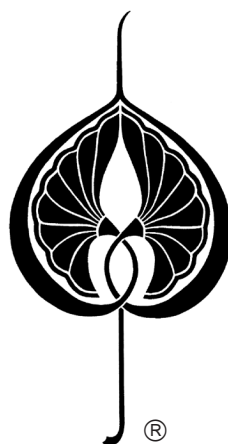


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The Purification of Heruka: Reflections on Identity Formation in Late Indian Buddhism¹

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A fascinating feature of Buddhism, and one that facilitated its development into a truly global religion, is its readiness to adapt to new and changing cultural contexts. This feature assured its development from a Northeast Indian renunciant movement to a pan-South Asian religion, and, eventually, into the global religion that it is today. This adaptability, perhaps, is rooted in the anti-essentialist stance adopted by the Buddha and subsequent generations of Buddhist thinkers. That is, Buddhist thought has been characterized by its resistance to the notion that people and things are the way they are because they possess some sort of unchanging essence, an *ātman* or *svarūpa*. Buddhists rejected this commonly held belief and argued instead that everything is in a constant state of flux, changing from one moment to the next.

This philosophical position seems to have led some Buddhists to reject the fixation on the Sanskrit language that characterized the ancient Vedic tradition. This fixation was based on essentialist assumptions about the nature of reality, namely the belief that Sanskrit was the underlying verbal code through which the universe was created. This was mirrored, philosophically, by Dīnāga's rejection of ontologically real universals. He argued instead that meaning occurs not at the level of the word, through a one-to-one correspondence between word and thing, but rather at the level of the sentence, through a process of exclusion (*apoha*).² Rejecting the Vedic cosmogony³ and the conservative attitudes toward language and culture that accompanied it, the Buddha is reported to have told the monks and nuns to travel and to teach the dharma in the language of the place, rather than in a primordial language, be it Sanskrit or Māgadhī, which only the learned would understand.⁴

This flexibility had tremendous consequences. Unlike Hindu Brahmins, Buddhist monks and nuns readily traveled to other cultural regions and translated their scriptures into the languages they encountered there. Buddhists, in India and elsewhere, also readily adapted elements from other religious traditions, converting local deities, such as *nāgas* in India, dragons in China, and so forth, into Buddhist protector deities, or assimilating local deities, such as the Japanese *kami*, with the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon.⁵ These adaptations could, and were, easily justified as exercises in “expedience” or skillful means. In other words, they were strategies, motivated by compassion, designed to further the spread of the “true teaching,” the *saddharma*.

This “expedience” has been a powerful force driving the development of Buddhism from its founding up until the present day. Here I will focus on an example of this sort of development, involving the creative appropriation and transformation of elements of a Hindu tradition by Indian Buddhists. This concerns the figure of “Heruka,” a major tantric Buddhist deity.

The deity Heruka is an important figure in part because he is not limited to a single text or tradition, but is highlighted in many of the *tantras*. He was originally seen as a liminal being closely associated with demonic entities. The seventh-century *Subāhupariṣcchā-tantra* stated that “At night gods, demons (*asura*), goblins (*pīśāca*, *sha za*, 食肉), and *herukas* (*khrag ’thung ba*, 食血) wander unresisted in the world, harming beings and wandering on.”⁶ However, in the *Mahāyoga-tantras*, a genre of Indian tantric literature that was composed during the seventh and eighth centuries, Heruka is portrayed as a buddha, albeit one manifesting in a fierce form. He appears as a major figure in the *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga-ḍākinījālasamvara-tantra*, a text that was composed by the late seventh or early eighth century.⁷ He would become the most important male deity in the *Yoginī-tantra* genre, which closely followed precedents set by the *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga*. These precedents include a focus on the terrifying locale of the charnel ground and on the ferocious deities that dwell there, particularly the *yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs*, who were associated with black magic, sacrificial rituals, and meat eating. He is described as follows in the *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga*:

