument that prose must be prior to verse is well taken, this would suggest only that Zhi ba 'od and Sujana Śrījñāna had the Tibetan translation of the *PK* in front of them when they were translating the *Vajra Rosary*, and, perhaps rather than translate directly the Sanskrit of the *Vajra Rosary* into Tibetan, they took the Tibetan translation directly from the Tibetan *PK*. One could speculate that Zhi ba 'od and Sujana Śrījñāna, recognizing that the Sanskrit was the same or similar to that of the *PK*, and knowing that senior translators in their community, Rin chen bzang po and Śraddhākravarman, had already translated it in the *PK*, simply adopted it as their own. Matsunaga's argument, at most, suggests only that the *PK* was *translated* into Tibetan before the *Vajra Rosary* was *translated* into Tibetan.⁵³³ Such a conclusion would not support his contention about the sequence of the *creation* of chapter sixty-eight of the *Vajra Rosary* and the *PK*.

Secondly, even if we look just at the Tibetan, I am not sure why Matsunaga concluded that prose must always precede verse. While there are very similar (not identical) prose verses in *VR* ch. 68, vv. 5-8 and *PK* ch. 4, vv. 19-21, the verses before

⁵³³ Davidson asserts that in his 1096 *Proclamation*, Zhi ba 'od denominated the *PK* as inauthentic, which would cut against my argument here. However, I believe that the work Davidson is referring to might not be the *PK*, *Five Stages*, but the *Rim Inga'i 'grel ba*, or *Five Stages Commentary*, which is the only reference to the *PK* I see in the *Proclamation*. See Karmay 1998, 35, 39. Karmay has the text, reconstructed from So zlog pa's commentary as noted above, as *rim Inga'i 'grel ba klu'i byang chub kyi mdzad zer ba dang*, which I would translate as "The *Five Stages Commentary*, supposedly by Klu'i byang chub." "Klu'i byang chub" could be the name of an author who wrote a commentarial work on the *PK*, or could be a reference to "the enlightened [*byang chub*] Nāgārjuna." But Nāgārjuna is usually referred to in Tibetan as *Klu sgrub*.

and after the similar verses do not concern the same subject matter. It is not as if the author (in this case, translator) of the *Vajra Rosary* took *PK* prose and neatly transformed it into verse.⁵³⁴

Third, and perhaps most importantly, contrary to what Matsunaga states, there *are* references to the “system of ‘five orders’”⁵³⁵ in the earlier chapters of the *Vajra Rosary*. Chapter twenty-three, where Buddha says at the outset that he is going to teach “self, mantra and so forth, *in exact stages*,”⁵³⁶ discusses the third of the five stages, “self-consecration,” using virtually (*bdag bying brlab* v. *bdag la byin brlab*; the insertion of the *la* does not change the meaning and can be ascribed to meter) the same nomenclature for that stage as chapter sixty-eight and the *PK*.⁵³⁷ The *Vajra Rosary* describes this as “abandoning ordinary conceptuality,”⁵³⁸ to know that the body is, in reality, a palace of deities,⁵³⁹ which is the essence of the third stage, self-consecration or illusory body.

Although the exact nomenclature that is used in the *PK* does not always appear, which, again, may not be surprising given that we are comparing separate translations of the original Sanskrit texts, there are many terms used in the literature to describe the five

⁵³⁴ I should stress again that perhaps in his other writings Matsunaga has provided more detail

⁵³⁵ Matsunaga 1967, 842

⁵³⁶ 42A, ch 23, v 1, although I must point out that “in exact stages,” *ji lta ba rim pa rnams*, is not in the Lhasa recension, but is in Alamka’s version. Lhasa reads *bdag nyid sngags sogs byed pa yis*, with only three lines in the verse, Alamka has *bdag nyid sngags sogs dbye bas/ ji lta ba bzhin rim pa rnams*. Alamka 153A

⁵³⁷ VR 44B, ch 23, v 40 (*snang ba thams cad rnam par spangs/ bdag bying brlab pa’i rang bzhin can/ kun la khyab pa rmad du byung/ rang rig pa yi rnal ‘byor mchog/*), VR 101A, ch 68, v 16 (*bdag la byin brlab rim pas kyang/ dngos grub brgyad ni thob par ‘gyur/ snang ba la sogs dbye ba shes/ mchon par byang chub rim pa thob/*), *Five Stages* ch 3, v 1 (*bdag la byin gyis brlab pa’i rim/ brtse bas bdag gis bshad par bya*)

⁵³⁸ Alamka 174A

⁵³⁹ VR 48A, ch 26, v 1 (*lus ni gnag gis shes pa/ lha rnams kun gyi pho brang mchog/*)

stages of the perfection stage. Chapter twenty-three explains the “commitment of the three realities,” which appears to refer to the practices of body and speech isolation, and, in describing the dissolution of the HŪM into “mere sound,”⁵⁴⁰ mere sound into “supreme sky,” and supreme sky into clear light,⁵⁴¹ to mind isolation, the second of the five stages, as well.

The very first chapter, according to Alamka, references the first and second of the five stages, speech and mind isolation.⁵⁴² In his commentary on chapter three, Alamka explains that this state of the four ecstasies is what is referred to in the *Mahāyoga* Tantras as manifest enlightenment and the state of integration, the fourth and fifth of the five stages.⁵⁴³ Chapter forty, explains Alamka, refers to the latter of the five stages, manifest enlightenment⁵⁴⁴ and integration, although, as in the first chapter, they are not described in the chapter with the same nomenclature as in chapter sixty-eight.⁵⁴⁵ Alamka explains how the Tantra refers to each of the five stages: “Having abandoned conceptuality, meditating and what is meditated on, attachment and detachment, on this stage you are even ‘free from abandoning,’”⁵⁴⁶ “because [this stage] is especially nobler than the stage of vajra repetition.”⁵⁴⁷ “‘You surpass the state of all things, ‘all things’ [meaning]

⁵⁴⁰ Alamka says this is “in the emptiness of the actuality of perfect sound ” *Id.*

⁵⁴¹ *VR* 44B, ch 23, vv 42-45

⁵⁴² Alamka 7A, 8A

⁵⁴³ Alamka 38B

⁵⁴⁴ Alamka 209A

⁵⁴⁵ Alamka 208A

⁵⁴⁶ Alamka 209A, The Lhasa *VR* does not have this verse

⁵⁴⁷ *Id.*

luminance⁵⁴⁸ and so forth” “because [this stage] is especially nobler than the stage of mental purification.”⁵⁴⁹ “‘You abandon the three worlds’ ... free of [even] the conception of the three worlds as in the nature of an illusion” “because you are free from the stage of self-consecration.”⁵⁵⁰ And “you are free of passion and dispassion,”⁵⁵¹ “abandoning passion because you are free of the stage of consort and concentration.”⁵⁵² “‘You abide in the great commitment,’⁵⁵³ “the aspect of integration.”⁵⁵⁴ That the nomenclature associated with the descriptions of the five stages is different or less clear than that of the commentarial works like the *Five Stages* is not surprising at all in light of the traditional explanation that the descriptions of practice become clearer as one proceeds from the *Root Tantra* to the explanatory Tantras and, finally, to the commentarial works. That indeed is the hallmark of the Noble Tradition system.⁵⁵⁵

Finally, there are examples of intertextuality between the *Vajra Rosary* and the *PK* that suggest the kinds of memorization issues discussed by Nattier, although, again, we are only dealing here with the Tibetan translation, which says nothing about the priorities of the Sanskrit texts in question. The *PK*’s fourth order, verse seventeen, states:

*mtshan mo snang ba’i cha ste gsal ba nyi ma’i zer ‘gyed snang ba mched pa yin/
mtshams ni snang ba thob par rang gi rang bzhin rnams kyis lan cig min par ‘gro/*

⁵⁴⁸ The first of the stages of subtle body dissolution, *snag ba*, “luminance,” also “white appearance

⁵⁴⁹ Alamka 209A

⁵⁵⁰ *I.e.* illusory body Alamka 209A

⁵⁵¹ *VR* 60B, ch 40, v 6

⁵⁵² Alamka 209A

⁵⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁵⁴ Alamka 209A-B

⁵⁵⁵ Wedemeyer 2007, 5-6

*mtshan min nyin par ma yin mtshams min gang zhig rang bzhin rnam
dang rnam
bral ba/
de ni byang chub skad cig yin par bla ma mchog bshad rnal 'byor pa nyid yul//*

The corresponding verses from chapter sixty-eight of the *Vajra Rosary* are:

*snang ba mtshan mo 'i cha ru 'gyur/ nyin mo snang ba mched pa 'o/
mtshams ni snang ba thob pa 'o/ de ltar snang la sogs mtshan nyid/
mtshan min mtshams dang nyin mo min/ kun rtog rlung ni spong bar byed// //4//*

de ni skad cig mngon byang chub/ mtshan nyid skad cig mar ni brjod
[from verse 5].

Luminance serves as part¹ of the night/ The day is radiance.
Dawn is imminence./ Thus, the characteristics of luminance and so forth
Are not night, and are not dawn or day,/ [But] cause the abandoning/
Of the conceptual energy-winds. //4//

It is instant enlightenment,/ [Its] character is called momentary.
[from verse 5].⁵⁵⁶

Looking at them side by side, with the *Pañcakrama* (PK) text in bold:

TABLE 5. PK v. VR

P1. <i>mtshan mo snang ba 'i cha ste/</i>	V1. <i>snang ba mtshan mo 'i cha ru 'gyur</i>
P2. <i>gsal ba nyi ma 'i zer 'gyed snang ba mched</i>	V2. <i>nyin mo snang ba mched pa 'o/</i>
<i>pa yin/</i>	
P3. <i>mtshams ni snang ba thob par/</i>	V3. <i>mtshams ni snang ba thob pa 'o/</i>
P4. <i>rang gi rang bzhin rnam kyis lan cig</i>	V4. <i>de ltar snang la sogs mtshan nyid/</i>
<i>min par 'gro/</i>	
P5. <i>mtshan min nyin par ma yin mtshams min/</i>	V5. <i>mtshan min mtshams dang nyin</i>
<i>mo</i>	<i>min/</i>
P6. <i>gang zhig rang bzhin rnam dang rnam</i>	V6. <i>kun rtog rlung ni spong bar byed//</i>
<i>bral ba/</i>	
P7. <i>de ni byang chub skad cig yin par/</i>	V7. <i>de ni skad cig mngon byang chub/</i>
P8. <i>bla ma mchog bshad rnal 'byor pa nyid yul//</i>	V8. <i>mtshan nyid skad cig mar ni</i>
<i>brjod/</i>	

There are clear parallels in 1-3, 5, 7 and possibly 6; P4 is parallel to V8 although in P8 and V8 there is the parallelism of *bshad* and *brjod*. Interestingly, elements of P4 and P8

⁵⁵⁶ VR 100A, ch 68, vv 4-5

that are unaccounted for in *VR* ch. 68 are found in the second to last line of *VR* ch. 53, v. 3: *rang gi ngo bo rnam pa mchog*. This tantalizingly suggests the kind of memorization mistakes noted by Nattier.

Finally, stylistically and thematically, chapter sixty-eight seems to belong with the rest of the Tantra. It ends with the assembled offer praise and thanks for the teaching, just as the questions in chapter one ended with praises and thanks. Neither chapter sixty-seven nor any of the earlier chapters have such a theme. *Without* chapter sixty-eight, the Tantra would seem to be ending in the middle.

In sum, particularly given the fact there are explicit and implicit references to the five stages in earlier chapters of the *Vajra Rosary*, there are many possible explanations for the intertextuality between the Tibetan translations of chapter sixty-eight of the *Vajra Rosary* and chapter four of the *PK* other than the one advanced by Matsunaga. His arguments say nothing about the Sanskrit texts. Even just looking at the Tibetan translations, there seems to be little evidence for his conclusion that the earlier chapters have no reference to the five stages, and therefore that chapter sixty-eight was a later addition, much less for his leap that the scholars of the Noble Tradition sought to increase the authority of the *PK* by adding a chapter to the *Vajra Rosary*. Based on the evidence, it is just as likely that chapter sixty-eight of the *Vajra Rosary* preceded the *PK*.⁵⁵⁷

3. *The Vajra Rosary as an Evolving “Text”*

⁵⁵⁷ This also demonstrates the utility of the case study and the collective efforts of scholars, since no one alone can master the vast collection of Tantras and the corresponding commentaries. The process moves forward in a dialectic, each of us conjectures, often erroneously, but that is what moves the process forward.

While all of his conclusions do not seem to be well taken, Matsunaga's insight that the terminology of chapter sixty-eight, at least in the Tibetan translation, was somewhat different than that of the preceding chapters does have some validity. But chapter sixty-eight is hardly the only place where the *Vajra Rosary* shows stylistic variation. Does the *Vajra Rosary* appear to be a unitary text or is it better thought of as an anthology?

As will be shown in detail in Chapter Three, the same topics are covered in different chapters of the *Vajra Rosary*, and there are sometimes inconsistencies. While these may be hermeneutically reconciled, they still appear as inconsistent. For example, while chapter sixty-two states that ejaculation is a "fault" in the practice⁵⁵⁸ and that the guru "should...control the vajra, delighting the deities in whatever way,"⁵⁵⁹ *i.e.* control release and not reach orgasm, chapter fifty-four refers to "conventional enlightenment spirit falling into the yoginī."⁵⁶⁰ Chapter six exclusively employs the mantra HŪṂ HOḤ for vajra repetition, while chapters fifteen and twenty-two use OM ĀḤ HŪṂ.⁵⁶¹ Chapter fourteen is a discussion of the various meanings of "vajra" and "lotus," while chapter forty-two discusses the meaning of "vajra." Chapter sixty-two returns to a description, that we saw in chapter forty-four, of the five types of yoginīs from the five Buddha clans, how they look, and what the proper signals and responses are. Chapters two and sixty-five both contain fairly detailed descriptions of the qualities of the good guru. Chapter

⁵⁵⁸ *VR* 91A-91B, ch 62, vv 25-26

⁵⁵⁹ *VR* 91B, ch 62, v 27

⁵⁶⁰ *VR* 80B, ch 54, vv 166

⁵⁶¹ This also caught Tsong kha pa's attention, and he discusses the fact that the *Vajra Rosary* contains two methods, concluding they are both effective methods for combining the Life-energy and Evacuative energy-winds in the heart center. Tsong kha pa 2010, 315-17

two says the disciple should offer his “wife, sister or daughter” to the guru (and *Alamka* indicates that this means what it says),⁵⁶² while chapter forty-four says that “wife” is a woman with a mole, “sister” is a washerwoman, and “daughter” is a dancer.⁵⁶³ Chapter fifty-four describes the same second and third initiations as chapter two, as does chapter sixty-two, and the descriptions are somewhat differing. Chapter five discusses emptiness in a general way, but later chapter forty-nine returns to the subject, correlating it with the sixteen emptinesses almost identical to those set out in Candrakīrti’s *Introduction to the Middle Way*.⁵⁶⁴ There are other examples.

Overall, the text is symmetrical, with praises found in chapter one and at the end of chapter sixty-eight, but between the first and the last chapters there are sequences of chapters that seem to follow one from the other, relating to the same subject matter, but there are also a number of exceptions, where subjects appear to be out of sequence. The following groupings of chapters make thematic sense: chapters 9 and 10 relating to the vow and the commitment; 17 and 18 relating to the chakras and the channels; 19 and 20 on the instants and the ecstasies; 21-25 concentrating on vajra repetition practice, including the crucial connection with emptiness in 25; 26-41 relating to the chakras, the channels and cutting off conceptuality; 42-48 explaining terms; 49 and 50 relating to emptiness; 51-53 describing the luminances; 54 and 55 detailing the twenty rituals and their meaning; 56 and 57 on the role of yogic bliss; 58 and 59 deriving the meaning of the

⁵⁶² “‘Daughter’ [means] female child ‘Wife’ [means] your own wife ‘Or girl’ [means] sister’s daughter ‘Sister’ [means] your own sister ‘You should offer’ [means] you should give ” *Alamka* 40A

⁵⁶³ *VR* 63B-64A, ch 44, vv 11-23 *Alamka* 218A-219B

⁵⁶⁴ One could make an argument here, similar to Matsunaga’s about chapter sixty-eight, that chapter forty-nine was inserted into the *Vajra Rosary* to validate the *PU*, also attributed to Candrakīrti. This would be complicated by the fact that the *PU* quotes the *Vajra Rosary* fairly extensively, and has a famous commentary on *VR* chapter fifty-nine, the famous “forty verses ”

entire perfection stage from the syllables *evam* and *evam mayā* and so forth; 60 and 61 on the inner offering; 62 and 63 relating to the *gaṇacakra*; and 66 and 67 on mundane *siddhis*.

On the other hand, the placing of some material seems rather random: the naming of the energy-winds and conceptualities in chapter 3; the discussion of emptiness in 5; the hermeneutical exposition of vajra and lotus in 14; and there is Matsunaga's critique of 68. Another factor to consider is that the chapters do vary tremendously in length and style; some are tremendously detailed and lengthy; others are short and general. And, as shown above, chapters on related topics, as shown above, are not usually found to be sequential. Another thing to consider is that chapter thirty-two of the *Vajra Rosary* uses the Yogacāra terms *ālayavijñāna*, "fundamental consciousness," and *kliṣṭamanas*, "addicted mind,"⁵⁶⁵ terms rejected by the Madhyamakas, yet chapter forty-nine sets forth the sixteen emptinesses in virtually the same form as great Madhyamaka Candrakīrti.⁵⁶⁶ Finally, the *Vajra Rosary* explicitly says in some chapters that it is following the Mahāyoga Tantras and in others that it is adhering to the Yoginī Tantras.

⁵⁶⁵ *VR* 54A, ch 32, vv 3, 5 One can find numerous statements to the effect that the *Yogacāra* view permeates Tantra. Guy Newland's observation is fairly typical: "That the mind has great power over objects, and is intimately involved with them, is a vital message of the Mind Only system. Another name for the Mind Only system is the Yogic Practice system (*yogacāra*). This name points to the fact that Mind Only ideas probably derive, in part, from the experiences of advanced meditators." Newland 1999, 48. David Snellgrove speculates that the strong influence of *Yogacāra* in Dunhuang may be related to the effort of Hsuan-tsang, whose main purpose in visiting India was to bring back *Yogacāra* texts. Snellgrove 2002, 457 n 136.

⁵⁶⁶ The presence of *Yogacāra* terminology gave rise to an hermeneutic issue when Madhyamakas like Tsong kha pa were called upon to interpret the *Vajra Rosary*. As noted by Professor Wayman, Tsong kha pa states in his commentary on the *Vajrajñānasamuccaya*: "The 'ālaya' and 'kliṣṭamanas' mentioned in this Tantra (the *Vajramālā*) are the same terms explained in other texts but have different meanings." Wayman 1977, 203. Wayman theorizes that what Tsong kha pa meant is that these *Yogacāra* terms do not refer to the fundamental consciousness and so on but to imminence, radiance and luminance. Wayman asserts that the *ālayavijñāna* should be interpreted as imminence or near-attainment, the stage directly following clear light in the incarnation process (and preceding it in the death process) characterized by the inner sign of pitch darkness and total loss of awareness. *Id.*

Jacob Dalton's "three stage" analysis would also suggest that the *Vajra Rosary* is an anthology because, as we shall see in Chapter Three, it contains elements not only of all three stages ("offering" is used fifty-eight times in the text), but also offerings toward external shrines:

The first stage in this process corresponded to the first half of the eighth century, when the first 'internal' Yoga tantras were composed. These works cast the Buddhist subject as the buddha at the center of the ritual, so that the oblations which were previously directed towards an external shrine were now offered to oneself. The second, intermediate period is represented by the early Mahāyoga tantras, and spanned the second half of the eighth and the early ninth century. During this period, ritual worship moved to the body's interior, with particular attention given to the details of male and female sexual anatomy. Thus the visualized maṇḍala was generated inside the vagina at the point of sexual union, and it was worshipped by means of pleasure generated through the performance of *coitus reservatus*. The third period is characterized by the later Mahāyoga tantras, most of which were eventually classified as Anuttarayoga. This period unfolded gradually over the ninth century, with Buddhajñānapāda of the first quarter of the ninth century being a transitional figure. Overall, this period witnessed the development of increasingly sophisticated technologies for describing and manipulating the body's subtle internal energies. These complex systems were mapped onto the ritual space of the body's interior, a space that had first been opened during the intermediate period.⁵⁶⁷

If, however, Dalton is wrong about the chronological sequencing of the various stages, and they represent concurrent *upāyic* practices, geared towards different levels of disciple, or different developmental circumstances in a disciple's life, then the author of the *Vajra Rosary* could have simply been collecting various methods that existed at the time, be it 400 BCE or 1000 CE.

It would be of great interest to compare the various chapters in the original Sanskrit to see if there are differences in style and meter and the like. Perhaps some day, hopefully soon, we will find Mantrakalaśa's "Indian book," but, until then, this most

⁵⁶⁷ *Id.*, 26-27

felicitous path to answering the question of the timing and single or multiple authorship at least the written text is foreclosed to us. Lacking that evidence and just considering the Tibetan text as we have it, on balance, it appears that the *Vajra Rosary* is a compendium of related teachings. Whether the text itself evolved over time or was dictated or written at one time, or whether the text is the product of contributions by a number of different authors or compilers or just one will have to await further evidence.

Would drawing the conclusion that the *Vajra Rosary* is a collection of perfection stage teachings set down by different compilers at different times contrary to Buddhist tradition? I think not. In discussing the transmission of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, Alamka notes that, “having been transmitted via the Compiler, Vajrapāṇi or Mañjuśrī, it came into the world of people.”⁵⁶⁸ In the world of people, things go awry: this is the first noble truth. Perhaps that is why Alamka, describing a directly conflicting view of when the explanatory Tantras were taught, says, “This view is also agreeable.”⁵⁶⁹

4. *Zhi ba ‘od as “Neo-con”?*

Both traditional accounts and contemporary Western scholarship agree that Aṭīśa and the royal family of western Tibet were, more or less, puritanical “neo-conservatives,” determined to reform degenerate Tantric practices. For example, Tsong kha pa writes in his *Great Stages of the Path*:

In the later dissemination of the teaching to Tibet, some who fancied that they were scholars and yogis misconstrued the meaning of the collections of Tantras. Because of this, they did great damage to the maintenance of ethical discipline, the root of the teachings. This excellent being [Aṭīśa] refuted

⁵⁶⁸ Alamka 3A

⁵⁶⁹ *Id.*

them well. Moreover, he caused their erroneous conceptions to disappear and then reinvigorated the flawless teaching.⁵⁷⁰

David Snellgrove notes,

Atīśa's attitude, like that of so many of his contemporaries, whether Indian or Tibetan, would seem to have been ambivalent. Having practiced his religion earlier in life under the guidance of famous Tantric yogins, he could scarcely be expected to change his views later in order to please a few leading people in Tibet, who wanted a far more thorough "reformation" than he was prepared to countenance."⁵⁷¹

And Ronald Davidson, in his discussion of "The Invention of Neoconservative

Orthodoxy,"⁵⁷² states, referring to Zhi ba 'od:

Shiwa-Ö, a royal prince of Gugé-Purang who took the monastic precepts in the manner of some of his predecessors, claimed that some of these materials were not conducive to liberation, and identified all of them as "Tibetan in composition" Well-accepted standard works of esoteric practice, such as the *Pañcakrama*, also are identified as inauthentic. . . . All together, they provide us with a perspective on Shiwa-Ö, that he was less concerned with the standards applied by Gö-lotsāwa about the same time and considered that the works in question were deleterious to Tibetans' practice of the monastic path, so they could be eliminated. Shiwa-Ö concluded this section by warning that the coded language (*sandhyā-bhāṣā*) of the *Mother-tantras* (i.e. *yoginī-tantras*) was misunderstood by monks, who were breaking their vows as a result. Thus the continuing tension between the graphic language and antinomian practices of the siddha scriptures was especially problematic to this scion of the West Tibetan royal house.⁵⁷³

These characterizations of the motivations of Western Tibetan royalty, however, seem somewhat one-sided when we consider that not only was the *Vajra Rosary* not

⁵⁷⁰ Tsongkhapa 2000, 42

⁵⁷¹ Snellgrove 2002, 481 It is important to remember that in no way did Atīśa denigrate Tantra, to the contrary he places Tantra at the pinnacle of his most famous *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Atīśa 1997, 158 Atīśa's point there was that monks should not engage in sexual yoga "Because the *Great Tantra of the Primordial Buddha*/ Forbids it emphatically./ Those observing pure conduct should not/ Take the secret and wisdom initiations// If those observing the austere practice of pure conduct/ Were to hold these initiations,/ Their vow of austerity would be impaired/ Through doing that which is proscribed" *Id.*

⁵⁷² Davidson 2005, 151

⁵⁷³ *Id.*, 154

excluded from authentic scripture by Zhi ba 'od's *Proclamation*, but that the Tantra was obtained at great expense and translated by the same Prince Zhi ba 'od, and, perhaps, Aṭīśa himself. This explicit description of initiation ritual, as discussed above, is a challenge to the received view of the "neoorthodox" nature of the "rulers of Purang." It indicates that, even if Zhi ba 'od was part of a "neo-conservative" movement, he was certainly no prude, at least by our standards, and we will have to look more closely at the applicability of such terms.

Although one could argue that Zhi ba 'od's primary interest was curtailing sexual yoga *by monastics*, who but monks would have the time and ability to perform such extensive rituals? Indeed, based on manuals composed by monastic authors composed from the late tenth to the early twelfth centuries, Isabelle Onians concludes that the sexual yoga of the second and third initiations were intended *for* monastics, so long as they properly understand reality. She argues that the incorporation of such erotic relations from outside their tradition was so successful that "some Tantric monks appropriated the originally alien tradition to the demanded exclusion of their non-monastic colleagues."⁵⁷⁴

Most contemporary Western writers assume, citing scant or no evidence for the proposition, that these sexual practices occurred with some regularity.⁵⁷⁵ Only Hartzell

⁵⁷⁴ Onians 2001, 300, 301

⁵⁷⁵ "The use of sexuality for religious purposes is almost as shocking in the Indian environment as it is in the West but was considered acceptable in secrecy since the purpose of an action denotes its ethical value in the Buddhist system. Accordingly, sexuality between consenting members in a secret ritualized context leading to awakening can be considered a profoundly religious event." R. Davidson, "Atisha's Lamp for the Path," in Lopez 1995b, 292. "There doubtless developed a curious and in many ways unacceptable mingling of monastic life and the use of tantric practices involving a female partner, which were manifestly a breach of monastic discipline." Snellgrove 2002, 469.

presents a detailed picture of tantric sexual practices in Kashmir during the 9th-12th centuries, based on literary sources.⁵⁷⁶ He summarizes his findings:

1) real sexual Yogas were in widespread use in Buddhist and Hindu Tantric practices at least up through the eleventh century; 2) group sexual rites were held at night in a variety of secret locations, and were accompanied by the ingestion of various stimulants; 3) these group sexual rites were essentially non-sectarian--i.e. though run by members of various sects, the rites were open to members of other sects; 4) there were a variety of secret communication codes in use for identifying the locations and times of these sexual congresses, and these codes were taught to the initiates; 5) the nighttime sexual rites of the Tantrikas eventually became widely known about in Kaśmīri society, as evidenced by Kṣemendra's satires; 6) in some circumstances young women were selected as Tantric consorts at an early age and protected for that purpose; 7) in other circumstances women ran the sexual congresses themselves and served as Tantric gurus; 8) Tantric practitioners were well aware of the potential for procreation as a result of their activities, and specific typologies of classification are outlined for "Tantric children" based on when and how they might be conceived; 9) the specifics of the progression of sexual union were integrated in detail into the Tantric doctrines. We also know, particularly from the several stages outlined in Buddhist Tantric practice, and from the sophisticated developments of Tibetan Tantrism, that monastic or celibate Tantra became well-developed, whereby initiates would engage with meditative or artistically depicted visualizations of goddesses or female consorts without actual sexual intercourse between a yogi and a yoginī.⁵⁷⁷

Nevertheless, there is another range of potential explanation of the initiations that should be considered: that these ostensibly sexual practices are metaphoric and, however they were practiced, were not intended for actual physical enactment. Or, if they were so intended, the physical enactment was not the main point. Or, if it was, that true Tantric sex had a very different meaning than that apparent to ordinary perception and conception. Indeed, "the Tibetans almost universally elected to continue the reception of

⁵⁷⁶ Hartzell, 1997, 492-556 ("Certain versions of Tantric practices had apparently worked their way into the upper classes, providing a ready rationalization for husbands and wives to visit Tantric "gurus" at night to indulge their sensual appetites under cover of religious devotion ") *Id.*, 543-44

⁵⁷⁷ Hartzell 1997, 847-48 Of course, there is a real question as to how much we can rely on literary sources, which may present a distorted view of actual events

the three 'higher' consecrations in a visualized rather than physical form."⁵⁷⁸ Given the multivalent nature of Tantric writing, none of these interpretations can be excluded. In his *Vajra Rosary Notes*, Tsong kha pa states:

Regarding the meaning of the parts, if we explain following the tradition of the *Guhyasamāja*, just as explained in the *Pradīpodyottana*, you have the four [parameters], literal, general, hidden and ultimate, and, because this Tantra is a Tantra which is explained to be common to the two [mother and father] Tantras, if we explain it following the tradition of the father and mother tantras, we explain it according to the two explanations of outer and inner and interpretive and definitive.⁵⁷⁹

In accordance with this hermeneutic, the overt sexual interpretation of the description of the second and third initiations would be the literal (*yi ge*) meaning only, and not the general, hidden or ultimate meanings. In view of the focus of the *Vajra Rosary* on the completion stage, the non-literal meanings may well relate to subtle body practices, the illusory body, clear light, and enlightenment itself.⁵⁸⁰ It would be curious if a completion stage yogi would limit his understanding to the literal.

⁵⁷⁸ Davidson 1995, in Lopez 1995b, 293 David Snellgrove concludes

The more reputable, but not necessarily the more famous yogins, lived either as laymen, or totally celibate, or they gained proficiency in sexual yoga before taking vows as a monk. These were clearly the standards which all reformers expected and there was never any suggestion that tantric theory and practice were an unwelcome addition to the Indian Buddhist heritage. The Tibetans seems to have had no contact with any Indian teachers who thought otherwise or who ever spoke out against the tantras

Snellgrove 2002, 469-70

⁵⁷⁹ *Tsongkhapa Vajra Rosary Notes*, 2B (*yan lag gi don la 'dus pa'i dbang du byas nas bshad na sgrom gsal las ji ltar bshad pa bzhin du yig don dang spyi don dang/ sbas pa dang mthar thug dang bzhis 'chad la/ rgyud 'di rgyud gnyis kyi thung mong gi bshad rgyud yin pas pha rgyud dang ma rgyud gnyis ka'i dbang du byas nas 'chad na/ phyi dang nang gi bshad pa gnyis su 'chad de drang nges kyi bshad pa'o*)

⁵⁸⁰ The first chapter of Tsong kha pa's Commentary on the *PU* has numerous examples of these sorts of explanations of the hidden and ultimate meanings of various passages. See Tsong kha pa 1999

Lest it be said that this is an apologetic hermeneutic initiated later than the translations of the *Vajra Rosary*, a similar cautionary note was taken some 500 years earlier, in a translation guide, the *Word-Combination, A Two Part Work*:

The tantras of secret mantras are to be secret by regulation, for it is unacceptable that they should be explained and shown to those who are unfitted. Although meanwhile their translation and practice have been allowed, *their enigmatic language has not been explained so that they have been taken literally and their practice has been perverse*.⁵⁸¹

If this is the case, that the overtly sexual description of the initiations is the literal meaning only, and Zhi ba 'od interpreted these parts of the *Vajra Rosary* in more profound terms, what would be the implications for my theory that his translation of the *Vajra Rosary* is inconsistent with the received characterization of him as a neo-conservative? I think the primary implication is that we would have to re-focus what it meant for Zhi ba 'od to be a neo-conservative. While much of the scholarship imbues the position of the Gu ge royal family with moralistic tones, if Zhi ba 'od himself did not take these practices literally, then his neo-conservatism would be completely practical and not value-laden. But that still leaves one to wonder why, if Zhi ba 'od thought Yoginī Tantras and the like which could be taken to encourage monks to break their vows of celibacy should not be practiced, he would translate the *Vajra Rosary*, which could be just as easily misconstrued. Thus, even if the initiations are not meant to be taken literally, the received wisdom fails to explain Zhi ba 'od's sponsorship of the *Vajra Rosary*.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Snellgrove 2002, 443 (emphasis added)

⁵⁸² One aspect that needs to be further explored is the impact of secrecy. While one might argue that Zhi ba 'od translated the *Vajra Rosary* with its antinomian language because he assumed it would be kept secret, the question is: secret from whom? The obvious audience for the translation was monastic, the very audience about whom Zhi ba 'od was concerned. The other possibility is that the *Vajra Rosary* was

Along with Zhi ba 'od and many others, the leading figures of the second propagation, Atīśa and Rin chen bzang po, as discussed above, were deeply engaged in the translation of Tantric works. R.A. Stein's comment about the intentions of the royalty of Western Tibet seems to be a more accurate description of what was actually occurring:

They were simply careful to offer a symbolic interpretation, especially to the uninitiated and to lay people, of ritual acts which taken literally would offend common morality. Their reform consisted mainly of a rigorous distinction between the types of behavior expected at different levels of mental training and holiness: ordinary men had to regulate their conduct according to ordinary morality.”⁵⁸³

So the recovery and translation if not the creation of the *Vajra Rosary* seems to contradict the received characterization of his and Ye shes 'od's and even Atīśa's mission as one of puritanical downgrading of Tantric yogas under the guise of “purifying” corrupt Tantric practices.

intended to be held very closely, limited to a select subgroup of initiates, and for this reason Zhi ba 'od sponsored its translation although there was the risk that if secrecy was breached it could be misinterpreted. This seems unlikely, but the possibility should be explored

⁵⁸³ Stein 1972, 72

Chapter Three:

The Teachings of the *Vajra Rosary*, As Interpreted by Alaṃkakalaśa

In accordance with the requisites of a case study that the “case” be presented “in-depth,” this chapter is a detailed summary of the teachings of the *Vajra Rosary*, together with Alaṃka’s *Commentary* and some of my own observations. This summary is organized thematically, with an eye towards the task here, determining how we should interpret this Tantra. A complete first English translation of the Tantra itself is annexed as Appendix A and a translation of Alaṃka’s chapters twenty-three and twenty-four as Appendix B.

The *Vajra Rosary*’s teachings are extensive and interwoven. The text fills one hundred and four *dpe cha*; the translation, in free verse is four hundred seventy three pages long. Alaṃka’s commentary is twice as long, Material on various topics is found in different chapters, and most of the material relates to many topics concerning the perfection stage. So a summary can only give an overview.

*A. The Setting and The Eighty-Two Questions*⁵⁸⁴

The first chapter of the *Vajra Rosary* Tantra, entitled “The Setting of the Tantra: Invocation, Questions and Activities of the Students and so forth,” describes the teaching

⁵⁸⁴ The full title of the Tantra is given in Sanskrit as *Śrī-vajramālabhūdhānamahāyoga-Tantra-sarva-Tantra-hṛdaya-rahasya-vibhedakam-iti*, “Opening the Secret Heart of All Tantras The Great Yoga Tantra, the Clear Expression of the Glorious Vajra Rosary ” This is followed by homage to Mañjuśrī, Vairocana, Vajradakṣiṇī and the Three Jewels VR 1B

of the *Vajra Rosary* by Buddha himself, followed by eighty-two questions⁵⁸⁵ about perfection stage yoga propounded by Vajrapāṇi, the interlocutor throughout the Tantra. After chapter two, which discusses the teacher and student and initiatory empowerment, the balance of the *Vajra Rosary* responds to these questions. These questions⁵⁸⁶ are essentially a topical index to the Tantra, and perusing them gives an overview of the subject matter, although they do not always convey the entire meaning of what is discussed in the particular chapter responding to the question(s).⁵⁸⁷ For example, the first question, “What of the name *Vajra Rosary*?” is answered in the third chapter, but that chapter also contains a listing of the names of all of the one-hundred eight energy-winds and all one-hundred eight conceptualities related to them.

The opening sentence of this first chapter is nearly identical to that of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, with Buddha “dwelling in the vaginas of the Vajra Queens, the essence of the body, speech and mind of all the Tathāgatas,” with the additional language “with clear realization through the immeasurable Great Seal,”⁵⁸⁸ meaning, according to Alaṃka, “the formless nature of clear light speech,”⁵⁸⁹ which is realized through vajra repetition, the first of the five stages of the perfection stage set forth in chapter sixty-eight

⁵⁸⁵ *VR* 6B-8B, ch 1 vv 42-65 Verse references are to those in the complete English translation of the *Vajra Rosary*, Appendix A There are no numbered verses in the Lhasa recension

⁵⁸⁶ See Appendix A, pp 11-16

⁵⁸⁷ There are sixty-eight chapters and eighty-two questions, chapters one and two are not responsive to any of the questions, but cover preliminaries, the setting of the Tantra and empowerment, respectively

⁵⁸⁸ The opening sentence of the *Root Tantra* is “Thus have I heard Once the Blessed One was dwelling in the vagina of the Vajra consort of the Essence of the Body, Speech and Mind of all the Tathāgatas ” Skt *Evam mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye bhagavān sarvatathāgatakāyavākcitta-hṛdayavajrayoṣṭidbhageṣu vijahāra*. Freemantle 1978, 117 Thus, at the outset, this *Vajra Rosary* explains Buddha's internal state, and the methodology involved Great Seal or *Mahāmudra* yoga It is unclear why Freemantle uses the singular for “vagina” in light of the Sanskrit locative plural

⁵⁸⁹ Alaṃka 7A

of the *Vajra Rosary* and in the *Five Stages*. As Buddha taught the Tantra, Buddha, the Vajra Queens and “zillions of great Bodhisattvas” were all engaged in realizing the Great Seal, with their lotuses “supremely delighted” with the bliss of nonduality, which Alamka notes connotes as the stage of mind isolation.⁵⁹⁰

Singled out in this gathering are thirty-two bodhisattvas whom Alamka identifies as the thirty-two deities of the *Secret Community* Akṣobhya maṇḍala. Smiling at the retinue, Buddha enters the *Vajra Rosary* concentration and radiates a great matrix of light rays from all of his pores putting many of the attendees into the state of non-dual union of Vajradhara, causing them to be completely overwhelmed. Buddha then emanates from his vajra path, *i.e.* his penis, a rosary of vajras that enters the crown chakras of the bodhisattvas, causing them to experience great bliss. Praising the Buddha at length, they think to themselves that they should ask him about the meaning of this vajra rosary. Reading their minds, Buddha abandons his dispassionate, ordinary form, and, emitting his own consort from his secret vajra, embraces her. The bodhisattvas “amazed, their eyes wide open, were seen to be as if placed in a painting and were speechless.”⁵⁹¹ Buddha then says OM ĀḤ HŪM and emits the *Secret Community* mandala deities. Vajrapāṇi’s eighty-two questions conclude the chapter, the answers to which “not spoken of anywhere in the Action, Performance, or Yoga Tantras,”⁵⁹² according to Tsong kha pa, “explain most of the meaning of the [*Secret*] *Community*.”⁵⁹³

⁵⁹⁰ Alamka 7B

⁵⁹¹ *VR* 5B, ch 1, v 29

⁵⁹² *VR* 8A, ch 2, v 2

⁵⁹³ Tsong kha pa 2010, 63

Alaṃka's lengthy commentary begins with an account of Buddha's Tantric enlightenment and his Tantric teachings, culminating in the teaching "on top of the peaks of Western Uḍḍiyana"⁵⁹⁴ of the "small" or "shorter" *Vajra Rosary Tantra*, a condensation of the *Vajra Rosary* in twelve thousand lines, presumably lost. After this, he taught the version of the *Vajra Rosary* closer to what has come down to us "in the Western Mountains of Uḍḍiyana, the Lord, from the perspective of the ten Terrifics in the form of glorious Vajrasattva, principally in order to control the ten Directional Protectors, taught the two Tantras: the *Vajra Rosary* in twelve thousand lines and the *Shorter Vajra Rosary*."⁵⁹⁵ Alaṃka gives two versions of the timing of the teaching of the oral personal instructions, and the root, branch⁵⁹⁶ and explanatory Tantras: one that they were respectively taught in the four ages or *yugas*; and another that they were all taught by Buddha during this age immediately after the teaching of the brief version of the *Secret Community Tantra*.⁵⁹⁷ Alaṃka says of the latter, "This view is also agreeable."⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁴ Alaṃka 4A

⁵⁹⁵ Alaṃka 3B-4A

⁵⁹⁶ According to Longchenpa, "branch" tantra is one that focuses on one of the ten "essentials" of Tantra outlook, meditation, behavior, initiation, mandala, charismatic activity, commitments, capacities, worship and mantras, while a root tantra encompasses all of them, an explanatory tantra expands upon and clarifies them Longchenpa 2000, 2

⁵⁹⁷ Alaṃka 3A (Sde dge) (*de yang sdud pa po phyag na rdo rje 'am dpal gyis brgyud nas mi'i 'jug rten du 'ongs so/ de la rdzogs ldan dang gsum ldan dang gnyis ldan dang rtsod pa can gyi dus su zhal gyi gdams ngag dang rtsa ba'i rgyud dang yan lag gi rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud la sogs pa la 'jug pa zhes bya ba ni kha cig smra'o/ gzhan dag ni rtsod pa'i dus 'di nyid du sems can thams cad rjes su gzung ba'i phyir nyung ngu'i rtsa ba'i rgyud bstan pa'i de ma thag tu bcom ldan 'das kyis yan lag gi rgyud dang bshad pa'i rgyud la sogs pa bstan zhes zer ro/*).

⁵⁹⁸ *Id.* Wedemeyer quotes Tāranātha's unambiguous statement that the Noble Tradition literature attributed to Nāgārjuna and the *PU* attributed to Candrakīrti "were not spread" and "was not composed and spread" during their lifetimes, but were propagated by a Nāgabodhi who preserved the teachings until late in the first millennium Wedemeyer 2007, 19-20

Alaṃka's account of the setting of the Tantra, and his elucidation of his hermeneutic scheme illustrated by detailed commentary on the first words of the Tantra is followed by his word commentary, which is approximately twice as long as the Tantra itself, although it only covers forty-three chapters and part of the forty-fourth, out of sixty-eight. In the beginning of the word commentary, Alaṃka describes the hermeneutic scheme he is employing, which can be seen at work in his commentary on the *Vajra Rosary*'s opening verse, *Evam mayā śrūtam . . .*⁵⁹⁹ Alaṃkakalaśa applies the four procedures as the third part of a tripartite interpretive scheme consisting of: (1) necessary introductory words; (2) condensed meaning; (3) and subsidiary meanings, and then adds an analysis based on the internal and external meaning, yielding six categories. Because Alaṃkakalaśa refers to the "six parameters" (*mtha' drug*), what we have here seems to be a variant of the six-parameter/four procedure system of the *PU*, here consisting of: (1) literal; (2) general; (3) secret; (4) ultimate; (5) external and (6) internal.

B. The Guru-Disciple Relationship

At the outset of chapter two, entitled "The Examination of the Teacher and Student and Empowerment," admonishing Vajrapāṇi to listen well, before answering the actual eighty-two questions from the first chapter, Buddha⁶⁰⁰ addresses the subjects of the Tantric teacher, student and empowerment or initiation, the process by which the student is authorized to practice Tantra, crucial to avoid both the master and student going to a

⁵⁹⁹ Alaṃka 4a-7a

⁶⁰⁰ Over the course of the Tantra, Buddha is sometimes referred to as "The Vajra Lord," "Vajrasattva," the "Vajrin" etc

“great unbearable hell.”⁶⁰¹ The qualities of the Tantric master are described,⁶⁰² and also those of the student who would be a proper vessel for the teachings, repeating the well-known admonition that both the master and student first examine each other for twelve years “just as one tests a jewel by rubbing and gold by burning.”⁶⁰³ Once found, the student should venerate and serve the teacher with great respect.

A more detailed discussion of the qualities of the guru is found in chapter sixty-five. The guru, who has all of the six perfections⁶⁰⁴ secretly delights in the practices of the *Secret Community*, but behaves externally like a *śrāvaka*, and gives disciples personal instructions step by step.⁶⁰⁵ Many other good qualities are described: he is “guileless and has abandoned those with bad conceptions” and has “a mind [set] on delivering sentient beings.”⁶⁰⁶ He is an expert in all Tantric practices and is able “to bestow the secret empowerment with perfect wisdom and compassion, not fearing the personal instructions of tantra.”⁶⁰⁷ In chapter sixty-six, the disciple is admonished not to spit, speak boldly, watch gambling, and the like, or to step over the guru’s shadow. Before the guru, the disciple should appear “fearfully, with clasped palms...promising to give all his possessions, shy and looking down.”⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰¹ *VR* 8B, ch 2, v 7

⁶⁰² *VR* 8B, ch 2, v 8 (“He has attained empowerment and knows reality, has genius and a compassionate nature, profound, magnificent and immaculate, he abjures harm and violence”)

⁶⁰³ *VR* 8B-9A, ch 2, vv 9-11, *Alamka* 36B

⁶⁰⁴ *VR* 96A, ch 65, v 11

⁶⁰⁵ *VR* 96A, ch 65, v 12

⁶⁰⁶ *VR* 96B, ch 65, vv 16-17

⁶⁰⁷ *VR* 96B, ch 65, v 14

⁶⁰⁸ *VR* 97B, ch 66, vv 2-4

C. The Meaning of “*Vajra Rosary*” and “*Secret Community*”

In the beginning of the third chapter, entitled “The Terminology of the *Vajra Rosary*,” Buddha answers the first of Vajrapāṇi’s questions, “What of the name *Vajra Rosary*?”— explaining that the name “*Vajra Rosary*” also refers to the “thirteenth stage, the genuine state of the fourth ecstasy, the ecstasy of universal emptiness.” This thirteenth stage is presumably that referred to in the second chapter as corresponding with the third empowerment, the wisdom-knowledge empowerment, referred to there as “true union.” Alamka explains that this state of the four ecstasies is what is referred to in the Mahāyoga Tantras as manifest enlightenment and the state of integration and in the Yoginī Tantras as innate or orgasmic ecstasy, reflecting the status of the *Vajra Rosary* as common to both branches of Tantra. The text states that this rosary pierces all of the conceptual energy-winds, but cannot be penetrated by them, leading into the principal task of the chapter, which is the naming of the “more than one-hundred and eight” energy-winds.⁶⁰⁹

The meaning of *Guhyasamāja*, *Secret Community*, is discussed in chapter four. It is called “Community” because it involves mingling or mixing (*‘dres pa*) during sexual yoga “when the two secret channels perfectly join and touch,” which results in the

⁶⁰⁹ Many texts name the ten main energy-winds. When I asked Denma Locho Rinpoche about the names of the energy-winds beyond the ten main ones, he wished me good luck and told me to follow the text *Personal Communication*. One theory, expressed by Alamka, is that the 108 energy-winds are the ten primary and secondary energy-winds minus the Pervasive energy-wind which arises only at death, making nine, times the six major chakras, making fifty-four, times two for the day and the night, making one-hundred and eight. Alamka 44B. Tsong kha pa 2010, 225-27. Tsong kha pa, analyzing this issue, concludes “Whatever the case, though it seems to be the meaning of that *Tantra* that the hundred and eight wind-energies are not non-comprised of the ten wind-energies, as it also seems difficult to posit the pattern of circulation of each of nine wind-energies in order in each of six wheels, we must still investigate this question.” *Id.*, 227.

blazing of *tummo*, which awakens the channels and fills them with enlightenment spirit from the crown chakra.⁶¹⁰ This makes the body, speech and mind of the yogi become “of one nature;” the elements become “as one taste.” “Then, the enlightenment spirit melts/ From all the places,/ Becoming as one nature,/ And then the [central] channel,/ As the fruition of one thing,/ Becomes of one taste./ That is called ‘mingling’ ./”⁶¹¹ *Alaṃka* explains that the mingling also includes the mixing of the perfection (literally, the vajra) of body, speech and mind that is embodied in the Tantric Buddha, Vajradhara; the mixing of the vajra with the secret lotus, “the lotus of the goddess,” referring to the sexual organs, “just like when the external sun rises it opens the lake-born lotus;”⁶¹² and the mixing of the various Buddhas, bodhisattvas, consorts and deities, emanations of Buddha’s body, described in the setting of the Tantra in chapter one. Mingling also refers to the creation stage practice of meditating the three concentrations.⁶¹³ In his commentary on chapter four, *Alaṃka* states that “Community” also refers to the vajra repetition mantric practice of placing Sanskrit syllables on the petals of each chakra,⁶¹⁴ and, in addition, to the stage of Tantra, *i.e.* sexual yoga.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁰ *VR* 12B, ch 4, vv 3-5

⁶¹¹ *VR* 12B-13A, ch 4, vv 5-6

⁶¹² *Alaṃka* 53A

⁶¹³ *Alaṃka* 53B

⁶¹⁴ *Alaṃka* 53B

⁶¹⁵ *VR* 12B, ch 4, v 3

D. Non-Conceptuality

The term “non-conceptual” (*nirvikalpa, rnam par mi rtog, rnam rtog med pa*) is used thirty-three times in the *Vajra Rosary*. Non-conceptuality is deployed as a synonym for emptiness⁶¹⁶ and it is used to describe the fourth ecstasy, innate ecstasy occurring when the enlightenment spirit dissolves in the navel chakra and “is born in the Great Bliss Wheel [crown chakra].”⁶¹⁷ When one engages in sexual yogic practices, it is done not in a state of ordinary sexual conceptual fantasy and the like, but in a “non-conceptual state,”⁶¹⁸ the yogi having consumed all of the conceptual energy-winds.⁶¹⁹ Chapter sixty-two, concerning the *gaṇacakra*, states that through the sexual ritual of wisdom and method, the guru is teaching through non-conceptuality, leading you to achieve the supreme attainment.⁶²⁰ The text describes as “true yoga” the part of the practice of vajra-repetition where the yogi counts the one hundred eight conceptual energy-winds in the “supreme practice of non-conceptuality.”⁶²¹ When the enlightenment spirit overflows from the crown chakra, it goes to the wind chakra between the eyebrows where it is held there by the yogi in a state of “non-conceptuality.”⁶²² When the “great non-conceptual energy-wind” flows through the central channel, overcoming the conceptual energy-

⁶¹⁶ *VR* 13A-B, ch 5, vv 2, 5

⁶¹⁷ *VR* 18B, ch 8, v 5

⁶¹⁸ *VR* 63A, ch 44, v 16

⁶¹⁹ *VR* 20B, ch 10, v 10

⁶²⁰ *VR* 91B, v 28

⁶²¹ *VR* 23A-B, chapter 12, vv 16, 22

⁶²² *VR* 33A, chapter 17, v 8, Alamka 125B

winds: “Non-conceptual bliss/ Will be achieved/ Through the reality/ Of mantra.”⁶²³ The achieving of the state of non-conceptuality is crucial: “Whoever always achieves/ Non-conceptuality/ Effects all actions/ And becomes an expert.”⁶²⁴

Chapter thirty-six is entitled “The Characteristics of Non-Conceptuality.” There the Tantra explains that one who knows when the non-conceptual energy-wind arises will attain the state of Vajrasattva. This non-conceptual energy-wind, and its corresponding mental state, abandons all duality, “Free from the state/ Of meditation/ And non-meditation/ It is the great wisdom/ Of Mahāyoga.”⁶²⁵ Non-conceptuality is the one characteristic of self-consecration or illusory body, the third of the five stages.⁶²⁶

The Great Seal itself, the object of Tantric practice, is non-conceptuality: “The seal of the wisdom/ Of the Tathāgatas/ Is the state/ Of non-conceptuality,/ The abode of indestructible/ Vajrasattva,/ The great bliss/ Of non-conceptuality,/ Naked, like sky.”⁶²⁷ The *Vajra Rosary* has a number of different practices designed to accomplish this, including the following. The yogi should find a peaceful place, by a riverbank or a tree at a crossroads, or where three roads come together. There, he should repeat the mantra of the Vajra Rosary, OM VAJRAMĀLE ĀḤ HŪṢ HŪṢ PHAT SVĀHĀ, one million times.⁶²⁸ This will cause the energy-winds “to be robbed by thatness, clearing away the

⁶²³ *VR* 41B, ch 22, v 37

⁶²⁴ *VR* 41B, ch 22, v 30

⁶²⁵ *VR* 58A, ch 36, v 2

⁶²⁶ *VR* 58A, ch 36, v 4

⁶²⁷ *VR* 64B-65A, ch 46, v 3

⁶²⁸ *Id.* vv 7-8

mind's conceptuality.”⁶²⁹ One who meditates in this way, abandoning conceptuality, becoming “the incarnation of extremely pure sky,”⁶³⁰ can gain “complete realization in one instant.”⁶³¹

E. The Four Empowerments and Sexual Yoga

In chapter two, Buddha describes the four empowerments required for perfection stage practice. The four empowerments have fourteen stages, eleven for the first and one each for the second, third and fourth, to be given at proper times during the lunar month. The required consort is described as a woman between sixteen and twenty years old, herself empowered, with a special faith in Tantra. “Otherwise there will be no success; you would be far from attainment.”⁶³²

To begin, the student should offer “an especially tender woman, wife, sister, or daughter”⁶³³ to the guru, and should make valuable material offerings to him.⁶³⁴ Then the guru makes love to the “Mother Seal”⁶³⁵ offered, and the student puts the enlightenment

⁶²⁹ *Id.* v 8

⁶³⁰ *Id.* v 11

⁶³¹ *Id.* v 10

⁶³² *VR* 9B, ch 2, v 12

⁶³³ *VR* 9B, ch 2, v 23 To the extent that the *Vajra Rosary* should be construed as a whole, Chapter forty-four suggests that this is not meant to be taken literally, that the reference is to code words for yoginīs with various characteristics. See discussion in Chapter IV, *infra*.

⁶³⁴ *VR* 9B, ch 2, vv 25-26

⁶³⁵ Because Alamka's version of the tantra just has “seal,” *phyag rgya*, and is missing the “mother,” *yum*, that is found in the Lhasa *VR*, it is unclear from the text whether the woman offered, with whom the guru makes love, is one of the women referred to above who are offered to the guru. Here, “mother” may be an indication of gender, respect, or might have been added to keep the meter in the Tibetan, it probably does not refer to the disciple's actual mother. But, unfortunately, because Alamka's version is missing the term, he has no explanation for it.

spirit of the guru⁶³⁶ into his mouth by joining his thumb and ring finger, which engenders great bliss in the student.⁶³⁷ The student mentally places the syllable HŪM PHAT at the tip of his penis, and shakes it, producing ecstasies. The consort, considered as the Vajra Queen, exclaims “How blissful!” and she is handed to the student. The text is quite explicit: “The yogi will not attain Buddhahood by any other means.”⁶³⁸

Chapter eight describes the increasingly blissful states of ecstasy as being born in the crown chakra and dissolving in the navel chakra, although the Tantra subsequently describes in much greater detail this “reverse” generation of the ecstasies, as well as the “forward” method. Sexual yoga, “the equal union of vajra and lotus,” while causing the reality of energy-wind “to be held in the central channel,” through the placing of mantras at the tips of the sexual organs,⁶³⁹ “bestows all bliss.”⁶⁴⁰ All of this is only to be practiced pursuant to the personal instructions of the “good guru.”⁶⁴¹ Chapter nine concerns itself with the various levels of meaning of the vows necessary to protect the practice. The first aspect of the Tantric vow, which *Alamka* denotes as conventional, is not emitting semen, one of the connotations of “the spirit of enlightenment.”⁶⁴² The yogi is warned not to

⁶³⁶ Given that this is not ordinary sexual activity, and that ejaculation is a “fault” in the practice, *VR* 91A-91B, ch 62, vv 25-26, this does not appear to refer to post-orgasm ejaculate, but to a substance generated prior to that. *But see VR* 80B, ch 54, vv 166-68, Omans 2001, 173-77

⁶³⁷ *VR* 9B, ch 2, vv 27-28

⁶³⁸ *VR* 10A, ch 2, v 32. For an extended discussion of these practices, *see* Omans 2001, 173-77. The *Secret Community Root Tantra* specifies that the yogi “should begin all yogas with the union of the two organs, for this is the unbreakable sacred law of all siddhis.” Freemantle 1971, 98

⁶³⁹ *Alamka* 69B

⁶⁴⁰ *VR* 18B-19A, ch 8, v 6

⁶⁴¹ *VR* 19A, ch 9, v 8

⁶⁴² *VR* 19A, ch 9, v 1

consort with a long list of various unworthy persons, hypocrites, nihilists, greedy monastics and so forth “even for a finger snap,”⁶⁴³ and to beware childish seductive consorts, and not to reveal Tantric ritual implements or Tantric yogic practice even to the Tantric guru,⁶⁴⁴ let alone anyone else.

Chapter forty-four, the last full chapter *Alamka*’s commented upon, discusses in detail the various types of “seals,” categorized in the Tantra as reality,⁶⁴⁵ action, commitment and “Great Seal.”⁶⁴⁶ Most of the discussion has to do with the female “action seal” who is sexual consort practicing with the yogi. First, however, the Tantra discusses “outer” meaning of “seal.” First is the seal of *karma*: that “because of an inconceivable collection of mutual dependencies,”⁶⁴⁷ “through the definitive ripening of *karma* you are completely sealed.”⁶⁴⁸ Next, briefly mentioned, is the “seal of reality,” which is that “all things, not having intrinsic existence, are naturally sealed.”⁶⁴⁹ The “commitment seal” is that of inseparable wisdom and compassion of the bodhisattvas, which benefits others,⁶⁵⁰ “spontaneously manifested by the power of prayer,” purifying

⁶⁴³ *VR* 19A, ch 9, v 5

⁶⁴⁴ *See* *Alamka* 72A, specifying that the guru referred to in the Tantra refers in fact to the Tantric guru bestowing the empowerment. While this seems curious, the main point here is to keep the practice secret.

⁶⁴⁵ Tib *chos*

⁶⁴⁶ *VR* 62B, ch 44, v 1

⁶⁴⁷ *Alamka* 216A

⁶⁴⁸ *VR* 62B, ch 44, v 1

⁶⁴⁹ *VR* 62B, ch 44, v 2

⁶⁵⁰ *VR* 62B, ch 44, vv 2-3, *Alamka* 216A-B

the Buddha field.⁶⁵¹ Finally, the “great seal” is “the nature of that which lacks inherent existence.”⁶⁵²

Turning to the “secret” meaning, the Tantra discusses the “action seal,” *i.e.* the sexual consort, who assists in “producing in the yogi serviceability towards the object of the innate.”⁶⁵³ The Tantric guru shows by example the conduct of the third empowerment.⁶⁵⁴ The “reality seal” in this context is the yogi experiencing union with the consort himself, with the accompanying state of “the wisdom of that reality.”⁶⁵⁵ The “commitment seal” here refers to the Tantric consort: “He finds a woman with gentle speech, wisdom and white eyes, adorned with form and youth.”⁶⁵⁶ The “great seal” of secret meaning is the non-conceptual state of great bliss emptiness wisdom attained by the yogi as a result of practicing yoga with the Tantric consort.⁶⁵⁷

Like the perfections, there are six kinds of seals, as follows:

⁶⁵¹ Alamka 216B (*smon lam gyi stobs kyis lhun gyis grub pa'i phyir ro*)

⁶⁵² *VR* 62B, ch 44, v 4

⁶⁵³ Alamka 216B (*las rung thob pa skye zhes bya ba ni lhan cig skyes pa'i yul la las su rung ba nyid bskyed pa'i phyir*)

⁶⁵⁴ Alamka 217A (*ji ltar dpes mtshon mtshan nyid ni*, “the characteristic of showing exactly by example”)

⁶⁵⁵ *VR* 62B, ch 44, v 6, Alamka 217A

⁶⁵⁶ *VR* 62B, ch 44, v 7

⁶⁵⁷ *VR* 62B, ch 44, v 9

TABLE 6. The Seals

<u>Seal</u>	<u>Mantra</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Called</u>	<u>Manifestation</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Taste</u>
Low caste woman	YAM	Lotus	Mother-in-law	Central Channel Energy-wind	Great Space	Bland
Washer-woman	RAM	Jewel	Sister	Crown Chakra Channel of flowing semen	Water	Sour
Moled Woman	LAM	Vajra	Wife	Life-energy, Channel of Flowing Urine	Wind	Salty
Dancer	BAM	Action	Daughter	Body, Channel of Moving Blood	Fire	Bitter
Undertaker	AM	Wheel	Daughter-in-law	Evacuative energy- wind, Channel of Melting Tears (in throat chakra)	Space	Spicy
Brahmin woman	HAM	Vajrasattva	Mother	Portion of the Peak of Inflation Channel (in crown chakra)	Earth	Sweet ⁶⁵⁸

To the extent that the *Vajra Rosary* is to be construed as an entirety, the nomenclature of the seals here, “wife,” “sister,” and “daughter” and so forth could suggest that the references in chapters two and fifty-four to offering them to the guru in connection with the second initiation was not meant to be taken literally, and that the consort who is made love to by the guru is not a close relative of the disciple, but a fellow practitioner. *Alaṃka* explains why the different yoginīs are given family names. For example, “‘The washerwoman is called sister’ because she resembles that very one, by increasing white dharma” and “‘The moled woman is known as wife’ because she is the

⁶⁵⁸ *VR* 63B-64A, ch 44, vv 11-23 *Alaṃka* 218A-219B

cause of bliss in every way causing [the yogi] to experience thatness, the antidote of all conceptualities.”⁶⁵⁹ The chapter concludes that the state of the seal “is in the sphere of the Yoginī Tantras.”⁶⁶⁰

The second, secret, and third, wisdom-knowledge, empowerments are described in detail as the nineteenth and last of the twenty rituals described in chapter fifty-four. In the nineteenth ritual, “empowerment,” the vajra master gives the disciples the four kinds of initiatory empowerments for the creation stage, starting with the vase empowerment, and then gives the perfection stage empowerments. The disciple meditates the consciousness aggregate as Akṣobhya, and the guru gives him “a crown ornament for empowerment to accomplish benefit for living beings,”⁶⁶¹ Ratnasambhava as the source of good qualities and gets a crown ornament of silk and flowers on his head; Amitābha and the guru places a vajra in his hand; Amoghasiddhi in the form of a sword; and the form aggregate as Vairocana and receives the name empowerment. Holding the vajra and bell, he is Vajrasattva, and receives the master empowerment. Then the guru gives the disciple a vajra name⁶⁶² and encourages them in the Bodhisattva conduct, and calls the disciple Vajrasattva. During this phase, the guru tells the disciple that he is “bestow[ing] vajra practice, the actual state of the five wisdoms, by which the eggshell of ignorance is opened.”⁶⁶³ The Vajra Master then gives the non-reversible empowerment

⁶⁵⁹ Alamka 218B

⁶⁶⁰ *VR* 64A, ch 44, v 25

⁶⁶¹ *VR* 77B-78A, ch 54, vv 127-30

⁶⁶² *VR* 79B, ch 54, v 149

⁶⁶³ *VR* 77B-78A, ch 54, v 132

and then, visualizing the disciples as the various deities in the mandala, the great vajra empowerment.⁶⁶⁴

The stage is now set for the special creation stage empowerments that set the stage for perfection stage attainments: “There is nothing that cannot be done by a yogi who knows reality...practicing in the sense pleasures, knowing [everything] as illusion, a dream, things arising from relativity. As a reflection, make unequalled benefits for sentient beings!”⁶⁶⁵ The disciple who wishes this empowerment prostrates to the guru, saying “Just as you are, Great Soul, make me like that!”⁶⁶⁶ In a charnel ground, at midnight, with “one especially liberated by the mantric vehicle...a fortunate lady seal,”⁶⁶⁷ the master gives the secret initiation: “Whatever conventional enlightenment spirit falling into the yoginī...the disciple, free from conceptuality, should taste.”⁶⁶⁸ The Vajra Master says: “Just as Vajradhara in the past empowered the sons of the Conqueror, so will I empower you, sons, with the liquid spirit of enlightenment spirit!”⁶⁶⁹

Then the disciple asks for the wisdom empowerment, “then, the great-natured guru consecrates the seal in order that the supreme be achieved. After that, he gives her

⁶⁶⁴ *VR* 79B, ch 54, vv 153-59

⁶⁶⁵ *VR* 80A, ch 54, vv 160-61

⁶⁶⁶ *VR* 80B, ch 54, v 163

⁶⁶⁷ *Id.*, v 164

⁶⁶⁸ *VR* 80B, ch 54, vv 166-68 This does suggest ejaculation, as contrasted with the statement that ejaculation is a “fault” in chapter sixty-two *VR* 91A-91B, ch 62, vv 25-26

⁶⁶⁹ *VR* 80B, ch 54, v 168

to the disciple,” and she “bestows limitless bliss.”⁶⁷⁰ The Tantra is very explicit about these activities.⁶⁷¹

The Tantra also specifies here that without the wisdom empowerment, “not knowing the personal instruction in this, the meditation on the creation stage, rejecting this knowledge, you won’t become enlightened by other methods.”⁶⁷² This practice should be done in stages: “The yogi and yoginī should know it gradually.”⁶⁷³ After the disciple requests that the supreme state be bestowed on him and that all sentient beings attain whatever they wish.

The locus for most if not all of the sexual yogic practices is the *gaṇacakra*, described in detail in chapter sixty-two. The *gaṇacakra* is the “assembly circle” of yogis and yoginīs and the Vajra Master, where various rituals take place. This is described as “the supreme ritual... by which the supreme attainment arises...”⁶⁷⁴ The yoginīs engaging in the practice should be equally adept in method and wisdom, and should not be more than twenty-five years old.⁶⁷⁵ In a beautiful place, at midnight, a flower mandala is made, offerings are given, and one meditates that all things are equal: “One who finds a contradiction/ Between scripture/ And worldly things/ Should not enter.”⁶⁷⁶ The Vajra Master sits in the center of the mandala and the other yogis and yoginīs take their

⁶⁷⁰ *Id.* vv 170-71

⁶⁷¹ *See, e.g., VR 80B-81A, ch 54, vv 173-78*

⁶⁷² *VR 80B, ch 54, v 179*

⁶⁷³ *Id.*, v 180

⁶⁷⁴ *VR 89B, ch 62, v 1*

⁶⁷⁵ *VR 90A, ch 62, vv 5-6, 10*

⁶⁷⁶ *VR 90A, ch 62, vv 7-9*

respective places in the mandala, and you relate to all of them as the mandala deities.⁶⁷⁷

One should observe proper conduct, not talking, arguing, spitting, laughing, spreading legs and so forth, or dancing or singing.⁶⁷⁸ Inner and outer offerings are made, and the second, secret initiation is accomplished: “You should taste/ The hero and yoginī in succession/ With the tip of [your] tongue...,”⁶⁷⁹ as is the third, the wisdom-knowledge initiation.⁶⁸⁰ If any “wicked dakinis” come to the *gaṇacakra*, you should welcome them, but only the Vajra Master should speak to them.⁶⁸¹

While all these activities should be done by the Vajra Master, if the Vajra Master isn’t present, the Vajra Assistant will do, and if there is no Vajra Assistant, anyone can preside, acting as Vajrasattva.⁶⁸² The presiding one “should summon again and again yoginīs of various types,” and he might commit the fault of ejaculating.⁶⁸³ At this point, if you wish to offer your “mother, sister or daughter,” you should do so, at which time the guru “should...control the vajra, delighting the deities in whatever way,”⁶⁸⁴ reiterating that he is to control release and not reach orgasm.

The balance of chapter sixty-two returns to a description, which we saw in Chapter forty-four, of the five types of yoginīs from the five Buddha clans, how they

⁶⁷⁷ *VR* 90A, ch 62, v 11

⁶⁷⁸ *VR* 90, ch 62, vv 12-13

⁶⁷⁹ *VR* 91A, ch 62, v 19

⁶⁸⁰ At least, that is how I am interpreting verse twenty’s “In the middle of the lotus bud/ Is said to be the seat/ Of the heroes” *VR* 91A, ch 62, v 20

⁶⁸¹ *VR* 91A, ch 62, vv 22-23

⁶⁸² *VR* 91A, ch 62, v 24

⁶⁸³ *VR* 91A-91B, ch 62, vv 25-26

⁶⁸⁴ *VR* 91B, ch 62, v 27

look, and what the proper signals and responses are. For example, the yoginī from the Amitābha clan has a face “glowing with light, round, smooth and gentle, and long-eyebrowed.”⁶⁸⁵ She shows the yogi the lotus gesture, and he responds with the tortoise.⁶⁸⁶ Chapter sixty-three is a glossary for the secret language to be used by the yogis and yoginīs at the *gaṇacakra*. One-hundred one terms are defined, covering ritual objects, sexual yoga, impure body substances, common words such as “hungry” and “buy,” caste and *jāti* terms, body parts and times of day.⁶⁸⁷

F. Hermeneutics Within the Vajra Rosary

As an “explanatory” Tantra, the *Vajra Rosary*’s general function is to expand upon the *Secret Community Root Tantra*. There are points, however, where the Tantra explicitly engages in hermeneutic analysis.

Chapter fourteen concerns the hermeneutics of sexual union in Tantric practice, illustrated by the concept of the union of vajra and lotus, which pervades all levels of Tantric practice. The Sanskrit word *vajra* (Tibetan *rdo rje*) means “vajra,” and is also a common euphemism for “penis.” Likewise, Sanskrit *pad ma* means “lotus flower” and can also mean “vagina.” The thirteen levels of meaning set forth for vajra and lotus are as follows:

⁶⁸⁵ *VR* 91B, ch 62, v 31

⁶⁸⁶ *VR* 91B, ch 62, v 32

⁶⁸⁷ *VR* 92B-93B, ch 62, vv 3-41

TABLE 7. Ch. 14: Vajra and Lotus

<u>Vajra</u>	<u>Lotus</u>
1. Energy-wind discerning <i>A</i>	8-petaled heart chakra
2. Energy-wind overcoming the 8 consciousnesses	The 8 conventional consciousnesses ⁶⁸⁸
3. Compassion	Emptiness
4. Light rays of the vajra “sun” (penis)	Lotus that opens to them (vagina)
5. Enlightenment spirit (semen)	Crown chakra
6. Speech of the teacher	Listening of the student
7. Serenity (<i>śamata</i> , <i>zhi gnas</i>)	Insight (<i>vipassana</i> , <i>lhag thong</i>)
8. Great bliss in the mouth of the yoginī	The mouth of the student
9. <i>Lingam</i>	Yoginī’s vagina
10. The 72,000 channels	The channel through which the enlightenment spirit descends
11. Vajra seat above the moon maṇḍala	Yourself as Vajradhara
12. The supreme empowerment ⁶⁸⁹	The disciple
13. The syllable <i>E</i>	The syllable <i>VAM</i> ⁶⁹⁰

In his commentary on this chapter, Alamka notes that the first four explanations above are from “having followed the *Mahāyoga* Tantra in the four modes of meaning.”⁶⁹¹ Although he does not say which is which, following his (and the *PU*’s) Four Mode scheme, the *literal* meaning would be 2, where, for ordinary people, “the eight conventional consciousnesses... engage in the three realms;”⁶⁹² the *general* would be 3,

⁶⁸⁸ *VR* 26B, ch 14, vv 2-3 The eight conventional consciousnesses (the six sense plus the addicted and foundational) engaging in cyclic existence are overcome and united by the energy-wind vajra *Id.*

⁶⁸⁹ The Tibetan here, *dbang bskur*, literally “bestowing power,” obviously supports the term “empowerment,” however, this is a translation of the Sanskrit *abhiṣeka*, from the root *śic*, to sprinkle in the sense of anointment See, e.g. Onians 2001 at 164 I use both “initiation” and “empowerment” to describe particular initiatory rituals depending on the context, but, particularly given our sensitivity to power relationships in this context, we should be aware that “empowerment” is very much a loaded term With that awareness, we can proceed

⁶⁹⁰ *VR* ch 14, vv 2-18

⁶⁹¹ Alamka 102B

⁶⁹² *VR* ch 14, v 4

with the doctrines of compassion and emptiness directed primarily at exoteric Buddhist, and practitioners of the lower Tantras and the creation stage; the *secret* would be 4, as Alaṃka says, “in order to teach the explanation of that with the nature of intense passion;”⁶⁹³ and the *ultimate* meaning would be 1, with the vajra “discerning the letter A,” which states Alaṃka, “is ultimate, the vajra of the aspect of emptiness.”⁶⁹⁴

Alaṃka then explains 4-8 are the Four Modes following the *Yoginī Tantras*.⁶⁹⁵ 5, “enlightenment spirit” and the “crown chakra,” would be the *ultimate* meaning because they are the causes of the higher stages of the enlightenment process in the perfection stage; 6’s “speech of the guru” and “listening of the disciple” the *literal* meaning;⁶⁹⁶ 7’s “serenity” and “insight,” directed towards exoteric Buddhists, would be the *general* meaning; and 8’s vajra “in the lotus face of the yoginī” and lotus as “the mouth of the disciple,” references to the secret initiation, is the *secret* meaning.

The balance of the *Vajra Rosary*’s explanations of the meaning of vajra and lotus are, per Alaṃka, drawn from *both* the *Mahāyoga* and *Yoginī Tantras*, *i.e.* are common to both. Although Alaṃka doesn’t state that 9-13 are concordant with the Four Modes, they certainly can be read that way: 9, the *lingam* and the yoginī’s vagina constituting the *secret* meaning; 10, the channels, focusing primarily on the first of the five completion stages, vajra repetition, and 11, the seat above the moon mandala with yourself as Vajradhara, referring to the creation stage, being the *general* meaning; 12, “the supreme empowerment,” “the cause of perfect reality,” constituting the *ultimate* meaning, as made

⁶⁹³ Alaṃka 102A

⁶⁹⁴ Alaṃka 101A

⁶⁹⁵ Alaṃka 103B

⁶⁹⁶ Alaṃka 102B

clear by Alamka's statement that "'perfect reality' [means] in natural clear light having the character of exact realization,"⁶⁹⁷ and 13, the syllables *E* and *VAM* constituting the *literal* meaning, "*E* is stated as 'lotus' because the shape of the E letter is like the lotus of a goddess."⁶⁹⁸

In chapter forty-one of the *Vajra Rosary*, Vajradhara⁶⁹⁹ defines and discusses the "reality realm," the *dharmadhātu*. This is defined as the unseen element pervading all things, "just as sesame oil is in a sesame seed, and just as fire is in wood."⁷⁰⁰ It is not even seen by intelligent ordinary people "because it is covered by adventitious stains."⁷⁰¹ The reality realm is only seen by the meditator on the two stages who practices the yoga of emptiness wisdom, meaning "emptiness wisdom characterized by body isolation which serves as the antidote to subject and object."⁷⁰² Seen in this way "all things are explained as a *bhaga*," and the "sphere" of reality as enlightenment spirit.⁷⁰³

And in chapter forty-two, the *Vajra Rosary* again explains the term "vajra." With the nature of the five Buddha wisdoms, "it dissolves"⁷⁰⁴ into the five [main] channels," These seed syllables that produce the vajra are located according to the Tantra "in the

⁶⁹⁷ Alamka 104B

⁶⁹⁸ Alamka 104B

⁶⁹⁹ Called the "Vajra Lord," *bcom ldan rdo rje*, in the Tantra VR 60B, ch 41, v 1

⁷⁰⁰ VR 61A, ch 41, v 3

⁷⁰¹ Alamka 210B

⁷⁰² Alamka 211A (*gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'i gnyen por gyur pa'i stong pa nyid kyi ye shes lus rnam par dben pa'i mtshan nyid de*)

⁷⁰³ VR 61A, ch 41, v 6 C.f. Steppenwolf 1968, *Born To Be Wild* ("Take the world in a love embrace, fire all of your guns at once, and explode into space")

⁷⁰⁴ I am following Alamka here, 212B, the Lhasa VR has *brten*, "relies on," VR 61B, ch 42, v 2, but the meaning is similar

center of the navel lotus”⁷⁰⁵ and according to Alamka “in the center of the jewel.”⁷⁰⁶

Alamka says that this is “in the form of a triangle within, in the shape of a vajra of eight petals” and explains that the Tantra’s “located in the center,” means located within the secret nose tip.”⁷⁰⁷

Like the description of the *bhaga* in the preceding chapter, the vajra has several layers of meaning. One meaning is that of a drop of enlightenment spirit,⁷⁰⁸ “known as the state of the commitment,”⁷⁰⁹ referring to “those who abide in the commitment because of abiding in the characteristic of the thought of equanimity regarding the outer seal [*i.e.* sexual consort].”⁷¹⁰ Another is “formless,”⁷¹¹ “because ultimately, it is nature-less, form and so forth are absurd.”⁷¹² And it is the basis of Vajrasattva⁷¹³ “because it is natural clear light, the support of Vajradhara.”⁷¹⁴

Chapter forty-six, only six verses in length, describes “the definitive meaning of the Great Seal.” Following on and going beyond the previous chapter’s description of the

⁷⁰⁵ VR 61B, ch 42, v 4

⁷⁰⁶ Alamka 212B

⁷⁰⁷ *Id.* Recalling that in chapter twenty-four the secret nose tip was described as extending from the navel chakra to the end of the central channel at the tip of the vajra or lotus, there is no conflict here Alamka 166A

⁷⁰⁸ Alamka 212B-213A

⁷⁰⁹ VR 61B, ch 42, v 5

⁷¹⁰ Alamka 213A (*phyi rol pa'i phyag rgya dang ro mnyam pa'i rtog pa'i mtshan nyid la gnas pas na dam tshig la gnas pa rnams so*)

⁷¹¹ VR 61B, ch 42, v 5

⁷¹² Alamka 213A (*don dam par rang bzhin med pa nyid kyis* [following P and Snar's *kyis* instead of Sde dge's *kyi*] *rnam pa la sogs pa mi 'thad pa'i phyir ro*)

⁷¹³ VR 61B, ch 42, v 7

⁷¹⁴ Alamka 213B

body mandala, the Great Seal is “the seal of the wisdom of the Tathāgatas,” “the state of non-conceptuality.”⁷¹⁵ Thus, “self-awaring yogis abandon the conceptual aspects of the aggregates, elements and sense media.”⁷¹⁶ Not only that, such yogis “abandon meditation, what is meditated upon, meditative equipoise and the two stages.”⁷¹⁷

In chapter sixty, the completion stage teachings of the *Vajra Rosary* are analogized to the traditional Vedic *puja*, or fire offering.⁷¹⁸ It is the “inner nature” that “is the supreme fire offering.”⁷¹⁹ “a fire of the seed of instinctual consciousness, the kindling of the five aggregates and great yogic wisdom.”⁷²⁰ In order to make the offering, the two sexual organs unite, fanning the fire in the center of the navel chakra.⁷²¹ This “fills up with butter” *i.e.* enlightenment spirit melting from the crown chakra, with HAM as the “small ladle” of the *puja*, the penis as the “large ladle,” and “the vagina... as the hearth.”⁷²² Completing the analogy, “the aggregates become the sacrificial firewood;

⁷¹⁵ VR 64B, ch 46, v 3

⁷¹⁶ VR 65A, ch 46, v 4

⁷¹⁷ *Id.*, v 5

⁷¹⁸ See generally Y Bentor 2000, for an excellent discussion of the interiorization of the fire offering in India and Tibet. There, however, the focus is on the *Śrī-Vajraḍāka Tantra* and commentarial works, and the *Vajra Rosary* is not mentioned. Bentor subdivides interior fire rituals into five categories: (1) based on inner heat and the subtle body, (2) offerings of great bliss performed with a consort, (3) food ritual, (4) mental, and (5) offerings of wisdom which destroy ignorance, noting that “no single Tibetan work I have consulted recounts all five of these categories in a straightforward manner.” *Id.* at 596 and n 10. Arguably, the *Vajra Rosary* presents all five, although the food ritual may be a stretch, with the sole reference to food being that “the secret lotus fills up with butter.” VR 88A, ch 60, v 4.

⁷¹⁹ VR 87B, ch 60, v 1

⁷²⁰ *Id.*, v 2

⁷²¹ *Id.*, v 3

⁷²² *Id.*, vv 4-5

the butter is explained as enlightenment spirit.”⁷²³ This internal offering satisfies the deities of the body, constituting “the unexcelled divine commitment.”⁷²⁴

In chapter sixty-five, the *Vajra Rosary* associates the Three Jewels with aspects of Tantra:

TABLE 8. The Tantric Three Jewels

<u>Buddha</u>	<u>Dharma</u>	<u>Sangha</u>
Mind	Speech	Body
HŪṂ	ĀḤ	⁷²⁵
<i>Avadhūtī</i>	<i>Lalanā</i>	<i>Rasanā</i>
Formless Realm	Form Realm	Desire Realm
<i>Sambhogakāya</i>	<i>Dharmakāya</i>	<i>Nirṇāṇakāya</i>
Luminance (<i>āloka</i>)	Imminence (<i>ālokāpalabdha</i>)	Radiance (<i>alokābhāsa</i>) ⁷²⁶

G. The Four Ecstasies and the Four Instants

Closely related to sexual yoga are the four ecstasies, already mentioned above, and the four instants. Chapter nineteen is a very short summary of the four “instants” of sexual yoga: Variety;⁷²⁷ Ripening;⁷²⁸ Triumph;⁷²⁹ and Beyond Characteristics.⁷³⁰ Variety

⁷²³ *Id.*, v 6

⁷²⁴ *Id.*, vv 6-9

⁷²⁵ Presumably OM stands for the *sangha* here, but the corresponding verse doesn't appear

⁷²⁶ *VR* 95B, ch 65, vv 2-9

⁷²⁷ *Rnam pa sna tshogs*.

⁷²⁸ *Rnam par smin*.

⁷²⁹ *Rnam par 'joms*.

is the various types of kissing and foreplay; Ripening is when the bliss in the channels reaches the throat; Triumph is “innate” or “orgasmic”⁷³¹ wisdom, with “the character of a vajra rosary, the formless instant, complete manifest enlightenment;” and Beyond Characteristics is “the formless instant, complete manifest enlightenment, surpassing the semen that emerges from the channels.”⁷³² The chapter ends with the statement that “the four wisdoms and the four emptinesses are realized from the four instants.”⁷³³ Because he notes that the next chapter addresses these same topics, *Alamka* has little to say about this chapter.⁷³⁴

Chapter twenty focuses on an analysis of the four ecstasies, “not clearly expressed in other Tantras,”⁷³⁵ in the forward and reverse order, and here we also have a more detailed description of the four instants. The four ecstasies are: Ecstasy;⁷³⁶ Supreme Ecstasy;⁷³⁷ Transcendent Ecstasy;⁷³⁸ and Innate Ecstasy.⁷³⁹ In the “reverse method,”

⁷³⁰ *Mtshan nyid bral*.

⁷³¹ Tib *lhan cig skyes pa* or Skt *sahaja* mean “born together,” therefore “innate” or, in the sexual context, where the two organs are together, “orgasmic”

⁷³² *VR* 36B-37A, ch 19, vv 3-6

⁷³³ *VR* 37A, ch 19, v 7

⁷³⁴ *Alamka* 136A Tsong kha pa notes that the demarcation between chapters 19 and 20 differs in the various translations of the *Vajra Rosary* Tsong kha pa 2010, 62

⁷³⁵ *VR* 38A, ch 20, v 17

⁷³⁶ Tib *dga'*, Skt *ānanda*.

⁷³⁷ Tib *mchog tu dga'*, Skt *paramānanda*.

⁷³⁸ Tib *dga' bral*, lit “free from ecstasy”, Skt *vīramānanda*, lit “the end of ecstasy” or “cessation of ecstasy”

⁷³⁹ Tib *lhan cig skyes pa dga'*, Skt *sahajānanda* Explaining these, *Alamka* quotes the *Hevajra Tantra* “Slight bliss is Ecstasy/ Supreme Ecstasy is more than that/ Transcendent Ecstasy is free from passion/ The fourth is free from these” *Alamka* 136B

Ecstasy is located in the navel chakra; Supreme Ecstasy in the heart; Transcendent Ecstasy in the throat; and Innate or Orgasmic Ecstasy in the crown chakra. Alamka explains that this starts with the support of the letter A in the navel chakra, and ends with the innate in the crown chakra “because in it there is the indestructible shape of the syllable HA.”⁷⁴⁰ In the forward method, these are the other way round, with Ecstasy starting in the crown chakra with the melting of the enlightenment spirit there by the wisdom fire,⁷⁴¹ and the more intense ecstasies experienced in the throat, heart and navel chakras, respectively.⁷⁴²

Then the four instants are described in somewhat greater detail and correlated with the four ecstasies, all in the context of the “reverse” method. Variety is the experience of “looking, attracting...and kissing on the mouth,”⁷⁴³ and causes Ecstasy. “Ripening” is (all in the context of sexual yoga) when the two organs meet and cause the fire in the navel chakra (*tummo*) to melt the enlightenment spirit in the crown chakra, overcoming conceptuality and giving rise to Supreme Ecstasy⁷⁴⁴ and being the cause a little later of Innate or Orgasmic Ecstasy.⁷⁴⁵ It is centered in the heart chakra.⁷⁴⁶ The

⁷⁴⁰ Alamka 137A

⁷⁴¹ Alamka 137A

⁷⁴² *VR* 37A-B, ch 20, vv 3-4 Alamka specifies in more detail the places where the ecstasies are experienced Ecstasy is felt in the crown chakra meaning “the thirty-two petals at the endpoint of the wind chakra,” Supreme Ecstasy in the throat chakra meaning “to the endpoint of the fire chakra,” and Innate Ecstasy from the navel chakra to the secret place, 137A-B, which should be experienced by “meditation on actual orgasm” (*don gyi lhan cig skyes pa bsgoms pas*) “through the force of the personal instructions of the guru ” 137B

⁷⁴³ *VR* 37B, ch 20, v 5

⁷⁴⁴ *VR* 37B, ch 20, vv 6-7 Alamka also mentions “tugging hair” here 137B

⁷⁴⁵ Alamka 137B-138A

⁷⁴⁶ *VR* 37B, ch 20, v 12

instant of Overcoming is identified with the throat chakra and Transcendent Ecstasy, where the entire central channel is experienced as undifferentiated, as the enlightenment spirit falls straight down from the crown, unimpeded.⁷⁴⁷ The instant Free From or Beyond Characteristics, associated with Innate Ecstasy, is the “peaceful state of great bliss,”⁷⁴⁸ explained by Alamka as “Free from the characteristics of the three other [ecstasies], abandoning passion and dispassion.”⁷⁴⁹

The Tantra then explains the “forward” method, stating that after the practices of the energy-winds explained in chapter twelve, the rising stream up the chakras, from the navel to the crown chakra, is the cause of achievement of the yogi. In this method, Ecstasy and Variety are associated with the navel chakra; Supreme Ecstasy and Ripening with the heart chakra, which is also stated to be “the supreme basis of all emptiness accomplished by the yogi;”⁷⁵⁰ Transcendent Ecstasy and Overcoming with the throat chakra; and Innate Ecstasy and the instant Free From Characteristics with the crown chakra.

As described in detail in chapter twenty-seven, yoginī deities sit within the channels.⁷⁵¹ By arousing them through sexual yoga, retaining enlightenment spirit, one

⁷⁴⁷ *VR* 37B, ch 20, v 8, Alamka 138A

⁷⁴⁸ *VR* 37B, ch 20, v 9

⁷⁴⁹ Alamka 138A Alamka appears to be quoting the *Mandala Ritual of the Arising of Glorious Heruka*, *dpal he ru ka 'byung ba shes bya ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga, śrī-herukabhūta-nāma-maṇḍalavidhū*, Toh 1261, 323A, although this quote appears in a number of texts

⁷⁵⁰ *VR* 37B, ch 20, v 12

⁷⁵¹ Either of the three main channels, center, left and right, following the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary*, 38A, ch 20, v 15, or the chakra channels of the four or six main chakras, following Alamka's version of the Tantra Alamka 139A I am following Alamka here, instead of the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary*'s “sixteen thousand” Alamka 139B The “sixteen emptinesses are described in chapter forty-nine of the *Vajra Rosary*, *infra*.

experiences the instant of Free from Characteristics, and a great awakening with the nature of the sixteen emptinesses.⁷⁵²

H. Secrecy

The meaning of the *Vajra Rosary* “should not be revealed in any way:/ That is as well known/ As breathing.”⁷⁵³ Tantric practice or aspects of it are described as “the supreme secret reality,” “hid[den] in the Tantras,”⁷⁵⁴ “the supreme secret.”⁷⁵⁵ Disciples are admonished not to reveal Tantric ritual implements to those who have not promised to adhere to the commitments of Tantric practice, and not to disclose the activities of Tantric yogic practice to monks remaining “in the vow,” presumably that of celibacy, or even to the Tantric guru,⁷⁵⁶ let alone anyone else.⁷⁵⁷ And one who reveals personal instructions to unsuitable disciples “will go to Howling Hell in this very life!”⁷⁵⁸

Concrete expression of how this concealed knowledge was intended to remain secret is seen in the instruction regarding the crucial mantras for vajra repetition, HŪṂ HO and OM ĀḤ HŪṂ, which are not explicitly stated in the Tantra, but, rather, are elliptically described in terms of Sanskrit grammar. For example, OM is described as

⁷⁵² VR 38A, ch 20, v 16 Professor Thurman notes that this can be interpreted to be the significance of the “sixteen year-old girl” referred to in chapter two, above Personal Communication, November 28, 2006

⁷⁵³ VR 10B, ch 3, v 6

⁷⁵⁴ VR 16B, ch 6, v 40

⁷⁵⁵ VR 19A, ch 8, v 8

⁷⁵⁶ See Alamka 72A, specifying that the guru referred to in the Tantra refers in fact to the Tantric guru bestowing the empowerment While this seems curious, the main point here is to keep the practice secret

⁷⁵⁷ VR 19B, ch 9, vv 8-9

⁷⁵⁸ VR 20A, ch 9, v 17

follows: “First, write the first letter,⁷⁵⁹/ Having the fifth vowel,⁷⁶⁰/ Having the last part/
Of the last one of the group.⁷⁶¹/ It is expressed/ As the seed of the body.”⁷⁶²

I. The Taxonomy of the Energy-Winds and Conceptualities

The energy-winds are explained by Alampa to consist of the ten better-known root and branch energy-winds, nine of which (minus the life energy energy-wind) are found in each of the six chakras, making fifty-four, moving both in the day and night,⁷⁶³ resulting in one-hundred eight.⁷⁶⁴ Adding the life energy energy-wind would make “more than one-hundred eight.”⁷⁶⁵ The *Vajra Rosary*, however, gives these energy-winds rather colloquial names, describing how the energy-winds grasp objects,⁷⁶⁶ beginning with “Sending and Grasping, One Hundred Million, Intoxicating, Stupid, Cooling, Itching, Mucus, Axe,” and so forth. Since we only have the Tibetan for these names of energy-winds, the task of comparison is made difficult. Back-translating into Sanskrit, however, yields some insight. For example, Alampa comments that “The ‘One-Hundred Million [Tib. *dung phyur*] [Energy-wind]’ is supported by the Extreme Power Channel.

⁷⁵⁹ I.e. “a.”

⁷⁶⁰ I.e. “u,” so “au,” equivalent to “o.”

⁷⁶¹ I.e. *anusvāra*, making “OM”

⁷⁶² VR 29A, ch 15, v 25

⁷⁶³ VR 11B, ch 3 vv 24-25

⁷⁶⁴ VR 12B, ch 3 v 37

⁷⁶⁵ VR 10B, ch 3 v 8

⁷⁶⁶ See *Abhidharmakosa* Ch 2, v 33 “Pride, Inflating, Expanding are [how] they are attracted to their own phenomena, [how] they touch the mind” *Nga rgyal khengs pa rgyags pa ni/ rang gi chos la chags pa yi/ sems ni yongs su gtugs pa’o*.

‘Realized by A and RA,’ [it is called] One Hundred Million; the two winds are the Evacuative Wind.”⁷⁶⁷ This seems rather strange unless one realizes that “realized by A and RA” could be rendered in Sanskrit as *arbuda* (*/bud* being an alternate root for */budh* and */bund*, meaning known or realized), and that *arbuda* is also Sanskrit for “One-Hundred Million.”⁷⁶⁸ There are other instances of this phenomenon, illustrated in the notes to the translation.⁷⁶⁹

As explained in more detail in the *CMP*, meditation on the energy-winds is the preparatory stage of the first of Nāgārjuna’s five stages, vajra repetition. In accordance with the well-known notion that the subtle body energy-winds are the mounts of the subtle-mind conceptualities, chapter three concludes with the naming of the one hundred eight conceptualities. This appears to be at variance with the usual count of 80 instincts well known in the literature.⁷⁷⁰

J. Overcoming the Conceptual Energy-Winds

Since conceptuality rides on the mount of the energy-winds, and conceptuality must be overcome on the path to Buddhahood, the *Vajra Rosary* discusses how and why

⁷⁶⁷ Alamka 45A (*Dung phyur zhes bya ba ni shin tu shugs kyi rtsa la brten nas a dang ra* [per Peking and Snar thang, Sde dge has ri] *dag gis rtogs pa zhes bya ba ni dung phyur te*)

⁷⁶⁸ Jayabhadra, writing in the ninth century, discussing the etymology of *rahasyam*, “secret,” notes that “*Ra* is said to mean ‘penis,’ and the syllable *ha*, ‘vulva’ ” Gray 2005, 440

⁷⁶⁹ I am pursuing further research on the names of the energy-winds in an attempt to identify whether they are so called in other systems. The energy-winds’ colloquial rather than technical names, with the incorporation of various puns and so forth suggests a mnemonic device, which may make sense if this tradition was primarily oral

⁷⁷⁰ Interestingly, the Tibetan rendering of the Sanskrit quotes from the *VR* of Alamka’s *Commentary* differs from that of the *Vajra Rosary* text, Alamka’s *Commentary*’s wording suggesting the translation of the Tibetan *rang bzhin* was of the Sanskrit *prakṛti*, “instinct,” as contrasted with the less technical translation of *rang bzhin* as “nature.” The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *rlung gi rang bzhin rgyu ba yin*, 12B, while Alamka has *rang bzhin rlung gi mtshan nyid yin* 52B

these energy-winds should be overcome. Much of this discussion is in the context of the practice of vajra repetition, and that will not be repeated here.

Commenting on chapter thirty-five, Alampa says that the energy-winds to be eliminated are “conceptual,” “in that they are conceptualities of desire and so forth produced by the force of the energy-winds.”⁷⁷¹ As the Tantra itself says, “Those energy-winds *are* conceptuality.”⁷⁷² Practicing this yoga, “you make everything the essence of emptiness,”⁷⁷³ “because it serves as the cause of the reality of natural clear light through the force of meditating the two stages.”⁷⁷⁴

The conceptual energy-winds having been eliminated, chapter thirty-six discusses the rising of the “great energy-wind of non-conceptuality,”⁷⁷⁵ “formless energy-wind,”⁷⁷⁶ “the cause of perceiving directly the reality of a form of supremely natural clear light,”⁷⁷⁷ which is the cause of Vajrasattva, which is who one becomes on the last of the five stages of the completion stage, integration.⁷⁷⁸ Once the conceptual energy-winds are abandoned, “you abandon all duality,” precisely because you are free of those energy-winds.⁷⁷⁹ With the arising of this non-conceptual energy-wind, you are free from all of

⁷⁷¹ Alampa 198A

⁷⁷² VR 57A, ch 35, v 2

⁷⁷³ *Id*

⁷⁷⁴ Alampa 198A

⁷⁷⁵ VR 57B-58A, ch 36, v 2

⁷⁷⁶ Alampa 200B

⁷⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁷⁹ *Id.*

the channel knots,⁷⁸⁰ and you are free from drops of enlightenment spirit and the sound that occurs when the enlightenment spirit falls.⁷⁸¹

In chapter thirty nine, the Tantra teaches that the abode of the Life-energy energy-wind is, contrary to what may be thought in the world, in the secret anus, the energy center between the perineum and the tip of the penis, or, as Alamka notes, the womb or womb channel.⁷⁸² The energy of this center is inherently non-conceptual, and is the original energy in the production of living beings, generating consciousness in process leading to birth, “fainting”⁷⁸³ in the move from clear light to the other empties, then to the production of the elements, aggregates, sense media, instinctual natures and so forth.⁷⁸⁴

K. Engagement of the Senses in the Tantric Way

Chapter nine discusses how the yogi’s sense powers “enter and completely fill the [sense] objects.” Alamka explains that this is actually a form of withholding engagement of the ordinary sense powers because here the movement is by the bodhisattva, for example Kṣitigarbha for the eye sense power, towards the sense goddess, here Rūpavajrā and so forth.⁷⁸⁵ Thus, contrary to non-Tantric vows, such as found in the *vinaya*, the *Vajra Rosary* emphasizes the vow of engagement with sense objects. But this is no

⁷⁸⁰ Alamka 201A

⁷⁸¹ Alamka 201B

⁷⁸² Alamka 117A

⁷⁸³ Alamka 117B

⁷⁸⁴ The role of the energy-winds in the birth process is discussed in greater detail in *VR* Chapter thirty-two, and in the dissolution or death process in Chapter thirty-three

⁷⁸⁵ Alamka 70B

ordinary engagement. Rather, the yogi engages them “in empty, non-dual illusion, by the bliss experienced in the wisdom-knowledge empowerment.”⁷⁸⁶

L. Emptiness in the Vajra Rosary Yogic System

The word, “emptiness” is used one hundred twelve times in the Tantra. It is the principal subject of chapters five, twenty-five, forty-nine and fifty, but is referenced throughout the Tantra.

The subject of chapter five is the nature of emptiness and its connection with the yoga of the *Vajra Rosary*. In a word, the understanding of emptiness is indispensable to the yogic path charted by the *Vajra Rosary*, and, at the same time, is its ultimate goal.⁷⁸⁷ Chapter five’s presentation of emptiness stresses the selfless nature of persons and things, and “has left behind the reifications of self, life, reincarnations, humanoids, *Manu*, *Manuja*, agent, experiencer, knower and creator.”⁷⁸⁸

Because the *Vajra Rosary* predates some of the finer distinctions later drawn among Buddhist tenet systems, one can find elements of *Yogacāra* idealism mentioned later in the text, such as the “foundational consciousness” or *ālayavijñāna*, along with *Madhyamaka* or centrist philosophy, including many elements of what is now regarded generally as the “highest” system, *Prasāṅgika Madhyamaka* or Dialectical Centrism. For example, in chapter five, Buddha notes that while emptiness is “free from the context of expressing and expressed, mere names alone are also wonderful self-arising wisdom,”

⁷⁸⁶ *VR* 19B, ch 9, v 10

⁷⁸⁷ Although chapter one of Alamka’s *Commentary* discusses the second question of chapter one, “What is emptiness,” in the much longer and detailed word commentary section it omits the Tantra’s chapter five, and resumes in the middle of chapter six Alamka 23A

⁷⁸⁸ *VR* 13B, ch 5, v 10

and adds that “I am teaching [reality] as conventional expression.”⁷⁸⁹ The notion of conventional reality being purely nominal is a hallmark of *Madhyamaka*. On the other hand, great bliss, which the Tantra equates with emptiness, “is explained as introspectively known (*rang rig pa*).”⁷⁹⁰ The self-awareness of consciousness, a prime feature of *rdzogs chen* and *Yogācāra-Svātantrika* thought, is rejected by the Madhyamakas.⁷⁹¹

Emptiness is not described in a vacuum, but in order to link it to and stress its importance in the practices of the perfection stage yoga described, beginning with the statement that “only through yoga do you realize that suchness and non-conceptuality, the unique selfless nature of the self of person and things, emptiness and self-awareness are always present in the nature of everything.”⁷⁹²

In chapter twenty-five, the Tantra explains “the words of emptiness,” referring to “the characteristic of emptiness-wisdom,”⁷⁹³ probably a reference to *śūnyatā jñāna*, “emptiness-wisdom,” from the mantra *om śūnyatā jñāna vajra svabhāva atmako ham*⁷⁹⁴ found in Chapter 3 of the *Root Tantra* and in the various *Guhyasamāja* prayers and practices performed to the present day. Here, it is specified at the outset that emptiness-wisdom abides “in the body, always remaining as the nature of everything.”⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁸⁹ *VR* 14A, ch 5, v 12

⁷⁹⁰ *VR* 25A, ch 13, v 13

⁷⁹¹ See Williams 2000, *xiii*

⁷⁹² *VR* 13B, ch 5, v 2

⁷⁹³ *VR* 47B, ch 25, v 1

⁷⁹⁴ OM, emptiness-wisdom, of the nature of vajra, that is me!

⁷⁹⁵ *VR* 47B, ch 25, v 1

“Emptiness” is “the characteristic illuminating all things,”⁷⁹⁶ the “true reality.”⁷⁹⁷ This applies to everything, even to the key event of the non-conceptual energy-winds entering the central channel;⁷⁹⁸ indeed, “emptiness is the actuality of the central channel,” and of Akṣobhya, who abides there, “the actuality of the energy-wind of clear light.”⁷⁹⁹ The other part of “emptiness-wisdom,” “wisdom,” is “great bliss, filled with enlightenment spirit.”⁸⁰⁰ The Buddha-field of emptiness is Sukhāvatī and the Buddha field of bliss is Amitayus; emptiness is Vajradhātviśvarī and wisdom Vajradhara; the left main channel, *lalanā* is emptiness and right, *rasanā*, is wisdom.⁸⁰¹ The union of these is the last of the five stages, integration.⁸⁰²

Chapter forty-nine contains an extensive discussion of emptiness. The yogi who knows the formulation of the sixteen⁸⁰³ emptinesses, the main subject of this chapter, “will know emptiness.”⁸⁰⁴ Emptiness is “the inner nature of all things, the antidote to conceptuality and the purification of wrong view.”⁸⁰⁵ The sixteen divisions of emptiness

⁷⁹⁶ *VR* 47B, ch 25, v 2

⁷⁹⁷ *Alamka* 171B

⁷⁹⁸ *Alamka* 171B

⁷⁹⁹ *Alamka* 172A

⁸⁰⁰ *VR* 47B, ch 25, v 5

⁸⁰¹ *VR* 47B-48A, ch 25, vv 7-10, *Alamka* 172B-173B

⁸⁰² *Alamka* 173A

⁸⁰³ Dolpopa, quoting the *Vajra Rosary*, discusses eighteen emptinesses, but, unfortunately, doesn't explain how Dolpopa 2006, 346 Alamka, in the word commentary on *Vajra Rosary* chapter thirty-six, does refer to eighteen emptinesses Alamka 201B

⁸⁰⁴ *VR* 66B, ch 49, v 1

⁸⁰⁵ *VR* 66B, ch 49, v 2

here is almost identical to that found in Candrakīrti's *Introduction to the Middle Way*.⁸⁰⁶

In sum,⁸⁰⁷

TABLE 9. Emptiness

<u>VR Emptiness Type</u> ⁸⁰⁸	<u>VR Description</u>	<u>Chandra Emptiness Type</u> ⁸⁰⁹
1. Outer	Free from focusing on outer objects	2. Outer
2. Inner	Without “outer,” no conception of “inner”	1. Inner
3. Inner and outer		3. Inner and outer
4. Great	Being free from the habitat world	5. Immensity
5. Wisdom by which one sees things as empty	Later causes contemplation in perfect mirror wisdom	14. (?) Of defining attributes
6. Emptiness of the emptiness of non-things	The opposite of VR (4),	4. Emptiness of emptiness
7. Ultimate	Knowing in the ultimate a false thing	6. Emptiness of the ultimate (i.e. of nirvana)

⁸⁰⁶ In this respect, the *Vajra Rosary* seems to contradict David Snellgrove's assertion that in the "earlier period," the *Prasangika* school "seems to be scarcely known," Snellgrove 2002, 439, although whether this is true depends on when this particular portion of the *Vajra Rosary* appeared. See discussion at chapter II, C, 3, *supra*.

⁸⁰⁷ Comparing VR 66B-67B, ch 49, vv 2-13, with Candrakīrti 2002, 93-96, 314-23 (Mipham's Commentary), ch VI, vv 180-201. Like the *Large Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom*, see E. Conze 1975, 14-48, Candrakīrti lists twenty emptinesses, explaining that four, which appear to be the last four, were used by Buddha in summarizing when speaking in brief. Candrakīrti 2002, 93, v 180.

⁸⁰⁸ VR 66B-67B, ch 49, vv 3-13.

⁸⁰⁹ Candrakīrti 2002, 93-96, Candrakīrti 1988, 284-315. Translations of the types of Chandra's emptinesses are taken from Candrakīrti 2002.

8. Compounded ⁸¹⁰	Engaging in the character of one's own conceptuality	7. Compounded
9. Uncompounded	Abandoning thing and no-thing	8. Uncompounded
10. Extreme ⁸¹¹	Prayer for the benefit of sentient beings not perceived as joyful for one's self	15. Of the unobservable
11. Beyond extremes	Abandoning conceptuality	9. Beyond extremes (beyond extreme positions)
12. Lacking beginning and end	Prayer for worldly beings	10. Beginningless and endless
13. Without rejection	The self naturally purified of the stain of passion	11. Of what should not be spurned
14. Of self-identity	The marks and signs of his form body	12. Of essential nature
15. Of all things	Emptiness of the wings of enlightenment, lacking arrogance in practice	13. Of all phenomena
16. Of no-thing	The very non-perception of emptiness, a non-thing is emptiness	16. Of non-things

The reason “you analyze emptiness” is “because it is the antidote to the instincts.”⁸¹²

Chapter fifty rather cryptic, continues focusing on the importance of emptiness, “pervading the six chakras because it dwells in the center of all things.”⁸¹³ “Inseparable

⁸¹⁰ *'dus byas stong pa nyid. VR 67A, ch 49, v 6*

⁸¹¹ *shin tu stong pa nyid. VR 67A, ch 49, v 7*

⁸¹² *VR 67B, ch 49, v 14*

⁸¹³ *VR 67B, ch 50, v 2*

from the conventional, emptiness is the ultimate.”⁸¹⁴ The Tantra explains that “the Vajra Rosary is like that,” reflecting the title of the chapter: “The Characteristic of Producing the Vajra Rosary of Emptiness.” With this foundation, the Tantra describes “the support of life-energy” as “a blue body, three faces, three eyes and six excellent arms,”⁸¹⁵ *i.e.* Akṣobhya, the central figure of the *Ārya Guhyasamāja* mandala, arising from HŪM and the vajra family. “He dissolves the energy-winds that produce conceptuality, clears away the harmful ones, eliminating all duality,” resulting in “great illusion, great emptiness, the marvelous ground of the Buddha.”⁸¹⁶

M. Great Bliss and Its Relation to Emptiness

“Great bliss,” used ninety-two times in the Tantra, is a form of psychophysical ecstasy that is both a cause and byproduct of perfection stage yogic practices, and of enlightenment itself. Great bliss is what was experienced by the Vajra Queens in whose vaginas Buddha resided at the outset of the Tantra, what overcame the bodhisattvas as they listened to Buddha at the outset of the Tantra. At one level of Tantric hermeneutic, great bliss is referred to as the “state of Vajrasattva,” *sattva*, hero, referring to the holding of conventional enlightenment spirit at the tip of the *vajra* during sexual yoga.⁸¹⁷ At another level, great bliss also refers to the abandoning of dualities of all kinds, manifesting the state of emptiness. Of course, these two levels are intimately connected because great bliss overcomes conceptuality, enabling the yogi to realize emptiness.

⁸¹⁴ *Id.*

⁸¹⁵ *Id* v 3

⁸¹⁶ *VR* 68A, ch 50, vv 5-6

⁸¹⁷ *Alamka* 93B, 96A

Thus, in chapter thirteen, entitled “Great Bliss,” it is described as intimately connected with, and in fact as *being* emptiness, realizing the promise of the Heart Sutra’s “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form”.⁸¹⁸ “Emptiness, great emptiness,/ Extraordinary emptiness,/ Supreme of supreme,/ The abode of emptiness/ And other-emptiness,/ It is of the nature/ Of the five skies.”⁸¹⁹ This empty great bliss “enters into every pleasure.”⁸²⁰ At the higher of the five stages, great bliss “‘liberates from all addiction’ because, after the attainment of clear light mind, it avoids the conception of the aggregates [that may arise from] the illusory body. ‘It enters into every pleasure’ because, through the cause of natural clear light, manifest enlightenment having the nature of outer and inner, it attains completely.”⁸²¹ It is the stream that flows through the five major energy channels of the subtle body,⁸²² and manifests in each of the three bodies of a Buddha.⁸²³ The discussion in chapter thirteen concludes with the clear statement that great bliss is achieved “only through yoga,” and not through outer methods, even by the creation stage

⁸¹⁸ Indeed, the current fourteenth Dalai Lama’s book on the *bla ma mchod pa* prayer, based in large part on the *Vajra Rosary*, is entitled *The Union of Bliss and Emptiness* T Gyatso 1988

⁸¹⁹ *VR* 25A, ch 13, v 6

⁸²⁰ *VR* 25A, ch 13, v 5

⁸²¹ However, unlike later interpretations of Centrist philosophy, great bliss is “self-cognizing” Alamka 95A commenting on *VR* 25A

⁸²² Alamka 94B

⁸²³ “Having the nature of the five vajra wisdoms” refers to the truth body, *dharmakāya*, “having the nature of the five Buddhas” to the enjoyment or beatific body, *sambhogakāya*, and “the stream falling from the five channels” to the emanation body, *nirmanakāya* Alamka 94B commenting on *VR* 25A

of Tantra,⁸²⁴ meaning, according to Alamka, it is to be achieved “by the nature of concentration having the characteristic of method and wisdom.”⁸²⁵

N. The Yoga of Vajra Repetition and Opening the Heart Knot

Vajra repetition is the yogic technique that leads to the first of the five stages, speech isolation. The *Vajra Rosary* is regarded by many in the tradition as being the ur-text on this subject. The subject of the sixth chapter is the yoga of energy-wind and mantra, specifically the opening of the three-fold knot in the center of the heart chakra through the practice of the two-syllable mantra, HŪM HO, taking the name of “sound” and “drop” and located in the heart and center of the eyebrows respectively.⁸²⁶ If this mantra is repeated for six months under the proper circumstances, the *Vajra Rosary* states, the yogi will open the heart drop and, without doubt, achieve the supreme state.

Above the knot is the Life-energy energy-wind, and below the Evacuative energy-wind. When the knot is constricted, the Life-energy energy-wind moves in the heart center in the form of the five main energy-winds⁸²⁷ in the five channels of the heart chakra.⁸²⁸ When that energy meets the navel knot, it moves in five channels there,⁸²⁹ and

⁸²⁴ VR 26A, ch 13, v 26

⁸²⁵ Alamka 100A

⁸²⁶ According to Alamka, HŪM is the Life-energy energy-wind, and HO the Evacuative energy-wind 61B (*srog dang thur sel gyi slung gnyis HŪM HO*) Alamka explains that HŪM is to be meditated in the center of the heart knot and HO in the center of the eyebrows 60A Personal instructions are key here, as stressed in the *Vajra Rosary*, Alamka’s *Commentary*, and Buddhist Tantric teachings in general

⁸²⁷ Life-energy, Evacuative, Upward, Pervading and Equalizing For a description of these “root” winds, see K Gyatso 2002, 26-7

⁸²⁸ Inflated, Developed, Crazy, Drinking and Friend Latu Rinpoche writes

Initially, five channels of the heart form simultaneously - the central, right and left channels as well as the Triple Circle of the east [front] and the Desirous One of the south [right]

the five “branch” energy-winds⁸³⁰ move out from there in the lower part of the body.

When the channels of the navel, then heart, and then throat chakras are agitated by the energy-winds, a person produces great ignorance, hatred and lust, respectively. When the channels of the crown chakra are agitated, all of the channels fill with enlightenment spirit. Then when the conceptualities corresponding with the various energy-winds overcome the Life-energy energy-wind at the heart center, the energy-winds go down into the tip of the vajra, facing downwards. But rather than going downwards, the navel chakra energy-winds of ignorance mix with those of the heart chakra characterized by attachment, and, in a kind of Tantric version of the twelve links of dependent arising, produce consciousness and the sense powers, leading to a strengthening of the instinct associated with conception, leading to repeated rebirth in cyclic existence.⁸³¹

The only way to overcome this karmic process is to open the heart center through meditational effort, merging the Life-energy and Evacuative energy-winds in the heart

The channel-wheel at the heart is composed of the central, right and left channels, around which are eight petals or spokes - four at the cardinal directions and four at the intermediate directions

After that, three channels form simultaneously - the Free of Knots channel that abides with [and behind] the central channel, the Household One of the west [back], and the Fiery One of the north [left]. These are called the eight channels that initially form at the heart [not to be confused with the eight channel-petals of the heart]

Lati Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche 1979, 64

⁸²⁹ Crescent Moon, Mole [on the body], Serving, Dewlap and Liver

⁸³⁰ *Naga*, *Kurma* [Tortoise], *Kṛkalasa* [Lizard], *Devadatta* and *Dhanuṣṭ*

⁸³¹ Alamka's *Commentary* resumes at this point, so, at least in the Sde dge and Snar thang recensions consulted, there is no commentary on chapter six up to here

center's indestructible drop,⁸³² leading to the five wisdoms and the five clairvoyances, and mundane and transmundane attainments. This method, says the *Vajra Rosary*, is the only one: only “the reality of mantra”⁸³³ and not ritual, activities, negation, the ecstasies or even meditation leads to Buddhahood.