Greatly Glorious Vajraheruka is very terrifying, blazing with ash; his visage blazes blue for beings, and his mandala of light blazes red. He is as fierce as the end-time of great destruction. Greatly blazing,

his voice blazes, like a charnel ground fire. He has a crown of skulls, fierce like the end-time of great destruction. Possessing the methods such as ferocity, he is as terrifying as a charnel ground, with various faces, and eyebrows arched in anger. With his blazing gaze and dance, he incinerates the triple world, along with Rudra, Mahādeva, Viṣṇu, the Sun, the Moon, Yama, and Brahmā, reducing them to ash.⁸

In this text he is portrayed as a *nirmāṇakāya* emanation of the cosmic Buddha Mahāvajradhara. He assumes the form of a *yogī*, a fierce *yogī* of the charnel ground, smeared with ash and adorned with bones. He did this in order to vanquish evildoers who were taking over the world, at the request of the Hindu deities who were incinerated in the resulting conflagration, but were later restored by him.

This description draws very heavily from the mythology and iconography of the Hindu deity Śiva, also known as Mahādeva and Maheśvara. He is known as the lord of *yogīs*, and was famed for his preference for meditating in charnel grounds and other desolate places, enjoying the company of the ghoulish creatures who haunt such locales. Heruka appears to have originally been one of these creatures, and was later promoted to the role of a major deity by the Buddhists. This promotion was likely a response to the growing popularity of the Śaiva deity Bhairava, the ferocious manifestation of Śiva responsible for the destruction of the cosmos at the end of each eon.

Heruka rises to great prominence in the *Yoginī-tantras* composed during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, such as the *Hevajra* and *Cakrasaṃvara tantras*. These sources acknowledge the connection between Heruka and his Hindu predecessor, Bhairava. For example, the thirty-second chapter of the *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra* succinctly describes him as follows: “[He has] four faces, and from four to as many as one hundred thousand hands. He has a white body and Bhairava’s form.”⁹ Elsewhere in the text,¹⁰ Heruka is also described as “the terror of Mahābhairava” (*mahābhairavabhīṣaṇaṃ*), a clear acknowledgement of the connection between these deities.

What exactly is their connection? From the academic perspective, Heruka is clearly a Buddhist transformation of the Hindu deity Bhairava. While Buddhists acknowledge this fact, they do so surreptitiously rather than openly. They did so via the creation of an origin myth of the deity Heruka, which was developed no later than the tenth century, and probably quite earlier.¹¹

According to this myth, during the distant past, Bhairava and his consort, Kālarātri, and their various divine and demonic followers began to cause mayhem throughout the world. Bhairava and his consort took control of the axial mountain, Mt. Sumeru, and their followers took control of twenty-four other sites located throughout South Asia and the Himalayas. There they began to indulge in wanton violence and sexuality. Mahāvajradhara, viewing this from the highest heaven, decided to act in order to preserve the cosmic order. He manifested in one of Bhairava's form, as Heruka, and his host of buddhas and bodhisattvas also manifested in Śaiva guise. They descended to earth in this form, and subdued Bhairava, Kālarātri, and all of their followers, seizing control of Mt. Sumeru and the other twenty-four sites. In the process, they established the Heruka mandala on earth.¹²

This myth is clearly apologetic. It acknowledges both the organic connection between the cults of Bhairava and Heruka and the historical precedence of the former. But it subordinates the Śaiva cult, representing its transformation as an example of the enlightened activity of the buddhas, rather than a historical appropriation by Buddhists.

Myths such as this were apparently not sufficient to allay the concerns of Indian Buddhists. Throughout the literature on Heruka we find repeated attempts to highlight his Buddhist credentials and "purify" him of suspicions of non-Buddhist origination. The classic method of asserting the Buddhist credentials of a newly appropriated deity is to correlate that deity to classical Buddhist doctrinal categories. Probably one of the earliest attempts to purify Heruka in this fashion occurs in the *Hevajra-tantra*, as follows:

Cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) is Heruka's form. He is the Lord Savior of the World. Listen, as I will speak of that form in which he manifested. His eyes are red with compassion, and his body is black due to his loving mind. His four legs refer to the four means of conversion.¹³ His eight faces are the eight liberations,¹⁴ and his sixteen arms the [sixteen forms of] emptiness.¹⁵ The five buddhas are [represented] by his [five] insignia, and he is fervent in the subjugation of the wicked.¹⁶