The *Vajra Rosary* describes just how to do this, in an isolated place, in the proper posture, prefaced with the warning that nothing will be accomplished without personal instructions from the guru. Using the various groups of Sanskrit vowels and consonants, the Vajrin elliptically describes the mantra HŪM HO in such a way that one not versed in Sanskrit would be unable to figure out the mantra. Combining these sounds with inhalation and exhalation, “reducing effort little by little,”⁸³⁴ leads to the opening of the heart knot.⁸³⁵ Tsong kha pa says of this point:

⁸³² See Tsong kha pa 2010, 310-325. Tsong kha pa says, referring to the *Vajra Rosary*, “Here, what is not clearly stated in any other Tantra, the extremely secret point, is this yoga of opening the channel-knot of the heart center by the vajra recitation.” *Id.*, 313

⁸³³ *VR* 16A, ch 6, v 27

⁸³⁴ *VR* 17B, ch 6, v 49

⁸³⁵ Tsong kha pa states

Thus, the *Vajra Rosary Sixth Chapter* expresses the need for opening the heart center channel knot, that, if you open that with the reality of mantra, you will achieve the superknowledges of sword and pill, etc., and the Great Seal accomplishment, that the reality of mantra is the repetition combining HUM and HO with inhalation and exhalation, and that if you practice it for six months, you will certainly achieve (accomplishments)

Here, you might wonder, “Well, is it the teaching of reality that the vajra repetition of the two syllables opens the channel knot? Or is it the vajra repetition of the three syllables?” Therefore both the two-letter and three-letter vajra repetition are undoubtedly intended by the (*Vajra Rosary*) *Tantra* to open the channel knot

As for how to open it, from the same text

Having named the sound (HUM) and the drop (HO),
By opening with the two winds
You cause the opening of the ignorance-knot

[It is] the point which is greatest secret of secrets, hidden within other Tantras. So [while I] explain this, you should listen. Within all three of those [the heart, throat and crown chakras], the definitive meaning *HŪM* syllable, the seed of the heart, is the master merger within the *dhūti* channel [central chamber] of the released heart channel-knot. Why? The release of the heart channel knot is the freedom from mental constructions. It is the supreme of causes of cutting off [the instinctual constructs]; because, unless you hold the wind-energies there without moving, those wind-energies become the chief thing that moves the constructs to obscure and deprive [you of accomplishments].⁸³⁶

This can be achieved in six months' constant practice.⁸³⁷

Chapter twelve sets forth a more detailed explanation of the *Vajra Rosary's* system of practice of vajra repetition, which may in fact be the most detailed explanation of this crucial part of the perfection stage found in any Tantra. In his discussion of vajra repetition in his *BIL*, one of a handful of texts part of today's Tantric college curriculum, Tsong kha pa relies most heavily on the *Vajra Rosary* in his discussion of that subject.⁸³⁸

For example, just as when the chamber of a bamboo is blocked, putting a long spoon in there and pulling it in and out opens it up, the inhalation and exhalation of the wind also opens up (the knot) like that

The same (text) states

The being who is lacking the A HAM,
Is like a tree whose root is cut

If you lack the knowledge of the definitive meaning of A HAM, it is like having the root (of your practice) cut off (It continues)

A is explained as the Life-energy energy-wind,
And likewise the evacuative wind is said to be HAM
As for those two becoming one,
That is renowned as A HAM

That is what is stated [in the *Vajra Rosary*] This method merges the vitalizing and evacuative winds in the home of the heart center indestructible

Tsong kha pa 2010, 315-17 (footnotes and page references omitted)

⁸³⁶ Tsong kha pa 2010, 320-21

⁸³⁷ *VR* 17A, ch 6, v 45

⁸³⁸ Denma Locho Rinpoche told me several times that inasmuch as the *Vajra Rosary* is not part of the Tantric college curriculum, it is not studied and that I should therefore stick closely to its text. Personal

Alaṃka notes, quoting the *Śrī-Herukābhyudaya-nāma*,⁸³⁹ that the practice of mantra (*e.g.* as briefly discussed in chapter eleven) must be mastered before taking on the reality of the energy-winds, consisting mainly of “meditat[ing] on the five or ten kinds of energy-winds and ... causing [them] to be identified precisely.”⁸⁴⁰ The chapter begins with a discussion of necessity of knowing the three main drops⁸⁴¹ which are the subject of perfection stage meditative concentration, and concentrates thereafter on the light ray drop, also known as the “wind drop,” located at the tip of the conventional nose. This drop should be meditated as having the size of a mustard seed, and serves as the cause of clear light speech.⁸⁴² In it are compressed the five types of energy-wind, which have the nature of the five Buddhas and corresponding colors and elements, summarized by Alaṃka:

Communications 10-7-08 and 7-18-09 Apparently though, as late as the 14th century, initiations into the *Vajra Rosary* were still being given Roerich 1978, 320

⁸³⁹ Toh 374, 13B

⁸⁴⁰ Alaṃka 83B As noted in the discussion of chapter three, above, there is an open issue as to whether the one-hundred eight energy-winds are composed of variants of the 4 main (excluding the Pervading energy-wind) and five branch energy-winds

⁸⁴¹ “Drop,” Tib *thug le*, Skt *citra* (the first definition given by Lokesh Chandra for *thug le*) is etymologized by Alaṃka as follows “Energy-wind drop” and so forth, because of having [Skt *ra*] the state of knowing [Skt *cit*], [it is] a drop [Skt *citra*] 83B

⁸⁴² Alaṃka 84A

TABLE 10. The Five Main Energy-winds

<u>Energy-Wind</u>	<u>Buddha</u>	<u>Color</u>	<u>Element</u>	<u>Aggregate</u>	<u>Wisdom</u>
Life-Energy	Akṣobhya	Black	Water	Consciousness	Dharma Sphere
Evacuative	Ratnasambhava	Yellow	Space	Sensation	Equalizing
Ascending	Amitābha	Red	Fire	Motivation	Discriminative
Equalizing	Karmavajradhara ⁸⁴³	Green	Wind	Perception	Accomplishing
Pervading	Vairocana	White	Earth	Matter	Mirror-like ⁸⁴⁴

The energy-winds should be conceptually counted in accord with 21,600 breaths per day, in eight meditation sessions, four in the day and four at night, divided among the various energy-winds/Buddhas and the four chakras.⁸⁴⁵ This is done initially for twenty-seven days. The process is then reversed, so the conceptualities that ride on the energy-winds are eliminated, and only the energy-winds remain. The Tantra describes how the various correspondences between energy-wind, Buddha, wisdom and so forth are put into practice, and *Alaṃka* expands upon the description. *Alaṃka* explains that, “You should know the five types of energy-wind as manifest enlightenment in five aspects through the purification of the five wisdoms,”⁸⁴⁶ and explains how the practice is done:

⁸⁴³ Amoghasiddhi

⁸⁴⁴ At one point in the chapter, when these parallels are first presented, *Alaṃka* 90A, he reverses the assignments given here of discriminative and accomplishing wisdoms, giving the former to Amoghasiddhi and the latter to Amitābha. Indeed, later in the chapter, 92A, he reverts to the version given above, which is fairly standard in Buddhist Tantric practice.

⁸⁴⁵ For a precise account of how this is done according to Tsong kha pa, *see* Tsong kha pa 2010, 227-236, Wayman 1991, 219-20.

⁸⁴⁶ *Alaṃka* 90A

In the first session of the day, red colored light rays move from abiding in the fire maṇḍala at the throat through the right nostril. In the second session, blue colored light rays move from abiding in the wind maṇḍala at the navel through the left nostril. In the third session of the day in the afternoon, golden colored light rays move from abiding in the secret lotus earth maṇḍala through both nostrils. In the fourth session white colored light rays slowly move from the water maṇḍala that abides in the heart lotus through both nostrils. Similarly in the night also.⁸⁴⁷

Further practice instructions are given in Alamka's glossing of the text, along with particulars regarding time measurement. The yogi practicing this text will achieve speech isolation.

Chapter fifteen continues the detailed explanation of vajra repetition, referred to as “the reality of mantra,”⁸⁴⁸ in more depth, this time via the three-syllable mantra OM ĀH HŪM rather than HŪM HOH as stated in the sixth chapter.⁸⁴⁹ The practice involves identifying, inhalation, holding and exhalation with the three syllables.⁸⁵⁰ The focus is on the heart drop.⁸⁵¹ The repetition is not outer but rather is internal: there is no sound. The mantra is non-dual with the energy-winds and the maṇḍala deities, and should be repeated with perfect concentration and equanimity.⁸⁵² The personal instructions of the teacher to the student are crucial here.⁸⁵³

⁸⁴⁷ Alamka 90B

⁸⁴⁸ *Snags kyi de nyid* or *snags kyi de kho na nyid*, Skt *tattva*.

⁸⁴⁹ Tsong kha pa notes that “both the two-letter and three-letter vajra repetition are undoubtedly intended by the [*Vajra Rosary*] *Tantra* to open the channel knot” Tsong kha pa 2010, 315-17

⁸⁵⁰ Alamka 105B

⁸⁵¹ Alamka 106A

⁸⁵² *VR* 28A, ch 15, v 8, Alamka 106B

⁸⁵³ *VR* 28A, ch 15, v 9, Alamka 107A

After discussing the various stages of perfection stage practice, chapter fifteen turns to a general discussion of the personal instructions on vajra repetition, starting with differentiating the chakras and inhaling, holding and exhaling the breath as non-dual with various mantras, elements and deities, very difficult to understand without a teacher's personal instructions. Not surprisingly, this section is followed by verses emphasizing study with and offerings to the guru, and, after initiation, the drawing of the maṇḍala with “a pencil made from human bone, [on] a ground of blazing jewels, or the well-spread ashes of a charnel ground.”⁸⁵⁴ Having made offerings, one should then recite the incomparable mantra, OM ĀḤ HŪM, which is not stated as such in either the Tantra or by Alamka, but is described elliptically in terms of the Sanskrit vowels and consonants.⁸⁵⁵

Chapter thirty-four explains another aspect of the practice of vajra repetition, the yoga of the “gathering of the dakinis” in the stage of Tantra. This, says the *Vajra Rosary*, is supreme wisdom “because it serves as the cause of not perceiving the form of the absence of attachment.”⁸⁵⁶ The key aspect here is the overcoming of conceptuality, and particularly that of the aggregates, accomplished by the blazing of the dakinis in the navel chakra.⁸⁵⁷ Then the conceptions of object and subject are gathered in the heart, “like a

⁸⁵⁴ VR 29A, ch 15, v 23

⁸⁵⁵ For example, HŪM is described as follows “The [last] part of USMA [the last line of syllables, *ṣa*, *śa*, *sa*, [and] *ha*], having the sixth vowel [*a*, *ā*, *i*, *ī*, *u*, *ū* .], with the last part of the last group [*anusvara*, *m*], manifests the state of the vajra of mind ” VR 29B

⁸⁵⁶ Alamka 196B

⁸⁵⁷ “For the purpose of completion, by the force of overcoming the form of the stick syllable A in the place of the navel chakra ” Alamka 197A

butterfly [drawn to the flame],” and are “incinerated.”⁸⁵⁸ This is done by using the techniques of vajra repetition described in chapter twelve of the Tantra.⁸⁵⁹ Alamka says: “‘Gathering the dakinis’ is causing the gathering of the seeds of the five Buddhas in the place of the heart, which are made to be invisible, [and] therefore are expressed as dakinis who gather, expressed in order to know that.”⁸⁶⁰

Chapter forty-one of the Tantra discusses how, by meditating the syllable HŪM in vajra repetition, the yogi withdraws the energy-winds into the central channel, going on to achieve instant enlightenment. The description of the essential subtle body components starts with the emanation and heart chakras, described as having sixty-four and eight petals and facing upwards and downwards and embodying the Evacuative and Life-energy energy-winds, respectively, “in the mode of a kiss,”⁸⁶¹ looking “like a basket.”⁸⁶² They produce ordinary conception and the instinctual natures, and are associated with the two main side channels: so the *lalanā*, the left channel is associated with body, Vairocana and the Life-energy energy-wind, and the *rasanā*, the right channel with speech, Amitābha and the Evacuative energy-wind.⁸⁶³

⁸⁵⁸ *VR* 56B-57A, ch 34, v 4

⁸⁵⁹ Alamka 197B This chapter also concludes with the statement that “in the vast wisdom of the dakinis, you will know the yoga of service” *VR* 57A, ch 34, v 6. See Lessing and Wayman 1980, 200 n 36 (“By service, Mkhas grub rje has already indicated that he means the four members of muttering”)

⁸⁶⁰ Alamka 196B (*mkha’ ‘gor rnams sdud pa zhes bya ba ni chos kyi ‘khor lor gnas pa’i sangs rgyas lnga’i sa bon sdud par byed pa ni mi snang bar byed pas gang de’i phyir bsdus pa’i mkha’ ‘gror brjod de rig* [following P and Snar instead of Sde dge’s rigs] *pa’i ngo bo la brjod do*)

⁸⁶¹ *VR* 41A, ch 22, v 28

⁸⁶² Alamka 150B

⁸⁶³ *VR* 41A, ch 22, v 29, Alamka 150B

The *avadhūtī*, the central channel, is supreme and non-conceptual, located between the two side channels. If one overcomes the energy-winds through the method outlined in the third chapter, above,⁸⁶⁴ and one's awareness abides in the central channel, one will "achieve complete enlightenment in a single moment."⁸⁶⁵ The method for achieving this starts with the meditation of calm abiding, followed by creation stage practice in which one seals the nine sense orifices. Then one mentally and single-pointedly merges the mantra HŪM with the inhalation, holding and exhalation of the breath through the cycle of 21,600 daily breaths. "After [mentally] repeating for one month, in an unbroken supreme continuum, you will attain in one instant."⁸⁶⁶ To do this, you look up from the navel chakra, called here the "secret lotus," to the opening in the center of the heart chakra above. This opens the knots there and, reversing the upwards and downwards Life-energy and Evacuative conceptual energy-winds moving in the side channels, you enter the central channel.⁸⁶⁷ The "great non-conceptual energy-wind"⁸⁶⁸ arising in the central channel cuts off the instinctual conceptions of body and speech originating in the heart and emanation chakras, and opens the energy-wind at the top of the central channel in the wind chakra between the eyebrows.⁸⁶⁹ This is the culmination

⁸⁶⁴ Alamka 151A *I.e.* the meditational analyzing of each energy wind as set forth in chapter three in the context of that chapter's statement that "From the supreme space, non-conceptuality arises, overcoming the instinctual conceptions of energy-wind" *VR* 1B, ch 3, v 23

⁸⁶⁵ *VR* 41B, ch 22, v 32

⁸⁶⁶ *VR* 41B, ch 22, v 35

⁸⁶⁷ Alamka 152A-B

⁸⁶⁸ *VR* 41B, ch 22, v 37

⁸⁶⁹ *Id.* v 38

of vajra repetition, and it produces intense and constant ecstasy in the yogi, who appears to all as energetic, joyful and ecstatic, with a “pleasant, copper-colored face.”⁸⁷⁰

O. Sound and Mantra

Key to vajra repetition and many other aspects of Tantric practice is sound and mantra. The first discussion of sound in the Tantra is found in chapter seven, and although the syllable does not appear in the chapter, *Alaṃka* explains that the primary sound referred to is the syllable A, which has the nature of wisdom fire is located in both ordinary beings and yogis in the center of the navel chakra. Indestructible and of the nature of clear light, in ordinary beings this syllable A gives birth to grasping consciousnesses, including that of the foundational consciousness. More detail is given in chapter eleven about sound and the syllable A, so this chapter is primarily introductory.

In chapter eleven, the *Vajra Rosary* returns to the subject of sound, principally to that of the syllable HŪM, described as “mere sound,” abiding in hollow of the lotus, *i.e.* the eight channels, of the heart chakra, and the syllable A, the mere sound residing in the navel chakra. In one of many delightful etymologies pervading the (to this point) lost Sanskrit text, which makes no sense in the Tibetan, *Alaṃka* notes:

“Mere sound” is “*ada*” [Sanskrit for] eating. *Na* [means] the negative [of that]. [So] what is not eaten is *nāda*. That very thing alone is mere *nāda* [sound]. “Because it is more subtle than the measure of an atom,” [mere sound is] the Protector who creates the rosary of ecstatic light.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁷⁰ *Id.* v 39

⁸⁷¹ *Alaṃka* 79A As Professor Thurman noted, “When you visualize Dharmakāya in the creation stage, form is dissolved, but as Khedrup Je says, don’t dwell in picture of a black void, just go into state of infinity that includes everything. You arise to embrace all of it, so you arise as a squiggle, as a that, you are

Although superficially discussing sound, the text is laden with deeper esoteric meaning. For example, the Tantra states that this mere sound, the syllable A, “dissolves in the state of great emptiness, the transparent state of great bliss.”⁸⁷² Alamka notes that this means “having the nature of universal emptiness, the actuality of natural clear light, which is perceived at the end of emptiness, extreme emptiness and great emptiness.”⁸⁷³

As summarized by the Fourteenth (current) Dalai Lama:

[T]here are four such levels called the four empties. These empties do not refer to the emptiness of inherent existence. These four empties are so called because of their being empty or devoid of the subtle energy that serves as the basis of the coarser levels of consciousness.

When the levels of conceptuality--which are specified as being of eighty different types--cease, then the four empties begin. and within the four empties the latter ones are more subtle than the earlier ones; thus the most subtle is called the “all empty.” Why is it called the all empty? Because the earlier levels of subtle consciousness have ceased. The earlier levels are called “the vivid white appearance,” “the vivid red or orange increase of appearance,” and “the vivid black near-attainment.” The all-empty level is called “the mind of clear light,” which for us is the ground of all mental life.⁸⁷⁴

Here we see how the *Vajra Rosary*’s poetic rendering, unpacked by Alamka, remains at the center of current Buddhist Tantric practice.

Chapter six introduced the vajra repetition practice of reciting the mantra HŪṂ HO;⁸⁷⁵ chapter twenty-two, in its encyclopedic fashion, the *Vajra Rosary* also discusses

all of everything So what would you eat? You have no interior, and since you're everything, there's no need to eat So you individuate ” Personal Communication 2-20-06

⁸⁷² VR 21B, ch 11, v 9

⁸⁷³ Alamka 81A

⁸⁷⁴ Mitchell and Wiseman 1997,

⁸⁷⁵ Quite the opposite of ho-hum

the much better known mantra used for many purposes in Buddhist Tantra. Here Buddha Vajradhara describes the three-syllable mantra, OM ĀḤ HŪṂ, described as the “essence” or “heart”⁸⁷⁶ of the three bodies because, Alamka explains, “it reverses the impurities of the body and so forth, because of the continuum with the pure body and so forth.”⁸⁷⁷ OM, vajra body, itself consists of three syllables, A, U and M.

The first part of OM, the syllable A, is in the center of the heart chakra and goes up to the wind chakra between the eyebrows. It is the Life-energy energy-wind, non-dual and non-conceptual, and pervades up to part of the crown chakra as well, and is the supreme letter because as the element of space it underlies all expression, and thus awakens the throat chakra, the chakra of speech.⁸⁷⁸ A also embodies the meaning of the formless realm, “because by the power the syllable A you accomplish the four meditative absorptions...or,” says Alamka, “because the four formless absorptions are epitomized by the four chakras.”⁸⁷⁹ The syllable U is located in the throat chakra, luminous and blazing, and extends up to the top of the crown chakra. It embodies the form realm with its seventeen divine levels constituted by the four concentrations inasmuch as “in enjoying the six tastes,” explains Alamka, “by meditating on the form of the deity, realizing that they lack intrinsic nature, you are free from the passion of desire, which is called the

⁸⁷⁶ *snying po* VR 39B, ch 22, v 1

⁸⁷⁷ Alamka 144B For a comprehensive discussion of the four formless absorptions and the four concentrations See generally Lati Rinbochay and Denma Locho Rinbochay, 1983

⁸⁷⁸ VR 39B, ch 22, vv 4-5, Alamka 145A Alamka stresses the importance of the seed syllables “Without faith in that very thing/ The seed syllables being the actuality of mantra/ You will be unable in the channels/ To begin to cause movement, //” Alamka 145B

⁸⁷⁹ VR 39B, ch 22, v 6, Alamka 145B

‘form realm’.”⁸⁸⁰ The last part of OM, the syllable M, is located in the crown chakra and is a drop of enlightenment spirit, “the seed of great bliss,” “completely filled with luminosity, like a moon mandala.”⁸⁸¹ Its height is twelve finger widths upwards from the throat chakra, extending to a point 4 finger widths above the crown chakra,⁸⁸² and embodies the twenty places of the desire realm.

So, when you know the meaning of the syllable OM, you awaken all three realms, but as pure, in the nature of Vairocana, who is the purity of the material aggregate, “because of the emptiness, in ultimate reality, of the actuality of the three realms.”⁸⁸³ The activities associated with OM involve the breath emerging from the two nostrils having the nature of the Life-energy and Evacuative energy-winds, the blood and semen moving in the lower part of the body causing fire to blaze in the wind and crown chakras.⁸⁸⁴ The next syllable of the three-syllable mantra is ĀḤ, the seed syllable of speech, in the nature of Amitābha, located in the middle of the throat, red in color, purifying the form realm.⁸⁸⁵ Like OM, ĀḤ consists of three parts: short A and short A, which combine to form a long Ā, and Ḥ. The short A syllables were explained previously in the discussion of A-U-M, or OM, as the Life-energy energy-wind extending from the heart chakra to the wind chakra, and is synonymous with *śūnyatā jñāna*, emptiness wisdom.⁸⁸⁶ The syllable Ḥ,

⁸⁸⁰ Alamka 146A

⁸⁸¹ Alamka 146A

⁸⁸² Alamka 146A

⁸⁸³ Alamka 146B

⁸⁸⁴ *VR* 40A, ch 22, vv 11-12

⁸⁸⁵ Alamka 148A

⁸⁸⁶ Alamka has an interesting discussion here about the meaning of the *Vajra Rosary*’s statements in ch 22, v 15 that the first syllable A, the Life-energy energy wind, is “classified as two, life-energy and effort

without any vowel at the end, consists of the Life-energy and Evacuative energy-winds.⁸⁸⁷ The last syllable of the three-syllable mantra is HŪṂ, the seed syllable of mind, and the essence of Akṣobhya, located at the heart. Like OM and ĀḤ, HŪṂ also consists of three parts; here, H, Ū and Ṃ. H is the Evacuative energy-wind, located inside the perineum. Ū is the Pervading energy-wind, located in the center of the throat chakra. Ṃ is the Life-energy energy-wind, located in the wind chakra.

Vajrapāṇi then asks which of the three, OM, ĀḤ or HŪṂ, Vairocana, Amitābha or Akṣobhya, is the main one, and the answer is unequivocal: “The heart seed is the Lord,”⁸⁸⁸ the syllable HŪṂ in the heart of Akṣobhya, “because all things rely on mind,”⁸⁸⁹ which gives rise in conjunction with the arising of the two principal energy-winds, Life-energy and Evacuative, to the one-hundred eight instinctual conceptions. These give rise to cyclic existence on the occasion of misknowledge; but this can be reversed by a yogi who properly practices meditation on the breath,⁸⁹⁰ stopping the one-hundred eight energy-winds or ten main energy-winds and the instinctual conceptions.⁸⁹¹

[*srog dang rtsol ba*, presumably *prāṇāyāma*], bringing together [sense] objects and [sense] powers,” in which I think he is saying that although one energy, it appears to be two, with objective characteristics brought about through the instincts in the storehouse consciousness generating a subjective consciousness through interaction with the addicted mentality Alamka 147B But I am not sure about this

⁸⁸⁷ VR 40B, ch 22, v 17

⁸⁸⁸ VR 41A, ch 22, v 24

⁸⁸⁹ Alamka 149B

⁸⁹⁰ Alamka 149B-150A

⁸⁹¹ Alamka 150A

P. The Three Drops, Three Nose Tips and Three Main Channels

Chapter twenty-one begins the discussion of the analysis of and practices concerning the “three drops”: the “substance” drop located at the tip of the penis or vagina; the “mantric drop” located at the center of the heart chakra; and the “wind” or “light” drop located at the tip of the conventional nose. The context here is vajra repetition culminating in speech isolation, and the more general observations here set the stage for the more detailed teachings of the following chapters.

As a result of completion stage practices, the enlightenment spirit from the crown chakra flows through all the channels. At the moment of the holding of the flowing energy-wind at the tip of the penis and vagina, that is, at the substance drop, the yogi meditates the mantra KSHMĪ⁸⁹² at the tip of the penis,⁸⁹³ which at this point is in contact with the palate, explained by Alamka to mean the “lower” palate, “the very long channel in the middle of the vagina.”⁸⁹⁴ This “causes the attainment of supreme yoga, the supreme basis of all bliss.”⁸⁹⁵

As for the mantric drop at the center of the heart chakra, the yogi places HŪM there, meditates on it, with its five parts having the nature of the five main energy-winds.⁸⁹⁶ In so doing, “everything has the nature of emptiness,”⁸⁹⁷ and the yogi/HŪM

⁸⁹² Tsong kha pa quotes the *Vajra Rosary* and Alamka’s *Commentary* as specifying KSHMAM here Tsong kha pa 2010, 280

⁸⁹³ Alamka 140B

⁸⁹⁴ Alamka 140A

⁸⁹⁵ *VR* 38A, ch 21, vv 2-3, Alamka 140A-B According to Tsong kha pa, this may be done using either an action (actual) or wisdom (imagined) consort Tsong kha pa 2010, 280

⁸⁹⁶ Alamka 141A

⁸⁹⁷ *VR* 38B, ch 21, v 4

syllable is “free from the range of conceptuality, liberated from all duality.”⁸⁹⁸ The wind or light ray drop is meditated on by the yogi by visualizing it at the tip of the conventional nose on the face, illuminating with five colors, symbolizing the five wisdoms, repeating the syllable OM while counting the energy-winds.⁸⁹⁹ Alamka explains that the light ray drop is also called the wind drop because it has “the form”⁹⁰⁰ of collecting the five energy-winds,” and that this is “‘supreme yoga’ because it serves as the cause of one-pointed mind.”⁹⁰¹ Meditation on the three drops brings about the five wisdoms and various powers. Alamka notes that, dividing the drops into body, speech and mind, the body drop is the wind or light ray drop, which should be meditated by the yogi whose main problem is delusion;⁹⁰² the speech drop is the substance or genital drop,

⁸⁹⁸ *VR* 38B, ch 21, v 6

⁸⁹⁹ Alamka has A instead of OM, explaining that the A to be repeated is “the form of the letter A that is all forms because there is nothing outside of it ” 141A-B Professor Thurman feels Alamka is right here, citing A as the first letter, the “Brahma big bang ” Personal Communication 12/5/06 However, the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* is consistent on this, stating in the chapter following this one that “OM has been explained as the essence of vajra body ” *VR* 39B, ch 22, v 3 The Sde dge, Stok and Snar thang recensions of the *VR* also have OM, however all of the recensions of Alamka have A Alamka as well as the *VR* primarily associates A with speech rather than form See, e.g., Alamka 147A (“‘The letter A is supreme wisdom’ because it purifies speech ”) Complicating matters is that OM is composed of three letters, the first of which is A See *VR* 39B, ch 22, v 3 Alamka 111B This is probably not a difference in practice, Alamka must have been reading a text or texts of the *Vajra Rosary*, now lost to us (or not yet recovered) that had A in place of OM Tsong kha pa does not address the matter in the *Brilliant Illumination of the Lamp*, indeed, the version of the *Vajra Rosary* he quotes avoids the issue entirely rather than specifying OM or A, the line simply says, “The yogi should repeat the supreme mantra of such a kind ” (‘*di lta bu yi sngags kyī mchog/rnal ’byor pa yis bzlas par bya*) Tsong kha pa 2010 at 284

⁹⁰⁰ Following Peking’s and Snar thang’s *rnam pa*, “form,” rather than Sde dge’s *rim pa*, “stage” or “process ”

⁹⁰¹ Alamka 141A

⁹⁰² Tsong kha pa says that in this context, “delusion” refers to the yogi whose passion and hatred is equal, Tsong kha pa 2010 at 285, and that, in general, the *Secret Community* “is taught for the sake of the person who has lust for the union of the two organs ” *Id.*

for the passionate yogi; and the mind drop is the mantric drop at the heart, for the predominately angry yogi.⁹⁰³

The Tantra then addresses the subject of the three main channels of the subtle body, the left, *lalanā*, right, *rasanā*, and central, *avadhūtī*, describing how they are interwoven, and their association with moon, sun and fire, and body, speech and mind, respectively, and how they form knots at the chakras, “in the fashion of a line of lambs [roped together].”⁹⁰⁴ The three drops, substance, mantric and wind, are also interwoven and mutually dependent. So, as *Alaṃka* explains, the substance drop, which consists of enlightenment spirit or semen, enters into the other two drops. The mantric drop, which is the syllable HŪṂ at the heart, incorporates the other two drops because HŪṂ also has the nature of the five energy-winds that constitute the wind drop and the enlightenment spirit of the substance drop. And the wind drop is “not made outside the mantric and substance drops.”⁹⁰⁵ The chapter ends with what *Alaṃka* explains is an alternative version of the three drops: positing the wisdom hero, the vajra hero and the commitment hero as the wind, substance and mantric drops, respectively.⁹⁰⁶

Chapter twenty-four is closely related to chapter twenty-one’s description of the three drops, although the focus here is on the three “nose tips:” “secret;” “heart;” and “face.” The context here is the practice of vajra repetition. *Alaṃka* notes that the yogi

⁹⁰³ *Alaṃka* 142A Tsong kha pa notes that, while the meditation on the heart center is preeminent, it is crucial for each yogi to meditate on each of the three drops Tsong kha pa 2010, 285

⁹⁰⁴ *VR* 38B, ch 21, vv 9, 12-13

⁹⁰⁵ *VR* 38B, ch 21, vv 9-11

⁹⁰⁶ *VR* 39A, ch 21, v 17, *Alaṃka* 144A

should meditate on each drop individually.⁹⁰⁷ The “secret” or “navel” nose tip is located at the emanation or navel chakra extending to the end of the “channel” or genital chakras, “the hub of the vajra and lotus channels,”⁹⁰⁸ where the substance drop is located.

Meditation on the secret nose tip “bestows mental bliss on those overcome by lust,”⁹⁰⁹ producing great bliss everywhere. The meditation is practiced by holding enlightenment spirit at the tip of the penis or vagina⁹¹⁰ as the case may be, which produces the fourth, most intense, of the ecstasies, innate or orgasmic ecstasy.⁹¹¹ Tailoring the practice to the particular condition of the yogi or yoginī, the Tantra concludes its discussion of the secret nose by stating that “only one with a greatly lustful mind will know [this] as the supreme yoga.”⁹¹² *Alamka* describes “one with a greatly lustful mind” not as a person whose general condition or mindset is lustful, but “whoever is single-minded on the object of great passion.”⁹¹³

The “heart” or “central” nose tip is the eight petals of the heart chakra, which is used to meditate “the mind of hatred,”⁹¹⁴ which is not necessarily referring to the mind of someone with an anger management problem, but, *Alamka* notes, the mind “of those

⁹⁰⁷ *Alamka* 170A

⁹⁰⁸ *Alamka* 166A

⁹⁰⁹ *VR* 45B, ch 24, v 2

⁹¹⁰ In its description of the “secret nose tip,” the *Vajra Rosary* text refers only to vajra, *VR* 45B, ch 24, v 4, but *Alamka* notes that “the tip of the lotus is also suitable” *Alamka* 166A

⁹¹¹ *VR* 45B, ch 24, v 4

⁹¹² *VR* 45B, ch 24, v 5

⁹¹³ *Alamka* 166A (*chags pa chen po'i yul la sems gcig pu gang rnams la yod pa de la de skad ces bya'o*) This supports Tsong kha pa's statement noted above that it is crucial for each yogi to meditate on each of the three drops Tsong kha pa 2010, 285

⁹¹⁴ *VR* 45B, ch 24, v 7

having the lineage of hatred,”⁹¹⁵ referring to the Akṣobhya thirty-two deity mandala of the Secret Community Noble Tradition. Meditating on this nose tip produces wisdom arising as the sound of mantra⁹¹⁶ (in the form of the syllable A, according to Alamka)⁹¹⁷ and purifies hatred, creating peace.⁹¹⁸ The three main channels, right, left and central (called “moon, sun and fire,” respectively)⁹¹⁹ converge on the “face” nose tip, at the conventional nose, where the light or clear light drop is located. This drop is ordinarily suppressed by delusion, which is overcome by concentration on this nose tip. The clear light drop should be thought of by the yogi as being the “commitment hero,” because of embodying the five energy-winds and wisdoms of the five Buddhas.⁹²⁰

In order to enter the clear light drop,⁹²¹ you meditate the five primary energy-winds arising through the breath moving in and out of the nostrils, as follows. In the first of the daily eight sessions,⁹²² you meditate the Ascending energy-wind moving from the right nostril, red, the fire element, in the form of Amitābha; in the second, the Equalizing energy-wind moving from the left nostril, green-yellow, the wind element, in the form of

⁹¹⁵ Alamka 166B

⁹¹⁶ VR 45B-46A, ch 24, vv 7-8, referring as well to the nature of the mantric drop that is located at the heart center

⁹¹⁷ Alamka 166B

⁹¹⁸ For Tsong kha pa’s discussion of how to meditate on the mantric drop, heavily relying on the *Vajra Rosary*, see Tsong kha pa 2010, 287-293

⁹¹⁹ VR 46A, ch 24, v 9, Alamka 166B-167A

⁹²⁰ Alamka 167B

⁹²¹ Alamka notes at the outset of this discussion, “in order to discuss the perspective of entering the clear light drop,” (*‘od zer gyi thig le ‘jug pa’i sgo nas brjod pa’i phyr*), meaning that what follows is a part of the vajra repetition meditation practice 168A

⁹²² See Alamka 168A Given that there are 21,600 breaths in each 24-hour day, Alamka 169A, each of the four day and four night sessions has 2,700 breaths You meditate “constantly, the entire day and night” Alamka 169A

Amoghasiddhi; in the third, the Evacuating energy-wind⁹²³ moving strongly from both nostrils, pure yellow, the earth element, in the form of Ratnasambhava; and in the fourth, the Life-energy energy-wind slowly moving from both nostrils, “pure crystal” in color, the water element, in the form of Akṣobhya.⁹²⁴ The last energy-wind, the Pervading, only circulates from the nostrils at death.⁹²⁵

After noting how meditation on the clear light drop can be used for the accomplishment of various mundane attainments,⁹²⁶ the Tantra reiterates that the three drops serve to liberate people controlled by anger, lust or delusion as the case may be,⁹²⁷ and instructs the yogi to retreat to “pleasant place, adorned by flowers and water, on a mountain top, apart from people,”⁹²⁸ and meditate.

⁹²³ The Tantra does not explicitly identify which elemental mandalas and colors are identified with which energy-wind. Alamka identifies the Amitābha fire element with the Ascending energy-wind and the Amoghasiddhi wind element with the Equalizing energy-wind, 168B, but makes not specific link to the others. In his detailed discussion of this practice in the *BIL*, Tsong kha pa outlines the correspondences with the other energy-winds indicated above, and gives greater detail on the practice, which involves meditating the primary Buddha energy-wind with the other goddess-elemental elements, so, *e.g.*, the red Amitābha Ascending energy-wind emanating from the left nostril is meditated with the four elemental energy-winds of Pandāraśinī, Tārā, Locanā and Māmākī in that order, which, influenced by the fire mandala, appear as red, reddish green, reddish white and reddish yellow, respectively. See Tsong kha pa 2010 at 234.

⁹²⁴ *VR* 46A-B, ch. 24, vv. 14-20, Alamka 168A-169B.

⁹²⁵ *VR* 46B, ch. 24, v. 19, Alamka 169A. There are other positions taken on this, Tsong kha pa agrees with the *Vajra Rosary* and Alamka. Tsong kha pa 2010 at 232.

⁹²⁶ *VR* 46B, ch. 24, v. 21, Alamka 169A-B.

⁹²⁷ Here, unlike earlier in the chapter, except for Alamka’s reference to the “lineage of passion,” it does sound like at least Alamka understands the Tantra to be referring to general dominant character traits rather than particular Tantric practice lineages. Alamka 170A-B.

⁹²⁸ *VR* 47A, ch. 24, v. 28.

Q. Yogic Time

The focus of chapter sixteen is on the counting of the energy-winds pursuant to the *Mahāyoga* Tantras, *i.e.* the *Secret Community*, without which one is doomed to wander in the three worlds. The “supreme yoga” can be achieved by one mastering the Life energy energy-wind, the “nature of all,”⁹²⁹ described by Alamka as “the intrinsic nature of the most subtle particles,” “a form of emptiness.”⁹³⁰ The guru’s instructions here are, as before, critical. In order to focus on these very subtle energies, and to measure the various sessions of meditation on the energy-winds, the yogi must be able to discern various periods of time, from the gross (“the energy-winds are like the six seasons of the year”)⁹³¹ to the extremely subtle (“the rising of bliss takes three split seconds”).⁹³² These periods may differ, depending on whether they are “outer” (external) or “inner” (internal); that is, whether they are functions of ordinary life, the seasons and the clock, on the one hand, or of subjective meditative experience, “sensed [only] by

⁹²⁹ *VR* 30A, ch 16, v 1

⁹³⁰ Alamka 113B

⁹³¹ Spring, summer, rainy season, autumn, early winter and late winter, approximately sixty days each Alamka 114B

⁹³² *VR* 30A, ch 16, v 9 Āryadeva writes “If you wonder, ‘How does intuitive wisdom emerge in a moment?’ It means it appears for one moment (*skad cig*), one instant (*thang cig*), a mere trice (*yud tsam*), the blink of an eye (*mig btsums*), or a mere hand-clap (*thal mo brdabs pa tsam*)” Hence, upon entering into the subtle element, the Luminances fluctuate for a moment, an instant, a mere trice, the blink of an eye, or a hand-clap Then, one will experience the instinctual natures in a moment, an instant, a mere trice, the blink of an eye, or a hand-clap” Wedemeyer 1999, 289, Wedemeyer 2007 at 157

yogis,”⁹³³ on the other. The following time periods⁹³⁴ are defined in this chapter of the Tantra and Alamka’s *Commentary*:⁹³⁵

TABLE 11. Yogic Time

Season (outer)	=	Approximately sixty days
(24-hour) Day (outer)	=	60 (24 minute) hours [<i>chu tsod, dbyu gu</i> or <i>tsha sha ka</i>]
1 (24 minute) “Hour”	=	60 seconds [<i>chu srang</i>]
6 inhalations/exhalations ⁹³⁶	=	1 <i>tsha sha</i>
1 inhalation/exhalation	=	6 moments (<i>skad cig ma</i>)
1 moment	=	1 finger snap
1 moment	=	3 instants (<i>thang</i>)
1 instant	=	1 turning of a mustard seed in the hand
1 instant	=	3 <i>inner</i> breaths
1 inner breath	=	A flash, a wink of an eye
A flash, a wink	=	3 <i>tsams</i>
1 <i>tsam</i>	=	A clap of the hands
1 <i>tsam</i>	=	3 arisings of bliss
3 arisings of bliss	=	The migration of the drop ⁹³⁷
4 hours (<i>outer</i>)	=	1 moment of clear light (<i>inner</i>) ⁹³⁸

The context for this exposition of subtle periods of time is the perfection stage practice of sexual union, where the yogi and yoginī experience the rising of bliss resulting from the migration of the drop to the tips of their sexual organs in “three split seconds (*tsam*).” The process of this extremely subtle, intense practice is terrifying, even

⁹³³ Alamka 115B

⁹³⁴ All time periods are “outer” unless otherwise indicated

⁹³⁵ Other Tantric systems present somewhat differing definitions and systems. For example, Tsong kha pa notes that other systems posit 64 rather than sixty hours in a day. Tsong kha pa 2010 at 246

⁹³⁶ Taking one round of inhalation and exhalation as one unit

⁹³⁷ *VR* 30A-30B, ch. 16 vv. 1-12, Alamka 114B-115A

⁹³⁸ Alamka 114B. According to Robert Thurman, the relationship between inner and outer time is like relativity. Personal Communication, April 18, 2006

for the blissful yogi,⁹³⁹ who fears the abyss of emission,⁹⁴⁰ “the moment of doubt when he falls from a mountain peak.”⁹⁴¹ This is the practical methodology for the union of bliss and the meditation on emptiness. Moreover, counting time is itself ecstatic; in each of the three times, past, present and future, there are three parts, and those also are divisible: “To the extent you count that much, thought becomes empty [and] non-dual; you will attain supreme yoga.”⁹⁴²

Chapter thirty-nine is about time, external and internal. In order to do the yoga of counting the energy-winds, you must know the characteristics of time.⁹⁴³ The Tantra gives a number of examples of “good” and “bad” times, such as the golden age versus the present time of contention, but also characterizes times found in yogic practice.⁹⁴⁴ Of the four ecstasies, the first, “ecstasy,” second, “extreme ecstasy,” and the fourth, “innate ecstasy” are “good times,” but the third, “transcendent ecstasy” or “free from ecstasy” is a “bad time.”⁹⁴⁵ This is because, according to Alamka, while ecstasy and extreme ecstasy

⁹³⁹ And presumably yoginī, although the text has the masculine “mantrin,” *sngags pa*

⁹⁴⁰ The *Vajra Rosary* text has *rab 'gyed*, “emanation,” “opening” or, per Professor Jamspal, “emission,” while Alamka’s version of the Tantra has *gyang sa*, “abyss” *VR* 30B, Alamka 115A. Professor Thurman thinks this may refer to “the certain kind of terror experienced in orgasm, when the energy-winds go to the central channel, the fear of losing traction on one’s coarse embodiment, like fear of flying. Here [Alamka] is talking about orgasm and bliss and mantra. The three spasms of ejaculations [the “arisings of bliss”] are not necessarily external, maybe they are experienced internally, but that is also a terrifying thing, releasing control.” Personal Communication 4/13/06

⁹⁴¹ Alamka 115A. This metaphor is also found in last verse of the *CMP* and also identically in the *PK*, albeit in a different context. “If someone falls from the peak of the king of mountains/ Even if they don’t want to plummet, they will/ If one gains the beneficial verbal transmission by the grace of the guru/ Even if they don’t want to be liberated, they will be.” *CMP* 331

⁹⁴² *VR* 30B, ch 16, v 12

⁹⁴³ *VR* 59B, ch 39, v 1, Alamka 206A

⁹⁴⁴ *VR* 59B, ch 39, v 4

⁹⁴⁵ *VR* 59B, ch 39, v 5

are “merely a little bliss,” and “greater than that, the direct cause of the lineage Tantra,” respectively, and innate ecstasy is “heroic in nature,” “free from ecstasy is explained as a bad time because it is the essence of losing bliss, and has a dispassionate nature, together with conceptuality.”⁹⁴⁶ Inhaling and holding the breath are good times, while exhaling is a bad time.⁹⁴⁷

“Inconceivable time,”⁹⁴⁸ the “fourth moment” discussed in chapters nineteen and twenty, that of “beyond characteristics,”⁹⁴⁹ is expressed in the Tantra as “one time,” as in its beginning words, “One time I heard.” In this moment time is unitary, all the elements, and you abandon great bliss as well as “wisdom consciousness,”⁹⁵⁰ explained by Alamka as both kinds of the spirit of enlightenment. This fourth moment of inconceivable time is “free from expressed and expression”⁹⁵¹ because it is “free from the conceptuality of the [third ecstasy] free from ecstasy.”⁹⁵² You are “definitively liberated from passion and dispassion” “because you are free from emptiness and extreme emptiness,” you “abandon the state of great bliss” because you “are free from great emptiness.” The fourth moment

⁹⁴⁶ Alamka 207A (*dga' ba dang mchog tu dga' ba dang zhes bya ba gsungs te/ cung zad tsam gyi* [following P and Snar thang's *gyi* instead of Sde dge's *gyis*] *bde ba dang/ de las lhag pa'i ngo bo brgyud pa'i rgyud* [P and Snar have *rgyud pa'i rgyu*] *dang dngos kyi rgyu'i ngo bo'o/ lhan cig skyes pa zhes bya ba ni dpe'i ngo bo la'o/ dus bzang ste zhes bya ba ni gsum po de rnams dus bzang po'i sgras brjod par bya ba ste/ gong nas gong du bde ba 'phel ba 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i phyir ro/ bral dgar bshad pa dus ngan ni/ bde ba nyams pa'i ngo bo nyid dang/ chags bral gyi bdag nyid can nyid dang/ rtog pa* [P and Snar have *rtogs*, “realization” instead of Sde dge's *rtog*, “conceptuality”] *dang bcas pa'i phyir ro//*) This may suggest that the third ecstasy accompanies conventional orgasm

⁹⁴⁷ *VR* 59B, ch 39, v 6

⁹⁴⁸ Alamka 207A

⁹⁴⁹ See *VR* 36B-37A, ch 19, vv 3-6

⁹⁵⁰ *VR* 60A, ch 39, vv 7-9, Alamka 207B

⁹⁵¹ *VR* 60A, ch 39, v 8

⁹⁵² Alamka 207B

is “the genuine basis of the Great Seal,” “because it has the nature of universal emptiness.”⁹⁵³

R. Birth and Death From the Subtle Body Perspective

Chapter sixteen is the first of several discussions in the *Vajra Rosary* of both ordinary birth and death from the perspective of the subtle body’s energy-winds, and how the yogi overcomes this. The death or dissolution process commences when the Evacuative energy-wind⁹⁵⁴ stirs up the addicted mind and becomes more powerful, causing the contraction of the sense media because the energy-winds that function conterminously with them become weaker.⁹⁵⁵ Then the Evacuative energy-wind is consumed and the Equalizing energy-wind becomes pre-eminent, followed by the consumption of the Equalizing energy-wind as the aggregates contract and the sounds are heard, with the Ascending energy-wind rising in power and the further contraction of the aggregates. Next, as actual death occurs, the Life-energy energy-wind overcomes the Ascending energy-wind, as well as the Pervading and subtle energy-winds, obscuring consciousness in the moment of the discarding of the dead person’s aggregates as the Life-energy energy-wind mixes a little with energy-wind in the *bardo* or between state.⁹⁵⁶ At this point, due to previous karmic instincts, one faints, although the yogi meditating on the two stages, or on the thatness of mantra and energy-wind, or on the six inhalations

⁹⁵³ *VR* 60A, ch 39, v 9, Alamka 207B

⁹⁵⁴ Called the “Producing Expansion” energy-wind in the Tantra Alamka explains that this refers to the Evacuative energy-wind, and explains the rest of the energy-winds in this section on dissolution in the same way Alamka 118B-119A

⁹⁵⁵ Alamka 118B

⁹⁵⁶ Alamka 118B-119A

and exhalations may be able to avoid this.⁹⁵⁷ The Life-energy energy-wind then dissolves, along with consciousness, demonstrating, says Alamka, the identity of the two.⁹⁵⁸

The Tantra then discusses how the yogi may avoid ordinary death by attaining a vajra body. First, given the short lifespan of people in this time, the yogi is advised to achieve longevity. Then, in terms of the actual internal practice, the yogi assumes the meditation posture, touches the tongue to the middle of the palate, and silently repeats mantra to melt the enlightenment spirit, “drinking” or experiencing this nectar “by applying the flowing Evacuative energy-wind.”⁹⁵⁹ The yogi recites mantra one-pointedly in this way for the third session of the night, 12-2 a.m., making the vajra body. The mantra for this purpose is elliptically indicated in the Tantra, and spelled out by Alamka, as GAH.⁹⁶⁰ The external practice involves preparation of an elixir which is fairly exactly described, in a vessel of particular composition, which should be imbibed at bedtime saying the appropriate mantras. Doing this for six months will result arising in the vajra body by the yogi, for whom there is long life, no disease, and no shortage of attractive consorts.

⁹⁵⁷ This is suggested by Alamka’s *Commentary*, but not by the text of either his or the Lhasa recension of the Tantra. Given Alamka’s commentary, one can speculate that the Tibetan should have been *sgrub pa*, rendering the verse as “accomplishing the pure part” rather than *sgrib pa*, “obscuring” it. The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* reads *skye mched cha ni sgrib par byed/ dag pa’i ye shes mchog gi mchog/*, “It obscures part of the sense bases. It is the wisdom of purity, supreme of supreme.” *VR* 31A, ch. 16, v. 22, Alamka 119A.

⁹⁵⁸ Alamka 119A.

⁹⁵⁹ It goes without saying that this is a very advanced practice, because, among other reasons, the Evacuative energy-wind cannot flow to the throat without the heart knot being significantly loosened, which happens in the stages of speech and mind isolation.

⁹⁶⁰ *VR* 32A, ch. 16, v. 32, Alamka 121A.

Chapter thirty-two continues the discussion of the subtle biology of re-birth and birth: how the ten main energy-winds arise and develop before and at conception, in the embryo and as the person matures. The person seeking rebirth thinks he knows the “opportune time” and place.⁹⁶¹ The text from *Alamka* adds, “[But], it is deceiving.”⁹⁶² In the *bardo* or between consciousness, the fundamental consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*, which goes from life to life includes the instincts from previous *karma* constituting the addicted mind, the *kliṣṭamānas*, “like a sleeping snake.”⁹⁶³ There, the person-to-be mistakenly sees other forms⁹⁶⁴ as a result of the activity of the Life-energy energy-wind which is “like a shadow” for the *bardo* being.⁹⁶⁵

At conception, consciousness is born from the mixing of the fundamental consciousness and addicted mind from the *bardo* with the semen and ovum. The fundamental consciousness carries the instincts. In the first month, the addicted mind takes the form of a fish; in the second, mixed with the mother’s blood, the Life-energy energy-wind splits into two, upper and lower, Life-energy and Evacuative, and the embryo has the form of a tortoise; in the third, as a mass of Evacuative energy-wind dries up, the Ascending energy-wind comes into existence and the fetus looks like a wild pig; in the fourth month, the Ascending energy-wind faces downwards and the Pervading energy-wind arises, the fetus in the form of a lion; in the fifth month, the fetus’s blood

⁹⁶¹ *VR* 54A, ch 32, v 1

⁹⁶² *Alamka* 190A

⁹⁶³ *Alamka* 190A

⁹⁶⁴ Like someone being carried in a palanquin or in a stagecoach who can’t get a good view of the outside
Alamka 190A

⁹⁶⁵ *VR* 54A, ch 32, v 1, *Alamka* 190A. There are significant variations between the *Bka’* ‘gyur’s and *Alamka*’s texts here, but the overall meaning is fairly consistent

and semen having increased, the Equalizing energy-wind arises, in the form of fire, and the Equalizing and Pervading energy-winds radiate, causing the body to move and completing the formation of the five aggregates; in the sixth month, the Pervading energy-wind produces the Dragon energy-wind and the earth element produces the two eyes;⁹⁶⁶ in the seventh month, the Dragon energy-wind produces the Tortoise energy-wind and the water element produces the ear hole;⁹⁶⁷ in the eighth month, fire creates the nostrils and the Tortoise energy-wind produces the Lizard energy-wind, which causes one to have a sense of self-awareness; in the ninth month, the wind element produces the feeling of taste and touch, and the Lizard energy-wind produces the *Devadatta* energy-wind; and in the tenth month, the *Devadatta* energy-wind produces the *Dhamujit* energy-wind, which gathers all of the energy-winds.⁹⁶⁸

The above discussion concerns ordinary beings; in the context of a Buddha manifesting an emanation body, the ten months of fetal development are the ten knowledges and ten bodhisattva stages.⁹⁶⁹ In this case, the Tantra says, “the child becomes a perfect Buddha.”⁹⁷⁰

Following chapter thirty-two’s discussion of the subtle biology of birth and growth, chapter thirty-three presents the subtle biology of death: how the ten main energy-winds transform and are consumed at the end of life. As the energy-winds arose,

⁹⁶⁶ See Alamka 192A

⁹⁶⁷ I am following Alamka’s *rna bug dong*, “ear hole [and] canal” rather than the *VR*’s *sna bug*, “nostril,” because the next month refers to the nose and because in the *Secret Community* system generally, the ears and hearing are associated with the water element and the nose and smelling with fire. See Alamka 192A

⁹⁶⁸ *VR* 54B-55A, ch 32, vv 6-16, Alamka 191A-193A

⁹⁶⁹ *VR* 55A, ch 32, v 18, Alamka 193A

⁹⁷⁰ *VR* 55B, ch 32, v 19

they disappear, “like the setting of the sun.”⁹⁷¹ After ten years,⁹⁷² the Intoxicated by Inflation energy-wind overcomes⁹⁷³ the *Dhamujit* branch energy-wind,⁹⁷⁴ increasing blood and flesh in the child; after another ten years (at age twenty), the Expanding Water energy-wind (a form of the Equalizing energy-wind)⁹⁷⁵ arises, increasing semen and fat in the young person, overcoming the *Devadatta* branch energy-wind. At age thirty, the Water of Expansion energy-wind (a form of the Ascending energy-wind) arises, overcoming the branch Lizard energy-wind, causing the increase of fire and wind. At age forty, the Great Sending and Holding energy-wind (the Life-energy energy-wind), overcomes the branch Tortoise energy-wind. At this point the Life-energy and Dragon (Ascending)⁹⁷⁶ energy-winds are both powerful, so they co-exist. By age fifty, however, the Blind, Sending and Holding, and Great Power energy-winds overcome the Dragon energy-wind in stages. By age sixty, the Inflation and Intoxication energy-wind (Evacuative)⁹⁷⁷ have overcome the Sending and Holding Life-energy energy-wind, causing the increase of blood and flesh. By age seventy, the Intoxicated Water energy-wind completely overcomes the Life-energy and Ascending energy-winds, and fat and saliva increase. By age eighty, the Life-energy energy-wind again arises, and consumes the Ascending energy-wind, causing fire and wind to increase. The Tantra says that at

⁹⁷¹ *VR* 55B, ch 33, v 2

⁹⁷² Alamka notes that the external one year is one day internally Alamka 194B

⁹⁷³ *I.e.* “makes it unable to do any activity ” Alamka 194B

⁹⁷⁴ The *Dhamujit* is the last energy-wind to arise in the development of the fetus *VR* 55A, ch 32, v 16

⁹⁷⁵ Alamka 195A

⁹⁷⁶ Alamka 195B

⁹⁷⁷ Alamka 195B

this point, due to the transformation of the Life-energy energy-wind, “great enjoyment increases.”⁹⁷⁸ But then, by age ninety, the body becomes heavy because the Pervading energy-wind starts to go, and the water and wind elements in the body start to mix. Finally, by the age of one-hundred years, one’s life energy is exhausted, and you die.⁹⁷⁹

S. The Chakras and the Channels

The focus of chapter seventeen is the description of the six chakras according to the *Yoginī Tantras*.⁹⁸⁰ Great Bliss (crown); Wind (between the eyebrows); Enjoyment (throat); Fire (between throat and heart); Reality (heart); and Emanation (navel). In the chakras, there are altogether one hundred twenty-nine⁹⁸¹ channels, as follows: Great Bliss – thirty-two; Wind – six; Enjoyment – sixteen; Fire – three; Reality – eight; Emanation – sixty-four. The Tantra names each of these channels, much as it had named the energy-winds and conceptualities in chapter three, and Alamka discusses the names of the channels of the navel and heart (Emanation and Reality) chakras, but not those of the other chakras.⁹⁸² Some additional attention is given to a description of the Wind

⁹⁷⁸ *VR* 56B, ch 33, v 12 Something to look forward to, although the Tantra’s text, according to Alamka, says nothing about increasing but does say that the octogenarian “‘has the pride of enjoyment’ because with the aspect of gathering the energy-winds, he is proud” (*longs spyod nga rgyal bcas zhes bya ba ni rlung thams cad nye bar bsdu ba’i rnam pas de nga rgyal dang bcas pa’o*) 196A

⁹⁷⁹ The chapter ends by saying that you should know this in detail “from the *Tantra of the Gathering of the Dakinis*,” which, oddly, is the name of the next chapter of the *Vajra Rosary*. This may suggest that it was added at some point, although Alamka notes that this merely refers to “yoginī Tantras that discuss that” Alamka 196A-B. This could also be a reference to the *Ḍaḍḍiṇījālasaṃvarasārvabuddhasamāyoga*, found in the *Mahāyoga* section of the *Rnying ma rgyud ‘bum*. See Eastman 1983, 3

⁹⁸⁰ Alamka 124A

⁹⁸¹ The Tantra says that these total “more than 131,” but all of the Sde dge, Peking and Snar thang versions of the *Commentary* have 129 here, and the various numbers do in fact add up to 129 Alamka 125A

⁹⁸² The *VR*’s description of the channels should be compared with the description of same in Tsong kha pa’s *Sngags rim chen mo, Great Stages of Mantra*. See Wayman 1991 205-06

Chakra at the forehead and Fire Chakra below the throat.⁹⁸³ Because these chakra channels are the basis for the yogi's body, it is crucial that these channels be identified and meditated on: "Without ascertaining the stages of the channels, without the aggregates (of the body), the yogi cannot achieve great wisdom."⁹⁸⁴ The channels should be meditated on as having the form of deities, who are named in chapter twenty-seven of the Tantra.

The Tantra then moves to the process of the functioning of the channels in completion stage practice, in the *bardo* following the yogi's death, and in the creation of a Buddha. First, the production of enlightenment spirit in sexual yogic practice is described, with the blazing of fire, *i.e.* *tummo*, in the navel and fire chakras, that causes the falling of great bliss/female hormonal fluid and enlightenment spirit in the left and right main channels, respectively.⁹⁸⁵ The Tantra then describes the role the main channels play in the *bardo*, when the former yogi, now in the between, under the influence of previous karma and the wish to emanate, conceives lust for the mother, resulting in the arising of the seed of the new person and the resultant birth. Finally, as Alamka makes clear, through the internal holding of enlightenment spirit during completion stage sexual yoga at the highest level, the channels do not arise, but that is supreme wisdom and supreme bliss.⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁸³ *VR* 33A, ch 17, vv 7-8

⁹⁸⁴ *VR* 34A, ch 17, v 25

⁹⁸⁵ See Alamka 130 A-B

⁹⁸⁶ *VR* 35A, ch 17, v 37, Alamka 131 A-B

The subject in chapter eighteen is the enumeration of the channels within the chakras, their emanation and expansion, and their dissolution. The total number of channels within the body are derived by taking the eight groups of letters in the Sanskrit alphabet, multiplying them by the three of the four main chakras other than the crown chakra to yield twenty-four, multiplying again by trio of body, speech and mind, yielding seventy two, then multiplying again by one thousand, amounting to a total of seventy-two thousand,⁹⁸⁷ whose nature is the letter A, objective reality.⁹⁸⁸ On the “deity stage,” presumably the creation stage, the yogi visualizes each of the channels as deities, in the nature of action consorts.⁹⁸⁹ The chapter then transitions to a discussion of thirty-two channels, in the crown chakra and also by multiplying the eight principal channels of the four main chakras. This also relates to the yogic practice of analyzing the eight collections of consciousness in eight sessions, and to the thirty-two Sanskrit letters.⁹⁹⁰

Chapter twenty-seven names and describes the goddesses who embody the channels in the chakras, sixty-four in the navel chakra, eight in the heart, sixteen in the throat and thirty-two in the crown chakra.⁹⁹¹ The names have the same colloquial flavor as found in the names of the channels and conceptualities described in chapter three. All of the goddesses have three faces and six arms, and sit in the half-lotus bodhisattva

⁹⁸⁷ *VR* 35B, ch 18, vv 1-9, Alamka 132B-133A

⁹⁸⁸ Alamka 132B

⁹⁸⁹ Alamka 133A

⁹⁹⁰ Alamka 133B Some of the *Commentary* is missing for this discussion, or Alamka’s version of the Tantra did not contain it, so some of this is hard to follow

⁹⁹¹ Compare Hartzell 1997, 348, with the names of the chakra channel goddesses from the *Ḍākārṇava-mahā-yoginī-tantra-rāja*

posture,⁹⁹² and each is a member of one of the five Buddha families, explained by Alamka as having the symbolic attribution or purification embodied in that family.⁹⁹³ Only fifty-six goddesses are named in the navel chakra; to obtain the total of sixty-four to correspond to the number of channels, the Tantra says “the count is always increased by eight.”⁹⁹⁴ They hold various implements whose significance is explained by Alamka; various vajras in their right hands, along with a wheel and jewel, and in the left hands blue lotus flowers and a sword. They are smiling,⁹⁹⁵ which causes bliss to increase, with Amoghasiddhi on their crowns,⁹⁹⁶ and are of different colors, depending on their Buddha family.⁹⁹⁷ Putting the name of each goddess in the three-syllable mantra,⁹⁹⁸ you make offerings to each, causing them “to bestow [on you] the reality of desire,”⁹⁹⁹ the character of a Buddha.¹⁰⁰⁰

⁹⁹² “Because of the non-differentiation of the purity of the conventional and the ultimate ” Alamka 178A

⁹⁹³ Alamka 177A For example, the “action” clan is that of “Amoghasiddhi, the actuality of the purification [or, as suggested by Robert Thurman, “symbolic attribution”] of the wisdom of accomplishing activities ” *Id.* The goddesses of the navel chakra are of Amoghasiddhi’s action family “because [they have] the very essence of activity with the character of what is to be achieved and the means for achieving ” Alamka 177B

⁹⁹⁴ *VR* 49B, ch 27, v 11

⁹⁹⁵ “Because [their] sole reality is peacefulness and because they look at conventional things in amazement ” Alamka 178A

⁹⁹⁶ *VR* 49B, ch 27, vv 12-14

⁹⁹⁷ Alamka 177B

⁹⁹⁸ *E.g.* OM BEDHANI ĀH HŪM Alamka 178A

⁹⁹⁹ *VR* 49B, ch 27, v 15

¹⁰⁰⁰ Alamka 178B

Nine goddesses sit in the heart chakra, also with three faces and six hands, sitting in the bodhisattva posture, blue in complexion, three-eyed, fangs slightly bared,¹⁰⁰¹ with vajra, wheel and jewel in the right hands and sword, lotus and bell in the left. The sixteen goddesses in the throat chakra have a lotus, wheel and vajra in their right and sword, bell and jewel in their left hands, and are red in color, sitting on sun disks.¹⁰⁰² The thirty-two goddesses in the crown chakra are white and sit on moon disks. With peaceful expressions, they carry a wheel, hook and vajra in their right and a lotus, lasso and jewel in their left hands. They are dancing, and have Vairocana on their crowns.¹⁰⁰³ You offer the mantras of each of the goddesses in all four chakras in a similar fashion. They are delighted by the offerings made to them, and “intoxicated” by the sexual union of the yogi and yoginī.¹⁰⁰⁴

Chapter twenty-eight follows chapter twenty-seven closely and concerns the channel goddesses, explaining when and how the deities arise in the channels, which “are supreme yoga, the source of all attainments.”¹⁰⁰⁵ In a sense, this short chapter embodies the Tantric way of using desire to engage the world. The arising of the deities follows from the sense media engaging with sense objects as a result of previous karmic instincts, which wakes them up.^{1006 1007} Without the stirring of these previous instincts and the

¹⁰⁰¹ With the ferocity of lust, says Alamka 179A

¹⁰⁰² Sun disks being “the means of burning with the antidote for conceptualization ” Alamka 179B

¹⁰⁰³ Alamka explains the rationale for the first three names of the crown chakra goddesses, then says that the rest are as in the Tantra 179B

¹⁰⁰⁴ *IR* 51A, ch 27, v 36, Alamka 180B

¹⁰⁰⁵ *IR* 51A, ch 28, v 1

¹⁰⁰⁶ Alamka explains that engaging the sense objects “is because of approaching (*mngon par phyogs pa*)” them, probably a reference to the sixth bodhisattva stage

sense media engaging in sense objects, “the channels will not arise” and “the awakening of the deities will not happen.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Consonant with this, “actual bliss” “in the center of the heart” is achieved “through the form of the grasped and the grasping” of the sense and mental powers and their objects.¹⁰⁰⁹

In chapter twenty-nine, more detail is given about the channels and chakras, in the context of producing ecstasy according to the yoginī Tantras. The cause of ecstasy relates to the sixteen “intermediate” channels (*mtshams kyi rtsa*), so called because they emanate from the center of the chakra in the intermediate directions,¹⁰¹⁰ four of which are located in each of the four main chakras.¹⁰¹¹ Alamka says that “just as the lotus is pervaded by the subtle essence of [its] sinews, so it pervades the secondary channels of the ecstasies and so forth.”¹⁰¹²

¹⁰⁰⁷ Although the text of the Tantra in the *Bka'* 'gyur does not mention any particular yogic practice in this chapter, Alamka's version of the Tantra has “From compressing the breath within,” which Alamka says means that “the energy-winds are perfectly endowed with consciousness,” “compressing within” [meaning] entering into the interior of the group [of channels]” Alamka 181B. The meaning here is not particularly clear to me, *i.e.* *tsogs*, “group” or “collection” could refer to the channels or to the aggregates. It should be noted that the text of Alamka's word commentary here differs significantly from Alamka's quotation of the same in his earlier discussion, in chapter one of the *Commentary*, 25B, of the eighty-two questions in which the text is *dbus ni nang du* 'dus pa yin, “by gathering within the central [channel],” which argues in favor of “group of channels”

¹⁰⁰⁸ *VR* 51B, ch. 28, v. 5

¹⁰⁰⁹ *VR* 51B, ch. 28, vv. 6-7

¹⁰¹⁰ See Latī Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche 1979, 64

¹⁰¹¹ *VR* 51B, ch. 28, v. 3, Alamka 183B (“In those very ones, four types of thread in each chakra”) (*de rnams nyid la 'khor lo so so la snal ma rnam pa bzhi* .)

¹⁰¹² Alamka 183B commenting on *VR* 52A, ch. 29, v. 4 “Filled with the watery subtle essence of the lotus, it causes the increase of great bliss”

Chapter thirty continues the discussion of the channels, but primarily focusing on the three main channels in the “stable vajra body,”¹⁰¹³ which refers here to the third of the five completion stages, illusory body.¹⁰¹⁴ Energy-wind flows through the one-thousand twenty-four channels in the form of “blood,” “sun” or, as per *Alamka*, *rdul*, *rajas* or “energy.”¹⁰¹⁵ Enlightenment spirit flows in the left main channel; blood and sun in the right; and when the energy-wind moves in the central channel, you will experience it as fire.¹⁰¹⁶ The yogi practices the stage of “spreading” (*spro ba*) the three channels, developing them in eight sessions, and the yogi reaches ecstatic awareness of seventy-two thousand channels.¹⁰¹⁷ Then the yogi practices making the three main channels, *lalanā*, *rasanā*, and *avadhūtī*, become one.¹⁰¹⁸ It is difficult to do this; “abandoning the sound drop is the secret foundation of all bliss,” harking back to chapter twenty-three’s

¹⁰¹³ *VR* 52B, ch 30, v 1 *Alamka* says that this body is “hard, firm like a diamond,” and abides on the perfection stage in the meditator 184B

¹⁰¹⁴ The *CMP* uses the terminology “vajra body” in connection with body isolation Wedemeyer 2007, 87, 170-74, however, the practices described there involve the three Buddha clans becoming one rather than the three channels becoming merged in the central channel, described just below Indeed, in the *CMP*, the student asks the vajra master how to reduce the three clans to one, and the master answers, interpreting the cryptic language of the *Root Tantra*, that this happens only *after* one transforms not only into the body vajra of body isolation, but the speech and mind vajras, 173, indicating that the three clans become one only after the three isolations, *i.e.* at the third stage of the illusory body

¹⁰¹⁵ *Alamka* 185A

¹⁰¹⁶ *Alamka* says that “‘What is known through the movement of the energy-wind in the center’ is the falling of fire of energy-wind and time that is fleeting in the place of the central [channel]” (*shes bya dbus su rlung rgyu bas zhes bya ba ni dbus kyi gnas su rnam par mi rtog pa’i rlung dang dus kyi me ‘bab pa’o*) 185B

¹⁰¹⁷ *VR* 53A, ch 30, vv 9-10

¹⁰¹⁸ *VR* 53A, ch 30, v 11, *Alamka* 185A-B

description of the dissolution of the syllable HŪM, as Alamka notes that the sound drop consists “of substance and echo.”^{1019 1020}

In chapter thirty-one, the Tantra explains the three “intermediate channels” in the crown chakra, referring to the three main channels as they pass through the crown chakra.¹⁰²¹ Practicing deity wisdom, mantra and yoga,¹⁰²² you unite the purities of mind, speech and body, and have the bliss of the triple-hero practice.¹⁰²³ Like the roots of a tree, the three main channels in the crown chakra anchor the 72,000 channels of the body and the aggregates and elements.¹⁰²⁴ Their purification, resulting from seeing the nature of the three channels, becomes the three doors of liberation, emptiness, signlessness and wishlessness.¹⁰²⁵

The three channels unite in the heart chakra, because it is the place of the mind,¹⁰²⁶ and become one, manifested as three in yogic perception as the purities of the

¹⁰¹⁹ Alamka 186B The sound drop “has the character of supporting Life-energy,” and is “explained as nearly black’ because it is the essence of non-perceiving” (*nag po’i rtsar ni rnam par bshad/ ces bya ba ni mi dmigs pa’i ngo bo nyid kyi phyir ro/*) *Id.*

¹⁰²⁰ Tsong kha pa notes that “although such and such a treatise sometimes explains clearly ‘the art of injecting the *rasanā* and *lalanā* wind-energies into the central channel,’ most of the explanations are usually unclear” Tsong kha pa 2010, 139

¹⁰²¹ Alamka 188A “The three channels located in the head [refers to] the *lalanā* and so forth”

¹⁰²² The wisdom of the deity “illuminates the transmudane innate,” the mantra of the deity is the syllable HŪM, and the yoga of the deity is “through analyzing the conceptual energy-winds” Alamka 187A

¹⁰²³ *VR* 53B, ch 31, vv 2-3, Alamka 187A-B The “wisdom hero” is the complete enjoyment body, “the sole province of the yogi,” Vajrasattva is the truth body, and on account of them, the “commitment hero,” the emanation body, is blissful

¹⁰²⁴ *VR* 53B, ch 31, v 6, Alamka 188A

¹⁰²⁵ Alamka 188B

¹⁰²⁶ Alamka 189A

falling of blood, semen and fire in the body.¹⁰²⁷ When they unite, “they have the character of an eclipse; when applied a little, the character of a partial eclipse.”¹⁰²⁸ These are the signs of ordinary death.¹⁰²⁹ For liberation from birth and death, you should definitively know the three channels as the main one, the central channel.¹⁰³⁰ The yogi knows this from the extensive yoginī Tantras.¹⁰³¹

Chapter thirty-seven focuses on the disappearance of the channels. The channels arise when the sense powers are joined with the sense objects,¹⁰³² “produced by the union of mental engagement and energy-wind.”¹⁰³³ This gives rise to the instinctual natures¹⁰³⁴ and the one-hundred eight channels and causes conceptuality and the constant return to the cycle of birth, old age, sickness and death.¹⁰³⁵ The way to break the cycle is by de-reifying the sense powers and their objects through the wisdom that purifies them of their “thing-ness.”¹⁰³⁶ This is accomplished by understanding that things are “devoid of any ultimate nature” through the standard techniques of meditating on emptiness, such as

¹⁰²⁷ *VR* 53B, ch 31, v 11, Alamka 189A

¹⁰²⁸ *VR* 53B, ch 31, v 12

¹⁰²⁹ Alamka 189A-B

¹⁰³⁰ Alamka 189B (*skye ba dang ‘chu ba dang thar pa’i gnas skabs gtso bo nyid du yongs su shes pa*)

¹⁰³¹ *VR* 53 B, v 13

¹⁰³² *VR* 58A, ch 37, v 2

¹⁰³³ Alamka 202B

¹⁰³⁴ *Id.*

¹⁰³⁵ *VR* 58B, ch 37, v 3

¹⁰³⁶ *VR* 58B, ch 37, v 4

“[neither] one [nor] many,” the “diamond slivers,” etc.¹⁰³⁷ When you do this, the channels disappear.¹⁰³⁸

Chapter forty-two describes how the vajra, with the nature of the five Buddha wisdoms, “dissolves”¹⁰³⁹ into the five channels,” which Alamka explains are the *lalanā*, *rasanā*, *avadhūtī*, *Devadatta* and *Dhanujit*. These channels have the nature of the five wisdoms and of purifying¹⁰⁴⁰ the five elements, and are expressed by the seed syllables AM, RAM, LAM, BAM and YAM.¹⁰⁴¹

In chapter forty-seven, the Tantra refers the “eight *rasas*” or the eight moods famous in Sanskrit literature since the *Nāṭyaśāstra*,¹⁰⁴² but in the context of the particular channels that produce certain effects in the yogi. These seem be associated with the eight moods discussed in the literature. The next to last verse of the chapter says that

¹⁰³⁷ Alamka 202B As the Tantra says, “From the yoga of meditating emptiness, you definitively know the reality of objects, the logic vajra conquers all ” Alamka explains that the logic vajra is the five great syllogisms of *madhyamaka* the diamond slivers, *rdo rje zags ma*, the production and cessation of existence and non-existence, *yod med skye 'gog*, the production and cessation of the four limits, *mu bzhi skye 'gog*, supreme relativity, *rten 'brel chen po*, and free from the one and the many, *gcig dang du bral* Alamka 203A

¹⁰³⁸ VR 58B, ch 37, v 5, Alamka 203A This is an apt completion stage parallel to the common analogy used to explain the use of desire in Tantra, that of wood-born insects eating the wood that sustains them See, e.g., Yeshe 1987, 25

¹⁰³⁹ I am following Alamka here, 212B, the Lhasa VR has *brten*, “relies on,” VR 61B, ch 42, v 2, but the meaning is similar

¹⁰⁴⁰ Alamka 212B

¹⁰⁴¹ VR 61B, ch 42, vv 2-4

¹⁰⁴² VR 63B, ch 47, vv 1-8 See generally Hartzell 1997, 593-601 for a discussion of the importance of *rasa* in Tantra Alex Wayman discusses the nine moods, a later development, in the context of Śrī Rāhuguptapāda's *Prakāśanāmaśrīhevajrasādhana* and a work of Śrī Lakṣmī applying the moods to Tantric conduct, the erotic with the goddess Nairātmyā, the heroic in staying in a charnel ground, etc Wayman 1991, 327-28 The nine moods are referred to in the *Vajra Rosary*'s famous discussion of the first words of the Tantra at VR 87A, ch 59, v 40 (“Getting turned on and getting to orgasm, being in the nine moods of the theater, and the thought of mantra and consort are the conduct of Vajrasattva, *rgod dang rtse mo byed pa dang/ gar gyi nyams dgur ldan pa dang/ sngags dang phyag gya rnam rtog pa/ rdo rje sems dpa'i spyod pa'o/*”) ”

“knowing as the moods of erotic and so forth awakens the process described above,”¹⁰⁴³
 in which the yogi experiences the effects of trembling etc. When the Partial Inflation
 channel¹⁰⁴⁴ is filled in the context of the ecstasies, the yogi trembles, the erotic mood.¹⁰⁴⁵
 The Destruction by Inflation channel¹⁰⁴⁶ causes the body hairs of the abdomen to stand
 up, showing what might be the wrathful mood.¹⁰⁴⁷ The *Nasara* channel¹⁰⁴⁸ causes the
 burning of the abdomen, which produces floating, which could be associated with the
 humorous mood.¹⁰⁴⁹ Development of the Tortoise channel¹⁰⁵⁰ causes the changing of
 colors, which could be associated with marvelous mood.¹⁰⁵¹ Development of the Great
 Head channel¹⁰⁵² causes fainting and pain, suggesting the mood of revulsion.¹⁰⁵³
 Opening the Great ‘Ur ‘Ur channel¹⁰⁵⁴ makes your hair stand on end, the mood of terror.

¹⁰⁴³ *VR* 33B, ch 17, v 17

¹⁰⁴⁴ This is the tenth of the sixty-four channels in the navel chakra *VR* 33A, ch 17, v 10

¹⁰⁴⁵ Tib *sgeg pa*, Skt *śṛṅgāra* The correlation of the eight moods here is my own Further research is in order

¹⁰⁴⁶ I could not find a channel with this name

¹⁰⁴⁷ Tib *drag shul*, Skt *raudra*

¹⁰⁴⁸ I could not find a channel with this name

¹⁰⁴⁹ Tib *bshad gad*, Skt *hāsyā*

¹⁰⁵⁰ Alex Wayman quotes a work of Ratnākaraśānti, the *Piṇḍikṛta-sādhanaopāyikā-vṛtti-ratnāvalī*, PTT, Vol 62, p 69-3, 4, that states *sku rdo rje ni rus sbal gyi rtsa*, “the body vajra is the Tortoise channel,” which Wayman parenthetically indicates is “the right *nāḍī*, i.e. the *rasanā*, right main channel” Wayman 1991, 118 The Tortoise *energy-wind* is one of the five branch energy-winds

¹⁰⁵¹ Tib *rmaḍ byung*, Skt *adbhuta*

¹⁰⁵² One of the channels of the heart chakra *VR* 33B, ch 17, v 17

¹⁰⁵³ Tib *mi sdug pa*, Skt *bībhatsa*

¹⁰⁵⁴ So called because it makes the sound “rrrrrrrr” Personal Communication with Prof Lozang Jamspal This could be the Great Sound channel in the heart chakra *VR* 33B, ch 17, v 17

Developing the Great Ecstasy channel¹⁰⁵⁵ “causes tears to drip,” consistent with the compassionate mood. And opening the Great Intoxication channel,¹⁰⁵⁶ which causes the life-energy energy-wind to dissolve, leading you to “experience trance, no-mind and great bliss”¹⁰⁵⁷ would be the last of the eight moods, the heroic.¹⁰⁵⁸

Chapter fifty-seven is focused on the body, but from the point of view of the *Yoginī* Tantras, where the channels are the goddesses, “pervaded by all-bliss, expressed as the [male] deities.”¹⁰⁵⁹ The four instants of Ecstasy and so forth and sexual activity from flirting to orgasm are explained as goddesses, as is the external consort, the yoginī, who rouses the channels of the body.¹⁰⁶⁰

T. The Buddha Families

In chapter forty-three, the Tantra discusses the various Buddha families, starting with the five main ones discussed in the *Root Tantra*,¹⁰⁶¹ “in order to train the element of

¹⁰⁵⁵ This could refer to the Intoxicated by Great Ecstasy channel in the heart chakra *VR* 33B, ch 17, v 17. In fact Alamka’s version of the Tantra has “Great Ecstasy” for this channel 127B

¹⁰⁵⁶ Another of the channels of the heart chakra Alamka 127B

¹⁰⁵⁷ *VR* 65B, ch 47, v 7

¹⁰⁵⁸ Tib *dpa’ bo*, Skt *vira*

¹⁰⁵⁹ *VR* 84A, ch 57, vv 1-2

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Id.* vv 3-4

¹⁰⁶¹ Alamka says that this appears “in the form of the Tantra, through the analysis of cause, effect and means” (*rgyud du zhes bya ba ni rgyu dang ‘bras bu’i dang thabs kyī dbye bas rgyud kyī rnam pa la’o*) 214A

living beings who are pervaded by the five addictions.”¹⁰⁶² The Tantra then notes that they are also divided into one-hundred families, but all can be expressed as Vajrasattva. There are countless ways of enumerating the families in accord with the various addictions and inclinations of sentient beings.¹⁰⁶³ There are as many Buddhas as there are channels, which, during the perfection stage, are reduced from 72,000 in stages by dividing by the one hundred clans and the twenty-four places until there are the three main channels that merge into the central channel, which then dissolves into clear light great bliss.¹⁰⁶⁴

U. The Body Mandala

In both the creation and perfection stages the yogi imagines and then effectuates his body as a mansion containing all of the *Secret Community* deities, here numbered thirty-two. Chapter eighteen discusses the thirty-two deities of the *Secret Community* body mandala, the inhabitant mandala of the creation stage, and how the process of dissolution of the yogi’s body mandala proceeds, with the sense media bodhisattvas such as Kṣitigarbha and so forth absorbing into the corresponding sense object goddesses such as Rūpavajrā and so forth, and the elemental goddesses such as Locanā dissolving into their corresponding Buddha, such as (in the case of Locanā) Vairocana, as Alamka

¹⁰⁶² Alamka 213B-214A. I believe the “element” here is the “Reality Sphere” or *dharmadhātu* discussed in chapter forty-one *VR* 60B, ch. 41, v. 3. In the *Root Tantra*, the five clans are emanated, *see, e.g.*, Freemantle 1971, 75 ch. 13, vv. 30-42 (“Make the five Buddhas approach the mandalas, then send them out by means of the five rays, and enlightenment will be attained, the emanation of all mantras is twofold, emanation and withdrawal should be done distinguishing between the three Vajra Bodies”). Freemantle notes that “‘twofold’ refers to the two stages, that of creation and that of realization, ‘emanation and withdrawal’ belong to the stage of creation.” *Id.* 159, n. 10.

¹⁰⁶³ *VR* 62A, ch. 43, vv. 4-6.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Alamka 214B-215B.

explains, “because the objective reality is not different from the phenomena.”¹⁰⁶⁵ The five Buddhas themselves dissolve into the three vajras of body, speech and mind,¹⁰⁶⁶ and then into the singular reality/bliss.¹⁰⁶⁷ Here the *Vajra Rosary* also further describes dissolution as proceeding “into mere letter,” which Alamka explains means “the mere form of experience, your own mind,” then into “the drop,” explained as “inexpressibility, with the nature of subtlety and knowing,” then into “sound,” meaning “natural clear light which is like resonating sound, then into “clear light,” explained as “the thatness of emptiness that is free from all elaboration,”¹⁰⁶⁸ and synonymous with “stainless enlightenment spirit, the great peace of Vajrasattva, wonderful non-dual wisdom, the bliss of the fourth empowerment and the supreme state of the four ecstasies.”¹⁰⁶⁹

Chapter forty-five summarizes in part the body mandala of the Secret Community Noble tradition, but only places relatively few of the thirty-two deities at particular parts of the body. The five aggregates are the five Buddhas: form is the “Conqueror of Conquerors,” JINAJIK (Vairocana); consciousness the “Vajra Holder” VAJRADRIK (Akṣobhya); feeling the “Jewel Holder,” RATNADRIK (Ratnasambhava); perception “Crossing Over from Cyclic Existence,” AROLAMKA (Amitābha); and compositional factors the “Wisdom Holder,” PRAJÑĀDRIK (Amoghasiddhi).¹⁰⁷⁰ The elements are:

¹⁰⁶⁵ Alamka 135A I have not seen this particular teaching on dissolution elsewhere

¹⁰⁶⁶ The five Buddha clans being dissolved into three, as Alamka notes, “Ratnasambhava being dissolved into the class of delusion” (*i.e.* Vairocana), “because delusion and pride are one ” Alamka 135A

¹⁰⁶⁷ *VR* 35A, ch 18, v 18

¹⁰⁶⁸ *VR* 35A, ch 18, v 19, Alamka 135A

¹⁰⁶⁹ *VR* 36B, ch 18, vv 20-21

¹⁰⁷⁰ *VR* 64A, ch 45, vv 1-2, Alamka 27B

earth as “Ignorance Ecstasy,” MOHARATĪ (Locanā); water as “Hatred Ecstasy,” DVEṢARATĪ (Māmakī); fire as “Passion Ecstasy,” RĀGARATĪ; wind as “Vajra Ecstasy,” VAJRARATĪ; and space as Vajradhatuiṣvarī.¹⁰⁷¹ The five sense goddesses are: form as Rūpavajrā; sound Śabdavajrā; scent Gandhavajrā; taste Rasavajrā; and touch as Sparsavajrā, Vajradhatuiṣvarī. The sense media are the bodhisattvas: eyes are Kṣitigarba; ears Vajrapāṇi; nose Ākhāṣagharba; tongue Lokeśvara; body Avaranaviṣkambini; mind Samantabhadra; and the channels as Meitreyā. Supreme wisdom is Mañśjuśrī, and “the entities of the body”¹⁰⁷² are the ten Terrifics.¹⁰⁷³

In chapter sixty-four, the body mandala of *Secret Community* practice is described in detail, with the deities of the Noble Tradition mandala placed on the body of the guru.

As the Fourteenth Dalai Lama writes:

The origins of the instructions on the *Lama Choepa* (guru yoga) practice are traced back to the explanatory tantra called Vajramala, in which the visualization of the mandala deities on the guru's body as explained according to Guhyasamāja and Heruka has great merit and advantages.¹⁰⁷⁴

The five male and four female Buddhas are described as sitting in the various aggregates and elements, respectively.¹⁰⁷⁵ The bodhisattvas are placed on the sense organs, with Mañjughoṣa placed on the mental faculty and Sarvanirvaraṇaviṣkambini “on the lump with the nature of the four elements.”¹⁰⁷⁶ The Terrifics are placed at the

¹⁰⁷¹ VR 64A, ch 45, v 3, Alamka 27B

¹⁰⁷² *lus kyi chos rnams*, VR 64A, ch 45, v 7

¹⁰⁷³ VR 64A, ch 45, vv 4-7, Alamka 27B

¹⁰⁷⁴ T Gyatso 1988, 11

¹⁰⁷⁵ VR 94A, ch 64, vv 4-8

¹⁰⁷⁶ VR 94A-B, ch 64, vv 9-12

root of the hands, shoulders, mouth, secret place, knees, top of the head and bottom of the feet.¹⁰⁷⁷ The beginning of the chapter explains that the enlightenment spirit in the thirty-two channels in the crown chakra constitutes the body mandala;¹⁰⁷⁸ the division of the parts of the letters forms the speech mandala, with twenty-seven members;¹⁰⁷⁹ and the distinguishing of “the instincts of desire and so forth” is the mind mandala with twenty-eight parts.¹⁰⁸⁰

Chapter sixty-eight also describes how the yogi’s body transforms into the measureless mansion, very similar to the sadhana in use today, with parts of the yogi’s body corresponding to, or becoming, the parts of the mansion, *e.g.* “the shins, thighs, biceps and forearms are explained as the eight pillars, eye consciousness as the mirrors...,”¹⁰⁸¹ with the mind “stated as the central lotus, the conceptual energy-wind as the perfect support.”¹⁰⁸² The parts of the human body are analyzed in terms of their corresponding elements and Buddha families,¹⁰⁸³ and then various places in ancient India are put in correspondence with the places of the yogi’s body.¹⁰⁸⁴

¹⁰⁷⁷ *VR* 94B, ch 64, vv 13-16

¹⁰⁷⁸ *VR* 93B-94A, ch 64, vv 1-2

¹⁰⁷⁹ Consisting of the vowels, *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ri, rī, li, lī, e, ai*, and *o, au, aṃ, aḥ*, and the consonantal groups *ka, ca, ṭa, ta* and *pa, ya, ra, la, wa, ṣa* (presumably standing for all three sibilants) and *ha*, for a total of twenty-seven *VR* 94A, 95A, ch 64, vv 2, 22

¹⁰⁸⁰ *VR* 94A, 95A, ch 64, vv 3, 23

¹⁰⁸¹ *VR* 101B, ch 68, v 22

¹⁰⁸² *VR* 101B, ch 68, v 25 The entire description can be found at *VR* 101B-102B, ch 68, vv 19-36

¹⁰⁸³ *VR* 102B-103A, ch 68, vv 37-44

¹⁰⁸⁴ *VR* 103A-B, ch 68, vv 45-50

V. *The Three Luminances*

In ordinary death, first the coarse body dissolves, earth, water, fire, wind, then consciousness, then the subtle body dissolves and a trained yogi can perceive the so-called three luminances, luminance (*āloka*, *snang ba*), radiance (*ālokābhāsa*, *snang ba mched pa*) and imminence (*ālokopalabdha[ka]*, *snang ba nye bar thob pa* or *nyer thob*). These states are employed by the yogi, particularly in mind isolation, as part of the elimination of the most subtle instincts and propensities, necessary to approach Buddhahood.

Chapter fifty-one, entitled “Explaining the Night and the Day in Detail,” is short, profound, and not really about the night or the day. Lacking a commentary, what follows is my own interpretation.

The first verse says, “You should know the night,” says Vajra Lord, “as wisdom.” And, “having dissolved all the elements, [the yogi] goes, becoming part of the night as a moon, the moon being characteristic of Nirvana.”¹⁰⁸⁵ This refers to yogic process of attaining liberation, through the steps of dissolution which are practiced in the creation stage, then actually done in the completion stage, where the elements and corresponding deities are dissolved, followed by the dissolution of the subtle body into luminance, whose subjectivity is described as a moonlit night sky, radiance or sunlight, imminence or completely darkness, followed by clear light.¹⁰⁸⁶ The moon can also refer to the

¹⁰⁸⁵ *VR* 68B, ch. 50, v. 1.

¹⁰⁸⁶ In his discussion of uncommon synonyms, Tsong kha pa quotes the *PK*, in which wisdom is imagined as a moon disc and also notes that in the *PK* “luminance is the relative, radiance is the imaginary, and imminence is the perfect.” Tsong kha pa 2010, 359. [Chapter](#) IV, v. 17 of the *PK* states in the first verse,

sambhogakāya or beatific body, a body made of energy-wind, in which the yogi arises after simulated or real death, and from which, out of compassion, s/he will emanate in the form of a Buddha.¹⁰⁸⁷

The second verse points out that there are two types of wisdom – here referring to enlightenment – “conventional and ultimate,” and that you should know both “as conventional objects of knowledge,” reminding us not to get carried away with the thought of the “ultimate,” which, like the conventional, is merely a dependent designation. That being said, the Tantra tells us that “the ultimate wisdom abandons touch,” which refers to the *sambhogakāya*, in which form the yogi/buddha cannot interact with ordinary beings and things. Blissful as that state may be, the Tantra tells us that there is a problem: “Whatever bliss is free from touch, that bliss is hard to attain.”

The solution is found in the third verse: “The day is explained as means,” completing the wisdom/means pairing. “At that time the real thing is born: the Sun.”¹⁰⁸⁸ Lest there be any doubt to whom this refers, the Tantra adds, “He always becomes the Lord of the *bhaga*.”¹⁰⁸⁹ So, as means, the yogi/buddha arises from the *sambhogakāya* into the *nirmāṇakāya* or emanation body, and is born in human form as Buddha and can now interact with the world.

mtshan mo snang ba'i cha ste gsal ba'i nyi ma'i zer 'gyed snang ba mched pa yin, “the night is the part of luminance, the spread of sun rays is radiance” Toh 1802 See Thurman 1995, 257

¹⁰⁸⁷ See, e.g., K Gyatso 1982, 95-101

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Gang tse dngos las skes nyi ma* VR 68B, ch 50, v 3

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Id.*, The VR refers to the “Buddha Sun” in other places as well 6A, ch 1, v 36 (only Alamka’s version has “sun” “Oh Lord! Sun of the Wisdom Vajra!” Alamka 19B, VR 12B, ch 4, v 1 (“Sun of the three vajras”), VR 51B, ch 28, v 6 (“The clear light of the Buddha Sun”)

The interaction between the moon, *sambhogakāya*, and the sun, *nirmāṇakāya* is explained by the fourth verse: “The worldly aspect becomes the Sun. From the Sun, the moon is born.” This refers to crucial fact that all evolution takes place in the world, where “touch” is indeed found, where the teachings of a buddha can be heard and give rise to the evolution of others, who practice the completion stage, attain liberation, than emanate to continue the cycle. The moon and the sun, the Tantra says, are, in reality, non-dual, “But,/ In order to blaze,/ He becomes the Sun/.”¹⁰⁹⁰

Finally, again lest we be carried away into thinking that any of this has any inherent super-reality that isn’t entirely empty, in the last verse of the chapter the Tantra says: “The ultimate that is/ Subjected to analysis,/ And the body that is/ Free from passion,/ Subtle, invisible and empty,/ And the peaceful state/ Of clear light,/ Do not abide anywhere.”¹⁰⁹¹

The next chapter, fifty-two, concerns itself with “Explaining the Vowels and Consonants in Detail,” but here the Tantra is not talking about grammar. Rather, the vowels are luminance¹⁰⁹² and the consonants radiance, “produced from the state of clear light.”¹⁰⁹³ “From the secret joining of these two,¹⁰⁹⁴ great bliss which is produced in the

¹⁰⁹⁰ *De las gnyis med ngo bor bshad/ ‘bar ba’i phyir ni nyi mar ‘gyur* VR 68B, ch 50, v 4

¹⁰⁹¹ VR 69A, ch 51, v 5

¹⁰⁹² VR 69A, ch 52, v 3

¹⁰⁹³ *Id*, v 2 See also Tsong kha pa 2010, 293-94 (summarizing the *Root Text of the Concise Five Stages*, attributed to Nāropa, to the same effect)

¹⁰⁹⁴ *I.e.* the joining of luminance and radiance Because this chapter is preceded by the chapter on the night and the day, *i.e.* luminance and radiance, and followed by the chapter on the “interval” just preceding enlightenment, one wonders if the “joining” of luminance and radiance, manifested by the joining of the drop of white enlightenment spirit from the crown and the red female hormonal substance from below, is a reference to luminance-imminence, *nyer thob*, *saṃdhyalokopalabdhaḥ*, usually characterized by utter darkness, a reference absent here

center is ‘the commitment of the alphabet.’”¹⁰⁹⁵ While the Tantra provides no further details on this practice, Tsong kha pa notes that “you will achieve the clear light of retention...with the yoga of the subtle vowels and consonants abiding in the navel channel....”¹⁰⁹⁶

Having described the “night and day” in chapter fifty-one as luminance and radiance, respectively, in chapter fifty-three the Tantra turns to the “interval,” *mtshams*. The context here is the very final stages of the enlightenment process, particularly the fourth of the five stages, *abhisambodhi*, manifest enlightenment.¹⁰⁹⁷

The interval is the very instant, so subtle as to be “inconceivable,”¹⁰⁹⁸ before manifest enlightenment. It is “free from light and non-light,”¹⁰⁹⁹ *i.e.* it is visible and invisible, apparent and non-apparent. It arises from the wisdom vajra,¹¹⁰⁰ “the supremely peaceful place at the peak of the knot, like the core of a pea.”¹¹⁰¹ While the interval is not the end,¹¹⁰² it is this instant – the interval -- which “purifies cyclic existence,”¹¹⁰³ and, in

¹⁰⁹⁵ *VR* 69A, ch 52, v 4

¹⁰⁹⁶ Tsong kha pa ascribes this to Tathāgatavajra, but does not identify the work Tsong kha pa 2010, 211

¹⁰⁹⁷ Tsong kha pa discusses *mtshams*, “interval” or “twilight” in some detail, and explains the *Five Stages*’ discussion of the term in the context of this stage of manifest enlightenment in his *The Ultimate Personal Instruction: Explanation of the Stage of Manifest Enlightenment*, *Man ngag gi mthar thug mngon par byang chub pa’i rim pa’i bshad pa rjes mdzad pa bzhugs so*

¹⁰⁹⁸ *VR* 69A, ch 53, v 3

¹⁰⁹⁹ *VR* 69A, ch 53, v 1

¹¹⁰⁰ *Id.* The wisdom vajra is “in the lotus bud of the heart, flanked by the Life-energy energy-wind above and the Evacuative energy-wind below ” *VR* 15A, ch 6, v 8

¹¹⁰¹ *VR* 69A-B, ch 53, v 5

¹¹⁰² *Mthar m yang dag mi ‘gro gnag*, “the interval, not going to the end ” *Id.* v 3

¹¹⁰³ The interval is the subject of the *PK*’s chapter 4, vv 17-18

17 The night is the part of luminance, the spreading of the sun rays is luminance-radiance, and luminance-imminence is engaged repeatedly through your own instinctual natures. What is neither night nor day nor the interval is free of the instinctual natures. It is explained by the guru the moment of enlightenment, the object of the yogi

18 The end of the interval goes beyond the entire mass of imperishable darkness and, here, the instant before the sun rises is explained as the stainless, perfect end. The supreme master teaches outer enlightenment to the disciple, dispelling the darkness [*vinihatatimiro* as contrasted with *rab rib bral bas*, “impartially”]. In an instant, he will achieve the unpolluted inner bliss of a Buddha’s enlightenment

(My translation) The Tibetan is,

17 *mtshan mo snang ba'i cha ste gsal ba nyi ma'i zer 'gyed snang ba mched pa yin/*
mtshams ni snang ba thob par rang gi gang bzhin rnams kyis lan cig min par 'gro/
mtshan min nyin par ma yin mtshams min gang zhig rang bzhin rnams dang rnam bral ba/
de ni byang chub skad cig yin par bla ma mchog bshad rnal 'byor pa nyid yul//

18 *mtshams kyī mtha' ni 'jig min mun nag tshogs ni ma lus gang du 'das pa dang/*
ji srid nyi ma ma shar skad cig 'dir ni dri med yang dag mtha' ru bshad/
slob dpon mchog ni rab rib bral bas slob ma la ni phyi rol byang chub bstan/
nang gi bde ba rnyog bral sangs rgyas byang chub skad cig dag gis thob par 'gyur//

and the Sanskrit

17 *Āloko rātrībhāgah sphutaravikīraṇah syād divāloka bhāṣah samdhyāloka palabdhaḥ*
praktībhīr asakrāḍ yujyate svābhīr etat | no rātrir nāpī samdhyā na ca bhavati divā yah prakṛtyā
vimuktah sa syād bodhī[sattva]ksano' yam varagurukathito yo [30 A] gīṇām eva gamyāḥ

18 *Naiṣam dhvāntam vinastam vyapagatam akhīlam sāmḍhya-tejas yasmin bhāsvān nodetī*
yāvat ksana iha vimale darṣayed bhūtakotim | Āśyāyācāryamukhyo vinihatatimiro
bāhyasambo-dhīrstyā prāpnoty adhyātmasaukhyam vyapagatakalusam buddhabodhim
ksanena

La Vallée Poussin 1896, 42

See also Thurman 1995, 257. In his *The Ultimate Personal Instruction: Explanation of the Stage of Manifest Enlightenment*, *man ngag gi mthar thug mngon par byang chub pa'i rim pa'i bshad pa rjes mdzad pa bzhugs so*, Tsong kha pa, explaining this passage from the PK, says “By ‘The night is the part of luminance, the spreading of the sun rays is luminance-radiance, and luminance-imminence is engaged repeatedly through your own instinctual natures’ [and] by ‘What is neither night nor day nor the interval is free of the instinctual natures,’ [Nāgārjuna means that] it is the joining of the four emptinesses and the dawn” 7B (my translation). The role of the instinctual natures [*rang bzhin, prakṛti*] in the stages beyond mind isolation is a topic requiring further research. Denma Locho Rinpoche explained to me that the instinctual natures are eliminated at the end of mind isolation and that the reverse *nyer thob* that follows final mind isolation does not have the “fainting” that follows dissolution of the seven ignorance instincts, so that there would be no “interval” or “gap” there. Personal Communication 10/7/08. Professor Thurman strongly disagrees with my translation of verse 17, and would translate it “Twilight is luminant imminence, and gradually one’s instinctual natures become nonexistent”.

In the *BIL*, Tsong kha pa puts it, “[T]he process of birth and death is caused by wind-energy, and the arising of the four voids is during the period between the dissolving and arising of the energy mobilizing the natural instincts. Thus, the natural instincts are derived from the increased movement of the three

particular, purifies the consummate sense experience of union with “Vajradhara’s queen,” as it purifies the interval between this life and the next one for any sentient being.¹¹⁰⁴

“Deathlessly born from the vajra and lotus,” *i.e.* from sexual yoga, “it perfectly mixes with the moon and the sun,” which probably includes both mixing with luminance and radiance, and, “abiding in the center,” with the left and right main channels.¹¹⁰⁵ Because at this stage, the Night Lord, *i.e.* enlightenment spirit, arises, “the upper state,” perhaps referring to the drawing of enlightenment spirit to the crown, remains in the form of some drops, some of which are also abandoned and some of which are unobservable.¹¹⁰⁶

W. Etymology as Esoteric Instruction

The *Vajra Rosary* is most well known, via the *PU*, for its etymological analysis of the first forty syllables of the Tantra, which are the same as the *Secret Community Root Tantra*. That is not however, the only way in which the Tantra employs this technique.

In chapter forty-eight, the Tantra explores the esoteric meanings of the word *ahaṃ*, Sanskrit for “I,” another of the *Vajra Rosary*’s many ways to liberation:

luminances, and thus it is said that the three luminances are the root of the natural instincts of all beings”
Tsong kha pa 2010, 256

Given the language of *PK*, chapter 4, verse 17, it appears that the instinctual natures are still, somehow, active, even their “last traces” as Prof. Thurman says. If that is the case, how are they active? I wonder whether, at this final stage, the instincts have been purged of their “negative” aspects and operate as pure energy, fueling the transformation to Buddhahood, much in the way that the entire subtle body is transformed into energy/deity, which then operates in Buddhahood, where a Buddha uses anything and everything in the service of enlightened activities. Or, perhaps, following Tsong kha pa’s statement in the *BIL* above, the instincts exist during luminance etc., but are not “mobilized.”

¹¹⁰⁴ *VR* 69A, ch 53, v 4

¹¹⁰⁵ *VR* 69A, ch 53, v 2

¹¹⁰⁶ *VR* 69A, ch 53, v 6

“Whoever perfectly knows the support of the word “I” exhausts the fetters of the wheel of A HAM, the character of the fetters of cyclic existence....”¹¹⁰⁷

A, “the most supreme of all forms,”¹¹⁰⁸ “is the exhalation of the Tathāgatas, skilled in making the emanation body and achieving all aims.”¹¹⁰⁹ HAM “dwells in the body but does not produce the body...abandoning all forms...the essence of the Truth Body.”¹¹¹⁰ It is “the out-breath of the mind of Vajradhara, free from achieving all aims.”¹¹¹¹ HAM is located at the hairline, “spreading a thousand rays of light,” and A at the navel, “as a moon.”¹¹¹² A is the Life-energy energy-wind and HAM the Evacuative.¹¹¹³ When A and HAM come together, there is cyclic existence, which is therefore known as “A HAM.”¹¹¹⁴ Yet, “dwelling free from conceptuality, A HAM does not abide anywhere.”¹¹¹⁵

Chapters fifty-eight and fifty-nine explain the first words of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*. This chapter starts with the first word, EVAM, Sanskrit for “Thus,” as in “Thus have I heard,” the beginning words of many Tantras and Sutras.¹¹¹⁶ Starting with

¹¹⁰⁷ VR 65B, ch 48, v 1

¹¹⁰⁸ VR 65B, ch 48, v 2

¹¹⁰⁹ VR 66A, ch 48, v 3

¹¹¹⁰ VR 66A, ch 48, vv 4-5

¹¹¹¹ VR 66A, ch 48, v 6

¹¹¹² VR 66A, ch 48, v 9

¹¹¹³ VR 66A, ch 48, v 10

¹¹¹⁴ VR 66A, ch 48, v 11

¹¹¹⁵ VR 66A, ch 48, v 12

¹¹¹⁶ The *Vajra Rosary* says that “two seals are stated at the beginning of the Tantras,” VR 84B, ch 58, v 3, and is “the epitome of the meaning of all Tantras” *Id.* v 8

the classic sutra definition, E is explained as emptiness; VAM as compassion.¹¹¹⁷

Moving to the Tantric sphere, the union of E and VAM yields a “drop,” the product of “wonderful, supreme yoga.”¹¹¹⁸ E is Buddha and VAM the Reality Seal; E as the support, the lotus or vagina, and VAM the supported, the vajra or penis.¹¹¹⁹ In E, the “sphere of secret space or the lotus of the triangular vagina,” sits VAM, Vajrasattva, who also represents Yamāntaka, Heruka, Kālacakra, the Primordial Buddha and so on.¹¹²⁰

“Whoever lacks the two syllables E VAM,” the Tantra concludes here, “lacks reality.”¹¹²¹

Chapter fifty-nine, due to its exegesis in Candrakīrti’s *PU*,¹¹²² is the most famous part of the *Vajra Rosary*, and the only chapter for which we have, at least to my present knowledge, a significant portion in Sanskrit. Here, the Tantra explains the first forty syllables of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*: *Evaṃ mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye bhagavān sarva tathāgata kaya vāk citta hṛdaya vajra yoṣid bhageṣu vijahāra*, “Thus have I heard: Once the Blessed One was dwelling in the vaginas of the vajra consort of

¹¹¹⁷ *VR* 84A-B, ch 58, v 1

¹¹¹⁸ *VR* 84B, ch 58, v 2

¹¹¹⁹ *Id.*, vv 3-4

¹¹²⁰ *Id.*, vv 5-6

¹¹²¹ *VR* 84B-85A, ch 58, v 10

¹¹²² *See CG*, 78 *et seq.*

the essence of the body, speech and mind of all the Tathāgatas."¹¹²³ The verses explain a full range of completion and creation stage practice in the *Secret Community* system.¹¹²⁴

It was not for nothing that Alex Wayman subtitled his book on the subject as “The Arcane Lore of the Forty Verses,” because, without the guidance of commentary, they are indeed difficult to understand. Here, the difficulties of translating are most manifest. In many cases, the Tibetan verse is lyrical and not particularly grammatical. Although we have the *PU* version, or, at least, a *PU* version of the Sanskrit, it is difficult to give the *PU* Sanskrit version of the *Vajra Rosary* verses in chapter fifty-nine priority over the Tibetan translation because, even though the *Vajra Rosary* was expressed (in written or oral form) in Sanskrit before it was translated into Tibetan, the eleventh century translators and the fourteenth century commentators like Tsong kha pa probably had many more versions of the Sanskrit than we do. Thus, even though my intent here is to represent the *Vajra Rosary* as much as possible as it was found by Mantrakalāśa for Zhi ba ‘od without later (perhaps apologetic) commentary, the commentary is very helpful in making sense of the verses. However, we must remember that it *is* commentary from hundreds of years after the recovery of the text, and does not necessarily reflect the principal meaning intended by the author(s) of the *Vajra Rosary*. Each of the Sanskrit

¹¹²³ This chapter of the *Vajra Rosary*, as repeated and commented upon in the *PU*, is the subject of Alex Wayman’s *Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra, The Arcane Lore of Forty Verses*, Wayman 1991. Wayman sought to place the verses interpreting the *mdāna* syllables in the context of later commentary. In the spirit of the case study of the *Vajra Rosary* my approach is different: understanding these verses in the overall context of the *Vajra Rosary* itself. In his study, Wayman generally does not do this.

¹¹²⁴ Wayman notes that “repeated consideration of these forty verses with great labor of collecting commentarial materials for them, finally convinced me that they represent a sequence of yoga.” Wayman 1991, 173. Wayman rejects the only grouping of the *mdāna* verses he found, that of Kumāra in his brief commentary, *Ṭippanīhṛdayādarśa*, and proposes his own. 175-80.

verses corresponding to the forty syllables has the syllable in question in the first word of the commentary, a fine mnemonic device.¹¹²⁵

The first syllable, E, is “holy wisdom, the nature of the instant free from passion,”¹¹²⁶ recalling the third ecstasy, Transcendent Ecstasy, and the instant of Overcoming, described in chapter twenty of the *Vajra Rosary*. In his *CG*, or “*Annotated Commentary*” on the verse as repeated in the *PU*, Tsong kha pa notes that this refers to the first stage of the dissolution of the subtle body, luminance, and in particular to the thirty-three instinctual natures associated with aversion.¹¹²⁷ The second syllable, VAM, refers to “means,” “the “consciousness which is radiance, like rising bamboo... producing lust,”¹¹²⁸ explained by the *PU* and Tsong kha pa as the second stage of subtle body dissolution, when the forty instinctual natures associated with attachment become predominant after dissolution of those of aversion.¹¹²⁹

MA, the third syllable of the *nidāna*, expresses ignorance, “the very root of great knowledge,”¹¹³⁰ which Tsong kha pa explains is the third of the subtle body dissolutions, or, going in reverse from clear light in the birth process, the first step in reincarnation, imminence.¹¹³¹ Going in reverse towards birth, the other luminances, radiance and

¹¹²⁵ For example, E – *ekāro*, VAM – *vaṃśas*, MA – *mahāvidyā*, YĀ – *yāu*, ŚRU – *śrutam*, TAM – *tam*, E – *eṣo*, KA – *kaḥ*, SMIN – *asmimś*, and so forth

¹¹²⁶ *VR* 85A, ch 59, v 2

¹¹²⁷ For a list of these, see Wayman 1991, 185 and Wedemeyer 2007, 775-78

¹¹²⁸ *VR* 85A, ch 59, v 3

¹¹²⁹ *CG*, 79

¹¹³⁰ *VR* 85A, ch 59, v 4

¹¹³¹ ‘*od gsal rang nyid kyi rtsa ba ni ma rig pa’o/ zhes sbrel bas nyer thob bstan te*, “Through connecting [the verse], ‘The root of it, clear light, is ignorance,’ he teaches imminence” *CG*, 80

luminance, arise in turn. YĀ describes luminance, “the name of that first of the three consciousnesses of migrators,” which transforms into “great emptiness,” *i.e.* imminence, and then into “clear light.”¹¹³² SHRŪ again equates the three subtle consciousnesses of luminance, radiance and imminence with the root of the instinctual natures of all sentient beings.¹¹³³ TAM represents the rise of the energy-winds in the reverse order, that of birth, that grasp the five sensory objects of each luminance.¹¹³⁴

E is the great element of wind, which is the mount of the three luminance-consciousnesses, and propels them as they take the form of the instinctual natures, as explained in more detail in chapter thirty-two of the *Vajra Rosary*.¹¹³⁵ KA continues the description of the progress of the embryo, with consciousness combining with the four elements.¹¹³⁶ SMIN stands for the five elements becoming the five aggregates, SA for the five wisdoms, and MA for the five sense media.¹¹³⁷

What appears to be a description of dissolution of the subtle body followed by reincarnation of the subtle followed by the gross body is now followed by a reference to breath control, *prāṇayāma*, in the verse on YE, which, assuming there is a carefully scripted order to these verses,¹¹³⁸ would be the key to understanding the sequence up until

¹¹³² VR 85A, ch 59, v 5

¹¹³³ VR 85A-B, ch 59, v 6

¹¹³⁴ VR 85B, ch 59, v 7

¹¹³⁵ VR 85B, ch 59, v 8 However, there is an important distinction Although the *PU* and the *CG* (and Wayman, citing VR ch 32) describe this “wind” as one of the four elements, *i.e.* wind, fire, water and earth, chapter thirty-two describes it as the Life-Energy energy-wind VR 54B, ch 32, v 6, Alamka 190A-B The *PU* and *CG* do not link the wind described here to the energy-winds described in chapter thirty-two

¹¹³⁶ VR 85B, ch 59, v 9

¹¹³⁷ *Id.*, vv 10-12

¹¹³⁸ Wayman’s schema for the forty verses is as follows

this point as being one of yogic practice, of *simulated* dissolution.¹¹³⁹ YE describes the practice of breath control, done in conjunction with the silent recitation of OM ĀḤ HŪM.¹¹⁴⁰

BHĀ¹¹⁴¹ represents how, from the three luminances,¹¹⁴² the instinctual natures again arise, and depending on virtuous or non-virtuous karma, birth in a good or bad state

I The Stage of Generation

A	Evam mayā śrutam	Yoga (=Sevā)
B	Ekasmin samaye	Anyuoga (= Upasādhana)
C	Bhagavān Sarva	Atiyoga (=Sādhana)
D	Tathāgata	Mahāyoga (= Mahāsādhana)

II The Stage of Completion

E	Kāyavākcitta	Pratyāhāra and Dhyāna (= kāyaviveka) Prāṇāyāma (= Vajrajāpa) Dhāraṇā (= Cittavisuddhi and Svādhiṣṭhāna – Sevā
F	Hṛdaya-vajrayosid	Anusmṛti (= Abhisambodhi) – Upasādhana
G	Bhagesu vijahāra	Samādhi (= Yuganaddha) – Sādhana and Mahāsādhana

Wayman 1991, 178 One need not agree with all of Wayman's conclusions, most of which are buttressed by commentarial works (*see id.* 180 for a list of the main ones used) to appreciate the immense value of his commentary as a teaching tool. Whether the author(s) of the *Vajra Rosary* intended these forty verses to be a *complete* guide to the practices leading to enlightenment is another, probably unanswerable, question, they certainly contain much of that path. While Wayman may not have been Indian or Tibetan (at least in his most recent life), his commentary deserves to be part of the literature and amply deserves and rewards study.

¹¹³⁹ Wayman analyzes *evam mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye* as pertaining to the creation stage yoga practices of *yoga* and *anyuoga*. Wayman 1991, 178. Of course, up until YE, the description also pertains to ordinary life, death and re-birth. Drawing on the *BIL*, Wayman notes the correspondences between the ordinary “basic time” and the extraordinary “path time” of the five stages of completion as follows

<i>Basic Time</i>	<i>Time of the Path</i>
1 Inhalation and Exhalation	Diamond Muttering [Vajra Repetition]
2 Dissolution of the elements	Purification of the Mind [Mind Isolation]
3 Clear Light of Death	Personal Blessing [Illusory Body]
4 Intermediate State body	Revelation-Enlightenment [Manifest Enlightenment]
5 Birth	Pair-united [Integration]

Wayman 1991, 223

¹¹⁴⁰ *VR* 85B, ch. 59, v. 13

follows.¹¹⁴³ GA identifies the five aggregates with the five Buddhas and the “five types of perfect enlightenment.”¹¹⁴⁴ With VAN, “one with nature of the three wisdoms” knows the four elements as the four elemental goddesses, Locanā etc., “bestowing a Buddha’s enlightenment.”¹¹⁴⁵ SA represents the bodies of the Tathāgatas, and the bodhisattvas associated with the six sense media, Kṣitigarba etc. in the *Secret Community* mandala and body mandala.¹¹⁴⁶ RVA describes the ten Terrifics in their places in the mandala and body mandala,¹¹⁴⁷ and TA makes the crucial point that “the different gods and goddesses do not exist, but are taught for the sake of living beings.”¹¹⁴⁸

Thus, with THĀ, the yogi, experiencing the three luminances, should contemplate all kinds of sense objects.¹¹⁴⁹ With GA the sense powers of the yogi go to their respective objects, both being “mere luminance,”¹¹⁵⁰ the experience of which, according to Tsong kha pa, is “just the mere bliss void inseparable wisdom of the three

¹¹⁴¹ BHA in the *CG* 84

¹¹⁴² At least that is how it is glossed in the *CG* “The conceptual instinctive natures again arise from these three luminances,” *snang ba gsum po ‘di las rang bzhin gyi rtog pa rnams slar yang ‘byung ba* 84

¹¹⁴³ *VR* 85B, ch 59, v 14

¹¹⁴⁴ *VR* 86A, ch 59, v 15

¹¹⁴⁵ *Id.*, v 16 The *CG* explains that one with the “nature of the three wisdoms” is one who has experience “of the three, luminance, radiance and imminence, after engaging in meditative equipoise relying on the subtle mediation on the lower door,” *‘og sgo’i phra mo bsgoms pa la brten nas mnyam gzhas tu snang mched thob gsum gyi ye shes bdag nyid can gsum*, *CG*, 85, i.e. mastering the subtle creation stage

¹¹⁴⁶ *Id.*, v 17

¹¹⁴⁷ *Id.*, v 18

¹¹⁴⁸ *Id.*, v 19

¹¹⁴⁹ *Id.*, v 20

¹¹⁵⁰ *Id.*, v 21

luminances.”¹¹⁵¹ Logically following from this, with TA, when the sense power reaches its object, the yogi should make an offering.¹¹⁵² KĀ states that in the creation stage¹¹⁵³ the three Buddha bodies, *Dharmakāya* or Truth Body, *Saṃbhogakāya* or Beatific Body, and *Nirmāṇakāya* or Emanation Body are taught as different, but in the perfection stage “they transform into one.”¹¹⁵⁴ YA represents the purification of those seemingly different and conventionally true characteristics of the body of a Buddha (per the CG, the illusory body)¹¹⁵⁵ through immersion in the clear light consciousness of the perfection stage.¹¹⁵⁶ This purified illusory body, the object of “the path of words,” *i.e.* mantra or vajra repetition, as VĀK, has “the nature of wisdom” and “in order to benefit sentient beings, manifests just like a rainbow.”¹¹⁵⁷ With CIT, the correspondences of the three luminances are explored: luminance as mind (*citta*, *sems*), wisdom and emptiness; radiance as mental function (*caitasika*, *sems byung*) and extreme emptiness; and imminence as ignorance and great emptiness.¹¹⁵⁸ And TA explains that the yogi knowing the nature of the three luminances and the instinctual natures abandoned with each,

¹¹⁵¹ *snang ba gsum gyi ye shes kyi bde stong dbyer med pa tsam nyid do* CG, 88

¹¹⁵² VR 86A, ch 59, v 22

¹¹⁵³ CG, 89

¹¹⁵⁴ VR 86A-B, ch 59, v 23

¹¹⁵⁵ CG, 90

¹¹⁵⁶ VR 86B, ch 59, v 23 v 24

¹¹⁵⁷ *Id.*, v 25

¹¹⁵⁸ *Id.*, v 26

should then engage in the “conduct” (*caryā, spyod pa*)¹¹⁵⁹ and thus will attain the vajra body.¹¹⁶⁰

HRI describes the emanation body, in which the Tathāgata “abides conventionally... engaging in desires just as he wishes,”¹¹⁶¹ and with DA, “forcefully taking the perfection of the Buddhas, you practice.”¹¹⁶² Similarly, with YA, the “Prince of Yogis can do whatever he wants without obstruction, always remaining entranced by the yoga of non-entrancement.”¹¹⁶³ With VA, “by uniting vajra and lotus, you know the parts of the three wisdoms,¹¹⁶⁴... always dwelling in bliss,”¹¹⁶⁵ and in JRA, “by illusion-like concentration, you play with all things.”¹¹⁶⁶ YO is, not surprisingly, for yoga,¹¹⁶⁷ particularly, according to the *PU*, the yoga of the illusory body.¹¹⁶⁸ SHĪ because one has also accomplished the cessations, abandoning activity and non-activity.¹¹⁶⁹ Here the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* adds the syllable BHE, lacking in the *PU*, which assimilates it to the

¹¹⁵⁹ Tsong kha pa says that the “conduct” meant here is that for attaining the illusory body as well as “learner’s union,” but not that of “non-learner’s union ” *CG*, 91

¹¹⁶⁰ *Id.*, v 27

¹¹⁶¹ *VR* 86B, ch 58, v 28

¹¹⁶² *Id.*, v 29

¹¹⁶³ *Id.*, v 30 (*mnyam par ma bzhaḡ rnal ‘byor gyis/ rtag tu mnyam par ‘jog par ‘gyur*).

¹¹⁶⁴ Per the *PU* and *CG*, luminance, radiance and imminence *CG*, 93

¹¹⁶⁵ *Id.*, v 31

¹¹⁶⁶ *VR* 86B-87A, ch 58, v 32 According to the *CG*, it is called vajra, “hard,” because it is *jimbha*, “swollen” or “stretched ” *CG*, 93

¹¹⁶⁷ *VR* 87A, ch 58, v 33

¹¹⁶⁸ *CG*, 93

¹¹⁶⁹ *VR* 87A, ch 58, v 34

discussion of SHĪ, stating that just as the lotus is untainted by mud, the yogi's essence is uncorrupted.¹¹⁷⁰

BHA concerns itself with the yogin as a member of a Buddha family, “engaging the entire world realm with [his] wisdom body.”¹¹⁷¹ GE states that the yogi's home is wherever he is engaged in great bliss, and SHU explains that the conventions of twilight, day and night are used to express the three luminances.¹¹⁷² These verses show the yogi, in the state of integration, re-entering the world of beings and the conventional. There, with BI, the yogi uses conventional names, with JA experiences the betweenness of birth, living and death, all of which is really the energy-wind of mind, with HA experiences the various moods and sexual yoga, and, finally, with RA, has the form of natural clear light.¹¹⁷³

X. The Five Stages and (Two Systems of) Six Yogas of the Perfection Stage

According to the seminal commentary of the Noble Tradition, *The Five Stages*, the five stages of the perfection stage are: (1) the vajra repetition stage (*vajrajāpa*, *rdo rje bzlas pa*), leading to speech isolation (*vag-viveka*, *ngag dben ba'i*); (2) the universally pure stage (*sarvasuddhivīśuddhi*), leading to mind isolation (*citta-viveka*, *sems dben*); (3) the self-consecration stage (*svādhiṣṭāna*, *bdag la byin brlab*), leading to the illusory body (*māyākāya*, *sgyu lus*); (4) the supremely secret bliss enlightenment stage (*parama-*

¹¹⁷⁰ *Id.* See CG, 95

¹¹⁷¹ VR 87A, ch 58, v 35

¹¹⁷² *Id.*, vv 36-37

¹¹⁷³ VR 87A-B, ch 58, vv 38-41 Extensive further discussion of the *nidāna* verses is found in the PU, the CG and Wayman 1991

rahasya-sukhābhisambodhi-krama) leading to manifest enlightenment (*abhisambhodi*, *mngon par byang chub*); and (5) integration (*yuganaddha-krama*, *zung du 'jug pa*).

There are a variety of synonyms for these stages used in the literature.¹¹⁷⁴ According to Tsong kha pa, “the Noble [Nāgārjuna] makes the perfection stage into five stages, taking the vajra recitation as the first, which follows the system in the final chapter of the Explanatory Tantra *Vajra Rosary*. ”¹¹⁷⁵

The six yogas, which are stated in the *Secret Community Further Tantra*,¹¹⁷⁶ are ancient, almost the same as those in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*:¹¹⁷⁷ (1) withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*, *so sor sdud*); (2) absorption (*dhyāna*, *bsam gtan*); (3) breath control (*prāṇāyāma*, *srog rtsol*); (4) retention (*dhāraṇā*, *dzin pa*); (5) recollection (*anusmṛti*, *rjes su dran*); and (6) concentration (*samādhi*, *ting 'dzin*). The five stages and the six yogas are two ways of conceptualizing steps towards the inconceivable. The *Vajra Rosary* discusses both schema.¹¹⁷⁸ Since these stages and yogas encompass the entire perfection stage, in a sense, most of the Tantra concerns them. Here, however, I will only discuss the more explicit references or clear or probable applicability of these stages and yogas.

Chapter ten concerns itself with the many levels of the Tantric commitment of “eating,” which is interpreted in terms of each of the five stages. There are many levels

¹¹⁷⁴ See Wedemeyer 2007, 49-53

¹¹⁷⁵ Tsong kha pa 2010, 157

¹¹⁷⁶ I.e. chapter eighteen of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, considered to be an explanatory Tantra

¹¹⁷⁷ Wayman 1977, 164

¹¹⁷⁸ Tsong kha pa has an extensive discussion of the various Indian and Tibetan commentators who sought to reconcile the five stages with the six yogas. Tsong kha pa 2010, 159-178. Wayman equates *prāṇāyāma* with *vajrajāpa*, *dhāraṇā* with *sarvaśuddhivisuddhi* and *svādhiṣṭhāna*, *anusmṛti* with *abhisambhodi*, and *samādhi* with *yuganaddha*. Wayman 1977 at 173

of meaning here. “Eating” refers to the inner offering of the creation stage,¹¹⁷⁹ as well as that of the student ingesting enlightenment spirit during the second, “secret,” initiation, where the student eats from the “lotus vessel.” In the perfection stage, the yogi “eats” the conceptual energy-winds, Alamka explains, referring to the state of vajra-repetition whose aim is speech isolation.¹¹⁸⁰ He then “perfectly unites with the three [types of] consorts,”¹¹⁸¹ which Alamka explains refers to both the three kinds of consorts and the three luminances, leading to the yogi eating “in the vessel explained as the Great Seal,”¹¹⁸² which Alamka explains refers to clear light and mind isolation, reversing the one-hundred six¹¹⁸³ instinctual natures.¹¹⁸⁴ The commitment continues with the yogi performing the commitments of self-consecration and the illusory body, and the last two of the five stages, manifest enlightenment and integration, as well as commitments of both the *Mahāyoga* and *Yoginī* Tantras. Throughout, the yogi “drinks compassion,”¹¹⁸⁵

¹¹⁷⁹ Alamka explains that each of the meats represents a commitment of one of the five Buddhas

[I]t states "elephant" etc because of the great size of the body like an elephant, the form of Varocana ["Horse"] because of going quickly, because of the essence of purifying the wind element, the form of Amoghasiddhi ["Dog"] because of having a long tongue, the form of Amitābha ["Cow"] the form of Ratnasambhava because it is known as wealth "human" because of having a consciousness like a person, the form of Aksobhya

Alamka 75B

¹¹⁸⁰ Alamka 76B

¹¹⁸¹ *VR* 20B, ch 10, v 11

¹¹⁸² *VR* 20B, ch 10, v 11

¹¹⁸³ In the *CMP*, Āryadeva refers to "the hundred and sixty instinctual natures " Wedemeyer 1999, 349

¹¹⁸⁴ Alamka 76B-77A

¹¹⁸⁵ *VR* 20B, ch 10, v 5

in that, explains Alamka, he does not “abandon... the mind [inclined] towards the benefit of sentient beings.”¹¹⁸⁶

Chapter fifteen of the Tantra states that the practice of vajra repetition is part of the “three yogas,”¹¹⁸⁷ which Alamka identifies as part of each stage of Tantra: in the creation stage, beginner yoga, supreme maṇḍala triumph and supreme evolutionary triumph, together with the division of the hundred families,¹¹⁸⁸ all part of the *Secret Community* sadhana, which result in body isolation, the first of the six stages¹¹⁸⁹ described by Alamka; in vajra repetition, the inhalation, holding and exhalation with the three syllables, leading to the first of the five stages of the perfection stage, speech isolation, the second stage; luminance, radiance and imminence, leading to mind isolation, the third; the bodies of truth, enjoyment and emanation in connection with the illusory body, the fourth; “the result of which is the isolation of conventional truth,” in the stage of manifest enlightenment, the fifth stage; and emptiness, extreme emptiness and great emptiness, leading to the natural clear light of universal emptiness; and in the

¹¹⁸⁶ Alamka 75B

¹¹⁸⁷ VR 28A, ch 15, v 12

¹¹⁸⁸ In the Supreme Mandala Triumph, the mandala absorbs the ordinary world, in the Supreme Evolutionary Triumph, the mandala’s activity triumphs over normal worldly evolutionary actions, and in the hundred clans practice there is a deity in every part of the body, not just the body mandala. So here, the subtle creation stage is merging into the beginning level of the perfection stage. There is no perception of ordinariness e.g. your fingernail is Locanā. The body is isolated from perception of anything ordinary. Shit becomes elixir. So body isolation has two aspects, creation stage and perfection stage. Personal Communication with Robert Thurman, 2/22/06. See also Cozort 1986, 51, Lodeo 1995, 42-45.

¹¹⁸⁹ See Alamka 108B. In this, Alamka is following the *Root Secret Community Tantra*’s sixth chapter. See Tsong kha pa 2010 at 156. The commentarial schema in the Noble Tradition involves five stages, as in the PK. Indeed, the final chapter of the *Vajra Rosary* sets forth the five stage schema. See Tsong kha pa 2010 at 157. Tsong kha pa explains that there is no contradiction here, since everyone is talking about the same process, differing only on whether to include some stages within others. Tsong kha pa 2010, 158.

stage of integration, the final stage of perfection, the yogas of cause, effect and non-duality.¹¹⁹⁰

Throughout the perfection stage, emptiness and compassion are paramount: “The main one exhausting the nature of thing and no-thing, emptiness and compassion indivisible!”¹¹⁹¹ Here, Alamka explains that “wisdom and compassion are of just one nature in the respective six stages.” Unpacking the terse verse of the Tantra, Alamka explains the essence of the perfection stage and its stages:

“Having the characteristics of the perfection stage” [means] complete knowledge of the letter A, which illustrates natural, primordial, unborn objective reality.¹¹⁹² **“Without support”** because you abandon the support having the characteristic of the deity generated in the creation stage. **“Non-objectifying”** because, relying on the stage of vajra repetition, you abandon the entering, arising and emerging [breaths]. **“Not inherently real”** [means that] through the stage of mental purification you realize the natures and luminances as lacking inherent reality. [In] **“Supreme of supreme,”** [“][of]¹¹⁹³ supreme[“] because of the characteristics of the trio of luminance and so forth.... **“Non-existent”** because in the stage of self consecration you abandon the means of expression. **“Formless”** because in the stage of manifest enlightenment you abandon all forms, coarse and subtle. **“Unchanging”** because by lacking all conceptions of difference you have the very form of union. **“Supreme of the great”** because in the path of no more learning you are also quite supreme.¹¹⁹⁴

Chapter twenty-three explains the “commitment of the three realities,” which appears to refer to the practices of body and speech isolation, and probably to mind

¹¹⁹⁰ Alamka 108A

¹¹⁹¹ *VR* 28B, ch 15, v 13

¹¹⁹² Professor Thurman notes here that the single syllable *Prajñāpāramitā* is “A,” and in the Vedas, Brahma says “A” after *pralaya*, annihilation, which then becomes fire and the creative force of speech. Personal Communication 3-24-06

¹¹⁹³ Following P and Snar, rather than Sde dge here

¹¹⁹⁴ Alamka 108B-109A

isolation, the second of the five stages, as well,¹¹⁹⁵ although those terms are not used here.¹¹⁹⁶ Rather the Tantra at this point refers to “self, mantra and so forth, in exact stages,”¹¹⁹⁷ and the *Commentary* to “self, mantra and wisdom.”¹¹⁹⁸

The first, the commitment of “self,” describes the *Secret Community* body mandala of the Noble Tradition in detail: the five Buddhas, Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Akṣobhya are the five aggregates of form or matter, sensation, discrimination, emotion and consciousness, with their respective mantras, JINAJIK, RATNADRIK, AROLIK, PRAJNADRIK and VAJRADRIK;¹¹⁹⁹ the four female Buddha consorts, Locanā, Māmakī, Paṇḍaravāsini and Tārā, are the four elements

¹¹⁹⁵ As will be discussed in connection with chapter sixty-eight, *infra*, body isolation straddles the creation and perfection stages. In the *BIL*, Tsong kha pa quotes this chapter in his discussion of body isolation Tsong kha pa 2010, 199

¹¹⁹⁶ The *Commentary* does refer to “body isolation” at the end of the discussion of the body mandala Alamka 161A. It seems that the Tantra’s reference to “wisdom” here refers to the latter part of vajra repetition, taking place after meditation on the energy-winds, which culminates in mind isolation, and also to the final stages. Alamka does say at the outset of the discussion of “wisdom” that “‘abandoning all the conceptualities of speech’ means the actuality of *prāṇāyāma*, which would place it within the stage of speech isolation. 162B. Tsong kha pa notes that “the *Vajra Rosary* states often and explicitly how the mind isolation voids are generated from the perspective of the vajra recitation’s blocking the circulation of the wind-energies.” Tsong kha pa 2010, 384. However, later on, Alamka indicates that the Tantra is referring to clear light mind and to recollection (*rjes su dran pa*, *anusmṛti*). As noted by Wayman, Tsong kha pa’s commentary on the *PK* states

*lsgron ma rab gsal las sor bsam gñis sems dben dan/
srog rtsol rdor bzlas dan/ ḥdzin pa ḥod gsal dan/
rjes dran dan ting nge ḥdzin zung ḥjug tu ḥdus par bsad de/*

According to the *Pradīpoddhyotana*, (among the six members) *pratyāhāra* and *dhyāna* are incorporated in secret state of mind (*citta-viveka*), *prāṇāyāma* in diamond muttering [vajra recitation] (*vajrajāpa*) (i.e. secret state of speech, *vāg-viveka*), *dhāraṇā* in clear light, *anusmṛti* and *samādhi* in pair-united (*yuga-naddha*)

Wayman 1991, 167

¹¹⁹⁷ *VR* 42A, ch. 23, v. 1

¹¹⁹⁸ Alamka 153A

¹¹⁹⁹ Alamka explains the interpretive and definitive meanings of these mantras, 155A-B, and those of the elemental goddesses 156A-B

of earth, water, fire and wind, with their respective mantras, MOHARATI, DVEṢARATI, RĀGARATI, and VAJRARATI; the five form goddesses, Rūpavajrā, Śabdavajrā, Gandhavajrā, Rasavajrā and Sparsavajrā¹²⁰⁰ are the five sense objects of form, sound, scent, taste and touch; the eight bodhisattvas, Kṣitigarbha, Vajrapāṇi, Ākāśagarbha, Lokeśvara, Sarvaṇivaraṇaviṣkambhīni, Mañjuśrī, Meitreyā and Samantabhadra, are respectively the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental consciousnesses, the body's sinews (and the sphere of instincts) and the individual channels ("the supreme basis of all bliss, with the nature of all things"¹²⁰¹; and the ten Terrifics, Yamāntakṛt, Prajñāntakṛt, Padmāntakṛt, Vighnāntakṛt, Ḍakarāja, Acala, Nilaṇḍa Mahābala, Sumbha[rāja], and Uṣṇīṣacakravartin, are, according to Alamka,¹²⁰² respectively, the right hand, left hand, mouth, penis tip, left shoulder, right shoulder, right shin, left shin, soles of the two feet, and top of the head, and they each embody one of the ten knowledges.¹²⁰³

¹²⁰⁰ The verse which should describe Sparsavajrā is missing from the Lhasa, Stok Palace, Sde dge and Snar thang recensions of the *Vajra Rosary*. Alamka's version of the Tantra describes her, but does not name her "By the division of smooth and rough, you know that very thing as touch, the form that is grasped for the main one." Alamka 157B. Alamka does name her as Sparsavajrā in quoting the *Sekoddeśa* on this subject. *Id.*

¹²⁰¹ *VR* 44A, ch. 23, v. 30

¹²⁰² The Tantra gives the body locations (only eight of them, without "upper" and "lower," which are found in Alamka's version, 160A) without specifying which Terrific goes where. The places given here are according to Alamka's quotation of the *Sekoddeśa*, Toh. 361, which differs slightly from Alamka's word commentary on the Tantra's verses 31 and 32 of this chapter. Alamka 160

¹²⁰³ As with the other members of the mandala, Alamka discusses the interpretive and definitive meanings of the names of the Terrifics (e.g. "Yamantakṛt" [meaning] the Terminator of Yama ["Yama"] is a hell being. He is called that because he is the terminator of concentration through great anger [This is] the interpretive meaning ["Yama"] is ignorance. He is called that because he perfects through the actuality of clear light [This is] the definitive meaning") and specifies the ten knowledges. 160B. In discussing the interpretive and definitive meanings of Yamantakṛt, Alamka is playing with the dual meaning of Skt. *anta*, as "to terminate" and "to perfect."

Body isolation is related closely to the perfection of divine pride, and *Alaṃka* notes here that “‘The reality of the self’ [means] the actuality of the lords, Vairocana and so forth, who abide precisely as the reality of the completely imaginary five aggregates....”¹²⁰⁴ Similarly, the Tantra says that Locanā embodies “delusion...expressed as ecstasy.”¹²⁰⁵ *Alaṃka* elucidates: “Having thought that ‘delusion is expressed as purity,’ whoever has ecstasy for Vairocana, the purity of delusion, ‘is Locanā’ because she appears as the lack of intrinsic nature in [even] a part of the earth element.”¹²⁰⁶ Many of the deities are described as “delighting” in their own nature or as embodying “pleasure,”¹²⁰⁷ consonant with Tsong kha pa’s explanation that “great bliss itself is the definitive meaning deity, and meditating as sealed by that is the great art which isolates one from notions of ordinariness.”¹²⁰⁸ Next, the Tantra discusses mantra, speech isolation, differentiating between various forms of mantra such as “snake,” in the form of the A syllable, “headless,” meaning without OM at the beginning, or “tail-less,” lacking SVĀ HĀ at the end. *Alaṃka* explicitly connects the meanings of

¹²⁰⁴ *Alaṃka* 153A

¹²⁰⁵ *VR* 42B, ch 23, v 11

¹²⁰⁶ *Alaṃka* 155B

¹²⁰⁷ E.g. *VR* 42B, ch 23, v 4 “In that is the actuality of Vairocana, and the cause of taking delight in all of them” (*der ni rnam snang ngo bo dang/ thams cad spro bar byed pa’i rgyu*), *VR* 42B, ch 23, v 5 “The sensation aggregate, the character of Ratnasambhava, the nature of the pleasure of the Tathāgata” (*thorn ba’i hung poor bshad/ rim chen ’byung ldan nyid kyī mtshan/ de bzhin gashes pa’i sprogs bdag nyid*) *Spro ba* here is probably Skt *rati*, “to delight in,” “to find pleasure in,” with a heavy connotation of sexual pleasure or desire. However, there is multivalence in the term, used throughout, which can mean either *prapañca* or *rati*, “emanate” or “radiate” on the one hand, or “pleasure” or “take delight in” on the other. The terms are related, with *rati*, the sexual urge, being a form of *prapañca*, proliferating, elaborating, emanating or radiating out. Actually, in Tantra, these two are not so distinct, so the multivalent/ambivalent (but not ambiguous) term is well-employed here. It would be helpful to see if texts on the same subject use *prapañca* or *rati* in this context.

¹²⁰⁸ Tsong kha pa 2010, 203

these mantras with the first chapter of the root Tantra,¹²⁰⁹ which describes the emanation of the thirty-two mandala deities.¹²¹⁰

The last subject of the chapter is wisdom, “abandoning all duality, equalizing all things. All things are as a body of singularity, abandoning all the conceptualities of speech.”¹²¹¹ Here the yogi goes beyond the “empties” of luminance, radiance and imminence, which are analogous to the stages of death following the cessation of breathing and bodily functions (what we would call clinical death) where the instinctual conceptions dissolve, to the state of clear light. This is the state denominated as mind isolation in the five stages system. The Tantra describes the yogic visualization of the dissolution process, which becomes actual in the completion stage, the mantra OM ĀḤ HŪṂ dissolves: OM into the drop or dot at its top, then into the A of ĀḤ; ĀḤ into the *visargah*, the two dots at the end, then into the HŪṂ; and HŪṂ into HAM (*i.e.* the vowels at the bottom disappear), HAM into the *bindu* or drop at the top, the dot into sound,¹²¹² the sound into “mere sound,”¹²¹³ mere sound into “supreme sky,” and supreme sky into clear light.¹²¹⁴ This state gathers all of the stages, as well as all outer objects and

¹²⁰⁹ Alamka 162A

¹²¹⁰ It seems as if this may be a key to the formation of mantras for the thirty-two deities, as in OM VAJRADRIK HŪṂ PHAT SVĀ HĀ

¹²¹¹ VR 44B, ch 23, v 39

¹²¹² Alamka says this is “sound whose nature is an echo ” 163B

¹²¹³ Alamka says this is “in the emptiness of the actuality of perfect sound ” *Id.*

¹²¹⁴ VR 44B, ch 23, vv 42-45 Wedemeyer, discussing the *CMP*, notes that the drop “dissolves either into voidness directly (as seemingly advocated here) or, often in contemporary practice, first into the *nāḍa* (traditionally, a subtle sound-energy, but understood in contemporary Tibet to refer to another graphical element looking like a squiggle on top of the drop) and then into voidness ” Wedemeyer 2007, 109 The *Vajra Rosary* dissolution practice described here, which is consistent with chapter eleven’s statement that “whoever knows just that [mere sound] achieves the state of no rebirth,” VR 21B, ch 11, v 1, is thus closer to the “traditional” practice Further research should be pursued here on possible correspondences with the

the ten main energy-winds. The yogi who accomplishes this becomes a Buddha, a Vajradhara, an Heruka, a Kālacakra.

The subject of the brief chapter twenty-six is the third of the five stages, that which this chapter calls “self-consecration,”¹²¹⁵ also known as the stage of the illusory or magic body, called here “the divine wisdom body.” The main point here is, “abandoning ordinary conceptuality,”¹²¹⁶ to know that the body is, in reality, a palace of deities.¹²¹⁷ Through identifying the chakras with the six Buddhas (including Vajradhara), and the other inhabitants of the Akṣobhya *Secret Community* mandala, you purify the addictions, poisons and aggregates, cutting the knot of cyclic existence.¹²¹⁸ Following the procedures discussed in chapter twenty-three, you place mantras of the deities at the

Kashmir Śaiva Tantra’s use of the concept of *dhvani*, defined by Monier Williams as “empty sound without reality” See, e.g., Muller-Ortega 1989, 118 (Abhināvagupta notes that “there always arises a spontaneous sound (*dhvani*) which is termed the supreme, the great Heart That self-consciousness in the Heart in which the entire universe without remainder is dissolved, present at the beginning and at the end of perception of objects, is called in the authoritative texts the vibration (*spāṇḍa*) For that vibration, which is a slight motion of a special kind, a unique vibrating light, is the wave of the ocean of consciousness, without which there is no consciousness at all”)

¹²¹⁵ See VR 101A, ch 68, v 17, for a description of the third stage of self-consecration as such See also Wedemeyer 2007, 243-52 for Āryadeva’s description of this stage in the *CMP* Wedemeyer notes how crucial this stage is to “the techniques of engaging the world via a compassionate, omnipotent, divine emanation body” emphasized by the Noble Tradition 103 Here in the *Vajra Rosary* we have some of the “personal instructions” that the *CMP*’s Vajra Master urges the student to get at the end of the discussion of this stage As a description of the body mansion, this chapter per Alamka (175B-176A) also applies to the creation stage, which, in this regard, sets the stage for the actual creation of the illusory body in the self-consecration stage In this regard, one should keep in mind the *Vajra Rosary*’s later statement “The practice of the creation stage and the completion stage – wherever those two become one, that is called integration” VR 101A, ch 68, v 13

¹²¹⁶ Alamka 174A

¹²¹⁷ VR 48A, ch 26, v 1

¹²¹⁸ VR 48A, ch 26, v 4, Alamka 174B The eight bodhisattvas stand for the eight consciousnesses, including the storehouse consciousness and the addicted mind of *yogacāra* thought, VR 48B, ch 26, v 6, Alamka mentioning “joints of all limbs and the joints of all sinews stated as the duo of the storehouse consciousness (*kun gzhi*) and addicted mind (*nyon mon pa can gyi yid*),” Alamka 175A, from which I infer Samantabhadra and Meitrya, respectively The ten Terrifics are the reality of “faith, effort, recollection, concentration, wisdom, the power of faith, the power of effort, the power of recollection, the power of meditation and the power of wisdom,” VR 48A, ch 26, v 7, though Alamka does not specify which is which 175B

various points of the body, and so identifying the body, you abide in the stage of self-consecration, enjoying the five sense objects in both the creation and perfection stages.¹²¹⁹ Doing so, you should ignore external deities and counting mantras,¹²²⁰ and achieve “illusion-like concentration,”¹²²¹ the defining characteristic of self-consecration.

The major theme of chapter thirty-eight appears to be a correlation of the six chakras to the “six yogas” of the completion stage.¹²²² In addition, although the chapter is entitled “Meditating on the Six Chakras,” much of it describes the emptiness that pervades them, being the key to any such meditation. At the outset, the channels of the six major chakras are elliptically enumerated.¹²²³ The wind chakra has six “spokes,”¹²²⁴ the fire three; the navel sixty-four; the throat sixteen and the crown thirty-two.

The first chakra to be described is the wind chakra, located between the eyebrows.¹²²⁵ But immediately we are reminded of the crucial fact of the emptiness of the objects of completion stage practice: “Like [the hidden part] of the half moon, emptiness abides in the wind chakra.”¹²²⁶ This is so “because it lacks intrinsic existence in ultimate reality,” and so it appears as a “great illusion.” It produces beings from

¹²¹⁹ Alamka 175B-176A

¹²²⁰ *VR* 48B, ch 26, vv 11-12

¹²²¹ Alamka 176B

¹²²² The six yogas relate to techniques, as contrasted with the five stages, which relate to attainment Cozort 1986, 66

¹²²³ “Six spokes, half of that, similarly, eight times eight is more than it, eight times two, and eight times four ” *VR* 59B, ch 38, v 2

¹²²⁴ Here the channels are described as spokes because of their shape Alamka 203B In the first line of verse 2, in his word commentary Alamka has *rtsibs*, “spoke,” instead of *rnam pa*, “type ” *VR* 59B, ch 38, v 2

¹²²⁵ Alamka 204A

¹²²⁶ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 3 (*don dam par dngos po las rang bzhin med pa'i phyr*) Alamka 204A

enlightenment spirit¹²²⁷ and is explained as life-energy. It is not in the sphere of the experts, including, according to *Alamka*, completion stage practitioners.¹²²⁸

Emptiness also pervades the fire chakra,¹²²⁹ located below the throat chakra, “because it exists within as empty by nature.”¹²³⁰ The chakra arises as a drop from the syllable HAM and pervades all, “because it pervades the entire body which becomes warm.”¹²³¹ It is “unelaborated,”¹²³² and thus “abandons vowels and consonants.”¹²³³ It increases bliss.¹²³⁴

The emptiness within the navel chakra has “the state of indestructible sound,”¹²³⁵ “moving like a snake’s tongue,”¹²³⁶ and “lacks form.”¹²³⁷ The syllable HŪM in the heart chakra, “abides as mere sound,” “like an echo,”¹²³⁸ “passionless, active and placeless.”¹²³⁹ Emptiness is in the enjoyment chakra, “as the supreme aspect of the

¹²²⁷ *Alamka* 204A

¹²²⁸ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 4, *Alamka* 204A

¹²²⁹ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 5

¹²³⁰ *Alamka* 204A (*rang bzhin gyis khong stong du yod pa'i phyir*), which could also be translated, less philosophically, as “because it naturally exists as a cavity ”

¹²³¹ *Alamka* 204A (*kun khyab ces bya ba ni dro bar gyur pa nyid kyī* [following P and Snar rather than Sde dge’s *kyis*] *lus thams cad la khyab pa'o*)

¹²³² *Alamka* 204A

¹²³³ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 6

¹²³⁴ *Id.*

¹²³⁵ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 7 “In the form of the syllable A, because it is like an echo ” *Alamka* 204B

¹²³⁶ *Id.* *Alamka* has “A body that moves like a snake’s lightning tongue ” 204B

¹²³⁷ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 9

¹²³⁸ *Alamka* 205A

¹²³⁹ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 9

unbound.”¹²⁴⁰ It has the form of the syllable OM, and “has the nature of relativity because of having the nature of cause and effect.”¹²⁴¹ In the chakra of great bliss, in the head, it has the form of the syllable HA, the actuality of the spirit of enlightenment,¹²⁴² “abandoning all characteristics, peaceful, fearless and inexpressible.”¹²⁴³ Yet it transcends characteristics “because it is expressed free from the forms of the syllables HA and A.”¹²⁴⁴ And “it transcends the sphere of speech because of being in the innate bliss that arises from it.”¹²⁴⁵

As for the major theme here, at the outset of the chapter, the Tantra says: “Practice exactly whatever characteristics of the state of the six yogas, the branch that supports what you wish for.”¹²⁴⁶ As explained in Chapter eighteen of the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, also more commonly known as the *rgyud phyima*, *Tantric Appendix*, the six yogas of the completion stage are: (1) withdrawal (*so sor sdud*, *pratyāhāra*); (2) absorption (*bsam gtan*, *dhyāna*); (3) breath control (*srog rtsol*, *prāṇāyāma*); (4) retention (*dzin pa*, *dhāraṇā*); (5) recollection (*rjes su dran*, *anusmṛti*); and (6) concentration (*ting ‘dzin*, *samādhi*).¹²⁴⁷ As noted there, “Practicing the six

¹²⁴⁰ VR 59A, ch 38, v 10

¹²⁴¹ Alamka 205A

¹²⁴² *Id.*

¹²⁴³ VR 59B, ch 38, v 13

¹²⁴⁴ Alamka 205B

¹²⁴⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁴⁶ VR 59B, ch 38, v 1 (*sbyor drug go ‘phang mtshan nyid ni/ ji lta ji lta ba bzhin sbyor/*)

¹²⁴⁷ See [Secret Community] *Tantric Appendix*, *Rgyud phyima*, Toh 443, LH 530B, v 141 (*so sor sdud dang bsam gtan dang/ srog rtsol de bzhin ‘dzin pa dang/ rjes su dran dang ting ‘dzin te/ sbyor ba’i yan lag drug tu bshad/*) See also Wayman 1991, 44-50 The *Kālacakra* Tantric system also has the six yogas, albeit in a somewhat modified form For an extensive discussion, also very helpful in understanding the

branches of service, you will supremely attain. Otherwise, when you practice, the supreme accomplishment will not arise.”¹²⁴⁸ Though as stated above, the six yogas are centered on technique, they are associated with certain of the five stages: withdrawal and absorption with body isolation; breath control with speech isolation; retention with clear light; and recollection and concentration with integration.¹²⁴⁹

Alaṃka mentions the connection of the six yogas to the six chakras, but does not go into detail, and in discussing the chakras makes no explicit connection to any of the yogas.¹²⁵⁰ He says, commenting on the first verse of the chapter:

“**Furthermore**” [means] as before. It is connected with “The characteristics of the state of the six yogas.” The state of the six yogas and the character of the chakras are connected to “**Listen to the explanation**,” [meaning] to the thorough explanation through the actuality of the unerring view. If someone asks how, in response to that he says “**exactly**,” [meaning] through the actuality of the unerring view. “**Whatever yoga**” [means] by abandoning the sequence. “**The branch that supports what you wish for**” [means] the support of beings through whatever they wish for.”¹²⁵¹

Secret Community system, see K. Gyatso 2004, 391-584. A fine discussion of the history of the six branch or *ṣaḍaṅga* yoga is found in chapter two of Wallace 2001, starting with the six-phase yoga found in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, and comparing the variations of the six-phase yoga cited in Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Buddhist texts. The six yogas discussed here in connection with the completion stage are also to be distinguished from the “six yogas” of the creation stage, *yoga*, *amūyoga*, *atīyoga*, *mahāyoga*, *supreme mandala triumph* and *evolutionary triumph*, discussed in chapter thirty-five of the Tantra. *VR* 57A, ch. 35, vv. 3-6, Alaṃka 198A-199B.

¹²⁴⁸ Toh 443, LH 530B, v. 140 (*bsnyen pa yan lag drug gis ni/ byas pas sgrub pa mchog tu 'gyur/ gzhan du bsgrubs par gyur na ni/ dngos grub mchog ni 'byung mi 'gyur//*)

¹²⁴⁹ Lodoe 1995, 52

¹²⁵⁰ Indeed, with respect to what I think is a direct connection in the Tantra to the third yoga, breath control, where the Tantra says, in the transition from the third chakra discussed (navel) to the heart chakra, “you abandon breath control,” *VR* 59A, ch. 38, v. 10, Alaṃka merely says “‘You abandon breath control’ because of the stopping of the energy-wind.” 205A. However, with respect to the fire chakra, he does note that “increasing great bliss” refers to “two kinds of great bliss,” 204A, which may be a reference to ecstasy and bliss, two of the five components of absorption. It is also quite possible that Alaṃka did not elucidate more connections between the descriptions of the six chakras and the six yogas because they were obvious to his audience, or perhaps because he wanted future scholars in a degenerate age to have to think for themselves.

¹²⁵¹ Alaṃka 203B. The verse commented on is: “Then, furthermore, listen/ [And] I will explain / Practice exactly whatever/ Characteristics of the state/ Of the six yogas/ The branch that supports/ What you wish for.” *VR* 59A, ch. 38, v. 1. In his commentary on the *Vimalaprabhā*’s discussion of the six chakras in the

The idea of a correspondence between the chakras and the six yogas is supported by the somewhat unorthodox order the chakras are discussed, starting with wind, then fire, the going upwards from the navel chakra.¹²⁵² The correspondence would be:

TABLE 12. Correspondence Between the Chakras and the Six Yogas

<u>Yoga</u>	<u>Chakra</u>
1. Withdrawal (<i>pratyāhāra</i>)	Wind (Between eyebrows)
2. Absorption (<i>dhyāna</i>)	Fire (Between heart and throat)
3. Breath Control (<i>prāṇāyāma</i>)	Emanation (Navel)
4. Retention (<i>dhāraṇā</i>)	Reality (Heart)
5. Recollection (<i>anasmṛti</i>)	Enjoyment (Throat)
6. Concentration (<i>samādhi</i>)	Great Bliss (Crown)

In withdrawal, one withdraws the sense powers from the sense objects,¹²⁵³ so the Tantra’s reference in the verses on the wind chakra to “appearing like a water moon” and “great illusion” seem consonant with the yoga of withdrawal. Absorption has five components: conception, discernment, ecstasy, bliss and single-pointed mind.¹²⁵⁴ The

Kālacakra system, in particular the verse that “Due to the power of the spiritual mentor’s precepts, these givers of death [the chakras] bestow life and health,” Bu ston notes that this is “due to the six-phased yoga” Wallace 2004, 73 n 81

¹²⁵² Although Alamka’s reference to “by whatever yoga” meaning “abandoning the sequence,” may suggest that if there is a correspondence between the six yogas and the six chakras, it is not in a particular order *VR* 58A, ch 38, v 1, Alamka 203B

¹²⁵³ *Tantric Appendix*, Toh 443, LH 530B, v 142

¹²⁵⁴ *Id.*, v 144 (*rtog dang dpyod dang dga’ ba dang/ de bzhin bde ba nyid dang yang sems kyi rtse gcig nyid dag ste/ lnga po der ni bsam gtan bsdu/*)

Tantra notes that the emptiness in the fire chakra, the second one discussed, “increases bliss.”¹²⁵⁵ “Bliss” and “ecstasy” are two of the five components of the second of the six yogas, absorption, and, in fact, Alaṃka remarks that the Tantra’s “increases bliss” refers to the “two types of great bliss.”¹²⁵⁶ The verses on the fire chakra conclude with “Because all three worlds are made into one, [that emptiness] is the Creator.”¹²⁵⁷ It may be no coincidence that Nāropa, in his *Commentary on a Short Teaching on Initiations*, discussing the fifth stage of absorption, says “Because concepts of form and so forth have been pacified, there is ‘pacification’ appearing vividly as the three realms. This is the sole and ultimate emptiness.”¹²⁵⁸

Thus the third chakra discussed, the emanation or navel chakra, should correspond to breath control or vajra recitation. And in fact the Tantra describes the chakra as “having the state of indestructible sound,”¹²⁵⁹ and, as we have seen in prior chapters concerning the practice of vajra repetition, “it is free from counting.”¹²⁶⁰ Moreover, the next verses on the heart chakra, which should leave the third yoga, breath control, and correspond to the fourth of the six yogas, retention, in fact says just that: “It abandons breath control.”¹²⁶¹ In addition, the vase breathing techniques for igniting

¹²⁵⁵ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 6

¹²⁵⁶ Alāṃka 204A

¹²⁵⁷ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 6

¹²⁵⁸ Toh 1351, 246a5, quoted in K Gyatso 2004, 468

¹²⁵⁹ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 7

¹²⁶⁰ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 8

¹²⁶¹ *VR* 59A, ch 38, v 10

tummo, which are part of the stage of vajra repetition, take place right at the navel chakra.¹²⁶²

Retention, the fourth of the six yogas, logically corresponds to the heart chakra, the fourth of the sixth chakras as described by the *Vajra Rosary*. The *Tantric Appendix* states: “Imagining your own mantra at the heart, placing the life-energy in the form of a drop...is explained as being retention.”¹²⁶³ The fifth of the six yogas, recollection, should be associated with the enjoyment chakra in the throat. And again, this is borne out by the second verse on that chakra, which refers to “the taste of liquor.”¹²⁶⁴ The quality of the crown chakra, the sixth chakra described in the Tantra, is described by the *Vajra Rosary* as “supremely abiding,”¹²⁶⁵ which is just what one would expect as describing the last and highest of the six yogas, concentration.

The title of chapter forty is “The Fruit of the Secret,” which, *Alamka* explains, refers to the latter of the five stages, manifest enlightenment¹²⁶⁶ and integration,¹²⁶⁷ and, in particular to the great seal. Not known to creation-stage yogis,¹²⁶⁸ this state is supremely peaceful and non-conceptual,¹²⁶⁹ “because it lacks the conceptions of self and

¹²⁶² See, e.g. K Gyatso 2004, 495

¹²⁶³ Toh 443, LH 531a, v 148

¹²⁶⁴ *VR* 59B, ch 38, v 7

¹²⁶⁵ *VR* 59B, ch 38, v 13

¹²⁶⁶ *Alamka* 209A

¹²⁶⁷ *Alamka* 208A

¹²⁶⁸ *I.e.* it is “free from the activities of mantra and Tantra,” *VR* 60B, ch 40, v 5, because it lacks the meditation of seed syllables and moon discs and so forth of the creation stage *Alamka* 209A

¹²⁶⁹ *VR* 60B, ch 40, v 2

other.”¹²⁷⁰ It is the “great” seal, “because it bestows great ecstasy.”¹²⁷¹ It is attained “because of integration through vajra-like concentration.”¹²⁷² Although this state is “the epitome of *Mahāyoga*,”¹²⁷³ “you learn the wonderful supreme essence from the *Yoginī* Tantras, causing the taste of great wisdom to descend.”¹²⁷⁴ This is most likely a reference to the *tummo* practices, common to all Tantras,¹²⁷⁵ but particularly emphasized in the practice of the mother or *Yoginī* Tantras.¹²⁷⁶ This and similar statements establish the *Vajra Rosary* as a “common” Tantra, *i.e.* basis of practice for father Tantras such as the *Secret Community* and *Yamāntaka* and for mother Tantras such as *Heruka* and *Vajrayoginī*.¹²⁷⁷

Having abandoned conceptuality, meditating and what is meditated on, attachment and detachment, on this stage you are even “free from abandoning,”¹²⁷⁸ “because [this stage] is especially nobler than the stage of vajra repetition.”¹²⁷⁹ “You

¹²⁷⁰ Alamka 208B

¹²⁷¹ *Id.*

¹²⁷² *Id.*

¹²⁷³ *VR* 60B, ch 40, v 3

¹²⁷⁴ *Id.* Alamka explains “Because it is realized from the Wisdom Dakini Tantra” (*ye shes kyi mkha’ ‘gro ma’i rgyud las rtogs par bya ba nyid kyi phyir*) Alamka 208B I have not been able to locate a Tantra by that name, *Jñānāḍākīmtantra*, which may mean that it is lost or that Alamka was referring generally to the Yoginī Tantras, which would be consistent with Alamka’s version of the Tantra, *rnal ‘byor ma yi zhal las rtogs*, “realized from the mouth of the yoginī,” as compared with the Lhasa *VR*’s *rnal ‘byor ma rgyud las bslab pa*, “learned from the *Tantra* [which could also be translated as *lineage* or *continuum*] of the yoginī” *Id.*

¹²⁷⁵ Cozort 1986, 72

¹²⁷⁶ Tsong kha pa 2010 at 216

¹²⁷⁷ This chapter also ends with the admonition that “you should know from the Yoginī Tantras the supreme wisdom of the supreme yoga” *VR* 60B, ch 40, v 7

¹²⁷⁸ Alamka 209A, The Lhasa *VR* does not have this verse

¹²⁷⁹ *Id.*

surpass the state of all things, ‘all things’ [meaning] luminance¹²⁸⁰ and so forth” “because [this stage] is especially nobler than the stage of mental purification.”¹²⁸¹ “‘You abandon the three worlds’ ... free of [even] the conception of the three worlds as in the nature of an illusion” “because you are free from the stage of self-consecration.”¹²⁸² And “you are free of passion and dispassion,”¹²⁸³ “abandoning passion because you are free of the stage of consort and concentration.”¹²⁸⁴ “‘You abide in the great commitment,’¹²⁸⁵ “the aspect of integration.”¹²⁸⁶

Chapter sixty-eight, the last chapter of the *Vajra Rosary*, titled “The Epitome of All Attainments,” summarizes the five stages, details the body mandala and other correspondences of the *Secret Community* Noble Tradition deities, summarizes the arising and the destruction of the energy-winds, and ends with the great host praising Buddha Vajradhara for the teaching of the *Vajra Rosary* and receiving final instructions from Buddha.¹²⁸⁷

¹²⁸⁰ The first of the stages of subtle body dissolution, *snag ba*, “luminance,” also “white appearance

¹²⁸¹ Alamka 209A

¹²⁸² *I.e.* illusory body Alamka 209A

¹²⁸³ *VR* 60B, ch 40, v 6

¹²⁸⁴ Alamka 209A

¹²⁸⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁸⁶ Alamka 209A-B

¹²⁸⁷ While Yukei Matsunaga asserts for textual reasons that this chapter was added later in order to provide a scriptural basis for the five stages of the *PK*, it is definitely noteworthy that the praise by the audience at the end of the chapter, symmetrical to that at the beginning of the Tantra, makes perfect sense in tying the Tantra together, the final praises are found neither in chapter sixty-seven, where one would expect them if it was the ending chapter of the work, or in any other chapter. However, given that at least one Sanskrit version of the Tantra contained significant obliterations, it is possible that those missing portions contained the ending praises and that the existing chapter sixty-eight was, as Matsunaga suggests, added later

The epitome of all attainments is the supreme wisdom of all Buddhas.¹²⁸⁸ This is described in terms of the fourth empowerment, which follows the three signs of luminance, radiance and imminence, at which time the intelligent yogi sees reality.¹²⁸⁹ The three luminances cause the five clairvoyances and, in that sense, are all like the day. However, on another hermeneutic level, the three luminances correspond to *parts* of the day: luminance as part of the night; radiance as the day; and imminence as the dawn; but on yet another level of meaning, the ultimate meaning, have nothing to do with the times of day; but cause the abandoning of the conceptual energy-winds.¹²⁹⁰ The abandoning of these energy-winds is “instant enlightenment” (*skad cig mngon byang chub*), “one instant of emptiness,” beyond conceptuality, the “supreme instant.”¹²⁹¹ The yogi attains bodily stability by holding enlightenment spirit at the tip of the vajra, applies it to energy-wind, and then, using the mantra HŪM HO, brings the enlightenment spirit upwards.¹²⁹²

“Integration” (*zung du 'jug pa*), the fifth and final of the five stages, makes possible the attainment of the Vajra Seal, and is attained by merging the creation and perfection stages, rejecting the duality of *samsara* and *nirvana*, or mixing conventional

¹²⁸⁸ *VR* 100A, ch 68, v 1

¹²⁸⁹ *VR* 100A, ch 68, v 3 This verse is preceded by a verse stating that Kṣitigarbha, Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrī, Viśkambhī and Maitreya consecrate the eye and so forth, but this seems to be out of place. Verse eleven of the chapter refers to “the five nectars explained above,” but, other than the five bodhisattvas named in verse two, there is no “five” of anything, so perhaps these relate to verse eleven’s statements that “the five nectars explained above are called elixirs,” and are for “turning iron into gold.” *VR* 101A, ch 68, v 11. Or, the reference could be to prior chapters.

¹²⁹⁰ *VR* 100B, ch 68, vv 3-4

¹²⁹¹ *VR* 100B, ch 68, vv 5-8 Here the Tantra does not explicitly use the term “non-conceptual,” but describes it in contradictory terms, such as “It has a modest form/ And is immodest.”

¹²⁹² *VR* 100B-101A, ch 68, vv 9-10

and ultimate reality.¹²⁹³ Before that, there is the first stage, vajra repetition, where “knowing the characteristics of energy-wind, you cut the winds of conceptuality.” Then there is the second stage, referred to here as “perception of mind” (*sems la dmigs pa*). Then the third stage, self-consecration (*bdag la byin brlab*), where the eight attainments are accomplished, is followed by the fourth stage, where one knows the division of the luminances, “manifest enlightenment” (*mngon par byang chub*). Then, there is the final stage of integration, where “you gather all attainments.” This, the Tantra says, “You will accomplish in this very life without any doubt,” by “entering into non-conceptuality through the concentration of integration in the great attainment of the Great Seal.”¹²⁹⁴

Y. The Forty-Nine and the Six Yogas of the Creation Stage and the Twenty Rituals

Although concentrated on the perfection stage, perhaps because the final stage of integration sees the creation and perfection stages as non-dual, the *Vajra Rosary* does teach aspects of the creation stage. Indeed, its longest chapter, fifty-four, concerns creation stage rituals.

In chapter thirty-five, in the context of the overall structure for cutting off the conceptual energy-winds, the key to advancement to Buddhahood, the Tantra sets out the forty-nine divisions of Tantric yoga. In order to accomplish this, after hearing and thinking about Tantra, you receive initiation.¹²⁹⁵ Then you practice the forty-nine yogas

¹²⁹³ *VR* 101A, ch 68, vv 11-14

¹²⁹⁴ *VR* 101A-B, ch 68, vv 15-18

¹²⁹⁵ *Id.*

of the creation stage, in six main categories that the Tantra calls the “six yogas.”¹²⁹⁶

These are somewhat but not completely sequential in terms of practice, and today most of them are incorporated into Tsong kha pa’s long *Guhyasamāja sadhana* in use today. The Tantra notes that the creation stage in general creates direct perception in the yogi,¹²⁹⁷ and Alamka remarks, “It should also be perceived as very profound.”¹²⁹⁸

The six yogas are: (1) the “first yoga,” with its fifteen divisions, including meditating on the mandala, mantra and the vital points, and pre-conditions for all of this such as stabilizing meditation, clearing obstacles and meditating on emptiness;¹²⁹⁹ (2) *Amuyoga*, with five aspects;¹³⁰⁰ *Atiyoga*, with four;¹³⁰¹ *Mahāyoga*, with six;¹³⁰² the Great

¹²⁹⁶ VR 57A, ch 35, v 3, Alamka 198A Davidson, relying on the *Kṛṣṇayamāri-tantra* and Wayman’s discussion in his *Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra*, notes that *yoga*, *amuyoga*, *atiyoga*, and *mahāyoga* are identified in some *mahāyoga* Tantras as denoting various visualizations in the creation stage, but his description is at odds with the detailed description of the same given in the *Vajra Rosary* and described by Alamka described below Davidson 2005, 74

¹²⁹⁷ VR 57A, ch 35, v 6

¹²⁹⁸ 199B

¹²⁹⁹ According to Alamka, the fifteen divisions of the first yoga are divided into “mandala” and “body,” as follows

As for the secondary practices [‘*khōr*], in that there are ten types [1] investigation of one’s own mind, [2] purification of the placing of mindfulness, [3] meditation on the four offerings and [4] the four abodes of Brahma, [5] perceiving in a particularly noble state, [6] expelling obstacles, [7] meditating on emptiness, [8] meditating on the stages of wisdom, [9] meditating on the measureless mansion, and [10] meditating on the mandala of faith For the body, there are five [1] meditating on the ultimate mandala, [2] preliminary consecration of the mantra of emptiness, [3] rising from the ocean of wisdom, [4] purifying the cyclic existence of the intermediate state by opening the vital points, and [5] meditating the reality of the dharma sphere and teaching by mantra

Alamka 199A

¹³⁰⁰ Alamka says these five are the “stages of manifest enlightenment ” 199A This refers to the creation stage practice of generating symbols of the five Buddhas from seed syllables in the parlance of Professor Wayman, the moon of Aksobhya, the red moon of Ratnasambhava, the seed syllable of Amitābha, the hand symbol of Amoghasiddhi and the image of Vairocana Wayman 1991, 229

¹³⁰¹ *I.e.* (1) the aggregates, (2), elements, (3) sense media and (4) consecration of those Alamka 199A

Accomplishment branch of *Mahāyoga*, with four;¹³⁰³ Accomplishment, with three;¹³⁰⁴ Supreme Mandala Triumph, with five;¹³⁰⁵ and Supreme Evolutionary Triumph, with twelve.^{1306 1307}

After that, the yogi meditates the completion stage, in particular vajra repetition on the mantric drop and the wind chakra,¹³⁰⁸ perhaps referring to the repetition of HŪM HO to open the heart knot described in chapter six, which is “taught in sequence” and “serves as the cause of clear light speech.”¹³⁰⁹ Meditation on the reality of energy-wind and mantra overcomes the conceptual energy-winds, which inhere “in the actualities of the one-hundred eight instinctual natures.”¹³¹⁰ This is done by counting the 21,600 daily breaths each of which has “the three energy-winds that enter, abide and rise,” *i.e.* OM ĀḤ

¹³⁰² *I.e.* the blessings of (1) body, (2) speech, and (3) mind, and meditation on the (4) commitment hero, (5) wisdom hero and (6) concentration hero *Id.*

¹³⁰³ *I.e.* (1) dividing the consorts, (2) gathering them, (3) the initial joining of vajra and lotus and (4) expressing the mantra of passion *Id.* In the next chapter, Alamka says “It is *Mahāyoga* because it is free from the creation stage yoga ” Alamka 201A But then, just a page later in the *Commentary* he says “ As for “The great *Mahāyoga* Tantra,” is the *Secret Community* and so forth that teach the two stages [*i.e.* generation and completion] ” Alamka 202A

¹³⁰⁴ *I.e.* (1) expressing the benefits of accomplishment, (2) the offering of bliss and (3) being taught by the offering mantra *Id.*

¹³⁰⁵ *I.e.* meditation on the body mandala of the creation stage, the envisioning of the body parts as composed of (1) Buddhas, (2) consorts, (3) bodhisattvas and (4) Terrifics, followed by (5) meditation on the supreme king of the mandala Alamka 199A-B

¹³⁰⁶ *I.e.* (1) subtle yoga, (2) and (3) two types of repetition, (3) having performed the activities, melting, (4) summoning by the four goddesses, (5) arising, (6) having emerged, praising the five lords, (7) gathering the wheel of the mandala, (8) generating Vajrasattva by the stage of egg-born, (9) the ritual of nourishing the body, (10) tasting the nectar, (11) the ritual of outer eating, and, (12) having requested [them] to go, sleeping Alamka 199B

¹³⁰⁷ Wayman 1991 has an extensive discussion of the “six yogas ” 156-63, 344-48 See also Bentor, “Do The *Tantras* Embody What the Practitioners Actually Do”? (unpublished paper)

¹³⁰⁸ Alamka 199B

¹³⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹³¹⁰ Alamka 199B

HŪM, “in the manner of a water-wheel by day and night.”¹³¹¹ Such a meditator “will no doubt achieve supreme wisdom.”¹³¹²

Chapter fifty-four is an extensive and detailed discussion of creation stage rituals, which are still practiced today. This is the longest chapter of the Tantra, and, perhaps reminding us that the peak is supported by the entire mountain, the *Vajra Rosary* brings us down the slopes a bit to the “twenty rituals” of the creation stage.

The twenty rituals are: [1] Preliminary service; [2] Purifying the land; [3] Banishing spirits; [4] Occupying the land; [5] Inspecting the thread line; [6] Consecration; [7] Banishing obstacles; [8] Making the mandala threadline clear; [9] Placing the dagger,¹³¹³ [10] Consecrating the vessel; [11] Consecration of the Lords; [12] Bathing; [13] Purifying; [14] Making offerings; [15] Consecration of the offerings; [16] the ritual cake; [17] Consecration of the disciples; [18] The fire offering according the ritual; [19] Empowerment; and [20] Requesting [the deities] to go.¹³¹⁴ The nineteenth and twentieth rituals have been discussed above in the context of the four empowerments and the sexual yogas, and that discussion will not be repeated here.

The first ritual, “Preliminary service,” involves the clearing away of obstacles by “the shaking of a finger warning the devils,” the rituals of *amuyoga*, and the recitation of the twenty-four syllable mantra of Viṣkambini ten thousand times, followed by ten thousand repetitions of the three letter mantra, OM ĀḤ HŪM.¹³¹⁵ “Purifying the land,”

¹³¹¹ Alamka 200A

¹³¹² *VR* 57B, ch 35, v 10

¹³¹³ At the ends of the lines - in the four directions?

¹³¹⁴ *VR* 69B, ch 54, vv 2-5

¹³¹⁵ *VR* 69B-70A, ch 54, vv 6-10

the second ritual, means selecting the place to practice, “isolated from people...near water...not too close or too far from a village” and “far from the king’s palace.” There, you sweep the ground.¹³¹⁶

Then, you engage in the third ritual, “banishing spirits” occupying the ground by making a teak dagger,¹³¹⁷ washing it while reciting the three-syllable and the hundred-syllable mantras, and then digging with it a certain distance or until you reach groundwater (or you do this mentally), then you let the spirit who lives there go, reciting the mantra OM MAHĀ KRO DHA DZWA LĀRKA HŪM PHAT with the mantra also visualized on your palms placed together, then striking your palms on the ground, adding other mantras, and offering the ghost or spirit the *torma*, the ritual cake.¹³¹⁸

Next the Vajra Master “occupies the ground,” the fourth ritual, “with equanimity and without discomfort,” by making the ground smooth and “smearing [it] with the five types,” *i.e.* cow dung, urine, milk, butter and yoghurt.¹³¹⁹ Then, preparatory to the drawing of the mandala, the Master performs the fifth of the twenty rituals, laying out the “thread line, which sets the dimensions of the mandala to be drawn,¹³²⁰ and then the sixth, in which the Vajra Master consecrates the mandala design after placing relics or jewels there, by repeating the three-syllable mantra with PHAT and SVĀ HĀ one-hundred eight

¹³¹⁶ *VR* 69B-70A, ch 54, vv 11-12

¹³¹⁷ See Mayer 1991 (“Not only was the *kīla* known and used in India in some form or another, but that characteristic form that we now call the Tibetan-style *phur-ba* might also be of surprisingly orthodox Indian provenance, and this in turn implies that the allegedly ‘apocryphal’ texts describing it might also in fact be genuine translations from Sanskrit”)

¹³¹⁸ *VR* 70A, ch 54, vv 13-16

¹³¹⁹ *Id.*, vv 17-19 The drawing of the mandala is also described in the *Secret Community Root Tantra* See Freemantle 1979, 40, ch 4, vv 7-10

¹³²⁰ *Id.*, vv 20-21

times, together with other mantras, and washing with foot water on the thread line.¹³²¹

The seventh ritual, the “banishing of obstacles,” is done by placing the words SUM BA, GRIHNA BA YA and so forth in the primary directions on the mandala.

In the eighth ritual, “making the mandala threadline clear,” the mandala is described in detail, with Akṣobhya in the center, and Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi in the east, south, west and north, respectively, and the elemental goddesses of Locanā etc. in the intermediate directions starting with the southeast, on the various variegated lotuses, sun and moon seats, “a delightful retinue, making hatred [*i.e.* Akṣobhya] joyous.”¹³²² The bodhisattvas sit two each in the four directions, and the sense goddesses and Terrifics are also placed in the mandala. All have three faces and six arms, and the various hand implements are described, as is the environment, symbolizing the divine mansion, as the outer rings. In short, the thirty-two deity *Ārya Guhyasamāja* mandala is fully described,¹³²³ which is “the reflection of one’s own body.”¹³²⁴

In the ninth ritual, “placing the dagger,” you “summon the wicked ones” and “strike with the dagger.” The dagger’s three points are marked with OM, ĀḤ and HŪṂ, and then it is placed in the prime and intermediate directions, various mantras, including that of Uṣṇīṣacakravartin, are said, and, at the end, you strike with the dagger.¹³²⁵

¹³²¹ *Id.*, vv 22-25

¹³²² *Id.*, v 32

¹³²³ *VR* 71B-72A, ch 54, vv 30-43

¹³²⁴ *VR* 72A, ch 54, v 44

¹³²⁵ *VR* 72A-73A, ch 54, vv 48-53

The tenth and eleventh rituals are the “consecration of the vessels” and “of the five [Buddha] Lords.” For the consecration of the vessels, ten vessels or six made of pure jewels are filled with the five medicines, the five fruits etc., adorned with jewels and jasmine, and filled with water with saffron, musk, camphor and sandalwood. The vessels are consecrated by saying the mantras of each of the five Buddhas, and inviting them from realm of Akaniṣṭa with light ray hooks to enter the vessel, which you lift up.¹³²⁶ Then you emanate the four elemental goddesses, making offerings to each while saying mantras, and to Yamāntaka and the other deities. Then finish by saying the essence, hundred syllable and three syllable mantras and visualizing yourself as the deity offer the contents of the vessels.¹³²⁷

For “consecration of the Lords,” you visualize the deities of the *Secret Community* mandala¹³²⁸ in the measureless mansion in Akaniṣṭa heaven “embracing their own reflection bodies,”¹³²⁹ light rays emanating from them. The master and the disciple say mantras, and the deities are invited to descend into the practitioners. Offerings are made to the outer deities; then “having made [oneself into] the deity, you should make offerings to yourself,” “having divine pride.”¹³³⁰ The deities are consecrated by the

¹³²⁶ VR 73A, ch 54, vv 54-57

¹³²⁷ VR 73A-B, ch 54, vv 58-64

¹³²⁸ Here, the mandala referred to is the *Mañjuvajra* 19-deity mandala rather than the *Ārya* 32-deity mandala VR 74A, ch 54, v 70 (“You should invite Mañjuvajra. He sits on his own particular seat, invited to the middle of the mandala.” [‘*jam pa’i rdo rje spyang drang bya/ dkyil ‘khor dbus su spyang drang ba rang gi gdan gyi dbye ba la bzhus*’ .]) However, seven verses later the text refers to the Aksobhya 32-deity mandala VR 74B, ch 54, v 74 (“You should worship the mothers [*i.e.* goddesses], harmful ones [*i.e.* Terrifics], and the sinless [*i.e.* bodhisattvas], who are created [and] the Lord of the mandala who arises from the family of great hatred.” [‘*ji ltar bskyed pa’i yum rnams dang/ gnod byed kha na ma tho med/ zhe sdang chen po’i rigs las byung dkyil ‘khor dbang phyug mchod bya zhing/*’])

¹³²⁹ *I.e.* consorts VR 74A, ch 54, v 67

¹³³⁰ VR 74B, ch 54, v 74

smoke of the vessel from camphor and *agru*,¹³³¹ and more mantras are spoken. At this point, “you should see the supreme mandala in all its detail.”¹³³²

Then you perform the twelfth ritual, “bathing,” by pouring milk and other substances over the mirror-reflections of the deities, “just as with a newborn.”¹³³³ Then you “purify,” the thirteenth, by visualizing Vajrasattva, burning mustard seeds and making the lotus-turning mudra as you give up the addictions.¹³³⁴ You then do the fourteenth ritual of “making offerings,” saying the appropriate mantras and making the appropriate hand gestures,¹³³⁵ followed by the fifteenth, the “consecration of the offerings,” done by saying mantras, followed by making prostrations.¹³³⁶ This is followed by the sixteenth ritual of the *torma* or ritual cake, blessed with offerings and given to pacify ghosts, accompanied by the saying of “the ten wrathful mantras” and concluding with the burning of sesame and additional mantras, all specified in the Tantra.¹³³⁷

Following all of this, the disciples themselves are prepared to be consecrated, the seventeenth ritual. The vajra master does this by washing them with various substances, “cleansing the stain of mind,” sprinkling water, “purifying the stain of karma,” placing

¹³³¹ *Agru* is less prized than sandalwood, most prized is white sandalwood, then red, then *agru*. Personal Communication with Lozang Jamsal

¹³³² *VR* 74B, ch 54, vv 75-77

¹³³³ *VR* 74B, ch 54, v 78

¹³³⁴ *VR* 74B-75A, ch 54, vv 79-81

¹³³⁵ *VR* 75A, ch 54, vv 82-84

¹³³⁶ *VR* 75A, ch 54, vv 85-86

¹³³⁷ Presumably, the mantras of the ten Terrifics *VR* 75A-B, ch 54, vv 86-94

the respective bodhisattvas on the sense faculties, establishing the body mandala, with the appropriate mantras. Then a thread is tied around the left arm of the disciples, flowers are scattered on them, other rituals are done, then a dagger is thrown and the disciples sleep that night in whatever direction the dagger falls. At dawn the master interprets the dreams of the disciples, tormas are given, and the disciples ask the masters for the teachings.¹³³⁸ The guru explains “what is to be done and not done.”¹³³⁹

The disciple then visualizes himself as the Vajra Master, and requests empowerment. He or she says: “Here, in the ocean of cyclic existence, covered with addictions, crocodiles and sea monsters, waves stirred up by the wind of karma, oh, Ocean of Compassion, alas, I am drowning...Help me!”¹³⁴⁰ The guru gives the disciple “nectar,” and tells him to protect it. The nectar is made from, among other things, shit, piss, and “a girl’s clothing from which drips bright blood, smeared with blood and semen, mixed with tree resin.” This is put in a vessel for the disciple, so he doesn’t forget this secret blend. The disciple drinks the nectar.¹³⁴¹ Then Vajradhara, “filled with the scent of burning the incense,” as a result of the eighteenth ritual, “the fire offering according to the ritual,” descends into the disciples as the guru says the mantra *oṃ tiśṭha mahā krodha āveśaya hūṃ*.¹³⁴²

¹³³⁸ VR 75B-77A, ch 54, vv 95-111

¹³³⁹ VR 77A, ch 54, v 111

¹³⁴⁰ VR 77A, ch 54, vv 114-15

¹³⁴¹ VR 77A-B, ch 54, vv 118-120

¹³⁴² VR 77B, ch 54, vv 121-22 The nineteenth and twentieth rituals are discussed above in the context of empowerment and the sexual yogas

The next chapter, fifty-five, explains the meaning of the main rituals set out in the preceding chapter. The preliminary rituals up to empowerment are related to the eight mundane spiritual accomplishments. One also practices the first five of the six perfections: giving, ethics, patience, effort, meditation of offerings to the Buddha and concentration. The sixth perfection, wisdom is attained through the knowledge wisdom empowerment with the consort: “Through the empowerment of knowledge wisdom, you perfect transcendent wisdom, abiding in secret and so forth, the cause being the passionate person.”¹³⁴³ The sensual enjoyment of the secret and wisdom knowledge empowerments are transformed “by the cause of equalizing wisdom,” so that “when you make offerings to the guru with faith, the result is the state of Vajrasattva.”¹³⁴⁴ The creation stage empowerments of water and so forth and the name empowerment are “for the purification of the five wisdoms” and that of non-reversal is “for the purification of the thought about sentient beings.”¹³⁴⁵ So powerful are these Tantric practices that “the subtlest particle of the mandala is equal to the worship of all the Tathāgatas,” because it is “the cycle of result.”¹³⁴⁶ “You attain empowerment, the very purest sphere of reality, and, by the knowledge wisdom [empowerment], you attain the very essence of reality.”¹³⁴⁷

Despite the description of matters pertaining to the creation stage that occupy part, albeit a small one, of the *Vajra Rosary*, the Tantra is clear that such practices are

¹³⁴³ *VR* 82A, ch 55, v 4

¹³⁴⁴ *Id.*, v 5

¹³⁴⁵ *Id.*, v 6

¹³⁴⁶ *Id.*, v 7

¹³⁴⁷ *Id.*, v 8

preparatory only and will not, in themselves, lead the practitioner to enlightenment. Passages such as the following are found in several places in the Tantra: “You don't need vows,/ You don't need burnt offerings,/ You don't need rosaries,/ You don't need counting./ As far as this is concerned,/ You don't need the division/ Of the creation stage,/ You don't need the so-called/ Accumulation of austerities.// By just the yoga of mantra/ The oral tradition of the guru/ And by practicing for six months,/ The supreme state/ Will be achieved.”¹³⁴⁸

Z. The Inner Offering

In chapter fifty-six, the Tantra explains the ritual of the inner offering, which “is the state of the ritual of worshipping the body.” Here, rather than engage in the worship of external things such as statues or mandalas, “you should always worship the [Three] Jewels and so forth with shit and piss.”¹³⁴⁹ But it is the Mind Vajra that is “chief,” and the Mind Vajra is the subject of all offerings, inner and outer.¹³⁵⁰

Here, as elsewhere, the understanding of emptiness and relativity is crucial: “The mind vajra itself is chief, [but] that mind also is non-existent because it has the character of emptiness. Emptiness likewise is formless, because of which all things are like space.”¹³⁵¹ So, you are instructed to “worship the three channels,” but realizing that

¹³⁴⁸ *VR* 17B-18A, ch 6, vv 55-56 *See also, e.g., VR* 26B, ch 13, v 26

¹³⁴⁹ *VR* 82B, ch 56, vv 1-2

¹³⁵⁰ Giving credence to Christian Wedemeyer's theory of connotative semiotics as applied to the five meats and nectars of the inner offering *See* Wedemeyer 2007b

¹³⁵¹ *Id.*, v 3

“they do not exist other than mind.”¹³⁵² Because of this, you are not lacking anything for practice: “You yourself abide as the nature of the mind of Vajrasattva,” so “always offer just your own body.”

So the yogi practices, indeed lives, as perceiving “the five pure families,” but “discern[ing] them as one family.”¹³⁵³ So, when your visual sense power engages, “having summoned Rūpavajrā, you should make offerings to Kṣitigarba,” and so on with each of the sense powers, including the mental sense power where, “summoning Dharmadhātuvajra, you make offerings to Mañjuvajra.”¹³⁵⁴ At the same time, however, “outer, inner and both are not perceived,”¹³⁵⁵ and thus “you should abandon the distinction of wanting and not wanting...you should never say that a yogi is ‘fortunate’ or ‘unfortunate.’”¹³⁵⁶

The inner offerings to the Mind Vajra take various forms: when you engage in desires and sense objects, you offer them to the guru; the “flower of perfect ecstasy” of the vajra sun and lotus are also so offered; conceptuality, like incense, is “totally burnt up by the fire of *tummo*” and offered to the Mind Vajra; as the vajra enters the lotus, you offer the indestructible sound of the yogi; then “the light rays of mantra, like the clear light of a blazing lamp.”¹³⁵⁷ In short, “whatever you are enjoying here, relying on all the senses, these are all the Mind Vajra.”¹³⁵⁸

¹³⁵² *Id.*, v 4

¹³⁵³ *VR* 83A, ch 56, vv 5-6

¹³⁵⁴ *VR* 83A-B, ch 56, vv 8-13

¹³⁵⁵ *VR* 83B, ch 56, v 14

¹³⁵⁶ *VR* 83A, ch 56, v 7

¹³⁵⁷ *VR* 83B, ch 56, vv 15-20

In chapter sixty-one, the ritual of “eating the five nectars” associated with the five Buddha families is described, the nectars being Vairocana – shit; Akṣobhya – piss; Amoghasiddhi – meat; Amitābha – semen; and Ratnasambhava – blood.¹³⁵⁹ They are mixed with the semen and hormonal fluid of the practitioner and consort, and other more conventional ingredients, and eaten by the practitioner and his co-practitioners, then friends and servants.

To practice the ritual the yogi is instructed to build a house in a wilderness, with a secret underground room.¹³⁶⁰ The practitioner, who “abandons passion and dispassion,” and consort purify themselves by eating fruit, etc. and repeating the Sumbharāja mantra 100,000 times,¹³⁶¹ then the practitioner repeats OM ĀḤ HŪM for one month.¹³⁶² The consort is young, sexy and beautiful, “without craving, but with a lustful mind... without thought construction, but very learned.” With her “the practitioner should desire until semen emerges.”¹³⁶³ The male and female sexual fluids are put into a “lotus vessel,”¹³⁶⁴ and left for seven days. Then bull, horse, dog, cow and human meats are added to the

¹³⁵⁸ *VR* 83B-84A, ch 56, v 22

¹³⁵⁹ *VR* 88A-B, ch 61, vv 1-3

¹³⁶⁰ *VR* 88B, ch 61, vv 4-5

¹³⁶¹ *Id.*, vv 6-8 The Sumbharāja mantra is OM SUM BHA NI SUM BHA HŪM HŪM PHAT/ OM GRIHNA GRIHNA HŪM HŪM PHAT/ OM GRIHNA PA YA GRIHNA PA YA HŪM HŪM PHAT/ OM Ā NA YA HO BHA GA WĀ NA PIDYA RĀ DZA HŪM HŪM PHAT *Id.*, v 9

¹³⁶² *VR* 88B-89A, ch 61, v 10

¹³⁶³ *VR* 89B, ch 61, v 11-13

¹³⁶⁴ Probably referring to the “lotus vessel” described in connection with the vase initiation described in verses 121 and 127 of chapter 54, *VR* 77B, particularly in view of verse seventeen’s instruction to place the ingredients “without companion in the lotus vessel made from good sandalwood,” *VR* 89A, ch 61, v 17, however, “lotus vessel” is also used to mean “vagina” in the Tantra, see *VR* 19B, ch 9, v 7, *VR* 27B, ch 14, v 18, so it is also possible that the hormonal fluids are smeared on the vagina, then left for seven days (!), then what remains after seven days is added to the other ingredients

lotus vessel, and OM ĀḤ HŪṢ is said for twenty-one days.¹³⁶⁵ Then the ingredients are placed in a sandalwood vessel on which is the mantra DZAḤ HŪṢ BAM HOḤ, and then more conventional substances, goat milk, sesame oil, butter and sugar are added.¹³⁶⁶ Pills are made from the mixture, which is left to dry in the shade. They should be consumed “with vajra brothers, sisters and relatives, [and] after a month, [with your] friends and servants.¹³⁶⁷ From this practice various attainments will be achieved, including “complete realization of the Great Seal.”¹³⁶⁸

AA. Peaceful and Wrathful Activities

In addition to the super-mundane attainment of enlightenment, Tantra has a more worldly aspect, the “mundane” siddhis. These are of two kinds, peaceful and wrathful. These are discussed in chapters sixty-six and sixty-seven.¹³⁶⁹ According to chapter sixty-six, peaceful and extensive activities are those of ordinary ritual; the others are not. The Tantra’s instructions for the four activities can be summarized as follows:

¹³⁶⁵ *VR* 89A, ch 61, v 16

¹³⁶⁶ *VR* 89A-B, ch 61, vv 17-18

¹³⁶⁷ *VR* 89B, ch 61, vv 19-20

¹³⁶⁸ *Id.*, v 22

¹³⁶⁹ If Matsunaga 1964 is right, and chapter sixty-eight was a later addition, then these two chapters would have ended the Tantra, which may make some sense stylistically. However, as noted above, chapter sixty-eight as written does put a nice wrap on the Tantra from a literary perspective, ending with the praises with which it began.

TABLE 13. Peaceful and Wrathful Activities

	<u>Peaceful</u>	<u>Extensive</u>	<u>Power</u>	<u>Killing</u>
<u>Moon</u>	Waxing	Waxing	Waning	Waning
<u>Direction</u>	North	East	West	South
<u>Color</u>	White	Yellow	Red	Black
<u>Mind</u>	Loving	Joyful	Desirous	Angry
<u>Time</u>	Dawn	Morning	Noon	Midnight

The Tantra also specifies the intermediate directions for certain fierce activities: killing in the Southeast; anger in the Southwest; punishing in the Northwest; and hypnotizing in the Northeast.¹³⁷⁰

Chapter sixty-seven specifies how to perform four “fierce repetitions” of the Terrifics: Yamāntaka, for controlling and expelling; Aparājita for exorcising ghosts and putting out fires; and Hayagrīva, for neutralizing poison. These should be performed in “a fearsome charnel ground, a terrifying, terrifying place, smeared with the blood of a human skull.”¹³⁷¹ The form to be practiced is to be drawn with a mixture of semen and menstrual blood, and should be “clear and scary.”¹³⁷²

For Yamāntaka, the Tantra gives the mantra for controlling and summoning, then specifies a procedure for expelling. For this, while reciting a different mantra, you make a potion of seeds, salt, mustard, poison, datura juice and blood to draw a wind mandala

¹³⁷⁰ *VR* 97B-98A, ch 66, vv 5-12

¹³⁷¹ *VR* 98B, ch 67, v 3

¹³⁷² *VR* 98B, ch 67, v 4

marked with vajras. In the center, you write the name of whatever it is you want to accomplish, and you practice constantly for seven days.¹³⁷³ For Aparājita, you place your hands on the head of the person to be cured, you visualize two sun disks on which there are HŪM's, and reciting the mantra, you visualize the two suns in the heart of the one to be exorcised burning up the ghost.¹³⁷⁴

For Hayagrīva, you visualize the person to be cured as a triple-stacked wisdom being with the wisdom being on a moon disk at her heart, visualizing light rays from the wisdom being filling up the body of the afflicted person. This blazing expels the poison. Then you visualize your right hand as a moon on which is written HAM, you say a mantra and then visualize “an unbroken stream of water” pushing the poison down from the patient’s head and out of his feet. Then you say a longer mantra, also specified in the Tantra, and add, “Please dispel the poison and so forth from so and so.”¹³⁷⁵ The chapter ends with, “Having followed the *Root Tantra*, you should know the rest in detail,” a reference to the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, chapters fourteen and fifteen. There, the procedures are given in greater detail than in the *Vajra Rosary*, but there are no lengthy mantras as there are in the *Vajra Rosary*.¹³⁷⁶

¹³⁷³ VR 98B-99A, ch 67, vv 5-16

¹³⁷⁴ VR 99A-99B, ch 67, vv 20-21

¹³⁷⁵ VR 99B-100A, ch 67, vv 23-27

¹³⁷⁶ VR 100A, ch 67, vv 31 See Freemantle 1971, 88-110 The *Root Tantra* specifies, among many other things, that the ones “to be cast out or destroyed” include those who “speak ill of the Mahāyāna” *Id.* 93-94

BB. The Conclusion of the Tantra

At the end of chapter sixty-eight, after describing the body mandala, and explaining the correspondences between the five main energy-winds and places in the body and Buddha families,¹³⁷⁷ and how the energy-winds are destroyed and then arise again in the life cycle,¹³⁷⁸ the assembled offer praise and thanks for the teaching, ending with “Thus to you, placeless space,/ Unelaborated and unsullied,/ With a mind equal to space,/ Unbounded one,/ We bow down, offering praise.”¹³⁷⁹

The Tantra ends with the command that the commitment of the *Vajra Rosary* should be practiced at all times, continuously, and that the ten Terrifics should be pacified with offerings of ritual cakes and mantras, which echoes Alamka’s statements (or is the source for them) that the *Vajra Rosary* in twelve thousand lines and the shorter *Vajra Rosary* were taught “from the perspective of the ten Terrifics in the form of glorious Vajrasattva, principally in order to control the ten Directional Protectors.”¹³⁸⁰ The last substantive verse of the Tantra states: “In order to care/ For sentient beings,/ Having taught various emanations,/ Vajrasattva will remain/ At all times,/ Day and night.”¹³⁸¹

¹³⁷⁷ VR 103B-104A, ch 68, vv 52-59

¹³⁷⁸ VR 104A-104B, ch 68, vv 60-63

¹³⁷⁹ VR 104B, ch 68, vv 65-70

¹³⁸⁰ Alamka 4A (*de ’i rjes su ’u rgyan du nub kyi ri la bcom ldan ’das dpal rdo rje sems dpa ’i gzugs kyi khro bo bcu ’i sgo nas gtsa bor phyogs skyong bcu ’dul ba ’i phyr*)

¹³⁸¹ VR 104B, ch 68, v 74

The colophon states: “Translated, edited and finalized by the Indian Abbot Sujana Śrī Jñāna and great text translator, monk Zhi ba 'od, the King of Tibet, in the temple of Tho-ling, *dpal med lhun gyis grub pa*, the sanctuary [of Ye shes 'od], the center of the earth.”¹³⁸²

¹³⁸² *Thugs dam sa'i snying po* could also refer to a temple of “the yidam Kṣitigarba,” although there is no reference to such a temple in Tucci 1989 or Vitali 1999. The Nyingma Catalogue translates the colophon to the *Śrīparamādīpikā*, Toh 488, also translated at Tho ling by Zhi ba 'od and Mantrakalaśa, presumably identical to that of the *Vajra Rosary*, as “Tr at the *viḥāra* of *dpal dpe-med lhun-gyis grub-pa* at Tho-ling in the province of Gu-ge.” See also Karmay 1998, 19-22.

Chapter Four

Application of the Algorithm to the *Vajra Rosary*

Let us now look at the *Vajra Rosary* through the hermeneutic approach outlined in Chapter One. Initially, and I stress that this is but the first step of a multiphase process, we will apply the algorithm proposed in Chapter One to two possible interpretations of the *Vajra Rosary*. One interpretation is inspired by Ron Davidson's interpretation of Tantra, *i.e.*, that soteriological concerns are "subordinated to the paradigm of dominance, hierarchy, and regal power." The other hermeneutic would see the *Vajra Rosary* as primarily a guide to yogic experience, in a soteriological context, with the objective of personal transformation in accord with the Buddhist path as explained in the literature. This is not a litmus test of the validity of either approach, but a methodology for deepening our understanding of this profound Tantra.

A. Application of the Algorithm - First Level: Finding the "Main Meaning"

1. Plain Meaning (+10%)

Introducing his *motif* of domination and royal power, Davidson asserts that, "Fortunately we only need read the texts and examine the rituals to determine that Mantrayāna has built into it a sustaining metaphor" ¹³⁸³ Does the text of the *Vajra*

¹³⁸³ Davidson 2002 at 121 That there may be a metaphor at work is a different issue than whether that metaphor illustrates the meaning of the text, but at this level of analysis, limited to the natural meaning of the words of the text, the two would coalesce When we get to the aspect of "function," if we find in the *Vajra Rosary* the metaphor Davidson emphasizes, we would have to examine whether the metaphor expresses the function of the text, and, even if we do not find such a metaphor predominating in the language of the text, we would have to consider whether it nevertheless reflects the text's function

Rosary reveal on its face that soteriological concerns are subordinated to “dominance, hierarchy and royal power”?

At the outset of the Tantra, Vajrapāṇi says to Buddha, “I beseech you to teach me/ Perfection stage yoga!”¹³⁸⁴ The questions in Chapter One of the *Vajra Rosary* that form the outline of the text are explicitly directed to the techniques of the perfection stage, as is most of the text of the Tantra that answers those questions. The plain meaning of the vast majority of the *Vajra Rosary* seems fairly clearly to be instruction in perfection stage yoga. However, it is worth noting here that in certain respects this explanatory Tantra, precisely because it *is* explanatory, has a plainer meaning than the *Root Tantra*.

Nevertheless, a close reading of the plain language of the Tantra does reveal elements that, although in the broad sense are part of the Tantric system of guru yoga, production of the ecstasies and the mundane *siddhis* that accompany the much greater transmundane attainment of enlightenment, are not strictly instruction in perfection stage yoga. These include the numerous instructions to disciples to give the guru things of value, sexual yoga consistently described from the male point of view, and the spells for control and killing of others as well as expelling demons and curing snakebite. So the plain language reveals a picture that is not black or white.

In addition, as even a cursory reading of the text of the *Vajra Rosary* will show, this explanatory Tantra is often not clear on its face and is deliberately written to function on multiple levels, as we see in Chapter Fourteen of the *Vajra Rosary* on the various meanings of “vajra” and “lotus.” While the *Vajra Rosary* lacks the *Root Tantra*’s most

¹³⁸⁴ *VR* 6B, ch 1, v 41

famous obscure statement that “you should kill living beings,”¹³⁸⁵ the *Vajra Rosary*, as noted in the next paragraph, tells you *how* to kill living beings, raising the very same hermeneutic issues that plague those interpreting the *Root Tantra* inasmuch as the actual killing of living beings would, in nearly all circumstances, violate fundamental religious and cultural norms.

The focus here though is whether the plain language of the text of the *Vajra Rosary* supports Davidson’s general conclusion about Indian esoteric Buddhism as being primarily about domination or royal power or other worldly considerations or whether it is mainly about perfection stage yogic techniques for personal transformation.¹³⁸⁶ Because, as shown in Chapter Three above, the great majority of the text concerns itself with the architecture of the subtle body, emptiness, the five stages, and specific yogic practices, I would say that the plain meaning of the text as a whole is soteriological or yogic rather than political or economic. Because the picture, based on the plain language

¹³⁸⁵ See generally Broido 1975

¹³⁸⁶ Davidson’s description of what constitutes the perfection stage emphasizes the sexual aspects of the practice, de-emphasizing much of what is discussed in the *Vajra Rosary* and other texts which discuss the perfection stage. See Davidson 2002b, 57. Davidson writes

Broadly speaking, “perfecting stage” involves two or sometimes three levels of ritual. Generally there is some form of internal yogic practice and the disciple is authorized to engage in this behavior with the second of the four consecrations. Here, the master copulates with a consort and the ejaculate is taken in by the disciple as a sacrament. The other level in the “perfecting stage” is that of sexual practice via the third of the four fundamental consecrations. Over and above the two major venues, we find the employment of sexual yoga in the tenth century in the fortnightly meetings, the *gaṇacakra*, in which yogins and their consorts come together—a ritual sexual practice would also be consummated. *Id.*

While sexual union does play an important role in the perfection stage, conflating the perfection stage with sexuality is misleading and, I would argue, incorrect, like equating government with military power or marriage with sex. Traditional definitions of the perfection stage refer to sexual union in the context of one of the components of innateness, but there is more to it than that alone. For example, “The completion phase is innateness, nonconceptuality, and the totality of all aspects, free from the concepts of faces, arms, colors, and shapes.” Kongtrul 2008, 124

of the text, is to some degree mixed, using those terms in their ordinary meanings, passing for now the larger issue of the interdependence of those two terms, I would make the judgment that 7% of the total 10% for this category falls within the ambit of “soteriological” meaning, while 3% of the total of 10% has a meaning that is “worldly.”

2. *Intellectual History/Authorial Intent (+10%)*

The obvious difficulty we encounter here is determining the identity of the author, not to mention the dating of the text in order to determine “what it was like to be an intellectual in that [spatio-temporal] region.”¹³⁸⁷ As Hirsch notes, “A stable and determinate meaning requires an author’s determining will, and it is sometimes important, therefore, to decide which author is the one being interpreted when we confront texts that have been spoken and respoken.”¹³⁸⁸ Inasmuch as the *Vajra Rosary* is a Tantra, and is found in the *bka’* ‘gyur, Buddhist tradition holds the author of the teaching to be Buddha, which is how it is presented in the Tantra itself. To the extent that this was in fact so, or to the extent that the author considered himself¹³⁸⁹ to be participating in the Buddha’s tradition or mindstream, while it might be easy to assume that the authorial intent here was of a soteriological and yogic nature, at the outset we have to acknowledge all of the difficulties attendant on trying to determine the actual mindset of a the founder of a religion about whom little is known apart from legend.

¹³⁸⁷ Rorty 1998, 268

¹³⁸⁸ Hirsch 1967, 126

¹³⁸⁹ Most probably *himself*, although not excluding the possibility of the author being a woman, someone like Śrī Lakṣmī or Ma gcig lab sgron. Roland Barthes makes a similar point about authorship in his distinguishing of “works” from “Texts” “[I]n ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose ‘performance’ — the mastery of the narrative code — may possibly be admired but never his ‘genius’ ” Barthes 1977, 142

While Vajrapāṇi is the principal interlocutor, there is no indication in the text as to the identity of the person who first recorded the Tantra in written form. From historical sources, the *History of Western Tibet*, we are told that the text was obtained by Mantrakalaśa in the vicinity of Oḍḍiyana after he had been given by Zhi ba ‘od four hundred *zho* of gold to procure it. If, as recent scholarship argues, the Buddhist Tantras were authored in the eighth and ninth centuries, then it is possible that Mantrakalaśa was within a small number of degrees of separation from the author, and possible, although, as discussed above, highly unlikely, was himself the author.

While, as noted by Anthony Thiselton, “[t]o be unaware of the author’s name, however, is not to be ignorant of his character, concerns and gifts,”¹³⁹⁰ one arguably can only be aware of the latter qualities through the text itself unless one can generalize based on other evidence extrinsic to the text. Lacking such extrinsic evidence, interpretations based on authorial intent, which intent is based only on the text, would be circular, and there would be, in effect, double counting. In such a case, this component of the algorithm should be omitted. Extrinsic evidence, however, could consist of other texts by the same author on the same subject, and, if the text is highly stylized and recognizable as part of a genre, the intent of the author in adopting a particular genre may be seen in the common Rortian intellectual history surrounding that genre of text. The *Vajra Rosary* is clearly an example of such a stylized text, representative of a genre,¹³⁹¹ in this case the Tantric genre in which the author continues *buddhavacana*, the speech of the Buddha, and particularly perfection stage Tantric writing. Similar styles respecting the setting for

¹³⁹⁰ Thiselton 2003, 1451

¹³⁹¹ See Hirsch 1967, 68-126

the Tantra are seen in not only in the Tantras but also in the Mahāyāna Sūtras, and the discussion of subtle body physiology and yogic technique is found in many other perfection stage Tantras and their commentaries.

So, in terms of a Rortian “intellectual history,” which “bracket[s] the question of what activities which intellectuals were conducting” in favor of “a sense of what it was like to be an intellectual in that [spatiotemporal] region,”¹³⁹² it is not difficult to conclude that the author here, whenever he lived, was a yogi-scholar, probably a monk or ex-monk, deeply familiar with yogic practice as well as the common literary trope in which the Tantra is written, and also familiar with Buddhist Tantric ritual and philosophy. The level of detail about the subtle body, particularly the one-hundred and eight energy-winds with their descriptions, not found in at least in the writings in use today in the Tantric colleges,¹³⁹³ indicates a special familiarity with subtle body physiology, possibly reflecting many years of meditative practice.

I think it is fair to say that the author’s intention and his or her intellectual history can fairly be represented as perpetuating and deepening the yogic system described in the Tantra, rather than expressing some differing agenda. Buddhists were particularly sensitive to the fact that on occasion less than meritorious use was made of Buddhist texts and practices—we see this in Ye shes ‘od’s *Proclamation* and many other places. But that less than dharmic motivation most likely did not occur to the author of this text in

¹³⁹² Rorty 1998, 267-68

¹³⁹³ Personal Communication with Denma Locho Rinpoche, 10-7-08 Rinpoche was the former disciplinarian of Gyume Tantric College, where the curriculum focuses on the *Secret Community*, and former abbot of Namgyal Monastery

creating it, regardless of whether it was later used for collateral or even political purposes.

While there were greedy yogis in the culture, even Davidson's review of 'Brog mi ascribes mainly soteriological motivation. While Zhi ba 'od did pay handsomely for the text, and Mantrakalaśa was apparently the intermediary, there is no evidence to suggest that this was mainly a financial transaction. As discussed in Chapter Two, Mantrakalaśa was a prolific translator and specialized in the *Secret Community*. I have seen nothing to impugn his motives. As for the translators, who brought the *Vajra Rosary* into its present form in Tibetan, Zhi ba 'od and, perhaps, Atīśa, there is no particular evidence impugning their motives. Zhi ba 'od was already, if not King, then royalty, with plenty of money and prestige, not to mention his monastic vows that would preclude doing work in the dharma for his own material gain. While, following Bourdieu, one could argue that true motive here is by definition disguised self-interest, that claim will be addressed in the function and power components of the algorithm.

So I would give 8% of the total 10% to soteriological meaning, and 2% to worldly objectives.

3. *Model Reader (+10%)*

Whom does the text contemplate as the audience? Here, given the technical nature of much of the text, it is fairly clear that the intended audience, Eco's model reader, "a sort of ideal type whom the text not only foresees as a collaborator but also

tries to create”¹³⁹⁴ were Tantric practitioners or scholar exegetes. It is hard to imagine who else would have the interest in it or the patience to read it.¹³⁹⁵

While, given the history of Tantric literature during the Tibetan Renaissance, where large amounts of gold were paid for teachings and manuscripts by wealthy monastic or lay Buddhists interested in Tantra, a history with particular relevance to Zhi ba ‘od, one could argue that in part the model reader contemplated by the author, procurer or translator of the text could have been a practitioner or scholar exegete with the resources to make a significant donation, my reading of the text does not reveal that the text is mainly directed towards persons with financial or political resources as opposed to those interested in developing their yogic practice and potential. Indeed, some of the explicit antinomian sexual yogic practices discussed in the *Vajra Rosary* might well have deterred many potential donors.

There is no praise of particular actual or potential donors or, as far as I can see, language in the text analogous to “Once upon a time” for children, that seeks the collaboration of anyone other than potential yogis or yoginīs. However, in the *Vajra Rosary*’s description of the *Gaṇacakra* ritual, there is a description of ritual involving the enactment of the *Secret Community* mandala with yogis and yoginīs arranged around the central figure, the Vajra Master.¹³⁹⁶ In this, the *Vajra Rosary* might be seen as a precursor of, for example, the *CMP*, with its discussion of perfection stage practice “with elaboration,” contemplating a ritual involving a large number of people and a significant

¹³⁹⁴ Eco 1995, 9

¹³⁹⁵ Again, while a text might have intended uses other than being read, those uses will be dealt with in the function and power relations part of the algorithm. Eco’s model reader assumes someone who *reads*.

¹³⁹⁶ *VR* 90A, ch. 62, vv. 10-11

cost.¹³⁹⁷ While this constitutes a relatively minor part of the Tantra, one could see this as contemplating the participation of persons with means to arrange and finance such rituals, although this is much more clearly seen in the *CMP* and the *BIL*. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the connection to the mandala configuration so emphasized by Davidson, here at the center of perfection stage ritual.

7% soteriological; 3% worldly.

4. *Commentary* (+10%)

Similarly, Alampa's *Commentary*, as well as the *PU*, the *BIL* and many others, illustrate the commentarial tradition of the *Vajra Rosary* that places it firmly in the religious-soteriological-yogic camp. Unlike, for instance, some of the Tantras claimed to be inauthentic in Zhi ba 'od's *Proclamation*, I am not aware of any traditional commentarial claim that the *Vajra Rosary* is not what it purports to be, or that treats it as having some worldly aim. There is Yukei Matsunaga's assertion that chapter sixty-eight of the Tantra was added later in order to promote the authority of the Noble Tradition, but because I believe that assertion is questionable, as discussed in Chapter II, C, 2, above, even if we treat it as some kind of commentary, I am giving it little weight. 9% soteriological; 1% worldly.

5. *Past Function* (+25%)

Now we come to the "modern" part of the algorithm, where we disregard the literal and traditional meaning of the text, the author's intent and the ostensibly intended

¹³⁹⁷ Wedemeyer 2007, 116-117, 277-305 See also Tsong kha pa 2010, 553-555

audience and we look for what we would say was *really* going on. It is here in particular that, in the approach I am proposing, we will have to weigh religious versus social, economic and political factors in validating interpretations of what was and is the principal function of the *Vajra Rosary*.

While acknowledging the yogic aspect of Tantra, Davidson emphasizes the importance of Tantra's social consequences. For example, he notes, "Far from being *simply* a series of complex internal yogic meditations, the Lamdré also became an icon for the emerging power and authority of the Khön clan in southern Central Tibet."¹³⁹⁸ On a grander scale, he concludes:

The renaissance is *really* the story of the great Central Tibetan clans' employment of Tantric and yogic documents to help their society, which was just emerging from a catastrophic collapse. That process of disintegration eventually led to the subsequent rebirth of Tibet.¹³⁹⁹

Here again, it is (really) the *really* that presents both the problem and the solution. While the Lamdré may have acted to augment the Khön clan's power and Tantric documents may have galvanized Tibetan society, the issue that will drive the discussion deeper through the instrumentality of the hermeneutic algorithm is whether that is *really* what Tantra is about: mainly a social or political phenomenon rather than yogic or soteriological one.¹⁴⁰⁰

¹³⁹⁸ Davidson 2005, 14-15 (emphasis added)

¹³⁹⁹ Davidson 2005, 60

¹⁴⁰⁰ Again, we need to be precise about the discussion of the *use* of yogic enlightenment technology, a component of its meaning. If the technology of the *Vajra Rosary* and similar teachings really does promote enlightenment, release from suffering and so forth, then it should come as no surprise that it would be considered "valuable" in the worldly sense and would be used in worldly ways, even fought over, as all things of value are. I do not think that means that we can assume that enlightenment technology is no different than other things of value and finds its meaning *only* in value. Given our economic system and its emphasis on material wealth, while the privileging of material value is not surprising, it should be the subject of our hermeneutic suspicions.

As Daniel Dennett says, “It is only because an artifact works that we infer the intention of the artificer.”¹⁴⁰¹ While Davidson, in the thrall of the protective strategy that many would still agree justifies bifurcating the social from the spiritual, does not engage the possibility of yogic, soteriological function, and so does not discuss whether the artifacts, in this case the practice described in the texts, “work,” if we are to seriously think about the primary meaning or meanings of the Tantra, we can no longer avoid that question. In the same way, I agree with Davidson that we can no longer simply discuss the spiritual and soteriological, and think that we can leave the social and political and so forth off to the side.

Since the vast majority of the *Vajra Rosary* is about perfection stage practice, in order to better assess its function as a preliminary matter in aid of our determination of function, we should attempt to make—and we should discuss—whether the practices described there are efficacious or not. If the practices described result in the states described, that would suggest that the yogic practices themselves might be the primary or at least a primary function of the Tantra; if not, we can assume its function was (and is) something other than is described. If we are to weigh, to choose, we should engage this question. Bracketing the question leaves key assumptions covert, and makes broader discussion and progress in understanding the meaning more difficult, if not impossible.

There are some difficulties here. First, we are dealing with mostly subjective states of mind, whose objective measurement is problematic. Second, there are strong cultural barriers erected that discourage such an inquiry. As described by Thurman, both the etic and emic perspectives on this are blocked by what he calls the “obstructive

¹⁴⁰¹ *Id.* at 177, *quoting* Wimsatt and Beardsley 1954, 4

presuppositions,” four for modern philosophers and four for Buddhist practitioners.¹⁴⁰²

These include for modern philosophers “a sense of the non-perfectibility of human understanding” and for the Buddhist practitioners “a sense of the vast difference between their own state of ‘ignorance’ and the ‘enlightenment’ of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.”¹⁴⁰³ In addition, within the Tibetan tradition, while the secrecy regarding the practices has been diminished with the fourteenth Dalai Lama’s pronouncements on the issue, secrecy regarding the *results* of the practices remains quite intact through the vehicle of modesty surrounding spiritual accomplishment, *i.e.* one who is spiritually accomplished would be too modest to reveal it.¹⁴⁰⁴

Logically, the first level of inquiry into the efficacy of religious practice in validating a textual interpretation is one’s own personal experience or lack thereof, which can and should, in the proper context and right time and place, be communicated to others not only as direct testimony as to the efficacy or lack thereof of the practices, but also in order that one’s prior assumptions and potential biases be transparent.¹⁴⁰⁵ On a second level, our judgments about the efficacy of religious practices are founded on our knowledge of the experiences of others, gleaned through observation of behavior,

¹⁴⁰² Thurman 1984, 6-7

¹⁴⁰³ *Id.*, 6, 7 Thurman does not ask the reader to overcome these particular presuppositions, but rather, “most importantly, I shall trust that they suspend dogmatic prejudgment of the issue of the perfectibility of human understanding, having realized the arbitrariness of either theistic or materialistic insistence on a fundamental imperfection in human genius, either dogma or ‘fact’ arising as a philosophical or ‘scientific’ buttress of authoritarian social structure, in ancient and modern cases, respectively ” *Id.*, 8

¹⁴⁰⁴ Interestingly, this attitude seems to be directly contradictory to that of the Buddha as depicted in the Pali canon, where he made no bones about proclaiming his realization

¹⁴⁰⁵ As of the final revisions to this thesis, I am still pondering what the right time and place for such disclosures would be, and, honestly, have not come to a conclusion I realize that, given my argument here, lack of disclosure on my part is inconsistent Inconsistency, however, may not always be a bad thing See Parfit 2011, *xlu*

conversations, spiritual biographies, autobiographies and hagiographies and, recently, scientific experiments.¹⁴⁰⁶ As noted by one modern study, “often during times of meditation there are powerful subjective experiences which individuals claim have radically altered their lives, given them a new sense of meaning a purpose, new values, and a new relationship not only with themselves but with other people and the world around them.”¹⁴⁰⁷ Thus far, there has been little research done regarding specifically Tantric practices, but we can anticipate that the future will see such studies as well as those that have focused on more general meditative practices. While beyond the scope of the present study, all of this material should be brought to bear in determining the validity of any interpretation that, as it must, makes assumptions about the efficacy of Tantric yoga.¹⁴⁰⁸

I have argued above that based on the evidence of Tantric practices prior to the emergence of the texts we now call “Tantras,” we should continue to entertain the possibility that Tantra, and perhaps even the *Vajra Rosary*’s teachings existed long before the emergence of the written text late in the first millennium. However, given the antiquity of the matter and the lack of textual or archeological artifacts from that period, it is difficult to do anything other than speculate about what the function of the *Vajra*

¹⁴⁰⁶ See, e.g. Lutz 2008, 2 (“[T]he brain regions underlying emotions and feelings are modulated in response to emotional sounds as a function of the state of compassion, the valence of the emotional sounds and the degree of expertise”), Richard Davidson 2007, 173 (“The findings support the idea that, after extensive [focused attention] meditation training, minimal effort is necessary to sustain attentional focus. Expert meditators also showed less activation than novices in the amygdala during [focused attention] meditation in response to emotional sounds. This finding may support the idea that advanced levels of concentration are associated with a significant decrease in emotionally reactive behaviors that are incompatible with stability of concentration”), Benson 1982, Shapiro 1984.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Shapiro 1984, 14. See also Samuel 2008, 351.

¹⁴⁰⁸ It is here that I believe Ann Taves’ proposals will prove very useful. By expanding the definition of “religious” to “special,” her proposed methodology will make it much easier to measure various religious experiences across cultures. See Taves 2009.

Rosary might have been at that time, if it existed. So we will begin our discussion of function at the beginning of the second millennium.

At that time, the “Indian book” obtained by Mantrakalaśa from Oḍḍiyana at Zhi ba ‘od’s request was translated into Tibetan by Zhi ba ‘od and, perhaps, Atīśa or another Indian pandit. From that time, although as discussed above, there was increasing public knowledge about Tantra, at least in Kashmir, we have no indication that the text of the *Vajra Rosary* was not, as best we can tell, like such texts at the time, closely held, and translated, read and commented upon by exegetes and advanced practitioners.

Subsequently, the *Vajra Rosary* was widely quoted in the commentarial literature such as the *PU*, the *BIL* and Dolpopa’s *Mountain Doctrine*, so it must have been, to some extent, copied and distributed.¹⁴⁰⁹ The *Vajra Rosary* became a central part of the Noble Tradition literature on the *Secret Community*; indeed, some assert with Yukei Matsunaga that the explanatory Tantras were created to validate the Noble Tradition commentaries. So, we will also have to examine the primary function of the Noble Tradition literature in evaluating what function the *Vajra Rosary* came to have in the centuries after its translation. And we need to be open to the possibility that the *Vajra Rosary* had more than one function over time and/or more than one function at a time.

a. Function As the Practices Themselves

Tibetan Tantric literature is replete with detailed descriptions of the states described in the *Vajra Rosary*. The very name of the Tibetan biographical work, *rnam*

¹⁴⁰⁹ *Mountain Doctrine* is a veritable encyclopedia of quotations from various texts. However, the *Vajra Rosary* is the fourth most frequently cited tantra, ahead of the *Secret Community Root Tantra* itself, and follows only the *Kālacakra* and *Hevajra* tantras and the *Expression of Mañjuśrī’s Ultimate Names* Dolpopa 2006, 28

thar, “complete liberation,” assumes that the primary content of a life is measured in spiritual terms. Yet, the Tibetans were keenly aware that there was more to life than this.

As noted by Turrell Wylie,

Tibetan “biographies” are essentially religious in content and purpose, and are replete with references to the innumerable initiations and teachings received by the lamas, as well as their accomplishments in the realm of the mystic and occult. They begin with the lama’s lineage, his early education, his advanced training, and the various manifestations of his wisdom and power in teaching, meditation, and performing rituals. The biographies are not limited exclusively to religious matters: the multiple roles of meditator, socio-religious leader, and medical practitioner played by the lamas serve to introduce significant data on political and social institutions....¹⁴¹⁰

The Tibetan concept of the *rnam thar* shows that the difficulties we have in taking religious and non-religious matters together is peculiarly our problem, a consequence of the protective strategy that disables us from considering the two together or measuring the one against the other.¹⁴¹¹ Stearn’s and Davidson’s work with *rnam thars* of Virūpa and Gayādhara shows that the Tibetans had no compunction about identifying human character flaws and the role of money and power without assuming religious considerations were subordinate to them.¹⁴¹² It is probably also worth mentioning that seeing religious and non-religious phenomena on a continuum is consistent with both Mahāyāna Buddhism and the Tantric way. Indeed, the *Vajra Rosary* would bar people

¹⁴¹⁰ Wylie 1968, 649

¹⁴¹¹ I have experienced something similar in teaching Contemporary Civilization to Columbia undergraduates. We start the semester with a fairly intensive exposure to Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics, and after five weeks, the students’ critical faculties have moved into high gear. Then we read the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and Qur’an. In what appears to be a miraculous transformation, most of the students’ critical abilities seem to evaporate, being replaced by questions like “Why is God so mean to the Egyptians?” The particular student’s religious belief does not seem to matter. After the change in their critical acumen is pointed out to them, the discussion improves, slowly. For many students, there is clearly a great resistance to applying critical reasoning to religion.

¹⁴¹² A review of the *rnam thar* literature with a view towards ascertaining whether there is a Tibetan way of *measuring* the impact of these worldly issues on religious considerations as opposed to adopting a protective strategy dichotomizing those two types of factors remains to be done.

like us from even entering the *gaṇacakra*, the circle of Tantric worship: “One who finds a contradiction/ Between scripture/ And worldly things/ Should not enter.”¹⁴¹³

Descriptions of the practices and their efficacy are represented by their authors, such as Mi la ras pa, Tsong kha pa and ‘Jigs med gling pa as well as the present Dalai Lama and many others, as being accurate descriptions of the result of Tantric meditation.¹⁴¹⁴ While we cannot exclude the possibility that all of these people, many of whom seem to have lived exemplary, ethical lives, and who demonstrated in their philosophical writings keen intelligence, were either delusional or were perpetuating a fraud, it seems unlikely. Anyone asserting such a thesis –which is not to my knowledge advocated by any reputable scholar¹⁴¹⁵ –would have to assume that these paragons of Buddhist ethics were violating the general and monastic prohibitions on false speech. In addition, if *all* of these people were lying, one would assume there would be some

¹⁴¹³ VR 90A, vv 7-9

¹⁴¹⁴ Particularly with the Tibetan diaspora starting in 1959 there has been significant anthropological and sociological work done with the refugee communities and individual practitioners. There is a vast literature by and about the present Dalai Lama, a Tantric practitioner. English translations of *rnam thar* (biographical) and *rang nam* (autobiographical) literature include Rato 1977, Trungpa 1977, Dowman 1984, Thurman 1989, Aris 1989, T. Gyatso 1990, Willis 1995, Edou 1996, J. Gyatso 1998, Dowman 2000. There are many others.

¹⁴¹⁵ Davidson characteristically emphasizes the flawed humanity of the Tantric masters

I have approached those of saintly aura and sought humanity where others seek holiness, having looked for the fragile edges of their personalities while the tradition affirms the impenetrable core of their personas. My compulsion to extend praise to these gentlemen proceeds despite our differences, for much that they did I have found disturbing or even, at times, dishonorable.

Davidson 2002, xi. But acknowledging the flawed humanity of Tantric practitioners is different than challenging the efficacy of Tantric practice. Indeed, from the Buddhist point of view, it is those very flaws, particularly those involving attachment and desire, that draw them to Tantra, and it is with them in mind that Buddha taught Tantra in the first place. Alamka, for example, notes that Buddha taught the *Secret Community Root Tantra* “after he looked at the realm of living beings, pervaded by the [five] corruptions of lives, views, addictions and fate and living beings.” Alamka 1B (*de’i rjes su slar yang tshe dang lta ba dang nyon mongs pa dang skal ba dang sems can gyi snyigs mas khyab pa’i sems can gyi kham la gsigs te*)

evidence of that. Absent such evidence, there is no reason not to assume they are telling what they believe to be the truth.

This leaves the possibility of some sort of collective delusion or habitus.

Certainly, collective delusion could take the form of literary trope, but the descriptions in the literature are of exact meditational states, and, given the remarkable creativity and output evident in Tibetan literature, one could reasonably assume that most if not all of the authors would have known the difference between repeating a myth regarding states of consciousness and giving instructions for attaining and using those states for soteriological ends. Thus, we end up in the same place: if these descriptions are inaccurate, they must be deliberately so, and for that proposition, there is no evidence.

So, it seems that there is some evidence that the practices described in the *Vajra Rosary* have at least some generalized efficacy, and there does not appear to be any significant evidence to the contrary.

b. The “Domestication” Function of the Explanatory Tantras

As noted in Chapter Two, while the received opinion on the matter is that the explanatory Tantras “domesticated” the antinomian practices described in the *Secret Community Root Tantra*, that is not so clear given many of the practices clearly prescribed in the *Vajra Rosary*. However, even if we take the received wisdom as a kind of commentarial tradition, and thus take it as true to some degree, it still can be seen as having a highly soteriological purpose: the adaptation of Buddhist practice to changing times and mores, the essence of the Buddhist principle of *upāya*, means.¹⁴¹⁶

¹⁴¹⁶ In this way, we can see the explanatory Tantras and “domesticating” commentaries as the precursors of what some now derogatively call “New Age” Buddhism, a Buddhism adapted to sell in our scientific,

c. Perfection Stage Tantra's Function As a Kantian Standard

If the perfection stage practices do not deliver what they promise in terms of a practical path to high levels of meditative concentration and ecstasy and wisdom leading to Buddhahood, then the question becomes whether they are efficacious in some other way. The notion of the possibility of Buddhahood in one or several lifetimes could be a potent ground for a belief and ethical system, whether or not the particular techniques were fact or fiction. As suggested by Paul Griffiths,

Immanuel Kant suggested that human beings need an idea of highest perfection in order to have a standard to apply in making determinations of an axiological kind....[B]uddhalogical doctrine may usefully be thought of as an attempt to construct a notion of something maximally great, a systematic attempt to define and list those properties that something must have in order...to be maximally great, and so also as the basis for and fullest representation of, Buddhist axiological commitments.¹⁴¹⁷

materialistic, anti-religious times. See, e.g. Batchelor 1997. Stephen Batchelor, writing for the general public, advocates for a western "Buddhism" divorced from traditional historical and cultural trappings. Robert Thurman writes in *Jewel Tree of Tibet*, his adaption of the *bla ma mchod pa* practice to a Western audience

Buddhism, as merely a set of responses to the needs of beings, develops as they need them. It isn't some system that emerges as a thing-in-itself out of some reality. It is not a dogma, a structure built up on the basis of reality. Buddhism is, actually, simply, an endless series of methods and arts of opening doors to reality that fit with any particular person's location and place. "Buddhism" can emerge as Christianity. It can emerge as Judaism. It can emerge as humanism.

Thurman 2005, 16

¹⁴¹⁷ Griffiths 1994, 58 (footnote omitted)

More practically, advanced Tantric “techniques are obviously only practiced by an élite, but they nourish even the layman’s religious life insofar as they are illustrated by countless hagiographic anecdotes.”¹⁴¹⁸

Thus, even if there were no efficacy to the practices themselves, there still could be a soteriological function for the promulgation of texts like the *Vajra Rosary* equivalent or analogous to the function of miracles in many religious traditions.

d. Non-Religious Functions

Finally, if we assume that the practices are not efficacious, or even if they are, we should look at the range of other functions the *Vajra Rosary* and similar texts may have performed. There is nothing “un-Buddhist” or “un-Tibetan” about this kind of analysis. Many of Buddha’s earliest discourses focused on worldly matters, work, marriage, social obligations and the like.¹⁴¹⁹ From the earliest days of Buddhism as a state religion in many different venues, in allowing a role for the local *yakṣa* deities, Buddhism acknowledged not only the transmundane values of liberation and the like (*lokottara*), but also the worldly values that were the specialty of the local deities (*laukika*).¹⁴²⁰ And, no later than Ye shes ‘od’s *Proclamation*, Tibetans were keenly aware of the dark side that came along with (mis)use of Tantra.¹⁴²¹

¹⁴¹⁸ Stein 1972, 186

¹⁴¹⁹ See, e.g., Bodhi 2005, 115-42

¹⁴²⁰ See, e.g., Samuel 2008 146-52

¹⁴²¹ Tibetans themselves often take skeptical views of the mundane motives of “holy” persons. But these things are generally talked about rather than written down. Personal Communication with L. Jamspal, 2-18-11

(A). *The Problematic Evidentiary Record*

The problem we face at the outset is that we have very little knowledge of the complex of cultural, social and economic conditions that existed on the ground at the end of the first millennium. As Kurtis Schaeffer noted in his study of Bu ston's letter to the editors of Buddhist texts, (and we know more about Bu ston, who was productive in the 14th century, than we do about the translation and editing of Buddhist texts at Tho ling in the 11th century),

We have as yet made far less progress in the study of the actual events, the day-to-day activities that went into the creation of such an enormous body of Buddhist literature. [fn. omitted] The economic, social, political, or institutional realities that constituted the making of a canon are still only poorly known. Who paid for the work? What sorts of laborers were involved and how many, and how might the systems of management that were no doubt necessary for the successful completion of such a large project have been organized? Further, what range of religious significance did the making of a canon hold, either for its patrons, its readers, its editors and scribes....?¹⁴²²

(B). *Dominance, Hierarchy and Regal Power*

Ronald Davidson's works make a good entry point because they present a variety of arguments made to date for a functionality other than a soteriological one, but they are not the end of the discussion. In *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, Davidson makes the point that the *Secret Community*, as well as in the *Chakrasaṃvara* and *Hevajra* systems, "united the practices associated with generating a maṇḍala (the generation process, *utpattikrama*) and the psychosexual yogic practices (the perfection process: *niṣpanna-krama*)...."¹⁴²³ He emphasizes that completion or perfection stage practices were allied

¹⁴²² Schaeffer 2004, 267

¹⁴²³ Davidson 2005, 36

“with a new series of consecrations,”¹⁴²⁴ the four initiations described in chapters two and fifty-four of the *Vajra Rosary*. “As the new systems became codified in the ninth century,” he writes, “the consecrations were said to provide access to the ritual or yogic practices.”¹⁴²⁵ Davidson stresses the relationship between consecration or initiation and coronation in his metaphor of royal power.¹⁴²⁶ So I think it is fair to say that Davidson’s argument about the primacy of the paradigm of power and domination could apply to perfection as well as creation stage texts and practices, and many of the examples he gives are drawn from perfection stage literature.

But while the motif of royal power may have reflected the social structures of the time, which, as discussed in Chapter One, is not particularly remarkable, to contemplate that Zhi ba ‘od sought to obtain and translate the *Vajra Rosary* in furtherance of “dominance, hierarchy, and regal power” might seem somewhat problematic in view of the fact that Zhi ba ‘od, being of royal family, had all of these already. Subject to the considerations raised below, one could argue with some force that he didn’t have to “configure... his practice through the metaphor of becoming the overlord of a maṇḍala of vassals” because he already *was* the overlord.¹⁴²⁷ While Zhi ba ‘od in one sense might be the exceptional case, in another sense he was not: Buddhism often entered a new

¹⁴²⁴ *Id.*

¹⁴²⁵ *Id.*, 37 And Davidson emphasizes the reappearance of the completion stage meditator “through the birth of the deity in the mandala” as the purification of death, “through the union of phenomenal appearance and emptiness” *Id.* at 38

¹⁴²⁶ Just as “[t]he monk obtains consecration [*abhiṣeka*] from his preceptor [*vajrācārya*] so that he takes pride in himself as a divinity [*devatābhīmāna*] and will be given dominion over a circle of divinities [*maṇḍala*], of different families [*kula*],” “[t]he prince obtains coronation [*abhiṣeka*] from his priest [*purohita*] so that he is recognized as composed of fragments of divinity [*devamśa*] and will be given dominion over a circle of vassals [*maṇḍala*] of different lineages [*kula*] Davidson 2002, 122

¹⁴²⁷ Davidson 2002, 2

culture from the top down, which is also a good argument that those initially adopting it did not do so to gain any worldly advantage.

It is also worth noting here that Zhi ba 'od, in becoming a monk at the age of forty-one, would have renounced, at least to some degree, his royal prerogatives. From that time,

[H]e was the patron of the translations. He was a recipient of religious teachings, a donor, a maker of religious books, gtsug.lag.khang-s and mchod.rten-s; he allocated public funds for each member of the dbu.sde-s ("monastic communities"), innumerable [deeds were performed by him]. Bla.ma Zhi.ba'od was a great patron of offerings to the teachings and the holders of [those] teachings. As he personally carried the banner of the teachings, he safeguarded Buddhism for forty-four years and died in the iron female hare year.¹⁴²⁸

Due to the paucity of the historical record, we have very little to go on in determining Zhi ba 'od's actual motivation. But even assuming that there was some mundane psychological intent, such as surpassing his older brother Byang chub 'od at whose behest Atīśa came to Tibet, the notion that those worldly objectives should predominate over central tenets of Buddhist Mahāyāna values centrally contradicts not only those latter values of selflessness and renunciation which characterize Buddhism from the outset, but also particularly Atīśa's own *Lamp Illuminating the Stages of the Path*, which, along with many other texts, specifies that Tantra should *only* be practiced *after* mastering and consistent with those values. If Davidson were correct that the mission of the Noble Tradition was to domesticate Tantra within the Buddhist paradigm, and that such mission was successful, *that* would seem to be a soteriological, religious motivation rather than one of domination and so forth.