This passage begins with language evocative of Hindu theology, but then quickly segues into Buddhist terminology. This early correlation of elements of Heruka's form and iconography to classical Buddhist doctrinal categories was dramatically expanded in later works. Perhaps the most notable example was composed by Śraddhākaravarman, a Kashmiri scholar who was active during the late tenth century, and

who collaborated with the great Tibetan translator Rinchen Zang-bo (*rin chen bzang po*, 958–1055). He wrote a curious little text called the *Purification of Heruka* (*he ru ka'i rnam par dag pa*).

This text provides his readers with a symbolic explanation of Heruka, his implements, and subsidiary elements in his mandalic environment. According to this exegesis, all of the non-Buddhist ornaments and so forth, depicted in the origin myth as deriving from the cult of Bhairava, are explained in terms of normative Mahāyāna Buddhist categories. Specifically, the text correlates elements of Heruka's iconography to the grounds (*bhūmi*) and perfections (*pāramitā*) of a bodhisattva's practice. The text begins as follows:

The teaching on the purification of the Reverend Blessed Lord Śrī Heruka has the nature of the purity of true concentration. It is true—that is, unerring—because it is not common to the disciples (*śrāvaka*) and so forth, and because [it teaches that] mind—as [the five gnoses] such as the discerning,¹⁷ in the form of the moon and *vajra*, the five clans or the single host—is the very nature of consciousness. It is the stage of devotional practice. Devotion refers in particular to the reverential practice of meditating on the deity's form as the embodiment, in a single savor (*ro cig, ekarasa*), of all of the aids to awakening (*bodhipakṣikadharmā*), because this is the antidote to misknowledge. The purification of each thing is none other than this.

His four faces have the nature of the four joys,¹⁸ because he is the nature of the joys that arise from contact with the four great elements, and of the fruit, the exalted doors of liberation such as emptiness.¹⁹ The double drum (*damaru*) in the first of his twelve hands is the purification of the perfection of generosity because it continually sounds the teaching of the mandala's wheel of the inseparability of self and other. It is the antidote for the envy that steals the happiness of others. It is the ground of delight,²⁰ because it gives rise to the enjoyment of the great bliss of the inseparability of self and other.

His axe is the purity of the perfection of moral discipline, as it cuts off with moral discipline the disorder of breaking the commitments of eating and so forth, as well as the non-virtuous actions such as killing. It is the stainless ground,²¹ because it turns one away from all sins. His flaying knife is the purification of the perfection of patience, because it completely cuts away impatience and disturbances of consciousness brought about by being struck with a sword, staff, cudgel, and so forth by someone thoroughly agitated. It is the ground of luminosity.²² This means that one rests one's mind without disturbance, and by thus resting one destroys misknowledge. Lacking that, stainless gnosis (*anāvīlajñāna*) shines.²³

The text continues in this vein, correlating the implements held in his hands to the perfections and bodhisattva grounds. It also exhaustively correlates his other iconographical features and the other deities of his mandala with Buddhist categories. He then explicitly describes the Hindu deities subordinated by Heruka in terms of the Buddhist mythology of evil. That is, he associates them with forms of Māra, the antagonist of bodhisattvas.²⁴ He describes Bhairava and Kālarātri as follows:

Bhairava is the essence of Māra of the Afflictions. The afflictions are the root of passion (*kāma*), and passion is Maheśvara. He has the pride of emanating and recollecting out of desire and attachment, and he is the very thing that binds one, namely cyclic existence. He is the lord who terrifies (*bhairava*) with his eyebrows, moustache, and so forth, [and produces the terrors] of old age and dilapidation, by means of partiality and impartiality. This is because he is the nature of speech which is sound itself, such as the sound of thunder and so forth. In order to counteract his pride, he is supine, pressed down with [Heruka's] left foot, playfully, without undue fixation or zeal.

Kālarātri is the essence of Māra Lord of Death. [She represents] the destruction and emptiness of the aggregates. Lacking all mental states of wrath, she has the nature of nirvana, while at the same time appearing as the most important element of cyclic existence, the inner and outer essence of which exists in the three times, the past, future, and present. This is because she apprehends the gnosis that manifests as great bliss, which arises from the contact of his right foot with her who is the passionless night, the darkness of unknowing.²⁵

The passage identifying the Hindu deities with Māra, the classical Buddhist evil one, was most likely directed to an Indian Buddhist audience. It demonizes the Hindu deities, but it does so in a subtle fashion. It portrays the deities as almost willing participants in the divine play, or *līlā*, of awakening. Bhairava is pressed by Heruka's foot, but playfully, not zealously, to counteract his pride, just as a parent might correct a child's misbehavior. And Kālarātri is assigned an ambiguous role, inwardly awakened while outwardly participating in the maintenance of cyclic existence. The text hints at the erotic violence that is present in older versions of the myth, which relates that after the Buddhist deities subjugated their male Śaiva counterparts, they enjoyed their wives sexually. But it does so in a much milder fashion, eliminating the more troubling elements of the narrative.

On the other hand, the earlier portion of the text, which correlates Heruka's implements to the bodhisattva perfections and grounds,

was likely directed to concerns shared by both Indian and Tibetan Buddhists. The key term in this portion of the text is *viśuddhi*, “purification.” It is a technical term that is very meaningful in the tantric context. As Francesco Sferra notes, the term *viśuddhi*

deals with the crucial theme of the essential nature of things, not merely as aiming at theoretical definitions, but also as a starting point of the practice that leads to awakening. In this second context we see the term “purification” is used in two different ways. One the one hand it indicates pureness, Buddha’s nature itself, the ever shining and pure condition that is always present in all things. This pureness represents one of the foundations on which the practice and doctrine of the Buddhist Tantras is based and which can be exemplified by the formulas *viśuddhis tathatā* and *tathatātmikā śuddhiḥ*. On the other hand, the term indicates “purification” and therefore a process or a means.²⁶

This text does not overtly discuss any elements of practice, although it almost certainly implies meditative and ritual purification via the identification of oneself with Heruka. It associates with the deity Heruka the innate purity of the buddha-nature, which is simultaneously the ground and goal of the practice. The ambiguity of the term *viśuddhi*, however, also permits another interpretation, which is the purification of Heruka, in the sense of sanitizing the deity of the non-Buddhist elements with which he was associated.

Here it is important to understand the context in which this text was written. Śraddhākaravarma was intimately involved with the incipient stage of the massive project of the translation and transmission of tantric Buddhist texts and their associated practice traditions to Tibet, known as the “latter transmission” (*phyi dar*) of the dharma. This project was motivated in part by controversy concerning the orthopraxy of the antinomian practices described in the *tantras*.²⁷

Many of the Buddhist *tantras*, and particularly the *Mahāyoga-tantras*, appear to advocate morally transgressive practices. The translation of tantric texts and, presumably, the dissemination of tantric practices, were controlled by the imperial Tibetan State during the first transmission of the dharma in the eighth and ninth centuries. During this time, the *Mahāyoga-tantras* were particularly singled out for proscription.²⁸ Later, transgressive practices described in the *tantras*, including violent sacrifice, sorcery, sexual rites, and offerings of impure substances, were strongly criticized by the Tibetan king

Yeshé Ö (*ye shes 'od*, 947–1024),²⁹ who sent Rinchen Zang-bo to India to learn if such teachings were orthodox or not.

In India, Rinchen Zang-bo would learn that the transgressive texts about which King Yeshé Ö was suspicious were popular and considered to be canonical by the Buddhist scholars he met in Kashmir and Magadha. However, he would also learn that Indian Buddhist scholars developed sophisticated hermeneutical systems for the interpretation of these texts, and that these systems did not usually privilege the literal interpretation of these passages. In other words, the *tantras* employed language in a radical fashion in order to accelerate the awakening process in properly prepared students and were not understood as advocating the overturning of the conventional moral order. Indeed, largely for these reasons, the *tantras* were considered to be highly secret. This secrecy was for the protection of the unprepared, and not for the hoarding of wisdom by an initiated elite.³⁰

One might surmise that Śraddhākaravarma wrote this text to assuage doubts that the king's envoy, Rinchen Zang-bo, may have had concerning the deity Heruka and the *Yoginī-tantras* that focus on him. These texts, after all, were notorious for their apparent advocacy of practices that violated mainstream Indian behavioral norms, including those dealing with sexuality and violence. Heruka may have been doubly suspect, on account of his obvious connection with a major non-Buddhist deity. By firmly associating Heruka with pivotal Buddhist concepts, the author may have been attempting to assure the reader of his bona-fide Buddhist credentials.