¹⁴²⁸ Vitali 1996, 120

I suppose though that it is possible that Zhi ba ‘od was an exception to the general rule. Davidson’s *Tibetan Renaissance* advances the theory that the translation movement, discussed in his chapter, “Translators as the New Aristocracy,” “was mainly a question of the clash of institutional cultures” and

really came about because of the disparity between the aristocratic and royal standards of appropriate conduct, on the one hand, and the decidedly inappropriate behavior of individuals or groups in Tibet...employing...such practices as sexual yoga or murderous assaults...even though this is exactly what some Indians had actually done....¹⁴²⁹

The result of the prodigious efforts made by the translators “provided its protagonists with a sense of entitlement that could match the credentials enjoyed by the older aristocracy...sufficient for them to attract disciples and resources.”¹⁴³⁰ Here Davidson is not exactly claiming that the translators were motivated by these worldly things, but he certainly asserts them as the primary result, again, largely ignoring the issue of whether these translations also had a soteriological purpose. In the worldly sphere, however, Davidson is not arguing that all or even most translators were acting with an eye toward political or economic power. He writes:

Whereas many of the eleventh-century translators did not seize the opportunities for political power as they were presented to them, it is clear that the most famous exercised varying degrees of political and economic authority and that virtually all doing so were translators of tantric Buddhist texts.¹⁴³¹

For Davidson, the biographies of Rwa lo rdo rje grags pa (Ralo) and ‘Brog mi-lo tsā ba shā kya ye shes (Drokmi) are paradigmatic. Ralo’s spectacular career of ritual

¹⁴²⁹ Davidson 2005, 120

¹⁴³⁰ *Id.*, 129

¹⁴³¹ *Id.*

murder and black magic did not detract from his ability to succeed as a translator in garnering a large amount of secular power. Continuing his metaphor of the importance of royal power, Davidson generalizes from Ralo's experience:

Although the exceeding of religious parameters and the wielding of temporal influence had been predominantly the prerogative of the landed gentry, the translator's religious training did grant them certain forms of legitimacy that their familial associations might not (and, in some cases, could not) provide, especially capital accrual and land tenure, but also the commandeering of resources for building projects... Some of the esoteric translators ended their careers by renouncing their vows (Drokmi), fathering illegitimate children (Ralo), or establishing a nice little harems for themselves of willing female disciples (Marpa and Ralo), in this way emulating the behavior of the feudal gentry, who bequeathed estates principally through patriarchal primogeniture... [M]any of the eleventh-century esoteric masters handed down their lines to their direct progeny or to members of their clan, thereby fusing clan and religion¹⁴³²

However, treating 'Brog mi and Gayādhara at greater length, and even reveling in 'Brog mi's greed and Gayādhara's duplicity, Davidson acknowledges that worldly goals cannot explain their achievements:

[T]he combination of an avaricious Tibetan with a self-absorbed Indian seems, on the face of it, a recipe for disaster. Yet Drokmi's ['Brog mi's] and Gayādhara's achievements belie that estimation, for the larger purpose of literary translation cannot be wholly subsumed into a neat paradigm of self-promotion... Neither promoted himself as an author, even if both were acknowledged authorities. The care and attention to detail evident from the more than sixty translations by Drokmi do not speak of an individual concerned solely with himself, and if his need for wealth was egregious, so was his expenditure of effort on behalf of his tradition...

... If their behavior occasionally challenges our moral suasion, their linguistic and literary accomplishments should challenge our own dedication to the value of intellectual and spiritual enterprise.¹⁴³³

¹⁴³² Davidson 2005, 140

¹⁴³³ *Id.* 208-09

Thus, even with his overarching theory about the subordination of soteriological concerns to those of power and the like, Professor Davidson recognizes “the value of intellectual and spiritual enterprise” in what the translators were doing.

On the other hand, the extremely high status of Tantra and Tantric texts in the eyes of the Ngari royal family cannot be ignored in assessing the function of the *Vajra Rosary* and similar texts. While Zhi ba ‘od was presumably at or near the top of the social pyramid in Gu ge, social capital is a wasting asset. The arrogation of Tantric texts and their translation to the royal family can be viewed as functioning to enhance and preserve the leadership’s social status, much like the collection of artwork by royalty in many parts of the world. That art may have been created “for art’s sake”¹⁴³⁴ does not mean that it did not *also* function as an emblem of royal prerogative and, yes, “dominance, hierarchy, and regal power.” The same can be said of Tantra. While Tantra may have been created with a soteriological purpose, like Dennett’s sad-irons, it may have come to have an entirely different function.

Using Pierre Bourdieu’s reasoning, we might go further. He writes, “Symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby *disguised* form of physical economic capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in ‘material’ forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects.”¹⁴³⁵ One could argue that the very distinctions of Buddhist dharma that separate the spiritual from the worldly realm embody this kind of transformation. Such an argument, of course, is totalizing in the sense that it assumes the primacy of material

¹⁴³⁴ I am grateful to Gray Tuttle for bringing my attention to this analogy. Personal Communication, 5/10/11

¹⁴³⁵ Bourdieu 1977, 183

factors, but must certainly be considered in any weighing of the worldly versus the spiritual, especially given the dominance of materialism in the contemporary worldview.

Some thirty years before Davidson's more fulsome treatment of the Tibetan Renaissance, R.A Stein, in his survey, *Tibetan Civilization*, covered many of the same issues. Tracing the temporal privileges, including tax immunity, food, valuables, land and serfs, of religious hierarchs and monasteries from the time of Khri strong lde btsan's rule in the eighth century,¹⁴³⁶ Stein describes in some detail "the endless feuds between great monasteries and religious orders [that] nearly always had economic and political reasons."¹⁴³⁷ He notes how even "disinterested saints" became the objects of disputes "precisely because the possession or control of such a saint was a source of revenue and political prestige,"¹⁴³⁸ and describes 'Brog mi's sale of Tantric initiations, Marpa's purchasing of Tantric teachings in India with gold, Gnyos lo tsha ba's desire to corner the Tantric market,¹⁴³⁹ and Marpa's greed.¹⁴⁴⁰ Stein describes the consistent Tibetan critique, much of it satirical, of greedy lamas using religion as a cover for worldly objectives, from the Gesar epic to 'Brug pa kun legs, to the contemporary practice of *bstan bshig*, "destroying the realm," where skits lampoon the excesses and hypocrisy of organized religion.¹⁴⁴¹ Yet Stein, like Davidson, recognizes that even within the grit of human

¹⁴³⁶ Stein 1972, 138-45

¹⁴³⁷ *Id*, 146.

¹⁴³⁸ *Id*, 147.

¹⁴³⁹ Davidson and Stearns cast some doubt on this Davidson 2005, 143, Stearns 2001, 220

¹⁴⁴⁰ Stein 1972, 146-52

¹⁴⁴¹ *Id.*, 152-55

foible, “[t]hough they may only have been a minority at any time, some monks took their religion’s commandments seriously and translated them into deeds.”¹⁴⁴²

(C). *Patronage*

It is clear that Bu ston, at least, considered the manuscript canon to be property of the patron, and not that of the monastery or its abbot.¹⁴⁴³ Schaeffer emphasizes two motivations for Bu ston’s vehemence in ensuring that the texts were of the highest standards: “the importance of such craftsmanship for the preservation and propagation of Buddhist literature, of Buddhist doctrine, in Tibet” and “that the manuscripts, indeed the whole venture, were in fact the property of the Lord of the Manor at Zhwa lu.”¹⁴⁴⁴ Again, one could argue that in Zhi ba ‘od, the roles of patron and translator coalesced, so it is difficult to see how his motivation was influenced by patronage. As for Mantrakalaśa, while Zhi ba’ ‘od was Mantrakalaśa’s patron, Mantrakalaśa was also Zhi ba ‘od’s guru. So while we might speculate that in procuring (or writing?) the *Vajra Rosary* Mantrakalaśa was trying to please his patron in derogation of the duties of the guru to the student to act only in furtherance of the disciple’s wellbeing, there is no evidence of that being the case. However, we again must consider the immense social value of the procuring and translating of the *Vajra Rosary* in the ecclesiastical if not theocratic culture of Ye shes ‘od’s and Zhi ba ‘od’s Gu ge.

¹⁴⁴² *Id.*, 152 The first monk so describes by Stein here is Ye shes ‘od

¹⁴⁴³ Davidson 2005, 273

¹⁴⁴⁴ *Id.*, 277

(D). Profit

If the *History of Western Tibet* be believed, Zhi ba 'od gave Mantrakalaśa four hundred zho of gold when the latter went off to find the text, and there is nothing said about any refund. Four hundred zho of gold was a considerable sum, worth six *bre*¹⁴⁴⁵ of barley during a famine when people were eating human flesh, and much more in normal times.¹⁴⁴⁶ Someone made some good money here, so there was undeniably an economic aspect to the function of the *Vajra Rosary* at the time. We also may wonder whether Sujana Śrījñāna, whether he was Atīśa or not, was financially rewarded for the translation, and whether there were financial aspects to the other translations. But, as noted above, we have little or no evidence of any of this, unless one takes as evidence the normal presumption that people need to be paid for their work in order to live.

(E). Politics

I have discussed in Chapter two that state power in Tibet was diffuse; indeed, Geoffrey Samuel called Tibet a “stateless society.” As discussed above, this does not mean that there was no state power in Tibet; only that the center would not, for very long, hold. From the time of the rise of Tantra during the second propagation, there were many occasions where powerful monasteries were at the center of theocratic rule. However, Davidson does not claim that Tantric practitioners amassed political power only because of their practice. Rather, he illustrates the creation of a new kind of nobility in the persons of the new translators. I will return to this topic in discussing power relations, below.

¹⁴⁴⁵ About six kilos

¹⁴⁴⁶ Van de Kuyp 1994, 611

* * * *

While Zhi ba 'od was certainly exceptional in that he was translator, patron and royalty, given what we know about his life, even allowing for some exaggeration in the hagiographical description of the *History of Western Tibet*, it is hard to conclude that, at the time he obtained and translated the *Vajra Rosary*, its function for him and those involved in the translation effort at Tho ling was anything other than primarily spiritual or soteriological. While we can speculate about psychological or other factors at play, we have no evidence for them.

But we do have the Bourdieuan social field at Tho ling and elsewhere in Tibet over the balance of the second millennium, within which Tantra played an important social and political role. It is undeniable that in Tho ling society, possession and translation of the *Vajra Rosary* and similar Tantric texts brought with them a large amount of social capital, precisely because of the heavy soteriological component of that society. To say however, that the *Vajra Rosary* functioned as social capital at the same time it functioned as what we might call soteriological capital is recognizing one of Bourdieu's main points. Yet we need not blindly subordinate the soteriological to the social, because while there are totalizing ideologies and hermeneutic approaches that do so, while we can respect their contribution, we need not subscribe to them. If a totalizing view of the religious field is taken assimilating it to the amassing of and competition for power, then the argument proves too much for ordinary language, for it would then undermine the distinction between the spiritual and the political, the selfless and the selfish and so forth. While ultimately, in the higher stages of the Tantric perfection stage where consciousness moves beyond conceptual thought, where there is no difference

between words, the algorithm inhabits the world of conceptuality, of conventional reality, where words carry the ordinary meanings ascribed to them, “beautiful without examination.” There is where we can have dialogue.

Even accepting Davidson’s conclusions about the social and political effect of Tantric literature at the time of its emergence at the end of the first millennium and through the Tibetan Renaissance, I am persuaded that the *Vajra Rosary* and texts like it had their primary functions in the yogic and soteriological domain. Particularly given the technical nature of much of the *Vajra Rosary*, the testimony of the efficacy of its and similar practices, current scientific evidence that meditation has some efficacy, Zhi ba ‘od’s role in bringing the *Vajra Rosary* to Tibetans and his exemplary life as described and lack of incentive to be seen as using Tantra and its translation for goals of domination and so forth, and Professor Davidson’s own more nuanced remarks in the more specific descriptions of translators of the Tibetan Renaissance, but acknowledging some inevitable infiltration of worldly objectives as Described by Davidson, Stein and others, I think in terms of its past function it is fair to ascribe 66.6% of the total of 25%, or 16.65%, of the *Vajra Rosary*’s meaning as soteriological and yogic, and 33.4% of the total, or 8.35%, to worldly goals including but not limited to those described by Davidson.

6. *Present Function (+15%)*

While there are vast differences between the function of the *Vajra Rosary* in the Buddhist cultures of India and Tibet and its function in twenty-first century American, nevertheless, some of the above considerations apply to the present function of the *Vajra*

Rosary. If the practices described were efficacious, there is no reason why they should not continue to be so. Even if not efficacious, they still could serve as valence for the Buddhist ethical system. We have practitioners today who continue to vouch for the efficacy of the practices, and, as with those who did so in the past, there is no reason to believe they are lying. However, there is one very significant difference: now, unlike during the Tibetan Renaissance, there are presently, if anything, less worldly benefits to be gained by translating or practicing the *Vajra Rosary* and similar texts than there were in Tibet in the eleventh century.

Given the diminishing of Tibetan culture after the 1959 diaspora, and the general diminishing of the importance of religion in the world, there is not the same kind of cultural homogeneity and religious fervor that previously existed in Tibet, even under the difficult circumstances there during the Tibetan Renaissance. One bright side is the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the West and in Taiwan, but, while there may be some *cachet* involved in the practicing of texts like the *Vajra Rosary* or translating them into English or Chinese, it is hard to see that in this culture this is intended to or that it would in fact produce much worldly benefit, much less something associated with domination or power.

The one exception to this is that Tantric masters still are very much revered, and are economically supported by Tibetans and, increasingly, Westerners, Japanese and Taiwanese. Tantric teachings, once secret, are now the subject of many books, and Tantric initiations are commonplace, often given to people with interest in, but not a great deal of background in Buddhism.¹⁴⁴⁷ Donald Lopez notes that with the end of the “patron

¹⁴⁴⁷ A perusal of the Winter 2011 issue of the *Snow Lion Buddhist Magazine and Catalogue* shows how Buddhist Tantra is being intensively marketed in the United States. The featured story is about the Dalai

and priest” (*yon mchod*) relationship with China, “Tibetans in exile, led by the Dalai Lama, have thus been forced to turn to new patrons—in Europe, the Americas, Australia, Japan, and Taiwan—for whom they perform the role of the priest by giving religious instructions and initiations and from whom in return they receive financial contributions and political support for the cause of Tibetan independence.”¹⁴⁴⁸ Again, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, this is a trade of symbolic for economic capital, which, ironically, “can only be performed on the condition that the logic of the functioning of the field remains misrecognized.”¹⁴⁴⁹

It may well be that, apart from the potential efficacy of the practices described in the *Vajra Rosary*, its primary function today is a supportive one as a part of the overall Tantric corpus. Because it is not *per se* part of the Tantric college curriculum, it is not studied on its own. However, it remains one of the most widely quoted Tantras in the texts that are used in the curricula, particularly because it is so heavily relied on by Tsong kha pa in his *BIL*, which is one of the primary texts studied, particularly regarding the practice of vajra repetition, the key to the opening up of the heart chakra, itself the key to the rest of the five stages.

Lama’s upcoming *Kālacakra* initiation, which is also the subject of a full-page advertisement on page four. On page nine is an article and book advertisement about Vajrayāna refuge, on page ten an announcement of a retreat on Cittamanī Tārā, on page fourteen announcements for Dzog Chen teachings, on page sixteen an announcement for Tārā and Chod retreats, on page seventeen there announcements of teachings on the Guhyasamāja perfection stage and the Dalai Lama giving a Yamāntaka initiation, together with more Dzog Chen retreats, and on page twenty a full page announcement of a month-long teaching on *Lam’bras* by the head of the Sa skya order, and another on page twenty-five of his giving the Vajrakīlāya empowerment. In the book advertising section at the end of the publication, there are many books advertised on Tantric subjects. Snow Lion 2011

¹⁴⁴⁸ Lopez 1998, 206. June Campbell writes that “hundreds of *dharma* centres have been established by Tibetans all over the world, their assets running into billions of dollars,” Campbell 2002, 2, although her sole source for this assertion appears to be an article in *Time Magazine*. *Id.*, 202 n. 2

¹⁴⁴⁹ Bourdieu 1990, 68

So, the analysis of the present function of the *Vajra Rosary* coalesces in large part with the present function of Tantra in general. There are certainly financial considerations at play, particularly when Westerners with money seek *entre* to the secrets of Tantric practice. Indeed, Tenzin Dorjee, in his introduction to Yangchen Gawai Lodoe's *Paths and Grounds of Gudhasamaja According to Arya Nagarjuna*, notes that "Tantric literature has today become a market commodity due to our materialistic attitude...."¹⁴⁵⁰ However, if we look at the motivation of the parties, it is hard to see economic considerations as the centerpiece of the matter. Westerners seeking to become Tantric practitioners are not doing so to obtain any worldly benefit; if anything there could be negative consequences to progress in worldly matters were their affiliation to be known. Tibetan lamas may be, in part, financially motivated, if not for themselves then for their culture, but, again, given the strong ethical prohibitions against using Tantra or dharma for any kind of personal gain, including economic gain, it is hard to presume that such motives are predominant; there is no evidence of that.¹⁴⁵¹ People being people, there will always be exceptions. But there is no indication that any such activity, which I would presume, is anything but aberrational.¹⁴⁵²

So, while many of the same considerations apply to the present function as to the past, while I recognize the large potential for the corrupting influence of Western wealth on traditional Tibetan Buddhist ethical systems, I would give a smaller percentage, 25% compared with 33.34% for past function, to economic considerations, yielding 11.25% of

¹⁴⁵⁰ Lodoe 1995 at xix.

¹⁴⁵¹ In many years of attending Tantric teachings, public and private, I have never been directly or indirectly asked for money or anything of value

¹⁴⁵² One could make a similar argument about psychotherapists. While some are in it strictly "for the money," one would be hard put to defend the proposition that money is what psychotherapy is "about."

the total of 15% for soteriological meaning and 3.75% for the mundane spectrum of meaning, primarily economic.

7. *Power Relations (20%)*

Given the primarily technical nature of the text, while there are literal references to “power” in the *Vajra Rosary*, most of them are clustered in Chapter two on “empowerment.”¹⁴⁵³ Chapter two specifies that unless the disciple receives “genuine empowerment” from the guru, “Both master and disciple/ Will go to a great/ Unbearable hell!”¹⁴⁵⁴ Chapters sixty-six and sixty-seven concern themselves with rituals for, among other things, “controlling” and “killing.”

That the literal references to power and so forth are limited is hardly, of course, the end of the story, for in this part of the algorithm, we are mindful of Bourdieu’s insight, similar to Marx’s notion of “false consciousness,” that “the logic of the self-interest underlying all practices—particularly those in the cultural domain—goes ‘mis-recognized’ as a logic of ‘disinterest’.”¹⁴⁵⁵ So our scrutiny here only starts with the language of the text. The practice of guru yoga and the treatment of women in the text will also call upon us to consider the role of the *Vajra Rosary* in organizing those relations in the “real” world as well as in an idealized world of religious practice. This is not only on account of modern Western hermeneutic theories, for Tantra itself and the *Vajra Rosary* in particular is intensely interested in all of the elements of the real world, for those elements, particularly desire, power Tantra itself.

¹⁴⁵³ Skt *abhiṣeka* has the same connotations of power as Tib *dbang bskur*. See Davidson 2002, 123-31

¹⁴⁵⁴ VR 8B, ch 2, v 7

¹⁴⁵⁵ Swartz 1996, 76-77

In Chapter Two, we outlined a number of the connections in early second millennium Tibet between secular power and strong, if not centralized, ecclesiastical authority. While the historical record does not reflect that Tantra played the usual role one thinks of in terms of religious power, like the dominant role of Islam in politics today, or the role of the Catholic Church in the economies and politics of Europe, certainly the kingdom of Gu ge in which Ye shes 'od and his descendants ruled, could certainly be said to have many elements of a theocracy. While Samuel has argued that Tibet was more of a “stateless” society, and even given the preeminence of the Geluks historically, there have always been competing denominational groups in Tibet, the Sakyas, Nyingmas and Kagyus in addition to the closely related but non-Buddhist Bons, there was and is a definite connection in Tibetan history and culture between worldly power and Tantra.

On the other hand, one can argue that, perhaps because of the climate, the great distances on the plateau, the harsh conditions, and perhaps also because of the doctrinal flexibility that characterizes the preeminent Buddhist notion of *upāya*, Tibetans generally tend to be independent. Also, perhaps stemming from Buddha's non-judgmental approach and his instruction to rely on one's own experience, and the instruction to examine a Tantric guru very closely over a long period of time before accepting him as one's teacher, within the fairly wide variation of devotional intensity and choice of lamas and *yidams* in Tibetan religion, Tibetans tend to keep their own counsel in religious matters. Geoffrey Samuel observes, summing up his *Civilized Shamans*, his anthropological and historical study of Tibetan Buddhism:

David Snellgrove's description of the Sherpa *gompa* of Jiwong in the 1950s... spoke of the monks' “strong sense of personal responsibility and their wide

freedom of action”... This is the positive converse to Sherry Ortner’s view of Sherpa society as individualistic and atomistic... Few who know the Tibetans would disagree with Snellgrove’s assessment....

[T]he Vajrayāna came to present to the Tibetans a way of being, and a form of social and political activity, capable of flowing around and beyond any kind of hierarchical structure. In a world where life is increasingly dominated by bureaucratic control, that ideal may continue to have an appeal to Tibetans and to other peoples.¹⁴⁵⁶

So, as discussed in the function part of the analysis, there are definite connections between Tantra and worldly power, and we can see this in the very fact that the *Vajra Rosary* itself was procured and translated by the royal family itself. Now we turn to what we see in the text of the *Vajra Rosary*.

(A). The Guru-Disciple Relationship

The primary relationship in the *Vajra Rosary*, as in many Tantric texts, is that of guru and disciple. This is not surprising at all; guru yoga—devotion to the teacher—is fundamental to all Buddhist practice,¹⁴⁵⁷ particularly Tantric practice, and the paradigmatic prayer to the guru, the *Lama Chöpa*, is based on the *Vajra Rosary*.¹⁴⁵⁸ One could certainly make a case for the predominance of mundane power relationships here inasmuch as the *Vajra Rosary* praises the guru throughout,¹⁴⁵⁹ instructs the disciple to

¹⁴⁵⁶ Samuel 1991, 570, 573. As far as contemporary developments, one cannot ignore the present Dalai Lama’s March 14, 2011 announcement relinquishing the Dalai Lamas’ role as the head of the Tibetan polity and government, which has been the case since 1642. “The essence of a democratic system is, in short, the assumption of political responsibility by elected leaders for the popular good. In order for our process of democratization to be complete, the time has come for me to devolve my formal authority to such an elected leadership.”

¹⁴⁵⁷ See, e.g., Pabongka 1993, 251-97.

¹⁴⁵⁸ T. Gyatso 1988, 11.

¹⁴⁵⁹ *VR* Ch. 2, vv. 8-10,

venerate and serve him,¹⁴⁶⁰ directs offerings of valuables to be made to him,¹⁴⁶¹ and places him at the center of the yogic sexual ritual.¹⁴⁶² From a mundane perspective, one could view the prescribed conduct as that of a slave to his master: “Fearfully, with clasped palms,/ Receiving instruction/ With hands on crown,/ Promising to give/ All [his] possessions,/ Shy and looking down,/ The disciple should remain/ Before the guru.”¹⁴⁶³

On the other hand, the reason the guru deserves such veneration is because of his good qualities,¹⁴⁶⁴ and because the key to success in the practice is empowerment by and the personal instructions of the guru,¹⁴⁶⁵ and success in the practice leads to Buddhahood. And all gurus are not entitled to the deference and support of all disciples. Alamka notes that just as the guru tests the disciple for twelve years before imparting advanced teachings, the disciple tests the guru as well, for the same twelve year period.¹⁴⁶⁶

Davidson emphasizes here the importance of particularly unexcelled yoga Tantra in

¹⁴⁶⁰ *VR* Ch 2, v 7 (“Venerate and serve the guru with great respect”), ch 2, v 10, ch 2, v 26 (“Please accept me as a servant”), ch 66, v 4 (“Fearfully, with clasped palms,/ Receiving instruction/ With hands on crown,/ Promising to give/ All [his] possessions,/ Shy and looking down,/ The disciple should remain/ Before the guru”)

¹⁴⁶¹ *VR* Ch 2, v 25 (gold, jewels and cloth), ch 2, v 26 (“all of your possessions”), ch 15, 15, vv 21-22 (“gold, brocaded garments, jewels and so forth of the finest quality, countless servants and laborers things that are hard to find”), ch 54, v 162 (“then pay the guru”), ch 55, v 5

¹⁴⁶² *VR* Ch 2, v 24 (“You should offer/ An especially tender woman,/ Wife, sister, or daughter,/ With great faith,/ To the guru”), ch 54, vv 170 (“The great natured guru/ Consecrates the seal”)

¹⁴⁶³ *VR* 97B, ch 66, v 4

¹⁴⁶⁴ *VR* ch 2, ch 65, vv 10-17

¹⁴⁶⁵ *VR* ch 6, v 31, ch 8, v 8, ch 10, v 19, ch 12, v 39, ch 13, v 27, ch 14, v 18, ch 17, v 25, ch 18, vv 11, 23, ch 20, v 17, ch 21, v 17, ch 23, vv 34, 52, ch 28, v 10, ch 32, v 23, ch 36, v 7, ch 38, v 13, ch 39, v 10, ch 42, vv 3, 7, ch 44, v 5, ch 45, v 8, ch 49, v 14, ch 52, v 4, ch 54, v 184 Many chapters of the *Vajra Rosary* have such statements in their last verse

¹⁴⁶⁶ “Just as one tests/ A jewel by rubbing/ And gold by burning,/ Similarly, he tests the disciple/ For twelve years” *VR* 9A, Ch 2, v 11 Alamka explains that this testing is mutual, the disciple also tests the guru in this manner Alamka 36B

attracting disciples and resources,¹⁴⁶⁷ yet the *Vajra Rosary* explicitly instructs the guru to abandon a disciple who is not a proper vessel for Tantra “even if he has great wealth.”¹⁴⁶⁸

(B). The Role of Women and of Sexuality in the Vajra Rosary

It is inarguable that Buddhist Tantra, whether taught by Buddha Śākyamuni or emerging at the end of the first millennium, developed in a patriarchal environment.¹⁴⁶⁹ Whereas in ancient India, there is evidence of some measure of freedom and social mobility for women, as the economy became more settled and agricultural, women lost these¹⁴⁷⁰ and became, in many respects, property: “Woman has been a chattel in India ever since the later Vedic times when she was included in the list of *dakṣiṇa* along with items like cattle, horses, chariots, etc.... In the *Sanatujatiya* section of the *Mahabharata* five marks of true friendship are enumerated; one of these is to share one’s wife with a friend.”¹⁴⁷¹ By the time of the *Manu Smṛti*, the “Laws of Manu,” dating from around 100 C.E., women were not independent and were subject to the authority of the men in their lives.¹⁴⁷²

¹⁴⁶⁷ Davidson 2005, 129

¹⁴⁶⁸ *VR* Ch 9, v 16

¹⁴⁶⁹ As noted by Bernard Faure, “The Buddhist sangha was (and remains) a patriarchal institution ” Faure 2003, 14 And, “A consistent feminine critique could well shatter Buddhism in its foundations It is indeed clear that not only the basic dogmas of Buddhism but the symbolic economy in which they are inscribed as well derive from a masculine ideology ” Faure 1998, 281

¹⁴⁷⁰ Bhattacharjii 1987, 33-34 Sita Raman writes “The long experience of gender inequality on the subcontinent prevents its dismissal as mere feminine fancy ” Raman 2009, Vol I, *xiii*

¹⁴⁷¹ Bhattacharjii 1987, 54

¹⁴⁷² Chakravarti 1988, 5

Discussion of Buddhism and women seems to be a collection of “on the other hand’s.” There has been a long history, from the very beginning of Buddhism, of the subordination of women, as nuns and otherwise.¹⁴⁷³ On the other hand, there is also an abundance of the rhetoric of equality.¹⁴⁷⁴ Bernard Faure invokes Katherine McKinnon’s description of how gender inequality is syntactic.¹⁴⁷⁵ On the other hand, Lama Yeshe writes, “[W]hile in ordinary sex it is the man who enters the woman’s body, in true tantric embrace it is the woman’s energy that penetrates the man!”¹⁴⁷⁶ June Campbell describes the *gsang yum*, “secret consort,” historical practice whereby some otherwise celibate monks practiced, and continue to practice, sexual yoga with Tibetan or, today, Western women under a strict veil of secrecy, that, in the case of Western women if not all women, is psychologically confusing and potentially destructive.¹⁴⁷⁷ On the other hand, Miranda Shaw criticizes the feminist critique of Tantric Buddhism as a projection of Western scholars’ own culture of oppression of women that they then seek to universalize,¹⁴⁷⁸ stressing that a woman’s history should emphasize the subjectivity of women more than how men view women.¹⁴⁷⁹ Emphasizing the positive, Shaw writes:

Tantric yogis and yoginis assembled in a network of pilgrimage sites throughout India, where they met other Tantrics, practiced their outer and

¹⁴⁷³ See, e.g., Faure 2003, 21

¹⁴⁷⁴ See, e.g., Harvey 2000, 361-79

¹⁴⁷⁵ Faure 2003, 14, *quoting* McKinnon 1982

¹⁴⁷⁶ Yeshe 1987, 136

¹⁴⁷⁷ Campbell 2002, 98-110 Campbell had first-person experience with this Miranda Shaw remarks, “I have no doubt that it happened She was emotionally coerced into a sexually abusive and exploitative relationship ” Shaw 1998 at 4

¹⁴⁷⁸ Shaw 1994, 196, Campbell 2002, 5

¹⁴⁷⁹ *Id.*

inner yogas, and staged elaborate rituals. In this open and freewheeling religious setting, there were no formal barriers to the participation of women. Tantric sources express no prohibition of women's full participation alongside men or assumption of leadership and authority over men....

...[W]omen were present and fully participated in Tantric circles as a matter of course. For example, Kāṇha had an equal number of male and female students, and his foremost disciple was a woman. Pha-dam-pa sangs-rgyas had a large number of women among his fifty-four teachers and had twenty-four female students who attained enlightenment. Two of the four most accomplished disciples of Jñānamitra were women. One of the two best disciples of Śāntiguṇya was a woman, Dinakarā. When the princess Śrīśukhā became a Tantric guru, hundreds of women in her retinue became her disciples and became accomplished yoginis. The adept Bodhivajra, one of Kāṇha's disciples, reportedly had hundreds of yoginis among his disciples. Among the students of the adept Nāropa, reportedly two hundred men and one thousand women attained complete enlightenment....¹⁴⁸⁰

Peter Harvey also presents a generally positive picture of the effect of Buddhism on women, finding that Buddhism improved the status of women relative to their position in Brahmanism, and promoted the spiritual wellbeing of both women and men. He concludes: "Moreover, amongst laywomen, in societies where Buddhism has been the dominant religion, women's freedoms, rights and status have often been compared favourably with those in many others in Asia or, until recently, the West,"¹⁴⁸¹ and also notes that in Tibet in the twentieth century women were substantially equal to men in terms of the ownership of property, marriage autonomy, inheritance and sexual

¹⁴⁸⁰ Shaw 1994, 74. It's not irrelevant that Shaw's positive view of Tantra is itself "Tantric" in the sense that, particularly in the creation stage, Tantra is nothing if not optimistic, positing the practitioner as a deity in an ideal universe. Campbell criticizes Shaw, arguing that the historical instances cited by Shaw "fail to convey the process by which many of these very early recorded achievements came to be eroded and how the female became 'fixed' in a different and inferior position" and that they "do not translate into the social and religious structures of Tibetan society." Campbell 2002, 11. The method I am proposing would extend this dialogue and encourage measuring and discussing *the extent* to which the respective arguments are valid. What *weight* do we give Shaw's examples of outstanding women practitioners in our analysis of women's role in Buddhist Tantra, and in the validity, for us, of Buddhist Tantra itself?

¹⁴⁸¹ Harvey 2000, 410

freedom.¹⁴⁸² Yet, Kurtis Schaeffer notes that of the approximately one-hundred fifty spiritual autobiographies of Tibetan Buddhists from the eighth to twentieth centuries, only three or four are by women,¹⁴⁸³ and notes how the subject of his research, a seventeenth century Tibetan Buddhist nun, praying to be born a man, was an example of the “internalization of negative Buddhist conceptions of women.”¹⁴⁸⁴

Similarly, Ronald Davidson catalogues the evidence showing the decline in women’s participation in Buddhism in India from the seventh century that, perhaps not coincidentally, reflects the rise of the popularity of Buddhist Tantra. He shows a dramatic decline in donations by women, mostly nuns, and inscriptions attributed to women during the medieval period compared with earlier,¹⁴⁸⁵ and notes that “esoteric specialists have yet to uncover a single text or lineage that preserves instructions about yogic or sexual practices that relate to women’s position,”¹⁴⁸⁶ concluding, “The data are sketchy, but they indicate that women’s numbers precipitously declined during the period of esoteric Buddhism, particularly in high status and authoritative religious positions.”¹⁴⁸⁷ On the other hand, Geoffrey Samuel writes,

As for the politics of gender in South Asian societies, Tantra by itself could scarcely have reversed the long-term processes by which the status of women in South Asia became increasingly confined and restricted, but it did at least enjoin and legitimate a more positive and equal relationship between the sexual partners who were involved in its practice at the time. Even this was a

¹⁴⁸² *Id.*, 408

¹⁴⁸³ Schaeffer 2004, 4

¹⁴⁸⁴ *Id.*, 37

¹⁴⁸⁵ Davidson 2002, 93-95

¹⁴⁸⁶ *Id.*, 97

¹⁴⁸⁷ *Id.*, 93

difficult and unstable position to uphold. Perhaps that is as much as we can reasonably ask of it.¹⁴⁸⁸

Perhaps Bernard Faure said it best: “Buddhism is paradoxically neither as sexist not as egalitarian as is usually thought.”¹⁴⁸⁹

The principal focus on women in the *Vajra Rosary* is as consorts of the male practitioner of sexual yoga, particularly the second, “secret,” and third, “wisdom knowledge” initiations. Although Davidson does not make this point, if one adopts his view of the power of the royal paradigm in Tantric Buddhism, to the extent it is more than a folk myth, one could easily see the *droit du seigneur* at play here.¹⁴⁹⁰ It may disturb us to read in chapter two that sexual yoga involves girls as young as sixteen¹⁴⁹¹ and that the disciple is encouraged to offer “An especially tender woman/ Wife, sister, or daughter,/ With great faith,/ To the guru.”¹⁴⁹²

Whether and how these rituals took place is a matter of scholarly controversy. A plain reading of the *Vajra Rosary* and Alamka’s *Commentary* suggests that these rituals probably did take place, at least in India.¹⁴⁹³ Chapter two of the *Vajra Rosary* is quite explicit about the practice, stating, “The yogi will not attain Buddhahood by any other

¹⁴⁸⁸ Samuel 2008, 350 It is also relevant here that one of the fourteen Tantric “root downfalls,” albeit the fourteenth, is “criticizing women ” Tharchin 1999, 120

¹⁴⁸⁹ Faure 2003, 1

¹⁴⁹⁰ See Wettlaufer 2000 for a collection of ethnographic sources regarding this practice in India from the eighteenth century

¹⁴⁹¹ *VR* ch 2, v 22 Alamka has an alternate wording referring to a twelve year old Alamka 39B

¹⁴⁹² *VR* ch 2, v 24

¹⁴⁹³ This conclusion is buttressed by Ye shes ‘od’s *Proclamation* that would not have been necessary had these practices not been occurring and also by Atiśa’s admonitions to monks to refrain from the second and third initiations See also Gray 2007, 97, 131

means.”¹⁴⁹⁴ The descriptions of the initiations in chapters two and fifty-four are graphic, and seem to have literal as well as connotative significance. And Isabel Onians points out that there are many ritual manuals in the *Secret Community* tradition that describe the practices in explicit detail.¹⁴⁹⁵ However, the intention of the Tantra is *not* to encourage ordinary sexuality and male ejaculation. To the contrary, the *Vajra Rosary* refers to “release” as “faulty conduct.”¹⁴⁹⁶

Alaṃka’s word commentary on the offering to the guru in the initiations is straightforward: “‘Daughter’ [means] female child. ‘Wife’ [means] your own wife... ‘Sister’ [means] your own sister.”¹⁴⁹⁷ This offering is especially pleasing to the guru, explains Alaṃka, “because like your own life, [these] shouldn’t be given up.”¹⁴⁹⁸ But here we should also keep in mind the polysemous nature of Tantric writing: Alaṃka glosses “sixteen years old” as “representing four: the four branches of Variety; the four of service and so forth; the four harmonies and so forth, and the four ecstasies, because she becomes the cause for manifesting [these].”¹⁴⁹⁹ And as for “wife, sister and daughter,” chapter forty four of the *Vajra Rosary* says that “wife” refers to a woman with a mole, of

¹⁴⁹⁴ VR 10A, ch 2, v 32

¹⁴⁹⁵ Onians 2001, 175 (describing the procedure in Vāgīśvarakīrti’s *Samkṣiptābhīṣekavidhi*, and noting, “It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into the many variations on the procedures here described. Some are certainly more bizarre than others, including prescriptions for the apparently homosexual ‘fellatio’. Sometimes the teacher’s consort is not required to offer her *śomta*; elsewhere the mingled fluids are scooped up in a leaf or other utensil, and so fed to the student.”)

¹⁴⁹⁶ VR 91A-B, ch 62, v 26

¹⁴⁹⁷ Alaṃka 40A

¹⁴⁹⁸ *Id.* (*lhag par yid ‘ong zhes by aba gsungs te/ rang gi srog dang ‘dra ban yid kyis yongs su dor bar mi by aba nyid kyī phyir ro*)

¹⁴⁹⁹ Alaṃka 39B (*brgyad gnyis lo lon zhes gsungs te/ bzhi brdar* [P and Snar have *das rdar*] *byas pa sna tshogs pa’i yan lag bzhi dang/ bsnyen pa la sogs pa bzhi dang/ rgyu mthun pa la sogs pa bzhi dang/ dga’ ba la sogs pa bzhi mngon par gsal bar byed pa’i rgyur gyur pa nyid kyī phyir ro*)

the vajra family, with the mantra LAM, Life-energy, the channel of flowing urine, the element of wind and/or a salty taste, with similar references for “sister” and “daughter.”¹⁵⁰⁰

Reading chapters two and forty-four together would support the interpretation that the initiation practices did not involve close female relatives of the disciple being offered to the guru, but rather took place between consenting yogis and yoginīs mainly in the context of personal initiations into very high levels of practice and in the *gaṇacakra*. This interpretation is supported by the description in chapter two of consorts: the “slim-bodied sixteen year old” “has achieved empowerment and has special faith in yoga tantra.”¹⁵⁰¹ Reading the reference to “wife, sister and daughter” connotatively rather than denotatively, as Wedemeyer suggests with respect to the inner offering of beef, dog, semen and feces, seems to me to be the most reasonable interpretation here, although the status of women as chattels in India, described below, does give me pause in that conclusion. The imaginative (and shocking) “giving up” of one’s wife to the guru connotatively is the giving up of one’s entire world, connotatively like the giving up of one’s body described in Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*¹⁵⁰² or the giving up of the entire universe in the *Lama Chopā*¹⁵⁰³ and many other prayers and visualization practices.

¹⁵⁰⁰ VR 63B-64A, ch 44, vv 13-23

¹⁵⁰¹ VR 9B, ch 2, vv 22-23 David Gray makes a similar argument, that mother, sister, daughter and wife are “women within the guru’s retinue, who together with him and his male students constitute the adept’s alternate family” Gray 2007, 115

¹⁵⁰² Śāntideva plays with the same kind of connotative meaning “I make over this body to all embodied beings to do with as they please Let them continually beat it, insult it, and splatter it with filth Let them play with my body, let them be derisive and amuse themselves I have given this body to them What point has this concern of mine?” Śāntideva 1995, 21

¹⁵⁰³ T Gyatso 1988, 98-110 Indeed, the secret initiation embodies the *bla ma mchod pa* secret offering of consorts to the guru “I offer even illusion-like consorts, of youthful splendor, slender and skilled in the sixty-four arts of love” *Id.*, 107

Similar to the Barthes-inspired *coup d'oeil* described by Wedemeyer as to beef, dog, etc., in the second, secret initiation, a practitioner experiences “the enlightened state of communion? It’s just a fact: look as I offer my wife, sister and daughter, my whole world!”¹⁵⁰⁴ And in the third initiation, the guru gives them back to the disciple, integrating the ultimate reality of the emptiness of all things with the conventional reality of life as known and lived. It is also worth mentioning that Ye shes ‘od’s *Proclamation*, though it seems to catalogue the antinomian practices of Tantra that, in his view, were erroneously being done literally, does not mention the giving of a wife, daughter or sister to the guru.

Among the most extensive discussions of the practices of the sexual yogas is that based on Puṇḍarīka’s commentary on the *Kālacakratāntra* and Abhinavagupta’s writings on the subject found in James Hartzell’s doctoral dissertation. Hartzell concludes that it is “very clear that in the perfection stage of the 11th century Indian Buddhist Tantric practitioners using Sanskrit as their communication medium, sexual Yogas were central to the perfection stage process, and the children who were sometimes conceived during these practices and were highly valued and protected, as were young ladies who were groomed for the position of Tantric consorts from an early age.”¹⁵⁰⁵ Puṇḍarīka’s commentary is explicit:

Having meditated into existence the smoke etc., and having made the thought motionless, Having purified [it--the *citta*] in the middle [channel], one should bring the supremely indestructible into being. Having placed the thunderbolt (*vajra*) in the lotus, one should make the *prāṇa* enter into the drop, And [make] the drops [enter into] the *cakras*; The *yogi* should always have a

¹⁵⁰⁴ See Wedemeyer 2007b, 406-07

¹⁵⁰⁵ Hartzell 1997, 911

blocked-up *linga*, and should always hold back his semen during the penetrations with his lightning bolt ... while in sexual embrace with his great consort Filled with the twenty-one thousand and six hundred supremely indestructible moments, he himself should become the great king, the lightning-bolt being.¹⁵⁰⁶

While Puṇḍarīka's commentary is in some respects more explicit than Alamka's, there are many similarities. In chapter eight, Alamka describes the same practice, although it is in the more awkward form of a word commentary:

“Realizing the equal union of vajra and lotus” because it is experienced by the practice of meditative equipoise on the two organs. “Bestows all bliss” [means] causing the attainment of mundane and transmundane bliss. “By holding the reality of energy-wind” [means] in the space of the vajra and lotus. “Cause to hold” [means] placing the seed [syllables of] BYA and DHYE [on the tip of the vajra and lotus, respectively], or the process of “pressing with the foot [on the] ground,” or by the force of holding the energy-wind directly. Because of that very thing, “you know the reality of energy wind” and so forth....¹⁵⁰⁷

Hartzell also discusses Puṇḍarīka's measures for birth control and provisions for taking care of any children born as a result of imperfect Tantric practices or deliberately conceived.¹⁵⁰⁸ Whatever the actual practice of sexual yogas was and is, we should directly analyze, in historical context and in today's context as we interpret the *Vajra Rosary*, the extent to which the Tantra plays a role in the subjugation of women, and how meaningful that role is compared and weighed against other roles embodied in the *Vajra Rosary*.

There is no question that the *Vajra Rosary*, like nearly all such texts, is written from the male point of view. Most all of the references to women are to women as sexual

¹⁵⁰⁶ *Id.* at 912, quoting the end of the commentary of *Kālacakratantra* 5 127, Rinpoche 1994, 102 26-33

¹⁵⁰⁷ Alamka 69B, commenting on *VR* 18B-19A, ch 8, vv 6-7's more cryptic “The equal union of/ Vajra and lotus/ Bestows all bliss // By knowing the reality/ Of energy-wind,/ You cause it to be held/ In the central channel ”

¹⁵⁰⁸ Hartzell 1997, 923-28

consorts. In fact, other than as the names of certain of the energy-winds, all of the Tantra's references to "girl," "woman" and "women" are as sexual consorts or to their hormonal substances or menstrual blood used in ritual.¹⁵⁰⁹ Miranda Shaw's arguments notwithstanding, I would say, reluctantly but assuredly, that the *Vajra Rosary* objectifies women and subordinates them to men.

Is the extent to which the *Vajra Rosary* merely reflects the attitude of the cultures in which it originated rather than *increases* the subordination of women a mitigating factor? Discussing gender-based imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhist thought, Jose Cabezón notes: "In patriarchal societies, where culture as a whole has been male dominated, it is not surprising that, in the religious sphere, symbols both created by and relevant to men have been propagated as the norm and the ideal."¹⁵¹⁰ I would say that the answer is "no." While the overall context of a society's domination of a given group might be relevant to a given author's intent, here we are looking at simply the operation of power. That the *Vajra Rosary* is one of many instrumentalities of oppression does not mean that it was not and is not effectuating the domination of women by men. I agree with Bernard Faure when he says, "We need rather to submit these principles to a thorough ideological critique, to recognize their ambivalent origin, in order to exploit tactically their liberating potential."¹⁵¹¹

¹⁵⁰⁹ See Faure's discussion of this aspect of "the rhetoric of subordination" in Faure 2003, 66-90

¹⁵¹⁰ Cabezón 1985, 181

¹⁵¹¹ Faure 2003, 330

(C). Peaceful and Wrathful Activities – Magic

Chapters sixty-six and sixty-seven describe rituals with worldly ends, curing snakebite and expelling demons and also for killing and controlling. Mi la ras pa's sorcery for revenge is well known, and Davidson describes similar stories.¹⁵¹² This kind of thing was in demand, and unscrupulous yogis, including charlatans, sold these practices and texts relating to them. It could be that these chapters, included near the end of the text, were added as *de rigueur*, but, there they are.

* * * *

So, while most of the *Vajra Rosary* has a primarily soteriological meaning, we do see power operating to raise not only the spiritual but also the worldly status of the guru and to implement in direct ways the subordination and domination of women by men. While Harvey, Samuel and Shaw have positive, but general, things to say about Buddhist Tantra's treatment of women, I am more persuaded by Davidson's and Shaeffer's hard data on the decline of women's participation in Buddhism during the rise of more widespread practice of Buddhist Tantra at the end of the first millennium. While an argument can be made that most of the sexual ritual took place in the *gaṇacakra* among freely consenting yogis and yoginīs, given the general weaker position of women in India and (perhaps less so but nevertheless still dominated by men) in Tibet, and Hartzell's research about children born of Tantric unions, I see a large potential, recalling June Campbell's testimony, even today, of abuse. Finally, the language of the *Vajra Rosary* does not diminish these concerns, as it objectivizes woman as a sexual consort, ignoring

¹⁵¹² See, e.g., Davidson 2005, 136-141

and thereby denying her subjectivity.¹⁵¹³ Because, among other things, this involves half or more of humanity, I do not see any reason to find a less than maximal operation of power relations in the *Vajra Rosary*. Power 20%.

8. *Critical Reader Bias (-10-20%)*

I am the critical reader here, and I confess to be biased in favor of finding the *Vajra Rosary* to be primarily soteriological in nature. This has to do with my own psychological predisposition, open-minded attitude towards beliefs of all kinds, personal interest in and practice of Tantric Buddhism, and training at Columbia, where I found kindred spirits. On the other hand, I am a lawyer with decades of experience investigating crime, fraud and greed in many of its forms, so I am a practiced skeptic. More to the point with respect to the algorithm, I have done a case study with in-depth research of the *Vajra Rosary*, so pursuant to this self-reflexive last part of the first level of the algorithm, we deduct 10% from the soteriological interpretation.

* * * *

So, we are now in a position to see the results of the algorithm applied to two interpretations of the *Vajra Rosary*: one of soteriological concerns being “subordinated to the paradigm of dominance, hierarchy, and regal power”; and the other seeing the *Vajra Rosary*’s meaning as mainly soteriological, with the objective of personal transformation in the Buddhist context:

¹⁵¹³ See, e.g., Ingaray 1985, 13-46

TABLE 14. Calculating the Algorithm

	Dominance, Hierarchy And Worldly Power	Soteriology And Personal Transformation
Plain Meaning (+10%)	3	7
Intellectual history (+10%)	2	8
Model Reader (Eco) (+10%)	3	7
Commentary (+10%)	1	9
Past function (+25%)	8.35	16.65
Present function (+15%)	3.75	11.25
Power Relations (+20%)	20	0
100%		
(Critical Reader's bias)		
Without Case Study (-20%)		
<u>With Case Study (-10%)</u>	-----	<u>(10)</u>
= Provisional Meaning	41.1	48.9

B. Application of the Algorithm – Second Level: Identifying Multiple Meanings and Multivalence

Application of the algorithm has indeed identified multifarious interlocking meanings in and surrounding the text of the *Vajra Rosary*. First of all, while Davidson's privileging of dominance, hierarchy and regal power over soteriology and self-transformation is, for all the reasons stated above, overstated, his metaphor is helpful in helping one understand how Buddhist Tantra came to reflect the form of the society in which it matured. And, application of the algorithm shows that a significant portion—

more than 40%—of the meaning of the *Vajra Rosary*, is associated with themes of dominance, hierarchy and worldly power.

In addition, working through the algorithm has brought a number of other considerations to the fore, which, although subordinate to the overall soteriological meaning, are, as Betti would have called them, “meaning-full forms.” Some of the more important of these are:

- The economics of Buddhist Tantra in the medieval period in India and Tibet, where it was not unusual for large sums of money to be involved in the obtaining of texts, and where, at times, both clans and royalty put their resources into the Buddhist Tantric enterprise;

- The economics of Buddhist Tantra today, where a network of Western students of Buddhist Tantra support the Buddhist Tantric infrastructure;

- In a larger sense, the viewing of Buddhist Tantra as a form of what Bourdieu calls “religious capital”;

- The Buddhist Tantric attitude towards women, which I have found to be mixed, with a sense of objectification found in the *Vajra Rosary* and other texts;

- The relationship between guru yoga, key in all forms of Buddhist Tantra, and worldly forms of hierarchy and power;

- Competition within Buddhist Tantra, both historically and today, over lineage, with its worldly implications.

It is crucial to keep in mind the many levels of both soteriological and social meanings expressed in the *Vajra Rosary* itself and explained in Alaṃka’s *Commentary*. Consistent with the *PU*’s hermeneutical system, these levels of meaning are directed to

different groups of people, from non-Buddhists, through the various types of Buddhist practitioners, to practitioners of Tantra and, among those, to the different levels of disciples. The “jewel-like” disciple will grasp the subtle and profound secret meaning as well as all the other levels of meaning, while the less evolved will only grasp the less subtle meanings. With increasing urbanization, then print media, and now mass and social media and the Internet, Tantric teachings originally meant only for jewel-like disciples carefully screened by their gurus are now available to all. Were it not for these developments, and the paradigm shift they have abetted that has, in effect, undermined the previous protective strategy that immunized religion in general from critical scrutiny, we would not be in a position where we are striving to understand the “main meaning,” albeit provisional, of the *Vajra Rosary*. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that teachings like the *Vajra Rosary* by their very nature contain multiple levels of meaning.

Since we are in a new paradigm where religious and non-religious factors are now on a level playing field where they can now freely compete and be judged, the work necessary to understanding how all of these factors interact has only recently begun. For example, we know little about how monasteries operated in medieval India and in Tibet, and we are only beginning to understand the role of Tantric practice in attracting patrons, then and now. When I say “we,” I am being somewhat presumptuous, for it is certain that there are many who have or may be researching these matters, and it is also certain that I have overlooked important evidence and misinterpreted relevant data. But that is why the disclosure compelled by the algorithmic method is so positive: my mistakes should be obvious as my common prior assumptions are pulled out of me by the

algorithmic process, and my biases made more transparent. The next round of scholarship, be it mine or my colleagues', will, hopefully, be better.

C. Application of the Algorithm – Third Level: Further Discussion and Reflection; Multivalence in the Vajra Rosary

The dichotomizing force of the duality between the “religious” and “worldly,” the “spiritual” and the “material” has been the energy source driving my hermeneutical argument. It is a direct offspring of the “protective strategy” still functioning powerfully in the background as we move to a new paradigm. Even with the theoretical justifications for abandoning that protective strategy set forth in the first chapter, which I believe are compelling, this cultural force field made it very difficult for me to actually *weigh* religious factors versus non-religious factors. But this makes sense; if we are moving to a new paradigm, it is a new one, and feels as yet unfamiliar.

The results of my application of the algorithm surprised me. Applying each component, from plain meaning to function and power relations, I found things I had overlooked, and, forced to make a quantitative judgment, delved deeper into the complexities of the arguments. I found more evidence for the preeminence of “domination, hierarchy and royal power” than I imagined I would, and, at the same time, realized that the many worldly sequelae of Tantra were deeply connected to its soteriological value. Ultimately, whether one follows Munidatta or Davidson, the sacred finds its meaning in the profane and the profane in the sacred. The algorithm operated on interpretation in an abhidharmic way, breaking down the components of the various interpretations to the point where it became clear that each interpretation was composed of the same building blocks.

But, without thoroughly breaking the respective arguments apart through the algorithmic process and examining the evidence of each from the various conflicting hermeneutic perspectives, the respective interpretations would have continued passing as ships in the night, the soteriological relying mainly on the components of plain meaning, author's intent or intellectual history, model reader and commentarial tradition, and the social relying mainly on function and power relations. By forcing the battle to be fought on each front, each aspect of each argument, the soldiers of the intellectual war, are held accountable. While there was a winner of the battle of the first level of the algorithm, and a score, the results on reflection are more ambiguous, but richer.

For example, beyond the history that in many ways justifies his thesis (but in many ways does not), there is something familiar and compelling about Davidson's metaphor of the overriding significance of "domination, hierarchy and power." Why? What preconception or bias does this reveal? One could argue that a materialistic view of peoples' motivations is our culture's default position; that Adam Smith's *homo economicus* started the job, and today neuroscience may be completing it, aided and abetted through ever more subtle forms of persuasion through the Internet and social media, mostly designed to sell products that will make us happy. This view is comforting because it justifies maintaining the *status quo*: if there is no possibility of escaping a materialist paradigm, then we are, in a sense, off the hook. We can continue living our lives as creatures of habitus, deflecting any internal or external imperative to change because we may be too distracted by the next click to even think about it. On a societal level, the materialist paradigm justifies irregular distribution of wealth and privilege as well, downplaying agency in favor of a more deterministic viewpoint.

There is, however, another possibility that would account for the power of Davidson's metaphor, but also free it from this materialist paradigm. What if the metaphor ran more powerfully in the opposite direction? What if, rather than originating in the "feudalization of Indian society in the early medieval period," "domination, hierarchy and royal power" find their source in the human mind itself, reproducing themselves in the social and political reality that human minds construct? As Buddha said in the *Dhammapada*: "Mind is chief and takes the lead... If the mind is polluted, whatever you do or say leads to suffering, which will follow you, as a cart trails a horse."¹⁵¹⁴ Tantra does indeed include a great deal of the language of "domination, hierarchy and power," but it is directed, not at worldly objects—that would not even be dharma—but at the mind.

In the *Secret Community* mandala described in the *Vajra Rosary*, while it is true that there are vassal deities surrounding the principal one, the dominating central deity is Akṣobhya, the Mind Vajra, consciousness, the Life Energy energy-wind abiding in the heart.¹⁵¹⁵ And who are the dominated "vassals" in the mandala? Mainly, the sense powers and objects that, in ordinary form, bind us to the materialistic view. Only when dominated, subordinated and controlled by mind do the sense powers become the bodhisattvas of the mandala and the sense objects the sense goddesses.

¹⁵¹⁴ Chos-'phel 1985, 3

¹⁵¹⁵ *VR* 42B, ch 23, v 9, *VR* 47B, ch 25, v 4, ch 54, vv 30, 128, ch 68, v 41 Alamka states, "The state of vajra mind" [means] the seed [syllable] of Aksobhya," 111B, and "The seed of mind" is the syllable HŪM, in the very heart of Aksobhya That very one is the main one of all, because all things rely on mind " Alamka 150A

Domination *is* a central theme not only in Tantric Buddhism but the in Mahāyāna itself. But the object of domination is not other persons, but the unruly and inflated ego.

As a corrective, Śāntideva describes how to engender jealousy towards one's self:

“Do this! Stay like that! You must not do this!” This is how he should be subjugated and punished if he disobeys.

If, despite being instructed in this way, you do not do it, you it is, Mind, that I shall punish. All faults rest with you.

Where are you off to? I can see you. I shall knock all the insolence out of you.¹⁵¹⁶

The rituals of Tantra are indeed characterized by these same themes, with the same goal: subjugation of the unruly mind and the forces that cloud its vision, the path to Buddhahood.¹⁵¹⁷ At the very same time, we should recall the key role of the critical wisdom of discrimination, also a prerequisite to Buddhahood, embodied in “The Tathāgata Amitābha,/ Completely illuminating/ All elaborations,/ Knowing the distinctions/ Of all beings,”¹⁵¹⁸ counseling us that no area of inquiry, be it social, political or spiritual or soteriological, should be exempt from thorough examination.

¹⁵¹⁶ Śāntideva, 102-03

¹⁵¹⁷ See, e.g., Cantwell 2008, describing the mying ma *sgrol ba*, “liberative killing,” *phur pa* ritual based on Dunhuang documents “The ritual which became the classic context for the performance of *sgrol ba* – the carefully structured summoning of evil forces into an effigy which is then stabbed, releasing the consciousness of the victim(s) into a buddha field, is witnessed in the regular rites of numerous wrathful deities. Thus, a central function of *sgrol ba* is directly and forcibly to destroy one's primal enemy, ignorance, using ritual and contemplative techniques. Typically, this might entail the extension of the violent methods of sacrificial-exorcistic ritual [fn omitted] towards the more inward and soteriological goal of liberating one's own mind, as well as those of others, from the ‘evil spirits’ of ignorance.” Cantwell and Mayer 2008 at 6-7

¹⁵¹⁸ *VR* 42B, ch 23, v 7

Conclusion

So, how should we interpret the *Vajra Rosary*? The first level of the application of the algorithm tells us that the primary meaning of the *Vajra Rosary* is yogic and soteriological rather than political or economic. But, there is undeniably a background of economic and political activity in the history of this and similar Tantric texts that appears to be part of the Tantric mix from the earliest days of Tantra. Application of the algorithm tells us that this political and economic activity, while significant, appears, however, to be subordinate to soteriological concerns, rather than constituting what is distinctive about the *Vajra Rosary* and similar texts. There is little doubt, as described in detail by Ronald Davidson, that the Tantric movement was of immeasurable importance in assuring the survival and spread of Buddhism during the Tibetan Renaissance, and there is little doubt that the Tantric movement is of great importance in Tibetan Buddhism's struggle to survive today. But this, I submit, has less to do with the imaginativeness of the literature or the metaphor of domination that Davidson describes and more to do with the efficacy of the system of practice described in that literature to open the human mind and ameliorate the suffering of the human condition.

And, as a reading of Chapter Three and of the English translation of the *Vajra Rosary* and the excerpts from Alampka's *Commentary* show, the system of practice described there is profound and amazing. Our culture has nothing like it. The personal transformation contemplated by the practices described in the Tantra challenges all of our preconceptions about what being human can be, and thus demands of us as readers, in

order to appreciate it, a radical open-mindedness that may be beneficial to us even if we never become Buddhists or Tantric practitioners.

But “power” indeed “is everywhere,”¹⁵¹⁹ including in the text of the *Vajra Rosary*. While power is employed in the *Vajra Rosary* primarily to subjugate, then eradicate, delusion and egotism, the causes of suffering, it is also true that the Tantra addresses women almost exclusively as sexual partners, which is not tolerable to us at all. While there may be cultural mitigating factors involved, our sensitivity to these issues in our culture of equality and individual rights makes a difference in determining the meaning of Tantra. We weigh and judge these things, without the “protective strategy” that immunized them for so long, and they are problematic.

The *Vajra Rosary* and other Tantric texts speak on a number of different levels, and can be misinterpreted in different ways. One way is by taking their language only at the literal level, which Ye shes ‘od sought to curb in his *Proclamation*. Another way to misinterpret these texts would be by de-emphasizing, bracketing or ignoring the main event, *i.e.* the yogic and soteriological teachings of the texts, and portraying the practitioners and translators of these texts as merely interesting people for us to study solely on account of their use of religion to accomplish mundane goals. They *were* interesting, but that is not the main event here.

The other conclusion I have reached is concerning the overriding importance of dialogue and reflection along the lines stimulated by application of the algorithm. I have been very impressed by the diversity of the subjectivities of, and the different data collected by, the various interpreters of Buddhist Tantra, and how, based on those

¹⁵¹⁹ Foucault 1978, 93

different lenses and foci, one hermeneut's white is another's grey if not black. I believe that the unveiling of the various prior assumptions of the interpreters and their engaging in detailed discussions revealing both their prior assumptions and their posterior conclusions is crucial for a rational assessment of the validity of the different points of view based on the assessment of the relative *weights* of the different spiritual and worldly considerations, for the benefit of all concerned. For, ultimately, ascertaining the meaning of Tantra is a collective task. If Buddhist Tantra, or Buddhist-style Tantra, new age or old school, is to play a meaningful role in our culture it will be because we, through discussion and reflection as a society, have decided its meaning is valuable for us.

Thus, I have tried to bring Wisdom and Method and *Truth and Method* together. I have advocated here a method whose essence is open, transparent discussion and reflection, for a time and place where we tend to talk at and past each other and to rely on experts and polemic. The proposed method also contemplates a new paradigm, where we honestly and boldly address and weigh religious and non-religious factors together. I am hopeful that, by emphasizing the provisional nature of the algorithm and stressing the importance of all interpretations, even those that are subordinate to the main one, the balance is right.

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Appendices

A. *The Vajra Rosary Explanatory Tantra*, Complete English Translation.

B. Alaṃkakalaśa's *Commentary on the Vajra Rosary*, Chapters 23 and 24.

In preparing the translation of the *Vajra Rosary*, I have relied primarily on the Lhasa recension. I have checked all of the text through Chapter 44 against Alaṃka's version set forth in his *Commentary*, and have spot-checked the Tibetan against the *Sde dge*, *Snar thang*, and Stok Palace versions, but have not done so systematically.

In preparing the translation of the *Commentary*, I have relied primarily on the *Sde dge*, but had the advantage of consulting the *Dpe bsdur ma* critical edition throughout. Also, I checked all of Alaṃka's quotations of the *Vajra Rosary* against the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary*.

While this translation is complete, and, I believe, accurate, it should be checked against a complete critical edition of the Tantra. It is my hope that the Sanskrit text will someday be recovered, and also that the missing part of Alaṃka's *Commentary*, if indeed Alaṃka completed it, will be found.

The Vajra Rosary Explanatory Tantra

Chapter One

The Setting of the Tantra: Invocation, Questions and Activities of the Students and so on, from the Mahāyoga Tantra, the Clear Realization of the Glorious Vajra Rosary¹⁵²⁰

Tantra [Volume] *Ca.* In Sanskrit, *Śrī-vajramālābhīdhāna-mahāyoga-tantra-sarva-tantra-hridaya-rahasya-vibhedakam-iti*. In Tibetan, “Opening the Secret Heart of All Tantras: The Great Yoga Tantra, the Clear Expression of the Glorious Vajra Rosary.”

I pay homage to
The noble youthful Mañjuśrī.
I pay homage to
Great Vairocana Buddha.
I pay homage to
Glorious Vajraḍaka.
I pay homage to
The Three Jewels.

I heard these words at one time. The Lord was dwelling in the vaginas of the Vajra Queens, the essence of the body, speech and mind of all the Tathāgatas, with clear realization through the immeasurable Great Seal.¹⁵²¹ //1//

All of them, together with zillions¹⁵²² of great Bodhisattvas associated with the limitless Vajra family, were engaged in the activity of manifesting the realization of the Great Seal.¹⁵²³ //2//

By the delight of the experience of the great bliss of nonduality, the[ir] lotuses were supremely delighted. //3//

¹⁵²⁰ The chapter headings appear at the end of the chapter in the Tibetan. Here, they are also placed at the beginning of each chapter, in accord with contemporary literary convention.

¹⁵²¹ Compare the opening of the root Tantra, translated by Freemantle as "Thus have I heard: once the Blessed One was dwelling in the vagina of the Vajra consort of the Essence of the Body, Speech and Mind of all the Tathāgatas," Skt *Evaṃ mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye bhagavān sarvatathāgatakāyavākcitta-hṛdayavajrayoṣidbhageṣu vijāhāra*. Freemantle 1971, 117. Thus, at the outset, this Explanatory Tantra explains Buddha's internal state, and the methodology involved: the Great Seal. It is unclear why Freemantle uses the singular for "vagina" in light of the Sanskrit locative plural. *Id.*

¹⁵²² L1: many one hundred thousand million ten millions. Alamka has *de 'i grangs kyis ni rnam par bcaḍ pa dang lhan cig tu zhes bya ba 'i tha tshig go*, "By counting them, [they are] 'determined'." Alamka 6B

¹⁵²³ Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *kyi*, Alamka has *kyang*, which makes more sense.

Confronting the suchness of non-conceptual intuitive wisdom by seeing and experiencing all things just as they are, in this way, becoming expert in the unexcelled pledge empowerment of Vajradhara, //4//

Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Pledge Vajra,¹⁵²⁴ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Hatred Vajra,¹⁵²⁵
Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Passion Vajra,¹⁵²⁶ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva [Permanent] [Action]
Vajra, //5//

Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Wisdom Vajra,¹⁵²⁷ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Earth Vajra,¹⁵²⁸
Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Water Vajra,¹⁵²⁹ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Fire Vajra,¹⁵³⁰ and
Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Wind Vajra,¹⁵³¹ //6//

and seventy-two thousand Bodhisattvas connected with the Great Pledge family headed by these, and furthermore, in this way, zillions of Bodhisattvas connected with the Great family, //7//

Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Space Goer,¹⁵³² Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Expanding Space,¹⁵³³
Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Space Scent,¹⁵³⁴ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Space Touch,¹⁵³⁵ //8//

Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Definitive Liberation by Quarters,¹⁵³⁶ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva
Vajrasattva,¹⁵³⁷ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra Essence,¹⁵³⁸ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva
Vajra Wisdom,¹⁵³⁹ //9//

and Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajrapāṇi, Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra King,¹⁵⁴⁰
Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra Pledge,¹⁵⁴¹ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra Reality,¹⁵⁴²
//10//

¹⁵²⁴ Per Alamka, Amoghasiddhi. 2B.

¹⁵²⁵ Per Alamka, Aksobhya. 3A.

¹⁵²⁶ Per Alamka, Amitābha. 3A.

¹⁵²⁷ Per Alamka, Ratnasambhava. 3A.

¹⁵²⁸ Per Alamka, Locanā. 3A.

¹⁵²⁹ Per Alamka, Māmaki. 3A.

¹⁵³⁰ Per Alamka, Pāṇḍarāvasinī. 3A.

¹⁵³¹ Per Alamka, Tārā. 3A.

¹⁵³² Following Alamka's *dri*, "scent," rather than the Lhasa VM's *zla* ba, "moon." Per Alamka, Śabdavajrā. 9A.

¹⁵³³ Per Alamka, Rūpavajrā. 9A.

¹⁵³⁴ Per Alamka, Gandhavajrā. 9A.

¹⁵³⁵ Following Alamka's *reg* pa, "touch," rather than the Lhasa VM's *gtsug* tor, "crown." Per Alamka, Sparśavajrā. 9A.

¹⁵³⁶ Per Alamka, Rasavajrā. 9B.

¹⁵³⁷ Per Alamka, Samantabhadra. 9B.

¹⁵³⁸ Per Alamka, Kṣitigarbha. 9B.

¹⁵³⁹ Per Alamka, Mañjuśrī. 9B.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Per Alamka, Lokeśvara. 9B.

¹⁵⁴¹ Per Alamka, Vajrasamāya. 9B. Akasagarbha?

¹⁵⁴² Per Alamka, Meitreyā. 10A.

Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra Enjoyment,¹⁵⁴³ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra Crown,¹⁵⁴⁴
 Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Subduing by Power,¹⁵⁴⁵ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Non-
 Conceptual Crown,¹⁵⁴⁶ //11//

Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Non-Conceptual Sound,¹⁵⁴⁷ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Non-
 Conceptual Reality,¹⁵⁴⁸ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Non-Conceptual Pledge,¹⁵⁴⁹ Bodhisattva
 Mahāsattva Vajra Ecstasy,¹⁵⁵⁰ //12//

Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra Supreme Ecstasy,¹⁵⁵¹ Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra
 Variety Ecstasy,¹⁵⁵² and Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Innate Vajra,¹⁵⁵³ //13//

and, moreover, the great Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas, who were specially liberated by the
 Vajra Vehicle, sat together. //14//

Furthermore, the Lord turned the Wheel of Reality, totally consummated Buddha deeds,
 completed the accumulation of merit and intuitive wisdom, [and], smiling at the retinue,
 he sat down. //15//

Then, the Lord, having seen the vast great retinues of Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas, in order
 to make them suitably receptive, having entranced himself in the concentration of the
 "Vajra Rosary, Vajra Vehicle of Perfect Enlightenment,"¹⁵⁵⁴ sat radiating a great matrix
 of light rays from all of his pores. //16//

Those Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas who attained supreme happiness by being touched by
 that great matrix of light rays [were] just like Lord Vajradhara, having non-dual union.
 //17//

Then, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas, having felt delight, bliss and joy, were
 overwhelmed.¹⁵⁵⁵ Furthermore, also at that time, the great matrix of light rays was
 gathered back into the Lord's hair tuft.¹⁵⁵⁶ //18//

¹⁵⁴³ Per Alamka, Bhogavajra 9B Sarvanivaranaviskambin?

¹⁵⁴⁴ Per Alamka, Usnīsacakravārtin 9B

¹⁵⁴⁵ Per Alamka, Yamāntaka 10A Robert Thurman relates that the Fourteenth Dalai Lama said
 "Yamāntaka is the bulldozer, Guhyasamāja is the limousine" Personal Communication

¹⁵⁴⁶ Per Alamka, Prajñāntakrt 10A

¹⁵⁴⁷ Per Alamka, Padmāntakrt 10A

¹⁵⁴⁸ Per Alamka, Viḥnāntakrt 10A

¹⁵⁴⁹ Per Alamka, Acala 10A

¹⁵⁵⁰ Per Alamka, Takkirāja 10A

¹⁵⁵¹ Per Alamka, Nīladanda 10A

¹⁵⁵² Per Alamka, Mahābala 10B

¹⁵⁵³ Per Alamka, Sumbharāja 10B

¹⁵⁵⁴ See also Alamka 11B for variant reading

¹⁵⁵⁵ Or, "fainted dead away" [*brgyal bar gyur*] The argument for "overwhelmed" is that Buddha is giving
 ecstasy, not unconsciousness, and that *brgyal ba* would be followed by *sang nas*, which it isn't To the
 contrary, the next thing that happens to them is that light rays from Buddha's vajra enters into their crown

Then, from [Buddha's] vajra path,¹⁵⁵⁷ light rays in the form of hooks came out and touched the totally overwhelmed ones, and from [his] vajra path a veritable rosary of vajras entered into [their] crown wheels and remained there. //19//

And again the Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas experienced great bliss. By the expression of the Vajra syllable HŪM again emanating from the nose at the center of the heart of each one, the net of light rays entering the[ir] crown wheel[s], the very experience of great bliss, great light rays were emitted [and] the Bodhisattvas sat on their respective seats.¹⁵⁵⁸ //20//

Then, those [Bodhisattvas], as if coming out from under water, were made to be blissful and, having seen the Lord's magic display, eyes wide open, praised the Lord with one voice: //21//

Oh Lord!
Filling up with
Innate¹⁵⁵⁹ ecstasy,
Becoming one taste!
Oh Lord!
Supremely refreshing!
Oh! Transcending the
Sphere of the path
Of speech! //22//

Oh Lord!
Just like your
Joyous state,
The three worlds are truly
Blissful!
Oh my! Innate ambrosia!
[From] tasting the flavor,
Great compassion arises! //23//

wheels and they experience great ecstasy. Could this happen if they were unconscious? Also, Alamka gives no support for the "fainting" reading. However, Nathan Katz notes "Hermeneutical shock is symbolized by fainting when the Mahāyāna teachings of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* were first announced, the *śrāvakas* in the audience passed out, similarly, when the Tantric teachings of the *Guhyasamāja* were promulgated, the bodhisattvas fell senseless to the ground, and the same situation ensued when the *Hevajra* teachings were promulgated." Katz 1984, 188 [citations omitted]

¹⁵⁵⁶ Skt *ūṇākoṣa*

¹⁵⁵⁷ While Tibetans generally use *mje* for "penis" or the Sanskrit/Hindi *linga*. Personal Communication with Prof. Lozang Jamspal, *vajra* is a common term for penis in this and other Tantras.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Alamka's version makes it clear that the light rays were emitted with the HŪM syllable from the Bodhisattvas' heart wheels to their crown wheels. Alamka 13B. Snar Thang agrees with Lhasa here.

¹⁵⁵⁹ In Sanskrit, *sahaja* is not used for ordinary sexual experience. Personal Communication with Prof. Lozang Jamspal.

Oh Lord of all living beings!
 You clarify all purposes
 Of beings,
 You open the Great Seal,
 The single flavor
 Of the three realities! //24//

Oh Lord!
 Delighted in great yoga,
 Cutting all fetters!
 Oh Lord,
 You are greatly delighted,
 Surely you make beings
 Fortunate! //25//

Oh my!
 The Vajra Vehicle is bliss!
 Please bestow
 Great delight and joy!
 Oh my!
 Mantra is magnificent!
 You achieved the state
 Of originality! //26//

Praising the Lord with these verses and more, they gathered together again. Desiring to ask about the essence of the nature of the very subtle state of the "expression of the Vajra Rosary," they were delighted, and, wanting to listen with one-pointed minds to the speech which delights, with hair [standing] on end and with bated breath,¹⁵⁶⁰ they paid homage to the Lord again and again, and each sat on his own seat, eagerly anticipating. //27//

The Lord knew the thought process of minds like theirs. Furthermore, having entered into the meditative equipoise of the "realization of the Vajra Rosary," he emitted his own consort from [his] secret vajra. Abandoning dispassionate form, having taken an erotic appearance¹⁵⁶¹ and so forth, he embraced his own consort. //28//

¹⁵⁶⁰ Although Alamka says this breathing was "particularly noble " 16B

¹⁵⁶¹ The nine "moods," *nyams, rasa*, are (1) *sgeg pa, śṛṅgārā*, erotic, (3) *drag shul, raudra*, wrathful, (2) *dpa' bo, vīra*, heroic, (6) *snying rje, kāruṇya*, compassionate, (7) *mī sdug pa, bibhatsa*, revolting, (4) *bzhad gad, hāsyā*, humorous, (5) *rmaḍ byung, adbhuta*, marvelous, (8) *jigs rung, bhayānaka*, terror, (9) *zhi ba, śanta*, peaceful. See Wayman 1977, 22, 327-8. Alamka explains that Buddha had all of these moods: "The Lord has an erotic aspect simultaneously through a state of meditative absorption. By not fearing conceptuality, he is heroic. By experiencing the taste of nectar, he is radiant. Holding fierce weapons, he is fearsome. Because he is in the mode of humor, he is smiling. Because of removing obstacles and [because] the division goes spreading the wheel of command, he is fearsome. Due to the actuality of [his] naturally great compassion, he is compassionate. Because of serving as the cause of spreading new mandala wheels, he is wonderful. Because he has no ultimate aspect, he has the *rasa* of peace." Alamka 17A-B

Furthermore, having become immersed in the Great Seal yoga, they [the Bodhisattvas] saw the very form of the one like that, and they were amazed, their eyes wide open, and they were seen to be as if placed in a painting, and became speechless, and the retinues [of Bodhisattvas] stayed there. //29//

Then, the Lord, stirred up by¹⁵⁶² his own consort, and, giving up the Great Seal yoga, from his own body, speech and mind, stated OM AH HŪM, the essence of the family of the Vajra Queen. //30//

Then, just after saying these words, instantly from the hair pores of the Lord all the Tathāgatas and Consorts and the Fierce Kings were emitted.¹⁵⁶³ //31//

Having been emitted, each was sitting in his or her own seat on the eastern side and so forth of the Lord. Some were in the form of Vairocana; some were in the form of Ratnasambhava; some were in the form of Amitābha; and some were in the form of Sumbharāja and Uṣṇīṣacakravartin through the [rest of the] Conquerors. //32//

Then, the Lord sat for a little while, not saying anything. Then, all the Bodhisattvas, speaking in one voice, made this pronouncement: //33//

Oh my!
Great Vajra Family!
You teach the meaning of
The Vajra Rosary!¹⁵⁶⁴
Oh my!
You illuminate the Vajra Vehicle,
You teach the meaning
Of the Reality Sphere!

Saying that three times, they prostrated to the great Vajradhara, and they sat down. Then, at that time, in that moment, a second, a flash, having seen that gathering of the great, vast retinue of Bodhisattvas and Mahāsattvas, Vajrapāṇi prostrated to the Lord and said these words: //35//

Oh Lord!
God of the Wisdom Vajra!
Abiding inside in the

¹⁵⁶² I am following Alamka, who has the instrumental *rig mas* here

¹⁵⁶³ Alamka 18B has both *byung bar* and *phyung bar*.

¹⁵⁶⁴ This is the first instance where the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* refers to the itself, but Alamka's version does not, having *rdo rje theg pa*, "vajra vehicle," instead of *rdo rje phreng ba*, "vajra rosary" Alamka 19B

Secret lotus!
 Lord of the Great Vow Yoga!
 From your compassion,
 Listen to my words! //36//

The Buddhas
 Of the Fortunate Eon
 Desiring intensely
 The Vajra Vehicle,
 [And] these¹⁵⁶⁵ Bodhisattvas
 And Mahāsattvas,
 Presented with bodies
 Prostrate. //37//

In the time of the
 Five degenerations,
 Future beings,
 Having little diligence
 And little merit,
 Have many bad views
 And short lifespans.
 I request that [those] beings
 Attain the supreme state!¹⁵⁶⁶ //38//

By means of that,
 Those Buddha children
 And future sentient beings
 Will quickly be perfectly liberated
 From cyclic existence!¹⁵⁶⁷ //39//

To the principal one,
 Great Lord Vajradhara
 I pray in this way.
 Oh Thou, Chief of Beings,
 By your kindness
 I seek¹⁵⁶⁸ supreme reality. //40//

I would wish to ask
 A little about the secret
 Of all Buddhas,

¹⁵⁶⁵ The *Vajra Rosary* often has *rnams*, and Alamka *dag*, for the third person plural suffix

¹⁵⁶⁶ Sde dge agrees with Lhasa for this and next verse

¹⁵⁶⁷ Alamka suggests an alternative reading *ji lta bu zhe na/ de 'i phyir pha rol tu phyin zhes gsungs te/ nyan thos kyī byang chub la sogs pa'i mtshan nyid dang bral ba la'o/ yang na bsdus nas zhes bya ba ni 'dod pa'i yon tan lnga'i spyod pas zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go//* Alamka 21A

¹⁵⁶⁸ Alamka's reference to *'tshal* is in his commentary on the following verse

The concentrated meaning
 Of all Tantras,
 The two unexcelled stages,
 The realization of the
 Vajra Rosary!
 I beseech you to teach me
 Perfection stage yoga! //41//

[By] what words in the
 Glorious Community
 In the Unexcelled Yoga Tantra
 Did the Great Sage [speak of]
 The 84,000 reality aggregates?¹⁵⁶⁹ //42//

Saying these words,
 He sat down in front [of Buddha].
 He prostrated [his] body [saying]:

O Great Wisdom
 Lord,
 Vajrasattva, Guru of beings! //43//

You attained the state
 Of the three realities,
 One taste with the three vajras.
 Please teach me
 The hidden meaning
 Of Tantric yoga! //44//

What of the name
Vajra Rosary? [1]¹⁵⁷⁰
 What is the Community? [2]
 What is emptiness? [3]
 What is the division
 Of the drops? [4]
 What is the sound? [5]
 The secret? [6]
 The commitment? [7] //45//

What is the vow? [8]
 The mere sound? [9]
 The reality of wind? [10]

¹⁵⁶⁹ There are 80,000 antidotes to the *kleśas* referenced in the *Abhidharmakośa* 21,000 for each of attachment, hatred and ignorance, and 21,000 for all of them together Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal 1-22-08

¹⁵⁷⁰ These bracketed numbers identify the number of the question identified by Alamka 23A-33A

Great bliss? [11]
 What about the union of
 Vajra and lotus? [12]
 What of the yogi of
 The reality of mantra? [13]
 In how many energy-winds [14] and chakras [15]
 Does the yogi abide? //46//

What are the channels
 In the yogic body?¹⁵⁷¹ [16]
 The instants of
 Variety and so forth? [17]
 The four ecstasies, [18]
 And the "drops" of
 Substance, mantra, and wind? [19] //47//

The three syllables? [20]
 And¹⁵⁷² the three realities? [21]
 Similarly, the three nose tips? [22]
 The emptiness wisdom
 Of the body? [23]
 And how then
 Do the deities remain [there]? [24] //48//

What are their names? [25]
 How, O Protector,
 Do they arise and disappear? [26]
 Please describe clearly
 The genuine creation
 Of the ecstasies! [27] //49//

The previously described channels,
 How do they always
 Move in the vajra body? [28]
 These three intermediate channels,
 How are they said to be important? [29] //50//

How do the energy-winds arise [30]
 And, Oh Master,
 How do they dissolve? [31]
 As for that, O Master,
 How does one perfectly achieve

¹⁵⁷¹ Reading *lags* as honorific, rather than *gang lags* as "why?" See Alamka 25A

¹⁵⁷² Following Alamka, the three syllables are the subject of the twentieth question and the three realities of the twenty-first, therefore *gang* should probably be read *dang* here Alamka 24B

Merging them¹⁵⁷³ into the *ḍākinī*, [32]
 Cutting off the energy-winds
 Of conceptuality? [33] //51//

How does [the mind] arise as non-conceptual? [34]¹⁵⁷⁴
 How do the channels disappear [35]
 And how does one undertake
 The six practices? [36] //52//

What are the characteristics of time? [37]¹⁵⁷⁵
 Also, what is the result of the secret? [38]
 What is the Reality Sphere [39]
 And¹⁵⁷⁶ Vajra [40]
 And the division
 Of the families? [41] //53//

How many are the
 Divisions of seals? [42]
 What are the aggregates
 And so forth, [43]
 And the sense media?
 What is the name
 Of the Great Seal? [44] //54//

Where do the division
 Of tastes [45] and
 The sound of self [46] abide?
 Where does the summary
 Of the divisions
 Of emptiness [47]
 And emptiness arise? [48] //55//

What is day and what is night? [49]
 What are the symbols of the
 Vowels and consonants [50]
 [And] the arising
 Of the interval? [51] //56//
 Of the twenty rituals, [52]
 What is the reason [for them]

¹⁵⁷³ *I.e.* the energy-winds, *sdud pa* is transitive. *De ni* refers to the energy-winds per Alamka 26B

¹⁵⁷⁴ Although Alamka characterizes this question as concerning vajra recitation 26B

¹⁵⁷⁵ Missing in Alamka. See 27A. But the thirty-eighth question refers to the preceding question about the "experience of inconceivable time," *bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i dus nyams su myong ba'i rjes la*// Alamka 27A

¹⁵⁷⁶ Following Alamka with "and" instead of "of "

And what are [their] results? [53]
 How did you state
 The offering ritual? [54] //57//

Similarly, how did you describe
 The nature and name
 Of the Goddess? [55]
 What about "Thus I and so forth"
 Stated in the beginning
 Of the Tantra? [56]
 How did "These words"
 And so forth, the beginning words,
 Become so extensively elaborated? [57] //58//

What about burnt offering
 Of the inner essence? [58]
 What did you say about
 The eating of the five nectars, [59]
 The assembly of the host
 Of yoginīs, [60]¹⁵⁷⁷
 Similarly, the secret symbols [61]
 And the mandalas
 Of the vajra
 Of body, speech and mind? [62] //59//

How do you explain
 The names of Buddha,
 Holy Reality and Sangha? [63]
 What is the explanation
 Of Guru, Teacher,
 Preceptor and Vajradhara? [64-67] //60//

What good qualities
 Should a student have
 To be a vessel
 For Yoga Tantra? [68]
 How many are
 The divisions of practice¹⁵⁷⁸
 Of that? [69] //61//

What are the results of that like?
 What is peace, increase, power?

¹⁵⁷⁷ Unlike all of the preceding questions, Alamka does not quote this question verbatim, although he says that the ritual feast is the subject of the sixtieth question

¹⁵⁷⁸ Per Alamka, *spyod* not *dpyod*

Similarly, what is killing,
 Expelling, transfixing
 And what is to be performed? [70]
 What are the fierce activities
 And mantric verses?
 O Protector, what is the recitation
 Of the fearsome one? [71] //62//

When you accomplish
 The eight Attainments,
 How do you get the
 Five clairvoyances? [72]
 Yogis seeing reality, [73]
 Enlightenment in one instant, [74] //63//

The stable body and agelessness, [75]
 Through taking elixirs, [76]
 The practice¹⁵⁷⁹ of alchemy, [77]
 And the great attainment
 Of the Vajra Seal, [78]
 O Guru of Beings,
 How are these accomplished? //64//

The body mansion,
 What is the nature of that? [79]
 How do the places
 And so forth abide in it?
 What are the characteristics
 Of the Lord of Dissolving [80]
 And Enjoyment, [81]
 And energy-wind? [82]
 How would they subside? //65//

In that way, when he completed
 Asking the questions,
 Vajrapāṇi, with palms joined,
 Sat in front of the
 Guru of Beings,
 And prostrated.
 Then the Master
 Said to Vajrasattva,
 "Well Done!",
 The Protector of Beings

¹⁵⁷⁹ I believe this should read *sgyur* instead of *'gyur*

Speaking in verse
 In a deep
 And pleasant
 Brahma voice." ¹⁵⁸⁰ //66//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the first chapter on the setting of the Tantra: invocation, questions and activities of the students and so forth.

Chapter Two

The Examination of the Teacher and Student and Empowerment

Then the Vajra Lord,
 Truth Speaking World Protector,
 Called out to Vajrapāṇi:

"I will definitively answer
 [Your] perfect questions. //1//

The summary of the meaning
 Of the essence,
 All things hard to discern,
 The things you have asked,
 Oh Vajra God,
 Lord of great secrets,
 The answers to [your] questions,
 The supreme secret,
 Not spoken of anywhere
 In the Action,
 Performance
 Or Yoga Tantras,
 I will explain
 Clearly and definitively. //2//

His eyes flashed, ¹⁵⁸¹
 And he taught
 The supremely wonderful
 And, filled with compassion,
 He spoke these words.
 Therefore, you should listen well! //3//

¹⁵⁸⁰ For variant reading of this verse, see Alamka 33A-B

¹⁵⁸¹ This should be *spyān* An alternate reading could be "Instantly open your eyes!"

Then Vajrapāṇi requested the Lord to moisten [his] heart with compassion and to resolve all doubts. And [the Lord] gave the explanation, using supremely secret words: //4//

When empowerment
Is the main thing,
All attainments constantly
Are present.
I¹⁵⁸² will explain
The exact meaning.
So, above all,
Perfectly listen! //5//

When at the outset
The brilliant disciple
[Has] genuine empowerment,
Then he becomes a vessel
For the yoga
Of the perfection stage. //6//

Lacking genuine empowerment,
Even if a practitioner knows
The meaning of Tantra,
Both master and disciple
Will go to a great
Unbearable hell!
Thus venerate and serve
The perfect guru
With great respect. //7//

He has attained empowerment
And knows reality,
Has genius
And a compassionate nature,
Profound, magnificent
And immaculate,
He abjures harm
And violence. //8//

A fortunate one,
[With] a perfect body.
Adorned with signs and marks,
Enjoying only great passion,

¹⁵⁸² This should be *nga*, not *da*

He abandons jealousy
Towards objects. //9//

Modest and always delighted,
He is born
From the yoginī's womb.
With extreme conviction
In the Vajra Vehicle,
He turns his back on
The Individual Vehicle.¹⁵⁸³
The disciple should serve
The guru with these
And similar good qualities. //10//

He finds a perfect guru,
Who, with good, exacting insight,
Having purifies, realizes and
Ripens the stains which are
Characteristic of the disciple, //11//

Just as one tests
A jewel by rubbing
And gold by burning,
Similarly, he tests the disciple
For¹⁵⁸⁴ twelve years. //12//

Because of that, in that way,
At all times,
They mutually examine
Each other.
Otherwise, obstructions will arise,
And will destroy
Spiritual attainments
And bestow suffering. //13//

Just as a mantra destroys poison,
So a mantra becomes an elixir of
Making virtue.
Therefore, with every effort,
Having understood
The student of mantra, //14//

¹⁵⁸³ Following the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's nomenclature

¹⁵⁸⁴ Should be *bar du*, not *par du*

The guru [gives] empowerment
 And so forth
 For spiritual attainment,
 The exact goal.
 Because of that,
 The anointed student,
 Impure,
 Becomes pure. //15//

Vajrapāṇi asked
 Great bliss Vajrasattva
 About that:¹⁵⁸⁵

In Tantra, how is empowerment
 Stated to be essential? //16//

Omniscient Vajrasattva,
 Resolving all doubt,
 By [his] expertise
 In suchness,
 Described to Vajrapāṇi
 The precise meaning. //17//

I will explain
 So listen!

Of the divisions of empowerment,
 The first is the main one,
 The second has the name of secret,
 The third is total union, and
 The meaning of the fourth
 Is supreme. //18//

The main one has eleven divisions,
 The twelfth is the secret one,
 The thirteenth is true union,¹⁵⁸⁶
 And the fourteenth
 Is ultimate reality.
 Each empowerment
 Is a specific ground.¹⁵⁸⁷ //19//

¹⁵⁸⁵ Vajrapāṇi appears to be asking the Lord/Buddha/Vajrasattva, who are interchangeable here

¹⁵⁸⁶ A possible instance of the Commentary being back-translated into the Tantra *yang dag sbyor*, part of the *Commentary's* explanation of the meaning of Alamka's *Vajra Rosary's snyom par 'jug*, is exactly what the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has instead of *snyom par 'jug*.

¹⁵⁸⁷ This verse is quoted in Yangchen 1995, 107. There are numerous correlations of the bodhisattva grounds to Tantric practice, including the *Root Tantra's* mention of ten grounds, the *BIL's* identification of

Causal empowerments are
 Of three kinds;
 You should know the fourth
 As result.
 I pervade all
 With the stages of
 The ecstasies and so forth. //20//

On the third date
 Of the waning¹⁵⁸⁸ moon
 And, similarly, on the
 Tenth and fourteenth,
 The guru bestows empowerment
 According to ritual
 On the student
 With good qualities. //21//

A slim-bodied sixteen year old,¹⁵⁸⁹
 Adorned with form and fortune,
 Dark,¹⁵⁹⁰ wide-eyed,¹⁵⁹¹
 With perfect conviction,
 A compassionate mind,
 And a sweet voice,
 Who has achieved empowerment, //22//

And has special faith
 In yoga Tantra,
 Or a twenty¹⁵⁹² year old,

the ten grounds with the ten winds, as well as the *Vajra Rosary's* identification of the fourteen empowerments with fourteen grounds. See *id.* 107-124. Yangchen Galoe notes that the *Drop of Mahamudra-The Great Seal* also correlates fourteen grounds with the fourteen empowerments, but says that they are not the same thing, rather, as Tsong kha pa stated in the *BIL*, "they are correlated from the point of view of a single concomitant factor," 121, also noting that "in many other texts it is stated that it is as fortunate to receive these empowerments as it is to attain the correlative grounds, and also, they establish the potencies and imprints to attain these grounds [in the long run]" *Id.*

¹⁵⁸⁸ Alamka has "waxing" moon, *yar ngo*, instead of the *Vajra Rosary's* *mar ngo*, "waning" moon

¹⁵⁸⁹ See *CMP* Chapter 10 regarding these practices. Wedemeyer 2007, 307-15

¹⁵⁹⁰ *Sngo bsangs*, lit. blueish, pale blue, pure blue, black, per L. Jamspal, *chandala*, low caste, per R. Thurman, with blue wide eyes. Personal Communications. The Sanskrit would be *śyāma*, per Monier Williams. "f a woman with peculiar marks or characteristics (accord to some 'a girl who has the marks of puberty', accord to others 'a woman who has not borne children,' also described as 'a female of slender shape' &c) [1094,3]" Alamka makes clear, however, that this refers to color. 39B

¹⁵⁹¹ See *Secret Community Root Tantra*, Freemantle 1971, ch. 8, v. 6 (*mig yangs* as "wide-eyed")

¹⁵⁹² Alamka has "twelve year old" 40A. See *Secret Community Root Tantra* Ch. 7, v. 36 "Taking a twelve-year-old girl whose mind is composed, distinguishing the practice of his Family, he should worship with his seed" (Freemantle 1971, 49), "Taking a twenty-five-year-old girl, wide-eyed, adorned with youth and beauty," Ch. 8, v. 7

Creates blissful delight.
 Otherwise there will be
 No success;
 You would be far
 From attainment. //23//

You should offer
 An especially tender woman,
 Wife, sister, or daughter,
 With great faith,
 To the guru.¹⁵⁹³ //24//

Having offered various kinds
 Of gold, jewels, cloth
 And garlands of flowers,
 Seated in front of the guru,
 The student says these words: //25//

"Oh Lord!
 Beginning from today,
 Please accept me as a servant!
 Please accept my offering!"

Having pleased [him]
 By those kinds of things,
 You offer the guru
 All of your possessions.
 Since the guru is Vajradhara,
 Worship the guru! //26//

Then, the Mother Seal,¹⁵⁹⁴
 Having been perfectly offered
 To the Lord,
 [The guru] should
 Make love to¹⁵⁹⁵ [her].¹⁵⁹⁶

¹⁵⁹³ But see *VR* 63B, Ch 44 "The brahmin woman is called mother and the washerwoman sister The dancer is known as daughter The mole woman is known as wife You should know the undertaker woman as the new wife, the low caste woman as mother-in-law "

¹⁵⁹⁴ *I.e.* your wife

¹⁵⁹⁵ The parallel text in the *Root Tantra* is *ṣoda śābdikāṃ prāpya yoṣitāṃ kāntisuprabhām/ gandhapuṣpākulīkṛtvā tasya madhye tu kāmāyet, lo grāns bcu drug lon pa ni/ dri dan me tog hphren brgyan te/ yon tan ska rags māmākīr/ shes rab can gyis byin brlabs la/ de yi dbus su mnyes par bya*, translated by Freemantle as "Taking a sixteen-year-old girl of radiant beauty, he should decorate the mandala with perfumes and flowers, and in the centre love her," Freemantle 1971, 40, 202, 203 Hevajra Tantra, Ch 10, "Consecration", v 6 *Tāvad dhi sevyate mudrā yāvac chukravatī bhavet/* The consort is served until her sexual fluids flow Farrow and Menon 1992, 121

¹⁵⁹⁶ Alamka's discussion of these terms suggests a slightly different order

What emerges and falls
 From making love
 Is [put] in the mouth
 Of the fortunate one.¹⁵⁹⁷ //27//

You should enjoy that
 By joining the thumb
 And ring finger.¹⁵⁹⁸
 Self-cognizing great bliss
 Is the wisdom
 That arises from that. //28//

Exhaling and inhaling
 Are of one taste,
 And you should make offerings
 With intense ecstasy.
 Having placed the mantra
 HŪM PHAT
 On the jewel's door,
 You should shake the vajra.
 Ecstasies arise¹⁵⁹⁹
 At that instant
 Just like that. //29//

With ecstatic mind,
 The Vajra Queen exclaims
 "How blissful!"
 Then she is handed
 To the student.
 These words are clearly stated. //30//

The practice of offering the lotus
 Should be done like this, and,
 Because of EVAM,¹⁶⁰⁰

¹⁵⁹⁷ See Onians 2001, 173 (Per the *Samājottārā* (*Secret Community* ch. 18), the second initiation is described as follows: "By means of [the union of] *vajra* (penis) and lotus (vagina) [the teacher] should gather in all the Vajra [Tathāgata]s and let them all descend into his heart, as vajras of body, speech and mind. Then he should emit them [as semen] via his *vajra* (penis) and let them fall into the student's mouth. This is the best initiation of all the Vajra [Tathāgata]s.")

¹⁵⁹⁸ Tib *ming med*, Skt *anamika*. *Tha* is end, *theb chung* is modern Tibetan for little finger. So *tha ltag* is above the end. Per Lozang Jamspal, this refers to the thumb and ring finger. Personal Communication. Per James Matisoff, "The interest of Zhangzhung for comparative Tibeto-Burman," stedt.berkeley.edu/pdf/JAM/Zhangzhung-reformat/wp3.pdf, the Western Tibetan form for "ring finger" is *srin-lag* or *srin mdzub*.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Alamka's *sngon du 'byung* is glossed by him as *skyes par 'gur*. This is probably just coincidental since these were all Sanskrit to begin with, unless some backing in occurred in the Tibetan versions only.

[Her] sublime face,
 Vajradhatuīśvarī herself
 Enters into the heart of this one.¹⁶⁰¹ //31//

The yogi will not
 Attain Buddhahood
 By any other means.
 Also that very subtle thing
 Will be realized
 By the yogi of great bliss. //32//

You should serve
 With great effort!
 The characteristic of
 Innate ecstasy
 Becomes the main empowerment.
 Therefore, you achieve everything
 Exactly. //33//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the second chapter on the examination of the teacher and student and empowerment.

Chapter Three

The Terminology of the *Vajra Rosary*

Now, listen more about that one!

The Vajra Rosary's clear meaning
 Is totally hidden in the Tantras,
 So don't mention [these] questions
 To others! //1//

The name, "Vajra Rosary,"
 Also is the Thirteenth Stage,¹⁶⁰²
 The genuine state
 Of the fourth ecstasy,
 The ecstasy of
 Universal emptiness.¹⁶⁰³ //2//

¹⁶⁰⁰ *I.e.* the lotus

¹⁶⁰¹ *I.e.* the student

¹⁶⁰² *I.e.* Buddhahood

It is beyond
 The province of speech,
 Abandoning all duality.
 It is the state
 Of all fortunate yogis,
 The realm of the speech
 Of the yoginīs. //3//

The wisdom of emptiness
 And the vajra
 Are explained as
 The "Vajra Rosary."
 Emptiness is the
 Secret vajra
 And the lotus channel
 Is Vajradhātuiśvarī.
 Wisdom is supreme great bliss,
 Wonderful innate ecstasy! //4//

The vajra is well known
 As piercing all thought constructions.
 The rosary of them
 Is also continuous.
 The continuity of those rosaries,
 Vajras of enlightenment spirit,
 Are called vajra
 Because they are indestructible. //5//

Hidden in all [other] Tantras,
 It should not be revealed
 In any way:
 That is as well known
 As breathing. //6//

The continuum of the rosary
 Cannot be broken.
 With the property of
 Overflowing ecstasy
 It causes the piercing
 Of all the conceptual energy-winds.
 It cannot be penetrated
 By energy-wind. //7//

¹⁶⁰³ *I.e.* the meaning of the ecstasies is universal emptiness, described by Alamka as "free from all elaborations" 42B

By day and by night.
 More than one hundred eight
 Energy-winds of the nature
 Of thought construction
 Also clearly arise and perish,
 Divided like this,
 So listen to the names
 Of the energy-winds!¹⁶⁰⁴ //8//

Sending and Grasping¹⁶⁰⁵
 And One Hundred Million,¹⁶⁰⁶
 Intoxicating,¹⁶⁰⁷ Stupid,¹⁶⁰⁸
 Cooling¹⁶⁰⁹ and Itching,¹⁶¹⁰
 Mucus¹⁶¹¹ and Axe,¹⁶¹² //9//

Falling,¹⁶¹³ Crocodile¹⁶¹⁴

¹⁶⁰⁴ Possible Sanskrit names of the energy-winds are given in footnotes. Further research will be pursued to verify these and compare them to other schema. See Alamka Ch. 17 for description of the 129 channels divided by chakra.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Skt *mucilinda* [?] Per Lozang Jamspal, usually *byung rngup*, *yāmayama* or better, *anāpana*. Personal Communication. Per Alamka, the Life-energy energy-wind. 45A. Per Lokesh Chandra, *btang gzung* is *Mucilinda*, the Naga who sheltered Buddha during his meditation under the Bodhi Tree.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Per Alamka, this energy-wind is "realized [*buda*] by A and RA." 45A. Per Lokesh Chandra the Sanskrit for *dung phyur*, "100 million," is *arbuda*, which was translated as "realized, *rtogs*" for "*buda*" (*/bud* being an alternate root for */budh* and */bund*) "by A and R," i.e. *arbuda*. Per Alamka, this second energy-wind is the Evacuative Energy-wind. 45A.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Skt *jagala* [?] Both Alamka and the Lhasa Vajra Rosary have *myos pa*, "intoxicated," which could be Skt *māda*. However, Alamka describes this channel as "having relied on the very good channel, having equalized things that are eaten, because of activity that is done as one like flowing water, the Equalizing Wind, which is the Intoxicating [*myos byed*] Wind." 45A. This may suggest Skt *jagala*, which Lokesh Chandra gives as the first definition of *myos byed*, *ja* meaning, among many other things, "eaten," *gāla* meaning "flowing" per MW, *myos byed* might have been the better translation.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Skt *kubuddhi* [?] *Blo ngan* as Skt *durmati* or *vimati*, or, per Lozang Jamspal, *kubuddhi*, Personal Communication, per MW "having vile sentiments, stupid." Alamka's *rtogs dka'*, 45A, as Skt *durbhoda* or even *tapas* if *rtogs dka'* was a variant translation of *tapas*, "ascetic," that could have been *dka' thub*. Taking both Alamka's *rtogs dka'*, as "realizationally challenged," and the *Vajra Rosary's blo ngan* as "bad-minded" in the sense of defectively-minded, Skt *kubuddhi* seems appropriate. Perhaps also Alamka's "because of being realized with difficulty because it causes the compression that goes above," Alamka 45A, also carries this sense in the sense of a "mind freeze" as "a compression above."

¹⁶⁰⁹ Skt *stala* for "cooling", per MW, *tuṣāra* or *devadruma*.

¹⁶¹⁰ Per MW, *kaṇḍū*, per Lozang Jamspal, *śyāmikā*, Personal Communication.

¹⁶¹¹ Skt. *siṅghāṇaka*. [?]

¹⁶¹² Per L. Jamspal, Skt *parśu*, per MW *kūṭhārakā*.

¹⁶¹³ Reading Alamka, 45A, "Falling," *zogs pa*, makes more sense than "particle," *gzegs* "having held the three types of tangible object, because of fatigue the Falling [energy-wind] is the Definitively Moving Wind."

¹⁶¹⁴ Skt *makara* [?] This energy-wind is not in Alamka, at least not so named.

And Breaking Through Flesh,¹⁶¹⁵
 Horrible,¹⁶¹⁶ Drinking Bout,¹⁶¹⁷
 Mad Desire Sinew,¹⁶¹⁸ Child,¹⁶¹⁹
 Producing Variety¹⁶²⁰ And Bowing,¹⁶²¹ //10//

Pride,¹⁶²² Drum¹⁶²³ and Sounding,¹⁶²⁴
 God of Wind¹⁶²⁵
 And Piercing Essence,¹⁶²⁶
 Fire,¹⁶²⁷ Time¹⁶²⁸ and Servant,¹⁶²⁹
 Vajra, Supreme Giving
 And Mango,¹⁶³⁰ //11//

Bee¹⁶³¹ and Moonlight,¹⁶³² 1633

¹⁶¹⁵ Per L Jamspal, "Protruding Flesh " Personal Communication Alamka notes "Because of quickly entering the stamen of the Dharma Wheel, [it is called] Breaking Through the Skin, the Life-energy energy-wind " 45B

¹⁶¹⁶ *Gtsigs* as it appears in the Lhasa Vajra Rosary, can mean in Tibetan "to bear or clench teeth," "important," or "subdue," among other things *Brtisgs*, which is what Alamka has, means "build" in Tibetan For *gtsigs pa*, Lokesh Chandra has *utkaṣṭa*, meaning "immense," "excessive" and the like and *udumbara*, meaning a kind of worm or leprosy For *brtisgs* Lokesh Chandra has *dātavya* (to be given or paid), *premañīya* (fit for exciting love), and *vikaṣa*, *vikaṣa* meaning, among other things, "horrible" and many variations of unpleasant or ugly things (including "large-toothed"), which accords with Alamka's statement that this wind "eliminat[es] the causing of the feeling of disgust towards wind and excrement " 45B Per Professor Jamspal, this could be "Baring Teeth," Skt *vikaṣa* I'm guessing that the Sanskrit here was originally *vikaṣa*, with the connotation of ugly or horrible (clenched or bared teeth being a manifestation of this) The Lhasa Vajra Rosary's *gtsigs* may have resulted from *vikaṣa* being rendered as *utkaṣa*, which has the primary connotation of large or excessive, not too far off from that of *vikaṣa*.

¹⁶¹⁷ Alamka has "Drunken Argument," stressing the absence of conceptuality 45A Skt here could be *madakāla*

¹⁶¹⁸ Skt *madakāma* or *kāmamuḍa*, the latter found in MW, meaning "infatuated by lust " *Chu ba* per JV and IW lexicons is one of 16 large sinews binding the joints together Per MW, the Skt for this is *kaṇḍarā* "f a sinew (of which sixteen are considered to be in the Human body), a principal vessel of the body, a large artery, vein &c " So the Skt for this compound could be *kāmamudhakaṇḍarā*.

¹⁶¹⁹ Here, taking Alamka's *ṣiṣu*, Skt for child, young of an animal, pupil, instead of repeating Lhasa Vajra Rosary's *chu srin*

¹⁶²⁰ Skt *nānotpādaka* [?]

¹⁶²¹ Alamka has *sdud pa*, Skt *saṃgraha* [?], which his *Commentary* supports 45B

¹⁶²² Skt *māna* [?]

¹⁶²³ Skt *duṇḍubhi* [?]

¹⁶²⁴ Skt *rāvaṇa* [?]

¹⁶²⁵ Skt *vāyu* or *namana* [?] Per Lozang Jamspal, could also be *maruṭi*. Personal Communication

¹⁶²⁶ Skt *marmataccheda* [?]

¹⁶²⁷ Skt *agni* [?]

¹⁶²⁸ Skt *kala* [?] Not in Alamka

¹⁶²⁹ Skt *kimkara* [?], lit , "What should I do?"

¹⁶³⁰ Skt *cuta*, "mango," corresponds with Tib *tsu ta* However, Skt *cūta* is 'dzag byed, "drip, trickle or leak," which makes more sense given Alamka's "supported by the channel that circles three times in the middle of the anther of the Enjoyment Wheel, [and] because it enters the Life-energy energy-wind as if dripping [it is called] the Dripping Wind " 46A

¹⁶³¹ Skt *bhramara* [?] Alamka has *tsin tsi ri*, [cinciri?], which I have not been able to track down

*Kāmbōja*¹⁶³⁴ and Dreadlocks,¹⁶³⁵
 Black Mustard,¹⁶³⁶ Well Spread¹⁶³⁷
 And Summoning Time,¹⁶³⁸
 Non-Virtuous¹⁶³⁹
 And Relying on Demons,¹⁶⁴⁰ //12//

Tight Woman¹⁶⁴¹ and Throat,¹⁶⁴²
 Totally Clear,¹⁶⁴³ Supreme Giving¹⁶⁴⁴ and Narcotic,¹⁶⁴⁵
 Ocean of Pride¹⁶⁴⁶ and Ganesha,¹⁶⁴⁷
 Chameleon¹⁶⁴⁸ and Earth Mind,¹⁶⁴⁹ //13//

Good Path¹⁶⁵⁰ and Supremely Born,¹⁶⁵¹
 Stainless,¹⁶⁵² Child¹⁶⁵³ and Sun,¹⁶⁵⁴
 Elucidation¹⁶⁵⁵ and Pressing Sun,¹⁶⁵⁶
 Powerful-like,¹⁶⁵⁷ Roar¹⁶⁵⁸ and Time,¹⁶⁵⁹ //14//

Vow¹⁶⁶⁰ and Frog,¹⁶⁶¹

¹⁶³² Skt *candrikā* [?]

¹⁶³³ Alamka has *zla ba'i thod*, "Upper Moon "

¹⁶³⁴ The uppermost of the sixteen "Great Kingdoms," *mahājanapadas*, referred to in the *Anguttārā Nikāya* and *Mahābhārata*.

¹⁶³⁵ Skt *kesarīn* [?] or *jaṭila*, meaning "having a mane" and "hairy" per MW respectively

¹⁶³⁶ Skt *kalasarṣapa* [?]

¹⁶³⁷ Skt *prakara* [?]

¹⁶³⁸ Skt *kalākārṣana* [?]

¹⁶³⁹ Skt *vr̥cchika* [?]

¹⁶⁴⁰ Skt *vāmāśarya* [?]

¹⁶⁴¹ Skt _____ [?]

¹⁶⁴² Skt *kanta* [?]

¹⁶⁴³ Skt *viṣkambini* [?]

¹⁶⁴⁴ Skt *varadā* [?]

¹⁶⁴⁵ Skt *unmataka* [?]

¹⁶⁴⁶ Skt *mānasarovara* [?]

¹⁶⁴⁷ Skt *ganapati* [?]

¹⁶⁴⁸ Skt *krkalāsa* [?]

¹⁶⁴⁹ Skt *pr̥tividhī* [?]

¹⁶⁵⁰ Skt *suyāna* [?]

¹⁶⁵¹ Skt *sujata* [?]

¹⁶⁵² Skt *nirmala* [?]

¹⁶⁵³ Skt *sisu* [?]

¹⁶⁵⁴ Skt *surya* [?]

¹⁶⁵⁵ Skt *vyanjana* [?]

¹⁶⁵⁶ Skt *suryākṛanta* [?]

¹⁶⁵⁷ Skt *balavat* [?]

¹⁶⁵⁸ Skt *garjana* [?]

¹⁶⁵⁹ Skt *kala* [?]

¹⁶⁶⁰ Skt *samvara* [?]

¹⁶⁶¹ Skt *meṇḍaka*, lit *utpalutagmana* - jumping one

Black Bee,¹⁶⁶² Dog¹⁶⁶³ and Mark,¹⁶⁶⁴
 Plow,¹⁶⁶⁵ Hunch-backed¹⁶⁶⁶
 And Straight,¹⁶⁶⁷
 Earth¹⁶⁶⁸ and Earth Woman,¹⁶⁶⁹ //15//

Brahmin¹⁶⁷⁰ and
 Place Becoming Nose,¹⁶⁷¹
 Family of Mother Deities¹⁶⁷²
 And Moving Tongue,¹⁶⁷³
 Not Talking¹⁶⁷⁴ and
 Drumbeat Cloud¹⁶⁷⁵
 Husband¹⁶⁷⁶ and Vast Eye,¹⁶⁷⁷ //16//

Stainless,¹⁶⁷⁸ Kāśyapa,¹⁶⁷⁹
 And White Lily,¹⁶⁸⁰
 Various Beaks¹⁶⁸⁰ and Level Eye,¹⁶⁸¹
 Beautiful,¹⁶⁸² and Reality Staff,¹⁶⁸³
 All Beings,¹⁶⁸⁴ Lightness¹⁶⁸⁵ and Firm,¹⁶⁸⁶ //17//

Calling [for] Food,¹⁶⁸⁷ Donkey¹⁶⁸⁸

-
- ¹⁶⁶² Skt *bhramara* [?]
¹⁶⁶³ Skt *kukkura* [?]
¹⁶⁶⁴ Skt *numittaka* [?]
¹⁶⁶⁵ Skt *hala* [?]
¹⁶⁶⁶ Should be *sgur po*. Skt *kubja* [?]
¹⁶⁶⁷ Skt *ṛjuka* [?]
¹⁶⁶⁸ Skt *prṭivī* [?]
¹⁶⁶⁹ Skt *bhūcarī* [Lokesh Chandra] or *prṭivigamana* [?]
¹⁶⁷⁰ Skt *brahmana* [?]
¹⁶⁷¹ Skt *nasikivikarsthāna* [?]
¹⁶⁷² Skt *matrikakula* [?]
¹⁶⁷³ Skt *jibhacalana* [?]
¹⁶⁷⁴ Skt *mum* [?]
¹⁶⁷⁵ Skt *duṇḍubhamegha* [?]
¹⁶⁷⁶ Skt *ramaṇa* [?]
¹⁶⁷⁷ Skt *akṣivī`sāla* [?]
¹⁶⁷⁸ Skt *nirmala* [?]
¹⁶⁷⁹ Skt *suka* [?]
¹⁶⁸⁰ Skt *nanāuṣṭha* [?]
¹⁶⁸¹ Skt *smākṣa* [?]
¹⁶⁸² Skt *ruci* [?]
¹⁶⁸³ Skt *dharmadāṇḍa* [?]
¹⁶⁸⁴ Skt *sarvajagat* [?]
¹⁶⁸⁵ Skt *sattva* [?]
¹⁶⁸⁶ Skt *sthira* [?]

And Lazy,¹⁶⁸⁹
 Open Mouth,¹⁶⁹⁰ Great Sound,¹⁶⁹¹ Powerful Playing,¹⁶⁹²
 Small Artery,¹⁶⁹³ Ruling,¹⁶⁹⁴ Dishonest,¹⁶⁹⁵
 Great Main One¹⁶⁹⁶ and Always Cheerful,¹⁶⁹⁷ //18//
 Lightning Rosary¹⁶⁹⁸ and
 Making Happy,¹⁶⁹⁹
 Exhaling,¹⁷⁰⁰ Ruby Tongue,¹⁷⁰¹
 Supreme Bliss,¹⁷⁰²
 Udumbara [Flower], and Delusion,¹⁷⁰³
 Lotus Net,¹⁷⁰⁴ Lotus Turning,¹⁷⁰⁵ //19//
 Battle-Ax¹⁷⁰⁶ and Peacock Wind,^{1707 1708}

Oh Vajra Lord!
 Thus I have taught
 The names
 Of the energy-winds. //20//

Oh Lord!
 By analyzing the places
 Of the winds asked about,
 From where do they arise,

¹⁶⁸⁷ Skt *asanāhvāna* [?] Also could be "Tibetan Food," with interesting implications But Lozang Jamspal thinks it could be "calling for food" He also thinks that this is the origin of *Bod* for Tibet, calling on the authority Personal Communication 2-20-08

¹⁶⁸⁸ Skt *khara* [?]

¹⁶⁸⁹ Skt *ālasya* [?]

¹⁶⁹⁰ Skt *prasṛtānana* [?] Used in *Bodhicaryāvatara* 5 92

¹⁶⁹¹ Skt *māhārava* [?]

¹⁶⁹² Skt *balakrīḍāṇa* [?] *Rtse* used as verb here

¹⁶⁹³ Skt *kṣudranāḍī* [?]

¹⁶⁹⁴ Skt *vaśakara* [?] Per Lozang Jamspal, there is a mantra, *vaśaṃkuru svaha* Tantra means body protection and mantra means mind protector per medicine text of 5th Dalai Lama, the *Four Tantras* Personal Communication

¹⁶⁹⁵ Skt *māyāsāṭya* [?]