Śraddhākaravarma's association of all of the major iconographic elements of Heruka with normative Mahāyāna concepts appears to have been an attempt to achieve what Robert Thurman calls the integration of the sutras within the *tantras*.³¹ This is a twofold process. Tantric exegetes not only drew upon classical Mahāyāna sutric categories to legitimize the *tantras* as Buddhist, but these categories were transformed in the process, becoming elements in the edifice of tantric theory and practice. This integration most likely eased Tibetan anxieties concerning the orthodoxy of the tradition.

King Yeshé Ö was concerned about the transgressions that were allegedly being practiced by some tantric practitioners in Tibet. He was particularly concerned about violent sacrifice and the use of impure substances as food and offerings. Buddhists have long opposed the former, and the latter inspired his indignation as a sacrilege.³²

Śraddhākaravarma may have had such doubts in mind when he wrote that Heruka's axe "cuts off with moral discipline the disorder of breaking the commitments of eating and so forth, as well as the non-virtuous actions such as killing." This language completely transforms the violence implicit in the iconography, portraying the deity's militaristic demeanor as symbolic of his ardent resistance to moral turpitude.

Evidently, this question was asked in India, and the Buddhists had an answer. In effect, they bifurcated ferocity (*krodha*) into two distinct forms: one into what might be termed "wrath," a secondary addiction (*upakleśa*) associated with anger; and the other into a form of "fierce compassion." The latter is not related to anger at all, the Buddhists claim, but is an expedience—what we might term "tough love"—in which one manifests the appearance of wrath in order to discipline those who are unresponsive to more peaceful instructional methods. This reasoning was developed centuries earlier by eighth-century scholars such as Śubhākarasiṃha, Yixing (一行), and Buddhaśrījñāna.³³

Buddhists considered Heruka and his entourage as *nirmāṇakāya* embodiments of the buddhas, and their manifestation in such fierce forms was thus considered to be motivated by compassion, an aspect of the enlightened activity of the buddhas. It is thus a dramatization of a uniquely tantric soteriology, which holds that even the most evil of beings can be awakened, and that this awakening is achieved by the very means of their source of bondage. Ron Davidson argues, concerning this myth, that "as soteriology, it implies that no depravity is irredeemable; indeed, it affirms that that the defiled condition will be answered by the insistent movement towards awakening, becoming finally the stuff of enlightenment itself."³⁴

There is no doubt whatsoever that Śraddhākaravarma was completely successful in this attempt at "purification," for not only was Heruka "purified" in the eyes of most Tibetans, but he also became a preeminent means of purification. His application of what might be termed creative commentary should not be viewed as simply an apologetic attempt to obscure Heruka's heterodox associations. It was that, but much more; it was also an attempt to reinterpret and reposition Heruka and the *Yoginī-tantras*, to recreate them in and for a new cultural context.

Through the efforts of Indian commentators such as Śraddhākaravarma, and the later generations of Tibetan commentators who followed him, *Yoginī-tantras* such as the *Hevajra* and *Cakrasaṃvara*

became extremely popular in Tibet, and Heruka became one of the most important tantric deities. Tantric practices centering on him became quite widespread. One *sādhana* focusing on Heruka which is very popular among practitioners of the Geluk tradition today is entitled “The Śrī Cakrasaṃvara Yoga of Triple Purification,” *dpal ‘khor lo sdom pa’i dag pa gsum gyi rnal ‘byor*. This triple purification is enacted by identifying one’s body, speech, and mind with the body, speech, and mind of Heruka and his consort Vajravārāhī. This is effected by visualizing oneself in their forms, reciting their mantras, and contemplating the esoteric significance of the syllables *śrī he ru ka*.³⁵