¹⁶⁹⁶ Skt *mahāpramukha* [?]

¹⁶⁹⁷ Skt *sadāpriya* [?]

¹⁶⁹⁸ Skt. *vidyutamāla* [?]

¹⁶⁹⁹ Skt *ramaṇa* [?]

¹⁷⁰⁰ Skt *prāśvāsana* [?]

¹⁷⁰¹ Skt *rāgaḥhvā* [?]

¹⁷⁰² Skt *samvara* [?]

¹⁷⁰³ Skt *moha* [?]

¹⁷⁰⁴ Skt *padmajāla* [?]

¹⁷⁰⁵ Skt *padmāvartana* [?]

¹⁷⁰⁶ Skt *prasū* [?]

¹⁷⁰⁷ Skt *mayūravata* or *anila* or *vayu* [?]

¹⁷⁰⁸ Broken down in this way, there are 105 energy-winds

And spread out?
Good sir! //21//

The Vajra Lord spoke:

As for the character of the
Abode of the energy-wind,
The energy-wind pervading
The six wheels
Always abides [in]
The Reality Wheel,
Pervading migrators
With "life-energy." //22//

At midnight,¹⁷⁰⁹
From the supreme space,¹⁷¹⁰
Non-conceptuality arises,
Overcoming the instinctual
Conceptions of energy-wind.
That energy-wind moves
In a nine-fold way,
Abiding in the state
Of the Reality Wheel. //23//

It has a
Nine-fold nature
In the six wheels.
At the end of mid-day,
The energy-winds are caused
To rise up. //24//

Starting from mid-day,
The six wheels have a
Nine-fold nature.
At midnight the energy-winds
Clearly move and, //25//

By division of place,
They go to
Various conceptualities.
Having analyzed the conceptualities,¹⁷¹¹

¹⁷⁰⁹ In glossing this and the next verse, Alamka has *thun phyed*, half a session, instead of *mtshan phyed*, midnight, raising the question of whether the same thing was intended here

¹⁷¹⁰ Per Alamka, the center of the navel 50A

¹⁷¹¹ Alamka notes *de rnams zhes by aba ni rnam par trog pa rnams kyi'o*, 50B, raising the issue of phrases from the *Commentary* perhaps making their way back into the main text

I will explain their names. //26//

Desire,¹⁷¹² Hatred,¹⁷¹³ and Ignorance,¹⁷¹⁴
 Inflated,¹⁷¹⁵ Pride¹⁷¹⁶ and Attraction,¹⁷¹⁷
 Jealousy,¹⁷¹⁸ Fury,¹⁷¹⁹ and Miserliness,¹⁷²⁰
 Dishonest¹⁷²¹, Hypocrisy,¹⁷²² Bad Dressing, //27//

Untamed Mind,¹⁷²³ Desire,
 And Sleepy,
 Doubt and Egotism,
 Joy, Free from Attachment,
 And Haughty,
 Hidden, Lusting, and Instinct, //28//

Illusion, Delusion,
 Great Desire,
 Quarrel, Amusement,
 Common, Dull,
 Conceited Charlatan,
 Completely Tormented,
 Appearance, Not Peaceful,
 Not Vigilant, //29//

Inanimate and False Pride,
 Regretful and Unabashed,
 Reverence-less, Non-Magnanimous,
 Low Mind, Shameless, Fettered, //30//

Shame and Embarrassment,
 Retentiveness, Bad States,
 Dualistic Mind
 And Not Conceited,
 Concentrated, Doubt
 And Weary, //31//

¹⁷¹² Skt *kama* [?]

¹⁷¹³ Skt *dvesa* [?]

¹⁷¹⁴ Skt *moha* [?]

¹⁷¹⁵ Skt *mada* [?]

¹⁷¹⁶ Skt *māna* [?]

¹⁷¹⁷ Skt *abhinvesa* [?]

¹⁷¹⁸ Skt *īṣyā* [?]

¹⁷¹⁹ Skt *khroda* [?]

¹⁷²⁰ Skt *matsarya* [?]

¹⁷²¹ Skt *sāthya* [?]

¹⁷²² Skt *māyā* [?]

¹⁷²³ Skt _____ [?]

Power and Illusory Mind
 And Strength,
 Thinking Mind
 And Unconsciousness,
 Dissolving and Wild,
 Equally Swirling
 And Intoxicated, //32//

Not Veda and Having A Little,
 Bad Rebirth¹⁷²⁴ and Fragile,¹⁷²⁵
 Unhappy Mind
 And Excess Conceptuality,
 Fear, Torpor and Sleep, //33//

Craving, Sport
 And Crane,
 Harmful, Lazy
 And Crookedness,
 Thinking, Practicing
 And Depressed,
 Conventional, Real
 And Meaningful, //34//

Bestowing and Desiring Joy,
 Fear and Trembling
 And Nature
 Of Mirror Divination,
 Clear, Very Clear
 And Adulterating,
 Connecting
 And Nature of Constancy, //35//

Tortoise, Insatiable,
 And Harming
 Unclear and Pleasant,
 Placeless, Many
 And Speaking,
 Lord and Personhood,
 Amazement, Joy
 And Bad Being.¹⁷²⁶ //36//

¹⁷²⁴ Skt *dausthulya* [?]

¹⁷²⁵ Skt *alpasthāma* [?]

¹⁷²⁶ The total count of conceptualities is 108, broken down this way

Attracted to cyclic existence,
 The three sufferings,
 The reality of the lower [states],
 The nature of the energy-winds,
 Always one-hundred
 Plus eight,
 Is to move constantly,
 Day and night. //37//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the third chapter on the terminology of the Vajra Rosary.

Chapter Four

The Explanation of the Special Terminology of the Community

Now, the Sun
 Of the Three Vajras,
 Opening the secret lotus,
 Dwells in a state of great bliss,
 Expressing the meaning
 Of the Supreme Community. //1//

The Community is explained
 As "mingling."
 I will explain mingling to you.
 The four wheels
 Are not different,
 Together with the mantras
 According to ritual. //2//

When the hero joins
 With the yoginī,
 The two secret channels
 Perfectly join and touch.
 At that time,
 Space¹⁷²⁷ expands. //3//

From the space, wind is born.
 By that, fire intensely blazes.
 The seventy-two¹⁷²⁸ thousand

¹⁷²⁷ *I.e.* the space “located at the navel of the yoginīs” Alamka 54B

Channels are awakened.^{1729 1730}
 Radiance pervades
 The Great Bliss Wheel
 With the supreme state
 Of all-bliss. //4//

The enlightenment spirit
 Of great bliss
 Melts and comes to rest
 In the channel.
 Because the three vajras
 Become of one nature,
 The elements become as one taste,
 The aggregates are spent, and,
 In order to revitalize,¹⁷³¹
 The ecstasies of energy-winds are born. //5//

Then, the enlightenment spirit melts
 From all the places,
 Becoming as one nature,
 And then the channel,
 As the fruition of one thing,
 Becomes of one taste.
 That is called "mingling." //6//

By terminating all conceptuality
 Hidden in the aggregates,
 Elements, sense faculties
 And objects,
 Great bliss is produced. //7//

Revitalizing in the singleness
 Of taste,
 Is called the mingling
 Of the Community,
 Supreme secret reality,
 Said to be the state

¹⁷²⁸ Per Chandra Das' entry for *rtsa*, "It is mentioned in *Kangyur* that there are 1072 smaller and larger veins in the Human body " *Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth* says 72,000 Lati Rinpoche 1997, 60

¹⁷²⁹ Per Lozang Jamsal, in Ladakhi they use *sang* for "open," as in "open the window " Personal Communication 4-1-08

¹⁷³⁰ Alamka's Commentary ends here for this chapter, and continues midway through *Vajra Rosary's* Chapter 6 at Lhasa 16A, for the verse starting with *byed pol as kyi 'bras bur myong*// Snar Thang has the same gap p 120 of 498 1 2 Numbered 116 in block print text TBRC Snar thang 1455=Sde 1795 W22704, volume 3286, pages 1-498

¹⁷³¹ Should be *ngal bso ba*, not *pa*.

Of Vajrasattva. //8//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fourth chapter on the explanation of the special terminology of the Communion.

Chapter Five

The Teaching of the Meaning of Emptiness¹⁷³²

Now, moreover, listen to reality!
The meaning of emptiness
Is very vast.
Emptiness pervades the
Interior of all things
And is their reality. //1//

Truly knowing reality,
Only through yoga
Do you realize that
Suchness and non-conceptuality,
The unique selfless nature of
The self of persons and things,
Emptiness and self-awareness
Are always present
In the nature of everything. //2//

Not in the province
Of the logicians,
The epitome of all things
Is expressed
As the six chakras. //3//

Then, pervading within,
It expands the channel wheels.
It pervades the sky
And causes subtle pervasion,
Having the nature of peace. //4//

¹⁷³² The commentary to this chapter is missing in the Sde dge *Commentary*, although in his commentary on Chapter one, Alamka does indicate that the second question is about emptiness, Alamka 23A, which seems to suggest that Alamka did comment on this fifth chapter and on the next chapter (where Alamka's commentary starts in the middle of the chapter), but did not make it into the Sde dge for whatever reason, presumably that it was lost

It is non-perceivable and
 Non-supported,
 Formless, additionless,
 Non-conceptually
 Supremely peaceful,
 Natureless, stainless,
 Non-dual, actionless,
 Abandoning subject
 And object. //5//

Transcending time
 And comparison,
 Free from the domain
 Of rhetoric,
 Reality is expressed
 Precisely
 In all things. //6//

Free from entity
 And non-entity¹⁷³³
 And insubstantiality,
 Liberated from the existence¹⁷³⁴
 Of virtue and non-virtue,
 It is entirely unobscured,
 Supremely pervading like sky,
 Things are born as they are:
 That is called reality. //7//

Not coming from anywhere
 And not going anywhere,
 Only from delusion and mistake
 Does it appear
 As proliferating. //8//

Abandoning happiness
 And suffering,
 Not sullied by desire
 Or hatred
 And so forth,
 Free from illusion

¹⁷³³ Per Lozang Jamspal, *bhava abhava* is broader than material, so "entity" is better than "substance"
 Personal Communication 4-8-08

¹⁷³⁴ Per Lozang Jamspal, "Existence" is better than "possibility" - this is *bhava*, not *sambhava* Personal
 Communication 4-8-08

And serious illusion,¹⁷³⁵
Free from concept, taintless, //9//

It has left behind
The reifications of
Self, life, reincarnations,
Humanoids, persons,
Mamu, Mamuja,
Agent, experiencer,
Knower and creator.¹⁷³⁶ //10//

Not obscured by
The aggregates, experiential media,
Elements,¹⁷³⁷ and so forth
Consciousness and grasping,
Supremely subtle,
It abides in a supreme sky.
In that way, all are
The meaning of emptiness. //11//

Free from the context of
Expressing and expressed,
Mere names alone are also
Wonderful self-arising wisdom.
I am teaching [reality]
As conventional expression. //12//

Because it is
An extremely subtle
Self-awareness,¹⁷³⁸
You cannot see reality.
Knowing yourself
As your own essence,
Not in the province
Of others outside,
Is explained as
Self-awareness.¹⁷³⁹

¹⁷³⁵ Reading 'prul instead of 'khrul, 'bral instead of 'brel, i.e. Skt *bhrama* ("mistake, error") and *vibrama* ("serious mistake, error"), both from the past participle of *branta*

¹⁷³⁶ Reading *mdzad*.

¹⁷³⁷ Reading *kham*s instead of *bam*s

¹⁷³⁸ Prof. Thurman prefers "apperception" the state or fact of the mind in being conscious of its own consciousness. Personal Communication. However, I prefer the less technical "self-awareness," which I think conveys the same idea

The state of all things
Is peace. //13//

Logicians misled
By conceptuality,
Deluded by ignorance,
Do not know the ultimate
And hold conventional words¹⁷⁴⁰
As a treasure.¹⁷⁴¹
They do not know
Supreme wisdom,
Yet the logicians advocate
Emptiness. //14//

The yogi who does yoga
And contemplation
Practices it with supremely subtlety.
Emptiness, the perfect vast space,
Leaves behind knower
And knowable.
Free from all forms
Of conceptuality,
It is expressed as the
Wheel of emptiness. //15//

A body with the
Nature of the five aggregates,
In the cave of the six wheels,
Like a crescent moon,
Emptiness abides
In the wheel of wind,
Not half, and not full. //16//

Just as the instincts,
Like a water moon,¹⁷⁴²
Arising at the instant
Of midnight,
Are explained
As the life wheel of energy-wind,
Perfect meditation in that way

¹⁷³⁹ Per Prof. Jamspal, this is about reality known only by one person, no one outside knows. In response to my question, it is not egotistical because there is no subject and object, it's calm, and therefore we have the next line about peace. Personal Communication 4-15-08

¹⁷⁴⁰ Should be *sgra*.

¹⁷⁴¹ Or, hold on to a treasury of hostile conventionality

¹⁷⁴² *I.e.* the moon reflected in water. See, e.g., Chandrakīrti 2002, 59

Is meditating on emptiness.¹⁷⁴³ //17//

You meditate to accomplish
 The nature of ultimate [reality]
 By non-dual yoga
 Or due to applying
 Cause and effect.
 By meditating
 On your ultimate nature,
 But similarly
 On conventional [reality]
 You will destroy cyclic existence.¹⁷⁴⁴ //18//

Just as sesame oil
 Remains in sesame
 But one can't see it there,
 Similarly, emptiness remains
 In the body,
 But one also can't see it
 Because it is obscured.
 Knowing this through the instructions
 Of the guru,
 One who knows reality,
 Abandons the conventional.¹⁷⁴⁵ //19//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifth chapter on the teaching of the meaning of emptiness.

¹⁷⁴³ Per Professor Jamspal, meditation on emptiness doesn't really exist, there is only meditation on emptiness because of instincts, which are like a water moon. Personal Communication 4-15-08

¹⁷⁴⁴ Per Professor Jamspal, when you apply cause and effect, you say reality "exists," while from the ultimate point of view, it doesn't exist. When you have both in your mind, you destroy samsara. Personal Communication 4-15-08

¹⁷⁴⁵ Per Professor Jamspal, maybe once you meditate as per the verse above, on both conventional and ultimate reality, then you abandon conventional reality, like you abandon the raft. Personal Communication 4-15-08

Chapter Six

The Opening of the Drop and Achieving the Supreme Yoga¹⁷⁴⁶

Then listen and
I will explain further.
The opening of the drop
Is unexcelled.
Worldly people,
Isolated from the opening
Of the drop,
Cycle again and again
In cyclic existence. //1//

The drop
Located in the center
Of the hair tuft
Is perfectly explained
As energy-wind.
Opening by the reality of mantra,
Having untied the yogic knot,
Knowing the reality
Of energy-wind.
It is the practice
That excellently opens it. //2//

And for one ignorant
Of that practice
Of the yoga
Of energy-wind and mantra,
Beyond the example
Of expressed and expressible,
[For] those who see
Unclearly or mistakenly,
Lacking meditative concentration
And the object of meditation,
The Buddhas are difficult to attain. //3//

By the kindness of the yoginī,
[This teaching] remains

¹⁷⁴⁶ Alamka's *Commentary* is missing the word commentary for VM 15A-B

In the lineage,
[Passing] from mouth to mouth.

Again, Vajradhara asked
The Great Bliss Lord: //4//

"Lord of migrating beings,
Please show [how] one
Who knows the supreme yoga
Possessing wisdom of the
Opening of the drop
Unties the knot by practice. //5//

[Then], this migrant
Of the three realms
[Would] swiftly attain
Supreme spiritual accomplishment."

The request having been made
In these words,
The Vajra One said
To the Vajra Lord: //6//

This supreme secret
Is not clearly stated
Anywhere.
Also, as for the
Opening of the drop,
Listen and I'll explain it. //7//

The Wisdom Vajra always
Resides in the space
In the lotus bud
Of the heart.
Flanking [it] above
And below
Abide the Life-energy
Energy-wind
And the great
Evacuative energy-wind. //8//

As for that [bud], it is
Constricted by three knots
In the center,
Difficult to open.
Because of that

It is made supreme and
 Dominated by that [constriction],
 And one cannot surmount [it].¹⁷⁴⁷ //9//

When it is dominated by that [constriction],
 The [winds] move in five ways:¹⁷⁴⁸
 Life-energy, Evacuative,
 Upward, Pervading and Equalizing,¹⁷⁴⁹
 Up from the five tips¹⁷⁵⁰ //10//

Perfectly relying on the
 Five channels.¹⁷⁵¹
 Inflated, Developed, Crazy,
 Drinking and Friend --
 You should know these as the
 Five channels. //11//

The great energy-wind
 Called "Life-energy"
 Pervades brilliantly
 Beneath the [Wisdom] Vajra,
 Above [it], and
 In the center of the
 Life Wheel,
 Also going to
 The expanse of space
 In the center
 Of the [Wisdom] Vajra. //12//

¹⁷⁴⁷ Based on the used of *bcom* two verses down, the translation in the verse makes sense

¹⁷⁴⁸ Per Robert Thurman, when enlightenment spirit flows, it goes all over the place, it is hard to get in the central channel Personal Communication 4-22-08

¹⁷⁴⁹ For a description of these "root" winds, see K Gyatso, 2002, 26-7

¹⁷⁵⁰ Per Lozang Jamspal, the tips of the energy-winds are like *chu sna*, water nose, the leading edge of a flow of water If you see this in the mountains, it's a good omen So the energy-winds just go in those five channels Personal Communication 1-30-06

¹⁷⁵¹ As for "five channels," Laté Rinboche writes

Initially, five channels of the heart form simultaneously - the central, right and left channels as well as the Triple Circle of the east [front] and the Desirous One of the south [right]

"The channel-wheel at the heart is composed of the central, right and left channels, around which are eight petals or spokes - four at the cardinal directions and four at the intermediate directions "

After that, three channels form simultaneously - the Free of Knots channel that abides with [and behind] the central channel, the Household One of the west [back], and the Fiery One of the north [left] These are called the eight channels that initially form at the heart [not to be confused with the eight channel-petals of the heart]

Laté Rinboche 1997, 64

Having triumphed
 By meeting up with the navel knot,
 It moves in five ways,
 In the five points at the tips --
 Crescent Moon,
 Mole [on the body],¹⁷⁵²
 Serving, Dewlap¹⁷⁵³ and Liver --
 These are the names
 Of the five channels. //13//

From the five channels,
 The wind-energies that move [are]:
Naga, *Kurma* [Tortoise],
Kṛkalasa [Lizard],¹⁷⁵⁴
Devadatta and *Dhamujit*.
 In that way, together with that tip,
 Because it goes to the
 Lower part of the body, //14//

Agitating again and again
 The channels of the Navel Wheel,
 When you expand [them]
 Through agitation
 Great ignorance controls. //15//

Having stirred up the channel
 On which rests
 The Heart Wheel,
 With those channels,
 The force of hatred controls. //16//

Again stirring up [those winds],
 You produce wonder
 In the Supreme Enjoyment [Wheel].
 With those channels,
 You fall under the power
 Of great lust. //17//

Because of the stirring up
 Of the upper Great Bliss

¹⁷⁵² Per the suggestion of Lozang Jamspal. Personal Communication 4-22-08. The dictionary defines *sma* as DM *mi gtsang ba dma' ba* Btsan-lha JV humiliate, cast down, humble IW [arch] 1) low, 2) inferior, poor quality, weak

¹⁷⁵³ The front of an ox's throat

¹⁷⁵⁴ Per Lozang Jamspal, *lhas sbyin* should be *lha sbyin*. Personal Communication 5-6-08

Crown Wheel,
 Together with those channels,
 You fill up
 With enlightenment spirit. //18//

Making the thoughts
 Move around
 From all of the
 Various openings,
 The upper ones go downwards.
 Having overcome the
 Life-energy energy-wind,¹⁷⁵⁵
 All these enter the tip
 Of the vajra,
 And face downwards.¹⁷⁵⁶ //19//

[But] it doesn't go downwards:
 The wheel of the knot
 Of ignorance
 Mixes with the instincts
 Of the energy-wind
 Of the chariot of consciousness,
 [Becoming] the four consciousnesses
 Of eye, ear, and, similarly,
 Nose and tongue. //20//

Arising from the four points,
 Having mixed with
 Instinctive consciousness,
 Consciousness together with the
 Sense powers
 Develops the objective realm. //21//

Again, from this very path,
 Engaged by this exact process, [or entering respectively]
 By the practice of
 That very thing of that,
 In the moment of using

¹⁷⁵⁵ Should be *srog gis*. Stok Palace has *srog gi*. 176A

¹⁷⁵⁶ I think all of this refers to the normal person and the process of birth, which could be why Alamka doesn't comment on it. Alamka says as much when he comments on the verse "The actor experiences the effects of karma" below, 55A, "Thus having taught the production of consciousness on the occasion of misknowledge, in order to express the summary of that, he says "Because of that" and so forth, [meaning that] you wander in cyclic existence by the power of instincts for objects of such [a consciousness] mounted on the chariot of wind "

Consciousness,
You increase its instinct. //22//

In that way, consciousness,
Polluted by instincts
From the wheel of samsaric error,
Leads to the nature of action.
That one also,
Through the life process,
Deluded in the three realms. //23//

The actor experiences¹⁷⁵⁷
The effect of karma;
Otherwise there is no
Cyclic existence.
Because of that
In order to conquer cyclic existence,
You strive in meditation
To open the drop
In the brilliant state,
Not knowing other ignorant things.¹⁷⁵⁸ //24//

When you open that
Central knot,
Powers arise¹⁷⁵⁹
[And] the yogi attains yoga.
Having attained
The five wisdoms, //25//

You attain
The five clairvoyances, and
Having attained

¹⁷⁵⁷ Sde dge Alamka Commentary resumes commenting here, p 673 in Lhasa Kangyur block print Alamka 55A

¹⁷⁵⁸ Alamka explains "Not knowing other ignorant things" [refers to] the meditator on the thatness of mantra, [and] has the meaning "by the logic previously explained " "Not knowing other ignorant things" [means] by the completion stage yogi "Other ignorant things" is the intrinsic existence of innate or composed things, that do not exist, because in the creation stage meditation they have [already] been abandoned If it is not thus, if someone asks what the other ignorant things are, in response to that he says "the central knot," [referring to] the five channels in the space in the center of the heart, within the five channels "Knot" [means] the tying up that is naturally made That very thing is expressed as "ignorant" because, by the force of that, one doesn't know the nature of energy-wind and mind 55B Although it seems somewhat awkward given his attainment of the clairvoyances etc as a result of this practice that this yogi does not "know" something, the yogi not "knowing" these "other ignorant things" makes sense given his non-conceptual state when the heart knot is opened

¹⁷⁵⁹ Snar thang has *ster*, "bestow", Lhasa has 'gyur, "arise " Alamka has both 'gyur and *ster*. Presumably he had both texts

The supreme secret,
The intelligent one
Abides exactly like that. //26//

You don't need a rosary,
You don't need meditation,¹⁷⁶⁰
You don't need activities,
You don't need negation.
Only by the reality of mantra
Will you achieve
Complete, perfect Buddhahood!
We don't [even] mention
These distinctions of
Action, dharma
And commitment consorts.¹⁷⁶¹ //27//

Not by analysis of the chakras,
And, similarly, not by the
Ecstasies and so forth,¹⁷⁶²
But by the reality
Of Mantra
Will you achieve
The clear state
Of the Great Seal. //28//

The Emptiness Wisdom Vajra,¹⁷⁶³
The reality of non-dual bliss,
And the opening
Of the secret drop,
Are the great bliss
That accomplishes yoga. //29//

Opening the eggshell
Of ignorance,
Destroying the mountain
Of [the egoistic] view
Of the transitory collection,¹⁷⁶⁴

¹⁷⁶⁰ This looks like it should be *sgom*, “meditation,” rather than Lhasa’s *sgo*, “door.” Alamka has *bsam gtan*, “concentration.”

¹⁷⁶¹ Cf. G. Harrison: “You don't need no temple. Just open up your heart.”

¹⁷⁶² J. Hartzell notes that in Chapter 29 of the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta “explains that for performing the Secret Rites (*Rahasyavidhi*), all the preparatory initiatory rites must be abandoned. This is a radical shift. The entire preparatory and initiatory structure that Abhinavagupta has outlined over the preceding twenty-eight chapters is to be abandoned.” (Hartzell 1997, 944)

¹⁷⁶³ Skt. *śūnyatā jñāna vajra*, as in the sadhana’s *Oṃ śūnyatā jñāna vajra svabhava atmako haṃ*.

And accomplishing
The Great Seal
Are declared to be
The supreme performance. //30//

Through the definitive practice
Of the reality of mantra,
You will definitively realize
The clarity of
Lineage and [its] components
From the kindness
Of the yoginī
And the personal instructions
Of the guru. //31//

Whoever recites
Without personal instructions
Makes the mind deluded [about]
The King of Mantras.
That one will only have difficulties.
When you churn¹⁷⁶⁵ water
It won't turn into butter. //32//

Similarly, a person could
Recite the mantra
To the end of his life¹⁷⁶⁶
Without personal instructions,
Not attaining even
An iota of its result. //33//

Some ignorant person,
Wishing to go
To the other shore
Of the four oceans
Doesn't even ask,

¹⁷⁶⁴ Per Lozang Jamspal, the “heaps” of the transitory collection are made destructive by the ego “*Jig tshogs la bdag tu lta ba*.” According to the *Avadāna Śataka Sūtra, Hundred Stories Sutra*, each aggregate has four wrong views, destroyed by vajra wisdom, so twenty wrong views are overcome by the stream winner. Every chapter has “destroying the mountain of the egoistic view” *Yām śrutvāshrīmatyā devakanyayā vimśatiśikharaśamdudgatam satkāyadrṣṭiśailam jñānavajrena bhutvā srotāpayyiphalam prāptam*. “Having heard thus, the glorious divine daughter destroyed the high twenty peaks of the mountain of the view of transitory collection with the thunderbolt of wisdom, manifesting the streamwinner result” Page 139. Story # 55. See also Candrakīrti, *Introduction to the Middle Way*, Ch 6 v 144, p 387 (“The body is not the self nor does self have a body, the self is not based on the body or body on self. Know that these four relations apply to all *skandhas*, so these are considered the twenty views of self”)

¹⁷⁶⁵ Stok agrees with Alamka, having *bsrubs* instead of *bsgrubs*

¹⁷⁶⁶ Alamka quotes both *jī srid 'tsho yi bar* as well as *jī srid skyes nas mthar* here

"What is the path?" //34//

That's how they make
 Themselves go.
 Similarly, the practitioner
 Who lacks the personal instructions
 That create great ecstasy,
 Even though an expert,
 [Gets] no result. //35//
 Such a practitioner gets angry.
 At the moment of anger arising,
 There is no result and he goes
 To howling hell.¹⁷⁶⁷
 Therefore with all [of your] efforts¹⁷⁶⁸
 And with faith,¹⁷⁶⁹
 Learn the personal instructions
 From a guru
 Who has the tradition. //36//

Wherefore, infused by the
 Lineage's textual transmission
 And abiding by the procedures
 Of the lineage,
 He who strives [for personal instructions]
 From the mouth of the yoginī
 And the mouth of the guru,¹⁷⁷⁰
 Should learn supreme reality,
 The scriptural tradition
 Of the lineage
 Of personal instructions
 About mantra. //37//

Hearing that, Vajrapāṇi,
 To eliminate all doubts,
 Prostrated to Great Bliss
 Vajrasattva,
 And asked: //38//

Whoever learns your
 Teaching of supreme reality,

¹⁷⁶⁷ Reading *ngu 'bod*, howling hell per Stok Palace, lit crying shouting instead of *du 'bod*

¹⁷⁶⁸ Alamka has both *'bad pas* and *'bad pa thams cad kyis*, again suggesting he had more than one text in front of him

¹⁷⁶⁹ Sde dge Alamka has *gus pa*, P and Snar have *pas*

¹⁷⁷⁰ Alamka has both *bla ma'i zhal* and *de'i dam pa'i zhal las*

The Lord's
Unexcelled attainment of the
King of Mantras,
Will [attain] attainments
Instantly! //39//

Then the blessed Vajrin said:

The very explicit reality of mantra,
The supreme secret reality,
I haven't taught to anyone.
Because of the thought that
No one deserved it,
I hid [it] in all the Tantras. //40//

But now I'll teach,
So listen up!
By practicing the
Practice of the mantra,
Which is the unexcelled
King of Mantras,
You will quickly gain
Attainments. //41//

In the beginning,
Draw [the letter]
Of the last [of] USHMA,¹⁷⁷¹
Adorned with the sixth vowel,¹⁷⁷²
Endowed with the end
Of the last of the groups,¹⁷⁷³
With the part that lacks a vowel,¹⁷⁷⁴ [i.e. HŪM], //42//

At the end of USHMA [h],
This vowel, endowed as the ninth,¹⁷⁷⁵
With the sound of supreme
Visarga at the end [HO:].
[This] you should choose
As the principal mantra, //43//

Thus the name

¹⁷⁷¹ *Ushma* is the last row of the Sanskrit alphabet *sha, hsa, sa, ha* .See Panini 8 4 58

¹⁷⁷² *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū*.

¹⁷⁷³ That is, *pa pha ba ma*

¹⁷⁷⁴ That is, *anusvāra*

¹⁷⁷⁵ *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, e, ai, o* [without the semivowels, *r, rr, l, ll*]

Of the two syllables
 Is the wonderful sign
 Of mantra.
 In order to abandon
 All grasping,
 They take the name
 Of sound and drop.
 Differentiating
 The two winds,
 You cause the opening
 Of the knot of ignorance. //44//
 One who repeats for six months
 The cause of the
 Supreme Great Seal,
 The two supremely
 Peaceful syllables,
 The object of those desiring
 Personal instructions,
 Will achieve the brilliant state
 Of the sound of the drop,
 Causing him accomplish
 The desired goal. //45//

[In] a divine place,
 Isolated from people,
 Free of any disturbing sounds,
 Unhindered, fortunate, happy, //46//

[In] a pleasure grove¹⁷⁷⁶
 Of great bliss,
 Enjoying the five sense pleasures,
 The main mantra
 Will be accomplished.
 Here, I'm telling, so listen! //47//

Sitting in a house,¹⁷⁷⁷
 In the posture of great bliss
 The supreme achievement
 Will arise.¹⁷⁷⁸
 The practitioner sits
 On the seat of bliss,

¹⁷⁷⁶ After *skyed mos tshal*, “pleasure grove,” Lhasa has *bzhi*, “four,” Stok Palace has *zhi*, “peaceful,” and Alamka has the emphatic or placeholding particle *ni* I am following Alamka here

¹⁷⁷⁷ Alamka gives an alternate reading here: *bde ba dam pa yi ni gnas* 61A

¹⁷⁷⁸ Alamka 61A *ganggā'i zhes bya ba ni phyag rgya'o*.

Placing his eyes
On the tip of the nose, //48//

He places the nose
In line with the navel.¹⁷⁷⁹
Leveling the shoulders and
Applying the tongue to the palate,
The teeth and the lips
Placed comfortably,
He relaxes the inhalation and
Exhalation of breath,
Reducing effort little by little,
Exhaling and inhaling
Exactly like that. //49//

By sitting well
In the full-lotus position,
Having posture like that,
You constantly recite
The two syllables.¹⁷⁸⁰
Through opening of the drop,
You will achieve
Great bliss and supreme yoga
In six months.
There is no doubt of this. //50//

This foremost is the stream
Of the channel,¹⁷⁸¹
Abiding as the stainless *Avadhūti*,
The great wisdom reality
Of energy-wind
The cause of Vajrasattva. //51//

Pill, sword, rising corpse,
King, eye medicine, alchemy,
Paralyzing an army,
Standing stationary
And [walking] through walls,
The supreme state
Of wisdom holding, //52//

¹⁷⁷⁹ Alamka refers to both *sna yi lte ba'i tshad du gnas* and *bzhag byas nas* 61A

¹⁷⁸⁰ HŪM, the Life-energy energy-wind, and HO, the evacuative wind, per Alamka 61B *srog dang thur sel gyi rlung gnyis hūm ho//*

¹⁷⁸¹ Referring to the energy-winds going inside the *avadhūti* Personal Communication with Lozang Jampal 6-3-08

Disappearing, seeing treasure,
 Transforming as you desire,
 Seeing forms,¹⁷⁸² alchemy,
 Conquering poison,
 Entering into fire,¹⁷⁸³ //53//

The state of the five clairvoyances,
 And the five wisdoms,
 Will be achieved.
 In this way,
 The state of enlightenment
 Is instantaneous. //54//

Having abandoned
 Difficult practices,
 Possessing perfect
 Wisdom and compassion,
 As explained, [with] the support
 Of great bliss,
 You don't need vows,
 You don't need burnt offerings,
 You don't need rosaries
 You don't need counting.
 As far as this is concerned,
 You don't need the division
 Of the creation stage,
 You don't need the so-called
 Accumulation of austerities. //55//

By just the yoga of mantra,
 The oral tradition of the guru
 And by practicing for six months,
 The supreme state
 Will be achieved. //56//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixth chapter on the opening of the drop and achieving the supreme yoga.

¹⁷⁸² Seeing forms underground etc

¹⁷⁸³ Stok Palace also has *me*

Chapter Seven

The Explanation of the Word "Sound [*Nāda*]"

Now listen to reality!
One who just
Understands the meaning
Of unexcelled sound
Will get attainments
In this very life. //1//

Sound is also said
To be indestructible,
[Having] the nature
Of stainless
Clear light.
It is liberated from all aspects,
Abiding in the center
Of the navel. //2//

Subtle as a snake's¹⁷⁸⁴ tongue,¹⁷⁸⁵
[It is] wonderful
Non-dual wisdom,
Precious as Brahma,
Viṣṇu, Rudra,
Íśvara,¹⁷⁸⁶ and Śiva [created]
By the father and mother
Of the creator. //3//

There is no letter
And no lump,¹⁷⁸⁷
The elements.
Liberated from
Time and notions.
Birthless and inexhaustible,

¹⁷⁸⁴ Reading *sbrul* instead of *sprul*

¹⁷⁸⁵ Interestingly, Alamka has "snake's tongue" as a gloss, perhaps suggesting that the Commentary influenced at least the Sde dge and Lhasa recensions *glog ltar phra ba'i lce can ni/ zhes bya ba ni glog dang 'dra b'ai lce ni sbrul gyi lce'o//* 65B

¹⁷⁸⁶ Per Chandra Das, *rtag zhi pa* is another name for Shiva

¹⁷⁸⁷ Confusing here, Alamka refers both to *gong du bud med* and *gong bu med cing*, indicating perhaps variant readings in his time

It's amazing. //4//

Abandoning cravings for
All grasping and so forth,
Without remainder and
Supreme of supreme,
Peaceful,¹⁷⁸⁸
It abides in the
Center of all things. //5//

Without concept and
Without support,
Said to be
Consciousness basis of all.
The addicted mind
Causes awakening
Through material objects. //6//

The unexcelled state
Attained by
Supreme non-dual
Yoga,
Non-dual, supreme
And brilliant,
Relies on the
Reality of energy-wind. //7//

Aroused by
the letter HOH,¹⁷⁸⁹
It awakens
The wheel of fire.
The meaning of
The state of such a sound
Abides in the speech
Of the guru. //8//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the seventh chapter
on the explanation of the word “sound.”

¹⁷⁸⁸ Following Alamka here 66A

¹⁷⁸⁹ The navel letter in *Kalacakra*

Chapter Eight

The Complete Demonstration of the Provision of the Great Secret

Then moreover I will explain
 The unexcelled secret meaning.
 The secret is said to be
 The "*bhaga*."¹⁷⁹⁰
 The *bhaga* is like a
 Reality source.¹⁷⁹¹ //1//

The basis of the state
 Of great bliss,
 The cause of
 Producing ecstasy,
 It is the state of Vajrasattva,¹⁷⁹²
 The clear nature
 Of the five wisdoms. //2//

It is great wisdom,
 Without elaboration,
 Abandoning all conceptuality.
 [At] the end
 Of transcendent ecstasy,
 Supremely subtle,
 Innate ecstasy abides
 As the nature of all. //3//

The state of the moment
 Of transcendent ecstasy
 And so forth
 Is subtle true
 Enlightenment spirit,

¹⁷⁹⁰ Alamka notes the double meaning of *bhaga* here (“good fortune” and “vagina”), stating “The secret is said to be ‘*bhaga*,’” because of overcoming the addictions and because of not being what is taught to those who do not have the commitment” 68A

¹⁷⁹¹ The ordinary word for triangle is *gru gsum* Per Robert Thurman, the three corners represent the three doors of liberation Personal Communication

¹⁷⁹² This alternative rendering of the verse shows that the Commentary was translated from the Sanskrit genitive singular of Vajrasattva into prose in the usual way *rdo rje sems dpa'i*, while the same Sanskrit form was translated into verse with an additional syllable - *yi* - *rdo rje sems dpa' yi*, the extra syllable needed for the meter

Living to benefit¹⁷⁹³
 The life span,
 Abiding like
 A weighing scale. //4//

Timeless, non-conceptual,
 Empty, birthless, deathless,
 It dissolves in the
 Emanation Wheel,
 And is born
 In the Great Bliss Wheel. //5//

Being inconceivably peaceful,
 It is passion-free,
 Free of attachment
 In all migrations.¹⁷⁹⁴
 The equal union of
 Vajra and lotus
 Bestows all bliss. //6//

By knowing the reality
 Of energy-wind,¹⁷⁹⁵
 You cause it to be held
 In central channel.¹⁷⁹⁶
 That which is experienced
 As rising
 Is well known to be "secret." //7//

That very thing is
 The supreme secret,
 Abiding supremely
 In the instruction of the guru.
 In the process of
 Mutual transmission,
 It is known from good guru. //8//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the ninth chapter on the complete demonstration of the provision of great secret.

¹⁷⁹³ Should be *phan par*

¹⁷⁹⁴ Or, free from the birth of all beings This phrase, '*gro kun skye ba med*', is not found in Alamka

¹⁷⁹⁵ Alamka also has '*dzin par byed*' 69B

¹⁷⁹⁶ This second line does not appear in Alamka

Chapter Nine

Defining the Word "Vow"¹⁷⁹⁷

Then, moreover, listen and
 I will explain
 The reality that is
 The meaning
 Of the vow.
 Whatever protects the vow
 Is called "the spirit
 Of enlightenment."
 Holding the mind
 At the tip of the vajra
 Is well known
 As keeping it. //1//

When the sense powers
 Enter and continuously fill
 The [sense] objects,
 They remain.
 That is explained as
 Keeping the vow
 And keeping the commitment. //2//

Don't get mixed up
 And so forth with the
 Unruly, hypocritical, cunning,
 Stupid, irritable, deceitful,
 Or the faithless,
 Or with sophists,¹⁷⁹⁸ //3//

Or those [just] technically
 Holding vows,
 Or with monastics
 Who are obsessed by wealth,
 Or with those

¹⁷⁹⁷ See Alamka 70A

¹⁷⁹⁸ Per Robert Thurman, a *tarikā* or *rtog ge pa* is not a logician, s/he is a bad logician, a sophist without any position of her own, and just quibbles without staking her own position on the outcome of the argument. Personal Communication

Disbelieving reality,
Or those who don't know
The ultimate, //4//

Or with nihilists
Or the unethical,
Or with prattlers
Or gossipers,
And you should not
Hang out with them
And so forth
Even for a finger snap. //5//

If you are with
A charming
Action consort,
If she is a childish person,
You won't keep
The commitment
And you will lose
Yoga. //6//

Once you make [it],
You stay in the center
Of the commitment,
And you rely [on] the
Lotus vessel and consort
And so forth,
And you should not
Engage with and enter
Into the commitment
Unenthusiastically.¹⁷⁹⁹ //7//

You should never reveal
The vessel, damaru,
Chopper knife, book

¹⁷⁹⁹ That is, assuming that what is literally "with or through connected with being parched, withered, or dry" can be so translated. Per the *Yogacāra-bhūmi* glossary, *skam* could be a translation from Skt *sthala*, which, per Monier Williams, in addition to meaning chapter, mound, prominent part of the body, place, dry land, soil, roof, can also mean "situation." So, perhaps it may mean, "in such a situation" — don't make the commitment etc. Alamka notes *skam dang 'brel pas 'jug pa dang/ zhes bya ba ni dam tshig la sogs pa la ste/ dad pas ni ma yin no//* 71B, which seems to support the translation of the verse above, positing *skam dang 'brel pas* as a kind of lack of faith. The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *brkam*, "desire," but that seems to lead in a rather un-Tantric direction. Alamka's version also makes some sense, but is also grammatically problematic. "You should not engage in the commitment/ [With] hypocrites at the fringes of the commitment/ [Who] reveal the vessel and the seal/ And practice unenthusiastically."

Or counting rosary
 To others lacking the commitment.
 You should not reveal
 The activities
 Of yoga practice
 And so forth
 And the personal instructions
 To monks remaining
 In the vow. //8//

You should not show
 The cloth drawing
 And so forth,
 And one who does the
 Exact practice and commitment
 Does not even speak [of this]
 To the guru,
 Let alone to others.¹⁸⁰⁰ //9//

Engaging in sense objects
 From wherever,
 Having bound them,¹⁸⁰¹
 Because you engage
 Supremely¹⁸⁰²
 Conventional reality
 In empty,
 Non-dual
 Illusion, //10//

By the bliss experienced
 In the wisdom-wisdom Empowerment;
 By recalling [that] great bliss,
 The senses withdraw
 From objects. //11//

You definitively abandon
 Praising one's self
 And belittling others

¹⁸⁰⁰ Perhaps this means to one's Sūtric guru, or that one shouldn't brag to one's Tantric guru. Or, as Alamka notes with respect to verse 14, below, it may mean that one doing advanced perfection stage practices should not even speak of them to one's Tantric guru. I suspect it means all of the above

¹⁸⁰¹ See *Secret Community Root Tantra* (Freemantle 1971), Ch 7, v 9-14 "Always direct the mind towards form and the other sense-objects, for they are the secret essences of all the Buddhas gathered together "

¹⁸⁰² Stok Palace has *lhag*, 361

And pride of wisdom and so forth.
 Oh Intelligent One,
 Oh Vajra Lord,
 I just explained the
 Perfect vow. //12//

A yogi always
 Must protect
 The commitment
 In that way
 And so forth.
 Otherwise,
 He will lose
 Yoga. //13//

The Vajra Holder with yoga,
 For the sake of attainment,
 Should even completely hide
 From the guru¹⁸⁰³
 The rosary, crown ornament,
 Bone ornaments with
 Bracelets and so forth,
 The books, meditation drawings,
 Skull and so forth
 [And] the yoginī. //14//

You shouldn't say mantra
 Out loud.
 You should not even make visible
 The movement of the lips, and,
 Vocalizing very little in the throat,
 You recite the King of Mantras
 Like that.
 The unequalled
 Spiritual accomplishment
 Comes from secrecy.
 Because of this,
 It is explained as a vow. //15//

Even if he has great wealth,
 One not a [proper] vessel
 Is said in the Tantra to be faulty.
 The guru should abandon [him]

¹⁸⁰³ Alamka says *bla ma la yang zhes bya ba ni rdo rje slob dpon la'o*, “Even to the guru [means] to the Vajra Master ” 73A

With effort
 For the sake of
 Unexcelled attainment. //16//

One who knows yoga
 Who is attached to
 Food, drink and clothing
 And great wealth,
 And speaks to
 Unsuitable disciples
 Of the supreme, wonderful
 Personal instructions,
 Will go to Howling Hell
 In this very life! //17//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the ninth chapter on defining the word “vow.”

Chapter Ten

Determining the Meaning of the Commitment¹⁸⁰⁴

Then, furthermore,
 Listen to reality.
 The meaning
 Of the commitment
 Is unexcelled.
 Now¹⁸⁰⁵ I'll explain the meaning
 Of the commitment
 Of eating.¹⁸⁰⁶ //1//

What is explained as eating
 Is expressed as the
 Five nectars.¹⁸⁰⁷

¹⁸⁰⁴ Alamka 73A

¹⁸⁰⁵ Reading per Alamka *da* instead of *de*

¹⁸⁰⁶ See S. Katz 1978, 41 ("The great Flemish mystic, John Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), is thus able to express his experience in the fascinating expression 'To eat and to be eaten! This is union!') Consider also the practice of communion as conceived by Catholics and Greek Orthodox: the actual ingesting of the deity, the blood and body of Christ

By applying the reality
 Of energy-wind,¹⁸⁰⁸
 You melt [them], and
 [They become]
 One taste.¹⁸⁰⁹
 Having again¹⁸¹⁰ gone upward
 From the vajra path,
 You eat it all
 In oneness.¹⁸¹¹ //2//

By the commitment
 Of body, speech and mind,
 The yogi is in one taste
 With the three realities.
 Whatever arises,
 And whatever bliss
 Is experienced
 In the four wheels.
 Always practice eating.^{1812 1813} //3//

The supreme reality
 Of the enlightenment spirit
 Dissolves in the state
 Of great bliss,
 Melted by the reality
 Of energy-wind,
 Eating is good concentration.¹⁸¹⁴ //4//

From the bottom
 Of the skull bowl,
 The yogi always
 Drinks compassion,

¹⁸⁰⁷ Urine, feces, blood, semen and marrow or brain In *Guhyasamāja*, HŪM (center), BRUM (east), AM (south), JRIM (west) and KHAM (north), respectively, in that order

¹⁸⁰⁸ By the six stages of *vajrajāpa* described above, by the force of the life-energy and evacuative winds Alamka 74B

¹⁸⁰⁹ Alamka *ro gcig ces by aba ni lte ba'i pad ma'i dbus su'o*// Robert Thurman notes that, having gone upward from the vajra path, you eat it all in oneness, going up central channel You kindle fire in navel and offer essence of the food that you eat in the pit and you swallow it, blessing the food Personal Communication Alamka's alternative "you eat from the path of the mouth" supports this 74B

¹⁸¹⁰ Alamka has *slar yang sten du song*// 74B

¹⁸¹¹ There appear to be several variant readings here, see Alamka 74B

¹⁸¹² Alamka indicates that the line *riag tu spyod pa* is an alternative reading for the *bza' bar bya* 75A

¹⁸¹³ Per Robert Thurman, a yogi experiences a uniform aesthetic, his whole behavior is eating Personal Communication

¹⁸¹⁴ Or, following Alamka, "Through meditative equipoise/ On the food spread/ On the lotus of the goddess 75A

The great bliss
Of the Bodhisattva. //5//

He pours into the secret lotus,
In the supreme vessel,
Realizing that eating
Is the support,
Mentally drinking the nectars,
Drinking the flavored substances
Of the five nectars,
Such a one who eats
Is Vajradhara. //6//

Elephant, horse, dog
Cow,¹⁸¹⁵ Human --
Having mixed the
Enlightenment spirit
With blood,¹⁸¹⁶
You should eat it
In that moment. //7//

That is called
The "five nectars."
By gross and subtle
Thought construction,
The Vajra Holder always eats
Of the vessel
Brilliant in emptiness. //8//

The emptiness
Of transcendent wisdom
Is the bliss
Of the third ecstasy.
The Vajra Holder always eats
In the vessel
Of orgasmic [bliss],
Abiding in the state
Of great bliss. //9//

The peaceful one will eat
All the conceptual wind-energies
In the good vessel.

¹⁸¹⁵ Stok has *ba glang*

¹⁸¹⁶ Per Robert Thurman, this does not refer to menstrual blood but to female hormonal essence, while egg is alive Personal Communication

By knowing the reality
Of energy-wind,
Abiding in a
Non-conceptual state. //10//

You perfectly unite [with]
The three consorts.
By knowing the
Reality of yoga.
You eat in the vessel
Explained as the
Great Seal. //11//

Abiding in a state of
Breath control,
By gross and subtle
Thought construction,
You confuse
Meditation and no meditation,
In the vessel
Of great life-energy. //12//

The host of the seeds
Of the net of concepts,
Is the kindling
For the aggregates
In the good vessel.
Ripened¹⁸¹⁷ by the fire
Of great wisdom,
You eat by realizing
The reality of mantra. //13//

By the wisdom of
The power of the
Great Fierce One
Of the Four Devils,¹⁸¹⁸
Being well settled
In equanimity,
You always eat
In the yogic vessel. //14//

If you eat
The unexcelled three drops¹⁸¹⁹

¹⁸¹⁷ Following Alamka

¹⁸¹⁸ Aggregates, addiction, Lord of Death, Son of Gods

Of wind, mantra and substance
 In the vessel
 Of the indestructible state,¹⁸²⁰
 [That is] transcendent yoga. //15//

Being entranced [in]
 Great wisdom,
 Unequalled
 Emptiness wisdom,
 Supreme by the vessel
 Of compassion,
 Drink and always drink! //16//

The joining of the vajra and lotus
 Is explained as
 "The commitment of the seal."
 He who produces
 Supreme thatness
 Is in the fortunate vessel. //17//

The yogi drinks,
 Experiencing ecstasy,
 The supreme reality
 That is accomplished,
 Free from addiction,
 He will achieve the goal
 Of the innate Great Seal. //18//

Such commitment and so forth
 I did not explain definitively
 Anywhere else.
 The supreme state
 Of Vajrasattva
 Is clearly realized
 From the speech
 Of the guru. //19//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the tenth chapter on determining the meaning of the commitment.

¹⁸¹⁹ Alamka has *thig le gsum*, but not explicitly as a quote from the *Vajra Rosary*

¹⁸²⁰ Alamka has two versions of this line one is the same as the Lhasa Vajra Rosary, the other has *bza' bar bya*.

Chapter Eleven

Determining the Meaning of Mere Sound¹⁸²¹

Then, furthermore,
 I will explain, so listen!
 I will explain the meaning of
 Mere sound.
 Whoever knows just that
 Achieves the state of no rebirth. //1//

In the hollow of the lotus
 Of the Reality Wheel
 Mere sound truly abides.¹⁸²²
 It is without desire,
 Invisible, non-dual
 And taintless, //2//

Incomparable, immobile,
 It lacks a foundation,
 And lacks a roof.
 Lord of the Gods,
 Supreme Wisdom
 It abandons
 Exhaling and inhaling. //3//

Divine God of Yogis,
 Such as that is hard to find.¹⁸²³
 It is supreme peace,
 Great bliss,
 Supreme form,
 Supremely deathless.
 With the natural relativity.
 Like tasting wine,
 Having supremely
 Gone within. //4//

Similarly, it is the abode
 Of all states,

¹⁸²¹ See Alamka 78B.

¹⁸²² "Mere sound, the final drop." Variant reading identified by Alamka, though he also glosses the *pada* as it appears in the Lhasa recension.

¹⁸²³ Lozang Jamspal thinks *kyang* after *rnal 'byor rnams* is wrong, and the *kyang* should come at the end, after *phyug*, meaning "even for the gods, this is hard to find." Personal Communication.

The foundation of knowing
 The reality of mantra,
 The state of realization
 Of one's own experience.¹⁸²⁴

Then Vajrasattva asked
 The unexcelled teacher, //5//

Oh Lord,
 Knower of peaceful reality,
 Can one accomplish reality
 By merely knowing
 The analysis of the
 Reality of mantra? //6//

Then the Vajrin spoke:

The unexcelled reality of mantra,
 Superb and more superb subtlety,
 Great wisdom and great excellence, //7//

Also the supreme
 Quintessence
 I will thoroughly explain, so listen!
 The non-migrating
 Secret state,
 Hidden in all the Tantras, //8//

It perfectly abides
 As mere sound,
 [In the] supreme reality
 Of the navel wheel.
 It dissolves in the center
 Of great emptiness,
 The transparent state
 Of great bliss. //9//

Non-dual, fearless and
 Peaceful,
 Imperceptible and
 Unconventional.
 By applying
 Non-dual concentration,

¹⁸²⁴ Reading *rtogs* rather than *rtog* per Alamka

The reality of mantra
Becomes utterly transparent. //10//

It is beginningless and peaceful,
Thing and no-thing,
[With] a principal nature
Of emptiness and compassion
Indivisible,
The nature of the spirit
Of enlightenment. //11//

At that time, initially,
Meditate on emptiness.
You rely supremely upon
A peaceful state
Of non-perception,
A pleasant state
Of naturelessness,
Incomparable emptiness wisdom
And the continuum
Of the spirit
Of enlightenment.¹⁸²⁵ //12//

From the letter HŪṂ
Perfectly arises
Great, wonderful
Yogic wisdom.
The three realities
[Have] the meaning
[Of] a single taste,
The transparent state
Of the central channel. //13//

Again, by ecstatic yoga,
You abandon
Entering and so forth.
The state of great bliss
Is the stainless
Enlightenment spirit. //14//

The instant of Variety
Is indivisible,
Free from the melodies

¹⁸²⁵ This verse appears to go with the preceding four-line verse because in Alamka there is no *de ltar*... *phyir* preceding it, while there are such breaks for the preceding and subsequent verses

Of the nature of expression.
 Through the continuity
 Of always abiding, however,
 The enlightenment spirit descends. //15//

You achieve by the
 Yoga of mantra
 The mere unproduced
 Peaceful drop,
 By conducting
 The practice of mantra,¹⁸²⁶
 Supreme wisdom is
 Self-known. //16//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the eleventh chapter
 on determining the meaning of mere sound.

Chapter Twelve

Explaining the Reality of Energy-Wind¹⁸²⁷

Now I will explain
 The supreme ultimate
 Reality of energy-wind,
 So listen!
 When the yogi meditates
 On energy-wind,
 He will reach attainments
 Quickly. //1//

The wind drop
 Is great wisdom.
 The subtle one
 And that one
 Are the clear state.¹⁸²⁸
 The inexhaustible
 Yoga of nonduality

¹⁸²⁶ The last two padas are reversed in Alamka

¹⁸²⁷ See Alamka 83A

¹⁸²⁸ Per Robert Thurman, *rlung* is physical, *ye shes* is not. When they touch, there is nonduality. Personal Communication

Is the delight that makes
All spiritual attainment. //2//

Birthless, ubiquitous, peaceful,
Pervading all [who have] bodies,
Invincible, empty,
Inconceivable,
It abides eternally
As the nature of all. //3//

By yogic meditation
And concentration,
You know the nature of
Your own drops,
The state of all things
Becoming as one,
The cause of the
Reality of mantra. //4//

Liberated from all instincts.
It invites omniscient
Omni-bliss.
You should concentrate
On the light ray drop,
The supreme reality
At the tip of the nose. //5//

Perfectly practicing breath control,
Bestowing the count
Of conceptualities,
The fortunate one has the
Nature of the five wisdoms.
The practice¹⁸²⁹
Of the five Buddhas.
The form of applying
The five jewels,
Is merely the nature
Of the five elements. //6//

First are the actual
Physical hand gestures,
With the character
Of the repetition
Of counting speech.¹⁸³⁰

¹⁸²⁹ Alamka Sde dge has *mchog ni*, P and Snar have *cho ga m*

The mind is attracted¹⁸³¹
 To the great yoga,
 The inexhaustible state
 Of meditation. //7//

You count the mass
 Of breaths,
 Analyze the winds,
 Realize the division
 Of places,
 [And] the division
 Of the times
 Of the channels. //8//

You reverse
 The energy-winds,
 [And] abandon conceptuality.
 So, in sum, [these] six things
 Are expressed in
 "Inhaling and exhaling."¹⁸³² //9//

Initially, you become certain
 That there is similarly
 A count of
 Twenty-one Thousand
 Six Hundred
 Inhalations and exhalations
 In the day and night. //10//

The state of achieving that number
 [Is done] by application
 Of that count over
 Twenty-seven days.
 You count over and over. //11//

You analyze the time limit,
 Then you repeat as follows.
 During each session,
 You should examine

¹⁸³⁰ Appears to be one verse per the breaks in Alamka's *Commentary*

¹⁸³¹ Alamka has *yid ni*, 84B, which makes more sense here

¹⁸³² Per Robert Thurman, there are six stages or times of the channels naturally during the day the energy-winds move in different channels in speech isolation/vajra repetition. This is an outline of how vajra repetition ends up with the energy-winds entering abiding and dissolving, so there is no more coarse breathing. Personal Communication

The breath,
 By a count of
 Two Thousand Seven-Hundred,
 Without being
 Perfectly definitive. //12//

Having clearly divided
 Into twenty-seven days,
 By division of the
 Four chakras,
 You define day and night.¹⁸³³ //13//

By control of place,
 The Vajrin examines [them]
 Separately,
 By moving
 The channel wheels.
 You should practice
 The channel wheels,
 By the yoga
 Of definitive retention
 Without inhalation
 Or exhalation. //14//

From the twenty-seventh day,
 By analysis
 Of those channel wheels,
 You should examine the state
 Of the changing
 Of place,
 By dividing the places. //15//

As for the place,
 By discerning individually
 The hundred-eight [energy-winds]
 Move intensely,
 And there is supreme
 Non-conceptual union,
 With the character of
 Abandoning conceptions,
 The nature of all things

¹⁸³³ This and the next verse seem divided into six lines each by Alamka. Alamka's *Sanskrit Commentary* commenting on the Sanskrit Tantra should not necessarily be definitive as to division of the Tibetan text, but Alamka's division of units of meaning is certainly relevant here, and I generally accept it as to the division of the Tibetan verses unless there is evidence to the contrary

The hundred-eight [energy-winds]
Move intensely. //16//

This is true yoga:
The yogi who meditates
On the characteristic
For twenty-seven days
On such places,
His own nature
The yogi together
With [his] notions.¹⁸³⁴ //17//

Reversed by the yoga
The great energy-wind,
Free from thoughts
Moves the channel wheels.
Having accomplished that,
The additions are completely
Reversed by the yogi. //18//

Definitively and ultimately,
In twenty-seven days,
By beginner's yoga,
By the intelligent one reversing, //19//

Then those [energy-winds] are ceased
By the force of true yoga.
The conceptualities of
Breath control are
Completely abandoned.
The suchness of energy-wind moves.
You should meditate
On the supreme yoga! //20//

By supreme non-dual yoga,
In [another] twenty-seven days,
Relying on the reality of energy-wind,
You purify mistaken yoga. //21//

For that,
With single-pointed mind,
By non-conceptual reality,
The supreme yoga

¹⁸³⁴ Division per Alamka

Of the thatness
 Of energy-wind
 With perfect effort
 Is made clear. //22//

Like making
 A mansion,
 First, you purify the ground.
 Upon it,
 Free from obstacles,
 You should purify the place well. //23//

The discerning should make
 Such a pleasant,
 Fortunate, mansion.
 Similarly, you should meditate
 On the reality of energy-wind,
 [Made] supreme by the
 Practice of yoga. //24//

Becoming entranced
 As before,
 By the yoga
 Of breath control,
 You should meditate
 Yogic awareness,
 The great wisdom
 Of supreme yoga.
 First, the reality
 Of energy-wind,
 Then the reality of mantra
 Becomes clear. //25//

As for that, [it is]
 Supreme light rays of energy-wind,
 The five colors of
 Great illumination,
 Like the five Tathāgatas,
 The very reality of the
 Five aggregates. //26//

That purifies the five wisdoms
 Causing [them] to move
 As the five energy-winds.
 The characteristic
 Of the reality

Of the five forms
Of manifest enlightenment
Is the supreme state. //27//

The supreme reality [at the]
Tip of the nose,
The very essence
Of the five energy-winds,
Is explained as the "Wind Drop,"
Also illuminating perfect reality. //28//

The mustard seed¹⁸³⁵
Of the nose
Is also explained
In other Tantras.
Moreover, that mustard seed
[At the] nose tip
Is also the mark
Of breath control.
You abide
In breath control,
Meditating
The five lights
As Buddhas. //29//

From the upper nose
Definitively arise four types:
Right, left, both
And slowly moving.
These are explained as
Being internal time.¹⁸³⁶ //30//

In the times of half a session,¹⁸³⁷
Taught as going and coming¹⁸³⁸

¹⁸³⁵ The text from here to third to last paragraph of this chapter are quoted in Nāgārjuna's *PK*, ch 1, vv 16-24

¹⁸³⁶ After quoting *steng gi sna las*, Alamka has *ji ltar zhe na de'i phyir gyon dang zhes bya ba la sogs pa gsungs te*, so presumably he had the *Vajra Rosary* text up to *dal bar rgyu dang rnam bzbur 'gyur* or something close to it

¹⁸³⁷ A session in retreat is about 2.5 hours, so this would be about 1.25 hours. Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

¹⁸³⁸ Alamka notes "However, if someone asks about the method of making the energy-winds that enter, abide and arise go and come, there is no fault having made the middle verse of 'going and not going and coming' disappear, it will make a summary that has two that are collected" 91A. In other words, the *Vajra Rosary* verse just refers to going and coming, *'gro 'ong ston*, Lhasa *VM*, 24A, and omits the middle verse, "not going." Presumably this refers to the more usual method of vajra repetition employing the *kumbaka*,

At the lotus of the throat,
Heart, navel and secret [wheels],
Taught as abiding respectively. //31//

The element arising
From the right
Is the fire mandala,
Red in color and brilliant,
The movement of the
Lotus Lord.¹⁸³⁹ //32//

The element arising
From the left,
The so-called wind mandala,
Perceived as yellow-green,
Moves the Action Lord. //33//

The element arising
From both,
The mandala of great power,
Perceived as golden in color,
Moves the Great Jewel Lord. //34//

The element that is
Slow and immobile,
Is the water mandala,
Perceived as a pure crystal,
The movement
Of the Vajra Lord. //35//

The winds that abide
Everywhere in the body
Engage in all activities.
This is the form of Vairocana.
They will arise
In the death body.¹⁸⁴⁰ //36//

the holding of the breath at AH, between the inhalation of OM and the exhalation of HÜM, in contrast to the HÜM HOH employed (in addition to the usual method) by the *Vajra Rosary*
¹⁸³⁹ See Wedemeyer 2007, 183 These verses are quoted in the *CMP*, but not quite as they appear here
Āryadeva has two previous verses not appearing here "Born from the nostril orifice, Fixed [in] the five
Buddha clans, The upward-motion of the five airs, Always courses in the body Moving [in] the superficial
nose, [It is] issued forth from that door They are fourfold Left and right and both and languid" *Id.*, 183
The text starting with this verse, as pointed out by Wedemeyer, are those cited in the *PK* in Sanskrit
Wedemeyer 1999, 263

¹⁸⁴⁰ Per Lozang Jamspal, this should be 'gag par gyur or should refer to the bardo body Personal
Communication 3-7-08

This luminance, reality of wind,
 Has the nature of the
 Five wisdoms.
 It is not the province of the
 Inexperienced yogi,
 And is not known
 By the logicians.¹⁸⁴¹ //37//

Illuminating all
 Of the attainments,
 Accomplishing the reality
 Of all yogas.
 Illuminating the state
 Of all reality,
 Encompassing the goal
 Of all yoga, //38//

The clear state
 Of Vajrasattva,
 Always remains
 As the nature
 Of everything.
 Supreme reality,
 Being extremely subtle,
 Is realized from the mouth
 Of the guru. //39//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twelfth chapter explaining the reality of energy-wind.

¹⁸⁴¹ Above portion quoted in *PK* ends here

Chapter Thirteen

Explaining the Term Great Bliss¹⁸⁴²

Now, listen to what else
 I will explain!
 The word that illuminates
 Great bliss,
 The indestructible state
 Of Vajrasattva,
 Because it is self-cognized
 Is the supreme of the supreme.
 Devoid of description
 By conceptual thought,
 It is expressed
 As "great bliss." //1//

During the time
 Of innate [ecstasy],
 Abandoning subject
 And object,
 Abandoning happiness
 And suffering,
 Free from non-dual peace,¹⁸⁴³
 The essence
 Of the nature
 Of all things:
 This is called
 "Great bliss." //2//

It is the actuality
 Of the five vajra wisdoms,
 Having the nature
 Of the five Buddhas,¹⁸⁴⁴
 The stream that flows
 From the five channels,
 Manifesting the state
 Of vajra emptiness. //3//

Unreal
 And unsupported,

¹⁸⁴² See Alamka 93B

¹⁸⁴³ Alamka has both, glossing *'byed* with *bral*.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Alamka has both *lnga yi* and *lnga bdag* 94B

Non-dual,
 Free from all things,
 Abandoning partless
 And part,¹⁸⁴⁵
 It always delivers
 From all concepts. //4//

Without migration
 And peaceful,
 Uncontaminated,
 It manifests all blisses.
 It liberates from all addictions,
 It enters into
 Every pleasure. //5//

Emptiness, great emptiness,¹⁸⁴⁶
 Extraordinary emptiness,
 Supreme of supreme,
 The abode of emptiness
 And other-emptiness,¹⁸⁴⁷
 It is of the nature
 Of five skies. //6//

Its nature unseverable
 And unchanging,
 It is unboundaried
 And supremely penetrating,
 Supreme wisdom
 Of the Five Buddhas,
 Its nature is called "vajra." //7//

Perfectly mixing
 Compassion and yoga,
 This supremely born bliss,
 Three realities in
 One taste,
 Abandons the expressed
 And the expressible. //8//

Abiding in the chakra
 Called "Great bliss,"

¹⁸⁴⁵ Alamka has both *tha dad spangs* and *rnam par 'das*, presumably from different versions of the *Vajra Rosary* he had in front of him

¹⁸⁴⁶ Alamka discusses *shin tu stong pa* before *stong pa chen po*. 95A

¹⁸⁴⁷ Alamka has no reference to other-emptiness, and analogizes the various emptinesses to luminance etc to clear light 95A

Not in the province
 Of the senses,
 By supreme, non-dual yoga,
 Peaceful, with [its]
 Sole characteristic
 Being ecstasy, //9//

You attain by the stages
 Of the four chakras,
 Manifesting the state
 Of the four yogas,
 Completely filled with
 The five emptinesses,
 Negated by the
 Four components, //10//

Holding at the tip
 Of the vajra
 Is what makes
 The "Mind Hero."
 What is filled with
 The parts of the five spaces
 Is called Vajrasattva. //11//

That very thing
 Is the state
 Of great bliss.
 The fourth pervades
 All the ecstasies.
 Produced [from] the union
 Of the hero and yoginī,
 It is indestructible,
 Abandoning all distinctions.
 Its nature is
 Reality. //12//

You yourself know [it]
 As feeling.
 Not in the province
 Of others outside,
 Incomparable and
 Hard to signify,
 And truly abides
 In your own mind,
 It is explained as
 Introspectively known. //13//

Like the extreme ecstasy
 With a young woman,
 It is experienced as
 Supremely clear.
 Reality is supreme
 And transcendent.
 Supreme means
 All the sages
 And so forth,
 The state of clear
 Conceptuality.¹⁸⁴⁸ //14//

It is supreme
 And great bliss,
 One characteristic
 In three realities,
 Liberated from existence
 And non-existence.¹⁸⁴⁹ //15//

You realize that
 The nature of bliss
 Liberates from the suffering
 Of the life cycle.¹⁸⁵⁰
 The mind that has
 The nature of peace,
 Free from the nature
 Of analyzing as dual
 Or non-dual,
 Cuts off the addiction
 That is spoken of
 And is free
 From worldly conceptions. /16//

It abandons being free
 From the conceptions
 Of knowing and known,
 And is of the nature
 Of truth,

¹⁸⁴⁸ Or, if this should be *bsal*, the state that clears away conceptions

¹⁸⁴⁹ Reconstructed as *bhavābhava*, which I am translating as “existence and non-existence” Jan Shlansky-Kitay says that if you meditate on thing and no-thing, you will be liberated from those Personal Communication

¹⁸⁵⁰ Or, as per Alamka’s version, “You should meditate on thing and no-thing/ The concept of suffering as the nature of happiness/ Has the nature of liberating cyclic existence”

Ultimate, ubiquitous,
 Supreme peace,
 The excellence that
 Bestows reality
 For the bliss of living beings.
 [It's] time is called
 The "end of time."
 The "fourth time,"
 "Union." //17//

You abandon the conceptuality
 That confounds
 The life cycle,
 And you abandon
 The achievement of Nirvana.
 The experience of equanimity
 Is greatly intoxicating,
 Having the character
 Of equalizing wisdom. //18//

What is grasped
 Are "objects,"
 All of them,
 Form and so forth,
 The grasping power,
 The consciousnesses
 Of the nature of eye
 And so forth. //19//

Free from them
 And supremely subtle,
 Is wisdom,
 [Whose] nature is all-bliss.
 Liberated from all suffering,
 Abandoning the grasped
 And the grasping. //20//

The blissful mind
 Is peaceful.
 Liberated from the characteristic
 Of samsaric suffering,
 You are fearless,
 [In] non-abiding Nirvana! //21//

With the nature of
 Great emptiness wisdom,

Samsaric suffering
 Does not arise,
 [But,] because in peace
 You create compassion,
 You do not stay
 In blissful Nirvana. //22//

The wisdom of the disciple
 Is peace itself;
 Of the rhinoceros¹⁸⁵¹
 Supreme non-duality.
 Great bliss is free from
 Their realization of bliss.
 Because they are satiated,
 The time of Supreme Ecstasy
 Is called "Disciple's Wisdom." //23//

Ecstasy free from that extreme,
 The Nirvana
 Of the self-enlightened,
 Is non-dual wisdom
 And peace,
 Specially created
 By great bliss. //24//

It is great bliss that
 Knows phenomena,
 Causing the holding of the
 Enlightenment spirit.
 The bliss in all the channels
 Abides in the state
 Of great bliss.¹⁸⁵²
 The truth that has
 The nature of that
 Is called "great bliss." //25//

As for that very thing,
 It is only [achieved] through yoga,
 Not [by] conceptuality
 With the nature of thoughts,
 Not by propitiation, repetition, or
 Fire offerings,

¹⁸⁵¹ *I.e. a self-arising Buddha, a pratyekabuddha*

¹⁸⁵² *I.e. bde ba chen po'i 'khor lo de la gnas pa'i rtsa rnams Alamka 100A*

Not by concentration or
 Restraining the winds,
 Not by activity or rosary,
 And not by meditation
 Of the creation stage, //26//

[But] is achieved somewhat
 Through the peaceful empowerments
 From the mouth
 Of the holy guru.
 The partaking of
 All the yoginīs
 Is supreme wisdom,
 Great bliss. //27//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirteenth chapter explaining the term great bliss.

Chapter Fourteen

Explaining the Union of the Vajra and the Lotus ^{1853 1854}

Now, furthermore,
 I will explain, so listen!
 The equal union of
 Vajra and lotus
 Would be the perfect attainment.
 [Of] yoga
 In this very life. //1//

Indestructible is called "vajra,"
 Well known as energy-wind.
 Discerning the letter A,
 Through the wisdom
 Of yoga
 Always bestows excellence. //2//

The support of that
 Is adorned by the

¹⁸⁵³ *See Commentary* 100B

¹⁸⁵⁴ *See Secret Community Root Tantra*, Ch 7.

Eight-petaled heart lotus.
 The heart chakra,
 The good fortunate¹⁸⁵⁵ one,
 Always abiding as the
 Nature of all. //3//

The eight conventional consciousnesses
 Are born
 On its petals,
 Perfectly supporting the
 Eye [consciousness] and so forth,
 They engage in the
 Three Realms. //4//

The energy-wind vajra
 That overcomes these
 Is called "Vighnāntakṛt."
 The consciousnesses and
 Whatever is on them
 Are called "World Protectors." //5//

The World Deities abide,
 Pervading all three worlds.
 All [kinds of] Protectors also abide
 As the fruit of
 Objects and so forth. //6//

As for them [the eight consciousnesses],
 Perfectly united by energy-wind,
 They are expressed as
 "Vajra and Lotus."
 You should know
 The vajra as compassion
 And the lotus as emptiness.
 These are known as
 The supreme union. //7//

[In] the union
 Of vajra and lotus
 The vajra is called
 The "Sun,"
 Having the nature of
 A multitude of light rays.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Sde dge Alamka has *bskal pa*, 101A, but P and Snar have *bskal ba*

What opens to them
Is expressed as "Lotus."
The joining of vajra
And lotus.
You should know that yoga
As supreme. //8//

Enlightenment spirit
Also becomes the vajra,
The crown chakra
The lotus.
The supreme union
Which is the union
In that or of that¹⁸⁵⁶
Is amazing! //9//

The speech of the guru is a vajra,
In the place of the lotus
Is the vessel of hearing
By good disciples.
The union with him
Manifests as supreme. //10//

Serenity is called a lotus;
In it is the vajra of insight.
When yoga unifies these two,
By meditation
You will see reality. //11//

Abiding in the
Lotus face of the yoginī,
The vajra is unexcelled great bliss.
The lotus is the mouth
Of the good disciple,
The vessel of the meaning
Of the personal instructions.
Those two see
The nature of all yoga,
The meaning

¹⁸⁵⁶ The Commentary states *De la zhes pa nib de ba chen po'i 'khor lo'i mtshan nyid can gyi pad ma la'o/ de'i zhes bya ba kun rdzob kyi rnam pa'i byang chub sems dpa'o/ sbyor ba gang zhes bya ba ni 'byel pa gang zhig ngo bo nyid dang rlung gzung ba'i stobs kyi sam gyen du rgyu ba'i rim pa'i mtshan nyid can no//* "In that' means in the lotus having the characteristic of the wheel of great bliss [crown wheel] 'Of him' means the bodhisattva of the conventional type 'Whatever union' means any conjunction having the characteristic of forcefully holding the essence and wind or of the higher causal stage [subtle creation stage]" Alamka 102B

Of perfect reality. //12//

The vajra of the wise one
 Free from conceptual thoughts
 Is explained as the "*lingam*."
 The wise one
 Free from conceptual thoughts
 Calling the vagina a "lotus,"¹⁸⁵⁷
 And the yoginī
 Moistened by the commitment:
 Those two perfectly unite
 As one entity,
 Bringing about the seeing
 Of non-dual wisdom. //13//

The 72,000 channels
 Are called vajra;
 The channel through which
 Enlightenment spirit descends¹⁸⁵⁸
 Is well known as lotus.
 As for that [channel],
 Because of the complete union,
 It produces
 Ecstasy. //14//

Also the seat of
 The experience of ecstasy
 Is also of vajra,
 The self-cognizing¹⁸⁵⁹ Vajradhara
 Is a lotus.
 On it, those two unite,
 The clear state
 Of Buddha wisdom. //15//

The supreme empowerment
 Is a vajra;
 The lotus disciple
 Is the good vessel.
 Those two supremely unite.
 The cause of

¹⁸⁵⁷ Without the instrumental, deleting the *sa*, or, as in Alamka, deleting the suffix, the translation could be more sexually egalitarian "The *bhaga* of the wise one/ Free from conceptual thoughts/ Is explained as 'lotus' "

¹⁸⁵⁸ *I.e. the lalanā* See Alamka 103B

¹⁸⁵⁹ Alamka has "one's self as Vajradhara is a lotus" *rang nyid rdo rje 'chang pad ma / zhes bya ba ni rdo rje 'chang chen po'o*// 104A

Perfect reality.¹⁸⁶⁰ //16//

E is called a "lotus;"
The letter VAM a vajra.
The indestructible reality drop
Uniting those two
Is wonderful. //17//

Thus it is known as
Supreme union.
The vow of the
Vajra and lotus vessel
Is known through the
Personal instructions
Of the yoginī¹⁸⁶¹
And the kindness
Of the guru. //18//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fourteenth chapter explaining the union of vajra and lotus.

Chapter Fifteen

Explaining the Reality of Mantra¹⁸⁶²

Listen Vajrin
To the explanation
Of the supreme wisdom
Of the reality of mantra.
By the practice
Of the conduct
Of mantra,
You will achieve attainments
Quickly. //1//

I will discuss repetition

¹⁸⁶⁰ Here following Alamka *yang dag de nyid kyi rgyu* 104B

¹⁸⁶¹ Per Robert Thurman, an email could be *man ngag* Personal Communication

¹⁸⁶² *See Commentary* 104B

According to the formula
 Of the mantra,¹⁸⁶³
 [Of] the vajras
 Of body, speech
 And mind.¹⁸⁶⁴
 From that you will quickly
 Accomplish attainment:
 The reality of mantra
 Will have gone
 To the other shore. //2//

The peaceful state
 Of vajra embrace,
 The goal of the vow
 Of *Great Seal*,
 The great wisdom
 Of supreme reality,
 Are taught as the reality
 Of mantra. //3//

The lucid state of
 Non-objectifying,
 The definitive cause
 Of Vajrasattva,
 Mantra is manifested
 By all good qualities.¹⁸⁶⁵
 [It is] the vow
 Of body, speech
 And mind. //4//

Producing that reality
 Is supreme wisdom,
 Gathering the meaning
 Of all reality.
 Supremely clear
 In the heart lotus,
 That very thing
 Is unexcelled wisdom. //5//

¹⁸⁶³ Per Lozang Jamspal, this involves the power of memory, a kind of meditation. Personal Communication

¹⁸⁶⁴ *I.e.* according to the mantra of OM ĀH HŪM, as contrasted with the earlier discussion in chapter six of the mantra HŪM HOH

¹⁸⁶⁵ Alamka just says *sngags kyis zhes bya ba la sogs pa*, “by ‘mantra’ and so forth.” Alamka 106A

Repeating for six months
 You will become accomplished;
 Otherwise not.
 The art of supreme yoga
 Is well known
 To the yogi. //6//

Whatever is stated
 As "non-objectifying"
 Is called ultimate.
 The non-dual repetition
 Of mantra
 Is by the division
 Of snake¹⁸⁶⁶
 And so forth.
 However, three
 Indestructible realities
 Are collected
 In ultimate mantra. //7//

The attainment of repetition
 Is unequalled.
 If you repeat with
 True equanimity,
 It becomes the
 Unequalled attainment.
 It is the brilliant clarity
 Of the state of purity.
 One who knows this
 Is Guru of the World. //8//

The meaning of mantra,
 The reality of mantra,
 The inexplicit
 Personal instructions of mantra,
 Who knows these
 Is the Guru of the World. //9//

Then Vajrapāṇi,¹⁸⁶⁷
 Again having prostrated
 To the all-knowing

¹⁸⁶⁶ Per Lozang Jamsal, this is repeating mantra without duality, without clinging, aware but not clinging
See also Alamka 106B *See also* CMP, Wedemeyer 1999, 265 "One will only understand mantra reality
 by following the explanatory tantras The mantras such as serpent and so on, are those which emerge from
 the vowels and consonants "

¹⁸⁶⁷ Following Alamka here, Lhasa VM has "Vajrasattva "

Guru of beings, Vajrasattva, asked:

"What is the character of mantra? //10//

O Lord, how are [its]
Name, meaning, and nature
Manifested?
What are the meanings
Of the personal instructions
On the reality of mantra,
Of the vows of mantra? //11//

Then the Vajra Lord spoke:

Listen and I will explain
Suchness characterized
By non-dual wisdom
And the supreme meaning
And name of mantra,
The very essence of the result
Of the three yogas.¹⁸⁶⁸ //12//

Essence gathers the meaning
Of essence,¹⁸⁶⁹
Beginningless and peaceful,
The main one exhausting
The nature of thing
And no-thing,
Emptiness and compassion Indivisible!
[These are] the characteristics
That are known
Of the meaning of mantra. //13//

Addictionless and unmanifested,
Supreme of supreme,
Lacking intrinsic nature,
Nameless and natureless,
Supreme great lack of form,
Abandoning all dualities, //14//

Increasing perfect bliss,

¹⁸⁶⁹ Alamka comments "On account of that, it is said to be 'essence' Essence means from the creation stage [forward] 'Said to be the meaning of essence' means, having pursued the completion stage, on account of being free from elaboration, causing the effect of speech isolation" 108A-B

Increasing the bliss
 Of the fortunate ones,
 Knowing all
 And free from parts,
 Non-dual wisdom
 Yoga is born! //15//

That reality is ultimate;
 Moreover, that reality
 Is none other than suchness!
 Reality is the state
 Of Vajradhara,
 The nature
 Of the five wisdoms. //16//

All pervading,
 Ubiquitous emptiness,
 The total conquest
 Of all addictions.
 Taintless joy,
 Free from stain,
 Supreme state
 Of self-awareness! //17//

The primordial Buddha,
 Extra-delighted,
 Expands the group
 Into parts.
 By specifying the place
 [According to] personal instructions,
 You should gather
 By division
 Of the chakras. //18//

How is [one's] nature perfected?
 What is the division of streams?
 What is the practice
 According to the clans?
 What is the result? //19//

You should study with great effort
 What perfectly abides
 Through the tradition
 Of the guru of perfect form
 And so forth,
 The stages of true contemplation

And embrace. //20//

Gold, brocaded garments,
Jewels and so forth
Of the finest quality,
Countless servants and laborers,
With faith and devotion,
And so forth, //21//

Whatever he likes
For the teacher,
With things that are
Hard to find,
As for the guru
Who shows the meaning
Of mantra,
You should completely
Fulfill his wishes.
You make prostrations,
And then,
Having perfectly grasped
The meaning of the result, //22//

A pencil made
From Human bone,
[On] a ground
Of blazing jewels,
Or the well-spread ashes
From a charnel ground,
Bestowing attainment! //23//

Having first taken initiation,¹⁸⁷⁰
You should [draw with these]
A mandala in front.
As for the offering cake
For Vignāntakṛt,
Offer it like in a great temple.
You should gather
The incomparable mantra
That brings accomplishments
Of body, speech and mind. //24//

First, write the first letter,¹⁸⁷¹

¹⁸⁷⁰ The *Commentary* notes that this refers to the four Guhyasamāja empowerments 111A

¹⁸⁷¹ I.e. "a."

Having the fifth vowel,¹⁸⁷²
 Having the last part
 Of the last one of the group.¹⁸⁷³
 It is expressed
 As the seed of the body.
 The beginning letter
 Becomes double.¹⁸⁷⁴
 Having the [last] part of UṢMA,¹⁸⁷⁵
 You should gather
 The incomparable mantra,
 The supreme essence
 Of vajra speech. //25//

The [last] part of UṢMA,¹⁸⁷⁶
 Having the sixth vowel,¹⁸⁷⁷
 With the last part
 Of the last group,¹⁸⁷⁸
 Manifests the state
 Of the vajra of mind. //26//

The three commitments
 Of body, speech and mind
 Cause [you] to attain
 The three worlds.
 The supreme reality
 Of the yogi,
 The unexcelled gathering
 Of mantras,
 That very thing
 Causes all *attainments*.
 Concentrating the meaning
 Of all mantras
 Is the entire Vajra Vehicle. //27//

It is the supreme yoga
 Of all adepts
 On this earth,
 With its creatures and environment.

¹⁸⁷² I.e. "u," so "au," equivalent to "o."

¹⁸⁷³ I.e. *anusvāra*, making "OM"

¹⁸⁷⁴ I.e. "ā."

¹⁸⁷⁵ I.e. *śa, ṣa, sa, ha*, i.e. "ĀḤ," the *ḥ* being *visarga*

¹⁸⁷⁶ I.e. "ha."

¹⁸⁷⁷ I.e. "ū"

¹⁸⁷⁸ I.e. *anusvāra*

Unexcelled wisdom yoga!
Essence of Vajrasattva! //28//

Repeating the mantra
According to personal instruction,
The supreme unexcelled wisdom,
According to scripture
For the sake of attainment,
It achieves his
Magnificent attainment. //29//

By wisdom of mantra
In this very life,
The great yoga of
Body, speech and mind,
Explained as "great wisdom,"
The incomparable brilliant mantra,
Causes the enjoyment
Of all desires.
One who always holds
Mantra in the throat
Knows reality. //30//

Causing the accomplishment
Even of all concepts,
Entering into all *maṇḍalas*,
And knowing all commitments,
The good-minded one
Even achieves
The three worlds. //31//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifteenth chapter explaining the reality of mantra.

Chapter Sixteen

Teaching the State of the Stages of Counting the Energy-winds¹⁸⁷⁹

Now I will explain further
 So listen!
 One who attains correctly
 The unexcelled stage
 Of counting,
 The stage
 Of the energy-winds
 As they abide,
 Is fortunate.¹⁸⁸⁰
 The life-energy [wind] abides
 As the nature of all.
 One who really knows [this]
 Can achieve supreme yoga. //1//

One who does not know
 The nature of energy-wind
 Wanders in the three worlds.
 One who, moreover,
 Gains familiarity [with it],
 [Is in the] lineage
 Of those who know
 Guru yoga. //2//

The characteristics
 Of the seasons
 Are like the characteristics
 Of energy-wind.
 Having summarized,
 I should explain.
 What is clear
 In the *Cloud Glory*, //3//

There are six times,
 Well known as the seasons.
 It is the time
 Of the two applications;

¹⁸⁷⁹ See Commentary 113A

¹⁸⁸⁰ Per Stok Palace, *thob pa skal ba bzang*

That time is sixty days. //4//

When you determine
Day and night
They are well known
As "one day."
There are sixty hours¹⁸⁸¹
In one day and night.
Similarly, an *dbyu gu*
Is a *tsa sha*. //5//

A *tsa sha* is well known¹⁸⁸²
As the time
Of six exhalations
And inhalations.
In six seconds,
There is one [external] breath.
Its measure
Is the snapping
Of one's fingers. //6//

In one moment [*skad cig*],
There are three instants [*thang*].
As for that,
The mere turning over
Of a mustard seed,
For three [internal] breaths
There is one instant.
That one instant
Is a flash. //7//

In three instants
Is the blinking of an eye.
Further, as for the eye ,
The blink of an eye
Is in the space
Of three split seconds.
The space is
The clapping of hands.¹⁸⁸³ //8//

The rising of bliss takes

¹⁸⁸¹ *Chu tshod*

¹⁸⁸² This line, as *chu tshod tsa sha ka zhes grags*, appears at the end of the preceding verse in Alamka's version 114B

Three split seconds.
 That is the migration
 Of the drop.
 The mantrin abides
 In bliss in the three [seconds].
 He is described
 As fearing emission.¹⁸⁸⁴ //9//

It is explained as
 Fearing the three times.
 Time is subtle,
 With the nature
 Of an instant,¹⁸⁸⁵
 The characteristic of
 Past, present and future. //10//

The past is said to be
 Three moments.
 The present is also
 Three moments.
 The future is explained
 As three moments.
 In [each of] those,
 There are also
 Three moments. //11//

Thus, there is a portion
 Of the three moments.
 From that, there are three parts;
 From those, a part.
 To the extent you
 Count that much,
 Thought becomes
 Empty [and] non-dual;
 You will attain
 Supreme yoga. //12//

The abode of
 [The] Life-energy [energy-wind]
 Is unexcelled,

¹⁸⁸⁴ Per Alamka, the migration of the drop means “the conventional drop through the perfect practice with the supreme yoginī,” accompanied by “fear of the abyss [like the yogi experiencing “the moment of doubt when he falls from a mountain peak ” 115A Per Lozang Jamsal, you experience bliss in the state of impermanence, like you are at the edge of a precipice Personal Communication

¹⁸⁸⁵ Per Lozang Jamsal, just like splitting atoms Personal Communication

Free from direction,
 Time and concept,
 You abandon reasoning
 And characteristics.
 The life-energy of that
 Arises and dissolves,
 The epitome of non-duality. //13//

I should explain further,
 So listen!
 Whether the life-energy [wind]
 Is arising or dissolving,
 You realize it
 As instantaneous and so forth.
 To the extent
 It is completely unpacified,
 It is the abode of wind,
 Not known as the
 Place of liberation. //14//

Abiding in the middle
 Of the anus [and] the secret [place],
 [Its] name is
 [“]Unproduced.[“]
 The great part,¹⁸⁸⁶
 Moreover, is free
 From consciousness,
 The wisdom body,
 Selfless.
 What is produced there
 Is the supreme
 Of the supreme,
 Called the supreme
 Of living beings.¹⁸⁸⁷ //15//

It manifests the actuality
 Of consciousness.
 First, it actualizes the generation
 Of reification
 Of the four elements.¹⁸⁸⁸
 At that time, it dissolves

¹⁸⁸⁶ Referring to enlightenment spirit Alamka 117A

¹⁸⁸⁷ I.e. the Life Energy energy-wind, as made clear in Alamka's text Tibetan *srog chags* can mean both “living being,” Skt *jīva*, and “life energy,” *prāṇa*

¹⁸⁸⁸ At 117B, Alamka has *skyes pa yi ni ngo bor byed*, but later, at 118A, elaborates as set forth here

In its own place.
 From consciousness
 Wind is born. //16//

From that, fire will arise.
 From fire, water will arise.
 From that, earth is purely produced. From these, the elements
 [Arise] as the aggregates,
 And because of that,
 The sense media,
 And, from that,
 The instinctual natures
 Of consciousness,
 Which are more than
 One-hundred eight processes. //17//

Just as a person abides,
 He dissolves,
 The instinctual natures
 Going.
 The great energy-wind
 Of Producing Expansion¹⁸⁸⁹
 Stirs up the addicted mind,¹⁸⁹⁰
 [And] attaining power,
 Expands,¹⁸⁹¹
 Causing the contraction
 Of the sense media. //18//

From that, there is
 The Expanding Water
 Energy-wind.¹⁸⁹²
 Because the Producing Expansion [Energy-wind]¹⁸⁹³
 Is consumed,
 The very contraction
 Of the aggregates
 Causes the great body,
 In stages,
 To make sounds.
 From that will arise
 The Partial Expansion [Energy-wind]¹⁸⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸⁹ Per Alamka, the Evacuative Energy-wind 118A

¹⁸⁹⁰ Following Alamka here 118A

¹⁸⁹¹ Agam following Alamka's version 118B

¹⁸⁹² Per Alamka, *mnyam* gnas, the Equalizing Energy-wind 118B

¹⁸⁹³ Per Alamka, *thur sel gyi rlung*, the Evacuative Energy-wind 118B

Gathering the Expanding Water [Energy-wind].¹⁸⁹⁵ //19//

The elements contract,
Also in precise stages.
From that will arise
The Sending Holding
Energy-wind,¹⁸⁹⁶
Consuming the
Partial Expansion
[Energy wind].^{1897 1898} //20//

Then it contracts
The energy-winds,
Obscuring the Pervading
And subtle [energy-winds].
Then, the unbearable
Sending and Holding
[Energy-wind]¹⁸⁹⁹
Momentarily obscures
Consciousness. //21//

Having been obscured,
From that, even consciousness, Becomes insensate,
And you faint.
It obscures part
Of the sense bases.
It is the wisdom of purity,
Supreme of supreme.¹⁹⁰⁰
From that, the life energy
[Energy wind] dissolves
Becoming equal

¹⁸⁹⁴ Per Alamka, *gyen du rgyu ba'i rlung*, the Ascending energy-wind 118B

¹⁸⁹⁵ See generally Alamka 118B

¹⁸⁹⁶ Alamka says this refers to the Life-energy Energy-wind 118B

¹⁸⁹⁷ Meaning the Ascending Energy-wind 118B

¹⁸⁹⁸ Per Robert Thurman, the energy-winds are tied up with elements in the coarse body, the deeper wind-energies withdraw from the elements in an order, then the winds are contracted, you bring them in and out, you withdraw energies from the element, each has the four elements, they're constructs Personal Communication 4-20-06

¹⁸⁹⁹ Alamka says this refers to the Life-energy Energy-wind 118B

¹⁹⁰⁰ Compare to ch 53, praising *mtshams* "The character of the interval/ Is unexcelled / The interval,/ Free from appearance/ And non-appearance,/ Arises from vajra wisdom // It abides in the center,/ Mixing with non-duality / It abandons the noble/ And the polluted / Deathlessly born/ From the vajra and lotus,/ It perfectly mixes/ With the moon and sun // What perfectly doesn't go/ To the limit,/ That interval/ Purifies cyclic existence //"

To consciousness. //22//

Supreme reality
Is thus explained.
The dissolving and arising
Of the life-energy [energy-wind]
And exact understanding
Arises through the process
Of the lineage guru. //23//

I will also explain
The reason
For attaining
The vajra body,
Achieving
The deathless state.
One who achieves
The supreme body
Of immortality
Is the support
Of good qualities. //24//

Because of that,
Owing to the short lifespan
Of living beings,
They unable to accomplish
The immortal state.
Thus, with utmost effort,
You should achieve longevity. //25//

O Lord Savior!
Supreme Wisdom!
Transcendent Reality Yoga!
He bowed to Vajrasattva, asking:

How do you dissolve well
Into the lineage
Of the two immortalities?¹⁹⁰¹ //26//

Then the Vajra Lord said:

The state that achieves

¹⁹⁰¹ Alamka has '*chu ba med cing rigs par m/ ji ltar yang dag thob par 'gyur*', "Immortality and reasoning, how do you achieve them?" 120A Robert Thurman comments that reasoning means application "For these guys, ritual movement *is* a reasoning Understanding is the same as yoga, no 'believin' what you know ain't true '" Personal Communication 4-20-06

All actions,
The great deathless yoga,
Ascertains perfect reality. //27//

For the short-lived beings
There is no way
To achieve attainment.
Therefore the good yogis
[Hold] longevity to be a virtue.
For that, first the intelligent one
[Versed in] supreme yoga
Should accomplish
The inner nature. //28//

Touching the tongue
To the middle of the palate,
Repeat the thatness word.¹⁹⁰²
Having assumed the
Spiritual hero posture,
You should recollect
Perfect yoga.¹⁹⁰³ //29//

You should move the breath
To the tip of the nose,¹⁹⁰⁴
And should clearly
Shut the mouth.
The moon arrives
At the place of the palate,¹⁹⁰⁵
And melts by the yoga
Of mantra.

¹⁹⁰² Robert Thurman says this is to be done silently Personal Communication 4-20-06

¹⁹⁰³ The Commentary states that "perfect yoga" refers to *sems kyi 'jug pa 'gog pa'i rnam pa'o*, a kind of shutting down of the engagement of the mind 121A This stanza is also quoted in Alamka 31B in discussing the attainment of "paralyzing an army "

¹⁹⁰⁴ I.e. the conventional nose Commentary 121A As for the method, Alamka states *dbugs ni mi 'byung zhes bya ba ni 'od zer gyi thig le bsgom pa'i bdag nyid can no*// "The breath not arising" means having the nature of meditating the drop of clear light Commentary 121A

¹⁹⁰⁵ Alamka explains "'The moon arriving at the place of the palate' means enlightenment spirit in the aspect of a moon 'One should melt' means by applying the uvula"¹⁹⁰⁵ If someone asks how, it is stated as the 'yoga of mantra,' the meaning which is 'connected' 'by the unbroken mantra ' [The enlightenment spirit] is melted by means of the uvula 'By wind yoga' means by applying the falling of the downward voiding wind 'Drinks' means that one should experience nectar " 121A "What is particularly surprising about this passage is the characterization [in the *Taṭtirīyopaniṣad's Shikṣāvallī*] of the uvula as Indra's womb Indra is of course the great Soma drinker from the Vedas Throughout the Yogic and Tantric literature we find that the uvula is described as the site where the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*, also a common epithet of Soma) drips down, after the *kundalīnī* or *enlightenment spirit* has risen up to the crown of the head " Hartzell 1997, 582

The chief of yoga
Should always drink
By the yoga
Of the melting
Of energy-wind. //30//

At the end of the middle
Of the night,
The yogi recites mantra
In one session without stopping,
Making the vajra body. //31//

To summon the life-energy
Of the practitioner,
Always repeat
Without losing the limbs¹⁹⁰⁶
The third of the second group,¹⁹⁰⁷
Including the vowel.¹⁹⁰⁸ //32//

Also, you should always
Use the substance,
Producing the stage
Of the five realities.
When you complete
The recitation,
There are never
Any stains arising
On the body.¹⁹⁰⁹ //33//

As for the vessel
Made of five metals,
You holding it
Until sunrise,
Pouring constantly into it
The blood
Of a young woman
And enlightenment spirit.
The supreme substance
Is called the seven nectars. //34//

¹⁹⁰⁶ *I.e.* say it clearly

¹⁹⁰⁷ *I.e.* "G."

¹⁹⁰⁸ *I.e.* GAH," *visarga* per Alamka 121B

¹⁹⁰⁹ This and the next three stanzas are quoted in Alamka 32A in his chapter six, as well as in his commentary on this chapter

Drinking the substance at bedtime
 Increases [your] lifespan.
 Then you should repeat
 The king of mantras
 OM ĀH HŪM seven times. //35//

You should mark
 Your right hand
 With a flag,
 Covering the good vessel,
 Purifying it three times
 With the mantra
 Of one hundred syllables.
 Because of that,
 You should always
 Carry, fill up
 And drink
 The [substance of]
 A young woman. //36//

Also, to give
 That [kind of] food,
 You make equal parts
 Of butter fried rice, beans,
 Sunflowers, goat milk,
 White sugar and sesame,
 With intense faith¹⁹¹⁰
 You should make
 A fire offering.
 At bed time,
 Eat the unexcelled food. //37//

Thus knowing the ritual
 Through [such] reasoning,
 Don't tell anyone!
 [The ritual] will quickly
 Bestow attainment
 On the subtle one,
 All as before. //38//

Doing this for six months,
 One will arise
 In a vajra body.

¹⁹¹⁰ Alamka has *mos pa*, 123A-B, which I have translated as “with intense faith” in light of the *Vajra Rosary’s myos pa*, “mad, crazy ”

One should use¹⁹¹¹
 Elixirs and alchemy
 With great effort,
 Unequalled [for]
 Controlling the lifespan. //39//

For the practitioner
 Who attains the Great Seal,
 There is no old age,
 Worm disease, drowsiness,
 Stupidity, dry lung,
 Energy or bile disease
 And so forth, //40//

No inner or goiter disease, pox,
 Hemorrhoids, itching,¹⁹¹² smallpox,
 Leprosy or syphilis.
 He has a glorious
 Smoke white lotus body,
 Shining like a golden river. //41//

He¹⁹¹³ always attracts
 The supreme
 Wisdom women.
 The goddesses
 Have great affection¹⁹¹⁴
 For [elixirs],¹⁹¹⁵
 [And so] the yoginīs¹⁹¹⁶
 Make [him]
 A mind hero,¹⁹¹⁷
 [So his] natural body

¹⁹¹¹ Reading *bsnyen* rather than *bsstan*.

¹⁹¹² Skt *kanḍū* Alamka has *gya' ba*, which means the same thing 123B

¹⁹¹³ Per Alamka, this “it” refers to the practitioner 123B

¹⁹¹⁴ Although Alamka glosses *mdza' chen*, which I am taking as “great affection,” as *tshe phun sum tshogs pa dang mdog phun sum tshogs pa'o*, “of a perfect age and perfect appearance” Perhaps Alamka was reading this as *mdzes*, “beautiful”

¹⁹¹⁵ Per Alamka, this “it” refers to the attainment of taking elixirs 123B

¹⁹¹⁶ Sde dge Alamka has *rnal byor pa*, “yogis” 123B

¹⁹¹⁷ Sde dge Alamka has *sems par byed*, 124A, but P and Snar have *dpar*, “as hero” *Id.* Alamka glosses this as *yid du 'ong ba*, “good looking, comely,” which is consonant with the rest of the verse, with its reference to the “natural body” Alamka could also have been referring to the *practitioner yoginīs*, which would be unusual in context, since Alamka usually refers to the practitioner in the male gender, but not impossible All in all, though, the reading above makes the most sense to me Robert Thurman reads this as centering on the yoginī/practitioner and thus being an answer to the male-oriented sexual fluids approach taken by current commentators Personal Communication It is also possible that Alamka’s interpretation varied from the original intent

Is always saluted
And given offerings. //42//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixteenth chapter on teaching the state of the stages of counting the energy-winds.

Chapter Seventeen

Situating the Chakras

Then, further,
Listen to the summary
Of the number and places
Of the channels
Precisely divided
By the number
Of wheels,
Wonderfully supreme. //1//

For the six wheels,
There are sixteen supports,
For the body,
The divine mansion.
Having summarized
By yoga and by place
I will explain. //2//

The channel that abides
As the wind wheel,¹⁹¹⁸
The six-petaled
Energy wind,
Engages space.
Three petals are explained
As the fire wheel.¹⁹¹⁹
Three types of channels
Arise in stages.
Similarly, the enjoyment wheel¹⁹²⁰

¹⁹¹⁸ Per Lati Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche, 1997, this should be 16 petals The Wind Wheel is between the brows *Id.*

¹⁹¹⁹ Per Lati Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche, 1997, between the neck and the heart

Also is perfectly expressed
As sixteen channels. //3//

The eight channels
That abide in the
Reality wheel¹⁹²¹
Pervade everywhere.
Similarly, also,
The wheel of emanation
Will also be explained
As sixty-four.¹⁹²² //4//

Thirty-two channels
Are explained as arising
In the Great Bliss Wheel.¹⁹²³
Summarized in that way,
The process is also
Perfectly explained
As constituting more than
One hundred thirty-one¹⁹²⁴
Channels. //5//

In other [Tantras]
The channels are
Also divided in detail,
Analyzing the[ir] locations
Into seventy-two thousand.
The definitive expression
Is stated in the
One Hundred Thousand.¹⁹²⁵
It is stated as the
Essence of the essence
In the Small Tantra
Or in this very one. //6//

¹⁹²⁰ Per Lati Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche, 1997, at the throat

¹⁹²¹ Per Lati Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche, 1979, at the heart

¹⁹²² Per Lati Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche, 1979, at the navel

¹⁹²³ Per Lati Rinpoche and Denma Locho Rinpoche, 1979, the Crown *Wheel*

¹⁹²⁴ Each of the Sde dge, Peking and Snar thang versions of the *Commentary* has one hundred twenty-nine here 125A

¹⁹²⁵ The *Commentary* states "From the Tantra which is propagated in stages' [I could not find such a Tantra in TBRC] means it is stated etc 'Expressed definitively in 100,000' [means] in the Similar to Sky Tantra " 125A Per the TBRC index, the *rgya cher dpal nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud* might refer to the *nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po* or the *bde mchog nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*

The place in the center
 Of the eyebrows
 Is the Wind Wheel.
 The Open Coiling¹⁹²⁶
 Is unbearable.
 Being unbearable has the Characteristic of stability,
 The characteristic of the
 Six short channels. //7//

Holding is filled
 With non-conceptuality.
 The three-channeled,
 Three-cornered Fire Wheel
 Is explained as being
 Below the throat.
 There are three [channels]:
 Stainless, clear and fierce. //8//

[The names of the channels are]¹⁹²⁷

[1] Perfectly Forceful and
 [2] Very Forceful,
 [3] Very Good and
 [4] Becoming Good,
 [5] Great Power and
 [6] Unbearable,
 [7] Great Beauty and
 [8] Great One Born in Front, //9//

[9] Sign of Inflation and
 [10] Part of Inflation,
 [11] Water of Inflation and
 [12] Intoxicating Inflation,
 [13] Inflation and
 [14] Harmonious Cause of Inflation,
 [15] Moistening Inflation and
 [16] Holding Inflation,¹⁹²⁸ //10//

¹⁹²⁶ Skt *Vibagakundali* or *Bangakundali* "'Opening coil' because having been awakened by A and RA, it turns back. As for the coiling of it, because it proceeds to transform itself [that way] it's called open coiling. 'Unbearable' because it is fierce at the time of incitement by fire. Called 'holding' because it holds in its own place the element of the enlightenment spirit that has overflowed in the head." Alamka 125B. Per Robert Thurman, this refers to the pituitary gland center that goes through the brain. When it opens, it turns toward the back, energy comes from the front and coils around. When fire incites the white enlightenment spirit, it melts flowing to the Wind Wheel, then is held there in place. *Mi bzad pa* means excruciating, because it hurts a little. Personal Communication 5-18-08

¹⁹²⁷ See Hartzell 1997, 348 for names of the channels from the *Ḍākārṇavatāntra*'s chapter 5

[17] Rough and
 [18] Space Arising and
 [19] Rude¹⁹²⁹ and
 [20] Unhappy Breath and
 [21] Itching,
 [22] Dākinī,
 [23] Bird [on a] Limb,
 [24] Face of Mouth¹⁹³⁰
 [25] Daring to Consume,
 [26] Unbearable Reification¹⁹³¹ //11//

[27] Smelly,
 [28] Striking and
 [29] Dusting and
 [30] Voice and
 [31] Producing voice and
 [32] Cloud,
 [33] Seen as Tube and
 [34] Continuously Moving,
 [35] Main Instant,
 [36] Unborn Instant, //12//

[37] Facing Backwards and
 [38] Stick,
 [39] Pride Stick and
 [40] Old and
 [41] Joint Belly and
 [42] Joint Word,¹⁹³²
 [43] Joint Measure and
 [44] Taming,¹⁹³³ //13//

[45] Place of Joints and
 [46] Joint Face,
 [47] Joint Light and
 [48] Chain¹⁹³⁴ of Joints,
 [49] Taming,
 [50] Animal¹⁹³⁵ and

¹⁹²⁸ Commentary reads 'chang

¹⁹²⁹ Alamka has "Elephant " 126B

¹⁹³⁰ Following Alamka I haven't been able to find the meaning of *khva*

¹⁹³¹ Per Lozang Jamspal, "Making Terrible Sounds " Personal Communication 9-12-06

¹⁹³² Alamka has "Joint Head " 127A

¹⁹³³ Alamka has "Suppressing Another " 127A

¹⁹³⁴ *Lu gu rgyud* - line to which lambs are fastened, Skt *śṛṅkala* Personal Communication, L. Jamspal

[51] Radiance,
 [52] Stainless and
 [53] Pride of Taming, //14//

[54] Belly Casting Water¹⁹³⁶ and
 [55] Desire Casting Water,¹⁹³⁷
 [56] Half Hanging Garlands [and Half] Cleaning Garlands,¹⁹³⁸
 [57] Bee
 [58] Child,
 [59] Bestowing Child,
 [60] Questioning,
 [61] Leaf,
 [62] Throat Leaf, //15//

63] Supreme Mother and
 [64] Very Illuminating.

In that way,
 Explained as
 Sixty-four channels,
 The places of the Emanation Wheel
 Are filled up
 With supreme nectar. //16//

Great Jewel and Lotus,
 Great Vajra and
 Greatly Powerful One,
 Great Headed and Great Sound, Intoxicated by Great Ecstasy
 And Great Drunk,

These are in the center of the Phenomena Wheel.
 They remain on the lotus
 Of the heart. //17//

Enjoyment and
 Bestowing Enjoyment,
 Sun, Going, Bright and Lucky,
 Meditation and Face of Ashes,
 Food Gift, Food and Hunger, //18//

Alchemy-elixir

¹⁹³⁵ Alamka has “Going to Tame ” 127A

¹⁹³⁶ Alamka has “Hanging Garlands,” 127A, which seems to make more sense in the context

¹⁹³⁷ Alamka has “Ecstasy of Hanging Garlands ” 127A

¹⁹³⁸ Alamka has “Mother of Garlands ” 127A

And Sour Taste,
 Fearsome Taste, Taste,
 And Crane.
 Are located on the
 Enjoyment Wheel,
 [Their] number expressed
 As sixteen. //19//

Above that,
 By the process
 Of reasoning:
 Passionate One,
 Lustful Woman,
 Life Energy Body,
 Drinking Moon,
 Bestowing Moon, Treasury,
 Desireless, Speech,
 Kusha Grass, //20//

Flesh, Charnel Ground,
 Mountain, Purity,
 People, Corpse, Parrot,
 That Having Two Tastes,
 Long Battle Cry,
 Giving Liquor, Nectar, //21//

Possessing Pearl, Pearl, Ear,
 Poisonous Eye, Poisonous Nose,
 Lord of Inflation,
 Inflation, Craving,
 Unconscious with Inflation,
 Wonderful Inflation, //22//

Smooth and Supported by.

These are stated as "thirty-two,"
 Part of the Wheel
 Of Great Bliss,
 Bestowing supreme ecstasy. //23//

Subtle and extremely subtle
 To the touch,
 It abandons
 The grasped
 And the grasping
 One's self being

Of the nature of great bliss,
You give it to others as well. //24//

Thus, you should know
From the guru's speech,
The true stages
Of the channels.
The aggregates and so forth
Will not arise
Without ascertaining
The stages of the channels.
Without the aggregates,
The yogi cannot achieve
Great wisdom. //25//

The body with the nature
Of the five aggregates
Is well known
As the five dākinīs.
That very thing,
Through the five elements,
Abides as the five wisdoms.
Therefore, with all effort,
You should know
The channel wheels. //26//

Just as a tree
In the middle of water
Grows quickly,
From it there is fruit
And so forth,
It will give.
In this there is
No doubt. //27//

Similarly, the aggregates
Are like a tree,
Having grown by the water
Of the channels.
Increasing, they bestow
The perfect fruit
Of Omniscience.
You should meditate on
The nature of the channels
Through the actualities
Of the forms

Of deities. //28//

Of the two,
 There are two touches.¹⁹³⁹
 If the vajra is present,
 At that time
 The fire truly blazes.
 Then, in the middle
 Of the wheel of fire,
 The lotuses called wheels¹⁹⁴⁰
 Will open stage by stage.¹⁹⁴¹ //29//

As for this,
 From the falling of that
 Great bliss of enlightenment spirit
 From the channels,
 You perfectly achieve
 The essence of emanation,
 Having condensed [it]
 Into a single entity. //30//

It flows down
 The sun and moon.
 Also, in the center
 Of the royal mandala,
 You abide in the form
 Of a scale.¹⁹⁴²
 Known also as one cause,
 Those two [have]
 Two kinds of effects. //31//

[From] the right,
 The form of a sun
 And [from] the left

¹⁹³⁹ Or, per Alamka, “By the two banners of touch coming together ” 129B

¹⁹⁴⁰ Alamka has *mig*, “eye ” 129B

¹⁹⁴¹ Alamka explains “Now in order to express the procedure of producing the channels, as the components of that, by the warmth of fire pressuring, the enlightenment spirit emerges and there is a meeting of the two victory banners of texture, and here texture means lotus Because of that very thing being very touchable, it has the nature of a victory banner ‘Present’ [*lhag*] [ancient sense of the word] [means] having the power of that which is to be protected and accomplished The center of the navel is the Emanation Wheel and the two fire wheels abide above, achieving the form of blazing ‘The middle of the Fire Wheel is the Fire Wheel that abides below the Enjoyment Wheel [in the chest below the Enjoyment Wheel] Lotuses having an eye means by the form of blazing because pervaded by heat 129B

¹⁹⁴² Alamka explains “‘The vaginal chakra’ [means that] the two channels abide like a balancing scale when you are connected with the yoginī in the center of the lotus chakra When both are brought together, you abide in the mode of a jewel sack ” 130A

The form of moon.¹⁹⁴³
 When the right sun arises,
 The blood becomes bliss. //32//

When the left moon
 Is clear,
 Bliss is [white],
 Like a *kunda* flower.
 The fire that enters
 Those two
 Abides perfectly
 As the seven branches. //33//

At the time
 Of the hundred paths,¹⁹⁴⁴
 When the previous
 Energy wind consciousness
 Becomes mistaken,
 You abide equably
 In the space
 Of the father,
 And at that time,
 You fall under the power
 Of lust. //34//

The Secret Place is
 The channel possessing
 The mark of the moon.
 When fire and sun arise,
 Driven by extreme lust,
 You desire supreme passion.
 The faces of
 Vajra and lotus
 Are mixed together,
 [And] the tip of the father
 Enters. //35//

At that time,
 A seed arises.
 From the seed
 Arises a living being.
 Therefore, you arise perfectly.

¹⁹⁴³ Alamka has “from the left, the form of a moon” first 130A

¹⁹⁴⁴ *I.e.* after death

From the channels.
The wonderful fruit is born. //36//

That very thing
Is also enlightenment spirit.
You hold [it],
Gathering the life-energy.
By attaining wisdom yoga
There is supreme wisdom
And supreme reality,
Great wonderful supreme bliss,
Unexcelled supreme bliss. //37//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the seventeenth chapter on teaching in stages the situating of the chakras.

Chapter Eighteen

Summary of the Channels of the Yogic Body

Now I should explain further.
The respective channels
In the yogic body,
Are always perfect,
Born through
The lineage clans. //1//

This is not stated clearly.
For the sake of
Unfortunate people
Who have given up
Thoughts of faith,
[This] is not clearly spoken of
Anywhere. //2//

For those beings desiring
To be made vessels
Of spiritual accomplishment
Quickly
In the time of

The "five degenerations,"
 I will perfectly explain
 The spontaneous
 Wonderful wisdom, //3//

The channels through which
 Enlightenment spirit clearly flows,
 The thirty-two in the
 Channel wheel of great bliss
 Of the yogic body. //4//¹⁹⁴⁵

Now, I will explain
 The characteristics
 Of that place
 Of great bliss.
 You should know these
 In order, by the groups
Ka,¹⁹⁴⁶ *ca*, *ta*, *ta* and *pa*,
 And *ya*, *ra la wa*, *sa*, *sa*,
 And *sa*, //5//

When you compress these,
 They go into one group.
 Moreover, having dissolved
 Into enlightenment spirit,
 The supreme wisdom of peace,
 They go [into one group]. //6//

Having abandoned all notions,
 It is the supreme basis
 Of all bliss,
 Abandoning knower
 And known,
 Always remaining
 As the nature of all. //7//

From that, by division
 Into three wheels,
 From division into eight channels,
 By differentiation into

¹⁹⁴⁵ For Alamka alternative readings of this and the next verse, see Alamka 24A. The corresponding verses in Alamka's Chapter 18 has *rnal byor lus ni bde ba chen po 'i/ 'khor lo 'i sum cu rtsa gnyis rmad du byung ba/ tsa rnams yang dag bshad par bya/ byang chub sems 'bab gsal// de rnams bde ba chen po 'i gnas/ mtshan nyid bshad par bya/ a ka tsa ta ta pa sde tshan dang/ ya ra la wa sha sa/ rigs pas shes par bya//*. 132A

¹⁹⁴⁶ Reading *ka* for *ga*

The mantras of body,
Speech and mind,
It manifests as seventy-two. //8//

Those have the nature
Of proliferating individually,
Dividing into a thousand.
You should "count"
Seventy-two thousand channels. //9//

By dividing into
The three elements
Of wind, bile and phlegm,
Twenty-four thousand.
Dividing wheel into wheel,
Following the definitive
Personal instructions
Of the *Mahāyoga* Tantras, //10//

You should know
From the mouth of the guru,
By differentiating each channel,
The characteristics
Of the stage of deity,
The supreme reality
Of consort yoga. //11//

Adding those together,
Completely relying
On one another,
Again they become
Seventy-two.
From the thirty-two channels
Of the place
Of the channel Wheel
Of Great Bliss,
You arise, moreover,
As Chakrasamvara.¹⁹⁴⁷ //12//

The principal channels
Of each chakra
Manifest as eight.
The "supreme" channels

¹⁹⁴⁷ The commentary for this reference to "bound up in a wheel" or "Chakrasamvara" appears to be missing Alamka 133B

Of the yogic body
 Are the miraculous
 Thirty-two.
 By discerning
 The thirty-two letters,
 The chief yogi
 Always attains. //13//

Protecting the aggregates,
 Elements, objects
 And the gate
 Of the sense powers,
 The luminous mandala,
 Thirty-two fold in nature,
 Is supreme. //14//

Also within the body mansion,
 The so-called *Tathāgatas*,
 The Goddesses [of]
 Form and so forth,
 The princes,
 And the Ten Terrifics,
 Those very ones
 Perfectly sit [there],
 Supreme. //15//

Further, as for
 The Terrifics
 And the princes,
 They go within,
 Disappearing.
 The princes are retracted
 Into the goddesses
 Of form and so forth. //16//

Of them,
 The earth and so forth
 Go into the
 Five Tathāgatas,
 Who, dissolved
 Into the vajras
 Of body, speech
 And mind,
 Go. //17//

Having also dissolved into
Singular reality/bliss,
They go.
Liberating from
Object and subject,
It is the supreme support
Of all bliss. //18//

Further, from mere experience,
Again, one dissolves
Into mere letter.
The mere letter dissolves
Into the drop.
The drop also dissolves
Into sound.
The sound into
Clear light.
In the perfect state
Of clear light,
There is the characteristic
Of emanating
And withdrawing. //19//

Liberated from consciousness,
Reality sphere, ultimate,
Great bliss, object, subject,
It is stainless
Enlightenment spirit, //20//

The great peace
Of Vajrasattva,
Wonderful non-dual wisdom,
The bliss of
The fourth empowerment
And the supreme state
Of the four ecstasies. //21//

By these
And so forth
Particular names
It is said to be
The supreme state,
By dividing into
Emanating and dissolving
According to
The exact stages. //22//

Thus you should know
 From the guru lineage
 The meaning of the process
 Of creation and perfection
 Characterized by non-dual peace. //23//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the eighteenth chapter on the summary of the channels of the yogic body.