There is no doubt that the deity Heruka, in his journey from India to Tibet, underwent tremendous transformation. From his origins as a blood-drinking ghoulish being in Śiva’s entourage, he became a *nirmāṇakāya* buddha in Śaiva garb. While his non-Buddhist persona made him suspect in Indian Buddhist circles, he completely shed the suspicion of heretical origination in Tibet, where Śaivism was not a thriving and threatening competing tradition, but was simply a doctrinal category. In this new terrain, he himself became a source for purification, for tantric Buddhists seeking to put into practice the esoteric teaching that he was believed to have propounded eons ago. He is also a living presence, accessible to the faithful via meditation or pilgrimage to his sacred abode at Mount Kailash. His purification, the *Herukaviśuddhi*, was undoubtedly a great success.

NOTES

1. A shorter version of this essay was originally delivered at the International Association of Buddhist Studies conference held in Atlanta, Georgia in 2008. Many thanks to the attendees of this panel who provided me with helpful feedback and suggestions.
2. See Bimal Matilal, *The World and the Word: India’s Contribution to the Study of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 37.
3. Regarding the Buddhist rejection and transformation of the old Vedic cosmogonies see Joanna Jurewicz, “Playing with Fire: The Pratītyasamutpāda from the Perspective of Vedic Thought,” *Journal of the Pāli Text Society*, 26 (2000): 77–103
4. See Richard Gard, *Buddhism* (New York: George Braziller, 1961), 67.
5. Regarding this practice of adaptation and assimilation see Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation: The Historical Development of the*

Honji-Siujaku Theory (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1969).

6. This translates the Tibetan version of the text *Subāhupariṣcchā*, To. 805. D rgyud 'bum vol. wa, 188b. The Chinese translation adds *nāgas* to the list, and groups together the *pīśāca* and *heruka* as “classes of evil demons who drink blood and eat flesh” (T. 895, 18.720a10: 及食血肉諸惡鬼類)

7. This estimate is based upon Amoghavajra's description of this text in his *Assembly of the Eighteen Adamantine Pinnacle Yoga Sutras* (金剛頂經瑜伽十八會) which was composed in 746 CE. For a study and translation of this important work see Rolf Giebel, “The *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*: An Annotated Translation,” *Journal of Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies* 18 (1995): 107–201.

8. My translation from *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga-ḍākinijālasamvara-nāma-uttara-tantra*, To. 366, D rgyud 'bum vol. ka, 157b.

9. My translation of *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra* 32.12. For an annotated translation, see David Gray, *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra: A Study and Annotated Translation* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies/Columbia University Press, 2007), 303–304.

10. That is, *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra* 2.14. See Gray, *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, 167.

11. There are hints of this myth in the *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra* itself. The earliest known version of the myth occurs in Indrabhūti's tenth-century commentary on the *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra*. For a translation of this, see Gray, *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, 44–54.

12. For more information on this myth, see Ronald Davidson, “Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, no. 2 (1991): 197–235.

13. The “four means of conversion” (*saṃgrahavastuśka*) are (1) generosity (*dāna*), (2) pleasant speech (*priyavādītā*), (3) altruistic conduct (*arthacaryā*), and (4) having the same interest [as others] (*samānārthatā*). Regarding these see Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (orig. pub. 1932; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 251–259.

14. The eight liberations (*vimokṣa*) are (1) liberation of the embodied looking at a form, (2) liberation of the disembodied looking at a form, (3) liberation through beautiful form, (4) liberation of infinite space, (5) liberation of infinite consciousness, (6) liberation of nothingness, (7) liberation of the peak of existence, and (8) liberation of cessation. See Tsepak Rigzin, *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1986), 236.

15. These are (1) internal emptiness, (2) external emptiness, (3) emptiness of the internal and external, (4) emptiness of emptiness, (5) emptiness of the

great, (6) emptiness of the ultimate, (7) emptiness of conditioned phenomena, (8) emptiness of unconditioned phenomena, (9) emptiness of the extremes, (10) emptiness of the beginningless and endless, (11) emptiness of the unabandoned, (12) emptiness of nature, (13) emptiness of all phenomena, (14) emptiness of self-characteristics, (15) emptiness of non-apprehension, and (16) emptiness of the reality of nonexistence. See Rigzin, *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, 160–161.