Chapter Nineteen

Extensive Explanation of the Characteristic of The Instants

Then, moreover, [there are]
 The characteristics
 Of the perfect doctrinal system,
 The nature of the moments
 Of Variety and so forth,
 Listen carefully
 To that very thing! //1//

The four instants¹⁹⁴⁸
 Are stated as:
 Variety; Ripening; Overcoming
 And Beyond Characteristics.
 Having distinguished [them],
 I will explain again. //2//

I will analyze the instants
 Of those types
 Asserted as Variety:^{1949 1950}

Erotically enticing¹⁹⁵¹
 Embracing,¹⁹⁵² kissing,¹⁹⁵³

¹⁹⁴⁸ See Hartzell 1997, 918-20 for various Buddhist and Śaivite four moment schemes

¹⁹⁴⁹ This list is virtually identical to that in the *CMP*. See *CMP* Ch 10, Wedemeyer 1999, 343-44

¹⁹⁵⁰ The balance of this chapter is not commented on by Alamka 136A

¹⁹⁵¹ *Ka ra na, karaṇa.*

¹⁹⁵² *Ālingana.*

¹⁹⁵³ *Cumbana.*

Sucking,¹⁹⁵⁴ fondling breasts,¹⁹⁵⁵
 Making goose bumps,¹⁹⁵⁶
 Biting [and] scratching,^{1957 1958}
 Swaying,¹⁹⁵⁹ needling,¹⁹⁶⁰ and Elbowing/kneeing¹⁹⁶¹ and so forth
 Are types of the instants
 Of Variety.¹⁹⁶² //3//

When you develop
 Bliss of the body,
 [In] the seventy-two thousand pipes,
 Whatever has gone to the throat,
 Is the instant of "Ripening."¹⁹⁶³ //4//

Innate wisdom has
 The character of
 A vajra rosary.
 It is the formless instant,
 Complete manifest enlightenment. //5//

Surpassing the semen that
 Emerges from the channels,
 The instant of
 Free From Form.
 The four wisdoms
 And four emptinesses
 Are realized
 From the four instants. //6//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the nineteenth chapter on explaining extensively the characteristic of instantaneity.

¹⁹⁵⁴ *Cuṣana* [?]

¹⁹⁵⁵ *Kucagrahaṇa*.

¹⁹⁵⁶ *Pulakatāḍḍana*. See *CMP*, Wedemeyer 1999, 344 n 21

¹⁹⁵⁷ *Dasanakhadana*. See *CMP*, Wedemeyer 1999, 344 n 22

¹⁹⁵⁸ *CMP* list at this point has *mardana*, "massaging," *CMP*, Wedemeyer 1999, 344 n 23 This is the only term missing from the *Vajra Rosary*, although the *CMP* listing goes on with "shaking her strings of pearls, ringing with the sounds of bracelets, head-ornaments, and anklets, equipoised on object, sense-organ, vajra, lotus, art, wisdom, intuitive wisdom, and knowable object, exhorting the vowels and consonants, and the three nāḍi " Wedemeyer 1999 at 344.

¹⁹⁵⁹ *Dola*.

¹⁹⁶⁰ *CMP* has *sūci*

¹⁹⁶¹ *CMP* has *kūrpara*.

¹⁹⁶² See *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*, Ch 6 George 1974, 116, 121

¹⁹⁶³ There is no commentary for this verse to the end of the chapter

Chapter Twenty

Analyzing the Characteristics of Ecstasy

Now, further.
 The characteristics
 Of the four ecstasies
 Will be explained
 In emergent and reverse order
 According to
 The exact procedure. //1//

The bliss of Ecstasy
 Is first;
 Supreme Ecstasy
 Is second;
 "Transcendent Ecstasy"
 Is third,
 And the fourth
 Is explained
 As Innate. //2//

In the "reverse method"
 It is stated that
 Ecstasy abides
 In the Emanation Chakra,
 Supreme Ecstasy
 In the Phenomena Chakra,
 Transcendent Ecstasy
 In the Enjoyment Chakra
 And Innate
 [In the] Great Bliss Chakra. //3//

After that, I will explain
 The forward sequence,
 With Ecstasy explained as [being]
 In the crown Great Bliss Chakra,
 Supreme Ecstasy
 In the Enjoyment Chakra,
 Transcendent Ecstasy
 Abiding in the Phenomena Chakra
 And Innate Ecstasy experienced

In the Emanation Chakra. //4//

Knowing the experience
Of the Ecstasy of looking,
Attracting, as well as signaling
And kissing on the mouth
Is the characteristic
Of Variety. //5//

Similarly, for the excellent
Yogi and yoginī,
Holding on to sound¹⁹⁶⁴
And placing the vajra
In the lotus
Is the supreme¹⁹⁶⁵ moment
Of the ground of experience.
That very moment
Is called "Ripening,"
You know
That very thing
As the cause. //6//

Abiding in extreme clarity
In the middle
Of the channel,
The furor fire
Also overcomes conceptuality.
It causes the supreme part
Of the great
Chakra of Great Bliss
To melt. //7//

The experience
Of Transcendent Ecstasy
Has the character
Of the instant of Overcoming.
In it is the nature
Of one taste,
Relying on the continuity
Of one channel. //8//

The peaceful state

¹⁹⁶⁴ Alamka is probably better here, with *skra la 'dzin pa*, "tugging on hair" 137B

¹⁹⁶⁵ Referring to Supreme Ecstasy

Of great bliss
 Has the character
 Of the Innate,
 The instant
 Free from characteristic,¹⁹⁶⁶
 The excellent, marvelous
 Speech of bliss. //9//

Following the [teaching of]
 The reality of energy-wind,¹⁹⁶⁷
 That very stream
 Having gone up,
 Causing achievement
 By the yogi.¹⁹⁶⁸ //10//

As for that,
 The Emanation Chakra
 Is known as "Ecstasy."
 The perfect support
 Of all bliss
 Is said to be
 The instant of Variety. //11//

Above that, the Phenomena Chakra
 Is the supreme basis
 Of all emptiness
 Accomplished by the yogi.
 The experience is
 Supreme Ecstasy,
 Having the character
 Of the moment of Ripening. //12//

Then, the Enjoyment Chakra,
 In the moment of moving up,
 The experience of
 Transcendent Ecstasy,
 The moment characterized
 As Overcoming. //13//

¹⁹⁶⁶ The last sentence of verse nine, and verses ten and eleven are missing from the Lhasa *VR*, and have been reconstructed from *Commentary*. For the third line, "The instant free from characteristic," I am following Alamka

¹⁹⁶⁷ As discussed in the twelfth chapter Alamka 138B

¹⁹⁶⁸ Something appears to be missing or wrong here, I would guess that the text should be *byed pa'o* or *byed pa'i sa*. The meaning appears to be pretty clear though

The moment with the character
 Of attaining the great
 Chakra of Great Bliss
 Is the experience
 Of Innate Ecstasy,
 The moment
 Free from characteristics. //14//

From arousing
 The great space
 Of all three channels,¹⁹⁶⁹
 The perfect form
 Of the host
 Of yoginīs,¹⁹⁷⁰
 The experience
 Is the uniform taste
 Of a single character.
 You experience
 The great object,¹⁹⁷¹
 Again going
 Without characteristics. //15//

You experience
 The great awakening,
 With the nature
 Of the sixteen emptinesses.¹⁹⁷²
 The indestructible state
 Of great bliss
 Is the abode
 Of non-dual Vajrasattva. //16//

Thus, this analysis
 Of the ecstasies
 Is not clearly expressed
 In other [Tantras].
 By the kindness of the yoginī,
 You should know [this]
 By the kindness
 Of yoginīs,
 From the lineage

¹⁹⁶⁹ Alamka has “all the channels” rather than “all three channels,” which makes better sense 139A

¹⁹⁷⁰ *I.e.* the names of the channels described in Chapter twenty-seven, *infra* Alamka 139A

¹⁹⁷¹ Given Alamka’s etymological explanation of the Sanskrit *gocara* for *yul*, “object,” *i.e.* “go meaning vajra and *cara* meaning the form of conventional enlightenment spirit [semen] in sexual yogic conduct,” Alamka 139A, I follow Alamka’s “great object” here rather than the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary*’s “great yoga ”

¹⁹⁷² Following Alamka here, instead of the Lhasa Vajra Rosary’s “sixteen thousand ” 139B

Of the gurus. //17//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twentieth chapter on the analysis of the characteristics of ecstasy.

Chapter Twenty-One

Analyzing the Three Drops

Now I will explain further,
So listen!
The three drops are unexcelled.
Just knowing them
Becomes a powerful attainment. //1//

Flowing in all the channels,
The enlightenment spirit melts.
At the moment of holding
The energy wind
At the tip
Of the vajra
and lotus, //2//

The application
Of the drawing in
Of the palate
And the application
Of the mantra KSHMĪ
Causes the attainment
Of¹⁹⁷³ supreme yoga,
The supreme basis
Of all bliss.^{1974 1975 1976} //3//

¹⁹⁷³ In the *Commentary* on this chapter, in the Sde dge Alamka has *mchog gis*, P and Snar have *mchog gi* 140A

¹⁹⁷⁴ Robert Thurman says this should be KSHIM, but Alamka has KSHMĪ Personal Communication

¹⁹⁷⁵ According to the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, Ballantyne 1995, ch 3, vv 39-40, 86, the *prāṇa* (*srog*) is chief among energy-winds, and stays in mouth and nostrils, nostril to heart, the *apāna* (*thur gsal*) is found in the navel to the soles of feet, the *samāna* (*mnyam gnas*) from the heart to the navel (food and drink), the *vyāna* (*khyab byed*) pervades the entire body, and the *udāna* (*gyen rgyu*) is located from the throat to the head

¹⁹⁷⁶ The alternate readings shown here for this and the preceding paragraph are from Alamka 24B

You place HŪM
 In the center,
 In the hub
 Of the heart lotus,
 The supreme reality
 Of the Reality chakra.
 Everything
 Has the nature
 Of emptiness,
 Liberated from things
 And no-thing,
 Protecting the body
 Of thatness. //4//

Freed from direction,
 Location and time,
 It abandons
 Above and below.
 Abiding in
 Its own nature,
 Free from mind,
 It abandons
 The trap of speech. //5//

It is free from continuity
 And characteristics,
 And free from the range
 Of conceptuality.
 Liberated from all duality,
 It is supremely permanent
 And peaceful. //6//

The practicing yogi
 Should meditate entirely
 At the tip of the nose
 The supreme¹⁹⁷⁷ yoga
 Of the drop of wind,
 The great illumination
 Of the five colors.
 The yogi should repeat
 The supreme mantra,
 The syllable OM. //7//

¹⁹⁷⁷ In his Critique of Judgment (1790), Kant investigates the supreme, stating "We call that supreme which is absolutely great" (§ 25). He distinguishes between the "remarkable differences" of the Beautiful and the Supreme, noting that beauty "is connected with the form of the object", having "boundaries", while the supreme "is to be found in a formless object", represented by a "boundlessness" (§ 23). Kant 1978

As before,¹⁹⁷⁸
 This brings about
 The five wisdoms,
 Peace and such,
 Having the character
 Of stages of instinct. //8//

By the division
 Of body, speech
 And mind,¹⁹⁷⁹
 These three channels
 Are supreme.
 Coming together
 And dividing,
 They mutually interweave. //9//

The Substance Drop
 Enters within the two drops:
 Mantric and Wind.
 The Mantric Drop
 Supreme reality,
 [Incorporates] the two drops
 [Of] Light and Substance. //10//

Further, the Wind Drop
 Goes into two drops
 Having the nature of
 Mantra and Substance,
 Perfectly known by the yogi. //11//

The names of the channels
 "*Lanlanā*," "*Rasanā*,"
 And "*Avadhutī*,"
 Having the character of
 Moon, sun and fire,
 And nature
 Of body, speech and mind,
 Are well known
 As those very ones. //12//

Pervading above and below,
 In the fashion of

¹⁹⁷⁸ Per Alamka, referring to the ritual for analyzing the drops taught in chapter 6 Alamka 141B

¹⁹⁷⁹ Per Robert Thurman, this refers to OM AH HŪM breathing Personal Communication

A line of lambs,¹⁹⁸⁰
 Pervading in all the channels,
 They abide
 Through the process
 Of perfect
 Personal instructions. //13//

In that way,
 Yoga is supremely subtle.
 It leaves behind knowing
 And knowable.
 [It is] the basis
 Of all attainments,
 The great wonderful Mahāyoga. //14//

Not by purification,
 Not by repetition,
 Not by rosary,
 Not by cessation,
 Not by counting time,
 Not by fire offerings,
 Not by removing,
 Not by ceasing;
 The peaceful state
 Of great wisdom
 Is realized only by yoga. //15//

The five clairvoyances,
 And, similarly,
 The five supreme wisdoms,
 Meditating on the three drops,
 Perfect peaceful
 And other actions
 Will be accomplished
 By supreme yoga,
 The characteristic
 Of the wisdom
 Of emptiness. //16//

It is said to be
 The "wisdom hero,
 The vajra hero
 And the commitment hero."

¹⁹⁸⁰ *I.e.* individual lambs roped together in a line Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

You should know [this]
 From the guru lineage
 By the analysis
 Of the counting of places. //17//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-first chapter on analyzing the three drops.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Explaining the Essence of the Three Bodies

Listen, furthermore,
 To reality,¹⁹⁸¹
 The supreme state
 Of the three thatnesses,
 The essence
 Of vajra body, speech
 And mind
 In the nature
 Of the commitment. //1//

I will also explain
 The three syllables,
 The essence of
 Body, speech and mind.
 I'll reveal it; you listen!
 I'll explain it exactly. //2//

OM has been explained
 As the essence
 Of vajra body:
 "The letter A,
 The letter U
 And the letter M." //3//

ĀH is in the lotus
 Of the heart chakra,
 Pervading up to

¹⁹⁸¹ "Reality," in this connection, refers to the opening of three drops in each letter Alamka 144B

The chakra of wind.
 The great unobstructed wind
 Is called Life-energy,
 Gathering all.
 Partless and free from parts,
 Thing and no-thing,
 Pervading up to
 The part of the chakra
 Which is the drop. //4//

Supreme syllable
 Of the element of space,
 Place of the meaning
 Of all mantras,
 Awakening all mantras.
 Benefitting all mantras,
 It awakens the chakra
 Of speech. //5//

It is actually the basis
 Of the three times.
 Governing all elements,
 The state of not decreasing
 And not increasing.
 Seed of enlightenment,
 Great bliss,
 Perfectly explained as
 The formless realm,¹⁹⁸²
 Epitomizing the meaning
 Of the four chakras. //6//

U abides in
 The Enjoyment Chakra.
 Like fire and sun,
 Pervading from the end
 Of the throat
 To the end
 Of the crown, //7//

The body of radiance,
 Is known as
 The "form realm."
 Having the nature

¹⁹⁸² Robert Thurman asserts that Buddha taught the four dissolutions by his teaching of the four formless realms. Personal Communication 1-27-07

Of seventeen abodes. //8//

Explained as in the
 "Chakra of Great Bliss,"
 The syllable M
 Is just a drop,
 Situated in the
 Crown of ecstasy,
 Starting at a point
 Four fingers from the end,
 Like the form of a moon.¹⁹⁸³ //9//

The peaceful state
 Of great bliss,
 Pervader of all channels,
 State of the indestructible body,
 It is explained as
 The "desire realm."
 If you collect them together,
 There are twenty abodes. //10//

Thus, the wind-energies
 Are collected in the places
 Of the three channels
 Of the three places.
 When you know
 The symbol OM,
 You awaken
 The three realms.
 Vairocana is
 The material form
 Of beings,
 Having the nature
 Of a proliferation
 Of forms. //11//

The two winds
 Of conceptuality
 Emerge from the nostrils.
 Causing the duo
 Of sun and moon,
 Hidden within,

¹⁹⁸³ “The measure of its height is twelve fingers, traversing the end by the measure of four fingers’ [means that] its height from the speech [wheel] is twelve fingers ‘Traverse’ [means] goes beyond ‘Located above’ means located based on the measure of twelve fingers” Alamka 146A

To move.
 Fire blazes
 At the peak;
 Between the brows
 Is the life energy
 Energy-wind.
 Thus the one
 Is explained as three. //12//

Determining
 The three thatnesses,
 Peaceful,
 Pervading
 The three realms,
 Expanding the generative
 Seed [syllables].
 The letter A¹⁹⁸⁴ is
 Supreme wisdom,
 The supreme essence.
 Of the vajra
 Of speech. //13//

The two A's
 And the letter HAM
 Become long,
 Divided into three,
 Collecting the meaning
 Of the reality realm. //14//

The letter A¹⁹⁸⁵
 Was explained previously.
 The second one also
 Is Life-energy energy-wind.
 Having the name
 Emptiness wisdom,
 Classified as two,
 Life-energy and effort,

¹⁹⁸⁴ The Fourteenth Dalai Lama writes

The letter A is a negative particle in Sanskrit. It indicates emptiness, which is the absence, or negation, of inherent existence. When the *Magical Array Tantra* says that “The perfect Buddhas arise from A,” this means that the Buddhas dawn from within the noumenal sphere of emptiness, or, put another way, the Buddhas dawn from meditating on the emptiness of inherent existence.

Also, from the viewpoint of Highest Yoga Tantra, the letter A refers to the indestructible drop within which a Buddha body is achieved.

T. Gyatso 2002, 174

¹⁹⁸⁵ Following Alamka here

Bringing together [sense] objects
And [sense] powers. //15//

The [mind]-basis-of-all
And the addicted mentality
Are the essence
Of subject and object.
Becoming as one nature,
It is the excellence
Expressing the vajra of speech. //16//

ĀH from the lotus
Of the Reality Chakra
Becomes the letter ĀH
At the throat,
Completely [made by]
The Life energy [Energy wind],
The Evacuative [Energy wind]
And the letter H.¹⁹⁸⁶ //17//

Remaining in the middle
Of the throat,
Completely bound,
You clearly express
ĀHAM from the mouth.
The white crane
Of the taste descending¹⁹⁸⁷
Is called a “sour” taste.
Being summoned,
It always pervades,
Burning the form realm. //18//

H and, similarly,
The letter U,
They and the letter M
[Make] three,
From the foot
To the top of the head,
Epitomizing the meaning
Of the four chakras.
HA is the wind
With the name of Evacuative.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Following Alamka’s topical break here, 148A, which puts the two wind-energies and the letter H in this verse, and “bound” in the following paragraph

¹⁹⁸⁷ Or, per Lozang Jampal, of the *rasanā* Personal Communication

It abides in the middle
Of the anus [and]
The secret [place]. //19//

The letter Ū¹⁹⁸⁸
Is the pervading wind.
It abides in the middle
Of the lotus
Of the throat.
The letter M
Is the Life-energy energy-wind,
In the Wind Chakra
[In] the forehead. //20//

From the heart,
They become one,
Expressed as the heart seed.
The essence [mantra]
Of Akṣobhya,
Black in color,
Having the name
Of the Formless Realm.
The essence [mantra]
Of vajra body, speech
And mind
Is explained
As three. //21//

Vajrapāṇi put [his] palms
Together,
And again asked
The Omniscient One:

“This being so, I ask
If you would bestow well
The meaning
Of the mantra
Of the three vajras
And the analysis of the places.
In the center of these,
Who is the lord?
Tell me exactly
Which is the main one!" //22//

¹⁹⁸⁸ Steering a middle course between the Lhasa *VR* and *Alamka*

"The main one
Is great Vajradhara,"

The Lord said again.

"Your question is
Of the hidden meaning
Stated as
The supreme secret,
Not mentioned
In all the Tantras.
I'll explain,
And you better
Listen! //23//

The seed [syllable] of mind
Is the Lord,
The non-conceptual [one]
Within everything.
Because of that,
The main one
Obscures and, similarly,
Appropriates the others¹⁹⁸⁹
And causes
The two winds
Of conceptuality,
To pervade
In the whole body. //24//

It causes [them] to emerge
In the body,
Moving from the nostrils.
It pervades
By the force
Of the path
Of the six chakras
Of migrations. //25//

As a result
Of stopping
All the winds,
The yogi realizes

¹⁹⁸⁹ *I.e.* OM and A, the seed syllables of body and mind Alamka 149B

The third one,
 The great non-conceptual
 Miracle.
 [That] person has realized
 Reality. //26//

I will explain
 The stopping
 Of all the winds
 As the perfect method.
 This tantra explains
 That the centers
 Of the Emanation
 And Reality Chakras
 Are as two lotuses. //27//

The two have sixty-four
 And eight petals.
 Facing upwards
 And downwards,
 They furthermore abide
 In the mode of kissing,
 Causing the Life-energy
 And Evacuative [energy-winds]
 To move. //28//

Those very ones
 Are conceptual,
 Stated clearly
 As the two energy-winds.
 The two essences
 Of body and speech
 Are the *lalanā*
 And *rasanā*. //29//

The place of
 The supreme *avadhūti*
 Is between those two,
 Supreme of supreme,
 The non-conceptual
 Wind of wind-energies,
 It goes everywhere
 And pervades everything.
 Whoever always achieves
 Non-conceptuality
 Effects all actions

And becomes an expert. //30//

As for the specific
Nature of energy wind,
Whoever overcomes
The one-hundred eight
Energy-winds
Has the lineage to increase
At all times.
A childish yogi¹⁹⁹⁰
Does not know [this]. //31//

In this Tantra it is stated
That such a one achieves
Complete enlightenment
In a single moment.
As for that,
When he achieves
The moment,
That moment is called
Supreme. //32//

Furthermore, I will discuss
The method of how that is
To be achieved.
First, the great yogi
Meditates calm abiding
With a good mind. //33//

By practicing
The creation stage,
Having produced the seal
Of the Terrifics,
In the nine
Sense orifices,¹⁹⁹¹
Conventional
In every way. //34//

Repeating HŪM
Is incomparable.
After repeating
For one month,

¹⁹⁹⁰ Practicing the generation, but not the perfection stage Alamka 151A

¹⁹⁹¹ Referring to the placement of the wrathful deities in the Guhyasamāja body mandala during creation stage practice

In an unbroken
 Supreme continuum,
 He will attain
 In one instant. //35//

Because of which,
 If you repeat it,
 Looking to
 The heart lotus
 Or upwards,
 You proceed.
 Then, by the kiss from
 The secret lotus,
 Having separated from them,¹⁹⁹²
 The two conceptual winds,
 You proceed. //36//

The great non-conceptual
 Energy-wind,
 Cutting off the vajras
 Of body and speech,
 Non-conceptual bliss,
 Will be attained
 Through the reality
 Of mantra. //37//

Abiding in the stream
 Of the *avadhuti*,
 It opens the energy-wind
 Between the eyebrows.
 The ecstasy
 That attains that
 Arises continually
 And inexhaustibly.
 Free from attachment
 And so forth,
 It is self-awaring
 Great bliss. //38//

Here I will explain
 The signs of the yogi
 Who has achieved mantra.
 Here you have

¹⁹⁹² Following Alamka, *bcad*, “cut ” 152A

Rajas and body hair
 Standing on end,¹⁹⁹³
 Always with
 A joyful mind,
 And a pleasant,
 Copper-colored face,
 Seen by all
 As ecstatic. //39//

Duplicating and omitting
 In counting
 And worldly reality
 And similar states
 Will not be harmful
 To the reality
 Of mantra yoga.¹⁹⁹⁴ //40//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-second chapter on explaining the essence of the three bodies.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Determining the Commitment of the Three Thatnesses

Now, moreover, listen
 To what I'll say.
 I will teach the word
 Of the three realities,
 Divided¹⁹⁹⁵ into
 Self, mantra
 And so forth,

¹⁹⁹³ Alamka has '*dar*, "trembling," rather than '*dir*, "here," and '*rngul*, "sweating," rather than '*rdul*, which, in addition to "particle" or "dust," can also translate Skt *rajas*, one of the three qualities, specifically "energy," which could encompass trembling and shaking Alamka 152B

¹⁹⁹⁴ Alamka's version is very different, but nearly all of the differences can be accounted for by copying errors either way

Cool and very hot,
 And, similarly,
 Other worldly things
 In him will not be harmful
 To the reality of mantra

152B

¹⁹⁹⁵ Going with Alamka's *dbye bas*, "dividing," instead of the Lhasa Vajra Rosary's *byed pa*, "doing "

[In] exact stages. //1//

The supreme yoga
Of one's own reality
Is the cause
Of Vajrasattva,
The self nature
Of all Buddhas,
The sole body
Of all Buddhas. //2//

The indistinct state
Of omniscience
Is made clear
Through the divisions
Of the clans.
Whichever form
Of the five clans
Has the characteristics
Of the five aggregates. //3//

By analyzing as
Subtle, coarse
And so forth,
And with the characteristics
Of obstructive
Or non-obstructive,
The substance
Of the four great elements
Is stated as
The material aggregate.
In that is the actuality
Of Vairocana
And the cause
Of taking delight¹⁹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁹⁶ Per Lozang Jamspal, *spro bar byed in thams cad spro bar byed pa'i rgyu*, “the cause of taking delight in all of them,” is probably Skt *rati*, “to delight in,” “to find pleasure in,” with a heavy connotation of sexual pleasure or desire. Personal Communication 4-17-07. However, there is multivalence in the term, used throughout, which can mean either *prapañca* or *rati*, “emanate” or “radiate” on the one hand, or “pleasure” or “take delight in” on the other. The terms are related, with *rati*, the sexual urge, being a form of *prapañca*, proliferating, elaborating, emanating or radiating out. Actually, in Tantra, these two are not so distinct, so the multivalent/ambivalent (but not ambiguous) term is well-employed here. It would be helpful to see if texts on the same subject use *prapañca* or *rati* in this context. In the verses on the elemental goddesses below in this chapter, it is clear that the mantras discussed are “emanation” mantras, corresponding to the two recitation of the same in the Guhyasamāja sadhana. Nevertheless, I am using the terms “delighting in” and “ecstasy for” as illustrative of the deeper meaning here, as a guide to the meditator’s state of mind during the “emanation” phases of the sadhana, the Supreme Mandala Triumph

In all of them. //4//

Knowing
Pleasure and pain
As supreme peace,
Cold and hot,
As the supreme
Of supreme,
Is explained as
The sensation aggregate,
The character
Of Ratnasambhava,
The nature
Of the pleasure
Of the Tathāgata. //5//

Knowing elephant,
Donkey, jackal, horse,
Deer, pig,
Paternal and maternal relations,
Friend, kinsmen,¹⁹⁹⁷
And so forth. //6//

Is the characteristic
Of the discrimination aggregate,
The Tathāgata Amitābha,
Completely illuminating
All elaborations,¹⁹⁹⁸
Knowing the distinctions
Of beings. //7//

The fruit of virtuous
And non-virtuous actions,
[Or], moreover,
Denominated¹⁹⁹⁹ as neutral,
Is explained as

and the Evolutionary Triumph Of course, it is also significant that *ratī* is found in the very mantras for the elemental goddesses *Moharati* (“Delusion Delight”) and so forth These and other mantras (without *ratī* except in the case of the four elemental goddesses) are what are emanated from the meditator’s heart during the *sadhana*

¹⁹⁹⁷ Reading *snag* instead of *snang* per J When someone dies, they come to take care of the family, the funeral, etc Personal Communication with L Jamspal

¹⁹⁹⁸ Or, per Lozang Jamspal, translating *spros pa* in *spros pa kun nas gsal* as Skt *samrati*, “completely manifesting the pleasure of that,” putting this in parallel with the verses concerning the other four Tathāgatas, as the type of ecstasy experienced Personal Communication

¹⁹⁹⁹ Following Alamka’s *ming*, “name,” instead of *min*, “not ”

The creation [aggregate],
 Having the nature
 Of delighting in Amoghasiddi. //8//

Cyclic existence,
 Thing and no-thing
 And so forth
 Have the nature
 Of arising
 As concepts.
 Consciousness is
 From consciousness,
 Having the nature
 Of delighting in Akṣobhya.
 If you know the aggregates
 In that way,
 Wisdom of the teachings
 And the lineage
 Is born. //9//

You know in stages
 The appropriate mantras
 Of JINAJIK, RATNADRIK,
 AROLIK, PRAJNADRIK
 And VAJRADRIK.²⁰⁰⁰ //10//

The four of Locanā
 And so forth
 Are considered as
 The three realms.
 Differentiated as
 The four of hardness
 And so forth,
 Delusion is expressed
 As ecstasy,
 Well known
 As Locanā.²⁰⁰¹ //11//

Peaceful,
 Urine, tears, semen
 And so forth,
 Rely on

²⁰⁰⁰ See *Secret Community Further Tantra*, vv 41-45

²⁰⁰¹ I.e. the eye of ignorance, Buddha's eye

The special substance
Known as
The water element,
With the nature
Of Māmakī. //12//

Heat, digesting
Food and drink,
And spreading radiance,
Should all be known
As the fire element,
Having the nature
Of delighting in
Paṇḍaravāsīnī. //13//

Increasing exhalation
And inhalation,²⁰⁰²
Supreme host
Of wind-energies,
Extending and retracting,
Those that function
Above and below,
This is known
As the wind element,
With the nature
Of delighting in
Tārā. //14//

In that way,
You know
The four elements
As supreme yoga,
MOHARATI, DVEṢARATI,
RĀGARATI, [and] VAJRARATI
Those respective mantras,
Directly perceived
Through the ritual. //15//

Through supreme yoga
You know
The mass of objects,
Matter and so forth,
As the character

²⁰⁰² Reading *rngub* for *rdub*

Of the matter
 Of the goddess,
 With only emptiness
 As the sole cause. //16//

The goddess
 Of analyzing
 As blue, yellow
 And so forth,
 By the form
 Of long and short,
 Is Rūpavajrā,
 With the nature
 Of outer objects. //17//

You should know
 The sounds of
 Kettle drum, cymbal,
 Finger cymbals,
 Big cymbals,
 Similarly, ear drum
 And lute,
 Praise and blame,
 As Śabdavajrā,
 Is the supreme nature
 To be grasped,
 Awakening awareness. //18//

You should know
 Bad scents,
 Good scents,
 Combined scents
 And others
 As Gandhavajrā,
 The bright red
 Grasping consciousness. //19//

You know
 Being divided
 Into having
 Six excellent tastes
 Such as salty, bitter
 And so forth
 As Rasavajrā,²⁰⁰³

²⁰⁰³ Following Alamka here to get “Rasavajrā” rather than “Vajrarasa ”

The form
That is grasped
Completely. //20//

By the division
Of smooth and rough,
You know that very thing
As touch,
The form
That is grasped
For the main one.²⁰⁰⁴ //21//

Depending on
The sense power
Of the eye
And so forth,
The eight collections
Of consciousness
Are known respectively
As the eight bodhisattvas. //22//

The two eyes
Are said to be
Kṣitigarbha,
The wonderful
Bodhisattva,
Delighting
In his own nature
In all kinds
Of forms
And so forth.²⁰⁰⁵ //23//

All forms
Of sound,
In whatever fitting
Individual aspect,
The sound consciousness,
Are explained
As Vajrapāṇi. //24//

Enjoying particular scents,
Knowing each one

²⁰⁰⁴ The main one is in the form of Guhyasamāja is Aksobhya, whose partner in the mandala is
Sparsāvajrā This verse is missing from the Lhasa Vajra Rosary The text is excerpted from Alamka 157B

²⁰⁰⁵ This verse is missing from the Lhasa Vajra Rosary The text is excerpted from Alamka 158A

Individually,
 You know the characteristic
 Of olfactory consciousness as
 As Ākāśagarbha. //25//

Enjoying particular tastes,
 Differentiating each one
 Respectively,
 You know the character
 Of gustatory consciousness as
 As Lokeśvara. //26//

Enjoying particular touches,
 Each particular one
 Respectively,
 You know the character
 Of tactile consciousness
 As Sarvaṇivaraṇaviṣkambhīni. //27//

Enjoying particular
 Mental experiences,
 Differentiating each one
 Respectively,
 Is called
 "Mental consciousness,"
 With the name
 Of "Mañjuśrī." //28//

Perfectly uniting
 All the sinews,
 Differentiating each one
 Respectively,
 Having the nature
 Of the sphere
 Of the instincts,
 You know
 As Meitreyā. //29//

Having the character
 Of the individual channels,
 The supreme basis
 Of all bliss,
 With the nature
 Of all things.
 This is explained
 As Samantabhadra. //30//

Thus, the supreme
 Eight groups
 Of consciousness
 Are unexcelled
 Perfect reality.
 The consciousnesses
 Of the visual
 And so forth
 Sense faculties
 Have the nature
 Of seeing form
 And so forth. //31//

Shins, shoulders,
 Backs of hands,
 And the two doors,
 The characteristics
 Of the ten wisdoms
 Of all of them
 Are well known
 As the pervaders: //32//

Yamāntakṛt, Prajñāntakṛt,
 Padmāntakṛt, Vighnāntakṛt,
 Ḍakarāja, Acala, Nilanḍaṇḍa
 Mahābala, Sumbha[rāja],
 And Uṣṇiṣacakravartin. //33//

In that way,
 By differentiating
 The places of these,
 Completely illuminated
 By the three wisdoms,
 Having become
 As one essence,
 The support
 Of perfect thatness,
 You will know reality
 According to ritual
 From the speech
 Of the guru. //34//

The reality of mantra
 Is supreme yoga,
 Increasing well

The great wisdom.
 Birthless, inexhaustible,
 Indistinct, unchanging,
 Unobscured, non-dual,
 Fearless and peaceful,
 It is the supreme state
 Of great bliss. //35//

By differentiating
 Snake and compressed,
 End-less and headless,
 OM and HŪM PHAT SVĀHĀ
 Is expressed as "snake,"²⁰⁰⁶
 With the form
 Of the good qualities
 Of [the deity's] own name. //36//

With a name characterized
 By compression.
 OM and so forth
 Do not have feet,
 Having the name
 Of "end-less."
 Having the ending
 SVĀ HĀ
 But lacking OM
 Is explained
 As "headless."
 Everything but OM
 Is explained
 As "headless." //37//

Thus knowing the character
 Of the unexcelled reality
 Of mantra,
 Following the *Root Tantra*,
 You should know
 The vast meaning of this. //38//

The reality of wisdom
 Is supreme yoga,
 Abandoning all duality.
 Equalizing all things.

²⁰⁰⁶ See Wedemeyer 1999, 265

All things are
 As a body
 Of singularity,
 Abandoning
 All the conceptualities
 Of speech.²⁰⁰⁷ //39//

It abandons
 All the luminances.²⁰⁰⁸
 Having the nature
 Of self-consecration,
 It pervades everything,
 Miraculous,
 The supreme
 Self-aware
 Yoga. //40//

[With] the character
 Of the four moments,
 Partless, Ubiquitous,
 And pervading,
 Not known by
 Childish yogis
 And not known
 Conventionally.
 Your own ultimate nature! //41//

The divisions
 Of the perfection stage
 And the reality
 Of mantra
 Are very clear.
 You meditate
 The syllable OM²⁰⁰⁹
 As perfectly dissolving
 Into the drop

²⁰⁰⁷ Per Lozang Jamspal, there is more joy from the whole body, that is why Śiva is depicted as half man and half woman. Personal Communication

²⁰⁰⁸ Alamka has “It is the very nature of all the luminances,” 162B, instead of the Vajra Rosary’s “It abandons all the luminances.” Alamka explains “The very nature of all the luminances” [means] having the form of clear light mind through the stage of the three wisdoms of luminance and so forth.” In either event, the subject is clear light mind, which both leaves behind *snang ba*, *ched pa* and *nyer thob*, “luminance,” “radiance” and “immanence,” and pervades them

²⁰⁰⁹ The Lhasa Vajra Rosary has A, while Alamka has OM 163A. Alamka explains these dissolutions in terms of the three vajras of body, speech and mind, starting with OM for body. This makes sense. In addition, there is no drop in the letter A, but there is in the syllable OM. So I am using OM

At the end
Of that very one. //42//

The drop also
Dissolves into A;
A into the mere H
At the end.²⁰¹⁰
H also
Into the syllable HŪM.
The syllable Ū into HAM.
The syllable HAM
Also [dissolves].²⁰¹¹ //43//

The letter M²⁰¹² is merely
A drop.
The drop also dissolves
Into sound;
The sound into
Mere sound;
Mere sound into
Supreme sky. //44//

That also dissolves
Into clear light,
The fourth manifestation²⁰¹³
Of the state
Of clear light,
The extremely pure
Sphere of reality.
Supreme non-dual wisdom
Awakens and dawns. //45//

Free from the activities
Of speech,
It abandons

²⁰¹⁰ I.e. into the *visarga*, the two dots at the end of HAH Alamka 163A

²⁰¹¹ The Lhasa Vajra Rosary has *yi ge ham yang OM la thum*, “the syllable HAM dissolves into OM,” while Alamka has merely *yi ge ha yang*, “The syllable HA also ” The Vajra Rosary’s reappearance of OM does not make sense here, so I have translated the verse in accordance without the Lhasa Vajra Rosary’s *OM la thum*, “dissolves into OM,” although, as shown, “dissolves” is certainly implied here

²⁰¹² Alamka has “the letter M,” 163A, as contrasted with the Lhasa Vajra Rosary’s “the letter A ” I think Alamka is correct here, since the subject of the verse is the dissolving of H-Ū-M, and it is the sound M, represented by the dot at the top of the syllable, that appears as “merely a drop,” rather than A, which does not

²⁰¹³ Alamka has ‘*od gsal go ’phang gsal por ni*, “into the clear state of clear light” or “clearly the state of clear light” instead of ‘*od gsal go ’phang bzhi*, “the fourth state of clear light ” 163B

All duality.
 The sole basis
 Of the five aggregates,
 Perfectly using
 The five elements. //46//

The group
 Of eight consciousnesses
 Isolated,
 The six outer sense objects
 Gathered,
 The ten wisdoms
 Collected
 By the ten wind-energies,
 Thus all the characteristics
 Are gathered. //47//

Whoever lives
 Through the yoga
 Of delighting
 In everything
 Gets all the attainments
 Of the three worlds
 He is glorious,
 Increasing all fortune
 And goodness.
 That vajrin
 Is Vajrasattva, //48//

Lord Vajrabhairava,
 Heruka, Kalachakra,
 The great sage
 Primordial Buddha,
 Samantabhadra,
 And Mañjuśrī, //49//

With the nature
 Of delighting
 In every kind of thing,
 Are the basis of a host
 Of good qualities
 Of various kinds.
 The yoga of delighting
 In everything
 Is the stainless Mahāyoga. //50//

That luminous wisdom,
 Non-conceptual
 And non-local,
 Is explained as
 “Going to the sphere
 Of reality.”
 The characteristics
 Of the stages
 Of creation
 And perfection //51//

Are like eight thousand
 Hair tips,
 Extremely clear
 And luminous.
 Through analyzing
 Scripture and lineage,
 You should know [them]
 From the lineage guru. //52//

Thus is the commitment
 Of the three realities,
 Born from the stage
 Of the oral lineage,
 The supreme
 Secret wisdom,
 The supreme moment
 With the character
 Of the fourth [ecstasy]. //53//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-third chapter on determining the commitment of the three thatnesses.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Determining the Three Nose Tips

Then listen and
 I will perfectly explain.
 The three names
 Of the noses
 Appearing in the Tantra

Are secret, heart [and] face.
 The process of
 The yogi's meditation
 Is by the differentiation
 Of the three chakras. //1//

Bestowing mental bliss
 On those overcome
 By intense lust,
 It awakens
 The channel chakras
 By the application
 Of the reality
 Of energy wind. //2//

Great bliss is produced
 Everywhere.
 The three realms
 Become as one taste.
 According to ritual,
 You should summon
 And control
 The great bliss
 Of enlightenment spirit. //3//

For the characteristic
 Of the moment
 Of innate [ecstasy],
 You should hold [it],
 At the tip
 Of the vajra.
 That very thing
 Is great bliss,
 With the character
 Of the five wisdoms,
 Completely abandoning
 All conceptuality. //4//

At the tip
 Of the secret nose
 Is the Substance Drop.
 Only one with
 A greatly lustful mind
 Will know [this]
 As the supreme yoga. //5//

What arises
 With the nature
 Of a channel chakra
 With sixty-four petals
 Is explained
 As the navel nose.²⁰¹⁴
 [Called] secret,
 It bestows all bliss. //6//

The eight lotus petals
 Of the heart
 Are, moreover, expressed
 As the central nose.
 Meditating on the mind
 Of hatred
 Is the cause
 Of perfectly emanating
 The wisdom mind
 That blazes
 Secret mantra,
 Abandoning all
 The conceptualities
 Of speech. //7//

Wonderful, great,
 Supreme wisdom
 Always arises as the sound
 Of mantra.
 Non-conceptual great bliss
 Applied in concentration
 Is the supreme bliss.
 With the attainment
 Of personal instructions,
 You happily²⁰¹⁵ triumph,
 Because of swiftly
 Controlling anger,
 [Which is] the single cause
 Of the reality
 Of peace. //8//

The trio of
 Moon, sun and fire
 Spread out from the center

²⁰¹⁴ Reading *de yi* as *de ni*, which is a fairly common alteration in the text

²⁰¹⁵ Following Alamka's *bde bar* here 166B

Of the three paths.
 [This is] explained
 As the "face nose." //9//

The characteristics
 Of the place
 Of the energy winds
 And the great wisdom,
 The drop, located there
 Are suppressed
 By the delusion.²⁰¹⁶
 Concentration is victorious
 Over supreme delusion,
 Abandoning all [reified] things. //10//

Manifesting the nature
 Of the five wisdoms,
 The five thatnesses
 Are the supreme support.
 The mere drop
 Of clear light of them
 Is perfectly supported
 At the face nose tip.
 You should meditate
 Supreme yoga,²⁰¹⁷
 Overcoming the ocean
 Of delusion. //11//

That one is
 Perfectly explained
 As having the name
 Of the Commitment Hero.
 The commitment
 Of all Buddhas
 Has the character
 Of the five wisdoms. //12//

Those skilled in yoga
 Overcome the darkness
 Of delusion.
 The characteristic
 Of omniscient

²⁰¹⁶ Following Alamka here 167A The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* would be translated “suppressed by the pearl [mu tṡg]” Alamka has *u mug*, “delusion”

²⁰¹⁷ Per Alamka, “supreme yoga” refers to vajra repetition 167B

Conceptual consciousness
 Abides²⁰¹⁸ as the lineage
 Of the five Buddhas.²⁰¹⁹ //13//

Arising from the nostrils
 Of the nose tip,
 The five energy winds ascend,
 Always becoming active
 In the body.
 They arise from
 That door of movement
 At the conventional
 Nose tip. //14//

There are four types
 Of movement:
 Left, right,
 Both and slowly.
 The element arising
 From the right
 Is the fire mandala.
 This good red color
 Is the movement
 Of the Lotus Lord.²⁰²⁰ //15//

The element that arises
 From the left
 Mixes with the mandala
 Of wind,
 Appearing as pure
 Green-yellow,
 The movement
 Of the Action Lord.²⁰²¹ //16//

The element arising
 From both,
 Appearing as pure yellow,

²⁰¹⁸ Alamka has *gnas pa* 168A

²⁰¹⁹ In his *Sngags rim chen mo*, starting at *dpe cha* 470, TBRC, *Gsungs 'bum vol ga*, Tsong kha pa comments on the last line of verse 13 through the end of verse 19

²⁰²⁰ Verses 15 (starting with “The element arising from the right”)-19 are quoted in Sanskrit in the *PK* See Wayman 1977, 72

²⁰²¹ The last line of verse 16, *las kyi mgon po'i rgyu ba'o*, “the movement of the Action Lord,” and the first two lines of verse 17, *gnyis ka las ni 'byung ba'i kham/ gser gyi mdog tu snang ba ste*, “the element arising from both, appearing as pure yellow,” do not appear in the Lhasa Vajra Rosary, but appear in Alamka 168A

Is the mandala
Of great power,²⁰²²
The movement
Of the Great Jewel Lord. //17//

The element
That is slow
And not moving,
Appearing as pure crystal,
This is the water mandala,
Moving as
The Vajra Lord. //18//

Arising perfectly from
The three elements,²⁰²³
What is apprehended
As habitat and inhabitants,
The nature
Of Vairocana,
Arises at the end
Of death. //19//

Always repeat
Those four mandalas
In even contemplation.
Counting the repetitions
Of mantra,
You constantly repeat
Day and night. //20//

Thus, meditate
The energy wind
At the tip of the nose
As having five colors.
By the yoga
Of supreme nonduality,
The mass of light rays
Is stainless.
By this you will accomplish
The activities of pacification
And so forth

²⁰²² Based on the literature, one would expect Ratnasambhava to be the water mandala, rather than the mandala of “great power ” Also, Aksobhya appearing as the water mandala is novel (at least for me), one would expect him to be the space element

²⁰²³ Alamka has “all the elements ” 168B

By practicing in stages.
 You will become
 Vajrasattva. //21//

Then Vajrapāṇi
 Asked Vajrasattva,
 The protector of beings:

Regarding the system
 Of the three drops,
 Prostrating to your feet,
 I have a little doubt about this.
 O Terminator of Samsara,
 Please clarify! //22//

When meditating
 On the three drops,
 Substance, mantric
 And, similarly, wind,
 Does the yogi meditate
 [On them] together
 Or individually? //23//

O Lord,
 Please cut off
 All doubt about this!"

Lord Vajrasattva spoke:

To benefit those beings,
 Who, controlled
 By desire
 Are weary²⁰²⁴
 Of the three worlds,
 The substance drop
 Is stated. //24//

In order quickly
 To liberate
 Those people
 With wild bodies,
 Controlled by anger,
 The mantric drop

²⁰²⁴ Following Alamka's *gang zhig skyo ba*, "those who are weary," 170A, instead of the Lhasa Vajra Rosary's *skyob pa rnams*, "protectors "

Is stated. //25//

For those completely
 Confounded
 By great delusion,
 Weary²⁰²⁵ from the ocean
 Of cyclic existence,
 In order for them
 To attain the result
 Of the eight attainments,
 An ocean of wisdom,
 He states
 The wind drop,
 The elaboration
 Of perfect reality. //26//

Thus, you should think about
 And practice
 The perfect three drops
 Exactly like this
 For the sake achievement
 In this very life,
 To purify all obscurations. //27//

With a single-pointed mind,
 In a pleasant place
 Adorned by flowers
 And water,
 On a mountain top,
 Apart from people,
 You should accomplish
 The three wisdoms
 With effort,
 Gathering all attainments. //28//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-fourth chapter on determining the three nose tips.

²⁰²⁵ Following Alamka as just above 170A

Chapter Twenty-Five

Explaining the Words of Emptiness

Then listen
 To the perfect explanation.
 The characteristic
 Of emptiness-wisdom,
 The supreme reality
 Abiding in the body,
 Always remains
 As the nature of everything. //1//

The characteristic
 Illuminating all things
 Is asserted
 As emptiness.
 Because of that,
 There is great bliss wisdom
 The utter purity
 Of clear light. //2//

Because of that, it enters
 The central channel,
 Asserted as perfect emptiness.
 Expanding the appearance
 Of the conceptuality
 Of things,
 It causes the severing
 Of all conceptuality.
 The easing of the conceptual winds is explained
 As emptiness. //3//

The worldly realm
 Of the great chief,
 Akṣobhya,
 Is that very thing,
 The ground that always
 Remains there,
 With the name
 Of life energy wisdom,
 The great formless
 Fierce One,

With the characteristic
Of a peaceful nature.²⁰²⁶ //4//

For him,
Wisdom is great bliss,
Filled with enlightenment spirit,²⁰²⁷
Abiding in the state
Of great bliss reality,
Perfect wisdom
As enlightenment spirit. //5//

By the sound
Of that and similar names,
Only great bliss
Is expressed.
If has but one entity,
Expressed as
Emptiness-wisdom. //6//

It is explained
As "Sukhāvati,"
The very sign of attaining
Virtuous bliss.
Abiding happily that way
Is called "Sukhāvati." //7//

In the Buddha-field
Of Amitayus,
The supreme basis
Of all bliss,
Enlightenment spirit,
Is Amitayus.
The light which is born
Arising from him
Is known as Amitābha,
The supreme basis
Of all bliss. //8//

Emptiness is
Vajradhātviśvarī,²⁰²⁸
Wisdom is
Vajraiśvara.²⁰²⁹

²⁰²⁶ Following Alamka here, without the *yi*.

²⁰²⁷ Following Alamka here, *byang chub sems kyi gang ba nyid* 172A

²⁰²⁸ As explained by Alamka 173A

The equal union of them
Is expressed as
“Emptiness-wisdom.” //9//

The wisdom lotus
Is the Lalanā,
Having the flow
Of the female fluid
To the sun.
Further, you know it
As emptiness,
Abandoning all duality. //10//

The vajra of means
Is the Rasanā,
The semen flowing
To the moon.
That is stated
As supreme wisdom.
The supreme state
Of great bliss
Is known
As the supreme joining
Of those two,
Inexhaustible
Emptiness wisdom. //11//

The full moon
Is reality,
Known from the speech
Of the yoginī. //12//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-fifth chapter determining the word of emptiness.

Chapter Twenty-Six

The Characteristics of the Divine Wisdom Body

Then listen moreover
To what I will explain.
The body is the place
Of emptiness.
One who knows the body
As the palace of all the deities
Is supreme. //1//

Enjoyment, Reality
And Emanation,
The basis of great bliss,
Are also explained
As chakras.
In this way,
All the respective stages
Always perfectly abide.²⁰³⁰ //2//

The lord of dissolving
And enjoying
Is supremely non-dual
With the deity,
The support of the state
Of perfect nature.²⁰³¹ //3//

Because of the state
Of great wisdom,
The perfect support
Of great bliss,
Through the states
Of great anger, great ignorance,
Great envy and passion,
Great wrath and supreme form,
You definitively cut

²⁰³⁰ Alternate readings indicated for this and the next verse are from Alamka's introduction in his Chapter 1 25A In the body of the Commentary, the first line of this verse reads *longs spyod ces bya ba la sogs pa*, "Enjoyment and so forth" 174B

²⁰³¹ For this line in the body of the Commentary, Alamka has *des yang dag che dngos po'i go 'phang*, "By that perfect greatness, the state of entity," which Alamka says is connected with *rtan dang brten pa'i rnam rtog*, "the conception of environment and inhabitants" 174B

The knot of cyclic existence. //4//

By the differentiation
Of earth, water
And, similarly, fire,
Wind and space,
And by the differentiation
Of the powers
Of form, sound
And, similarly,
Scent, taste and touch, //5//

The sphere of reality,
And the good eye,
Ear, nose and tongue,
Body consciousness
And object of mind,
The storehouse consciousness,
The addicted mind,²⁰³² //6//

Faith, effort, recollection,
Concentration and wisdom,
The power of faith,
The power of effort,
The power of recollection,
The power of meditation
And the unexcelled power
Of wisdom, //7//

Perfectly knowing [them]
In [their] respective places,
They are manifested
As the deities
Of the body. //8//

By differentiating the names
As before,
By the process²⁰³³
Of differentiating mantra,
By the yoga
Of placing²⁰³⁴ the mantras,

²⁰³² Skt *klīṣṭomaṇovijñāna*.

²⁰³³ *Commentary* has *rim pa yis*

²⁰³⁴ Should be *gtod*?

By the dividing
Of the respective places, //9//

Dividing the perfect places
And goddesses
As definitively done
In scripture,
The yogi always abides
In the state
Of self-consecration.
He enjoys the
Five sense objects
And offers them
With enthusiasm. //10//

You should not bow down
To outer gods
Whose nature is rock
And earth.
Other than that very process
Of self-consecration,
There is no supreme
Thatness yoga
In the three worlds.
Unobscured self-consecration
And so forth
Is the stage of mantra
And mudra. //11//

You should not count
Outer objects.
The yogi achieving thatness,
Desiring a blessing,
[Making] supreme effort
Towards the yoginīs
Is characteristic
Of the art
Of [self-] consecration. //12//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-sixth chapter on the characteristics of the deity wisdom body.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Analyzing the Stages of the Four Goddesses of the Four Chakras

Then further
I will explain
The names of those goddesses
By dividing the four chakras,
By counting the types
Of channels, //1//

By dividing the families
Into Action and Vajra,
Lotus and Wheel
And so forth,
By differentiation
Of the four stages,
Through the processes
Of the channels [on which]
They perfectly sit.²⁰³⁵ //2//

Here, the supreme experience
Of thatness is also
In the five families.
It dwells pervading
In all the experiences
Of feeling.
Born from the family
Of one's own emanation,²⁰³⁶
These goddesses perfectly sit:²⁰³⁷ //3//

Intelligent,²⁰³⁸ Hot,²⁰³⁹ Heroic,²⁰⁴⁰
Liberating Action,²⁰⁴¹ Pleasant Minded,²⁰⁴²
Mandala Artist,²⁰⁴³
And Woman,²⁰⁴⁴

²⁰³⁵ For the variant readings of this and the preceding verse, see Alamka 25A

²⁰³⁶ *I.e.* in the navel chakra

²⁰³⁷ Commentary missing for the following section

²⁰³⁸ Skt *vedham* Alamka 178A

²⁰³⁹ Skt *chandika*. Alamka 178A

²⁰⁴⁰ Skt *sattvī* [?]

²⁰⁴¹ Skt *karmamuktī* [?]

²⁰⁴² Skt *priyamanī* [?]

²⁰⁴³ Skt *yantrī* [?]

Perfectly Courageous Buddha,²⁰⁴⁵ //4//

Thoroughly Pure²⁰⁴⁶ and Beautiful,²⁰⁴⁷
Accomplished,²⁰⁴⁸ and Sound
Of Living Emanation,
Powerful Lady of the Treasure, Holding Divinity,
Stainless Lotus Stamen, //5//

Making Continuum
Of the Knots of Wind,²⁰⁴⁹
Copper Faced, Crow Faced,²⁰⁵⁰ Sleeping, Not Increasing,
Dark Skinned Kālarātrī,²⁰⁵¹ //6//

Pinnacle Conqueress,
Increasing Good Fortune,
Narajana,²⁰⁵² Dog Faced,²⁰⁵³
Passionate,²⁰⁵⁴ Joyful,²⁰⁵⁵
Charming,²⁰⁵⁶ Increasing Effort,
And White, //7//

Increasing the Five Nectars,
Descending Thing,²⁰⁵⁷ Very Heroic,²⁰⁵⁸
Five Lotused and Desired,
Illusion,²⁰⁵⁹ Pleasant,²⁰⁶⁰
And Friendly,²⁰⁶¹ //8//

Sour, Powerful Drinking Lady,

²⁰⁴⁴ Skt *maṭṭa* [?]

²⁰⁴⁵ Skt *Samyaksattvabuddhī* [?]

²⁰⁴⁶ Skt _____

²⁰⁴⁷ Skt _____

²⁰⁴⁸ Skt *siddhī* [?]

²⁰⁴⁹ Per Lozang Jamspal, *lugu* is a knot used to tie sheep together Personal Communication

²⁰⁵⁰ Skt *kākāśya* [?]

²⁰⁵¹ On whom Vajrayoginī tramples

²⁰⁵² River on whose bank Buddha practiced austerities

²⁰⁵³ Skt *shvānasyā* [?]

²⁰⁵⁴ Skt *raginī* [?]

²⁰⁵⁵ Skt *ratī* [?]

²⁰⁵⁶ Skt *srungarī* [?]

²⁰⁵⁷ "In Tibetan yoga, a controlled fall that channels the body's subtle energies through the subtle channels to promote higher states of awareness " Chagdud 1992, 239

²⁰⁵⁸ Skt *atvirya* [?]

²⁰⁵⁹ Skt *maya* [?]

²⁰⁶⁰ Skt *hidyanyama* [?]

²⁰⁶¹ Skt *manorāmya* [?]

Great Fearsome, Fortunate Karma,
 Good Flower, Poisonous Delusion,
 Face Upturned,
 And Adorned With Trident, //9//

Beautiful, Green Moving,
 Always Rotten, Dancer,
 Doe-Eyed, Joyfully Passionate,
 Variegated Delusory Sporting, //10//

White, Three-World,
 Attracting Taste, Stainless,
 Agreeing to Go.

The cloaked ones perfectly sit.²⁰⁶²
 The count is always increased²⁰⁶³
 By eight.²⁰⁶⁴ //11//

Three faces and six arms
 Are stainless.
 Differentiating the seals
 By family,
 They are well adorned
 With weapons.
 Various of the[ir] right hands
 [Hold] vajras. //12//

The[ir] left [hands] elegantly move,
 [Holding] blue lotus flowers.
 In the right [hands]
 Are wheel and jewel,
 And, similarly, a scimitar²⁰⁶⁵
 In the second left [hand]. //13//

They sit well
 In the cross-legged
 Bodhisattva posture.²⁰⁶⁶
 As for the faces,
 Three green eyes,
 With Amoghasiddhi

²⁰⁶² The total is 56

²⁰⁶³ Per Lozang Jamspal, intertwined Personal Communication

²⁰⁶⁴ Making a total of 64

²⁰⁶⁵ Lit triangular sword

²⁰⁶⁶ Half lotus, right foot on left thigh

On the crown.
 The faces are meditating
 With smiles,
 Causing the increase
 Of all blisses. //14//

By analyzing each one's name,
 Augmenting with the three letters,
 Perfectly worshipping
 With mantra,
 You cause [them]
 To bestow [on you]
 The reality of desire. //15//

These deities perfectly sit
 In the center
 Of the eight channels
 Of the Reality²⁰⁶⁷ chakra.
 You should know [them] as:

Vajra Sphere,²⁰⁶⁸ Lady Guru,²⁰⁶⁹
 Vajra Consort,²⁰⁷⁰ Great Power,²⁰⁷¹ //16//

Vajra Dancer,²⁰⁷² Vajra Face,²⁰⁷³
 Vajra Dharma,²⁰⁷⁴ Good Vajra,²⁰⁷⁵
 And Vajra Music.²⁰⁷⁶

They have the character
 Of nine
 In the Reality chakra. //17//

[With a] form of three faces
 And six hands,
 They sit well
 In the Bodhisattva posture.

²⁰⁶⁷ The heart chakra
²⁰⁶⁸ Skt *vajradhātu* [?]
²⁰⁶⁹ Skt *guruḥ* [?]
²⁰⁷⁰ Skt *vajramudra* [?]
²⁰⁷¹ Skt *mahābalī* [?]
²⁰⁷² Skt *vajralasya* [?]
²⁰⁷³ Skt *vajrānana* [?]
²⁰⁷⁴ Skt *vajradharmī* [?]
²⁰⁷⁵ Skt *vajrabhadri* [?]
²⁰⁷⁶ Skt *vajravādita* [?]

They hold vajra, wheel
And jewel
In the[ir] right hands. //18//

In the[ir] left,
They hold the unexcelled
Sword, lotus and bell.
Blue in complexion,
Three-eyed, the fangs
Of the faces
Are a little bared. //19//

Augmenting each one's
Own names
With the three letters,²⁰⁷⁷
You offer them with mantra.
The deities sit in the middle
Of the lotus
In the sixteen petals
Of the Enjoyment [chakra].²⁰⁷⁸ //20//

Lotus Liberator,²⁰⁷⁹ White Lotus,²⁰⁸⁰
Increasing Water Lily Lotus,²⁰⁸¹
Lotus Eye, Lotus Crown,
Lotus Rosary,²⁰⁸² Lotus Birth, //21//

Lotus Seat, and Lotus Net.
Similarly, Lotus Light,
Lotus Eye,²⁰⁸³ Good Lotus,
Sitting Inside Lotus, Lotus Birth,²⁰⁸⁴
Lotus Stamen, and Lotus One.

Thus these are perfectly explained. //22//

With the form
Of three faces and six arms,
They sit well

²⁰⁷⁷ Per Lozang Jamspal, like D OM V AH D HŪM = DAVID Personal Communication

²⁰⁷⁸ The throat chakra

²⁰⁷⁹ Skt *padmatārā* [?]

²⁰⁸⁰ Skt *pundarīka* [?]

²⁰⁸¹ Skt *padmakumud* [?]

²⁰⁸² Skt *padmamālā* [?]

²⁰⁸³ Duplicates above

²⁰⁸⁴ Duplicates above

In the Bodhisattva posture.
 In the[ir] right [hands],
 They brandish
 A lotus, a wheel
 And a vajra. //23//

In the[ir] left [hands],
 They play with a sword,
 A bell and a jewel.
 Three eyes shining,
 Red like the color
 Of a red lotus, //24//

They sit on a sun disk
 In the Bodhisattva posture.
 With the letters
 Of their own name,
 Their mantra is unexcelled. //25//

The goddesses always sit
 On a thirty-two petaled lotus
 In the great chakra
 Of Great Bliss:²⁰⁸⁵

Quite Awake, Effortful, //26//

Forceful Wheel,²⁰⁸⁶ Vajra One,
 Jewel Liberator,²⁰⁸⁷
 Fire Lotus, Variety Actress,
 Enjoying Delusion,
 Hatred Vajrī, Passionate One, //27//

Vajra Action,
 Passionate Form Vajra,
 Sound Vajra, Taste Vajra,
 Touched Vajra, Reality Sphere,
 Eye Light,²⁰⁸⁸ Skull Voice, //28//

Appearance of Scent,
 Delightful Taste,
 Body Banner, Delightful Mind,

²⁰⁸⁵ The crown chakra

²⁰⁸⁶ Skt *cakravega* [?] See Alamka 179B, 180A

²⁰⁸⁷ Skt *ratnatārā* [?]

²⁰⁸⁸ Skt *Locanārasanī* [?]

Having Element,
Moving Down,
Of Special Mind
Destroying Yama, //29//

Specially Expanding One,
Lotus Hair Standing Up,
Destroyer of All Obstacles,
Hidden Treasure, Blue Stick,²⁰⁸⁹
Very Firm, Great Force,
Self Arising, and Crown Chakra.^{2090 2091} //30//

Thus arising in the middle
Of the channel,
Again the goddesses
Have three faces
And six arms,
Endowed with increasing bliss,
They sit on moon disks. //31//

Stainless, the color
Of a white lotus,
[With] three peaceful faces
[And] three eyes,
They carry a wheel,
A hook and a vajra,
Respectively,
In the[ir] right hands. //32//

Similarly, in the[ir]
Three left hands,
[With] a lotus, a lasso,²⁰⁹²
And a jewel,
They are blooming,
Throwing and dancing,
Shining like a white lotus. //33//

They hold Vairocana
On [their] crowns;
Their mantras are
Their own names

²⁰⁸⁹ Skt *nīlaṇḍaṇḍī* [?]

²⁰⁹⁰ Skt *uṣṇīṣacakra* [?]

²⁰⁹¹ Totaling thirty-two

²⁰⁹² Per Lozang Jamspal, a *zhags pa* is something you attach to the nose of a *dzo*. Personal Communication

And the three letters,
In sequence.
They manifest
Supreme thatness. //34//

The vow of body,
Speech and mind
Is the supreme vow.
The thatness of the goddesses
Is supreme.
They always remain sleepy²⁰⁹³
In the body. //35//

Served the enjoyments
Of the five desires,
They are perfectly delighted
By the offerings,
Intoxicated by the bliss
Of the [joining of]
Vajra and lotus,
The supreme state
Of Vajrasattva.
Having delighted,
Again they refresh.
They will accomplish the activities Of peace and so forth;
Of this there is
No doubt. //36//

Concentration, yoga,
And so forth,
Practice and mantra,
Activities of shape
And so forth
Are not necessary.
Just a tidbit born
From the teachings
Of the guru is supreme.
Because of this
You should please the guru
With effort and attainments. //37//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-seventh chapter analyzing the stages of the four goddesses of the four chakras.

²⁰⁹³ Per Alamka, indistinct within the channels 180B

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Arising and Disappearing

Then, moreover,
 The characteristics
 Of arising and disappearing
 Will be explained.
 The channels are
 Supreme yoga,
 The source
 Of all attainments. //1//

By turning the mind
 From objects in front,
 You won't go there.²⁰⁹⁴
 Existing within
 The previous instincts,
 The sense powers appear
 At that time. //2//

Because of that,
 They wake up.
 They remain respectively
 In the channels.
 Having awakened
 By that awakening,
 The goddess herself [arises]
 From the chakra.²⁰⁹⁵ //3//

That is described
 As the process of arising.
 I will also explain disappearing.
 Objects also lack substantiality.²⁰⁹⁶
 When you mentally engage,
 They abide elsewhere. //4//

If the instincts are not awakened,

²⁰⁹⁴ All of the recensions of Alamka noted in the Sde dge critical edition have *der mi 'gro*, “go there” instead of the Lhasa (and Stok Palace's) *VR*'s *der mi 'gro*, “don't go there,” but they also have *la* instead of the *VR*'s *las*, so the meaning is similar

²⁰⁹⁵ For the variant reading from the beginning of this chapter to here, see also Alamka 25B

²⁰⁹⁶ Following Alamka's *dnegos po med*, “lack substantiality ” 181B

The channels will not arise
 And, for that reason,
 The awakening
 Of the gods
 Will not happen. //5//

Actual bliss is in the center
 Of the heart.
 The clear light
 Of the Buddha sun [is achieved]
 Through the form
 Of grasped and grasping.
 As for that, relying
 On the twelve light rays,²⁰⁹⁷ //6//

Increasing Light, Light Ray,
 Radiant, Clear, Shining,
 And Blazing Light,
 And the eye [sense power]
 And so forth,
 You grasp the outer form
 And so forth. //7//

Illuminating Darkness,
 Light, Shining,
 Clear Beauty, Clear Light,
 And Clear Sun
 Are types of outer form
 And so forth.
 These six are asserted below. //8//

Whatever goddesses arise,
 They arise as the wisdom sun.
 Furthermore, when
 They disappear,
 They supremely disappear. //9//

This is the supreme reality
 Of yoga,
 With the character
 Of arising and disappearing.
 Following the secret vajra,
 You should know [it]

²⁰⁹⁷ *I.e.* the goddesses

From the lineage guru. //10//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-eighth chapter on arising and disappearing.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The Characteristics of Producing Ecstasy

Then furthermore listen
And I will explain.
He who perfectly knows
The characteristics
Of generating ecstasy
[Attains] the supreme state
Of Vajrasattva. //1//

As for that,
You perfectly practice
Regarding the channel chakras
Again as expanded
And by reducing²⁰⁹⁸
[The number of] the four chakras,
[Making] more than
One-hundred twenty channels.²⁰⁹⁹ //2//

Also the stage
Of the intermediate channels
Depends on the
Sixteen channels.²¹⁰⁰
Always pervaded
By four times four,
These are the stages
Of ecstasy. //3//

Filled with the watery
Subtle essence of the lotus,

²⁰⁹⁸ *I.e.* practicing in the expanded version of six chakras, or reducing them to four Alamka 183B

²⁰⁹⁹ Following Alamka here 183B

²¹⁰⁰ See also Alamka 25B for variant reading of this and the prior verse

It causes the increase
Of great bliss. //4//

By division
Of the individual chakras,
The letter HA is of four parts.
The very subtle part
Always pervades,
Remaining as the mode
Of support. //5//

From the division
Of the four stages,
You will attain
By differentiating
The sixteen stages.
The nature of the Rosary
Is wonderful!
You will attain the state
Of one taste. //6//

Through experiencing
The individual stages,
Through the application
Of various waters,
Gradually like the water
Of an ocean,
The four ecstasies
Are expressed as
The time of the wheel
Of the four unions.²¹⁰¹
Through the practice
Of the Yoginī Tantras
You will accomplish
The supreme state. //7//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the twenty-ninth chapter on producing ecstasy.

²¹⁰¹ Alamka has *dus kyī khor lo*, “*Kalachakra*” or “wheel of time” rather than the Tantra’s *khōr lo’i dus*, “time of the wheel,” and says that “‘the wheel of time’ is through the example of internal time ”

Chapter Thirty

The Armor Characteristic of the Descending Channels

Then, moreover, listen!
I will definitively
Explain thatness
[As] the stream of channels
Always [flowing]
By means of
The stable vajra body. //1//

The 1024 channels
Are always wonderful.
You know [them]
As flowing enlightenment spirit.
They increase all bliss. //2//

You should know
The ever-wonderful
One thousand twenty-four channels
As the flowing of blood,²¹⁰²
Having the nature
Of transferring
The sun. //3//

You should know
The ever-wonderful
One thousand twenty-four channels
As the movement
Of energy-wind.
From the Great Ocean Tantra,²¹⁰³ //4//

By dividing the places
Of the body,
They are stated
As twenty-four.

²¹⁰² *I.e.* female hormonal fluid

²¹⁰³ Alamka says that this refers to the *Vast as Sky Tantra*, *Akasasamānatantra* [?] or the great *Vajra Rosary*, Alamka 185A, presumably the 12,000 line *Vajra Rosary* taught by Buddha at the same time as the shorter *Vajra Rosary*, presumably this one. See Alamka 4A. However, in the version of this line found in Alamka's chapter one, in the summary of this chapter found in the *Commentary* on the relevant question of the eighty-two questions, the Tibetan is *The Expanding in Stages Tantra* Alamka 25B

The number of the lords
Of dissolving and enjoyment
Is stated as seventy-two. //5//

Each has a thousand chakras.
Eliminating the dissolving
And enjoyment lords,
But including the main one,
Gives the number
Of the places. //6//

Again summarizing,
In living beings,
The three are divided
Into eights.
By the division
Of day and night,
And through the application
Of the moments of sessions,
You should know the channels
As going internally
Higher and higher. //7//

[In] the left flows
Enlightenment spirit
And moon.
[In] the right blood
And sun.
When the wind moves
In the central one,
You should know [it]
As the awakening of fire. //8//

The names are
The *lalanā*, *rasanā*
And *avadhūti*.
Through the practice
Of spreading them
By each stage,
Each has eight sessions. //9//

The third one goes
As twenty-four.
Due to the lords
Of dissolving and enjoyment,

In stages the count
 Is seventy-two.
 Again, by the practice
 Of spreading those,
 By dividing each
 Into a thousand,
 It always becomes a count
 Of seventy-two thousand. //10//

Again, by practice,
 The main three
 Become one.
 At first, it is hard
 For the yogi to know
 That subtle one
 Supremely inconceivable. //11//

Abandoning the sound drop
 Is the secret foundation
 Of all bliss.
 I have explained the character
 Of the support
 Of life-energy, //12//

From the yoginī tantras
 You should know
 The one that has
 The state of one taste. //13//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirtieth chapter
 on the armor characteristic of the falling channels.

Chapter Thirty-One

Ascertaining the Three Intermediate Channels

Then listen moreover to
 What I will explain
 About the very essence
 Of the intermediate channels,
 One who understands
 The knotting and arising
 Of the channels,

Experiences supreme ecstasy. //1//

Illuminating the wisdom
Of the deity,
Practicing in the mantra
Of the deity,
Ascertaining the meaning
Of the yoga
Of the deity,²¹⁰⁴
Instantly unites the nature
Of the three realities.²¹⁰⁵ //2//

Pervading²¹⁰⁶ and subtle
In the three worlds,
The perfect support
Of the entire body
You should know
The wisdom hero,
[And] Vajrasattva,
On whose account
The commitment hero²¹⁰⁷
Is blissful,
As supreme yoga. //3//

Wonderful pervading reality,
Supreme, more supreme
And subtle,
Self-arising
Inexhaustible wisdom,
Thirty-two bodhisattvas fall,
Expanding supremely
All of the channels. //4//

Located in the chakra
Of great bliss,
The nature of all the parts
Is [that of] the root.
The three channels are
In the middle of that,
Also explained

²¹⁰⁴ The wisdom of the deity “illuminates the transmudane innate,” the mantra of the deity is the syllable HŪM, and the yoga of the deity is “through analyzing the conceptual energy-winds” Alamka 187A

²¹⁰⁵ Alamka has *de nyid gsum* rather than *de gsum* 187A

²¹⁰⁶ Alamka has *khyab*, “pervading,” rather than the Tantra’s *khab*, “needle” Alamka 187B

²¹⁰⁷ Vajrasattva is the truth body, the wisdom hero the enjoyment or beatific body, and the commitment hero is the emanation body, the yogi Alamka 187B

As the main ones.²¹⁰⁸ //5//

Moon, sun and fire move,
 Pervading all the elements.
 Just as some of the roots of a tree
 Remain firmly in the ground,
 And the trunk, branches,
 Leaves and buds
 Pervade everywhere,
 A person with a head
 Pervades supremely
 The host of
 Aggregates,
 Elements,
 And
 The
 Like. //6//

The three doors of liberation
 Bind the three realities.
 Desire, hatred
 And ignorance
 Are the three divisions
 Of the characteristics
 Of the [instinctual] natures. //7//

The three types of characteristics
 Of commitments
 Are also night, day and twilight.
 The characteristics
 Of the commitments
 Of Buddha, Dharma
 And Sangha
 Are divided into three, //8//

And the vajra
 Of the wisdom
 Of emptiness
 [Has] the characteristic
 Of those three very types.
 The characteristics
 Of the three yogas
 Are causal, fruitional

²¹⁰⁸ Alamka 188A “The three channels located in the head [refers to] the *lalanā* and so forth ”

And environmental. //9//

The three worlds
 Include the three divisions
 Of wind, phlegm and bile,
 Having the characteristics
 Of the three worlds:
 The desire, form
 And formless realms. //10//

The three roots
 And one fruit go
 To the heart chakra²¹⁰⁹
 From [their] respective places.
 They are manifested
 As three emanations,
 With the nature of body,
 Speech and mind. //11//

When applied to that,
 Those have the character
 Of an eclipse.
 When applied a little,
 The character
 Of a partial eclipse.
 Because of that,
 When the Life-energy
 Energy-wind is overcome,
 It has the character of death. //12//

You should “define
 Those three [channels]”
 As the main channel.
 From the extensive
 Yoginī tantras,
 The yogi clearly knows. //13//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-first chapter defining the three intermediate channels.

²¹⁰⁹ Because it is the place of the mind Alamka 189A

Chapter Thirty-Two

Entering Birth, The Person Generated By Energy-wind

Then listen to what
Is further explained
About the character
Of the birth of energy-wind.
When you seek
The opportune time,²¹¹⁰
You perfectly know [it]
Just as it is.²¹¹¹ //1//

The mind with addictive instincts,
[With] the energy-winds
Makes other forms,
Not knowing existence
In ascertaining the objects,
And deluded by just
Mere energy-wind. //2//

The fundamental consciousness
Having been summoned,
The instincts
Wander within.
Consciousness is held
By the instincts.
By the process
Of mixing with the instincts, //3//

Clothed in the internal instincts,
When they enter
The womb channel
During the time
Of menstruation,
The drop of the melting
Of vajra semen and blood, //4//

They become mixed
And consciousness arises from

²¹¹⁰ Time refers here to both outer time, determined by the movements of the sun and the moon, and inner time, determined by the movement of breath Alamka 190A

²¹¹¹ However, Alamka adds, “[But], it is deceiving ” 190A

The fundamental consciousness.
 Just as one is intoxicated
 By the taste of *chang*,
 The fundamental consciousness
 From the instincts
 Gives birth to the continuity
 Of consciousness. //5//

The addicted mind
 Is the Life-energy energy-wind,
 Going in one moment.
 In the time of the first month,
 In the form of a fish. //6//

In the time
 Of the second month,
 Again mixed with blood,
 By division into upper
 And lower,
 The Life-energy energy-wind
 Becomes two.
 In the going and coming
 Of the Evacuative energy-wind,
 It holds the form
 Of a tortoise. //7//

Then, in the third month,
 When the blood and semen
 Are consumed,
 The mass of
 Evacuative energy-winds
 Dry up,
 And the Ascending energy-wind
 Arises.
 Facing upwards,
 It abides,
 Holding a body
 Like a wild pig. //8//

Further, in the fourth month,
 Smeared with blood
 And semen,
 Having summoned
 The Ascending energy-wind,
 It goes facing downwards,
 Also in the form

Of a lion,
 The Pervading energy-wind
 Radiates. //9//

Then, in the fifth month,
 The blood and semen
 Having increased,
 The Equalizing energy-wind
 Having stirred,
 In the form of fire,
 It gradually goes. //10//

The Equalizing
 [And] Pervading energy-winds
 Radiate, by which [the body state]
 Moves and stirs
 In the complete five aggregates.
 Thus he again spoke
 About these things. //11//

In the measure
 Of the time
 Of the sixth month,
 The earth element
 And the two eyes
 And the Pervading energy-wind
 Spreads the Dragon energy-wind,
 Increasing the phenomenon
 Of energy-wind. //12//

Then, in the seventh month,
 The water element
 And the nostrils
 Are desired.
 The Dragon energy-wind
 Having spread
 The Tortoise energy-wind,
 It spreads non-dually. //13//

Then, in the eighth month,
 Fire makes the nostril;
 The Tortoise energy-wind
 Spreads the Lizard energy-wind,
 Causing you to know
 Your own nature. //14//

Then, in the ninth month,
 The wind element
 And feeling of taste,
 By the great energy-wind
 Known as "lizard,"
 It causes the *Devadatta* energy-wind
 To spread. //15//

Then, in the tenth month,
 The *Devadatta* energy-wind spreads
 The *Damujit* [energy-wind].²¹¹²
 It has the character
 Of gathering all
 The energy-winds. //16//

In the middle
 Of the ninth
 The pervading element.²¹¹³
 Has the character of subtlety
 And non-obstructedness.
 In the hollows
 Of the channels,
 Sinews and intestines,
 It develops the nine doors.
 Feeling as a supreme body,
 It holds the characteristic
 Of touching as one.²¹¹⁴ //17//

The good clear light
 Perfectly abides in the sky
 Of supreme awakening.²¹¹⁵
 The ten wisdoms
 Of the Buddhas
 Should be explained
 Like that.
 The ten movements

²¹¹² I am following Alamka's *nor rgyal*, "*Dhanujit*" 193A. As noted by Tsong kha pa, "The *Vajra Rosary* and *Revelation of Intention* use the same expressions for the first five, and for the latter five, Naga, Kurma, Kṛkalāsa, Devadatta, and Dhanujit (Dragon, Tortoise, Chameleon, Devadat, and Dhanujit), for this last, some commentaries also call it Dhanajit (*nor las rgyal*)" Tsong kha pa 2010, 226

²¹¹³ I.e. energy-wind Alamka 192B

²¹¹⁴ Per Lozang Jampal, this means that the body is formed but there is no separate sensation. Personal Communication

²¹¹⁵ Following Alamka's *rab sad*, "awakening," rather than the *VR*'s *ra ba sad*, "awakening the wall" Alamka 193A

Are the ten grounds.
 You know [them]
 In stages. //18//

The mother is the perfection
 Of wisdom.
 The vagina is expressed
 As the great seal.
 The child becomes
 A perfect Buddha.
 He knows all
 And sees all. //19//

The head hair is shaved
 And he wears
 The red religious robe
 Of the womb.
 The glorious one
 Joins his palms together.
 The crown of his head
 Touches the ground. //20//

He holds the thirty-two signs
 And is adorned with
 The eighty marks.
 He arouses great wisdom.
 He attains the compositional factors
 With liberation. //21//

The great hero is without
 Thought construction.
 He destroys [his own]
 Creator flesh.
 The five nectars are
 The great wisdom.
 He always tastes
 The five nectars. //22//

The yogi practices
 Like a lion.
 These supreme things
 Are secret:
 They are not even stated
 Anywhere.
 You should know
 From the lineage guru

The ascertainment
Of the energy-winds
Of birth. //23//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-second chapter on entering birth, the person generated by energy-wind.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Detailed Explanation of the Consumption of Life Energy by the Stages of the Energy-winds

Then, furthermore,
[More] should be explained
About how one perfectly knows
The disappearance
Of the energy-winds
As supreme.
As for the character
Of the moment of death, //1//

Here and there
[The energy-winds] assemble,
Dissolving like the stages
Of arising.
The energy-winds go²¹¹⁶
Here and there,
Like the setting
Of the sun. //2//

After ten years,²¹¹⁷
The energy-wind
Intoxicated by Inflation
Is born.
Having consumed
The *Dhamujit*
Energy-wind,
Like Rāhu [eating] the moon

²¹¹⁶ Following Alamka's 'gro bar gyur, "go," rather than the VR's *skye ba m*, "are born" Alamka 194B

²¹¹⁷ Alamka notes that the external one year is one day internally Alamka 194B

In stages. //3//

After ten years comes,
The Expanding Water
Energy-wind arises,
Consuming the "*Devadatta*"
Energy-wind.
The stage of wind
Is as before. //4//

Furthermore, when
Ten years comes,
The Water of Expansion
Energy-wind will be born,
Consuming the "Lizard"
Energy-wind. //5//

Then another ten years passes.
By the stages
That are born
From the years,
The Great Sending and Holding
Energy-wind
Causes the consumption
Of the Tortoise energy-wind. //6//

Because the Dragon energy-wind
And the Great Sending Holding Energy-wind,
Power and radiance,
Are similar,
When another ten years comes,
They cannot harm²¹¹⁸
Because power and ability
Are similar,
Who could harm whom? //7//

Being unable to do [this],
Ten [years] pass.
Attaining the Blind,
Sending/Holding and Great Power
[Energy-winds],
They consume the Serpent
Energy-wind

²¹¹⁸ The practitioner who consumes these energy-winds?

In stages. //8//

When another ten come,
 Blood and flesh increase.
 By the stages of inflation
 And intoxication,
 They cause the consumption
 Of the Sending/Holding
 Energy-wind. //9//

After another ten years comes,
 You summon the
 Crazy Water energy-wind,
 And fat and saliva increase,
 Consuming the Sending/Holding
 [And] Serpent [energy-winds]. //10//

Another ten stages passes.
 In a year the strength
 Of the Sending/Holding
 Energy-wind arises.
 It consumes the Crazy Time
 Energy-wind,
 Causing the increase
 Of fire and wind. //11//

Having transformed
 That Sending Holding
 Energy-wind,
 Great enjoyment
 Will increase.
 Then, another ten years
 Having passed,
 The body of energy-wind
 Becomes heavy.
 From the stage
 Of being pervaded,
 And obscured,
 Water and wind mix.
 From that, another ten years come. //12//

Lacking [a seed],
 Like the banana fruit,
 By the final action
 Of karma,
 It cannot root. //13//

Thus, in ten stages,
 [In] another [few] months
 Or days,
 Life shortened,
 You should know that
 [Your] life energy
 Is exhausted.
 From the *Tantra of the*
*Gathering of the Ḍākinīs*²¹¹⁹
 You should know this
 In detail. //14//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-third chapter on the detailed explanation of the consumption of life energy by the stages of the energy-winds.

Chapter Thirty-Four

The Gathering of the Ḍākinīs

Then listen further
 And I will explain.
 The great characteristic
 Is the supreme wisdom.
 The gathering of the ḍākinīs
 Is the supreme yoga.
 They gather the meaning
 Of the essence of the essence,²¹²⁰ //1//

Because of which,
 The gathering
 By the ḍākinīs is called
 The ḍākinī collection.
 They always sit
 In the middle of the navel.
 [Their] light is equal
 To a thousand suns.

²¹¹⁹ The next chapter of the *Vajra Rosary*

²¹²⁰ “The essence” is the creation stage and “the meaning of the essence” the completion stage Alamka 196B

They overcome all
Conceptuality. //2//

The blazing incinerates
The conceptuality
Of the aggregates,
[Leaving] a body
Without obstacles.
Gathering the conceptuality
Of the vajra realm
Again naturally, //3//

[Then] again gathering
There, in the heart
The conceptions of object
And subject,
Incinerating all the fetters,
Like a butterfly
[Drawn to the flame]. //4//

By the application
Of the reality of energy-wind,
By the application
Of the mantric body,
There is, again, no doubt
About the incineration
Of mere conceptuality. //5//

From the *Tantra of the
Gathering of the Ḍākinīs*,
When you know the stage
Of supreme yoga,
In the vast wisdom
Of the ḍākinīs
You will know the yoga
Of service. //6//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-fourth chapter on the gathering of the ḍākinīs.

Chapter Thirty-five

The Characteristics of Cutting Off the Conceptual Energy-winds

Then furthermore listen
 And I will explain
 [How] you cut off
 The conceptual energy-winds,
 [Which], day and night,
 Are known as moving
 As more than
 One hundred and eight.²¹²¹ //1//

Because those energy-winds
 Are conceptuality,
 To cut [them] off,
 That yoga is supremely
 Peaceful.
 You make everything
 The essence
 Of emptiness. //2//

If you doubt,
 First practice the six [yogas].²¹²²
 The knower of yoga²¹²³
 Should practice excellently.²¹²⁴
 Then he should recite
 Extensively
 The vowel-less²¹²⁵ letter HA. //3//

Yoga, Amuyoga,
Atiyoga and Mahāyoga
 Have eighteen divisions.²¹²⁶

²¹²¹ For variant, see also Alamka 26A

²¹²² *I.e.* the creation stage Alamka 198A

²¹²³ *I.e.* the creation stage yogi Alamka 198A

²¹²⁴ *I.e.* achieve body isolation

²¹²⁵ *I.e.* you should recite it silently Alamka 198A

²¹²⁶ This is somewhat confusing, the “first yoga” has fifteen divisions, adding *Amuyoga*, *Amuyoga* and *Mahāyoga* makes eighteen Alamka 199A But those three latter yogas themselves have thirty-four divisions, all set forth by Alamka According to Alamka, the fifteen divisions of the first yoga are divided into “mandala” and “body,” as follows

As for the secondary practices [‘*khora*], in that there are ten types [1] investigation of one's own mind, [2] purification of the placing of mindfulness, [3] meditation on the four offerings and [4]

You should meditate
On the application
Of the first [*Yoga*]. //4//

There are seventeen [divisions]
Of *Amuyoga* and so forth.²¹²⁷
After that, there is the
Supreme Mandala Triumph,
Supreme yoga,
With five divisions.
Then there is the
Evolutionary Triumph.
There are twelve divisions
Of [that] yoga. //5//

The creation stage,
Is comprised of
Forty-nine divisions.
It is the yoga of manifesting
Direct perception. //6//

Here, in the branch
Of completion stage yoga,
There is the supreme stage
Of vajra repetition.
Overcoming conceptuality,
[It is] unexcelled subtle thatness. //7//

The intelligent yogi²¹²⁸
Meditates as before
According to ritual.
Cutting the fetters
Of cyclic existence,
The great yoga
Is great wisdom.^{2129 2130} //8//

the four abodes of Brahma, [5] perceiving in a particularly noble state, [6] expelling obstacles, [7] meditating on emptiness, [8] meditating on the stages of wisdom, [9] meditating on the measureless mansion, and [10] meditating on the mandala of faith " For the body, there are five [1] meditating on the ultimate mandala, [2] preliminary consecration of the mantra of emptiness, [3] rising from the ocean of wisdom, [4] purifying the cyclic existence of the intermediate state by opening the vital points, and [5] meditating the reality of the dharma sphere and teaching by mantra

Alamka 198B-199A

²¹²⁷ I.e. including *amuyoga*, *atyoga* and *mahāyoga* Alamka 199A

²¹²⁸ I.e. the completion stage yogi Alamka 200A

²¹²⁹ Alamka notes "'Great wisdom' because it serves as the cause of the continuum of natural clear light 'Great yoga' because it is more distinctively noble than the yoga of the creation stage " 200A

Meditating perfectly definitively,
 You destroy
 The conceptual winds.
 By repetition
 Following the meaning,
 You completely adhere
 to entitylessness,
 One essence
 And the emptiness
 Of the supported. //9//

You definitively stabilize
 Meditation.
 The practitioner who
 Perfectly meditates
 The unexcelled stage
 Of vajra repetition,
 Will no doubt achieve
 This supreme wisdom
 Through the stages of that. //10//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-fifth chapter on the characteristics of cutting off the conceptual energy-winds.

Chapter Thirty-Six

The Characteristics of Non-Conceptuality

Then furthermore listen
 And I will explain.
 When the non-conceptual
 Energy-wind arises,
 He who knows
 Will attain
 The good state
 Of the reality
 Of Vajrasattva. //1//

The great energy-wind
 Of non-conceptuality

Abandons all duality.
 It is the nature
 Of all things,
 Free from the state
 Of meditation
 And non-meditation.²¹³¹ //2//

It is the great wisdom
 Of Mahāyoga,
 Place-less and stainless.
 All the subtle parts remain
 In the center,
 Abandoning the sound drop. //3//

Ubiquitous and peaceful,
 It is the one characteristic
 Of self-consecration.
 Free from the characterized
 And characteristics,
 It transcends
 The conceptual instincts. //4//

It transcends the path
 Of words and books,
 Meditating and meditated.
 It is the characteristic
 Of great emptiness.
 It transcends the portion
 Of the aspects of mantras
 And mudras,
 [And all] types
 Of activities. //5//

You should not even read
 The action, performance
 Or yoga tantras.
 The great tantra of *Mahāyoga*
 Is the supreme pledge
 To be explained. //6//

It is appropriate to explain
 At the outset
 According to ritual instructions.
 Knowing the subsequent stage of that

²¹³¹ For variant reading, *see also* Alamka 26B

Is the supreme state
Of the lineage guru. //7//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-sixth chapter on the characteristics of non-conceptuality.

Chapter Thirty-Seven

The Practice of Disappearance of the Channels

Then the Vajra Lord spoke:
Listen [and] I will explain
The thatness of the yoga
Of the disappearing
Of the channels. //1//

[With] perfect joining
Of the [sense] objects
And powers,
The channels will arise.
Having arisen,
They go as before,
The unexcelled process
Of creation. //2//

Because of that birth
Of conceptuality,
From that process
Of the special
One hundred eight,²¹³²
Birth, old age, sickness
And death
Will return. //3//

Because the wisdom
Of thatness
Purifies objects
By [their] non-thing-ness,
Because of practicing
In that reality,

²¹³² Energy-winds

Because things and objects
 Lack thing-ness,
 The sense powers
 Are not born.²¹³³ //4//

In that way, they²¹³⁴ intertwine
 With one another:
 Things and non-things
 Are emptiness.
 Then all the channels
 Will disappear,
 Relying on the process
 Of the chakra,²¹³⁵
 From gathering them
 There is peace. //5//

All seventy-two thousand
 Will become
 The channel wheels.
 All of these pervade within. //6//

From the yoga
 Of meditating emptiness,
 You "knowing definitively
 The reality of objects."
 The logic vajra conquers [all]. //7//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-seventh chapter on the practice of the disappearance of the channels.

²¹³³ For variant reading, *see also* Alamka 26B

²¹³⁴ The sense powers and their objects Alamka 202B

²¹³⁵ *I.e.* the navel chakra Alamka 203A

Chapter Thirty-Eight

Meditating on the Six Chakras

Then, furthermore, listen
 [And] I will explain.
 Practice exactly whatever
 Characteristics of the state
 Of the six yogas²¹³⁶
 The branch that supports
 What you wish for.²¹³⁷ //1//

Six spokes;²¹³⁸ half of that;
 Similarly, eight times eight
 Is more than it;
 Eight times two;
 And eight times four.²¹³⁹
 Thus is shown the count. //2//

Like [the hidden] part
 Of a half moon,
 Emptiness abides
 In the wind chakra.
 Neither half nor full,
 It appears like a water moon. //3//

Great illusion
 Is the mother
 Of all beings;
 With the characteristic
 Of supporting everything,²¹⁴⁰

²¹³⁶ I.e. the six yogas of the completion stage (1) Withdrawal (*so sor sdud, pratyāhāra*), (2) Absorption (*bsam gtan, dhyāna*), (3) Breath Control (*srog rtsol, prāṇāyāma*), (4) Retention (*dzin pa, dhāraṇā*), (5) Recollection (*rjes su dran, anusmṛti*), and (6) Concentration (*ting 'dzin, samādhi*) See [Secret Community] Tantric Appendix, *Rgyud phyima*, Toh 443, v 141 (*so sor sdud dang bsam gtan dang/ srog rtsol de bzhin 'dzin pa dang/ rjes su dran dang ting 'dzin te/ sbyor ba'i yan lag drug tu bshad//*) See also Wayman 1977, 44-50 The *Kalacakra* Tantric system also has the six yogas, albeit in a somewhat modified form For an extensive discussion, also very helpful in understanding the *Secret Community* system, see N Gyatso 2004, 391-584

²¹³⁷ Alamka has the variant reading indicated at 26B in the question section, but in the Commentary on Chapter 38, has both, separated by a *yang na*

²¹³⁸ I am following Alamka's word commentary here, 203B, which has *rtsibs*, "spoke," instead of *rnam pa*, "type" For variant reading, see also Alamka 26B

²¹³⁹ I.e. the wind chakra has six channels, the fire three, the navel sixty-four, the throat sixteen and the crown thirty-two Alamka 203B

The wind chakra
Is explained as "life-energy."
It is not in the sphere
Of the experts. //4//

The fire chakra
Is pervaded by emptiness.
In the middle,
Like a drop.
Unchanging,²¹⁴¹ going everywhere,
Self-arising, pervading all, //5//

It increases bliss.
It abandons vowels
And consonants.
Because all three worlds
Are made into one,
It is the Creator.²¹⁴² //6//

Having the state
Of indestructible sound,²¹⁴³
It abandons all forms.
It moves like
A snake's tongue,
Grandfather²¹⁴⁴ Brahma
And so forth,
Fearless, immobile. //7//

It is not a letter
Or a word.
It abandons the collection
Of elements.
It is free from counting, Inexhaustible, birthless,
Abiding in the navel,
The emanation chakra. //8//

²¹⁴⁰ Because it pervades the entire body Alamka 204A

²¹⁴¹ Alamka has *yi ge kun la*, "in all letters," instead of *mi 'gyur*, "unchanging" 204A

²¹⁴² In the word commentary on the next verse, Alamka quotes the following

Brahma becomes the body vajra,
The speech vajra is great Śiva,
The mind vajra is Vajradhara,
That very one is wondrous Visnu

204B

²¹⁴³ "In the form of the syllable A, because it is like an echo" Alamka 204B

²¹⁴⁴ Following Alamka's *mes po*, "grandfather" Alamka 204B

Abiding in the center
 Of the reality chakra,²¹⁴⁵
 As mere sound,
 It is stainless,
 Free from passion, passionless,
 Active and place-less. //9//

Incomparable and non-abiding,
 It abandons breath control.
 Supreme Lord
 Of divine wisdom,
 It is hard to find anything
 Like that. //10//

Abiding in the enjoyment chakra,²¹⁴⁶
 As the supreme aspect
 Of the unbound,
 It penetrates supremely.
 It dwells in all forms. //11//

By nature relativity,
 It is like being drunk
 With the taste of liquor.
 The first excellence,
 It abides within all things. //12//

It supremely abides
 In the beginning
 And the end.
 Lacking characteristics
 And lacking appearance,
 It abandons all characteristics.
 Peaceful, fearless, inexpressible,
 It naturally experiences
 Its own nature.
 It dwells in the chakra
 Of great bliss.
 You attain [it] from
 The lineage guru. //13//

Thus, the great special wisdom,
 Your own nature,
 Is the six consciousnesses.

²¹⁴⁵ Heart chakra

²¹⁴⁶ Throat chakra

Perfectly applying [these]
 Above and below²¹⁴⁷
 Is well known
 As "yoga." //14//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-eighth chapter on meditating on the six chakras.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Explanation of Time and the Measure of Time

Then the Vajra Lord spoke:

Knowing the yoga of collecting
 The characteristics of time
 Is the unexcelled yoga
 Of counting. //1//

Time is explained as
 The "measure of time."²¹⁴⁸
 Thinking and free from thinking
 Is its own state.²¹⁴⁹
 It perfectly abides
 In the twin aspects
 Of good times
 And bad times. //2//

Having arisen from the nostril
 Of the nose,
 Always arising
 From the outer door,
 Compressing within²¹⁵⁰ is stated
 As a good time.
 And exhaling is asserted
 As a bad time.^{2151 2152} //3//

²¹⁴⁷ *I.e.* in the upper and lower places in your own body Alamka 205B

²¹⁴⁸ *I.e.* "the time that makes the moon and the sun move," *i.e.* external time Alamka 206A

²¹⁴⁹ *I.e.* internal time, "because that is how it is experienced by yogis " Alamka 206A

²¹⁵⁰ *I.e.* inhaling

The others are superior
 To the bad time.
 The supreme good time
 Is one's own.²¹⁵³
 The golden age,
 The third age
 And the second age
 Are good times.
 The time of contention
 Is a bad time.
 The characteristics
 Of the times are thusly stated. //4//

Ecstasy, supreme ecstasy
 And innate ecstasy
 Are good times;
 Transcendent ecstasy
 Is a bad time.²¹⁵⁴
 The characteristics of time
 Are thus explained. //5//

The times of entering²¹⁵⁵
 And abiding²¹⁵⁶
 Are well known
 As good times.
 Emerging²¹⁵⁷ is also

²¹⁵¹ This may be a reference not to ordinary breathing, but to Skt *kumbhaka*, defined in Monier Williams as "stopping the breath by shutting the mouth and closing the nostrils with the fingers of the right hand " 293

²¹⁵² In the first chapter of the *Commentary*, in the context of a brief discussion of the meaning of EVAM, Alamka quotes a similar verse, I am unsure if it is this verse of the Tantra or from some other source

As it is said From the two nostrils of the nose, [as for] the good time, the bad time and the inconceivable time, coming [inhalation] is called the "good time," going [exhalation] is called the "bad time " It is said that, "Becoming as inconceivable, abandoning life-energy and effort, abandoning exhalation and inhalation, liberated from going and coming, is expressed as "a certain occasion "

Alamka 6B (The last line of the quote has *brjod pa min*, "is not expressed " I have speculated that *min*, "is not," should be *ym*, "is," and have translated it accordingly as "is expressed ") In his word commentary, Alamka has something rather different, *srog dang rtsol ba gnyis mnyam pa 'bab gang du/ dus bzang dus ngan de las bzlogs pa'o*, "When breath control falls evenly, it is a good time, reversing from the bad time " 206B

²¹⁵³ I.e. having the leisure and opportunity to practice dharma

²¹⁵⁴ Alamka explains that this is because "of having the nature of losing bliss and the nature of being free from passion, and having conceptuality " (*bde ba nyams pa'i ngo bo nyid dang/ chags bral gyi bdag nyid can nyid dang/ rtog pa dang bcas pa'i phyir ro*) 207A

²¹⁵⁵ I.e. inhaling

²¹⁵⁶ I.e. holding

A bad time.
 The characteristics of time
 Are like that.²¹⁵⁸ //6//

Time is all the elements.
 It is the supreme state
 Of one equal taste.
 Abandoning
 Wisdom consciousness,
 Time is expressed as one. //7//

The character
 Of the fourth moment
 Is free from
 The elaboration of thing
 And no-thing.
 It is liberated from expressed
 And expressing.
 It is expressed as
 "One time."²¹⁵⁹ //8//

It is definitively liberated
 From passion
 And dispassion.
 It abandons the state
 Of great bliss.
 The basis of the meaning
 Of the Great Seal,
 It is expressed as
 "One time." //9//

Without characteristics,
 Without appearance,
 It abandons the yoga
 Of counting.
 You should know
 From the lineage guru
 That [which is] explained
 As the time of thatness. //10//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the thirty-ninth chapter on explanation of time and the measure of time.

²¹⁵⁷ *I.e.* exhaling

²¹⁵⁸ According to the system of the three breaths Alamka 207A

²¹⁵⁹ *I.e.* the first words of the Tantra, "One time I heard "

Chapter Forty

The Fruit of the Secret

Then, further, listen
 To the supreme fruit
 Of the secret
 To be explained,
 By which [yogis] go
 To the supreme attainment
 The Great Seal, the perfect form.²¹⁶⁰ //1//

The secret is explained
 As "hidden."
 Childish yogis don't know [it]
 Or the name
 Of the fourth empowerment,
 The procedures
 Of the oral lineage,
 The great wisdom
 Of supreme peace
 Abandoning all conceptuality.²¹⁶¹ //2//

The great attainment
 Of the Great Seal
 Is the epitome
 Of Mahāyoga.
 You learn the wonderful,
 Supreme essence
 From the *Yoginī* Tantras,
 Causing the taste
 Of great wisdom to descend,
 Having the quality
 Of great thatness. //3//

Your own essence
 Is Vajrasattva,
 The state that dwells
 In the supreme sky.

²¹⁶⁰ Following Alamka's *rtan*, "form" or "base," rather than the Lhasa *VR*'s *bstan*, "serve "

²¹⁶¹ For variant reading of this and prior verse, see Alamka 27A

It causes the increase
Of blisses.
You transcend the state
Of great bliss. //4//

You are free from knowing
And knowable.
You abandon meditating
And what is meditated on.
You are empty
Of the activities of mantra
And tantra.
You abandon all conceptuality. //5//

You manifest the state
Of all things.
A person of the three worlds,
[Yet] you abandon passion
And dispassion.
You abide in the great commitment.
The countless three worlds
Are one thing.
You are the cause
Of the ultimate attainment. //6//

He thus clarified
The fruit
Of the secret,
Not spoken of
Anywhere else.
You should know
From the *Yoginī* Tantras
The supreme wisdom
Of the supreme yoga. //7//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fortieth chapter
on the fruit of the secret.

Chapter Forty-One

Explaining the Meaning of the Reality Realm

Then spoke
the Vajra Lord:

The Reality Sphere's
State is supreme.
The elements pervading
From the Reality Sphere
Are called
The "Reality Sphere." //1//

All-pervading,
Supremely subtle,
Going everywhere,
Always arising,
[Whatever is] endowed with
The five aggregates,
The four elements,
[Sense] objects, [sense] media,
And consciousness,
Is explained as all phenomena,
Giving birth to
The Lord of Secrets.²¹⁶² //2//

The element that dwells
In the center of these
Is not pervading
And is not in the range
[Of the mind of individuals].²¹⁶³
Just as sesame oil
Is in a sesame seed,
And just as fire is in wood,
Similarly it pervades all things
But is not seen. //3//

Like sky, stainless,

²¹⁶² Alamka has *gsang ba'i dbang phyug gi*, "O Lord of Secrets," here, Alamka 210A

²¹⁶³ Not pervading "because it is located in what is pervaded, with the nature of lacking elaboration, and not in the range because it is not in the range of individual persons" Alamka 210A

It is the supreme basis
 Of all things.
 It is pervaded
 By all the conceptions
 Of object and subject,
 But is not seen.²¹⁶⁴
 The yogi sees clearly
 By the yoga of
 Emptiness wisdom. //4//

The Reality Sphere
 Is called “*bhaga* [fortunate].”
 The *bhaga* [womb] is also
 A jeweled basket.
 Because of that
 Whatever has the
 Good qualities of the Lord
 And so forth
 Is called *bhaga*.²¹⁶⁵ //5//

Bhaga is explained
 As all things,²¹⁶⁶
 [“]Sphere[“] is stated
 As enlightenment spirit.
 The cause for beings
 Of the three realms
 Is explained as “*bhaga*.”
 Through actual perfect practice,
 The sphere perfectly abides
 Like a water moon. //6//

Know reality
 As the only ultimate.
 Like myrobalam placed
 On the palm,
 So supreme reality appears.
 Self aware, very stainless,
 Having exhausted
 Thing and no-thing,
 Reality always is seen

²¹⁶⁴ “Because it is covered by adventitious stains ” Alamka 210B

²¹⁶⁵ Playing on the well-known double meaning of *bhaga*, most famously in Buddha’s epithet, *bhagavan*, as “lucky one,” or “one who got lucky ”

²¹⁶⁶ “Because it gives birth to things having the characteristics of the aggregates and so forth ” Alamka 211A

And appears. //7//

It is the clear state
Of the Reality Sphere.
Thus I have explained
Very extensively.
By being free
From object and subject,
[This] wonderful wisdom
Is free from practice. //8//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-first chapter on explaining the meaning of the reality realm.

Chapter Forty-Two

The Explanation of Vajra

Then spoke
The Vajra Lord:
The character
Of the vajra
Is supreme.
Listen [and] I will explain
The meaning of that.
I will explain it exactly! //1//

The vajra is described
As "indestructible."²¹⁶⁷
It relies on the space
Of the five channels,
The supreme nature
Of the five wisdoms.²¹⁶⁸
The nature
Of the five prongs //2//

Is earth, water,
And, similarly, fire,

²¹⁶⁷ Alamka interprets this to mean "It is said that you cannot break a vajra" because he interprets it to mean "because of the addiction of conceptuality you cannot open it, like an outer vajra [a diamond]" 212A-B

²¹⁶⁸ For the variant reading of this verse, *see also* Alamka 27A

Wind and space.
 You should know
 From the lineage guru
 The form of the state
 Of the space
 Of the channels. //3//

The five channels are expressed
 By the seed syllables
 AM, RAM, LAM,
 BAM and YAM.
 You should know them
 With diligence.
 The character of vajra birth²¹⁶⁹
 Dwells in the center
 Of the navel lotus.²¹⁷⁰ //4//

It is explained as
 A stationary drop,
 Known as the state
 Of commitment,
 And it is filled up
 With the supreme nectar.
 It has all forms,
 But is formless;
 It is well known
 As vajra. //5//

It has the nature
 Of the five wisdoms:
 Mirror; equality, individuating,
 All-accomplishing
 And pure Reality Sphere. //6//

Known as the actuality of those,
 The vajra is one's own
 Supreme experience
 It dwells in the great space,
 Peaceful impermanent,
 And unaddicted,
 The basis of Vajrasattva.
 You should know [this]

²¹⁶⁹ *I.e.* the seed syllables Alamka 212B

²¹⁷⁰ Alamka has *nor bu lte bur*, “in the center of the jewel,” instead of the Lhasa *VR*’s *pad ma lte ba’i*, “of the navel lotus ” 212B

From the lineage guru. //7//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-second chapter on the explanation of vajra.

Chapter Forty-Three

Summarizing the Meanings of the Various Families

Then spoke
the Vajra Lord,
Summarizing the meaning
Of the division
Of the families:

Now,
The five types
Of families
Were clearly stated
In the root tantra,
Through analyzing
The yoga of emanation,²¹⁷¹
The commitment
Of *Mahāyoga*. //1//

The ultimate division
Known in the tantra
Is perfectly stated.²¹⁷²
[As] collected
From that very one,
They are also stated
As divided into
One hundred families. //2//

²¹⁷¹ I am following Alamka's *spro ba*, "emanation," here, Alamka 214A, rather than the Lhasa *VR*'s *spros pa*, "elaboration." Alamka discusses the two aspects of emanation, emanation and withdrawal, consistent with the *Root Tantra*. In the *Root Tantra*, the five clans are emanated, *see, e.g.*, Freemantle 1971, 75 ch. 13, vv. 30-42 ("Make the five Buddhas approach the mandalas, then send them out by means of the five rays, and enlightenment will be attained, the emanation of all mantras is twofold, emanation and withdrawal should be done distinguishing between the three Vajra Bodies"). Freemantle notes that "'twofold' refers to the two stages, that of creation and that of realization, 'emanation and withdrawal' belong to the stage of creation." *Id.* 159, n. 10.

²¹⁷² *See also* Alamka 27B for variant reading of this and the prior verse.

By the yoga
 Of elaborating various [deities],
 They [all] are expressed
 As Vajrasattva.
 You see his form,
 Like a variegated jewel. //3//

Because of the liberation
 By the World Teacher,
 Suppressing the various addictions
 Of sentient beings
 Of various faiths
 And of particular
 Various inclinations, //4//

Among the scriptures
 [There is] one
 which in that way
 Is the essence of elaborating
 The various [inclinations].
 By differentiation
 Of the countless [families],
 By adding the countless divisions, //5//

[You arrive at]
 The very division
 Of the ultimate family.
 By statements in other tantras,
 By particular inclinations
 Of sentient beings,
 When they are collected,
 They are divided.
 When you gather those,
 They are countless. //6//

Dividing by the stages
 Of the channel chakras,
 There are
 Seventy-two thousand.
 In those, there are
 Thirty-six thousand
 In the substances
 Of the body and places
 And so forth. //7//

But from that division
 Of the stages
 There are
 Twenty-four thousand.
 After that, whatever
 Is excellently [divided]
 By one hundred,
 From being gathered into
 Seventy-two, sixty four,
 Or thirty-two, //8//

Even from twenty-four,
 And also thirty and nine.
 From that five,
 And, because of that,
 Three.
 Even when collected
 As three,
 [They become] one. //9//

By the practice
 Of the completion stage,
 They mix with one another,
 [Then] go.
 Further, [they go] into the state
 Of clear light.
 The great bliss
 Of non-conceptuality
 Is the stainless wisdom
 Of nonduality,
 The supreme nature
 Of the Reality Sphere. //10//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-third chapter on summarizing the meanings of the various families.

Chapter Forty-Four

Detailed Explanation of the Division of the Seals

Then the Vajra Lord spoke.

The division
Of seals
Is unexcelled,
Expressed as Reality,
Action, Commitment,
And Great Seal.
Through the definitive
Ripening of karma
You are completely sealed.²¹⁷³
Whenever there is action,
The result will be like that. //1//

All things,
Not having intrinsic existence,
Are naturally sealed.²¹⁷⁴
The commitment [seal],
The essence of
Their good qualities,
Sealed by the bodhisattvas, //2//

Is inseparable emptiness
And compassion,
Purifying the Buddha field.
It is the commitment
Of the Tathāgatas
Because of the purifying activities. //3//

The nature of that
Which lacks inherent existence
Is expressed as the Great Seal.
If he knows the action seal,
The mantrin will get
[Some] action.²¹⁷⁵ //4//

²¹⁷³ For variant reading, *see also* Alamka 27B

²¹⁷⁴ This refers to the “reality seal” mentioned in the first verse Alamka 216A

²¹⁷⁵ Alamka has *sngags kyis las su rung ba'i blo*, “the mantrin [has] a mental state of serviceability ”

217A

In the wisdom empowerment,
 The guru illuminates,
 With a compassionate mind,
 The characteristic
 Of exact seeing,²¹⁷⁶
 The meaning
 Of Vajrasattva's own essence. //5//

From him,
 Having attained definitively,
 You ascertain
 From the door,
 Of reality.²¹⁷⁷
 Thus is the wisdom
 Of that reality;
 Thus the character
 Of the yoginī. //6//

He is absorbed in²¹⁷⁸
 And expert in
 The commitment
 And goes to the perfection
 Of the reality
 Of energy-wind.
 He studies the meaning
 Of the glorious Community.
 He finds a woman
 With gentle speech,
 Wisdom and white eyes,
 Adorned with [beautiful] form
 And youth. //7//

Thus he practices
 With the seal
 In the exact yogic commitment.
 When he achieves thatness,
 [It has] the character
 Of the Great Seal. //8//

²¹⁷⁶ Alamka has *ji ltar dpes mtshon mtshan nyid ni*, “the characteristic of showing exactly by example ”

217A

²¹⁷⁷ Alamka has *chos nyid ram mkha' nges pa*, “ascertaining the space of reality,” which he explains as “penetrating” (*nges pa zhes bya ba ni nges par 'byed pa ste*), 217A, rather than the Lhasa VR's *chos nyid sgo nas*, “from the door of reality,” but the reference to the yoginī's *bhaga* is clear in either case

²¹⁷⁸ Alamka has *rtse gcig*, “one-pointed,” instead of the Lhasa VR's *zhen la*, “absorbed in ” 217A

Thatness is the state
 Of great bliss,
 Completely transcending Conceptuality.
 Emptiness is stainless wisdom,
 The lucid state
 Of the Reality Sphere. //9//

Then, moreover,
 What will be explained
 Is the unexcelled division
 Of seals.
 By division of families
 And the perfections,
 Seals are perfectly explained
 To be six. //10//

Through the succession
 Of YAM, RAM, LAM,
 BAM, AM, HAM,
 And the goddesses,
 The process of offering
 Is of one taste.
 You should always
 Make offerings. //11//

The yogi himself,
 In order to attain,
 Should play and stay
 [With] low caste women,
 Washerwomen, women with moles,
 Dancers, undertaker women,
 And brahmin women. //12//

The washerwoman is born
 From the jewel family;
 The low caste woman born
 From the lotus family.
 Similarly, the dancer
 Is [from] the action family;
 The undertaker woman is [from]
 The wheel family; //13//

The woman with a mole²¹⁷⁹

²¹⁷⁹ Skt *pīḷu tilaka*

Is [from] the vajra family;
 And the brahmin woman
 Is the wisdom seal,²¹⁸⁰
 Expressed as the family
 Of Vajrasattva.
 These are the six families. //14//

The brahmin woman
 Is called mother
 And the washerwoman
 Sister.
 The dancer is known
 As daughter;
 The mole woman is known
 As wife. //15//

You should know
 The undertaker woman
 As the new wife,
 The low caste woman
 As mother-in-law.
 By the ritual of wisdom
 And means
 You should express
 Non-conceptually.²¹⁸¹ //16//

Because of that,
 When it becomes
 Non-conceptual,
 In all attainments,
 At all times,
 The mind having become
 Like a mother,
 It also can be
 Perfectly explained
 As sisters. //17//

You should know the body
 As daughter.
 Life energy is manifested
 As wife.
 The daughter-in-law²¹⁸² is

²¹⁸⁰ *I.e.* mother Alamka 219A

²¹⁸¹ Alamka explains that this means either by “experiencing great bliss or by abandoning thoughts of difference ” Alamka 219A

The Evacuative energy-wind.
 The energy-wind
 Of the central [channel]
 Is expressed
 As mother-in-law. //18//

Mother is the
 Portion of the Peak
 Of Inflation.²¹⁸³
 Buddha is the
 Jeweled vessel.
 Sister is the channel
 Of flowing semen,
 Located in the place
 Of the crown. //19//

Daughter is the channel
 Of moving blood,
 [Each of them have]
 An extra half.²¹⁸⁴
 Wife is the channel
 Of flowing urine,
 Located in the middle
 Of that very one.
 Daughter-in-law is the channel
 Of melting tears,
 Particularly located
 In the place of the throat. //20//

Mother is explained
 As earth.
 The water element is expressed
 As sister.
 You should know fire
 As daughter.
 Wind is well known
 As wife.
 Space is explained
 As new wife.
 Great space is
 Mother-in-law. //21//

²¹⁸² Or “new wife,” which accounts for her taste as “spicy,” below

²¹⁸³ A number of the channels of the navel and crown chakras have names containing “Inflation ” *VR* 33A-34A

²¹⁸⁴ See *Alamka* 219B

Because she is sweet,
 Mother.
 Sour is expressed
 As sister.
 Bitter is well known
 As daughter
 And salty as wife.²¹⁸⁵ //22//

You should know bland
 As mother-in-law.
 Spicy is well known
 As new wife.
 You should desire these
 With effort,
 And one who desires attainments²¹⁸⁶
 Should serve them.²¹⁸⁷ //23//

This is the analysis
 Of the action seal
 The supreme one
 Who relies on
 Its good qualities
 Engages in the thought
 Of that commitment,
 The great bliss
 Of the Great Seal. //24//

The peaceful state
 Of Vajrasattva
 Is unexcelled supreme wisdom.
 In that way, the clarification
 Of the state of the seal
 Is in the sphere
 Of the yoginī tantras. //25//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-fourth chapter on the detailed explanation of the division of the seals.

²¹⁸⁵ Snar thang recension of Alamka ends here

²¹⁸⁶ Alamka's *Commentary* ends here, quoting "one who desires attainments should rely on [them]" without explaining the quote, suggesting that more was intended, and either has been lost, or was not completed Alamka 220A

²¹⁸⁷ Sde dge recension of Alamka ends here

Chapter Forty-Five

The Aggregates and So Forth and the Sense Media²¹⁸⁸

Then furthermore
 I will also explain
 The character
 Of the aggregates
 And sense media.
 The Conqueror
 Of Conquerors²¹⁸⁹
 Is stated as "form;"
 The Vajra Holder²¹⁹⁰
 As consciousness; //1//

The Jewel Holder²¹⁹¹
 As feeling;
 Crossing Over
 From Cyclic Existence²¹⁹²
 Is spoken of as perception;
 The Wisdom Holder²¹⁹³
 As compositional factors
 And thus they are spoken of
 As aggregates.²¹⁹⁴ //2//

Earth is explained
 As Moharati,²¹⁹⁵
 Similarly, water
 As Dveṣarati,²¹⁹⁶
 Fire as Rāgarati,²¹⁹⁷
 And, similarly,

²¹⁸⁸ The only Commentary for this chapter is the colophon to it

²¹⁸⁹ Per Alamka (chapter one's quotations from the *VM* in the context of the 82 questions), JINAJIK, Alamka 27B, *i.e.* Varrocana

²¹⁹⁰ Per Alamka, VAJRADRIK, Alamka 27, *i.e.* Aksobhya

²¹⁹¹ Per Alamka, RATNADRIK, Alamka 27B, *i.e.* Ratnasambhava

²¹⁹² Per Alamka, AROLAMKA, Alamka 27B, *i.e.* Amitābha, who "crosses over" from his abode in the Western Paradise to help beings

²¹⁹³ Per Alamka, PRAJÑĀDRIK, Alamka 27B, *i.e.* Amoghasiddhi

²¹⁹⁴ For variant reading of this and prior verse, *see also* Alamka 27B

²¹⁹⁵ Lit, "ignorance ecstasy "

²¹⁹⁶ Lit, "anger ecstasy "

²¹⁹⁷ Lit, "passion ecstasy "

Wind as Vajraratī;²¹⁹⁸
 Space as Vajradhatuiṣvarī. //3//

Form is explained
 As Rūpavajrā;
 Sound as Śabdavajrā,
 Scent as Gandhavajrā
 And taste as Rasavajrā. //4//

Touch becomes
 Sparśavajrā,
 Vajradhatuiṣvarī;
 The two eyes are expressed
 As Kṣitigharba;
 The ears as Vajrapāṇi,
 The nose as Ākhāṣagharba, //5//

The tongue as Lokeśvara,
 And the body
 As Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin.
 The mind is expressed
 As Samantabhadra
 And the channels
 As Meitreya. //6//

Supreme wisdom
 Is perfectly explained
 As Mañśjuśrī,
 Pervading everywhere.
 Similarly, the entities
 Of the body²¹⁹⁹
 Are explained
 As the ten Wrathful Ones. //7//

Thus is stated
 The body mandala.
 You should know
 The aggregates
 And so forth
 [And] the sense media
 And so forth
 By nondual yoga
 From the lineage guru. //8//

²¹⁹⁸ Lit , “vajra ecstasy ”

²¹⁹⁹ Per Professor Jamspal, the five senses and the five sense objects Personal Communication

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-fifth chapter on the aggregates and so forth and the sense media.

Chapter Forty-Six

The Definitive Meaning of The Great Seal

Then, further, [listen to]
What is to be explained:

The character of the meaning
Of the Great Seal.
The result of great yoga
Is peace,
Gathering the meaning
Of great wisdom.²²⁰⁰ //1//

The great good fortune
Of great bliss
Has the nature
Of the great supreme taste.
The great illusion
Is extremely subtle.
The great of great
Is the great sky. //2//

The seal of the wisdom
Of the Tathāgatas
Is the state
Of non-conceptuality,
The abode of indestructible Vajrasattva,
The great bliss
Of non-conceptuality,
Naked, like sky. //3//

Natureless and groundless,
It is non-dual, selfless
And inexpressible.

²²⁰⁰ No variation per Alamka 27B

Self-awaring yogis abandon
 The conceptual aspects
 Of the aggregates, elements
 And sense media. //4//

They abandon meditation,
 What is meditated upon,
 Meditative equipoise
 And the two stages.
 Free from wisdom consciousness,
 They abandon mantra,
 Repetition, expression
 And service. //5//

Crossing over from the place
 Of all things,
 They request great wisdom.
 You should know
 [It] as this great attainment.
 The Great Seal is unexcelled. //6//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-sixth chapter on the definitive meaning of the Great Seal.

Chapter Forty-Seven

The Explanation of the Divisions of the Moods

The yogi who knows
 The divisions of the
 Characteristics of the moods
 Will become a knower
 Of the great yogas,
 A great wisdom one. //1//

He yawns
 From all [these] yogas,
 Trembling, dusty,²²⁰¹

²²⁰¹ *Rdul*, “dust,” sometimes means passion. In the *Saṅkhya* system, *rdul* is *rajas*. Personal Communication with Prof. Lozang Jamspal

Hair standing on end, floating,²²⁰²
 Changing colors, tears melting,
 Dissolving, and courageous:
 These are the eight moods.²²⁰³ //2//

When the channel of
 Partial Inflation²²⁰⁴
 Is inflated,
 It produces trembling.²²⁰⁵
 Similarly, when the channel of
 Expanding Water²²⁰⁶
 Is roused,
 It is the producer
 Of passion. //3//

Similarly, the channel of
 Destruction by Expansion
 Causes the standing
 Of body hairs
 Of the abdomen.²²⁰⁷
 Similarly, the hollow
 Of the *na sa ra*²²⁰⁸ channel
 The burning of the abdomen,²²⁰⁹
 Produces floating. //4//

If you develop
 The Great Tortoise Channel,
 It causes the changing of colors.
 If you develop
 The Great Head Channel,
 It causes fainting and pain. //5//

²²⁰² Reading *lding* for *ldib*

²²⁰³ These are put somewhat differently in Alamka's discussion of the forty-fifth question put by Vajrapāṇi in the first chapter of the *Commentary*

"The division of the tastes and" [means], in the time of engaging in the Great Seal, "the eight moods" of trembling, passion, hairs standing on end, breaking into song, shaking, changing the method, breaking down in tears and goodness. It becomes similar to "What are the divisions of the erotic mood?" The question on the subject of that is the forty-fifth

Alamka 28A

²²⁰⁴ The Ascending energy-wind Alamka 118B

²²⁰⁵ See also Alamka 28A for variant reading of this chapter to here

²²⁰⁶ The Equalizing energy-wind Alamka 118B

²²⁰⁷ Reading *lang* or *ldang*, "rise," for *lngar*, "as five" to be consistent with *spu langs*, two verses above

²²⁰⁸ *Rasanā*? Skt *nasa*, "nose"? *Nasara* is not in Lokesh Chandra or Monier Williams

²²⁰⁹ *Khong stong* Hollow body? Interior? Internal? Abdominal?

If you open
 The Great 'Ur 'Ur Channel,²²¹⁰
 It produces the standing on end
 Of the body hairs.
 If you develop
 The Great Ecstasy Channel,
 It causes tears to drip
 [In] the cavity. //6//

If you open
 The Great Intoxication Channel,
 It causes the dissolving
 Of the Life Energy energy-wind.
 You will experience
 Trance, no-mind [and] great bliss.
 Then you lose awareness.
 Knowing [these]
 As the moods
 Of erotic and so forth,
 Awakens the process
 As explained above. //7//

Whoever develops
 By invoking the Mantra
 JA HŪṂ BAM HOḤ
 [And,] similarly,
 A LA LA LA LA HO,
 Will know by the division
 Of individual moods.
 Thus, it is the lineage
 Of the division of that. //8//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-seventh chapter on the explanation of the parsing of experience.

²²¹⁰ This channel makes the sound “rrrrr ” Personal Communication with Prof Lozang Jamspal

Chapter Forty-Eight

Explaining the Meaning of the Word A HAM

Then spoke
the Vajra Lord:

Whoever perfectly knows
The support
Of the word "I"
Exhausts the fetters
Of the wheel of A HAM,²²¹¹
The characteristic
Of the fetters
Of cyclic existence,
[And] is liberated. //1//

A is the excellence
Of all things.
It dwells particularly
In all bodies.²²¹²
It most supreme
Of all forms, "
"All-pervading, Omniscient, Inexhaustible, unobstructed
Spiritual power,"²²¹³ //2//

Simultaneously arising.
It is neither existence,
Nor the peak of existence,
Nor [meditation on] love.
It is the exhalation
Of the Tathāgatas,
Skilled in making
The supreme emanation body
And achieving all aims. //3//

Free from things,
HAM dwells in the body
But does not produce the body.
Not manifest beyond the senses

²²¹¹ *Aham* is "I" in Sanskrit

²²¹² For variant reading up to this point of this verse and prior verse see Alamka 28A

²²¹³ *I.e. sattva*, the best of the three *guṇas*

It abandons all forms.²²¹⁴ //4//

It is liberated
From thing and no-thing,
Where dwells surpassingly.
All things vanish
And it is the essence
Of the Truth Body. //5//

The out-breath of the mind
Of Vajradhara,
Free from achieving all aims,
[Its] empty nature is Nirvana,
The very nature
Of the Wisdom Body. //6//

Liberated from expressing
And expression,
It is also known
As the syllable HAM.
A HAM pervades everything,
Everywhere,
Always abiding
As the nature of everything. //7//

A HAM specially abides
As the ground pervading
All things.
The person lacking A HAM
Is like a tree whose root
Is cut. //8//

HAM abides
On the hairline;
A at the navel.
Here, A is explained
As a moon.
HAM, which spreads
A thousand rays of light, //9//

Here also relies
On the name of A,
Well known as the support

²²¹⁴ For variant reading of this verse, *see also* Alamka 28A

Of HAM.
 A is explained
 As the Life-energy Energy-wind.
 Similarly,
 The Evacuative energy-wind
 Is expressed as HAM. //10//

When these two
 Become one,
 [There is] cyclic existence
 [Which] therefore is known
 As "A HAM."
 Dwelling free
 From conceptuality,
 A HAM does not abide
 Anywhere. //11//

As for others,
 A few also [say] about this
 That it is ultimately
 Unobservable.
 So the egoists say.
 Hard to find
 In all the tantras. //12//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-eighth chapter on explaining the meaning of the word A HAM.

Chapter Forty-Nine

Analyzing the Characteristics of Emptiness

Then spoke the Vajra Lord:
 The yogi who knows
 The summary of the divisions
 Of emptiness
 Will know emptiness. //1//

Because it is
 A contradictory antidote,
 It is universally taught as

The meditation on emptiness.
 The inner nature of things, [1]
 The antidote to all conceptuality
 And the purification
 Of wrong view,
 Again is asserted
 As emptiness.²²¹⁵ //2//

Free from focusing
 On outer [objects], [2]
 There is also
 No conceptualizing
 Of the inner
 And outer nature of things.
 Here, this is explained
 As the emptiness of
 Outer and inner. [3] //3//

Being free
 From the habitat world
 Is expressed
 As great emptiness [4].
 The wisdom
 By which one sees [things]
 As empty [5]
 Is also expressed
 As emptiness
 Because it later
 Causes contemplation
 In perfect mirror wisdom. //4//

The opposite side of that
 Is empty:
 Empty of the emptiness
 Of non-things [6].
 Knowing in the ultimate
 A false thing
 Is ultimate emptiness [7]
 Because of not perceiving
 The virtue of giving
 And so forth
 As constructed. //5//

²²¹⁵ For variant reading of this verse, *see also* Alamka 28A

Engaging in the characteristics
 Of one's own conceptuality
 Is explained
 As compounded emptiness [8].
 Perfect emptiness
 Is uncompounded;
 Reason is also not perceived,
 Abandoning thing
 And no-thing, stated as
 Uncompounded emptiness [9]. //6//

Prayer for the benefit
 Of sentient beings
 And so forth,
 Not perceived as joyful
 For one's self and so forth,
 Is explained
 As extreme emptiness. [10]
 Abandoning all conceptuality
 Is stated as
 Emptiness going beyond extremes
 [11]. //7//

That very prayer
 For worldly beings
 Without beginning or end
 Is expressed without arrogance.²²¹⁶
 The emptiness lacking
 Beginning and end, [12]
 Not observed in Nirvana,
 The nature of virtue
 Which is not empty
 Is explained as being
 “Without arrogance.” //8//

Emptiness without rejection [13],
 The self naturally purified
 Of the stain of passion
 And so forth,
 Thus is stated
 As lacking arrogance.
 [Its] nature manifests
 As emptiness. //9//

²²¹⁶ Per Lozang Jamsal, when realizing emptiness, you don't think that you are benefitting “them,” because there is no subject, object or action. Personal Communication

The marks and signs
 And so forth,
 The good qualities
 Of his form body,
 Not seen in others,
 [Is] the emptiness
 Of self identity. [14] //10//

The things of the wings
 Of enlightenment,
 Also lacking arrogance
 In practice,
 Is explained as the emptiness
 Of all things. [15] //11//

As for the self
 And things that are produced,
 The excellence
 Of not reifying things,
 Cutting all the fetters,
 Is stated as the emptiness
 Of no-thing. [16] //12//

As stated previously,
 In that way
 You know emptiness
 As a non-thing.
 Again, that very non-perception,
 A non-thing
 Is asserted as emptiness. //13//

In that way
 You analyze emptiness
 Because it is the antidote
 To the instincts.
 You should know [this]
 From the lineage guru. //14//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the forty-ninth chapter on analyzing the characteristics of emptiness.

Chapter Fifty

The Characteristic of Producing the Vajra Rosary of Emptiness

Then spoke the Vajra Lord:

Emptiness is the cause
Of birth,
The actual experience
Of formlessness.
It pervades all bodies
And is the natural body
Of the five aggregates. //1//

It pervades the six chakras
Because it dwells in the center
Of all things.
It is neither far nor near.
Inseparable from the conventional,
Emptiness is the ultimate.
The Vajra Rosary
Is explained like that. //2//

The characteristics
Of the support of life-energy
Are a blue body,
Three faces, three eyes
And six²²¹⁷ excellent arms.
With the right a vajra,
Wheel and jewel,²²¹⁸
[In] the left a bell,
Lotus and very sharp sword,
Brandished and carried,
Respectively. //3//

Arising from vowels
And consonants,
He sits on a moon
And sun seat
On a variegated lotus.

²²¹⁷ Following Alamka's *drug*, "six," instead of the Lhasa Vajra Rosary's *rgya*, "vast "

²²¹⁸ Differs from *sadhana*, which has vajra, wheel and lotus

He sits in the bodhisattva posture. //4//

He arises from
The perfect seed syllable HŪM
And the family of the great vajra.
He cuts and dissolves
The energy-winds
That produce conceptuality. //5//

He clears away the harmful ones,
Eliminating all duality.
Great illusion, great emptiness,
The marvelous ground
Of the Buddha.
Bestows the result
Of Buddhahood. //6//

One should express
The mantra of this:
OM and VAJRA MĀ LE, similarly
ĀḤ and HŪM twice,
Perfectly endowed with
PHAT and SVĀHĀ. //7//

Collecting the supreme mantra
Is unexcelled.
The energy-winds are robbed
By thatness,
Clearing away
The mind's conceptuality.
[In] a peaceful place,
[By] a riverbank,
[By] a tree [at] a crossroad,
Or, where three roads come together,
Clearly repeat [the mantra]
One million times. //8//

You go to supreme attainment
By the yoga
Of the perfection stage.
Its good qualities
Will clearly arise.
You don't need to try
Peaceful [methods]
And so forth. //9//

Complete realization
 In one instant,
 You know it as
 The excellent clan
 Of that very one.
 This ritual of the Solitary Hero
 Accomplishes the Solitary Heroine. //10//

One who meditates
 The characteristics of that,
 The yogi abandoning
 Conceptuality,
 The incarnation
 Of extremely pure sky,
 Goes to his own
 Supreme attainment. //11//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fiftieth chapter
 on the characteristic of generating the vajra rosary of emptiness.

Chapter Fifty-One

Explaining the Night and the Day in Detail

Then spoke the Vajra Lord:

You should know the night
 As wisdom.
 Having dissolved
 All the elements,
 [The yogi] goes,
 Becoming part of the night
 As a moon,²²¹⁹
 The moon being characteristic
 Of Nirvana. //1//

You should know
 The "two types of wisdom
 Of conventional and ultimate,"

²²¹⁹ For variant reading of this verse, *See also* Alamka 28B

As a conventional
 Object of wisdom.
 The ultimate [wisdom]
 Abandons touch.
 Whatever bliss is free
 From touch,
 That supreme bliss
 It is hard to attain. //2//

What's more, the day
 Is explained as means.
 Means arises in the day,
 And at that time
 The real thing is born: the Sun.
 He always becomes
 The Lord of the *bhaga*. //3//

The worldly aspect
 Becomes the Sun.
 From the Sun,
 The moon is born.
 From that, non-duality,
 Explained as reality.
 In order to blaze,
 He becomes the Sun. //4//

The ultimate that is
 Subjected to analysis,
 And the body that is
 Free from passion,
 Subtle, invisible and empty,
 And the peaceful state
 Of clear light,
 Do not abide
 Anywhere. //5//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-first chapter on explaining the night and day in detail.

Chapter fifty-Two

Explaining the Vowels and Consonants in Detail

Then spoke the Vajra Lord:

The commitment
Of the vowels and consonants,
Is the intention
[Of the Buddhas]
For the children
Of the Conqueror,
Not stated in other tantras. //1//

You develop
A mandala of letters
Having thirty-three
Consonants,
[With] the characteristic
Of the radiating light
Produced from the state
Of clear light. //2//

The state of radiance
Arises from luminance,
Inexhaustible.
You spread the *ali* mandala,
Having sixteen vowels.²²²⁰ //3//

From the secret joining
Of these two,
Great bliss which is
Produced in the center,
Is “the commitment
Of the alphabet,”
Specially made through
Intentional words,
The supreme subtle wisdom
You should know
From the lineage guru. //4//

²²²⁰ For variant reading, *see also* Alamka 28B

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-second chapter on explaining the vowels and consonants in detail.

Chapter Fifty-Three

Explaining the Interval²²²¹ in Detail

Then furthermore listen
And I will explain.
The character of
The interval is unexcelled.
The interval,
Free from light
And non-light,
Arises from the Wisdom Vajra.²²²² //1//

It abides in the center,
Mixing with non-duality.
It abandons defiling
And polluting.
Deathlessly born
From the vajra and lotus,
It perfectly mixes
With the moon and sun. //2//

The interval,
Not perfectly going

²²²¹ The basic meaning of *mtsams* is “interval.” See Thurman 1995, 257. However I think that “twilight” might also be appropriate here given *VR*’s chapter fifty-one’s description of luminance and radiance as night and day, and also because Locho Rinpoche explained that the reverse *nyer thob* that follows final mind isolation does not have the “fainting” that follows dissolution of the seven ignorance instincts, so that there would be no “gap” there. Personal Communication 10-7-08. In his *The Ultimate Personal Instruction: Explanation of the Stage of Manifest Enlightenment*, *man ngag gi mthar thug mngon par byang chub pa’i rim pa’i bshad pa rjes mdzad pa bzhugs so*, Tsong kha pa, explaining this passage from the *Five Stages*, says: “By ‘the twilight is the luminance-imminence, one proceeds through these not just once through one’s own natural instincts,’ [and] by ‘with respect to the three time periods and the three luminances it is not the night, not the day and not the interval between them,’ [Nāgārjuna means that] it is the joining of the four emptinesses and the dawn.” 7B

²²²² The Wisdom Vajra is discussed earlier in *VR* Chapter 6, 15A

The Wisdom Vajra always
Resides in the space
In the lotus bud of the heart. Flanking [it] above and below
Abide the Life-energy energy-wind
And the great Evacuative Wind

To the end,
 Purifies cyclic existence
 Without [any] interval.^{2223 2224}
 Its own essence
 Is the supreme form,
 [Its] characteristic subtlety
 Is inconceivable. //3//

It is explained
 As supremely purifying
 The experiencing
 Of Vajradhara's queen,
 The interval [between lives]
 Of all living beings
 Abandoning Transcendent Ecstasy
 And so forth. //4//

It is the supremely
 Peaceful place at the peak
 Of the knot,
 Like the core of a pea.
 Because the Night Lord²²²⁵ arises
 The upper state²²²⁶ remains. //5//

It perfectly remains,
 In four aspects
 As your own essence
 [In the form] some drops.²²²⁷
 Some of the beginning ones
 And so forth
 Are abandoned.
 Some are, moreover,
 Unobservable.
 It has its own nature,
 And is therefore
 Inexpressible. //6//

²²²³ For variant reading of this chapter up to here, see Alamka 29A

²²²⁴ *Mtshams med* also refers to the five acts of immediate retribution, *i.e.* going directly to hell without the interval of the *bardo*

²²²⁵ *I.e.* the moon, *i.e.* enlightenment spirit

²²²⁶ The Life energy energy-wind above the knot remains there after the Evacuative energy-wind coming from below is consumed?

²²²⁷ Lozang Jamspal interprets this as meaning that as the enlightenment spirit rises, some drops remain at the crown, throat etc Personal Communication

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-third chapter on explaining the twilight in detail.

Chapter Fifty-Four

The Extensive Actions of the Twenty Rituals

Then the Vajra Lord spoke.

The mere names of the twenty aspects are explained as the activities of the masters. To develop well the yoga of mantra: //1//

Preliminary service [1],
Purifying the land [2],
Banishing spirits [3],
Occupying the land [4],
Inspecting the thread line [5],
Consecration [6], //2//

Banishing obstacles [7],
Similarly, making
The mandala threadline clear [8],
Placing the dagger [9],²²²⁸
Consecrating the vessel [10], //3//

Consecration of the Lords [11],
Bathing [12], Purifying [13],
Making offerings [14],
Making a firm request
For the deities to stay [15],
The ritual cake [16],
Consecration of the disciples [17], //4//

The fire offering
According the ritual [18],
Empowerment [19]
And requesting [the deities]
To go [20].
Thus are the activities
Of the twenty rituals.

²²²⁸ At the ends of the lines - in the four directions?

Whoever knows those
Is a *jagatguru*. //5//

A vajra holding monk
Should do [these].
The shaking of a finger
Warning the devils
Is supreme.
Absorbed in repeating
The three letters,
The vajra vehicle
Especially liberates. //6//

For one who [practices]
The peaceful [activities]
And so forth,
[Liberation] always dwells
In the palm of [your] hand.
By those perfect procedures,
The supreme ritual should be done. //7//

The yogi should undertake
Amyoga and so forth,
The rituals and so forth.
You should recite
The heart mantra of Viṣkambini,
The supreme twenty-four syllables,
Ten thousand times. //8//

The wise [do this] first exactly,
To clear away all obstacles.
[This] is explained
As "preliminary service." //9//

After that,
When you repeat
Wholeheartedly the three letters
As ten thousand,
It bestows the attainment
Of [getting] whatever you wish for,
Serving as the cause
[Of] attainments in the disciples. //10//

You sweep [the ground]
[In a place] isolated
From people,

Occupying land
Near water.
You should not practice
Too close to
Or too far from a village. //11//

[On] gentle land,
Without [wild] beasts,
Far from the king's palace,
Far from home
Or market time,
Or²²²⁹ in the support
Of the Sugata²²³⁰
With [your] fingers
You should arrange the mantra
Of the Sugatas.²²³¹ //12//

Having made
A dagger²²³² of teak,
One *khru*²²³³ and four fingers
In length,
You wash it
With the water
Of the three syllables.
With the hundred syllable mantra
Seven times //13//

And the three letter [mantra]²²³⁴
You dig²²³⁵
To [where you reach] groundwater,
Or, two and one-half *khru*,
Or you mentally purify. //14//

²²²⁹ According to Lozang Jamspal if you're practicing in your house, not in solitude Personal Communication

²²³⁰ According to Lozang Jamspal, image or stupa Personal Communication

²²³¹ According to Professor Jamspal, maybe counting OM AH HŪM on the fingers in the Indian way Personal Communication

²²³² See Mayer 1991 ("Not only was the *kīla* known and used in India in some form or another, but that characteristic form that we now call the Tibetan-style *phur-ba* might also be of surprisingly orthodox Indian provenance, and this in turn implies that the allegedly 'apocryphal' texts describing it might also in fact be genuine translations from Sanskrit")

²²³³ From elbow to end of fingers

²²³⁴ According to Professor Jamspal, perhaps before this you wrote OM AH HŪM on the dagger Personal Communication

²²³⁵ According to Professor Jamspal, maybe digging along the thread line Personal Communication

You let the ghost
 Who lives there go,
 [Reciting] OM MAHĀ
 KRO DHA DZWA LĀRKA, Perfectly endowed
 With HŪM PHAT
 At the end.
 Thus, you should
 Expel the ghosts,
 The mantra visualized
 On [your] palms
 Placed together. //15//

Striking the palms
 Three times on the ground,
 Repeat the mantra, saying
 UD GTZTSA twice.
 Say SARBA BHŪ TA
 GRA HA UD GTZTSA,
 With the three letters
 At the end. //16//

That is explained
 As BADZRA STĀ VE.²²³⁶
 Having given the torma
 As stated in all [ritual] actions,
 Let [him] go.
 Afterwards, the Vajra Master
 Should start
 Occupying the ground. //17//

Without burning²²³⁷
 Or having to purify,²²³⁸
 With equanimity
 And without discomfort,
 The wise one should also
 Make [the ground] even
 And smooth like a mirror. //18//

He should smear [the ground]
 With the five types,²²³⁹

²²³⁶ Vajrasattva?

²²³⁷ Reading *tshwa sgo*, “burning,” for *tsha rgo*, “salty ”

²²³⁸ Reading *ma bsal*, “without having to purify,” for *ma gsal*, “unclear ”

²²³⁹ I.e. of cow parts Apte p 587, col 3 curds, clarified butter, ghee, urine, dung, p 293 *ba byung lnga*
 are cow dung, urine, milk, butter and yoghurt

Cow dung and so forth.
 After smearing, to purify,
 The master,
 With a wrathful body
 And the vajra
 Of the Mañjuvajra mandala,²²⁴⁰ //19//

With the form
 Of supreme Acala,
 With soft cotton or hemp
 Braided in three strands,
 Equalizes everything
 With the thread line. //20//

He makes part into a square;
 The vajrin should hold
 Three cubits by three cubits
 Into four corners.
 He should abandon the fault
 Of covering the part
 Of the string in its the center. //21//

He should place relics
 Or jewels [there].
 Having purified well,
 He makes the blessing.
 Joining the three letters
 And also SVĀ HĀ
 In the middle of PHAT,
 He should also repeat
 This mantra very clearly
 One hundred and eight [times]. //22//
 Then having drawn
 The Brahma line,²²⁴¹
 He should repeat
 The hundred syllable [mantra].
 After that, he should scatter
 A rain of flowers on it, //23//

Saying the mantra OM
 And A MO GHA PADMO.
 Similarly, later on,
 BA SU DHA RI DHA RA twice,

²²⁴⁰ *I.e.* the nineteen-deity mandala of the Jñānapada system

²²⁴¹ Per Lozang Jamspal, the Brahma line means in the middle Personal Communication

[Then] DHA RA NI
MANDA LI HŪM. //24//

He should purify by
The hundred syllable mantra
And by washing with foot water
On the thread line
Up to three times.
He should strike the line
With the three syllables.²²⁴² //25//

The vajrin should again strike
The perfect thread line
At the four corners
And the four doors,
Beginning in the east,
Then the north,
Then as far as the south
And the west,
And in the intermediates. //26//

He should measure
By plumb line
The intermediate [direction]
Of the southeast
And the intermediate [direction]
Of northwest.
He should make a straight line
[Between] the four corners, //27//

Three concentric circles,
Four doors, beautified
By three vajra rosaries.
He strikes the two
Brahma threads.²²⁴³
From that, Indra's Palace,
A perfect line in all respects,
The visible dwelling place
Of all the Conquerors. //28//

From that, he draws
The vajra-holder.

²²⁴² Per Lozang Jamspal, striking the line so it leaves a line of water and say OM AH HŪM Personal Communication

²²⁴³ Per Prof Jamspal, east to west and south to north Personal Communication

Moreover, by application
 Of actions²²⁴⁴ or substances,
 Jewel powder or flowers
 Of five different colors,
 In exact stages,
 He should draw
 The symbolic hand gestures
 And so forth. //29//

As for the family
 Of Akṣobhya
 [In] complexion,
 Symbolic hand gestures
 And so forth,
 Her should place [them]
 In the center.
 Dividing the respective complexions
 Of the Conqueror of Conquerors,²²⁴⁵
 The Jewel Holder,²²⁴⁶
 The Transcender
 Of Cyclic Existence,²²⁴⁷
 And the Wisdom Holder,²²⁴⁸
 He should arrange [them]
 In the eastern direction
 And so forth. //30//

He should exactly place
 Ignorance, hatred, lust
 And vajra ecstasy, respectively,
 In the intermediate [directions]
 Of fire and so forth. //31//

Seven are on
 Variegated lotuses
 And a moon seats;
 Two others are on
 A sun [seat].
 A delightful retinue,
 Making hatred joyous,

²²⁴⁴ *I.e.* per Prof. Jamspal, hand mudras in substitution of substances Personal Communication

²²⁴⁵ Vairocana

²²⁴⁶ Ratnasambhava

²²⁴⁷ Amitābha

²²⁴⁸ Amoghasiddhi

Adorned with a row
Of pillars. //32//

With three faces
And six arms,
In the left they hold
The sword of wisdom.
They should offer
To the center mandala
Exactly the forms
And shapes [described here]. //33//

Place vajras and so forth
In the intermediate part
Of the outside form.
On a cloth in the east
And so forth,
Entirely visualize
Meitreyā and Kṣitigarbha
In the east,
Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi
In the south,
And Akāśagarbha and Lokēśvara
In the west. //34//

Place Sarvanivaraṇa
And Samantabhadra
In the north.
Each has three faces
And six hands,
Carrying a sword
In the left. //35//

Vajrapāṇi sits on
A stainless sun mandala.
For the goddesses
There are moon seats.
All appear above
A variegated lotus. //36//

Place the symbolic hand gestures
And so forth
Arising from the family
Of Vairocana.
Place Yamāntaka
And so forth

In the eastern doors
And so forth. //37//

Each with three faces
And six hands,
Similarly holding a sword
In the left.
Acala and so forth are
In the intermediate [directions],
The actual nature
Of Yamāntaka. //38//

They have three faces
And six hands.
You should think
Of a sword in the left
Because the left
Is the nature of wisdom.
Similarly, the sword
Is stated to be
In the left. //39//

Similarly, place Sumbha
And Uṣṇīṣa below
And above.
The wrathful ones
Are sitting on suns.
Similarly, [on]
Variegated lotus seats. //40//

Similarly, place a figure
Symbolizing a mace
And so forth.
Similarly, five drawings
Of the pure Tathāgatas
Should be placed. //41//

On them, a garland
Of blazing vajras.
Two walls encircled
With nets of jewels,
Yak tails and the cloth
Of goddesses,
Marked with pillars,
Arches and wheels,
Adorned with the figures

Of deer. //42//

Umbrellas and victory banners
And so forth are explained
As adorned with yak tails,
Fans and mirrors
And so forth.
They are supported
By Buddhas. //43//

The mandala
Of the supreme teacher
Is the reflection
Of one's own body.
The activities
Of the Vajra master
Have previously banished
The obstructions. //44//

Therefore you should place
At the eastern door
The word SUM BHA
And SUM BHA,
With an OM first
And with the wonderful part,
Having two HŪM's and PHAT
At the end. //45//

The intelligent place
In the south OM
And "GRIHNA GRIHNA,"
With two HŪM's and a PHAT
At the end.
You should elaborate
In the west OM and
Two GRIHNA BA YA's. //46//

After that you also place
In the north OM Ā NA YA
HO BHA GA WĀ NA
and BIDYA RĀ DZA,
Placing two HŪM's
And a PHAT
At the end. //47//

Having summoned
 The wicked ones,
 Then the Tantrika
 Should strike
 With the dagger.
 The dagger is made
 Of khadira wood,
 And has the measure
 Of twelve fingers. //48//

[Its] three points are marked
 By the three letters.
 Repeating individually
 The hundred syllables,
 Having purified [it]
 With mantric water,
 Place [it] in the prime
 And intermediate directions. //49//

[Saying] OM
 And the letter GHA twice,
 Similarly GHĀ TA YA twice,
 "SARBBA DUSTHAM PHAT,"
 And, similarly,
 KĪ LA YA twice, and //50//

SARBA PĀ PAM PHAT,
 And HŪM thrice,
 BADZRA KĪ LA YA
 BADZRA DHA RA
 A DZNYĀ PA YA
 TI KĀ YA WĀ KA
 TSITTA VAJRA
 And the syllables
 KĪ LA YA HŪM PHAT
 At the end,
 Strike with the dagger. //51//

OM and VAJRA MUD GA RA
 VAJRA KĪ LĀ YA Ā KO TA,
 SA and two HŪM's and PHAT
 [At the] end,
 Are stated as striking
 With mantra and dagger. //52//

The vajra penetrating
 The obstructions
 And so forth
 [Has the] meaning
 Of banishing [them].
 By the vajra wall
 And the net of arrows above,
 And the variegated vajra below,
 And by the mantra of Uṣṇīṣa. //53//

Through the ritual
 Of consecration,
 Whether using ten vessels
 Or six made of pure²²⁴⁹ jewels,
 Fill [them] up
 With the five medicines,
 The five fruits,
 The five grains and so forth. //54//

Adorn [the vessels]
 With the five jewels
 And the five leaves of jasmine
 And so forth.
 Put saffron, musk, camphor
 And sandalwood in the water.
 Make offerings of flowers
 And so forth. //55//

Consecrate each
 By the mantra of each one.
 [Say] the mantras
 VADZRA DRIK, DZI NA DZIK,
 RATNA DRIK, Ā RO LIK,
 And, similarly, PRA DZNYĀ DRIK, //56//

By light rays
 In the form of hooks,
 [Invite them] from the realm
 Of Akaniṣṭa,
 Lift up the vessel yourself.
 Then, having invited them,
 Let them enter. //57//

²²⁴⁹ Reading *dag*, “pure,” for *drag*, “fierce ”

Then emanate the form
 Of the goddesses.
 After that,
 You should place
 The others.
 You repeat OM
 And RU RU SPHU RU and,
 After that, say
 DZWA LA TISHTHA. //58//

Similarly, recite
 "IDHĀ LO TSA NI
 SARBBA ARTHA
 SĀ DHA NE SVĀ HA."
 Completing the aspect
 Of the Locanā,
 You should make offerings
 In the center
 Of the vessel.²²⁵⁰ //59//

OM and SHAM KA RE
 And also, from that,
 SHĀNTAM KU RU
 And, similarly, GHU TI GHU TI
 And GHU TI NE, GHU TI NE,
 And GHĀ TA YA twice.
 Say the mantra SVĀ HA
 At the end. //60//

You should offer
 In the center
 Of the vessel,
 Completing the aspect
 Of Māmakī.
 [Say] OM and KA TA BI KA TE
 NI KA TE KA TAM KA TE
 KA RO TA BĪ RYE SVĀ HĀ.
 Having completed the aspect
 Of Pāṇḍarāvasinī,
 You should make offerings
 In the center of the vessel. //61//

²²⁵⁰ Reading *bum pa* for *bum ba*

Place OM and TĀ RE
 TUTTĀ RĀ TU RE SVĀ HĀ.
 Having completed the aspect
 Of Tārā,
 You should make offerings
 In the center of the vessel. //62//

For Yamāntaka and the others
 And so forth,
 [Do] all the activities in one:

OM NA MAH SA MANTA
 KĀ YA VA KA TSI TTA
 BADZRA NĀM NA MAH
 BADZRA KRO DHĀ YA
 MA HĀ DESHTO
 TA KA TA BHAI RA BĀ YA
 A SI MU SA LA PA RA SHU PĀ
 SHA HASTĀ YA
 OM AM RI TA KUNDA LI
 KHA KHA KHĀ HI KHĀ HI
 TISHTHA TISHTHA
 BANDHA BANDHA
 HA NA H ANA
 DA HA DA HA
 GARDZDZA GARDZDZA
 BI SPHO TA YA BI SPHO TA YA
 SARBBA BIGHNAM
 BI NĀ YA KĀN
 MA HĀ GA NA PA TI
 DZĪ BI TA ANTA KA RĀ YA
 HŪM PHAT SVĀ HĀ //63//

Repeat the essence mantra²²⁵¹
 Which is all activities,
 Up to seven times.
 You should make offerings
 To the Lord of the family. //64//

Visualize up to seven times
 The hundred syllable mantra.
 Also say the three letters
 Through the process

²²⁵¹ Per Lozang Jamspal this refers to OM AH HŪM, Personal Communication, but I would think it refers to this long one since the three letters are referenced below

Of one hundred eight.²²⁵²
 Then with the yoga
 Of [visualizing] yourself
 As the deity,
 You should offer the bowl
 Of excellent offerings. //65//

Then, having covered
 The incense pot,
 Smoking with camphor
 And aloe,
 You should consecrate
 Each one's mantra there
 In turn. //66//

In the form²²⁵³
 Of three faces
 And six arms,
 Like the sky
 Free from clouds.
 [Their] hands like
 The complexions
 Of [their] bodies,
 Embracing their own
 Reflection bodies.²²⁵⁴
 Arisen from²²⁵⁵ vowels
 And consonants,²²⁵⁶
 Sitting on
 Variegated lotus seats, //67//

Sitting in the center
 Of a measureless mansion
 In the realm
 Of the delightful Akanīṣṭa field,
 Together with the mandala retinue,
 With the five Buddhas
 As crown ornaments,
 [Thus] you visualize [them],
 Light rays emanating from them. //68//

²²⁵² *I.e.* one hundred eight times

²²⁵³ Following Stok Palace's *rnam pa*, "form," p 457, rather than Lhasa's *nam kha*, "sky "

²²⁵⁴ *I.e.* their consorts

²²⁵⁵ Reading *las* for *la sa*

²²⁵⁶ Ignoring the *tshig*, reading *las*, "from," rather than *la sa*, "ground to " Professor Jamspal points out that the vowels are considered to be female Personal Communication

The Master having said
 The mantra,
 You should invite [them]
 With [light ray] hooks
 Of the five colors.
 You say: "E HYE HI
 And BA GA WĀN²²⁵⁷
 SA MA YA MA NU SMA RA
 TISHTHA twice
 And SA MA YA.
 Then A NU SMA RA twice. //69//

[Say] vajra body,
 Speech and mind²²⁵⁸
 And at the end
 SVĀ HĀ three times.
 You should invite Mañjuvajra.
 He sits on his own
 Particular seat,
 Invited to the middle
 Of the mandala,
 With the mandala ones,²²⁵⁹
 And you should worship. //70//

Making offerings
 With divine flowers,
 Their own respective mantras,
 You should worship
 The supreme mandala.
 "I, this name,²²⁶⁰
 By applying
 Whatever things [I have],
 Bow down to this,
 The city of the Reality Sphere,
 The mandala. //71//

Having thought [of me]
 With love, O Lord,
 Please accept this.
 OM SARBBA

²²⁵⁷ "Oh Lord, come in "

²²⁵⁸ *I.e. OM AH HŪM.*

²²⁵⁹ Following Stok Palace's *khor pa*, "mandala one," rather than Lhasa's *khor ba*, "cyclic existence "

²²⁶⁰ *I.e. your own name*

TA THĀ GĀ TA NĀM
 BŪ DZO²²⁶¹ BA STHĀ NA YA
 ĀTMA NĀM NI KONAM²²⁶²
 NI RYĀ TA YĀ MI.["]

The guru says

The three letters. //72//

Having made [oneself
 Into] the deity,
 Then you should make
 Offerings to yourself.
 You say: "OM SARBBA
 TA THĀ GA TA PŪ DZA
 BADZRA SVA BHĀ RBA²²⁶³
 ĀTMA KONY HAM." //73//

Having made your own
 Divine pride,
 You should worship
 The mothers,²²⁶⁴
 Harmful ones,²²⁶⁵ and the sinless,²²⁶⁶
 Who are created
 [And] the Lord
 Of the mandala
 Who arises from the family
 Of great hatred.²²⁶⁷ //74//

After that,
 You should consecrate the deities,
 Very delightful,
 Dressed in various
 Divine garments.
 [The vessel] smokes
 With camphor and agru²²⁶⁸.
 Having purified by mantra,
 You should cover [the vessel]. //75//

²²⁶¹ Stok Palace has *P* for Lhasa's *B*

²²⁶² Stok Palace has *atmāko*, but per Prof. Jamspal, short *A* is better. Personal Communication

²²⁶³ Stok Palace has *BA* for Lhasa's *RBA*, which makes sense for Skt. *svabāva*

²²⁶⁴ *I.e.* goddesses

²²⁶⁵ *I.e.* wrathful deities

²²⁶⁶ *I.e.* bodhisattvas

²²⁶⁷ *I.e.* Aksobhya

²²⁶⁸ *Agru* is less prized than sandalwood, most prized is white sandalwood, then red, then *agru*. Personal Communication with Prof. Lozang Jamspal

Having said OM
 And TISHTHA
 BADZRA HOH,
 You should remain
 As the supreme mandala.
 The intelligent one says OM
 And SPA RA²²⁶⁹ BADZRA HOH. //76//

Scooping up the flowers
 With [your] palms
 [And] scattering [them],
 [You tell] the ones
 Excellently remaining there,
 That they should go.
 You should see
 The supreme mandala
 In all of its detail. //77//

Having meditated
 On the image
 Of the Lords
 With the good natures
 Of the five families,
 You bathe [them]
 In mirrors and so forth,²²⁷⁰
 And, similarly, substances²²⁷¹
 And milk and so forth,
 Just as with a newborn,
 Also, offering a bath
 [For] all the Tathāgatas,
 [Saying] Similarly I offer
 The bathing of the body. //78//

In the middle
 Of the crown ornament
 Of Vajrasattva,
 The three letters are intertwined.
 You should say SVĀ HĀ
 At the end.
 You know the ritual
 Of that very action.

²²⁶⁹ Professor Jamspal spreading?

²²⁷⁰ *I.e.* pouring water over the mirror reflection of the deities Personal Communication with Prof Lozang Jamspal

²²⁷¹ You bathe them with saffron and sugar and so forth Personal Communication with Prof Lozang Jamspal

After that, you should do
The prepared tormā. //79//

You should say the mantra
OM SARBBA Ā BAR NA
SHUDDHA SARBBA
BĀ BAM and DI²²⁷²
SHUDDHA BADZRA
HŪM PHAT,
With SVĀHĀ at the end. //80//

Having [made] the mudra
Of the PHAM circling
And having burnt
White mustard seeds,
You dispel the addictions.
By [the hand gesture of]
Embracing and turning²²⁷³
You should give [them] up.²²⁷⁴ //81//

After that,
According to ritual,
Make offerings well.
You should offer cymbals
And music and so forth
To the Lord.
Afterwards, you say
The respective mantras
Of each [offering]: //82//

OM SARBBA TA THĀ GA TA
BUSHPA PŪ DZA MEGHA
And SA MU DRA
And SPHA RA NA SA MA YA
And SHRI YE ĀH HŪM. //83//

Each substance has
Its own name.
The aforementioned form
And so forth
Should be said according to ritual,

²²⁷² Stok Palace has *bu* for Lhasa's *vi*

²²⁷³ The lotus turning mudra?

²²⁷⁴ Presumably, the addictions

[With] the elegant gestures
Of Vajrasattva. //84//

The Vajra Master
Knows the ritual.
With these mantras
You should make consecration.
You should repeat OM
And SU PRA TISHTHA
And BADZRA SVĀ HĀ
At the end. //85//

Having placed
The three letters
The essence of
Body, speech and mind,
You should make a rain
Of flowers.
The Vajra Master
With a host of disciples,
Being stirred up by song,
When awakened,
Make prostrations. /86//

[“]I, the yogi,
Lord of all actions,
Make the torma,
The accomplishment
Of all goals.[”]
Pure and skilled
In action,
With the elegant movements
According to ritual, //87//

He offers with flowers
And so forth,
Chang and various meats,
And similarly sweet milk,
Cooked rice, ground *puri*,
Puri bread,
Many millions
Of peas and pure water
In ten vessels filled with water. //88//

By speaking
The ten wrathful mantras,

According the previous ritual,
 All ghosts being
 In the center of that,
 You give a wonderful
 Great torma. //89//

In accordance with
 The previous ritual,
 Burning sesame
 With particular food,
 The intelligent one
 Should recite the mantras.
 This accomplishes all goals. //90//

OM BRAHMA DE VA TĀ
 SARBBA INDRA DA SHA
 LO KA RAKSHA KA NĀ GA
 GANDHARBBA KUṂ BHĀNDA
 YAKSHA BHŪ TA
 GA NĀ TA THĀ
 PRE TA UD²²⁷⁵ GA TA
 PI SHĀ TSI A PA²²⁷⁶ SMA RE²²⁷⁷ //91//

DĀ KI NĪ GRA HA²²⁷⁸
 BI GHNAM MĀ KSHI²²⁷⁹
 GA NĀH SARBBA
 TA THĀ GATA AGNI
 MA RA GRA HĀ
 OM DZO BHAKSHA
 MA HĀ TE DZA
 MA NU SHYA NAMA²²⁸⁰
 BI HIM SA KA
 MU DRĀ²²⁸¹ MANTRA
 A DHI DHO BYAH²²⁸² CA //92//

GRA HĀ NAKSHATRA
 MANUŚA

²²⁷⁵ Per Stok, Lhasa has U

²²⁷⁶ Per Stok, Lhasa has BA

²²⁷⁷ Per Stok, Lhasa has SMARA

²²⁷⁸ Per Stok, Lhasa has HĀ

²²⁷⁹ Stok may have MĀDRA, or that might be better per Lozang Jamspal

²²⁸⁰ Stok has SHĀNĀSHĀNAMA

²²⁸¹ Lhasa has MUDRA

²²⁸² Stok has visarga, Lhasa does not

I MAM BA LIM
 PRA GRI HNANTUM²²⁸³
 SIDDHI MME
 PRAYA TSTSHANTU ME
 SANDHA
 SA TYA MA NE SHU
 KA RA ME SHU
 SAT SA HA YA BHA BANTU TSE
 DHĀ NA DHĀ NA
 SU PA RA NA NYTSA //93//

DHA DĀNTU MA MA TO SHĪ TA
 I TI U PĀ TRA NA²²⁸⁴
 TRO SHA NI SAT VĀ TA NĀ
 MA NĀ SHA YANTU²²⁸⁵ TSE.
 First OM
 And ĀH HŪM PHAT.
 At the end SVĀ HĀ,
 Making all actions. //94//

Thus reciting this mantra
 In the vessel,
 Sporting as Vajrasattva,
 He consecrates the disciple.
 Adorned with the good qualities
 [Of] these characteristics, //95//

He washes [them]²²⁸⁶
 With the water
 Of sandalwood,
 Camphor and musk
 Cleansing the stains
 Of mind. //96//

Sending all possessions,
 Wearing clean clothing
 As an offering,
 Having made
 A multi-storied house,
 With decorated textile
 Curtains all around,

²²⁸³ Per Stok, Lhasa has PRAGR

²²⁸⁴ Per Stok, Lhasa has UPĀTĀNA

²²⁸⁵ Per Stok, Lhasa has MANASHAYANTU

²²⁸⁶ The disciples

Perfectly endowed
 With the three letters,
 The Vajrin sprinkles
 The water mantra
 In front seven times,
 Purifying the stain
 Born from karma. //97//

Then you place
 Kṣitigarba and so forth
 On the eyes and so forth.
 Touching each
 Of the sense faculties
 With the two middle fingers,²²⁸⁷
 You should say the mantra
 And bless [them]
 By the yoga
 Of the body mandala. //98//

You repeat OM
 And TSAKSHU TSAKSHU²²⁸⁸
 And SA MANTA
 And TSA KSHU.²²⁸⁹
 You say this mantra
 MAI TRI SATVA LO TSA NE²²⁹⁰
 SARBBA ARTHA SĀ DHA NI,
 With SVĀ HĀ
 At the end. //99//

You put the thumb
 And middle finger together.
 Having applied foot bathing water
 To the feet,
 You should repeat
 That mantra three times.
 You should touch each
 Of the disciples' eyes
 With the thumb mudra.²²⁹¹ //100//

Having said

²²⁸⁷ Per Lozang Jamspal, the ring and middle fingers Personal Communication

²²⁸⁸ Per Stok, Lhasa has CHAKSHA

²²⁸⁹ This mantra is from Stok Palace, per Prof Jamspal's suggestion Personal Communication

²²⁹⁰ Following Stok Palace's LOCANE rather than Lhasa's LOCANI

²²⁹¹ Per Lozang Jamspal, the thumb sticking up from the fist Personal Communication

The hundred syllable mantra
 Three times for the thread
 Of one cubit and four fingers,
 The lasso and the noose
 You should purify
 With water for washing
 The feet. //101//

Wrapping the thread around
 Three times and tying [it]
 On the left arm
 With a knot of three vajras,
 You should say this mantra
 Three times. //102//

The sound of OM
 And this mantra of
 LO TSA NE,
 YA TA TVATTAM
 SAM PRA TAM,
 The sound of MAM BHA BI
 SHYANTI,²²⁹² RAM
 And RATNA TRA YĀ YA
 SIDDHI NA NI DA DA SHA YA
 SVĀ HĀ. //103//

Scatter flowers on the disciples.
 Then Vajradhara should make
 A triangle
 By measuring twelve fingers.²²⁹³
 Meditate a blessing
 By the three letters.²²⁹⁴
 You should hand [it]
 To the disciples. //104//

Having repeated
 The mantra
 OM and PRA TI BADZRA
 And SA MANTA and Ī SHVA RI,
 Ending in ĀH HŪM SVĀHĀ,
 The disciple should throw

²²⁹² Per Stok, Lhasa has SHUDDHE

²²⁹³ Measuring on the cord 4 fingers on each side, making a triangle Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

²²⁹⁴ *I.e.* visualizing that a blessing is coming Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

[The thread] away. //105//

Seeing whatever direction
The dagger falls,
The master and disciples
Should sleep
Facing that direction. //106//

At dawn, [the disciples] request
Of the guru all the meanings
Of whatever is seen [in dreams].
Having focused on that,
As for the fire offering,
By division into peaceful
And so forth,
You should pacify
All activities and obstacles. //107//

Vajrasattva, with elegant gestures,
According to the exact yogic ritual,
Here, as before,
Should give the tormas
To pacify obstacles. //108//

Then the disciple
Should make supplication.
Infused with the compassion
Of the Vajra Master,
Having put palms together,
Prostrating to the one
Sitting in front,²²⁹⁵ //109//

"Oh Great Joyous One,
You are my teacher!
So please listen!
Teach the method
Of great enlightenment!
I seek the great refuge! //110//

Please bestow
That very pledge
And give me the vows!²²⁹⁶
Oh Lord!

²²⁹⁵ Assuming *bahuvrīhi*.

²²⁹⁶ *Scol* instead of *scal* per suggestion of Lozang Jamspal Personal Communication

Please let me enter
The supreme city
Of great liberation!"

Then the guru tells him
What is to be done
And not done. //111//

Living beings are thrown
By the thread of *karma*,
Bent by the process
Of spreading colored dust,
These living beings
Are a mandala,
Intrinsically pure, non-dual. //112//

First, visualize yourself
As the Vajra Master,
Yoga Lord of the mandala.
After seeing the disciple
As similar to yourself,
You will accomplish everything.
After that, the disciple
Should make request
For the sake of empowerment
From²²⁹⁷ a good guru. //113//

Here, in the ocean
Of cyclic existence,
Covered with addictions,
Crocodiles and sea monsters,
Waves stirred up
By the wind of *karma*,
Oh, Ocean of Compassion
Alas, I drown! //114//

By the cataract
Of ignorance,
The work of addiction.
Ocean of compassion,
Ward off bliss,²²⁹⁸
Suffering and fear,

²²⁹⁷ Reading *las* rather than *la*.

²²⁹⁸ I.e. the bliss of Nirvana See *Lama Chopa*, v 53, in T Gyatso 1988

Help me!
 Vajrin, please listen
 To words like these! //115//

Filling up [his] heart
 With compassion,
 He says to the disciple:

You, son, from this time,
 Proclaim the Vajrayana doctrine,
 Hold yoga as supreme,
 The state of the practice
 Of Vajrasattva. //116//

Son, this is nectar,
 Protect it!
 If you don't,
 You will burn!
 If you protect [it],
 You will accomplish
 All attainments! //117//

The wind that dispels
 All addictions,
 OM and PANYTSA A MRI TA
 U DA KA and ĀḤ HŪM THA,²²⁹⁹
 The disciple should drink
 The five nectars,
 Wonderful vajra wisdom. //118//

Because there would be mistakes
 In remembering the secret,
 Shit and piss and so forth
 Fall on the vajra disciple,
 Girl's clothing from which
 Drips bright blood, //119//

Having taken ghost fire,²³⁰⁰
 Smeared with blood
 And semen,
 Mixed with tree resin,²³⁰¹
 Having placed [it]

²²⁹⁹ Lhasa manuscript has *tha*, other recensions should be checked to see if should be *phat*

²³⁰⁰ *Yidwags me, pretāgni*, some kind of substance?

²³⁰¹ Per Lozang Jamspal, burned in ritual at Likir Monastery to frighten ghosts Personal Communication

In the lotus vessel,²³⁰²
 You should put everything
 In there. //120//

The Wrathful One
 With the nature
 Of three vajras,
 Standing with
 Right [leg] extended,
 Lord Vajradhara,
 Filled with scent
 By burning the incense
 Of the great wonderful one
 For the students,²³⁰³
 Without doubt would descend. //121//

OM TISHTHA MA HĀ KHRO DA
 Similarly, Ā BE SHA YA HŪṂ,
 The yogi expresses this mantra.
 [The deity] clearly descends
 Into the disciple. //122//

BADZRA SATTVA HI MA HE
 BIDYA RĀ DZA YA BRIDYA
 MA HE,
 Thus again having empowered
 The disciple
 With this mantra, //123//

When he sees this
 Supreme mandala,
 His own body,
 Intrinsically pure,
 The perfect basis
 Of Tathāgatas,
 Goddesses and Bodhisattvas, //124//

The supreme secret
 Pervading the Wrathful Ones,
 The support of Vajrasattva,
 The external and internal mandalas,
 He should show

²³⁰² Per Lozang Jamspal, not the vagina, but some actual vessel Personal Communication

²³⁰³ Per Lozang Jamspal, the guru does the consecration waving incense in front of the students Personal Communication

Both to him [the disciple]. //125//

Further, the disciple requests:
 "Please give me empowerment!"
 To take the victorious
 Vase [initiation],²³⁰⁴
 In the good lotus vessel, //126//

In the middle of that,
 The good hearted one²³⁰⁵
 Visualizes Akṣobhya
 Arising from a vajra HŪM.
 He meditates on the wisdom being
 Arising from the agitation
 Of rays of light
 Of his own wisdom seed. //127//

By the very actuality
 Of Akṣobhya,
 He meditates the aggregate
 Of consciousness
 As the supreme form
 Of Akṣobhya.
 Infused with compassion,
 The Vajra Master
 Places [his] hand
 On the head of the disciple. //128//

OM and MA HĀ SATVA and,
 Similarly, Ī SHVAR TRAM
 And A BHI SHRĪ NYTSA MI
 SVĀ HĀ.
 OM SARBBĀ TA THĀ GĀ TA
 A BHI SHE KA SA MA YA
 SHRI YE ĀḤ HŪM,
 He repeats after him. //129//

From the bottom of the water,
 For the disciple,

"O Three World King,
 Pervaded by compassion,

²³⁰⁴ Per Lozang Jamspal, on the altar next to the guru Personal Communication

²³⁰⁵ Although *blo bzang po* should be agentive for this reading

I will give a crown ornament
 For empowerment,
 To accomplish benefit
 For living beings." //130//

Having meditated Ratnasambhava,
 The source of good qualities,
 Who arises from
 The seed syllable TRAM,
 He should give
 For the head of the disciple
 A crown ornament
 Made from decorated silk. //131//

Having expressed the words
 OM SARBBA TA THĀ GA TA
 RATNA MU KUN²³⁰⁶
 And similar words
 And BŪ DZA YA
 A TISHTHA and ĀH HŪM.
 And, having expressed this mantra,
 He should bestow flowers
 On the [disciple's] head. //132//

For the empowerment
 Of the vajra disciple,
 He again supplicates the guru.
 [The guru says:]
 "I bestow vajra practice,
 The actual state
 Of the five wisdoms,
 By which the
 Eggshell of ignorance
 Is opened.
 By what I have done,
 You will achieve wisdom." //133//

From HRIH,
 On a perfect lotus,
 Visualize in the form
 Of Amitābha.
 [The guru] puts a vajra
 In the right hand

²³⁰⁶ Stok Palace has *mu ku ta*, Skt "crown "

[Of the disciple],
And expresses these words
To the disciple: //134//

"Today I will empower you.
This one is he who is
All those Buddhas.
Trusting in the vow
Of Samantabhadra,
Take this vajra
For the sake of
Good spiritual attainment." //135//

Arising from KAM
Is a sword,
Also in the nature
Of Amoghasiddhi,
Perfectly held
By the disciple
In an elegant gesture
In the left hand.
This is called the follower
Of the sound of the bell
Of all Buddhas. //136//

"You should always hold [it],
The basis of the Conqueror
Of supreme enlightenment."

After holding the vajra and bell,
He is actually Vajrasattva.
Full of natural good qualities,
He becomes the yoga
Of a master. //137//

Placing [his] hand
On the head of the disciple,
As the very essence
Of Vairocana,
The Vajra Holder [bestows]
The Name Empowerment.
You meditate on
The Form Aggregate.²³⁰⁷ //138//

²³⁰⁷ *I.e.* Vairocana is beautiful

OM SARBBĀ TA THĀ GA TA,
 "So and so"²³⁰⁸
 BADZRA SATTVAM
 A BHI SHI NYTSA MI SVĀ HĀ //139//

To the Name [Empowerment]
 At the end,
 You know the purity
 Of the Five Aggregates
 As the supreme empowerment.
 I will explain
 The great wonder. //140//

You will attain
 The five empowerments,²³⁰⁹
 These pure five Buddhas.
 By dispelling ignorance,
 You will attain
 The five wisdoms. //141//

Then he gives
 The Mantra Empowerment,
 The fulfillment of the wishes
 Of the disciple of Vajrasattva.
 "I will give
 The supreme Wisdom Empowerment
 Of mantra,
 Bestowing spiritual attainments." //142//

Then the six-syllable mantra
 Having PHAT SVĀHĀ
 At the end,
 [Then] the three syllables.
 [When the disciple's] mouth
 Is filled with pledges,
 Purified by the body
 Of mantra,
 [This] is expressed
 From the mouth
 Of the guru: //143//

"In order to be given

²³⁰⁸ Sanskrit is *amuk*. Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

²³⁰⁹ Water, Crown, Flower, Vajra and Name

Spiritual accomplishments
 By the guru,
 You should always hold this,
 The supreme wisdom
 Of the essence
 Of all Buddhas,
 Epitomizing all Buddhas." //144//

Then, by particularly
 Bringing to mind
 The various vows
 Of a disciple's behavior,
 Purifying his conduct,
 The main compassionate one
 [Says] to the aspirant:
 "I bestow the vow of conduct,
 The means of benefitting
 Living beings." //145//

Then he should purify
 The book, conch, arrow,
 Bow and sword
 By mantra as before,
 Placing [them] one by one
 In the hand of the disciple. //146//

This is the vow
 Of the practice of Samantabhadra,
 Purifying a variety
 Of thoughts.
 You should always hold [it]
 To benefit all sentient beings. //147//

OM SARBA TA THĀ GA TA
 Similarly, DHĪ TĀ RA TWA and
 DHĀR YA MI and ĀḤ HŪṂ,
 Thus you should place
 This mantra. //148//

Then, in order to achieve
 The prophecy,
 The clear-minded one
 [Says] to the guru thusly:

"Please prophesize for me
 Entering into the Buddha family!"

"I will predict the Lord

Of the family . . .

You are 'Amoghavajra.'" //149//

Then in order to

Encourage the disciples,

From the presence

Of the speech of the guru:

"O Protector, Perfect Lord,

Encourage [us]!

Be firm in the vow

Of Bodhisattva conduct!" //150//

Then, holding the vajra

And the end of the cloth

In the left hand,

Bestowing the gesture

Of fearlessness [in the] right,

The supreme activity

Of encouragement:

"I call you the Lord

Of vajra speech,

The supreme state

Of all Buddhas,

Vajrasattva." //151//

You are the King

Of the three realms,

The embodiment of the source

Of glorious good qualities!

Conqueror of the power

Of demons!

You enter the supreme city! //152//

Then for the disciples

Wishing benefit

He should give

The non-reversible

Empowerment.

"Vajrasattva, please give me

The great non-reversible

Empowerment!" //153//

Then, the Lord

Of Vajra Wisdom,

With rays of light
 Invites the wisdom beings,
 [And] the Five Buddhas
 And so forth [and]
 The chakra of goddesses
 Progressively arise. //154//

They carry
 Vessels in hand,
 Filled with the water
 Of wisdom.
 The Tathāgata, Vajra Holder,
 Conqueror of Conquerors,
 Jewel Holder,
 Liberator from Cyclic Existence, //155//

And the Wisdom Holder,
 Respectively, in ignorance,
 Anger and passion,
 Similarly, Vajraratī,
 Yamāntaka, Prajñāntaka,
 Padmāntaka, Vighnāntaka -
 With complete empowerment
 He visualizes all [of these]
 As the vajra disciples. //156//

I will give
 The great Vajra Empowerment,
 Saluted by the three realms,
 Arising from the source
 Of the three secrets,
 All the Buddhas. //157//

Then the Tathāgatas, Goddesses,
 [And] Wrathful Ones
 Sit in their own places.
 Having meditated Mañjuśrī,
 Adorned with wisdom vajras,
 Place [him, saying:]
 OM and SU PRA TISHTHA
 And BADZRA SVĀ HĀ. //158//

The good minded one
 Having expressed the mantra,
 Sprinkles flowers
 On the disciples.

Then, they offer
 Flowers and so forth,
 The mandala of disciples
 Being like a chakra.
 The guru, infused
 With compassion,
 Then gives permission
 To the disciples. //159//

There is nothing
 That cannot be done
 By a yogi
 Who knows reality.
 Great hero,
 By your kindness,
 Now, practicing in
 The sense pleasures, //160//

Knowing [everything]
 As illusion, a dream,
 Things arising
 From relativity,
 Knowing [everything]
 As a reflection,
 Make unequalled benefits
 For sentient beings! //161//

The disciples who have
 Performed [these] activities
 Should practice comfortably,
 Then pay the guru,
 Praising and making
 Complete prostrations
 Together with
 The good people. //162//

Then aspiring [to be]
 The *Guhyasamāja* guru,
 Facing downwards,
 Kissing [the ground],
 [The disciples say:]
 "Just as you are, Great Soul,
 Make me like that!" //163//

Then, one especially liberated
 By the mantric vehicle

Divided by actions and things
 Arising from the five clans
 Is explained as a
 Fortunate lady seal. //164//

Having gone into
 A charnel ground,
 At midnight,
 Isolated from people,
 Emerges the skill
 Of the Vajra Master,
 Infused with great compassion. //165//

Whatever conventional
 Enlightenment spirit,
 Falling into the yoginī,
 The epitome of
 All Buddhas
 Of unexcelled nature,
 Arising in the union
 [With] the Seal,
 However it is found,
 By that secret
 He should empower. //166//

"This one, arising as
 The great pledge
 Of all Buddhas,
 Taste great bliss,
 The elixir from
 The Five Realms!" //167//

The disciple,
 Free from conceptuality,
 Should taste what is left
 On the lotus.

"Just as Vajradhara
 In the past
 Empowered the sons
 Of the Conqueror,
 So will I empower
 You, sons,
 With the liquid
 Of the enlightenment spirit!" //168//

Then, for the
 Wisdom Empowerment,
 The guru gathers
 All spiritual accomplishment
 For the disciples
 Who seek the goal.

"Please bestow empowerment
 On me!" //169//

Then, the great-natured Guru
 Consecrates the Seal
 In order that the supreme
 Be achieved.
 After that,
 He gives [her]
 To the disciple. //170//

This Great Seal goddess
 Bestows limitless bliss.
 The son, having taken
 All of that,
 Should make
 An unexcelled offering. //171//

Then, "I bestow
 For the sake
 Of spiritual accomplishment
 The supreme reality
 Of the wisdom
 Of the goddess,
 The goal accepted
 As the supreme accomplishment
 Of wisdom." //172//

The goddess commands him:
 "So, unexcelled heroic son,
 Hero, how do you like it?
 Are you able to eat
 The Enlightenment spirit?" //173//

That perfect one says
 "Certainly! Whatever you wish!"
 And such.
 "The supreme commitment
 Is stated just so.

O Goddess, why wouldn't I?" //174//

Then the goddess
Is pleased.
Loosening her hair,
Taking off her clothes,
And opening up
[Her] pure lotus, she says,
"BHANYDZA MOKSHA!"²³¹⁰
Abiding in the middle
Of the vaginal lotus,
Is the channel that moves
As all-bliss,
Urging with [your] finger,
You should enjoy. //175//

You should also play
With [your] tongue.
This produces innate bliss.
When you use
This good wisdom,
Having experienced
Supreme bliss,
With descending bliss,
You should taste it. //176//

Then, Chomdenma,
Having been pleased,
Says the mantra
"BHAÑDZA MOKSHA,"
Places [her] left leg
On [your] head,
[And], with a command,
Teaches perfect reality:²³¹¹ //177//

"Starting today,
Until [you reach]
The heart of enlightenment,
You, son, must create
Unexcelled benefits
For sentient beings,
As in a dream!" //178//

²³¹⁰ *I.e.* "EAT LIBERATION!"

²³¹¹ Or, "[And] by [her] word [*i.e.* "Check this out!"]/ Shows [you her]/ Perfect reality!"

Not knowing
 The personal instruction
 In this, the meditation
 On the creation stage,
 Rejecting this wisdom,
 You won't become enlightened
 By other methods. //179//

The son practices
 The vow of
 The wisdom woman,
 The best of the best
 Of vows.
 Thus, this is
 Supreme enlightenment.
 The yogi and yoginī
 Should know [it] gradually. //180//

"Relying on the state
 Of Vajrasattva,
 Please bestow the
 Supreme state on me!
 Manifesting as the result
 Of all concentration,
 Wishing whatever [they want]
 For all sentient beings,
 I request unexcelled
 Spiritual accomplishment!
 In order that you²³¹²
 Might return again,
 Please go to your own places,
 BADZRA MUḤ!" //181//

Then, give the leftover tormā,
 The procedure for those arising
 Beyond the [protection] chakra,

U TSTSHISHTĀ
 KSHE TRA PA LA
 A TI TSAKRA U TSITTA
 SU BHO DZAM NĀM BI BA twice,
 BHAKSHA twice and SARBBA and
 SIDDHIṀ PRA YATSTSHA ME²³¹³

²³¹² The wisdom beings

And OM first
 [Then] ĀH HŪM PHAT SVĀHĀ,
 Thereafter you should recite that.²³¹⁴ //182//

Holding vajra and bell,
 He stands in the position
 Of left leg spread out.
 As for the nature
 Of the Conqueror
 Of the three realms,
 And the nature
 Of the Vajra Master,
 He holds the nature
 Of the Conqueror
 Of the three realms. //183//

Thus from the twenty rituals
 He teaches the characteristics
 Of the creation stage.
 By knowing that very one
 As manifold,
 You become empowered
 From a virtuous guru. //184//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-fourth chapter on the extensive actions of the twenty rituals.

Chapter Fifty-Five

Teaching the Reason for and the Result of the Twenty Rituals

Then, furthermore,
 The reason and the result
 Of that to be explained
 Is the action explained
 As the twenty rituals.
 What is the reason
 Of the Great Lord?

²³¹³ Abiding Field Protector, abiding beyond the [protection] wheel, very good food, very good food, eat, eat and always and please give me attainments

²³¹⁴ Presumably, OM, then the body of the mantra, then ĀH HŪM PHAT SVĀHĀ

What would be
 The result of that?
 Great of Great,
 What would you say? //1//

Then the Vajra Lord spoke:

As for the cause and effect
 Of the activities
 And of preliminary service,²³¹⁵
 The cause
 Is the eight worldly
 Spiritual accomplishments. //2//

In order to clear away
 Stinginess and so forth,
 You meditate offerings
 To the Buddha,
 And you perfect
 Giving, ethics, patience
 Effort and concentration. //3//

Through the Empowerment
 Of Wisdom,
 You perfect
 Transcendent wisdom,
 Abiding in secret,
 And so forth,
 The cause being
 The passionate person. //4//

Through events of enjoyment,
 By the cause
 Of equalizing wisdom,
 When you make offerings
 To the guru with faith,
 The result is the state
 Of Vajrasattva. //5//

The completion of
 The Water and so forth
 [And] Name [Empowerments]
 Is for the purification

²³¹⁵ *I.e. the sadhana* Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

Of the five wisdoms.
 Because of practice,
 The completion of Non-Reversal
 Is for the purification
 Of the thoughts about
 Sentient beings.
 The completion of Wisdom Vow
 And so forth
 Is to teach bliss by example. //6//

The subtlest particle
 Of the mandala
 Is equal to the worship
 Of all the Tathāgatas.
 In that way, you engage
 In the cycle of result,
 The worship of all Buddhas,
 The purification
 Of karmic obscurations.²³¹⁶ //7//

You attain empowerment,
 The extremely pure
 Reality Sphere,
 And, by the wisdom
 [Empowerment], you attain
 The very essence of reality. //8//

The guru also achieves
 The supreme state of that offering.
 In that way, you will achieve
 In a short time,
 The supreme vow
 Of pure practice. //9//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-fifth chapter on teaching the reason for and result of the twenty rituals.

²³¹⁶ For the variant reading of this paragraph, *see* Alamka 29B

Chapter Fifty-Six

Analyzing the Ritual of the Inner Essence Offering

Then said Vajrasattva:

The unexcelled offering ritual
Is the stage of the ritual
Of worshipping the body
By non-dual equalizing yoga.
You should not prostrate
To a body of rock,
Wood, earth or gold. //1//

You should never make
Consecrations, mandalas
Or fire sacrifices.
You should always worship
The [Three] Jewels and so forth
[And] the Five Lords
[With] shit and piss.
Therefore, you should engage
In that!²³¹⁷ //2//

The mind vajra itself is chief,
[But] that mind also
Is non-existent
Because it has the character
Of emptiness.
Emptiness likewise is formless,
Because of which all things
Are like space. //3//

In that way you should know
Pure consciousness.
You should also worship
The three channels;²³¹⁸
Because they are all

²³¹⁷ For variant reading of this paragraph (the first paragraph is identical), *see* Alamka 29B

²³¹⁸ For the variant reading of these two lines, *see* Alamka 29B

In the nature of mind.
 They do not exist
 Other than mind. //4//

You yourself abide
 As the nature of the mind
 Of Vajrasattva.
 The unexcelled divine form
 Is nothing other
 Than mind alone. //5//

Because of that,
 Analyzing in that way,
 Always offer
 Just your own body.
 Always practicing
 As the five pure families,
 You discern [them]
 As one family. //6//

You should abandon
 The distinction
 Of wanting and not wanting,
 Drinking and not drinking.
 You should never say
 A yogi is "fortunate"
 Or "unfortunate." //7//

Just as there are
 Of the types of consorts,
 Blue and so forth,
 There are three divisions of form.
 Having summoned Rūpavajrā,
 You should make offerings
 To Kṣitigarba. //8//

Authentic song,
 Beyond expression
 And melody,
 Likewise, there are also
 Three divisions
 Of sound.
 Summoning Śabdavajrā,
 You make offerings
 To Vajrapāṇi. //9//

Camphor, wood
 And ficus,²³¹⁹
 Similarly, there are
 Three divisions
 Of scent.
 Summoning Gandhavajrā,
 You make offerings
 To Ākāśagarbha. //10//

Kissing, sucking
 And the six tastes,
 Similarly, there are
 Six divisions.
 Having summoned Rasavajrā,
 You make offerings
 To Lokeśvara. //11//

Joining,
 There are three divisions:
 Of smearing and embracing.
 Summoning Sparśavajrā,
 You should make offerings
 To [Sarvanivarāṇa]viṣkambin. //12//

All of these
 Are outer reality,
 Examined and, also,
 Not examined.
 Summoning Dharmadhātuvajra,
 You make offerings
 To Mañjuvajra. //13//

Similarly, outer, inner
 And both
 Are not perceived,
 And, having made [them]
 Into three in form,
 You should make offerings
 To the deities. //14//

The five objects,
 Definitively abiding,
 Arise definitively

²³¹⁹ Monier Williams has *jāti* as *Ficus infectoria* L., a kind of ficus

As the five tantras.
 When you have
 Dreams and energy-wind,
 You engage in
 The five desires. //15//

Through whatever senses
 And whatever path,
 The practitioner achieves
 The object.
 You should offer
 All of these things
 To please
 The Great Compassionate One. //16//

By the flower
 Of perfect ecstasy
 Arise the vajra sun
 And the lotus.
 You offer flowers
 To the Lord,
 The supreme commitment
 Of the three vajras. //17//

The mode of conceptuality
 Has no location.
 Thus offer incense
 To the Mind Vajra,
 That which is
 Totally burnt up
 By the fire of *tummo*. //18//

Gradually, the vajra
 Perfectly enters the lotus
 And so forth.
 You should offer
 To the Mind Vajra
 The indestructible sound
 Of the yogi. //19//

Perfectly arising
 From the syllable HŪṂ,
 The brilliant light rays
 Of mantra,
 Like the clear light
 Of a blazing lamp,

You should offer
To the Mind Vajra. //20//

The great bliss abiding in space
Awakens the
Enlightenment spirit,
And, anointed with that,
You should make offerings
To the Mind Vajra. //21//

Whatever you are enjoying here,
Relying on all the senses,
These are all the Mind Vajra.
You should worship
In the vessel
Of eating. //22//

Various kinds of
Laughing, flirting and playing
Please the mind.
Offer the[se]
Doors of liberation
To the Mind Vajra!²³²⁰ //23//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra, the glorious
Vajra Rosary, the fifty-sixth chapter on analyzing the ritual of the inner essence offering.

Chapter Fifty-Seven

The Character of the Goddess

Then spoke the Vajra Lord:

Those who realize
The bliss of yoga
Through the nature
Of dividing the channels,
The supreme character
Of the goddess,

²³²⁰ As stated by Lozang Jamspal, you need enlightenment spirit and wisdom in addition to sense joy, otherwise no good Personal Communication

Should always play
With the body,
Explained as its deities. //1//

The body that dances
Wholly ecstatic
With constant all-bliss
Is completely pervaded
By all-bliss,
Expressed as the [male] deities.²³²¹ //2//

The arising of
The instants of
Ecstasy, Supreme Ecstasy,
Transcendent and Innate,
And amusement,
Intense flirting,
Fainting and waking:²³²²
These are explained
As goddesses. //3//

When manifesting externally,
She becomes as
The perfect union,
Rousing the channels
Of the body,
Thus explained
As the yoginī. //4//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-seventh chapter on the characteristics of the goddess.

²³²¹ For variant reading of this and previous paragraph, *see* Alamka 29B

²³²² Orgasm and revival?

Chapter Fifty-Eight

Explaining the First Word "Evam"²³²³ and Explaining the Reasoning

Then the Vajra Lord spoke:

"EVAM" has two syllables.
E is explained
As emptiness.
Similarly, VAM is explained
As compassion, and //1//

The drop arising from
The union of those two
Is wonderful, supreme yoga.
E VAM, the two,
Are Buddha
And, in short,
The Seal of Reality.²³²⁴ //2//

Oh Great King!
Two seals²³²⁵ are stated
At the beginning
Of the tantras.
E has the character
Of vagina.
You should know [it]
As the support
Which is the lotus. //3//

The supported²³²⁶ is stated
As the "vajra."
The steady one
Is the form of the drop,
Vajradhara remaining on it,
Showing the emanation
Of Variety. //4//

²³²³ The Tibetan is E BAM

²³²⁴ *I.e.* Buddha is conventional and the *dharmamudra* is ultimate Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

²³²⁵ Variant reading from beginning of chapter to here can be found at Alamka 30A

²³²⁶ Reading *bten*, "supported," for *rten*, "support "

The source of the basis
 Of all-bliss
 Is great bliss Vajrasattva.
 In E, the sphere
 Of secret space,
 Or, the lotus
 Of the triangular vagina,
 The yogi sits
 On a lion throne,
 Supremely manifesting wonder. //5//

Vajrasattva, the VAM vajra,
 Is the sign
 Of Lord Yamāntaka,
 Heruka and Kalachakra,
 Primordial Buddha
 And so forth. //6//

EVAM is the seal
 Of the Tathāgatas,
 Expressed as non-dual
 Bliss supreme,
 Emptiness and compassion,
 Inseparable. //7//

In that, the seal
 Of the Tathāgatas
 Is the symbol
 Of non-dual wisdom,
 Stated in the introduction
 Of all tantras,
 The epitome of the meaning
 Of all tantras. //8//

Inseparable emptiness compassion
 Is expressed as reality.
 Whoever lacks
 The two syllables E VAM,
 Lacks reality. //9//

Whoever knows reality
 Shines like refined gold.
 The tantra explains well
 [That] he who knows reality,
 Abiding in the practice
 Of mantra, //10//

In that way
 Ascertain the meaning
 Of EVAM.
 The Seal of Reality,
 The two syllables
 Are perfectly explained
 As the first word. //11//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-eighth chapter on showing the explanation and reasoning of the first word EVAM.

Chapter Fifty-Nine

Explaining the First Words "Evam Mayā"

Then listen further
 To the explanation.
 EVAM and so forth
 He who knows
 The vast meaning of EVAM
 Realizes the that[ness]
 Of reality. //1//

E/ E is holy wisdom,²³²⁷
 The nature²³²⁸ of the instant
 Free from passion²³²⁹
 And so forth,
 Perfect knowledge
 In the three worlds.
 This is taught
 As the root.²³³⁰ //2//

VAM/ The consciousness²³³¹

²³²⁷ For variant reading of this verse and the preceding paragraph, see Alamka 30A

²³²⁸ Here the CG glosses “nature” as *bdag nyid dam rang bzhun gyi rtog pa so gsum*, “nature or the thirty-three instinctual natures” 79

²³²⁹ Prof. Wayman, following Tsong kha pa’s CG, translates Skt *virām* or *virāma*, Tib *‘dod chags bral* as “aversion,” referring to the thirty-three instinctual natures associated with luminance Wayman 1977, 185-86, CG 79 See also Wedemeyer 2007, 775-76

²³³⁰ Skt *ekāropi sato prajñā virāmādikṣaṇātmikā/ Eṭanmūlam vinirkiṣṭaṃ parijñānaṃ bhavatrāye//* The Sanskrit from the *Pradīpodyotana* for this and the following verses is given in Wayman 1977, 3-22

Which is radiance,²³³²
 Like rising bamboo,
 A beautiful tree
 Endowed with producing
 Lust and so forth,
 Is named "means."²³³³ //3//

MA/ The very root
 Of great knowledge²³³⁴
 Ignorance, is [its] opposite.²³³⁵
 This arises from ignorance;
 Therefore the luminances arise.²³³⁶ //4//

YĀ/ The name of that first
 Of the three consciousnesses
 Of migrators is luminance,
 Which transforms into
 Great emptiness,
 Also going into
 Clear light. //5//

SHRŪ/ The three consciousnesses
 Heard of²³³⁷ here,
 With the characteristics
 Of the three lights,
 Are the root
 Of the instinctual natures
 Of the entire realm
 Of sentient beings,²³³⁸ //6//

²³³¹ CG has *snang ba mched pa'i rnam par shes* 79

²³³² CG has *snang ba gsal ba*, Skt per Lokesh Chandra as *pratibhāsa*, CG has *snang ba mched pa*, 79, "radiance", PU has *ālokābhāsa*, Wayman 186

²³³³ Skt *Vaṁśas tad bhavad ābhāti rāgādriprasavānvitam / ālokābhāsa-vijñānam upāya iti saṃjñitam*
 See Wayman 1977, 186

²³³⁴ Per the CG, clear light 79

²³³⁵ The PU version of the verse quoted in the CG has *lugs las ldog pa'i ma rig pa'o*, "the ignorance of the reverse method," instead of the Lhasa VR's *ma rig pa ni bzlog pa yin*, "the reverse (or opposite) of ignorance" or "reversing ignorance" CG 80

²³³⁶ Skt *mahāvīdyā svayaṃ mūlam avidyayā vilomataḥ / avidyayā bhaved caitat tasmād ālokaśambhavaḥ*.
 See Wayman 1977, 187 The CG explains that in the reverse method, birth, clear light gives rise to imminence (the referent of "ignorance" in the VR and the PU), which in turn gives rise to radiance and luminance CG 80

²³³⁷ Following the CG's *thos pa*, "heard," rather than the Lhasa VR's *thob pa*, "attained" CG 80

²³³⁸ As Tsong kha pa puts it, "[T]he process of birth and death is caused by wind-energy, and the arising of the four voids is during the period between the dissolving and arising of the energy mobilizing the natural instincts. Thus, the natural instincts are derived from the increased movement of the three luminances, and

TAM/ It is,
 Having asserted themselves,
 The energy-winds
 Causing the grasping
 Of the objects
 Of each luminance.
 LAM/²³³⁹ Consciousness endowed
 With energy-wind
 Will abide in beings
 Everywhere. //7//

E/ This is the great element
 Of wind, the mount
 Of the three consciousnesses.
 By that [wind],
 They go wherever
 As the instinctual natures.²³⁴⁰ //8//

KA/ Consciousness²³⁴¹ having taken
 The earth which is hard,
 The water element
 And, similarly, fire and wind,
 Will be born in the place
 Of the three existences. //9//

SMI/²³⁴² These composite elements
 [Become] as the five aggregates:
 Form; feeling; discrimination;
 Volition and consciousness.²³⁴³ //10//

SA/ Equanimity, discrimination,
 Accomplishing activity,
 Mirror and reality sphere --
 These are the five wisdoms. //11//

thus it is said that the three luminances are the root of the natural instincts of all beings ” Tsong kha pa 2010, 256

²³³⁹ Obviously there is no “LAM” following *śrutam* in the *nīdāna*, and the *PU* and *CG* do not have it, but have the entire verse as part of the comment on TAM CG 81

²³⁴⁰ See Wedemeyer 1999 glossary, 404, and 293, n 4

²³⁴¹ *CG* has *rnam par shes pas*, 82, rather than the Lhasa *VR*’s *rnam par shes par*. 85B

²³⁴² This should be SMIN, and is so in the *CG*. 82

²³⁴³ The Tibetan *lotsawas* apparently expanded the Sanskrit for the last half of the verse, which had *saṃskārā* stand in for the middle three of the five aggregates *rūpavān nāma saṃskārā viṣṇānaṃ caiva pañcamaṃ* See Wayman 1977, 207

MA/ The mental sense faculty,
 Eye and, similarly, ear, nose
 And body [sense faculties] --
 These are the sense media
 That emerge. //12//

YE/ Whatever three-realm
 Sentient beings,
 Rely on breath control
 All the while repeating
 The King of Secret Mantra,
 Abandoning recitation
 [In] ignorant concentration.²³⁴⁴ //13//

BHĀ/ From this
 The instinctual natures²³⁴⁵
 Of passion and dispassion
 Again arise;
 From that, virtuous
 And non-virtuous action;
 From that arises birth. //14//

GA/ The aggregates
 That arise [in] migrations
 Are of the nature
 Of the five Buddhas.
 They are activated
 By the name of
 "The five types
 Of perfect enlightenment." //15//

VAN/ Wind, water,
 Fire and earth,
 Locanā and so forth,
 Are four.
 One with the nature
 Of the three wisdoms²³⁴⁶

²³⁴⁴ Wayman has "miss the 'mental reading' " Wayman 1977, 8 The Sanskrit is *dhyānāḍkyāpanavarjūtāḥ*, which could also be instruction (*adhy-āpana*) in concentration, a *tatpuruṣa*

²³⁴⁵ The version in the CG has BHA/ 'byung ba 'di las rang bzhu yang, "From this element, again the instinctual natures [arise]" CG 84

²³⁴⁶ I.e. one who has experience "of the three, luminance, radiance and imminence, after engaging in meditative equipoise relying on the subtle mediation on the lower door," 'og sgo'i phra mo bsgoms pa la bten nas mnyam gzhag tu snang mched thob gsum gyi ye shes bdag nyid can gsum CG, 85, i.e. mastering the subtle creation stage

Should know [this],
Bestowing a Buddha's
Enlightenment. //16//

SA/ All of the bodies
Of the Tathāgatas,
Are marked with four seals.
In the nature of eye
And so forth,
Are the bodhisattvas
Kṣitigarba and so forth. //17//

RVA/ You should discern
The great, powerful
Fierce Kings,
Ecstatically running,
In the cardinal
And quarter directions,
[And] as shoulders [and] limbs. //18//

TA/ Emerging from
This or that clan,
The different gods
And goddesses
Do not exist,
But are taught
For the sake
Of living beings. //19//

THĀ/ Because of this,
The yogi who sees
Non-dually,
By seeing the three wisdoms,²³⁴⁷
Should contemplate
Inferior, intermediate
And superior sense objects. //20//

GA/ While each sense power
Goes itself
To its own object,
Whatever the sphere of engagement
Of [that] sense power,
Each one is mere luminance. //21//

²³⁴⁷ Sanskrit has the ablative *jñānatrayanirdaśanāt*, perhaps the Tibetan should have been *mtshong pas*

TA/ By the path of that sense power,
 The practitioner reaches the object.
 Likewise, without saying
 Anything else,²³⁴⁸
 To give satisfaction
 Should make an offering. //22//

KĀ/ The Savior teaches²³⁴⁹
 The three bodies
 As different.
 Through practice
 Of the perfection stage,
 They transform into one. //23//

YA/ The characteristics
 Of Buddha's body
 Stated as conventional truth
 Become purified in clear light
 Through the practice
 Of the perfection stage. //24//

VĀK/ This very object
 Of the path of words,²³⁵⁰
 The lord with a body
 With the nature of wisdom,
 In order to²³⁵¹ benefit sentient beings
 Manifests just like a rainbow. //25//

CIT/ Mind, mental function
 And ignorance,
 Are also expressed
 As wisdom, means and imminence,
 Emptiness, extreme emptiness
 And great emptiness.²³⁵² //26//

²³⁴⁸ The *CG* has *de bzhin de rnams ma lus par*, “completely those Tathāgatas,” 88, and the *PU sakalam*, “completely,” Wayman 1977, 13, in place of the Lhasa *VR*'s *de bzhin de las ma gsungs par*, “not spoken.” The *CG* and *PU* seem to be, not surprisingly, consistent, and would seem the better choice here, but the sense of the Lhasa *VR* is not that different so I will go with the latter.

²³⁴⁹ In the creation stage *CG* 89

²³⁵⁰ *I.e.* mantra

²³⁵¹ Wayman notes that the Tibetan does not follow the Sanskrit of the *PU*, which has *sarvasattvahiṭāc ca-apa*, “apart from the benefit of all sentient beings,” Wayman 1977, 270-71, but the Tibetan makes sense here, and it is quite possible that the translators of the *Vajra Rosary* into Tibetan had other Sanskrit texts at hand.

²³⁵² Per Robert Thurman, these are aspects of the subtle mind, the three faces of Guhyasamāja. Personal Communication.

TA/ When you know the division
 Of the instinctual natures
 And the luminances,
 Then, you should
 Engage in the conduct
 Abandoning the karmic body;
 You will attain
 The vajra body itself. //27//

HRI/ Establishing the practice
 Of the benefit of worldly beings
 In the heart,
 The Tathāgata abides conventionally
 In the emanation body,
 Engaging in desires
 Just as he wishes. //28//

DA/ Like a wish-fulfilling jewel,
 You bestow all wishes.
 Forcefully taking
 The perfection of the Buddhas,
 You practice. //29//

YA/ Prince of Yogis,
 Whatever you want
 You can do without obstruction,
 By your yoga of non-entrancement
 You will always remain
 Entranced. //30//

VA/ By uniting vajra and lotus
 You know the portions
 Of the Three wisdoms.
 Whether the mind is
 Tainted or untainted,
 There you will always dwell
 In bliss. //31//

JRA/ By the illusion-like
 Concentration,
 You play with all things.
 Performing the Buddha deeds,
 You abide in the ground
 Of determination. //32//

YO/ You become yoga,
 Extreme yoga
 And great yoga itself,
 The vajrin and the ḍākinī

Are that very yoga. //33//

SHĪ/ Because you have
 Accomplished the cessations,
 You have abandoned
 Activity and inactivity.

BHE/ Just as the lotus
 Is not tainted by mud
 Your essence is not corrupted. //34//

BHA/ By totally possessing
 The eight qualities,²³⁵³
 All beings become the family,
 The great one engaging
 The entire world realm
 With the wisdom body. //35//

GE/ Whatever the Lord
 Engages in,
 His home is space itself
 By his entrancement
 Of great bliss
 He always plays there. //36//

SHU/ Here,
 The mundane conventions
 Of twilight, day and night
 In regard to the
 Categories of luminance
 [Are used] in order to see
 The three wisdoms.²³⁵⁴ //37//

BI/ The various

²³⁵³ Per DM, *tshe ring ba / kha dog phun sum tshogs pa / rigs phun sum tshogs pa / dbang phyug phun sum tshogs pa / tshig btsan pa / dbang che bar grags pa / skyes pa yin pa / stobs dang ldan pa rnam so* See Pabongka 1993, 460-64 (“long life, a handsome body, high family, great wealth, trustworthy speech, great power and fame, being a male, being strong in mind and body” 460

²³⁵⁴ Per Robert Thurman, reading this verse with the prior one, because you see twilight and so forth as the wisdoms, you see the path back to engage with beings Personal Communication, March 2010

Conventional names
 Are designated
 By worldly people
 By the analysis
 Of the three times,
 You arise from
 The three wisdoms. //38//

JA/ Abiding in between
 Of birth, endurance
 And destruction,
 However designated
 By the world,
 You project
 The energy wind
 Of mind. //39//

HA/ Getting turned on
 And getting to orgasm,
 Being in the nine moods
 Of the theater,
 The thought of mantra
 And consort:
 Are the conduct
 Of Vajrasattva. //40//

RA/ Except for
 The great self consecration,
 There is no other
 Great jewel
 In this world.
 Like a jewel
 Cleansed by fire
 It has the form
 Of natural clear light. //41//

[Thus] expanding
 The meaning
 Stated as supreme
 The first words,
 [“]These words[“]
 And so forth,
 [In] the root sutra
 Of the Secret Community,
 Compressing the teaching
 Of that very thing. //42//

Knowing according to
 The exact stages,
 You know the reality
 Of achievement
 By the sign
 Of supreme wisdom,
 Not stated clearly
 Anywhere else. //43//

By these stages
 The yogi is
 Sealed in the
 Glorious Community.
 Thus by this sequence
 You know it,
 And can benefit
 All sentient beings. //44//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the fifty-ninth chapter on explaining the first words, "EVAM MAYĀ."

Chapter Sixty

The Inner Essence Fire Offering

Then moreover listen
 And I will explain.
 The inner nature is
 The supreme fire offering.
 The elements moving within
 Will be dissolved
 In whatever way. //1//

A fire of the seed
 Of instinctual consciousness,
 The kindling
 Of the five aggregates,
 And great yogic wisdom
 Always will make

A wonderful fire offering.²³⁵⁵ //2//

The mere sound
Abiding in the center
Of the navel,
Is the secret lotus
Of outer mere sound.
For that, by the fire
Fanned by the wind
Of your own continuum, //3//

There is the perfect union
Of the two organs.
When brilliant radiance blazes,
The secret lotus
Fills up with butter,
Therefore this is called
The vessel. //4//

HAM is called the "small ladle,"²³⁵⁶
The vajra is expressed
As the large ladle;
The vagina is explained
As the hearth;
And the five senses
The substances
To be burnt. //5//

The aggregates become
The sacrificial firewood;
The butter is explained
As enlightenment spirit.
From the new moon
To the full moon,
For as long as you
Are doing [it],
Invite [them] to come.
The stove is spoken of
As the mere drop;
The large ladle moves. //6//

You should always satisfy

²³⁵⁵ For variant reading of this chapter up to here, see Alamka 30A

²³⁵⁶ In the fire *pūja*, the larger ladle is called *dgang gzar* and the smaller *blugs gzar*. Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

Buddha Moharati
 And so forth,
 Rūpavajrā and so forth,
 The Bodhisattvas
 And the ten Wrathful Kings --
 With the fire offering. //7//

Whatever is given
 To Vajrasattva,
 That is also expressed
 As the large offering ladle.
 With the mantra perfectly endowed
 With HŪM PHAT,
 You should make the offering,
 Pouring into the fire
 According to ritual. //8//

When the places of the body
 Are delighted by that, [that is]
 The unexcelled divine commitment.
 Having thus bestowed
 As attainments
 Whatever desires
 You have in mind,
 This fire sacrifice
 Is called supreme. //9//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixtieth chapter
 on the fire sacrifice of the inner nature.

Chapter Sixty-One

The Ritual of Eating the Five Nectars

Then spoke Vajra Lord:

Drinking the five nectars
 Is the supreme reality
 That makes all attainments.
 The respective families, //1//

Vairocana, Akṣobhya,
 Amoghasiddhi, Amitābha
 And Ratnadhvaja,²³⁵⁷
 [Have] the character
 Of the five nectars.²³⁵⁸ //2//

Blood is the Great Jewel Lord,
 And semen, Amitābha,
 Similarly, Amoghasiddhi
 Is meat, and likewise
 Akṣobhya is piss.²³⁵⁹
 Shit is explained
 As Vairocana --
 These are the five
 Supreme nectars! //3//

[In] a pleasant wilderness,
 Isolated from people,
 Abandoning the tone of sound,
 Build a house.
 The house should be
 Two stories, with a door. //4//

You should make
 One story underground
 And the others above.
 The others you should
 Make secret,
 So the worldly ones
 Only know one. //5//

The practitioner knows
 All reality
 And knows mantra,
 The vast great-minded one.
 Firm, compassionate and skilled,
 He abandons jealousy
 Towards objects. //6//

These are the qualities
 Of the chief practitioner.

²³⁵⁷ Reading *rin chen rgyal mtshan* as an alternative form of *rin chen 'byung ldan*, both indicating Ratnasambhava

²³⁵⁸ For variant reading of this and preceding paragraph, see Alamka 30A-B

²³⁵⁹ Lit vajra water

The one who has these qualities
 Is the best friend
 Of practitioners.
 He abandons passion
 And dispassion.
 Effortless and without craving,
 An ascetic without anger,
 Learned and optimistic. //7//

First, both bodies²³⁶⁰
 Are purified by fruit
 And so forth.
 Then you repeat
 The mantra urging Sum̐bharāja
 One hundred thousand times. //8//

OM SUM̐ BHA NI SUM̐ BHA
 HŪM̐ HŪM̐ PHAT
 OM GRIH̐NA GRIH̐NA
 HŪM̐ HŪM̐ PHAT
 OM GRIH̐NA PA YA
 GRIH̐NA PA YA
 HŪM̐ HŪM̐ PHAT
 OM Ā NA YA HO
 BHA GA WĀ NA
 PIDYA RĀ DZA
 HŪM̐ HŪM̐ PHAT //9//

Then the practitioner
 Should silently
 Repeat the three letters
 For a month.
 Momentarily he will see
 Samantabhadra,
 Chief of beings,
 In a dream. //10//

Then he commands:
 "You should serve
 A supreme young girl,
 Creating incomparable benefit
 For sentient beings.
 Such a one is Vajradhara. //11//

²³⁶⁰ *I.e.* the yogi/nī and consort

A fortunate girl,
 Wide-eyed
 Adorned with form
 And youth,
 Without craving,
 But with a lustful mind,
 Intoxicatingly charming,
 And dancing gracefully, //12//

A beautiful one,
 With bluish complexion
 And swelling breasts,
 Without thought construction
 But very learned--
 The practitioner should desire
 Until semen emerges. //13//

Then, having taken both elements,
 The face and lotus,²³⁶¹
 You should place [them]
 In that lotus vessel,
 [Waiting] seven days
 As a good sign.²³⁶² //14//

In the second
 And third spring months,²³⁶³
 Having taken
 Bull, horse, dog, cow,
 And human [meats],
 [And what was]
 From the place of birth,²³⁶⁴
 Similarly, there, gradually, //15//

There, in that very
 Lotus vessel,
 You should place [them]
 For seven days.
 You should repeat

²³⁶¹ *I.e.* semen and blood

²³⁶² Per Lozang Jamsal, you mix the substances, then smear them on the vagina or lotus vessel. Where substances are put together, that's called the "lotus vessel." This may also be describing how to make pills. Personal Communication

²³⁶³ I am guessing that this means the waxing and waning of the moon

²³⁶⁴ *I.e.* the vagina

The mantra of the three letters
For twenty-one days. //16//

Without companion,
[In] an isolated place,
You should place [them]
In the lotus vessel
Made from good sandalwood
Arranged with the mantra
DZAḤ HŪM BAM HOḤ. //17//

Having brewed in equal parts
Goats milk, sesame oil,
Melted butter and white sugar,
Placing them together
In a vessel, mix [them]. //18//

The wise one should make a pill
With the mere measurement
Of a juniper pit.
Having dried [them] in shadow,
You should produce gradually
And eat [them]. //19//

Eat together with [your]
Vajra brothers, sisters
And relatives,
[And] after a month,
[With your] friends
And servants. //20//

You start on the waning moon
Of the eighth, tenth,
Or fourteenth lunar month
Making ritual cakes from that,
Unexcelled in all activities. //21//

From that attainments
Are also born.
He achieves without effort
Complete realization
Of the Great Seal,
Vast attainments
And the peaceful and so forth.

Learning the reality
 Of energy-wind,
 You will achieve
 Flight. //22//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty-first chapter on the ritual of eating the five nectars.

Chapter Sixty-Two

The Gaṇacakra Ritual and Mixing with the Yoginī

Now furthermore listen
 And I will explain.
 The *Gaṇacakra*²³⁶⁵
 Is the supreme ritual
 By which the supreme attainment
 Of the Conqueror's children
 Arises from worship. //1//

Together with the yogi,
 Who abides [in the feast]
 Because of accomplishment,
 The Seal knows the sign
 And engages in the commitment.²³⁶⁶
 //2//

Those assembled are most excellent
 And are called "*Gaṇacakra*."
 All abide in the commitment,
 Abandoning all conceptuality. //3//

Abiding in the commitment
 With faith in the guru,
 Adorned with the good qualities
 Of giving and so forth,
 If there are not obstructions
 Of the "method,"
 They engage in the *Gaṇacakra*. //4//

²³⁶⁵ Lit "assembly circle "

²³⁶⁶ For variant reading up to here and preceding paragraph, see Alamka 30B

Otherwise, there would be fault,
 And they would not accomplish
 In the *Gaṇacakra*.
 But wisdom is equal to method,
 And the companion
 Should be good and very wise. //5//

Having abandoned those
 More than twenty-five years old,
 If of all of method
 And discriminating wisdom
 There is [but] one,
 There is no benefit.²³⁶⁷ //6//

First, in a beautiful
 And pleasant place
 You should make
 A flower mandala.
 That very one [you]
 Having placed [one's self]
 In meditative equipoise,
 Should make various offerings. //7//

Offer the main [mandala deity]
 All things, similar to Vajrasattva.
 After making
 The *Gaṇacakra* offering,
 Looking one way
 Then the other,²³⁶⁸ //8//

In a state of faith,
 Having meditated
 With the view
 Of considering all equally,
 One who finds a contradiction
 Between scripture
 And worldly things
 Should not enter. //9//

Furthermore, it is stated
 In scripture

²³⁶⁷ I.e. you need both

²³⁶⁸ Lit By the forward and reverse mandala methods

That you should
 Summon at midnight.
 You make offerings
 To the Master Protector
 As you request [him]
 To take [his] seat. //10//

The seat should have
 The great seal of Vajrasattva.
 The Vajra Master himself sits
 In the center of the chakra
 Of wisdom.
 The other mandala ones
 You should similarly
 Arrange in place
 In the mandala.
 You should know [them]
 As the mandala ones. //11//

In the *Gaṇacakra*
 You should never
 Talk, argue and the like,
 Spit, laugh,
 Spread legs and so forth,
 Or get up again and again. //12//

The assemblants should do
 And know how to do
 By gesture [and] signal.
 You should not deliberately
 Dance and sing
 In the *Gaṇacakra*. //13//

You should offer
 To the main one
 A supreme vessel,
 A one-piece [skull],
 The best characteristic,
 [Or], lacking that,
 A three-piece [skull]. //14//

Filling [it] up with divine liquor
 And so forth,
 Well equipoised,
 Offer [it].
 For each individual

In the assembly,
Fill up the vessel
With heaps of flowers. //15//

First, give the great ritual cake,
Eating [it] and so forth as before.
Whoever loses [her] ecstasy
Should not drink like that. //16//

Having prostrated again
And again,
You should drink from
The binding gesture.²³⁶⁹
Then eat all the food
That has been purified
And so forth,
Completely purifying [it]. //17//

By OM ĀḤ HŪM
You should purify,
Increase and realize.
Saffron, sandalwood and hero,²³⁷⁰
Ice and musk --
These are the five purifying nectars.
You should always use this food. //18//

By putting together
[Your] thumb and ring finger,
You should taste
The hero and yoginī in succession
With the tip of [your] tongue.
You should always place
[Your] mind on the mouth
In the center of the lotus.
You should make
The unexcelled offering! //19//

In the middle of the lotus bud
Is said to be the seat
Of the heroes.
If the hero doesn't know
The characteristics of

²³⁶⁹ *I.e.* from your cupped palm Personal Communication with Lozang Jampal

²³⁷⁰ Tib *dpa' bo*, "hero," is probably Skt, *vīrya*, which can also mean "semen "

Of the genuine hero,
 There will be no result
 From that [gaṇa] cakra
 That is requesting
 All attainments. //20//

Whoever practices
 The outer and inner nature
 [In] little stages like that,
 Will become perfectly attained.
 To bestow the effect
 Of the Gaṇacakra. //21//

One who mingles
 With the yoginīs
 Should listen
 To what I will explain.
 When some wicked dākinīs
 Come in order
 To attract attention,
 The practitioner at that time
 Should not even speak
 To them, and²³⁷¹ //22//

Should not answer even
 With one word,
 [But] should welcome [them]
 Or make a gesture.
 If anyone speaks
 A little to them,
 It should be
 The master himself. //23//

Or, all activities
 Should be done
 By the vajra assistant,
 Because of which,
 If there are no other
 Vajra assistants,
 Whoever [can serve as]
 Vajrasattva. //24//

He should summon

²³⁷¹ For variant reading of this paragraph, see Alamka 30B

Again and again
 Yoginīs of various types.
 Towards them [however]
 There is no perverted behavior.
 The Master should act
 Like a hero. //25//

By whatever faulty conduct
 His body will release,²³⁷²
 Giving rise to great ecstasy.
 He should command [them]
 To dance. //26//

He should, moreover,
 Control the vajra.
 Delighting the deities
 In whatever way,
 If you wish to offer
 Mother, sister or daughter, //27//

By the ritual
 Of wisdom [and] method,
 He should demonstrate²³⁷³
 Through non-conceptuality.
 In this, you will doubtless
 Achieve supreme attainment. //28//

Take the leftover ritual cake
 Go to a great wilderness,
 [And] throw it away.
 You should say the mantra
 KSHMIM UTSTSHISHTA
 KSHE TRA PĀ LĀ YA SVĀ HĀ²³⁷⁴ //29//

Further, if you see
 A yoginī doing [something] there,
 You should recognize her
 As follows. //30//

You should know
 The excellent characteristics

²³⁷² *I.e.* experience orgasm. See Hartzell 1997, 932, quoting the *Kālacakratāntra*, "When the wisdom consort's *dharma* rises, i.e. when she has an orgasm, and the male initiate's 'pleasure' (*sukham*) falls, i.e. when he ejaculates."

²³⁷³ Should this be *bsten*, like in Chapter 2?

²³⁷⁴ "I offer the leftovers to the field protector."

Of the yogi[nī],²³⁷⁵
 By which [her] face
 Is glowing with light,
 Round, smooth and gentle,
 And long-eyebrowed.
 //31//

She rises from the clan
 Of Amitābha.
 She shows him
 The lotus gesture.
 The tortoise gesture
 Is the response. //32//

Wet²³⁷⁶-lipped, almond-eyed,
 Golden-complected,
 An enchantress,
 On her brow three designs,
 Placed up to [her] hairline,
 She listens well to the news
 Of those who died in battle. //33//

If you see this kind
 Of dākinī,
 You should show
 The spear gesture.
 You draw in [your] left leg
 And she shows you
 The dancing [gesture]. //34//

Having turned [her] left leg,
 You should respond
 To the Seal.
 She delights in various clothing,
 Arising from the family
 Of Ratnasambhava. //35//

If you see signs like
 Black skin and black clothing,
 Curly hair tied
 With a silk ribbon,
 An outline of a bow

²³⁷⁵ Although the Tibetan has *rnal 'byor pa*, “yogi,” I think the context calls for *rnal 'byor ma*, “yoginī”

²³⁷⁶ Should be *rlon*?

On [her] forehead, //36//

Her mind always agile,
 She is known as "Mamo."
 You should show
 The bell gesture,
 Showing the gesture
 To her left.
 Know [her] as arising
 From the family of Akṣobhya. //37//

Excellent beings
 Who come at night,
 Short-bellied, pale,
 Fat-calved, very pretty,
 You should know [her]
 As earth-mover.
 The conch gesture
 Is the response.
 She arises from
 The family of Vairocana. //38//

Wide-eyed, thick browed,
 Hair on all [her] limbs,
 Blue [complexed], red-eyed,
 Limbs thin, arms long,
 She is well known
 As ḍākinī. //39//

She arises from
 The family of Amoghasiddhi.
 If you see one like her,
 The banner gesture
 And the left gesture
 Are the responses. //40//

Thus, having known
 With effort,
 The wise having gone
 At night,
 You should not fear her
 [Even] a little,
 [But] because of that
 You should worship
 That very one! //41//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty-second chapter on the *gaṇacakra* ritual and the yoginī and such.

Chapter Sixty-Three

Explanation of the Secret Words²³⁷⁷

Then, moreover, listen
To what I will explain.
Listen with faithful minds
And I will explain
The meaning of secret words
In vajra places
And so forth
[And other] places, //1//

Yoginīs arising
From all clans,
The commitment
Of meeting at night,
Words like these,
And similar secrets. //2//

SAM PO TA KAM
Is drinking liquor,
BRI RAM SHA RU
Is to clearly express,
NI LA NA PA TRAM²³⁷⁸
A skull,²³⁷⁹
And KU LAM
Is adorned
With human bone. //3//

KUN DU RAM
Is using desire,
TSHA DRUM
Eating the six tastes,

²³⁷⁷ See Wedemeyer 1999, B 62a-b, 300-01

²³⁷⁸ So, in Lhasa *ni la na pa tram thod dang*, in Stok *na li ni pa tram thod dang*, and in Alamka *na lan pa tram thod pa dang*

²³⁷⁹ The variant readings from Alamka for these three lines can be found at Alamka 30B

SAM PU TAM²³⁸⁰
 Is applying
 The two organs,
 A LO KAM²³⁸¹
 Is the name existing.²³⁸² //4//

SHA RIM GA KAM is knowing
 You are lucky,
 TSA TRA KAM is called unlucky,
 TUM SHAM RAM is knowing
 You are melting,
 ME GA MA TRAM is said
 For musk. //5//

TSANDRA MA²³⁸³
 Is explained as blood,
 GA NAM²³⁸⁴
 Is known as shit,
 GHA NAM²³⁸⁵
 Is explained as great meat,
 NI DZAM²³⁸⁶
 Is expressed for *soma*. //6//

BHA SA NAM²³⁸⁷
 Is explained as water,
 PAKSHAM²³⁸⁸
 Is explained as a limb,
 SHU PA²³⁸⁹
 Is expressed for good,
 HO is known as "satisfied." //7//

MARGA²³⁹⁰
 Is expressed for hungry,

²³⁸⁰ Following Stok Palace's *samputa*, "coitus "

²³⁸¹ Skt *āloka*, "light "

²³⁸² Professor Jamspal suggests this should be *ah gang yod pa yi ming*, meaning "whatever vowels are there, it is the name [of the person practicing] Personal Communication with Prof Lozang Jamspal, 10-31-06

²³⁸³ Skt *candra*, "moon "

²³⁸⁴ Skt *gaṇa*, "heap "

²³⁸⁵ Skt "strike," "kill "

²³⁸⁶ Skt *nīya*, "innate," "native "

²³⁸⁷ Skt *bhaṣaṇa*, "speech," but also *bahana*, "flowing "

²³⁸⁸ Skt "side "

²³⁸⁹ Skt *śubham*, "good "

²³⁹⁰ Skt "path "

GHRI TAM²³⁹¹

Is explained as path, and

KHYO MA GAM NAM

Other side,

KA MA YA means do. //8//

NA GA RAM²³⁹²

Means one's own body,

BA TA KA

Means "buy,"

A DZAM YA

Means "fire,"

SHA KHAM

Means "eat." //9//

RAG MA HDOR

Means ritual,

SHA TA KAM

Means eat,

Such things are expressed

As "mantra."

SHA RAM means cooking dog. //10//

RAM BA KA

Is explained as guru,

KA YA

Here means *kṣatrtiya*,

RA GAM

Is explained as "*vaiṣya*,"

BE RAM

Means *śūdra*. //11//

TSA BAM

Means "untouchable,"

SHA RAM

Means "having a mole,"

BHA BA TSA KRAM

Is shoemaker,

KHAD KOM

Is explained as cremator. //12//

SA MANTRA

Means king,

²³⁹¹ Skt "melted butter "

²³⁹² Skt "person "

MI RAM MA YI
 Is expressed for long,
 BHA RA HA
 Is explained as full,
 You should say
 BIMKHYA
 For pig. //13//

BA LAM
 Means "fish,"
 DI NAM RA
 Explained as goat,
 NAG TUM
 Explained as fire offering,
 MARTA A HNA
 Means bird. //14//

HI RA PHYU
 Means flower,
 SHA DRUL LAM
 Incense,
 MĀ LA TRI
 Is explained as scent,
 SHA KU
 Is explained as butter lamp. //15//

KA SHI KAM²³⁹³
 Is explained as clothing,
 KE SA RA
 Means face,
 PAM TRAM
 Means forehead,
 MA LA
 Is well-known as eyebrow. //16//

KO BAL YAM
 Is known as eye,
 A DAR
 Means teeth,
 PAL LA BO
 Is known as lips,
 PA SHA
 Is known as throat. //17//

²³⁹³ *I.e. clothes made in Varanasi* Personal Communication with Lozang Jamsal, 11-6-06

HŪṂ

Is explained as shoulders,

A GU RO

Means arms,

SO SO RU

Is explained as hand,

SHRI PANG LE

Means breast. //18//

DZA TAM PHA LAM

Means arms,

DAL NAM

Means navel,

PADMA DZA

The secret place path,

KA TAM BA KAM

The two thighs. //19//

BE SAM

Is explained as shin,

TSWA GA NA

Is expressed for foot,

BA RA A KA KE SAR

Is perfectly explained as nails. /20//

As for PADMA GAR NI GA,

Light,

SHA KRA KU SU LAM

As bed,

SHAG TU

Is expressed for "son,"

NA LA NI RNA LAM

As without teacher. //21//

GO BAG SHMA

Is expressed for all paths,

SA GA RAM

Is explained as old,

SA LAM

Means delicious taste,

AKSHO RAM RIM

Is explained as not tasty. //22//

MRĪ GAM

Is explained as not speaking,

PA GO LA MU DAM

As singing,

MI TRA

Is expressed for "dancing,"

SHAPTA

Is explained as putting on airs. //23//

SPAR SHA

Is well-known as noose,

RASA²³⁹⁴

Bringing food to the dancer,

RU PAM

As a mountain peak,

TWA NE HA

Is explained as killing. //24//

PĀ RĀ BA TA

Is expressed for dying,

TA MA LĀ KO SE MA

As country,

PHA LAM

Is expressed for city,

PRA NA

Is explained as village. //25//

THYA NYA

Is explained as "life,"

KU RU TA RA

Is expressed for skill,

NA YA NA

Means consciousness,

A BHI NA BAM

Is explained as placing. //26//

RU DHI RA²³⁹⁵

Is expressed for embracing,

KU MU RA

Is explained as day,

KAN NYA

Is well-known as night,

DA SA

Is explained as half a day,

And DA PI

²³⁹⁴ Reading *rasa* for *ras*

²³⁹⁵ Skt for "blood "

Is known as part of the night. //27//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty-third chapter on the explanation of the secret words.

Chapter Sixty-Four

Explanation of the Mandala of Body, Speech and Mind

Then furthermore listen,
And I will explain!
The body mandala
Of body, speech and mind
Flows as enlightenment spirit
As the thirty-two [channels]
Located in the head. //1//

Distinguishing each of those
You should know [it]
As the Body Chakra.
By division of the parts
Of the letters,
You know [it]
As the Place for Speech. //2//

Distinguishing the instincts
Of desire and so forth,
You know [it]
As the Mind Mandala.²³⁹⁶
Oh great hero,
Listen to the explanation
Of body, speech and mind! //3//

The bodies of the Conquerors
Are respectively situated
In the body
Of this Vajra Master.
First, the Body Vajra
Sits in the form aggregate. //4//

²³⁹⁶ For the variant reading of this chapter up to here, see Alamka 30B

Then the Space Vajra sits
 In the feeling aggregate.
 The Vajra
 Of the Lord's Speech sits
 In the discrimination aggregate. //5//

The Actions Vajra sits
 In the motivation aggregate.
 The Vajra
 Of the Lord's Mind sits
 In the consciousness aggregate. //6//

Also in the flesh and so forth
 Of this one,
 The element of earth,
 Sits Transcendent Lady Locanā.
 In the blood and so forth,
 The element of water,
 Sits Transcendent Lady Māmakī. //7//

In the element of fire,
 Heat and so forth,
 Sits Transcendent Lady Pāṇḍaravāsini.
 In the element of wind,
 Akṣobhya and so forth,
 Sit Transcendent Lady Tārā. //8//

On his two eye organs
 Is Tathāgata Kṣitigarbha.
 On his two ear organs
 Is Tathāgata Vajrapāṇi. //9//

On his two nostrils
 Is Tathāgata Akāśagarbha.²³⁹⁷
 Tathāgata Lokeśvara
 Sits on his tongue.²³⁹⁸ //10//

On his mental faculty
 Sits Tathāgata Mañjuḥṣa.
 On the lump with the nature
 Of the four elements

²³⁹⁷ Or *Gaganagañja*.