16. My translation of *Hevajra-tantra* 2.9.10–12, from the Sanskrit edited in David Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 2.92.

17. The five gnoses (*pañcajñāna*) are (1) mirror-like gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*), (2) gnosis of equality (*samatajñāna*), (3) discerning gnosis (*pratyavekṣanājñāna*), (4) accomplishing gnosis (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*), and (5) gnosis of reality (*dharmadhātujñāna*). See Rigzin, *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, 384.

18. The four joys are (1) joy (*ānanda*), (2) supreme joy (*paramānanda*), (3) the joy of cessation (*viramānanda*), and (4) natural joy (*sahajānanda*). Regarding these see Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, 34–35.

19. The *trivimokṣamukha* are emptiness (*śūnyatā*), signlessness (*animittatā*), and wishlessness (*apraṇihitatā*).

20. That is, *pramuditābhūmi*, the first bodhisattva ground.

21. That is, *vimalabhūmi*, the second bodhisattva ground.

22. That is, *prabhākarībhūmi*, the third bodhisattva ground.

23. My translation from Śraddhākaravarma's *he ru ka'i rnam par dag pa*, To. 1481, D rgyud 'grel vol. zha, 125a, b.

24. Māra, literally "Death," is traditionally considered to have four forms: (1) Māra of the Components (of sentient existence), *skandhamāra*; (2) Māra of the Afflictions, *kleśamāra*; (3) Māra the Lord of Death, *mṛtyupatimāra*; and (4) Māra the Son of God, *devaputramāra*. Concerning the mythology surrounding the Māras see Trevor Ling, *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil* (London: George, Allen and Unwin, 1962).

25. My translation of Śraddhākaravarma, *he ru ka'i rnam par dag pa*, 126b–127a.

26. Francesco Sferra, "The Concept of Purification in Some Texts of Late Indian Buddhism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 27, nos. 1–2 (1999): 85–86.

27. For an insightful discussion of this period and the controversies triggered by antinomian tantric texts and practices see Jacob P. Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 95–109.

28. See Samten Karmay, “The Ordinance of Lha Bla-ma Ye-shes-’od,” in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson: Proceedings of the International Seminar of Tibetan Studies, Oxford 1979*, ed. Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1980), 151.

29. See Karmay, “The Ordinance of Lha Bla-ma Ye-shes-’od,” 154.

30. Regarding the interpretation of the tantras and their use of language, see the essays in Donald Lopez, *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988). See also Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 236–292; and Christian Wedemeyer, “Beef, Dog, and Other Mythologies: Connotative Semiotics in Mahāyoga Tantra Ritual and Scripture,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 2 (2007): 383–417.

31. See Robert Thurman, “Tsoñ-kha-pa’s Integration of Sūtra and Tantra,” in *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization: Proceedings of the 1982 Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies held at Columbia University*, ed. Barbara Nimri Aziz and Matthew Kapstein (New Delhi: Manohar 1985), 382.

32. See David Ruegg, “Problems in the Transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism in the Western Himalaya about the Year 1000,” in *Studies of Mysticism in Honor of the 1150th Anniversary of Kobo Daishi’s Nirvāṇam*, *Acta Indologica* vol. 4 (Narita: Naritasan Shinshōji, 1984), 377–378.

33. This topic is explored in much greater depth in my article “Compassionate Violence? On the Ethical Implications of Tantric Buddhist Ritual,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 14 (2007): 239–271.

34. Davidson, “Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth,” 227.

35. This *sādhana* is entitled *dpal ‘khor lo sdom pa’i dag pa gsum gyi rnal ‘byor*. It is contained in a popular book of *sādhana*s entitled *bla ma’i rnal ‘byor dang yi dam khag gi bdag bskyed sogs zhal ‘don gces btus* (Dharamsala: Tibetan Cultural Printing Press, 1994).