²³⁹⁸ Stok Palace reverses these, beginning with *de yī*

Designated as "body,"
Sits Tathāgata
Sarvanirvaraṇaviṣkambhini. //11//

In all the body's joints,
Tathāgata Samantabhadra,
In all the body's sinews,
Tathāgata Meitreya. //12//

On the root of the right hand
Is Tathāgata Yamāntaka,
On the root of the left hand
Is Tathāgata Aparājita.
Sitting on the lotus of the mouth
Is Tathāgata Hayagrīva. //13//

Sitting in the secret place
Is Tathāgata Amṛtakunḍalinī,
Sitting on the right shoulder
Is Tathāgata Akṣobhya,
Sitting on the left shoulder
Is Tathāgata Takkirāja. //14//

Sitting on the right knee
Is Tathāgata Nīlandaṇḍa,
Sitting on the left knee
Is Tathāgata Mahābala. //15//

Sitting on top of his head
Is Tathāgata Cakravartin,
Sitting below [his] feet
Is Tathāgata Sumba. //16//

All of the Tathāgatas sit here
In his entire body,
Called the "body mandala,"
The body
Of Vajrasattva himself. //17//

By dividing Vajrasattva,
All of these perfect Buddhas,
Are the Buddha bodies
Without remainder.
The yogi in this birth
Will quickly attain Nirvana. //18//

He bestows virtue on you.
 Therefore, all the Victors
 Sit in the body
 Of the Vajra Master.
 If you see [it],
 There is benefit, hey! //19//

The *Mahāsattva*
 In the later time,²³⁹⁹
 Therefore, by all sentient beings,
 Having made efforts
 By the goods offered
 To the deity,
 Serves the guru. //20//

Then, meaningfully seeing,
 The Bodhisattva known as great,
 Having prostrated
 With joy and rejoicing,
 Sheds tears for the guru
 [And] sits in the mandala
 Of speech and mind. //21//

Having said "Well done,"
 The Lord
 Says these words:
A, ā, i, ī, u, ū,
ri, rī, li, lī, e, ai, and
o, au, am, ah,
 The so-called vowels, //22//

The groups of *ka, ca,*
ṭa, ta and *pa,*
*ya, ra, la, wa, ṣa,*²⁴⁰⁰
 And *ha,*
 He knows the mandala
 Of speech,
 Having emitted all
 [Of the sounds of] speech,
 The instincts of desire
 And so forth,
 Twenty-eight in number.²⁴⁰¹ //23//

²³⁹⁹ *I.e.* the degenerate age

²⁴⁰⁰ *Ṣa* here presumably stands in for all three sibilants

²⁴⁰¹ Counting the above as written, however, totals twenty-seven

By increasing well
 The mandala of mind,
 You will know
 The glorious supreme actions.
 Thus the [*Secret*] Community yogis
 Increase the supremely wonderful
 Supreme commitment
 Of the three vajras.
 The Lord of Practice knows [this]. //24//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty-fourth chapter on the explanation of the mandala of body, speech and mind.

Chapter Sixty-Five

Developing the Words of the Buddha, Holy Reality, Sangha and So Forth

Then spoke the Vajra Lord:

Gathering all the characteristics
 Of Buddha, the Holy Reality,
 And Sangha,
 The guru, teacher,
 And master,
 Vajradhara and the disciple, //1//

You become
 The stainless mind: Buddha.
 You speak perfectly
 As the Dharma.
 You make [your] body
 "The Sangha,"
 The place of the host
 Of bodhisattvas.²⁴⁰² //2//

²⁴⁰² This paragraph and the first two lines of the preceding one are identical to Alamka's text 31A

Buddha is explained
 As the syllable HŪṂ,
 Speech is expressed
 As the syllable ĀḤ,
 [Having] the nature
 Of emanating everywhere. //3//

Buddha becomes
 The *Avadhūtī*,
 Reality is expressed
 As the *Lalanā*,
 The sangha is expressed
 As the *Rasanā* --
 The characteristics
 Of these three. //4//

The formless realm
 Becomes Buddha,
 The form realm Reality,
 And, similarly,
 The desire realm the Sangha.
 Thus are the supreme characteristics
 Of the three realms. //5//

None other than
 Your own life
 Becomes the essence
 In the three realms.
 Illusory are the
 Three realms of wind.
 You see [them]
 Like dreaming a dream. //6//

Alone you will quickly see
 That the nature
 Of the three realms
 Is like that.
 Having been blessed
 Just like that,
 You will quickly
 Achieve attainments. //7//

Buddha is the
 Complete Enjoyment Body,
 The Holy Reality
 Is the Truth Body,

The Sangha becomes
As the Emanation Body. //8//

Luminance is the form of Buddha,
The Dharma is imminence,
The Sangha becomes radiance.
Those are the characteristics
Of the three luminances. //9//

Well-versed in the peaceful
And so forth activities,
Knowing the components
Of mantra and yoga,
Learned in the actions
Of the twenty rituals,
That is the guru.²⁴⁰³ //10//

Purely ethical and generous,
Having supreme patience
And diligence,
Absorbed in meditation
Day and night,
Skilled in wisdom
And crafts,
In general the guru
[With this] host of good qualities
Is called "Glorious Master." //11//

Internally, he delights
In the Secret Community,
Externally, he behaves
Like a *śrāvaka*.
He teaches disciples
Such personal instructions
Step by step --
That one is called a teacher. //12//

Speaking those words
And doing such things,
One who teaches
And causes the teaching of others
In a multitude of ideas
And mandalas,

²⁴⁰³ For variant reading of this verse, see Alamka 31A

Activities with holy meaning,
 And further, the three luminosities
 And the conduct
 Of supreme yoga --
 That one is called "Master."²⁴⁰⁴ //13//

He knows the ten realities,
 He knows the activities
 Of the mandala
 And so forth,
 Able to gather disciples
 And bestow
 The secret empowerment,
 Endowed with perfect
 Wisdom and compassion,
 Not fearing
 The personal instructions
 Of tantra, //14//

Perfectly endowed
 With the profound
 And the vast,
 He is a supreme
 Second Vajrasattva.
 Skilled in refuting
 And benefitting,
 He is explained
 As Vajradhara.²⁴⁰⁵ //15//

Faithful and also respectful
 To the guru,
 He always is found
 In virtuous activities.
 He is non-dual
 And also guileless,
 And has abandoned
 Those with bad conceptions. //16//

He has studied many scriptures²⁴⁰⁶
 And abandoned killing
 And violence.
 With a mind [set]

²⁴⁰⁴ For variant reading of this and prior verse, *see* Alamka 31A

²⁴⁰⁵ This verse is identical with Alamka 31A

²⁴⁰⁶ For variant reading of the five lines ending here, *see* Alamka 31B

On delivering sentient beings,
 He is perfectly endowed
 With constant effort.
 He has [all of] these [things]
 And so forth. //17//

You should certainly
 Know him as
 A good disciple
 Of great faith²⁴⁰⁷
 In whom there is
 Emptiness compassion inseparable. //18//

He meditates on
 Unexcelled supreme activity,
 The stages and so forth
 Of mantra and yoga,
 The purity of the five wisdoms,
 The nature of the five Buddhas,
 [And], by the five
 Manifest enlightenments,
 On the characteristics
 Of the three luminosities
 And the three bodies:
 Truth, enjoyment
 And emanation, and //19//

The characteristics
 Of the good qualities
 Of great bliss,
 And the division
 Of the ecstasies
 And so forth, and,
 Similarly, the delights²⁴⁰⁸
 Of the charming one
 And so forth. //20//

He engages and remains in
 And rises from²⁴⁰⁹
Yoga, Amyoga,
Atiyoga and Mahāyoga,

²⁴⁰⁷ I am tempted to translate this as "A good disciple with great faith should certainly know " but there is no agentive subject for *shes pa*

²⁴⁰⁸ *Nyams, rasa.*

²⁴⁰⁹ Would be happier with a *las* here, but can't make any other sense of *ldang*

First by gathering short practice,
 Then the Supreme Mandala King,
 The Supreme King of Actions. //21//

The tantra in which
 Completion stage yoga,
 The two blisses
 And the two exhalations
 And so forth
 Are extensively explained
 Is called a *Mahāyoga* Tantra.²⁴¹⁰ //22//

A tantra of such good qualities,
 Is called the "support and vessel"
 Of the supreme good qualities
 Of listening and so forth.
 It is adorned
 With all the signs, and, //23//

Just as you shouldn't place
 The milk of a lion
 In an earthen vessel,
 Similarly, you shouldn't give
 A *Mahāyoga* tantra
 To [those] who
 Are not [proper] vessels. //24//

If he explains
 The personal instructions
 To one not a [proper] vessel,
 The student will instantly die,
 This and [his] future lives
 Will be lost
 And the Master
 Will lose [his] attainments. //25//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty-fifth chapter on developing the words of the Buddha, holy Dharma, Sangha and so forth.

²⁴¹⁰ For variant reading of this and preceding line, see Alamka 31B

Chapter Sixty-Six

Teaching the Results of the Actions of Peace and So Forth

The spoke the Vajra Lord:
 As for engaging
 In the activities of a disciple,
 Also [for] the peaceful
 And so forth activities,
 You [do] mantra
 And yoga gradually. //1//

Using shoes, umbrellas,
 Crowns and betel nuts,
 Spitting out lumps of mucus
 And saliva and so forth,
 Spreading legs apart,²⁴¹¹ //2//

Looking at others, speaking boldly,
 Pride of wealth, egotism,
 Watching gambling and so forth,
 Speaking carelessly,
 Stepping over the guru's shadow,
 The multitude of those
 And similar faults--
 You should abandon
 In the presence of the guru.²⁴¹² //3//

Fearfully, with clasped palms,
 Receiving instruction
 With hands on crown,
 Promising to give
 All [his] possessions,
 Shy and looking down,
 The disciple should remain
 Before the guru. //4//

If they wish supreme attainment,
 The disciples in front of the guru
 Should "conduct" [themselves]
 Like that and so forth.

²⁴¹¹ For variant readings in this and prior verse, *see* Alamka 31B

²⁴¹² This and the prior line are identical in Alamka 31B

The commitment [and] vows
Have been explained above. //5//

These are the behaviors
Of the disciples.
The peaceful and so forth
Activities for them
Are suitable to be taught
By the guru.
I will briefly explain this.²⁴¹³ //6//

The elements
Of ordinary ritual,
Peaceful and extensive,
You should do
On the waxing moon.
The activities of power
And fierce activities,
You should undertake
On the waning moon. //7//

For peaceful [activities]
You face north,
Similarly, for extensive [activities]
You look east.
Fierce activities
On the south side,
For activities of power,
Look to the west. //8//

For killing, the direction
Of fire,²⁴¹⁴
For activities of anger,
From the place
In the free from truth
Direction,²⁴¹⁵
For punishing,
Of expelling wind,²⁴¹⁶
For hypnotizing,
The direction of power.²⁴¹⁷ //9//

²⁴¹³ For variant reading of this verse, *see* Alamka 31B

²⁴¹⁴ The southeast

²⁴¹⁵ The southwest

²⁴¹⁶ The northwest

²⁴¹⁷ The northeast

White is the complexion
 Of peace;
 For extensive,
 You should make yellow;
 For power and summoning,
 Red;
 The black complexion
 Is for killing. //10//

For peaceful [activities],
 A loving mind,
 For extensive, an ecstatic mind,
 For power, a desirous mind,
 For killing, an angry mind. //11//

For peaceful [activities],
 Usually you should act at dawn,
 Similarly, for extensive
 You should act in the morning.
 For power and fierce activities,
 At noon and midnight. //12//

Thus I have suitably explained.
 By the characteristics
 Spoken in the tantra of mantra,
 The intelligent one
 Should perform according to ritual
 The eight attainments
 Of peace and so forth. //13//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty-sixth chapter on the teaching of the result of the peaceful activities and so forth.

Chapter Sixty-Seven

The Eight Attainments Of Fierce Recitation and Peaceful and So Forth

Then listen further
And I will explain.²⁴¹⁸
The characteristic
Of reciting fierce [mantras]
Explains the attainments of yoga.
This you will doubtless achieve. //1//

Reciting with a wrathful mind
The so-called "fierce repetition,"²⁴¹⁹
Or by applying
The mantra recitation
Of the fierce kings.
You should know
That fierce recitation.
It bestows the fruit
Of the eight attainments. //2//

In a fearsome charnel ground,
A terrifying, terrifying place,
Smeared with the blood
Of a human skull,
You take the character
Of the unwounded one. //3//

Mixing human semen
And menstrual blood
The form to be practiced there
Is to be drawn
And [it should be] clear
And fearsome and scary. //4//

As for the one stomping
With an extended left leg,
In the three times [of day]
Up to seven days,

²⁴¹⁸ Alamka agrees with Stok on *bshad k'is*

²⁴¹⁹ For variant reading up to here and of the prior verse, see Alamka 32A

You should recite
This mantra of Yamāntaka
As the cause of attainment: //5//

NA MAḤ SA MANTA
KĀ YA WAK TSITTA
BADZRA NĀM
OM KHA KHA KHĀHI KHĀHI
SARBA DUSHTA
SA TVA DAMAKA
A SI MU SA LA PAR SHU
PĀ SHA HASTA²⁴²⁰ //6//

KHADGA BĀ MA TA
RA TSA NI HASHTHA
TSA TUR MU KHA
TSA TUR BHU DZA
SHA TA TSA RA NĀ
Ā GATSTSHA Ā GATSTSHA
SARBA DUSHTA
PRA NĀ A PA HĀ RI NE²⁴²¹ //7//

MA HĀ BI GHNĀM GHĀ TA KA
BI KRI TE ĀNĀM
SARBBA BHŪTA
BHA YAṀ KA RA
ATTA ATTA HĀ SA NĀ DI NE
BYĀ GHRA TSARMMA NI
PĀ SA NA KU RU KU RU
SARBBA KRMMĀ NĪ²⁴²² //8//

TSTSHINDA TSTSHINDA
SARBBA MANTRĀM
BHINDA BHINDA
PA RA MU DRĀ NA
Ā KARSHA YA Ā KARSHA YA
SARBBA BHŪ TĀM
MA THA MA THA
NI RMA THA NI RMA THA
SARBA DUSHTĀ NA²⁴²³ //9//

²⁴²⁰ I bow down to all [*samanta*?] of the body speech and mind of the vajra ones Eat! Eat! Tamer of all wicked beings! In [his] hand a sword, club, axe and lasso, a chopper [in his] left hand,

²⁴²¹ [With] the index finger [in the warning mudra], four faces, four arms, six legs, take away the life of all the evil ones!

²⁴²² Deformed face one! [*I.e.* buffalo-faced Yamāntaka] Terrifying all ghosts! Making a laughing sound of "atta, atta," [should be AHA, AHA?], wearing a tiger skin [*carma*], Do! Do! All actions!

PRA BE SHA YA
 PRA BE SHA YA
 MANDALA MADHYE
 BAI BA SHĀ TA
 DZĪ BI TA ANTA KA RA
 KU RU KU RU HA NA HA NA
 DA HA DA HA PATSA PATSA
 MĀ BI LAMPA MĀ BI LAMPA²⁴²⁴ //10//

SA MA YA MA NU SMA RA
 HŪM HŪM TARDZA YA
 BHA GA NAM²⁴²⁵ PHAT PHAT
 SPHO TA YA SPHO TA YA
 KĀ RA KĀ RA SARBBĀ
 Ā NA NA BA RI BĪ RA
 PŪ RŪ²⁴²⁶ YA
 HE HE²⁴²⁷ BHA GA BĀM
 KINTSI RĀ YA SI NA
 NAMAḤ SARBBĀ
 THA SĀ DHA YA
 HŪM PHAT SVĀ HĀ.²⁴²⁸ //11//

First, this fierce recitation
 Is excellent for controlling
 And summoning.
 I will explain expelling. //12//

Reciting the second fierce one
 [While] mixing with
 The index finger
 Seeds, salt, mustard,
 Poison, datura juice
 And blood, //13//

²⁴²³ Cut! Cut! [With] all mantras, split! Split! [Usually in Yamāntaka, it's *sarva śatrum* (enemies)
 Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal Seal! Summon! Summon! All ghosts! Kill! Kill!
 Pulverize! Pulverize! All evil ones

²⁴²⁴ Enter! Enter! The middle of the mandala [VAIBASHĀTA?] Terminate the living one! Do! Do!
 Kill! Kill! Burn! Burn! Roast! Roast! Don't be late!

²⁴²⁵ Stok Palace has *bhe ga anam*

²⁴²⁶ Stok Palace has RĀ

²⁴²⁷ Stok Palace has HI HI

²⁴²⁸ Remember the pledge! HŪM HŪM! Warning! Hurry! PHAT PHAT! Shatter! Shatter! Do! Do!
 Hero, fill up all faces! (Per Lozang Jamspal something is wrong here Personal Communication 12-19-06)
 Stok Palace has *parivīrapuraya* The rest of this phrase is unclear to me, maybe something like HE HE
 BHAGAVAN, KIMCIT what is RĀYASINA? I bow down Make all goals! HŪM PHAT SVĀHĀ

You should draw
 A wind mandala,
 [On] so-called cemetery cloth,
 Supreme like a half-moon.
 You should mark
 The two sides
 With a vajra. //14//

In the center of that
 Draw the name
 Of what you will accomplish.
 Standing, spreading
 [Your] left leg,
 You should recite
 This mantra. //15//

Having summoned like before
 The name of what
 You will accomplish,
 In the middle of the night
 You should practice constantly
 For seven days. //16//

NAMAḤ SA MANTA
 KĀ YA WAKA TSITTA
 BADZRA NĀM
 NA MO BADZRA KHRO DHĀ YA
 MA HĀ DAM SHTOTA KA TA
 BHAIRAVA WĀ YA
 A SI MU SA LA PA RA SHU PĀ
 SHA HASTĀ YA //17//

OM A MRI TU KUNDA LI
 KHA KHA KHĀ HI KHĀ HI
 TISHTHA THSHTHA
 BANDHA BANDHA
 HA NA HA NA DA HA DA HA
 GRDZDZA GRDZDZA
 SPHOTA SPHOTA
 BI SPHO TA YA BI SPHO TA YA
 SARBBA BI GHNĀM
 BI NĀ YA KĀ NA
 MA HĀ GA NA PA TI
 DZĪ BI TA ANTA KA RA YA
 HŪM PHAT SVĀ HĀ //18//

This mantra is
 The "peaceful action"
 That is done in order to
 Banish evil sentient beings. //19//

As for Aparājita,
 Having recited the
 Three fierce ones,
 Pacifying fire and snakes,
 You should visualize
 Two HŪM's on
 Two sun [disks]
 On [your] two hands. //20//

With two hands
 On the head
 Of the one to be cured,
 Scratching and
 Entering into him,²⁴²⁹
 You should visualize
 Those two [suns]
 In the heart
 Of the one to be cured
 As burning up the ghost. //21//

I should explain the mantra
 That terrifies fires and ghosts:

NAMAḤ SA MANTA
 KĀ YA WĀ KA TSITTA
 BADZRA NĪ
 OM A PA RĀ DZĪ TI RĪ TSI²⁴³⁰
 HŪM PHAT:
 PLEASE RELEASE
 SUCH AND SUCH A PERSON
 FROM THE INFLUENCE
 OF THE GHOST! //22//

Listen and I will explain
 That fourth one
 DHRIḤ,

²⁴²⁹ Per Lozang Jamspal, this may mean you scratch HŪM on his head Personal Communication 12-19-

06

²⁴³⁰ Stok APARĀJĪ RĪRITI

The mantra
 That dispels poison.
 By the recitation
 Of fierce Hayagrīva,
 Perfect, unexcelled excellence,
 You visualize
 The person to be cured
 As a triple-stacked mind hero.
 The wisdom being
 Is on a moon [disk].
 At the heart. //23//

Supremely visualize
 Light rays of that one
 Filling up the body
 Of the one to be cured.
 By that blazing,
 The poison [is expelled].
 Then visualize [your] right hand
 As a moon
 Adorned by HAM, //24//

White in color,
 Placed on [your] finger.
 In that way,
 Perform for the patient.
 Place HŪṢ DHRI DZI
 KSHĪṢ SĀ DHA,
 Causing the accomplishing
 Of all actions. //25//

Meditate that
 Starting from the head
 Of the one to be cured
 Up to the end of the foot,
 An unbroken stream of water
 Sends the poison
 Down in stages.
 Here, you should recite
 This mantra called Hayagrīva: //26//

NAMAḤ SA MANTA
 KĀ YA WAKA TSITTA
 BADZRĀ NĀM
 OM HŪṢ HŪṢ HŪṢ
 TA RU LA BI RU LA

SARBBA BI SHA GHĀ
 TA KA TA KA
 DZWA LI TI BI SPHU LINGA //27//

ATTĀ ATTA HĀ SA
 NĀ DA SAHITĀ
 KA SA RI SA HO PA TAM AD DE
 BADZRA KHU RA GHA TA NA
 TSA TA PA SU DHA TA
 LA NI SHVĀ
 SA MA RU TA UT KSHIPTA
 DHA RA NI DHARA //28//

BI SHA NA ATTA HĀ SA
 A PA RI MI TA
 WA LA PA RĀ KRA MA
 ĀRYA GA NA BHITA
 BUDDHA BUDDHA
 HA YA GRĪ BA KHA KHA
 TSTSHINDA TSTSHINDA
 Ā BE SHA YA SARBBA
 GRA HE SHWA
 A PRA TI HA TO BHA WA //29//

BADZRA DAM SHTI
 KINYTSI RĀ YA SI ID AM
 DUSHTA GRA HAM DAM SHTA
 SARBBAM PĀ DHU NA DHU NA
 MA THA MA THA
 MARDĀ MARDĀ
 BIDDHA DHARMMA RA DHA
 BIDDHA DHARMMA SAM GHA
 A NU DZNYĀ NA KĀM KU RU SVĀ HĀ //30//

PLEASE DISPEL THE POISON
 AND SO FORTH FROM SO AND SO HŪM,
 And intertwine the mantra.
 Having followed the root tantra,
 You should know the rest
 In detail.²⁴³¹ //31//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty-seventh chapter on the eight attainments of fierce recitation and peaceful and so forth.

²⁴³¹ See *Secret Community Root Tantra*, chs 14, 15

Chapter Sixty-Eight

The Epitome of All Attainments

Now furthermore I will explain.
 The epitome of all attainments,
 Is the supreme wisdom
 Of all Buddhas,
 The quality of attainment
 And so forth. //1//

Kṣitigarba, Vajrapāṇi,
 Mañjuśrī, Viṣkambhīni
 And Meitreyā--
 These five are intertwined
 With the three syllables.
 They consecrate
 The channel chakras
 As eye and ear,
 Mind and body. //2//

The three signs
 Are like the day,
 Causing the attainment
 Of the five clairvoyances.²⁴³²
 Through the fourth empowerment,
 The intelligent one
 Perceives reality.²⁴³³ //3//

Luminance serves as part
 Of the night;
 The day is radiance.
 Dawn is imminence.
 Thus, the characteristics
 Of luminance and so forth
 Are not night,
 And are not
 Dawn or day,
 [But] cause the abandoning
 Of the conceptual energy-winds.²⁴³⁴ //4//

²⁴³² For variant readings up to here in this chapter, *see* Alamka 32A

²⁴³³ These two lines are identical in Alamka 32A

²⁴³⁴ This verse and the first two lines of the next verse are parallel to *PK* ch 4, vv 17-18

It is instant enlightenment,
 [Its] character is called momentary.²⁴³⁵
 Whether arising at the end
 Or at the beginning,
 Whether arising not in the center
 Or in the center, //5//

Whether arising not at the end
 Or at the end,
 All of these are spoken of
 As one instant of emptiness,
 Not going or coming anywhere,
 Inexhaustible, not increasing
 Not nothing, //6//

It has a modest form,
 And is immodest,²⁴³⁶
 Not stationary,
 And not going quickly,
 Free from all conventions
 Of existence and non-existence,
 Neither the form of merit
 Nor the form of demerit, //7//

Not being the lord
 Of merit or demerit,
 It becomes supreme.²⁴³⁷
 All these are stated
 As one instant
 Of emptiness,
 Manifest enlightenment
 In an instant.
 This characteristic
 Is the supreme instant. //8//

Holding the enlightenment spirit
 At the tip of the vajra
 Is stability of body.
 By that [stability],
 That very enlightenment spirit

²⁴³⁵ These two lines are identical in Alamka 32B

²⁴³⁶ *I.e.* conventional and ultimate Personal Communication with Lozang Jamspal

²⁴³⁷ Per Nāgārjuna, nihilists go to hell, meritorious go to heaven, and he who gives up both, to Nirvana
 Personal communication with Lozang Jamspal

Is applied to the
Reality of energy-wind. //9//

Therefore the suitable one
Makes [it go] above,
Not aging without a doubt.²⁴³⁸
Knowing HŪM and HO
Respectively,
Holding increases [it] above. //10//

The five nectars
Explained above
Are called
Elixirs.²⁴³⁹
By this,
You will accomplish
Turning iron
Into gold.²⁴⁴⁰ //11//

The Vajra Seal
Is the great attainment,²⁴⁴¹
Accomplished
Through integration.²⁴⁴²
The practice
Of the creation stage
And the completion stage--
Wherever those two
Become one,
That is called integration. //12//

By always rejecting
Samsara and Nirvana
As two,
Whenever they become
One thing,
That is explained
As "integration." //13//

Conventional and ultimate

²⁴³⁸ Variant readings for these two lines and the preceding paragraph found at Alamka 32B

²⁴³⁹ These two lines are identical to Alamka 32B

²⁴⁴⁰ For variant reading of these two lines, *see* Alamka 32B

²⁴⁴¹ Per Lozang Jamsal, when you can transform iron into gold, then you can engage in consort practice

Personal Communication

²⁴⁴² These two lines are identical to Alamka 32B

Are always free from duality,
 Whenever they are mixed,
 That is explained
 As "integration." //14//

By practicing vajra repetition,
 Knowing the characteristics
 Of energy-wind,
 You cut the winds
 Of conceptuality,
 You will attain
 Perception of mind. //15//

By the stage
 Of self-consecration,
 The eight attainments
 Will be accomplished.
 Knowing the division
 Of the light
 And so forth,
 You will attain the stage
 Of manifest enlightenment. //16//

Abiding in the state of integration,
 You gather all attainments.
 By means of yoga,
 You will accomplish
 In this very life,
 Without any doubt! //17//

Entering into non-conceptuality,
 By the concentration of integration
 In the great accomplishment
 Of the Great Seal,
 There is no doubt
 In this attainment. //18//

The body transforms
 Into a measureless mansion
 Supported by all the Buddhas,²⁴⁴³
 Divided into four sides,
 Front and back,
 Right and left. //19//

²⁴⁴³ For variant reading of these two lines, *see* Alamka 32B

Divided into upper
 And lower,
 It is explained
 As "four doors."
 The shape of
 The four nose tips
 Should be expressed
 As four arches. //20//

The decorations are explained
 As the intestines,
 The half nets become
 The sinews,
 The part [of the enlightenment spirit],
 The half moon,
 The vase is known
 As the belly. //21//

The shins, thighs,
 Biceps and forearms
 Are explained
 As the eight pillars,
 Eye consciousness
 As the mirrors
 And so forth,
 Auditory consciousness
 As cymbals, //22//

Olfactory consciousness
 As garlands of flowers,
 The [rim of] jeweled bricks
 As the gustatory consciousness,
 The tactile consciousness
 As the cloth banners,
 And the mental consciousness
 As the deer. //23//

The eyes
 As chakra symbols,
 The ears
 As crossed vajras,
 The nose
 As a silk banner,
 The tongue
 Is stated as a bell. //24//

Pure yak tail fans
 Are explained
 As the body's totality,
 The mind is stated
 As the central lotus,
 The conceptual wind
 As the perfect support. //25//

The five pure wisdoms
 Are expressed as five drawings,
 The five pure aggregates
 Are divided into
 Five pure colors.
 You cultivate these
 As a measureless mansion. //26//

First, you should know
 [How] to practice.
 The five manifest enlightenments
 Are your own essence,
 Divided into clans,
 Expressed as an outer place,
 The pure mandala. //27//

The nature of the four elements
 Is your own self,
 In short, the Form Aggregate.
 The Form Aggregates
 And visual consciousness
 Are explained as Kṣitigarbha,
 The outer [form sense objects]
 As Rūpavajrā. //28//

Meitreyā sits in the center
 Of the sinews,
 Similarly, the two
 Fierce Kings
 In the east and south²⁴⁴⁴
 Are explained
 As the mirror wisdom,
 Pure Vairocana. //29//

Happiness, suffering,

²⁴⁴⁴ Presumably Yamāntaka and Acala, although Acala is technically in the southeast (and Yamāntaka at the eastern gate) in the standard Arya Guhyasamāja mandala. See Wayman 1977, 123

Fear and disgust
 Are asserted as the character
 Of feeling.
 Feeling is the water element,
 The outer [auditory sense objects]
 Are explained as Śabdavajrā,
 And the ear as Vajrapāṇi. //30//

The two clans mix.
 Gandhavajrā becomes
 The outer [olfactory sense objects];
 The olfactory consciousness
 Ākāśagarbha.
 The two fierce ones²⁴⁴⁵
 Are consciousness. //31//

Equality is Ratnasambhava,
 And the discrimination
 Of things and nothings
 Has the character
 Of subsequent memory
 Of the previous one.
 The discrimination aggregate
 Is the fire element,
 And the outer [olfactory sense objects]
 Are Gandhavajrā, //32//

And the gustatory consciousness
 Is Protector Lokeśvara.
 The two Fierce Kings
 Are of discriminating wisdom,
 Arising from the clan
 Of Amitābha. //33//

Through virtuous
 And non-virtuous actions,
 The instincts have the character
 Of discrimination.²⁴⁴⁶
 Discrimination
 Is the element of wind.

²⁴⁴⁵ Hayagrīva and Nīladanda?

²⁴⁴⁶ While one might expect 'du byed, "volition" or "compositional factors" or "emotion" here, Lhasa, Sde dge, Snar thang and Stok Palace all have 'du shes here rather than 'du byed. If this is a scribal error, it would be evidence that these four versions come from a common source, and that the error occurred in the transmission of the Tibetan, rather than the Sanskrit, text. There is no mention of 'du byed (*saṃskāra*) in the *Vajra Rosary*.

The outer [gustatory sense objects]
 Are Rasavajrā,
 And the tactile consciousness
 Is Viṣkambhini.²⁴⁴⁷ //34//

Samantabhadra sits in the middle
 Of the gaps of the joints.
 Similarly, the two Fierce Kings
 The intensive-activity-
 Accomplishing wisdom,
 Arise from the clan
 Of Amoghasiddhi. //35//

The nature of all things
 Expresses the consciousness
 Characterized by wisdom.
 Consciousness is
 The element of space,
 Mental consciousness
 Is Mañjuvajra.
 Similarly, the two Fierce Kings
 Are the extremely pure
 Reality Sphere.
 They arise from the clan
 Of Akṣobhya. //36//

The five types
 Of manifest enlightenment
 Dwell in the measureless mansion.
 I will explain them respectively,
 By analyzing [their] elements. //37//

The essence of
 Hair, bone, shit and spit
 Are of the nature
 Of earth, Vairocana.
 The essence of
 Body hair, place and near^{2448 2449}
 You know as the element

²⁴⁴⁷ This differs somewhat the standard Ārya viewpoint. Lokeśvara and Rasavajrā are taste and wind, Viṣkambhini and Sparśavajrā are touch and also wind. Chapter 22 also is missing a reference to Sparśavajrā where you would think there would be one, which would seem to indicate unity of text. On the other hand, chapter 45 refers to Sparśavajrā.

²⁴⁴⁸ Or secret place?

²⁴⁴⁹ Or places close to the heart? In Ārya system, Amoghasiddhi usually sits at the secret place, of the wind element.

Of water.
 You should know [them]
 As supported by the clan
 Of the nature
 Of Ratnasambhava. //38//

The essence of
 Teeth, skin and flesh
 Are expressed
 As the "fire element."
 You should know [these]
 As distinguished by the clan
 Of Amitābha. //39//

The essence of
 The flesh of sinews
 And the ribs
 Is wind, Amoghasiddhi.
 The essence of
 Shit, sinew and bile
 Are known as the element
 Of space. //40//

The nature and essence
 Of Akṣobhya
 Are the "five consciousnesses."
 You know the emanation
 Of five types
 For each one
 And individually. //41//

Dividing the substances
 Of an internal nature,
 The five aggregates
 Of the Tathāgatas,
 Expressed as
 "Flesh, artery, sinew
 Flesh morsel [?],
 Brain and cerebrum, //42//

Bone marrow, intestine,
 Kidney, heart, abdomen
 Lung, spleen, bladder,
 Anus, stomach, intestines, //43//

Body fat, lymph fluid, pus,

Blood, bile, phlegm,
 Mucus, hair, beard,
 Nails, body hair, skin,
 Arm, ankle, limbs
 And so forth,
 Fontanel and shoulder.
 You should know
 [them] in succession. //44//

Having summarized,
 I will explain
 The division of the places
 Of the pure measureless mansion.
 Pulīra is known as the head.²⁴⁵⁰ //45//

The crown
 As Jalandhara,²⁴⁵¹
 The right ear
 As Udyana,²⁴⁵²
 The back of the crown
 As Arbuda,
 The left ear as Godābari,²⁴⁵³ //46//

The center of the brows
 As Rāmeśvari,
 The two eyes
 As Debokoti,
 The shoulder channels
 As Mālawa,
 The two armpits
 As Kāmarūba,²⁴⁵⁴
 The breasts are known
 As Ode, //47//

You know Kosala
 As the belly button,
 Under the ears
 As Tresaku,
 The mouth lotus
 As Kalingka,

²⁴⁵⁰ For variant reading of these three lines, starting with *de la*, see Alamka 33A

²⁴⁵¹ Jalandhar, Punjab

²⁴⁵² Oddiyana, Kashmir

²⁴⁵³ In west central India

²⁴⁵⁴ In Assam

The throat is expressed
 As Lambakar,
 You should know the heart
 As Kānchir. //48//

You know the Himalaya
 As the crotch,
 The sign²⁴⁵⁵
 As Grihadeva,
 The rectum
 As Pretapuri,
 The two thighs
 As Indonesia. //49//

The two shins
 As Saurastra,²⁴⁵⁶
 The top of the foot
 As Sindh country,
 The fingers
 As Nagara,
 The two thumbs
 As Marur,²⁴⁵⁷
 And the sole
 As the Kulu Valley. //50//

In that way,
 You should know
 One who has
 The purity of the places
 And the extreme purity
 Of the ten stages
 As the lord
 Of dissolving and enjoying.²⁴⁵⁸
 By the particular stages
 Of engaging and so forth,
 [You become] Vajrasattva. //51//

Now, further, I will explain
 The supreme characteristics
 Of the energy-winds.
 The Life-energy energy-wind

²⁴⁵⁵ *I.e.* as male or female

²⁴⁵⁶ Near Mumbai

²⁴⁵⁷ In Rajasthan

²⁴⁵⁸ These two lines are identical in Alamka

Abides in the heart,
 Born from the particular clan
 Of Akṣobhya.²⁴⁵⁹ //52//

The Evacuative energy-wind
 That abides in the crotch
 Is born from the aspect
 Of Ratnasambhava.
 The Ascending energy-wind
 Abides at the end
 Of the throat,
 The nature of Amitābha. //53//

The Fire and Equalizing
 Abide at the navel,
 The nature
 Of Amoghasiddhi.
 The Pervading
 Abides in all the limbs,
 Blessed by Vairocana. //54//

This continuity
 Of life-energy and effort
 From the continuity
 Of the sense doors
 Moves at all times,
 Explained as "life-energy." //55//

Life-energy, wind, excrement
 And, similarly,
 Semen and so forth--
 The yogi should always know
 These downward carrying ones
 As the evacuative wind. //56//

Laughing, eating, licking,
 Drinking everything, sucking
 And whatever
 Is always equalized
 Is expressed
 As "equalizing." //57//

Going upwards and gathering,

²⁴⁵⁹ Variant reading of this verse found in Alamka 33A

Eating and tasting and so forth,
 Joined together with wisdom,
 You should know as
 Upward moving actions. //58//

Pervading and holding
 And, similarly, going
 And returning and so forth,
 Because of pervading
 All the joints,
 It is explained as "pervading." //59//

I explained the characteristics
 Of energy-wind.
 Now I will express
 Their destruction.²⁴⁶⁰
 As before, the Emitting
 And Retracting [energy-winds]
 And so forth
 Cause harm to each other,²⁴⁶¹
 One is harming the other.
 Naturally attaining strength,
 One dissolves into another. //60//

Just as the moon
 Is caught by a planet,
 The winds gradually decrease.
 Like before, higher and higher,
 They dissolve into themselves,
 Emitting and retracting,
 They rise again.
 Just as [something]
 Burned by fire
 Is a no-thing,
 [The energy-winds]
 Not moving, dissolve. //61//

The Life-energy energy-wind
 Rises again,
 The various active energy-winds,
 Together with consciousness
 Again abide

²⁴⁶⁰ Presumably should be 'jug, although both Lhasa and Stok have 'jigs

²⁴⁶¹ For variant reading of these four lines, *see* Alamka 33A

In the three worlds.
 From that, *karma*,
 And from that, birth.
 From that, clinging
 And so forth, the instincts. //62//

And from that,
 Again death and birth.
 Thus like a chakra turning,
 As before, vajra recitation
 And so forth
 Gradually divides that. //63//

Then all the great beings,
 With a spoonful
 Of eye ointment,
 Dispel the blindness
 Of the mistakes of all.
 They see perfect reality. //64//

Then, having prostrated
 Again and again,
 With eyes full of tears,
 Having circled the Lord
 Three times,
 They praised Vajradhara: //65//

E MA'O
 Omnipresent Lord of all,
 Attaining equality with space!
 E MA'O
 Commitment of the three realities,
 Teaching very wonderfully! //66//

Liberating from
 The three realms,
 The actuality of
 The Reality Sphere,
 Unsullied by desire,
 To you, unbounded one,
 We bow down! //67//

Not relying on aggregates,
 Realms or sense media,
 Liberated from [both]
 Cyclic existence and Nirvana,

To you, unbounded one,
We bow down, offering praise! //68//

Thus to you, placeless space,
Unelaborated and unsullied,
With a mind equal to space,
Unbounded one,
We bow down, offering praise. //69//

Then the person
Of the Lord
Became victor over
The three worlds,
And moved
These three worlds,
Having triumphed over
The devils. //70//

Reigning over the heavens
Of the three worlds,
All of the ten Terrifics,
The main one,
Conqueror of the three worlds,
Issues commands like this: //71//

In whatever part of the earth,
This, the Tantric commitment
Of Mahāyoga,
Expressed as the Vajra Rosary,
Should be practiced
At all times,
And, you yourself
[Should do] that one
Continuously. //72//

As for the activities
Of the ten Terrifics,
In that kingdom,
In order to protect against
All interferences
With the ritual dagger,
You should offer
A ritual cake to them
With a rosary of mantras
To each one. //73//

In order to care
 For sentient beings,
 Having taught various emanations,
 Vajrasattva will remain
 At all times,
 Day and night. //74//

From the realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra Glorious Vajra Rosary, the sixty eighth chapter on gathering all the attainments.

The Opening of the Secret Essence of All Tantras, from the Manifest Realization of the Mahāyoga Tantra, the Glorious Vajra Rosary, is complete.

Colophon

Translated, edited and finalized by the Indian Abbot Sujana Śrī Jñāna and great text translator, monk Zhi ba 'od, the King of Tibet, in the temple of Tho-ling, *dpal med lhun gyis grub pa*, the sanctuary [of Ye shes 'od], the center of the earth.²⁴⁶²

²⁴⁶² Samten Karmay has an extensive analysis of the colophons to Zhi ba 'od's translations, including this one at Karmay 1998, 19-26. *Thugs dam sa'i snying po* could also refer to a temple of "the yidam Kṣitigarbha," although there is no reference to such a temple in Tucci 1989 or Vitali 1999. The Nyingma Catalogue translates the colophon to the *Śrīparamādīpikā*, Toh 488, also translated at Tho ling by Zhi ba 'od and Mantrakalaśa, presumably identical to that of the *Vajra Rosary*, as "Tr at the *viḥāra* of dpal dpe-med lhun-gyis grub-pa at Tho-ling in the province of Gu-ge."

Selections from Alamkakalaśa's *Commentary*

Chapter 23

Determining the Commitment of the Three Realities²⁴⁶³

[153A] Thus having taught the answer to the question about the subject of the three letters, the twenty-second chapter, now, in order to discuss the answer to the question about the subject of the three realities, to teach the twenty-third chapter, and at the outset discussing the beginning of that, he says “**Then**” and so forth, [meaning] after the explanation of the twenty-second chapter. “**Furthermore**” [means] relying on what came before. “**Listen**” is directing the questioner to listen, exhorting the questioner to listen, connected to “**I will teach the word of the three realities.**” [“]The three realities[“]²⁴⁶⁴ with the nature signifying the characteristics of the thatness of self, mantra and wisdom. “I will teach” [means] “I will teach the ascertaining of the meaning to be expressed.” If someone asks how, in response to that he says “**Divided into self and so forth,**” the words [“] and so forth[“] should be known as [meaning] collected by the thatness of mantra and wisdom. “**Exactly**” [means] with the nature of the unerring view. “**Stages**” means by the stage of the thatness of self and so forth.

Thus having taught the beginning, in order to discuss the direct explanation, summarizing the thatness of the self as a branch of that, “**The reality of self**” [means] the actuality of the lords, Vairocana and so forth, who abide precisely as the reality of the

²⁴⁶³ Chapter headings do not appear in Alamka's *Commentary*. The chapter headings here are those of the chapter of the *Vajra Rosary* on which Alamka is commenting

²⁴⁶⁴ I have been translating *de nyid* as “reality” and *de kho na nyid* as “thatness,” but there is nothing fixed about those terms, and here they are clearly used as equivalents

completely imaginary five aggregates, called “the thatness of self.” **“Supreme yoga”** because it is free from the characteristics of ordinary people, the actuality of supreme contemplation. **“Is the cause of Vajrasattva”** [means] that by really knowing that the actuality of the five lords is in the five aggregates you achieve the supreme state. **“The self nature of all Buddhas”** [means] having the nature of the actuality of the body, speech and mind of the five lords. **“The sole body of all Buddhas”** is that which is wherever there is one body of all Buddhas: the sole body of all Buddhas, synonymous with the form of great Vajradhara. **“The state [153B] of omniscience”** because you know through the actuality of the five Buddhas in the three realms. **“Is indistinct”** because it is free from the nature of having materiality. **“It is made distinct through the divisions of the clans”** [means] that through the means of purifying the root addictions, you make clear the divisions of the clans of ignorance and so forth. **“Whatever form of the five clans”** [means] with the nature of Vairocana and so forth. **“Those are the characteristics of the five aggregates”** [means] the nature of the five aggregates.

Thus having discussed in summary the thatness of the self, in order to teach the detailed explanation of it, with respect to the purity of the material aggregate, he says **“By the divisions of subtle [and] gross and so forth”** and so forth, [meaning that] as for that, the [“]coarse[“] is the material aggregate, because, by its nature, it appears as outer. [“]Subtle[“] [refers to] sensations and so forth that are different than that, because, being non-material, they lack coarse appearance. **“Having the characteristic of obstructive [or] non-obstructive”** [means] as for the material [aggregate], it is obstructive, because it stops the production of other [things] in its own sphere; as for [the aggregates of] sensation and so forth, they are non-obstructive, because they are the opposite of that.

[“]Obstructive and non-obstructive[“] [means] things that are obstructive and non-obstructive, [meaning] those things that exist wherever there are the signs of those very things, [*i.e.*] obstructive and non-obstructive things.²⁴⁶⁵ “**The substance of the four great elements**” [means] the nature of the great elements of earth and so forth, because it is made by those. “**As the material aggregate**” [means] having the character of matter. “**Here**” [means] in the teaching of Buddha. “**It is stated**” [means] it is expressed. “**The actuality of Vairocana**” [means that] the nature of the material aggregate is the actuality of Vairocana, because one’s self and others appear through the nature of the mirror-like wisdom. [In] “**The cause of taking delight in all of them,**” [“]all[“] because of taking delight in the orgasmic consort and servant consort and so forth that are connected to his own clan, [thus] the cause of taking delight in all of them.²⁴⁶⁶

Thus [154A] having taught the purity of the material aggregate, in order to discuss the purity of the sensation aggregate, he says “**Happiness and suffering,**” [meaning] happiness and suffering.²⁴⁶⁷ “**As supreme**” [means] supreme. “**Pacify**” [means] a type of equanimity that is not supreme.²⁴⁶⁸ “**Cold and heat**” has the form of contact with those. “**Supreme of supreme**” [means] the actuality of subtle and coarse. “**Know**” [means] experience. “**By that**” [means] by knowledge of a kind of exact discrimination. “**That**” is the actuality of experience like that. “**Mostly**” [means] by most people. “**The characteristic of the sensation aggregate**” is “**The characteristic of Ratnasambhava,**”

²⁴⁶⁵ This is a completely Sanskrit construction, a traditional way of glossing – once as in the verse, as a *dvandva*, once with *ca*, and once using the plural – Something like *sa pratigha pratigha hi sapratighāpratiga ca*

²⁴⁶⁶ In other words, Vairocana in his full form, with consort(s) – See next verse concerning Ratnasambhava

²⁴⁶⁷ Presumably, all of these are glosses of Sanskrit *dvandvas*

²⁴⁶⁸ Cf the third seal – only Nirvana is peace – Only after stabilization of the jumpy character of the aggregates, do they arise as the Tathāgatas – Only after cold and hot supremely, supremely pacified, only then do sensations arise as Ratnasambhava

because of the realization of the equality of the actuality of the emptiness of the sensations with the characteristic that has the aspects of pleasure [and] pain and so forth. **“The nature of the pleasure of the Tathāgata”** with the nature of the orgasmic consort and servant consort of his own clan.²⁴⁶⁹

Thus having taught the purity of the sensation aggregate, in order to teach the purity of the discrimination aggregate, he says **“Elephant”** and so forth, “elephant” [meaning] great elephant. **“Donkey”** [means] donkey. **“Gomayu”**²⁴⁷⁰ [means] jackal. **“Tiger”** [means] *śartula*.²⁴⁷¹ **“Deer”** [means] *eṇa*²⁴⁷² and so forth. **“Pig”** [means] pig and so forth. **“Father”** [means] progenitor. **“Mother”** [means] one who gives birth. **“Father’s brothers and so forth”** [means] his siblings and so forth. **“Friend”** is one who you like. **“Maternal relatives”** are relatives and so forth. **“Perfectly knowing these”** [means] by knowledge of the form that holds the sign that is suitable for themselves.

“That” is the form that holds the sign. **“Perfectly”** [means] through the unerring view. **“Is the characteristic of the perception aggregate”** [meaning] that which enters uncommon thatness. **“Tathāgata”** is concerning he who has gone into that very thatness. **“Amitābha”** is in the form of limitless light. [154B] **“It is truly”** [means that,] through the nature of the unerring view you should know [it] as an elaboration. **“In all ways”** [means] completely. **“Illuminating”** because of radiating those of the clan of Amitābha. **“The distinctions in beings”** because in apprehending signs in the three realms as lacking intrinsic existence, you individually discriminate. **“Great miracle”** [means] with

²⁴⁶⁹ Presumably *sahajacarani* and *amucarani* the main and subordinate consorts

²⁴⁷⁰ Skt for “jackal ”

²⁴⁷¹ Skt for “tiger ”

²⁴⁷² Skt for “a species of deer or antelope (described as being of a black color with beautiful eyes and short legs) MW

amazement through eliminating the conceptions of perception by the power of analysis.

Thus having taught the purity of the perception aggregate, in order to discuss the purity of the creation aggregate, he says “**The fruit of virtuous and non-virtuous action,**” [meaning] the result of virtuous and non-virtuous karma. “Action” is of the nature of virtue and non-virtue. “**Further, denominated as neutral**” [means] with a neutral nature, because it produces matter and non-matter. “**It is explained as the creation [aggregate],**” [meaning] that there are differences by dividing into those having similarities and those not having similarities. “**Explained**” [means] expressed. “**With the nature of delighting in Amoghasiddhi,**” [means] having the nature of the action-accomplishing wisdom, having reversed from virtuous and non-virtuous actions [caused] by the power of the addictions, because of only accomplishing the activities of [benefit to] sentient beings. Because of that very thing, you have the nature of taking delight in those with the retinue of Amoghasiddhi.

Thus having taught the purity of the creation aggregate, in order to teach the purity of the consciousness aggregate, he says “**Thing and no-thing and so forth,**” [“]thing[“] having the nature of being able to perform a function, [and] [“]non-thing[“] being the opposite of that, [thus] things and non-things. The division of those is the division of thing and no-thing. As for that and so forth, it is similar to that. The nature of that is “**Thought construction,**” conceptuality. “**Having the nature of arising as that**” [means] causing the birth of conceptuality like that. “**Consciousness**” has the character of isolation. “Consciousness” should be known. “**Having the nature of delighting in Akśobhya**” [155A] [means] you cannot be robbed by the conceptual addictions because you are of the nature of the wisdom of the exceedingly pure sphere of reality. He says “**If**

you know the aggregates in that way,” [meaning] by the logic stated previously, you completely understand that in the five aggregates [means] in those very five Buddhas. “If you understand” [means] should be understood. “**Knowledge of the teachings and lineage is born,**” the [“]lineage [“] being well known as the mantric vehicle; the [“]teachings[“] being known as the Vaibaśika system. [“]Arising[“] through these has the meaning of being “expressed” [in them].

Thus having fully taught the purity of the five kinds of aggregates, in order to discuss the mantras of emanation, “**JINAJIK,**” [meaning] having the state of victory, [thus] conquering devils, because he conquers them with a twelve-spoked dharma wheel, [thus] JINAJIK. [This is] the interpretive meaning because he overcomes the four devils with a vajra-like concentration, JINAJIK. [This is] the definitive meaning.

“**RATNADRIK**” because he holds the great jewel that completely fulfills all hopes, [thus] RATNADRIK. This is the interpretive meaning. Because he holds the great jewel, the limit of reality, RATNADRIK. [This is] the definitive meaning. [In] “**ĀROLIK,**” [“]Ā[“] [means] everything; [“]RO[“] [means] from cyclic existence; [and] “**LIK**” [means] going, thus ĀROLIK. [This is] the interpretive meaning. “A RA O” going into clear light by means of the three wisdoms, thus ĀROLIK. [This is] the definitive meaning.

“**PRAJÑĀDRIK**” [means] holding the wisdom that has the character of individual discrimination, thus PRAJÑĀDRIK. [This is] the interpretive meaning. The wisdom is moonlight and so forth. Because of holding that, PRAJÑĀDRIK. [This is] the definitive meaning. “**VAJRADRIK**” [means] the five aspects illustrating manifest enlightenment, thus VAJRADRIK. [This is] the interpretive meaning. Because of

causing the holding of the vajra with the nature of the two truths, VAJRADRIK. [This is] the definitive meaning. “**In that way mantras**” [means] of all five, Vairocana and so forth, [155B] the nature of the mantras that are emanated for the purpose of protecting²⁴⁷³ the mind. “**Respective**” [means] by the stages of purifying the material aggregate and so forth. “**Know**” [means] should be known. “**Suitable**” means through being suitable: suitable for emanating during the time of the Supreme King of Mandala; and suitably compatible with yourself during the time of doing the two kinds of repetition.²⁴⁷⁴

Thus having taught the division of the aggregates through seven types of meaning, in order to teach the division of the elements, summarizing the branch of that, “**The four of Locanā and so forth,**” [meaning] the nature of the four consorts. “**Are considered as the three realms**” [means] conceptualized through the nature of the four elements of earth and so forth.

Thus having explained the summary, in order to discuss the detailed explanation, in order to teach the purity of the earth element as a branch of that, he says “**By differentiating as the four of hardness and so forth,**” [meaning] relying on the characteristic of the actuality of hardness. “**Considered as the earth element**” [means] considering the bones and so forth that are located in your own body. [“]Differentiated as four[“] because each has the nature of the four elements. Having thought that “**Ignorance is expressed as purity,**”²⁴⁷⁵ whoever has ecstasy for Vairocana, the purity of

²⁴⁷³ Following P and Snar Or, following Derge, “the natures of mantras that are of genuine delight for weary minds”

²⁴⁷⁴ I.e. you rotate clans/mantras at different times, as described above in the discussion of mantra repetition Jamspal suggests this could be read with *rig pa* instead of *rigs pa*, but we should note that, at least in the Derge, P and Snar Alamka and the Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* there is no variation from *rigs pa*.

²⁴⁷⁵ The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *gti mug dga' bas*, “by the ecstasy of delusion,” 42B, and Alamka has *dga'* in his gloss

delusion, “**Is Locanā**²⁴⁷⁶” because she appears as the lack of intrinsic nature in [even] a part of the earth element. “**Known**” [means] well known.

Thus having taught the purity of the earth element, in order to discuss the purity of the water element, he says “**Peaceful**” and so forth, because of its smooth nature. “**Urine, tears, semen and so forth**” [mean] piss, eye tears and the seed of the main one and so forth. “**Using whatever particular substance**” [means] differentiated by division into blood and so forth. “**Known as the water element**” following the worldly ones. Because of terminating completely the conceptual reality of a self in the water element, [“**Māmakī**”], meaning her form, [156A] the [“**nature**”] of her emanation.

Thus having taught the purity of the water element, in order to discuss the purity of the fire element, he says “**Heat**” and so forth, [meaning] a kind of heat in your own body. “**The digestion of food and drink**” [means] the digestion of ordinary substances and food inside [the body] and so forth. “**Having the characteristic of fire, appropriating**²⁴⁷⁷ **radiance**” [means] the characteristic of fire that appropriates radiance, heats. “**You should know as the fire element**” [means] known in the world as the “heat element.” “**Having the nature of delighting in Paṇḍaravāsini**” because of causing the disappearance of conceptions in the element of fire, [thus] Paṇḍaravāsini.²⁴⁷⁸ “**Having the nature of delighting**” [means] the actuality of such purity.

Thus having taught the purity of the fire element, in order to discuss the purity of the wind element, he says “**Increasing exhaling and inhaling**,” [meaning] the entering into your own body of the life energy and evacuative [wind-energies]. “**The supreme**

²⁴⁷⁶ *Locana* is Skt for “eye” She is *mig ma* in Tibetan

²⁴⁷⁷ Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has ‘*phro ba*, “spreading,” which seems to make more sense here

²⁴⁷⁸ Skt *Pāndara-vāsa*, “white dress”

commitment of the wind-energies” [means] the nature of the ten wind-energies of the aggregates and the sense powers. “Commitment” [means] suitable for one’s self. “Supreme” because of having the nature of holding the aggregates and so forth, [thus] supreme. Having the nature of [“]**extending and retracting**[“], “**Functioning up and down**” [means] exhaling and inhaling up and down. “**That is known as the wind element**,” [meaning] known by the that name. “**Having the nature of delighting in Tārā**” because of liberating from the conceptuality of the wind element,²⁴⁷⁹ Tārā.

Thus having taught the purity of the wind element, in order to summarize the four elements he says “**Thus the four elements are also**,” [“]thus[“] meaning by the logic stated earlier. “The four elements are also” [refers to] the four great elements. “**Known**” [means] known. “**Yoga**” [means] by the yoga of the four goddesses, Locanā and so forth. “**Supreme**” is the supreme nature of the goddess.

Thus [156B] having taught the summary of the four elements, in order to explain the expression of the mantras of delight²⁴⁸⁰ he says “**MOHARATI**” and so forth, [“]MOHA[“]^{2481 2482}being Vairocana, being what you call that which exists wherever there is ecstasy for him. [This is] the interpretive meaning. By purifying delusion, what exists wherever there is ecstasy in clear light is MOHARATI.²⁴⁸³ [This is] the definitive meaning. [In] “**DVEṢARATI**,” [“]DVEṢA[“]²⁴⁸⁴ is Akśobhya, [meaning] that which

²⁴⁷⁹ Skt Tārā “carrying across, savior”

²⁴⁸⁰ As noted above, *spro ba* could also be translated as “emanation” here, yielding “emanation mantras,” which does in fact correspond to what is happening in the Mandala Triumph and Evolutionary Triumph parts of the long Guhyasamāja sadhana. The point is that these mantras promote both emanation *and* ecstasy, emanation without ecstasy is not the practice. Again, it would be interesting to see whether the *Vajra Rosary* and *Alamka* use *ratī* or *prapañca* here.

²⁴⁸¹ Following P. and Snar

²⁴⁸² *Moha*, Skt “delusion”

²⁴⁸³ The Derge and other recensions all have RĀGARATI, which should be MOHARATI in light of the context

²⁴⁸⁴ *Dveṣa*, Skt “hatred”

exists wherever there is ecstasy for him, DVEṢARATI. [This is] the interpretive meaning. The purification of hatred, existing wherever there is the ecstasy of clear light, is DVEṢARATI. [This is] the definitive meaning. [In] “**RĀGARATI**,” [“]RĀGA[“] is Amitābha. That which is wherever there is ecstasy for him is RĀGARATI. [This is] the interpretive meaning. [“]RĀGA[“]²⁴⁸⁵ [means] the purification of desire, existing wherever there is ecstasy in clear light, [thus] RĀGARATI, the definitive meaning. [In] “**VAJRARATI**,” [“]VAJRA[“] is Amoghasiddhi, that which exists wherever there is ecstasy for him, VAJRARATI. [this is] the interpretive meaning. [“]VAJRA[“]²⁴⁸⁶ is that which exists wherever there is ecstasy for one who has the characteristics shown to be like that and so forth, thus VAJRARATI. [This is] the definitive meaning. “**Those respective**” [means] by in the sequence of the four elements of earth and so forth. “**Mantras**” [means] the emanation mantras. “**Attainment**”²⁴⁸⁷ is known in the Mahāyoga Tantras. “**Those**” [means] of those elemental goddesses. “**Of the ritual**” means following the emanation and two repetitions of the syllables with nature of the bodhisattvas during the time of the Supreme Mandala Triumph as before.

Thus having already explained the detailed teaching through six modes of meaning, by just this much, having taught the division of the elements along with the analysis, in order to discuss the division of the [sense] objects, teaching a summary of the that branch, he says “**The mass of objects of form and so forth**” and so forth, [meaning] the five types that serve as the objects of the inner eye and so forth. “**As the character of the form of the goddess**” by the reasoning to be explained, because it is the actuality of

²⁴⁸⁵ The text has *chags*, Tib for the Skt *rāga*, “desire ”

²⁴⁸⁶ The text has *rdo rje*, Tib For the Skt *vajra*, “thunderbolt,” “adamantine,” “penis ”

²⁴⁸⁷ Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *mngon sum*, “directly perceived,” 43A, instead of *dingos grub*, “attained ”

Rūpavajrā and so forth. “**Know**” [means] know. “**Of supreme yoga**” because of the actuality [157A] of the [sense] powers being of the nature of bodhisattvas and the [sense] objects having the characteristics of Rūpavajrā and so forth, together with the realization that [they] are of one taste. “**With only emptiness as the sole cause**” [means that] the cause is in clear light, meaning it “serves as the cause.” By meditatively equalizing both, you actualize the state of universal emptiness.

Thus having explained the teaching in brief, in order to discuss the detailed explanation, the component of it that is purification of form, he says “**Analyzing as blue, yellow and so forth,**” [meaning] by analyzing into blue, yellow, red and white and so forth. “**With the form of long and short**” [means] with the actuality of the shapes of high and low, long and short, round, even and uneven. “**You should know form as**” [means] “You should know form as” should be added. “**That goddess is Rūpavajrā**” because in conceptualizing a visual object you fall into emptiness.²⁴⁸⁸ [In] “**Having the nature of object and subject,**” [“]object[“] [means] the actuality of grasping at form, as just explained, because of grasping at an aspect of emptiness.

Thus having taught the purity of matter, in order to teach the purity of sound, “**Similarly**” [means] produced from a lute and so forth. “**Kettle drum [and] cymbals**” [means] arising from instruments other than that. “**Praise and blame and so forth**” [means] the sounds of praise and blame and so forth. “**Śabdavajrā**” [means] you should know [them] as the nature of Shabdavajra. “**Is the nature that is grasped**” because the purity of the ear sense faculty should be grasped as Vajrapāṇi. “**Supreme**” because of abandoning ordinary conceptuality. “**Awareness**” in having the nature of reversing sense

²⁴⁸⁸ Perhaps with the sense of *vajrapāṇi*, “falling like a thunderbolt ” So cognizing matter [*rūpa*], you fall into emptiness [*vajra*]

object and faculty conceptuality. “**Awakening**” by realizing the nature of clear light.

[157B]

Thus having taught the purity of sound, in order to discuss the purity of scent, he says “**Scent**,” serving as the object of the olfactory sense faculty. “**Bad**” [means] of the nature of a bad scent, because it is unpleasant. A “**good**”²⁴⁸⁹ **scent**” is a fragrant scent, because it eliminates the former one. “**Combined**” [means] various, arising from being mixed together. “**Other ones**”²⁴⁹⁰ [means] others. “**Ghandavajrā**” makes the conceptions of scent into emptiness. “**Is the form that is grasped**”²⁴⁹¹ because the olfactory sense power serves as the object for the purity of Ākāśagarbha. “**Blazing greatly**” because it bestows particularly noble bliss by being the very antidote of ordinary conceptuality.

Thus having taught the purity of scent, in order to discuss the purity of taste, he says “**The six tastes**,” divided into astringent and bitter and so forth. “**Supreme**” because it satisfies the gustatory sense faculty. “**Endowed with**” [means] with the nature of meditating on the actuality of the form of the deity. “**By dividing into salty and bitter and so forth**” [means] from dividing into sour, bitter, salty and astringent. “**Rasavajrā**” because she makes the conceptuality of taste into emptiness. “**Is the form that is grasped**” [refers to] the purification of Lokeśvara, who is the gustatory sense faculty,²⁴⁹² because she serves as the form object. “**Completely**” [means] the aspect of form and so forth, because here each sense faculty perceives [their own] various sense objects.

²⁴⁸⁹ Following P and Snar and Lhasa *Vajra Rosary*

²⁴⁹⁰ *Mchog* here is translating Skt *para*, which means “other” as well as “supreme” or “excellent”

²⁴⁹¹ The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *gzung ba'i rnam shes*, “consciousness of the object”

²⁴⁹² This would be why, according to Alamka, in the dissolution of the body mandala, the sense bodhisattvas first dissolve into the sense goddesses before the sense goddesses themselves (or the union of the two) dissolve. The bodhisattvas are purified into emptiness by their grasping at the sense goddesses

Thus having taught the purity of taste, in order to discuss the purity of touch, “**By division of smooth and rough,**” [meaning] by the division of smooth and rough and so forth. “**You should know touch**” [means] you should know touch. If someone asks how, in response to that [he says] “by dividing.” As it is said “In the nature of the eleven touches.” “**That very thing**” is touch because of making the conceptuality of touch into emptiness. “**The form that is grasped**” is the corporeal sense power, because it serves as the object that purifies Sarvanivaraṇaviśkambini. “**For the main one**” means that she herself is the form that is grasping Akśobhya, [158A] the form of the main one in the center, in order to embrace him.²⁴⁹³ As it is said in the *Sekoddeśa*:²⁴⁹⁴ “Embracing Vajrasattva, she abides as Sparsāvajrā.”

Thus having expressed the division of the object including the division of the two types, in order that the division of the sense media of an inner nature be expressed, teaching an abbreviated branch of that, he says “**The eight collections of consciousness,**” and so forth, [meaning] dividing them into the six collections of consciousness, the consciousness of the addicted mind and the foundational consciousness. “**Which depend**” [means] the support of the eight [such as] as the eye and so forth as will be explained, having the meaning of “support.” Because of that very thing, “**On the eye and so forth sense powers**” [means] relying on the eight. Relying on those, the entity of the eight collections of consciousness are produced. “**As producing the bodhisattvas**” [means] having first produced Kṣitigarbha, you should know the actualities of the sons of

²⁴⁹³ Reading *‘khyud pa* in place of *‘khyad pa*, which does not appear in the dictionaries, but which does appear in the *śrīhevajrasādhana*, *dpal dgyes pa rdo rje ‘i sgrub thabs*, Toh 1218, 2A, “*rang gi rig ma la ‘khyad pa spyang gsum pa dbu skra kham pa gyen du ‘greng ba*,” “embracing his consort, three-eyed, brown hair standing up on end.” So *‘khyad pa* does seem to be a variant of *‘khyud pa*, here used in a nominalized form. Skt. *vajrasattvāṅgita*.

²⁴⁹⁴ Toh 361

the Conqueror up to Samantabhadra. Having relied on their purity, "**the process**" of the unerring thing²⁴⁹⁵ has the meaning of the "process of the visual [sense power] and so forth.

Thus having taught the summary, in order that the detailed expression be expressed, as a branch of that, the purity of the visual sense faculty, he says "**The two eyes are explained as Kṣitigarbha**," [meaning that] the two eyes are of the nature of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. Their object is caused to arise as the great elements of earth and so forth because it is understood as a conceptual characteristic. [In] "**Bodhisattva**,"²⁴⁹⁶ ["enlightenment["] [means] with the nature of the three bodies, [and] in that, ["hero["] is so-called because he exists in these [three bodies]. "**Wonderful**" because he benefits others by various means. "**In all kinds of forms and so forth**" [means] also in all appropriate [forms] of the five sense objects of form and so forth. Furthermore, "**Delighting in his own nature**" [means] delighting in the unborn form of the actuality of his very own self.

Thus having taught the purity of the visual sense power, in order that the aural sense power [158B] be purified, he says "**The form of sound**" and so forth, [meaning] the form that is grasped as ordinary conceptuality, by dividing into the form of sound of a lute and so forth, by distinguishing all the different forms of sound. You analyze that very thing as different, especially because it is the antidote to the conceptuality of this and that. By meditating on that, you investigate it. "**As Vajrapāṇi**" because you understand [it] as emptiness through very embodiment of Vajrapāṇi in the conception of sound. "**Is perfectly explained**" [means] expressed. "**The characteristic of the**

²⁴⁹⁵ *I.e.* the particular bodhisattvas

²⁴⁹⁶ Lit Skt *bodhi* "enlightenment," *sattva* "hero "

auditory consciousness” [means], because of knowing sound as primordially birthless, having the characteristic of that.

Thus having taught the purity of the auditory sense power, in order to teach purity of the olfactory sense power, he says “**The conceptuality of a particular scent,**” [meaning that] whoever analyzes the nature of the conceptualities of the conceptions of the four kinds of scent, however you analyze the nature of the conception, as for that, you meditate [it] with the nature of being completely empty.²⁴⁹⁷ “**Ākāśagarbha**” because he grasps the conceptuality of scent with emptiness. “**Knows**” [means] is known. “**The characteristic of the olfactory consciousness**” [means] by knowing that that the nose the causes the grasping of scent is primordially birthless, the characteristic of the wisdom of that.

Thus having taught the purity of the olfactory sense power, in order to express the purity of the gustatory sense power, he says “**The conception of particular tastes,**” [means] the conceptual nature of the six particular kinds of tastes. As for differentiating them, “**The aspect of differentiating**” [means] you intensely meditate through the aspect of emptiness. “**As Lokeśvara**” from realizing emptiness in the analysis of the tastes that abide in the world because of attaining your own ecstasy, [thus] Lokeśvara. “**Know**” [means] is known. “**The character of the gustatory consciousness**” [means that] knowing what is included in the gustatory sense objects as emptiness is the characteristic of that consciousness.

Thus having taught the purity of the gustatory sense power, in order to express the purity of the tactile sense power, he says “**Enjoying particular touches,**” [meaning] the

²⁴⁹⁷ Reading *bsgom pa'o*

differentiation into the nature of eleven types, cultivating intense meditation on them in the aspect of emptiness. “**Sarvaṇivaraṇaviṣkambhī**” [means that] the addictions of desire and attachment, all the obscurations arising by the force of touch, are removed. Because of reciting for just that long, he removes all obscurations. “**The character of tactile consciousness**” [means] the primordially unborn consciousness of touch, wherever that characteristic exists, it is called that.

Thus having taught the purity of the tactile sense faculty, in order to discuss the purity of the mental sense faculty, he says “**Enjoying particular mental experiences**,” [meaning] having relied on a particular mental experience, the characteristic of the sense medium of [mental] phenomena,²⁴⁹⁸ the nature of the seven substances, and, having relied on the object possessor,²⁴⁹⁹ that which is the conception of the characteristic of various conceptualities is the nature of conceptuality. [“**Differentiating that**”] [means] as distinct. As for that, “**completely**” [means] entirely, by meditating on the form of emptiness, he is the meditator. As for “**Is stated as the “mental consciousness**,” if someone asks [why] it is known to the worldly as “**Mañjuśrī**,” it is because you know the intrinsic naturelessness of that.

Thus having taught the purity of the mental sense faculty, in order to discuss the purity of the sinews, which were left out of the tactile sense faculty, he says “**Definitively joining all the sinews**,” [meaning] the particular quality of definitively uniting all of the sinews included in the body, for the special quality of perfectly uniting. “**Totally**” [means] completely. “**The meditator**” is the meditator on intrinsic naturelessness.

²⁴⁹⁸ Skt *dharmāyatana*, *āyatana* being translated here as “medium” As Thurman notes The word *āyatana* is usually translated as “base,” but the Skt, Tib and Ch all indicate ‘something through which the senses function’ rather than a basis from which the function, hence ‘medium’ is suggested Thurman 1995, 155

²⁴⁹⁹ *I.e.* the subject, here the mind

“**Totally knows [them] as Meitreya**” because by totally knowing that in all of the sinews there is a lack of intrinsic existence he generates extraordinary ecstasy. “**Having the nature of the conception of the instincts**” [means] because of purifying the addicted mental consciousness.

Thus having taught the purity of the definitive uniting of all the sinews left out of the tangible sense faculty, in order to teach the purity in all of the joints of the body, he says “**Having the nature of the individual channels,**” [159B] [means] the nature which is divided among all the channels included in your own body, having an extraordinary nature. “**The basis of all bliss**” [means that], having eliminated the root conceptualities, you rely on all of the bliss that is transmudane. “**Supreme**” because isolated from having the shape of a face and so forth. “**Having the nature of all things**” is what you call wherever there exists the actuality of all things, because it is know as Samantabhadra, having the nature of the purity of consciousness, the basis of all forms of thatness. [In] “**Samantabhadra,**” [“]completely[“]²⁵⁰⁰ because of being different through being isolated from the very notion of channels; [“]good[“] is defined as whatever virtues there are. “**This**” because it is called by this very form.

Thus having taught the detail explanation through eight modes of meaning, he says in order to summarize, “**Thus the eight groups of consciousness**” [means] the actuality of purifying the eight groups of consciousness of the eye and so forth. “**Perfect reality**” because of actuality of purifying the internal sense media. “**Unexcelled**” because of serving as the cause of the thatness that has the characteristic unexcelled body isolation. “**The consciousnesses of the visual and so forth sense faculties**” [means] the

²⁵⁰⁰ Skt *samanta*, Tib *kun tu*

six visual and so forth sense faculties serving as the different sense faculties of the body, [and] the two, counting the actualities of the two having the characteristics of the addicted consciousness and the foundational consciousness, which become the eight groups of consciousness. “[**With] the characteristics of seeing form and so forth,**” [meaning] the particular objects of the body’s sense faculties, having the characteristics of the six of form and so forth, all the sinews and all the joints of the limbs. “[**Having the characteristic of seeing**” has the meaning of the characteristics of seeing and so forth.

Thus having taught the differentiation of three types of the internal by three modes of meaning, in order to discuss the differentiation of [those] very branches, teaching a summary of the branches, [160A] he says "**Shins and shoulders**" and so forth, [meaning] the left and right knees respectively [being] the places of the Niḷaṇḍanda and Mahābala. As for "shoulders," the left and right shoulder are the places of Yamāntakṛt and Prajñantakṛt.²⁵⁰¹ As for "shoulders," the right and left shoulders are the places of Acala and Ḍakarāja. As for "**upper and lower**," the head and soles of the two feet are the places of Uṣṇiṣacakravartin and Sumbharāja. The "**Openings of the holes**," includes the mouth and the vajra path. These are also the two places of Padmantakṛt and Vighnantakṛt.

As it is said in the *Sekoddeśa*:²⁵⁰²

You should visualize Yamāntaka
On the right hand,
Aparājita on the left,
And Hayagrīva on the mouth.
On the vajra, Amṛtakundali,
On the right shoulder Acala,
On the left Ḍakirāja.

²⁵⁰¹ In the Guhyasamāja sadhana, Yamāntaka is on the right hand, Acāla is on the right shoulder, Aparājita on the left hand, and Takṣirāja on the left shoulder

²⁵⁰² Toh 361

Think of the right knee blazing
 As great Nilaṇḍaṇḍa,
 Mahābala on the left knee,
 On the head Uṣṇīṣacakravartin,
 On the soles of the two feet
 You should think Sumbharaja,

And so forth. “**All of them in the places**” that are like that [means] pervading in the entire body, because of having fierce natures. “**The characteristics of the ten knowledges**” are the knowledge of suffering, the knowledge of origin, the knowledge of cessation, the knowledge of the path, the knowledge of extinguishing, the knowledge of non-arising,²⁵⁰³ the knowledge of things, the subsequent knowledge, and the knowledge of complete victory. As for those, knowledge of the lack of the arising of suffering is the first. Knowledge of the origin to be abandoned is the second. Knowledge of the cessation of suffering is the third. Knowledge of the way to the path is the fourth. The knowledge of the exhaustion of delusion is the fifth. Knowledge of beings not arising in cyclic existence is the sixth. Knowledge of separating things into the five aggregates [160B] is the seventh. Knowledge of “**Impermanent**” and so forth is the eighth.²⁵⁰⁴ Knowledge of the thoughts in the minds of non-Buddhist sentient beings and other persons is ninth. Knowledge of accomplishment and extinguishing are tenth. “**Well known**” has the meaning of through thoroughly analyzing those things with a conceptual nature, as stated previously.

Thus having explained the teaching in brief, in order to explain in detail from the point of view of the wrathful mantras, he says “**Yamantakṛt**” [meaning] the Terminator of Yama. [“]Yama[“] is a hell being. He is called that because he is the terminator of

²⁵⁰³ Of suffering

²⁵⁰⁴ It is hard to understand why this eighth knowledge is presented as a quote, possibly from the *Vajra Rosary*, when the others are not

concentration through great anger. [This is] the interpretive meaning. [“]Yama[“] is ignorance. He is called that because he perfects²⁵⁰⁵ through the actuality of clear light. [This is] the definitive meaning. “**Prajñantakṛt**” [means] Knowledge Terminator. [“]Prajña[“] is called that because by eliminating knowledge he terminates addiction. [This is] the interpretive meaning. Because of its nature of completely transforming the active consciousness,²⁵⁰⁶ it is [“]knowledge,[“] [and] because it [“]perfects[“] by entering clear light, it is the Knowledge Terminator.²⁵⁰⁷ [This is] the definitive meaning. “**Padmantakṛt**” is the Lotus Terminator. By being untainted by the addictions like a lotus is untainted by [muddy] water, because of terminating them, he is called that. [This is] the interpretive meaning. [“]Padma[“] is the place of birth. [“]Anta[“] is the middle.²⁵⁰⁸ Because of making [kṛt] bliss for him, *Padmantakṛt*.

After that, “**Vighnāntakṛt**,” [meaning] Obstacle Terminator. Because he overcomes all obstructions, Vighnāntakṛt. [This is] the interpretive meaning. The obstacles are the elements. Because of terminating through holding the wisdom of means with respect to them, [???] he is called that. [This is] the definitive meaning. [As for] “**Ḍākarāja**,”²⁵⁰⁹ [“]ḍāka[“] [desire] because of binding the poisons in the union of the elements, the actor [???] in binding the poisons; [“]rāja[“] [king] because of illuminating, [thus] *Ḍākarāja*. J: binding the wicked ones by making himself visible. Similarly, “**Acala**”²⁵¹⁰ because he is unmoved by obstacles. “**Mahābala**”²⁵¹¹ because he

²⁵⁰⁵ *Anta* has two meanings ending or terminating and perfecting, *mthar* also has these two meanings

²⁵⁰⁶ *I.e.* the six of visual etc

²⁵⁰⁷ So this could be a play on “terminating knowledge” and “terminating through knowledge” The interpretive meaning is the former, and the definitive the latter, giving this a slightly *gzhan stong* feel Here also it might be revealing to have the Sanskrit

²⁵⁰⁸ Skt *anta* can mean “inside” or “inner part” as well as “end” or “limit” MW

²⁵⁰⁹ Wayman has “*Takkirāja*” Wayman 1977, 128 Lokesh Chandra has *Ḍākarāja* 1267 Could also be *ragarāja*, which accords best with the Tib Literal meaning *Ḍakkarah* per Apte is an epithet of Śiva 460

²⁵¹⁰ Skt “not moving,” “undisturbed”

has great force in eliminating the obstacles. [161A] “**Nilanḍaṇḍa**” is he who terrifies wicked sentient beings with his blue staff, he is called that. “**Śumbha**”²⁵¹² [means] definitively overcoming all obstacles, thus *Śumbha*. Because of being brilliant with the actuality of that, *Śumbharāja*. As for “**Uṣṇīṣacakravartin**,” [“]uṣṇīṣa[“]²⁵¹³ [means] made on the head, preceded by the elimination of all obstacles moving in the sky; [“]chakra[“] [refers to] wherever there is the state of turning the upper part of the wheel of the mandala, [thus] *Uṣṇīṣacakravartin*.²⁵¹⁴

“**In that way, those**” [refers to] the ten Terrifics. “**Differentiating the places**” [means], as explained just above, differentiating the shoulders and the forearms and so forth.

“**Completely illuminated by the three wisdoms**” [means] a person completely illuminated from Akśobhya or great Vajradhara, the essence of the three secrets. You yourself [“]completely illuminate[“] by differentiating the body and so forth of the three vajras, synonymous with the “essence” of that. “**Having become as one essence**” [means] attaining oneness in your own body. “**Perfect**” [means] with the unerring view. “**Support of thatness**” [means] the characteristic of body isolation, the support of one side of thatness.²⁵¹⁵

Thus having taught the detailed explanation by the thatness of the self, in order to express the summary, he says “**The reality of self**,” [meaning] the thatness of difference, the differentiation of the aggregates and elements in one’s own body, by the reasoning stated above, known in the form of the mandala chakras. “**According to ritual**” [means]

²⁵¹¹ Skt “great force ”

²⁵¹² Skt *śumbha*, “ “of an Asura or demon slain by Durga ” MW The Tibetan translation, *gnod mdzes* literally means “powerful” or “beautiful” “harm ”

²⁵¹³ Skt “crown protrusion ”

²⁵¹⁴ Lit “Crown protrusion wheel turner” in both the Sanskrit and the Tibetan

²⁵¹⁵ So, the “thatness of self” is equivalent to the stage of body isolation in the parlance of the *Vajra Rosary*

by the stages of the vast lineage.²⁵¹⁶ “**You should know**” [means] should be known.

“**From the speech of the guru**” means “from the speech of the vajra master” at a future time.

Thus having expressed the thatness of the self by three types of meaning together with analysis, in order to teach the thatness of mantra, explaining the actuality of that branch, he says “**Reality of mantra**,” [“]mantra[“] [meaning] those of snake and so forth, in the form of the A letter. [161B] “**Supreme yoga**” [means] the supreme form of concentration because it is from elaboration. “**Great wisdom**” because it completely knows clear light. “**Increases well**” because it permeates. “**Birthless**” because it lacks birth. “**Inexhaustible**” because it lacks destruction. “**Indistinct**” because it pervades everything, and is thus also invisible. “**Unchanging**” because it does not change through conceptualities. “**Unobscured**” because it has abandoned the obscurations of the addictions. “**Non-dual**” because it does not exist as two. “**Fearless**” by being unafraid of desire and so forth. “**Peaceful**” because from the very first, it pacifies. “**State of great bliss**” by reversing all suffering. “**Supreme**” because it is transmundane.

Thus having taught the essence of the thatness of mantra, in order to discuss the analysis, he says “**Snake and compressed**” and so forth, [“]snake[“] in being similar to a snake, because of having a head and a tail; [“]compressed[“] because it also lacks both. “**End-less**” because it has a head but not a tail. “**Headless**” because it has a tail but not a head. In order to teach the characteristics, he says “**OM**” and so forth, [meaning] having the first syllable as OM. “**HŪM and SVĀ HĀ at the end**” [means] “**By being complete, it is a snake.**” “**It is expressed as**” [means] being like that, it is consistent

²⁵¹⁶ Reading *brgyud*, “lineage,” for *gyud*, “tantra.” The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *brgyud*. 44A

with having a head and a tail to have the syllable OM and the word SVĀ HĀ. As for
“Your own name is expressed as the essence,” [“]your own[“] [means] the form of the
 name expressed that is connected with one’s self, the character of that.²⁵¹⁷
“With a name with the character of compressing” because of being without a head and
 a tail, like TAKKI HŪM JAH. **“The first, OM”** because OM is the very first syllable.
“Whatever mantra” [means] whatever is like that. [162A] **“Abandoning the syllables
 of SVĀ HĀ”** because of lacking that which is like a tail. **“Has the name ‘end-less’”**
 because it doesn’t have an end. **“Arising from the process of the speech of the guru”**
 has the meaning of arising from the lineage of the speech of the master. **“Having the
 ending of SVĀ HĀ”** because it has the syllables SVĀ HĀ, similar to a tail. **“Without
 OM”** [means] free from the syllable OM. **“Head-less”** because it cuts off the head like
 that. **“Is explained”** [means] is expressed.

Thus having explained the analysis, in order to express the summary, he says
“Thus,” [meaning] by the reasoning previously stated. **“The characteristic”** [means] by
 the actuality of causing entry into the uncommon essence. **“Having known”** [means]
 you should know. **“The reality of mantra”** [refers to] the statements just above.
“Unexcelled” because it is realized through the syllable A. **“Vast meaning”** [means]
 having the nature of elaborating on what is expressed and so forth. **“You should know”**
 [means] you should know. **“Following the *Root Tantra*”** means by the reasoning stated
 in the first chapter of the Guhyasamāja.

Thus having explained the thatness of mantra in three modes of meaning, in order
 to discuss the thatness of wisdom, as a component of that, teaching the general nature, he

²⁵¹⁷ Per Jamspal, like D OM V AH D HUM = DAVID Personal Communication

says “**The reality of wisdom**,” [meaning] the form of integration that becomes the result, because the conventional and the ultimate become as one taste. “**Supreme yoga**” because it is the ultimate. “**Abandoning all duality**” because it has the nature of reversing all conceptualities of difference. “**Equalizing all of the sense powers**” because of the characteristic of collecting each one. As it is said: “You collect each one/ Of the forms of the ten sense powers/ From all of their own sources.” All of the sense powers [constituting] five [in number] [162B] is connected with the equalizing of them with [their respective] sense objects. “**All things are one body**” [means that] there is oneness in all things. That which exists where there is a body of one taste is called that. By that he teaches the very actuality of concentration in order to know the form of the three Tathāgatas in the three kinds of object as primordially birthless. “**Abandoning all conceptualities of speech**” [means] the actuality of *prāṇāyāma*, having reflected on transcending all the conceptions of speech. “**The very nature of all the luminances**” [means] having the form of clear light mind through the stage of the three wisdoms of luminance and so forth.²⁵¹⁸ By this is meant the holding of the actuality of clear light mind. “**Having the nature of self-consecration**” because of having the nature of illusion-like concentration. By this is meant the branch of recollection.²⁵¹⁹ “**Pervading all**” [means] pervading all things having the nature of the three emptinesses. By this is

²⁵¹⁸ I.e. *snang ba*, *ched pa* and *nyer thob*, “luminance,” “radiance” and “immanence”

²⁵¹⁹ Skt *anusmṛti* As noted by Wayman, Tsongkhapa’s commentary on the *PK* states

/sgron ma rab gsal las sor bsam gñis sems dben dan/

srog rtsol rdor bzlas dan/ ḥdzin pa ḥod gsal dan/

rjes dran dan ting nge ḥdzin zung ḥjug tu ḥdus par bsad de/

According to the *Pradīpoddhyotana*, (among the six members) *pratyāhāra* and *dhyāna* are incorporated in secret state of mind (*citta-viveka*), *prāṇāyāma* in diamond muttering [vajra recitation] (*vajraṇāpa*) (i.e. secret state of speech, *vāg-viveka*), *dhāraṇā* in clear light, *anusmṛti* and *samādhi* in pair-united (*yuga-naddha*)

Wayman 1977, 167

meant natural clear light, the nature of the two subjects.²⁵²⁰ “**Miraculous**” because of effortlessly accomplishing the benefit of sentient beings. “**Of self-awaring**”²⁵²¹ [means] the form of integration that is self-known, not falling to the two extremes. By this he teaches the summary of concentration. “**Supreme yoga**” because it is unexcelled. “**Having the character of the four moments**” [means] the nature of the genuine innate. “**Partless**” because it is free from all parts. Further, you should know it as being free from conventional enlightenment spirit.²⁵²² “**Omnipresent**” because it pervades the three ecstasies and so forth. “**Subtle**” in being realized by subtle yogis. “**Not in the scope**” [means] not in the range. “**Of childish yogis**” by beginner meditators on the creation stage. “**Completely unknown**”²⁵²³ **conventionally**” because it is not to be expressed by words and concepts. “**Its own ultimate nature**” [163A] because it is touched by yogis who have perfected in only [the ultimate].²⁵²⁴

Thus having taught its own nature in general, in order to discuss its own nature in particular from the perspective of dissolving within, “**The divisions of the perfection stage and**” [meaning] the two types of the perfection stage, and “**The reality of mantra,**” as stated just above, “**Engaging in [them] is very clear**”²⁵²⁵ he says. “**OM**” is the syllable OM. “**Dissolving within the drop of that very one**” [means] being gathered within the drop of the syllable OM. “**Perfectly**” [means] relying on the very nature that lacks elaboration. “**Thoroughly meditate**” [means] meditate. “**The drop**” is that which

²⁵²⁰ Mother and son clear light?

²⁵²¹ Tib *rang rig pa*, Skt *svasamvondana* According to Lozang Jampal, this is when the mind recognizes itself as empty, feeling its own true nature, like space There is no subject and object Personal Communication

²⁵²² Per Lozang Jampal, in other words, there is no conventional *bodhicitta*, only ultimate *bodhicitta*, i.e. emptiness Personal Communication

²⁵²³ Alamka here has “completely known conventionally” The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *mi shes pa*, “not known conventionally,” which makes more sense here

²⁵²⁴ I.e. the ultimate way

²⁵²⁵ The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *rab tu gsal*. 44B

is connected with the syllable OM. “**Into the syllable AH**” [means] into the seed [syllable] of speech. “**Dissolves**” [means] is gathered within, because, relying on the body, speech is born, and because in the body, it also dissolves into speech that has a coarse and subtle nature. “**The syllable A**” [means] by itself the seed [syllable] of the Lord of Speech. As for “**The syllable HA**,” the nature of part of itself is in the nature of two dots. It relies on that because it lacks elaboration. “**The next syllable HA**” is of the nature of the part that is connected with the syllable A.²⁵²⁶ “**Into the syllable HŪM**” [means] into the seed [syllable] of the Lord of Mind. “**HA also**” is a part of the seed [syllable] of the Lord of Mind. “**The syllable U**” is in a part of the syllable HŪM. “**Dissolves**” [means that], having been gathered within, it goes. “**The syllable HA also**” causes the gathering within of the syllable U.

“**The letter M also**” into the drop of the syllable HŪM. “The letter M also” has the nature of the drop. “**Mere drop**” [means] in the nature of the drop of HŪM that is not to be expressed. “**Also the drop dissolves into sound**” [means] into sound that is like an echo. “**Perfectly dissolves**” [means] dissolves within. “**Sound also**” [163B] [means] the sound whose nature is an echo. “**Into mere sound**” [means] empty of the nature of complete sound. “**Into the space of supreme mere sound**” [means] into supreme space. “**That also**” [refers to] supreme space. “**Goes**” [means] goes. “**Clear light**” [means] into natural clear light. “**The state of clear light**” is the state that exists²⁵²⁷ the form of natural clear light. “**In the clear**” [means] naturally pure. “**Exceedingly pure**” [means] having the purity that is stainless. “**The sphere of reality**” is the actuality of the nature of all things. “**Non-dual**” because it lacks the conceptuality

²⁵²⁶ Following P and Snar Derge has “**The syllable HA**” is of the nature of the part that is connected with the syllable A ”

²⁵²⁷ Should be *rnam par ‘dug pa*?

of difference. “**Supreme wisdom**” because of its very nature in lacking wisdom.

“**Awakens and**” because it is purified by the force of the path. “**Always arises**” because it is naturally realized.

“**Free from the activities of speech**” by not being in the sphere of words and concepts. “**Abandoning all duality**” because of lacking the conception of difference. “**The sole basis of the five aggregates**” [means] you rely on it because of [its] nature as being the five Tathāgatas. “**The perfect support of the five elements**” because it is of the very nature of the elements of earth and so forth. “**It becomes as the nature of the eight consciousnesses**” [means] that it is its nature, as [stated] before. “**Gathering the six outer objects**” because of being the very objects of form and so forth. “**Known as the ten wind-energies**” because [it is] of the nature of the ten wind-energies. “**The characteristic of knowledge**” [means] the characteristic of the three knowledges. “**Gathering all**” [means] the actuality of gathering all of the stages.

Thus having taught the essence of the thatness of mantra in particular from the perspective of dissolving within, in order to discuss the good qualities of the realizer of that, he says “**By the yoga that delights in everything**,” [meaning] the ultimate of the perfection stage, by the yoga that delights in everything, with the character of benefitting one’s self and others. “**Whoever**” [refers to] the yogi who is the meditator on the thatness of mantra. “**The three existences**” [164A] are the three realms. “**Lives**” [means] practices. “**Making all the attainments**” [refers to] making mundane and transmundane attainments. “**Glorious**” because he completes the two collections. [In] “**Increasing all fortune and goodness**,” [“]fortune and goodness[“] because of causing the increase in those with the characteristic of not being dependent on those who are

addicted, increasing all [those], because of reciting everywhere. “**That vajrin**” is this very one, the actuality of Vajradhara, because he manifests the thatness of emptiness. “**Is Vajrasattva**,” relying on the Yoga Tantras.

“**Vajrabhairava**” because by realizing like a vajra, he is fearless of thought construction.²⁵²⁸ “**Lord**” because he attains self-ecstasy everywhere. “**Heruka**” because, relying on the Yoginī Tantras, he is the very actuality of the three doors of liberation. As it is said, “[’]HE[’]abandons cause and so forth” and so forth. As for “**Kalachakra**,” “The cause of the syllable KA is peace/ The syllable LA is the energy for it/ The syllable CHA is the movement of mind/ The syllable KRA is arranging in stages.”²⁵²⁹ “**The primordial Buddha**” because of being the Buddha, naturally pure from the beginning. “**The great sage**” because of having the capability²⁵³⁰ of body and so forth, sage; because of being free from the characteristics of the disciples and so forth, great. “**Samantabhadra**” because of arising from this complete good, [thus] Samantabhadra, [and] further, because of having the two purities and because of having the two perfections. [In] “**Mañjuśrī**,” [“]mañj[“] being pleasant, [“]śrī[“] [meaning] perfection. Putting these together in this, having had the thought of by existing in this perfection. If someone asks how, in response to that he says “**Having the nature of delighting in a variety of things**,” [meaning] following the thought of these and those people, because of having the nature of delighting in the forms of those types.

“**Liberating various beings**” because of lacking form because things have no form.

²⁵²⁸ Following P

²⁵²⁹ These verses are also found in the *Padmīn-nāma-pañjīka*, *padma can zhes bya ba’i dka’ ’grel*, Toh 1350, 104A

²⁵³⁰ Skt *mauna*, “silence,” translated as Tib *thub*, “ability.” So Skt would be “silent in body and so forth,” meaning body, speech and mind. Ch 9, v 1 *Bodhicaryāvatāra* Commentary, *samaropāpavādaāntadvayamaunāt aśaikṣakāyavāṅgmanahkarmalakṣaṇamaunatrāyogādva*. From the silence of two extremes of reification and repudiation. P 168, Ed P L. Vaidya, Darbhanga. Mithila Inst 1960

“**The various ones are the basis of a host of good qualities**” [means] perfectly endowed with the good qualities of a buddha, power and fearlessness and so forth. “**The yoga of delighting in everything**” [means] by the yoga of delighting in the form body in all of its forms. “**Great yoga**” because of not wavering your own nature. “**Stainless**” because of benefitting others.

Thus having taught the good qualities of the realizer of that, in order to discuss the summary, he says “**That very wisdom**” and so forth, [with] the explanations just above. “**Clear**” because it is in the sphere of yogic direct perception. “**Not knowable**” because it is unable to be known by ordinary people. “**Non-local**” because it is isolated from support. “**Going to the sphere of reality**” because of wisdom like that through the force of that. “**The characteristics of the creation and perfection [stages]**” because of the distinction between the two stages. “**Like 8000 hair tips**” [means] by also being extremely subtle. “**Very clear**” by also being very clear. “**Luminous**” because it is the perfection of purity. “**From the speech of the guru**” [means] from the speech of the master. “**You should know**” [means] should be totally known. “**By analyzing scripture and lineage**” [means] by the mantra vehicle and concordant lineage, and, as for [“]scripture,[“] with the nature of the five classes of Tantra and so forth. “**Know by analyzing**” has the meaning of thoroughly analyzing that. Thus he states the thatness of wisdom in four modes of meaning.

Thus having taught the three realities, in order to discuss a summary of that, he says “**Thus is the commitment of the three realities,**” [meaning] the nature of the thatness of self and so forth. [165A] “**Supreme wisdom**” because of consisting of the five stages after the creation stage. “**Secret**” because of being hidden from those who are

not vessels. “**Characteristic of the fourth wisdom**” because of being a type of innate [ecstasy], and because it is of the nature of the moment free from signs.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Determining the Nose Tips

Thus having taught the answer to the question on the subject of the three realities in the twenty-third chapter, now, in order to discuss the answer to the question of the subject of the three nose tips, teaching the twenty-fourth chapter, starting at the beginning, he says “**Then**” and so forth, [meaning] after the explanation of the twenty-third chapter. “**Further**”²⁵³¹ [means] relying on what was previous in order to differentiate. “**Listen**” is exhorting Vajrapāṇi to listen. “**To the characteristics of the three nose tips**” [meaning] to the characteristics of the differences through the analysis of the secret, heart and face nose tips, establishing uncommon thatness. “**To the explanation**” [means] to what will be expressed.

Thus having taught the beginning of it, to discuss the direct teaching, as a component of it, the three nose tips, he states the teaching, “**The names of the tips are secret, heart and face,**” [meaning] is they are to be called by those. “**The three from the Tantra**” [means] from the *Secret Community Root Tantra*. “**Appearing**” [means] taught by the Lord. “**By differentiation of the three chakras**” [means] by differentiation of the three chakras that are located in the Emanation, Reality and

²⁵³¹ The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *yang dag*, 45B I believe that this should be *gzhan yang*, consistent with prior chapters and making sense of Alamka’s explanation

Complete Enjoyment [Chakras]. “**By the yogi**” [means] by the meditator on the thatness of energy-wind. “**The process of meditation**” [means] the process of meditating on the thatness of energy-wind.

Thus having taught the summary [regarding] the question on the subject of the three nose tips, [165B] in order to teach the detailed explanation of that, the branch of discussing the secret nose tip, meditating on the substance drop, he says “**Of those of intense lust**” and so forth, [“]intense lust[“] [meaning] intense lust, great lust. One who is completely dominated by that is called that, of those. “**Bestowing bliss**” [means] causing the bestowal of bliss, connected with “great bliss is produced everywhere.” If someone asks how, he says “**By the application of the reality of energy-wind,**” [meaning] by the energy-wind yogas of *prāṇayāma*. As for “**Awakening the channel chakras,**” [“]the channel chakras[“] are those located on one’s own body; [“]awaken[“] [means] through the cause of complete knowledge.

“**Produced everywhere**” [means] produced everywhere through the force of the joining of means and wisdom. “**Great bliss**” [means] the actuality of enlightenment spirit. If someone asks how, he says “**The elements become of one taste,**” [meaning] by equalizing the taste of the thirty-two realms. “**Summon**” [means] holding by the force of the reality of energy-wind. “**Apply**” [means] apply. “**You should do according to ritual**” [means] by the ritual of the reality of energy-wind. “**Hold**” [means] you should hold. “**At the tip of the vajra**” [means] at the tip of the vajra. “**Enlightenment spirit**” [means] the conventional type. “**Great bliss**” because it is the concordant cause of great bliss. “**The characteristic of the innate moment**” [means] having the character of customary orgasm. “**The nature of the five wisdoms**” [means that] the form like a pure

moon and a white kunda flower in the karmic drop is the mirror-like wisdom; the thirty-two elements having an equal taste is the equalizing wisdom; the actuality of experiencing bliss in that very one is the discriminating wisdom; from that, completing the actions of emitting and withdrawing is the activity accomplishing wisdom; the reality sphere wisdom is naturally purified by emptiness. **“Bliss”** [166A] because of the reality of experience.

“Abandoning all conceptuality” because of being free from discordant factors.

“Substance drop” because of being the actuality of the drop of enlightenment spirit. **“At the tip of the secret nose”** [means] at the tip of the vajra; the tip of the nose of the lotus is also suitable. **“At the end of that”** [means] at the end of that. **“Having the nature of perfect holding”** [means] the actuality of holding. “Supreme yoga” because of serving as the cause of supreme yoga. **“Only one with a greatly lustful mind”** has the meaning “of the great ones who know extreme passion.” Whoever is single-minded on the object of great passion is called that.

Thus, having taught the meditation on the substance drop, in order to explain the actuality of the secret nose tip, he says **“In sixty-four lotus petals,”** because of the shape of those channels. **“Lotus”** because of its very form. **“Channel chakra”** because of the characteristics of perfect force and so forth. **“The so-called channel chakra arises”** is taught as stated in chapter seventeen. **“Explained as the nose tip at the navel of that”** [means] the navel in the center of the Emanation Chakra and that, which is located in the secret chakra, the hub of the vajra and lotus channels. **“Explained as the nose tip”** [means] expressed as the tip of the secret nose. For that very reason, he says **“secret”** [because] it has the name of secret. It bestows all bliss.

Thus having explained the secret nose tip in two forms, explaining the actuality at the nose tip of the heart, he says “**At the nose tip of the heart**” and so forth. The “**Reality Chakra**” has the nature of causing the holding of its own characteristic.²⁵³² “**Of the heart**” [means] at the place of the heart. “**Eight lotus petals**” [means] in the form of eight lotus petals. “**Hub**” [means] in the middle, together with the stamen. “**The nose tip heart**” [means] at the tip of the nose of the heart. If someone asks what it is with respect to which he says “**Mind of hatred**,” it is of those having the lineage of hatred. “**In it**” [means] [166B] in that heart nose tip. “**Mantra**” is in the nature of thunder. “**Vajradhara**” is great Vajradhara. “**The cause of perfectly emanating**” [means] the cause of producing. “**Abandoning all the conceptualities of speech**” because of transcending the sphere of all verbal elaborations.

“**Supreme wisdom**” because it serves as the cause of clear light speech, the wisdom that is supreme. “**Wonderful**” because from reality it engages all the elaborations of speech. “**Subtle**” because it is the object of the subtle yoga. “**Always arises**” because with the nature of reality, it exists eternally. “**Nāda [sound]**” is the aspect of the letter A. “**Non-conceptual**” because it lacks the conception of the nature of the five parts. “**Great bliss**” because, by holding the mind there, you eliminate the discomfort that is in the nature of distraction. “**Meditating**” [means] causing one to be familiar with the mantric drop discussed immediately above, and “**excellent yoga**” [means] the creation stage, relying on the meditator, because it is excellent. “**Through the correct**” [means] with the nature of the instructions on exhalation and inhalation. “**Achieving the personal instructions**” [means] understanding the personal instructions.

²⁵³² *Svalakṣaṇa*.

“**Happily**” [means] having made happy. “**The King of Hatred**” [means] the addiction of hatred, having the opportunity to move everywhere. “**When you control**” [means] having controlled [hatred] itself, through the actuality of purifying hatred. “**Quickly**” [means] quickly. If someone asks what the drop is like, in response to that he says “**The one cause of the reality of peace,**” [means] that very single cause in the aspect of clear light, the thatness unmixed with the natures of the peaceful conceptual energy-winds “because it approaches that through the power of the drop.”

Thus having taught the meditation on the mantric drop in two aspects, now, in order to teach the expression of the conventional nose tip, the actuality of its own branch, he says “**The trio of sun, moon and fire,**” [meaning] the actuality of the *lalanā*, *rasanā* and *avadhūtī*, [167A] because they cause all three elements to flow. “**Pervading from the middle three times**”²⁵³³ [means] entering into the middle of the three channels. “**The face nose**” is expressed as the “conventional nose tip.” “**The characteristics of the place of the energy-winds**” [means that] whatever has the characteristics of the place of the five or the ten winds should be called that.

Thus having taught the actuality of [the drop] itself, in order to briefly explain the meditation on the drop of clear light in that very one, he says “**Located there,**” “in that” [meaning] in that conventional nose tip. As for the great wisdom in “**Great wisdom,**” because of the very accomplishment of vajra repetition. “**Great drop**” [means] the drop of clear light. “**Mind suppressed by delusion**” [refers to] the yogi who has a mental continuum agitated by ignorance. “**Concentration**” [means] meditation. “**Conquers supreme delusion**” [means] penetrates ignorance. “**Supreme**” refers to delusion,

²⁵³³ The Lhasa *Vajra Rosary* has *lam gsum*, “three paths ”

because it serves as the cause of producing all addictions. As it is said: “It is called delusion because of being the very cause of the faults. Otherwise, you abandon by abandoning the view of worldly things [as intrinsically existent]. Further, if someone asks how, in response to that he says “**Blaming all things**,” [“]all things[“] [meaning] particularly placing the blame on external and internal things because, through the force of that [view], you don’t know the nature of all things.

Thus having taught regarding that the summary of the meditation on the drop of clear light, in order to discuss the detailed explanation of that, he says “**Manifesting the nature of the five wisdoms**,” [meaning] the clear light drop having the nature of those, because all five energy-winds have the nature of the five Tathāgatas. “**Relying on the five Buddhas**” [means that] as for that, the life energy-wind is of the nature of Akśobhya, the evacuative [energy-wind] is of the nature of Ratnasambhava, the equalizing [energy-wind] is of the nature of Amitābha, [167B] the ascending energy-wind is of the nature of Amoghasiddhi, and the pervading energy-wind, because of its being located in the totality of the entire body, is of the nature of Vairocana. They are the support because of their nature. “**Supreme**” [because of] serving as the cause of clear light speech. “**That is the drop of clear light**” because of being called by the name of that. “**Perfectly relying on the nose tip of the face**” because of being located having relied on the tip of the conventional nose. “**You should meditate**” [means] holding at the tip of the nose. “**Supreme yoga**” because it serves as the very cause²⁵³⁴ of vajra repetition. “**Traversing the ocean of delusion**” has the meaning of “causing the disappearance of the ocean of delusion.”

²⁵³⁴ Following P and Snar

Thus having taught the detailed explanation of that, in order to discuss the name of that very thing, he says “**Commitment Hero**” and so forth, “**That one**” [standing] for the drop of clear light. “Commitment hero” is the name. As for [“]perfectly or completely arrived,[“] because the hero exists in the nature of beings in the five types of energy-winds, he is the commitment hero. “**As having the name**” [refers to] the name. “**Perfect**” by having the unerring view of the very nature of the perfection stage. If someone asks what the commitment hero is like, in response to that he says “**The commitment of all Buddhas**,” [meaning] of all the Tathāgatas. “**Having the nature of the five wisdoms**” [means] having the nature of the five wisdoms of mirror-like and so forth, because in meaning it has the nature of the five types of energy-winds, you should think like that. “Suitable,”²⁵³⁵ having the nature of the clear light drop.

“**Those skilled at yoga**” [refers to] those able to hold the clear light drop at the conventional nose tip. “**Overcoming the darkness of delusion**” [means] overcoming the dark forest of ignorance because you know the intrinsic naturelessness of speech illustrated by the energy-winds’ own natures. “**Free from all conceptions everywhere**” because of the disappearance of all elaborations of speech. “**The characteristic of omniscient conceptual consciousness**” [refers to] [168A] the wisdom that knows everything; whoever has that characteristic is called that because it is known by the subtle yogas.

Thus having taught the expression of the name of that very thing, now, in order to express the point of view of entering the clear light drop, as a branch of that he teaches a summary, saying “**Arising from the nostril of the nose**,” [meaning that] the energy-

²⁵³⁵ Not in Lhasa *Vajra Rosary*

winds arise from the nostrils of the face nose. “**The five Buddha families abide**” [means] the five energy-winds, because of the form of the five lords. “**The five energy-winds perfectly move upwards**” because all five energy-winds move everywhere from the door of the upper nose. “**Active in the body**” [means] in the body. “**Always become**” [means] at all times, because the energy-winds depend on the body. “**They move at the conventional nose**” because of arising from the face nose. “**From that door**” [means] from the face nose's nostrils. “**That**” [means] energy-wind. “**Arises**” [means] is born.

Thus having taught the summary, in order to discuss the detailed explanation, he says “**Left, right and both,**” [meaning] by the division of from the right, left, both, [and] slowly moving, those four movements of energy-wind, having the meaning of “relying on the first session and so forth.” Thus also from the first session, the energy-wind of the fire mandala arises from the right nostril; in the second session the wind mandala arises from the left nostril; in the third session the earth mandala arises from both; in the fourth session the water mandala arises from both, falling slowly. At night it is also like that. Here also, from each mandala, from each nasal nostril counting each of the four mandalas, by dividing into the right and so forth, you will realize [them] as different. “**Arising from the right**” because it arises from the right nasal nostril. “**Element**” is energy-wind. “**It is the fire mandala**” [means] the mandala of fire. [168B] “**Red color**” because of having the nature of purity which is the Tathāgata Amitābha. “**This bright**” because it appears in yogic knowledge. “**Lotus Lord**” because of not being smeared by passion and so forth like a lotus, [thus] lotus. That very one because of being the lord of his own clan is the Lotus Protector. “**Movement**” is that very Amitābha, through a kind

of upward movement, [thus] movement.

“**From the left**” [means] from the left nasal nostril. “**That arises**” [means] that is produced. “**Element**” is a the kind of energy-wind that is equalizing. “**Relying on the wind mandala**” because of being produced from the wind mandala. “**Appearing as pure green-yellow**” [means] having the color green, Amoghasiddhi, “**of the Action Lord.**” “**The movement**” is a synonym for a kind of energy-wind. “**From both**” [means] from both nasal nostrils. “**That arises**” [means] that is produced. “**Element**” is “a kind of equalizing energy-wind,” yellow in color. “**The mandala of great power**” is the earth mandala. “**The Great Jewel Lord**” [means] Ratnasambhava, who completes all thoughts. “**Moving**” [means] “through the aspect of that.” “**Slow and not moving**” because it arises from the water mandala. “**Slowly moving**” because water doesn’t move up. “**The water mandala**” [means] that very water mandala. “**Appearing as pure crystal**” through its color, because it is stainless. “**Vajra Lord**” is Akśobhya, because he is stable²⁵³⁶ in emptiness, like a vajra. He is also a Lord because he is the lord of his own clan. Because of that form he deserves that.

“**From all the elements**” [refers to] the nature of the four energy-winds. “**Arising perfectly**” [means] [169A] relying on. “**The apprehending of habitat and inhabitants**” because of apprehending the four [elements] in the environment. The [“]apprehending of habitat and inhabitants[“] [refers to] the pervading energy-wind. “**The nature of Vairocana**” because of appearing through infusing forms. “**The end of death**” because of always lacking its activity at the time of death, it has the meaning of that arising.

²⁵³⁶ Reading *brtan*

Thus having taught the detailed explanation, now, in order to the internal repetition through the process of the four mandalas, he says “**As these four mandalas**” and so forth, [meaning] by the process of the four mandalas such as fire and so forth. “**You repeat the wheel of breath of the elements**” [means] you should scrutinize [them] preceded by the application of the three syllables. “**Constantly**” [means] the entire day and night. “**Having placed [one’s self] in equipoise**” [means] by abiding in mirror-like concentration. “**Day and night**” [means] divided into eight sessions. “**Always repeat**” [means] that very wheel of energy-wind. “**Through mantra**” [means] through abiding on the perfection stage. “**By the count of repetitions**” [means] by the count of 21,600.

Thus having discussed internal repetition according to the process of the four mandalas, now, in order to discuss a host of activities from the perspective of gathering the drop of clear light, he says “**In that way, the energy-wind at the tip of the nose,**” and so forth, [meaning] the aspect that gathers all five energy-winds, [“]at the tip of the nose[“] [meaning] at the tip of the conventional nose. “**As five colors**” being the colors with the natures of the five clans. “**Meditate**” as the mere kernel of a mustard seed. “**By supreme non-dual yoga**” [means] through the non-dual yoga of mantra, energy-wind, mandala and deities, by realizing [that they] are not different [from each other]. “**[Of] the supreme light ray**” [means] the nature of the five energy-winds. “**The great blazing**” because it is also a very brilliant light. “**By this**” [means that] the light ray drop will accomplish a host of the peaceful and so forth activities. If someone asks how, [169B] in response to that he says “**The yogi,**” [meaning] by the gradual practice of the mandala with the nature of being held for the period of half of each session break. As it is said, “In each mandala of fire, wind, great power and water, in the time of half of each

session, two actions in each.”²⁵³⁷ Thus he states four modes of meaning from the perspective of engaging in [meditation on] the light ray drop.

Thus having taught the detailed explanation from the perspective of dividing, now, in order to teach the subject of that very thing, the answer to the question on the subject of the meditator, as the branch of that which is requesting, he says “**Then**” and so forth, [meaning] after expressing the host of activities from the perspective of gathering. “**Vajrapāṇi**” is the requestor. “**Vajrasattva**” is an aspect of Vajradhara, the sixth teacher. [“]Speaking[“] should be added to the meaning of holding [*dhara*]. “**Guru of beings**” because he becomes the vajra master of the three realms. If someone asks what he said, in response to that he says “**Of the three drops**,” [meaning] the actualities of the substance, mantra and light ray drops. “**Complete knower**” [means], by the kindness of the Lord, he knew the three drops. “**Endowed with the three nose tips**” [means] the three nose tips of secret, heart and face, which become the support of these [drops]. “**A little about this**” [means] the meditation on the three drops and in the meditation on the three drops. “**Doubt**” [means] being of two minds. [In] “**O Terminator of Samsara, please clarify**”²⁵³⁸ that [means] doubt, O Lord, please dispel. [“]Samsara[“] is cyclic existence. The terminator of that is the enemy [of that],²⁵³⁹ because he cuts off the root of cyclic existence. [“]Doubt[“] is stated as his own state. As for “**Does the meditator-yogi meditate on the three drops together or individually?**” the yogi [does so] individually. [170A]

Thus having taught the request, now, in order to show the certainty of the three

²⁵³⁷ So eight all together

²⁵³⁸ Following Snar and Comi

²⁵³⁹ This could be a reference to the alternative etymology of *arhat* as *ari* + *han*, “enemy killer” See Lopez 1996, 243

meditators preceded by engaging in the speech of the Lord, he says “**Then**” and so forth, after putting the question. “**The Vajra Lord**” is great Vajradhara, connected with “**spoke**.” If someone asks how, in response to that he says “**Cutting off all doubt**,” all doubt [meaning] uncertainty. Cutting them off is overcoming, having the meaning of “reversing.” “**The main one**” because he is the main one of the five Buddhas. If someone asks what was said, in response to that he says “**A long time**,” [meaning] a very long time. “**Controlled by desire**” [means] having come into the power of very great desire. “**In the three worlds**” [means] in the three realms. “**Whoever**” [means] sentient beings. “**Is tired**” [means] is fatigued. “**For the benefit of those beings**” [means] for those sentient beings that have the lineage of passion, in order to liberate [them] by the means of conduct that is suitable for them, because of pacifying desire. “**As the substance drop**” means the actuality of the drop of enlightenment spirit. “**Is stated**” [means] is expressed.

“**Of great anger**” [means] extremely great anger. “**Under the control**” [means] dependent. If someone asks what the name of those beings is, in response to that he says “**Wild-bodied**,”²⁵⁴⁰ [meaning that] whoever through the power of anger has a wild body is called that. “**Them**” concerns sentient beings with the behavior of anger. “**Quickly**” [means] quickly. “**In order to liberate**” because of showing the way from anger. “**The mantric drop**” is in the form of the syllable HŪM at the heart nose tip. “**Is stated**” [means] is described. “**By great delusion**” [means] through great ignorance. “**Those completely confounded**” [means] those with the wrong view. “**Fatigued**” [means] with an exhausted mind. “**Those**” [means] sentient beings. “**This ocean of Samsara**”

²⁵⁴⁰ Skt *nikṛtikāya* [?]

[means] [170B] from the ocean of cyclic existence. “**They**” are those with depressed mind streams. “**Quickly**” [means] with a quick result. “**Attainment**” is the actuality of vajra repetition. “**In order to achieve**” is in order to achieve the attainment that has the quick result. “**The characteristic of wisdom**” is the actuality of wisdom through the overcoming of ignorance. “**As the wind drop**” [means] as the light ray drop. “**Is stated**” [means] is expressed. If someone asks how, in response to that he says “**The elaboration of perfect reality**,” meaning “the property of elaborating reality with the nature of the unerring view.”

Thus having taught the definition of the three meditators preceded by engaging in the speech of the Lord, now, in order to express a summary of the three nose tips, describing their nature, in that way expressing a summary of the three drops, describing their nature, he says “**Thus, the three drops**,” as described just above, “**perfectly**,” [meaning] with the nature of the unerring view, “**You should practice exactly like this**,” [meaning] the practice of the energy-winds. “**You should think like this**” [means] by depending on those with the lineage of passion and so forth. “**In this very life**” [means] in the reality that is seen [now]. “**In order to attain**” [means] in order to transcend into the thatness of the energy-winds. In “**In order to purify all obscurations**,” “he said” should be added. It has the meaning of “in order to pacify” [“]all obscurations,[“] [meaning] the discordances present in isolated body and speech.

Thus having taught the nature of one’s own gathering, now, in order to define the place of meditation, he says “**With one-pointed mind**” [meaning] with an undistracted mind. “**A pleasant place**” [means] in a part of the land that is pleasant. “**Gathering wisdom**” [means] consistent with producing the five wisdoms, [171A] gathering all

attainments [and] is connected with “**You should accomplish with effort.**” Further, if someone asks how, in response to that he says “**Adorned with water, fruit and flowers,**” in order to be undistracted and pleasant. “**Isolated**” [means] without people. “**On a mountain peak**” [means] on the top of an earth-holder. “**You should accomplish**” [means] you should meditate. “**With effort**” [means] with striving. “**Gathering all attainments**” [means] all the attainments of peace and so forth. [“]Gathering[“] is an aspect of collecting, having the meaning of “the three drops.”