

THE BODY AS A TEXT AND THE TEXT AS THE BODY: A VIEW FROM THE *KĀLACAKRATRANTRA'S* PERSPECTIVE

Vesna A. Wallace
University of California, Santa Barbara

I. Introduction

When contemporary geneticists study the body, they look at it as a genetic text and strive to intelligibly read it as a blueprint for how the body is formed and maintained. In this sense, for geneticists, a malleable genetic text serves as a metaphor of the body. The holders of the Kālacakra tradition in India saw the body in a similar way. They viewed it as a tantric text, consisting of *mantras* and letters that provide a blueprint of the mind-body complex, its operations, habitual propensities, and potentialities for transformation. They devised their own method of interpreting, editing, and changing that text in order to transmute the ordinary body characterized by afflictions into the blissful body of empty form.

One can say that in the context of the Kālacakra tradition, a *tantra* is also interpreted as a metaphor of the body, since the tantric text and its discourse themselves are treated as blueprints of the individual's mind and body. Moreover, a tantric text is also understood as representational body of ultimate reality, manifesting in a literary form, as a literary reproduction of Vajrasattva, the Buddha's gnosis of bliss.

In this paper, I will discuss both—the Indian Buddhist interpretation of the *Kālacakratantra* discourse as the body, and the interpretations of the body as the Kālacakra

tantric text having a performative function. These two interpretations can be equally relevant for our understanding of the concepts of *tantra* and the tantric body. I surmise that these two interpretations could also have broader implications for contemporary theories in literary and cultural studies, as they extend the existing notions of the text, its function, and the role of the reader.

In the context of Indian tantric Buddhism, the concept of the body as a sacred text is evoked in various definitions of the term “*tantra*” and is elaborated within the Buddhist tantric discourse on the body and tantric practice.

The Buddhist tantric concept of the body as a Dharma discourse or as a sacred text has its precursors in earlier Buddhist literature. In the early Pāli sources, its antecedents can be recognized in the Buddhist definitions of Dharma, contained in discussions pertaining to the Buddha’s discourse on Dharma. In the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*, I. 167, Dhamma is defined as dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), which is synonymous with *samsāra*, the condition of a sentient being, and it is also defined as *nibbāna*. The *Mahāhatthi-padopama-sutta* (MN, 2001, p. 282) further states that one who sees dependent origination sees Dhamma, and one who sees Dhamma sees the dependent origination. In the Pāli *suttas*, the Buddha himself is identified with Dhamma due to his insight into dependent origination. Therefore, one of the epithets of the Buddha in the Pāli *suttas* is *dhamma-bhūta* (“one who has become Dhamma”); and the Buddha is quoted as saying: “He who sees the

Dhamma sees me, and he who sees me sees the Dhamma.”¹ This early Buddhist interpretation of Dharma suggests that by gaining transformative insight into a Dharma-discourse, one becomes the embodiment of Dharma. It further shows that in the context of early Buddhism, an ordinary individual who fully grasps a Dharma-discourse with both of its aspects—saṃsāric and nirvāṇic—becomes transformed into its nirvāṇic aspect. Thus, there is nothing outside the Dharma itself that is being transformed, and there is nothing outside the Dharma that brings about a transformation. This interpretation can be also supported by a statement given in the commentary on the *Paṭisambhidā-maggā*, which interprets the phrase “*dhamma-cakka*” as Dharma being a weapon (*paharaṇa-cakka*) by means of which mental afflictions (*kilesa*) are destroyed.² This understanding of Dharma as a three-faceted phenomenon, consisting of the basis, means, and the result of a transformative insight, is echoed in the later Buddhist views of Mahāyāna *sūtras* and in the Buddhist tantric interpretations of the term “*tantra*.”

In the subsequent Mahāyāna literature, a Mahāyāna *sūtra*, sometimes referred to as a Dharma text, is seen as a textual embodiment of all the good qualities of Buddhahood. Therefore, one is told that by listening, memorizing, reciting, or copying a Mahāyāna *sūtra*, one will acquire those good qualities and see the Buddhas.³ Similarly, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* asserts that by reading, copying, mastering, and teaching this text to others, one attains the pure and perfect body, which reflects the triple universe with all

the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in it.⁴ It is also stated in the *Lalitavistara* that the house in which this Dharma text is found is the dwelling place of the Tathāgatas, and one who masters it, will be like the imperishable ocean.⁵ Statements like these indicate that also in the context of Mahāyāna, by mastering a Dharma discourse, which is a container of all virtues and the means of attaining the virtues, one becomes a living Dharma text, instilled with virtue and worthy of reverence.

In Indian Buddhist tantric sources, the term “*tantra*” is frequently defined as a “connected discourse.”⁶ In the *Amṛtakanikā*, one reads the following:

A *tantra* is called a “connected discourse.” *Saṃsāra* is considered a *tantra*.
A *tantra* is called a “secret mystery.” The higher is called a “*tantra*.”⁷

Thus, similarly to the early Buddhist definition of Dharma, a tantric discourse here has *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as its two interconnected aspects. This “connected discourse” is said to have three aspects, namely: the cause (*hetu*), result (*phala*), and method (*upāya*) leading to the result. Although in various Buddhist tantric texts, interpretations of these three mutually related aspects of a tantric discourse differ slightly, they equally suggest that the individual may be viewed as a *tantra* with all of its facets. According to the *Yogaratnamālā* commentary on the *Hevajratantra* (1959, p. 105), the causal aspect of a *tantra* is sentient beings (*sattva*) who are the members of the *vajra*-family. Another commentary on the *Hevajratantra*, the

Hevajrapañjikā-muktāvalī, identifies the causal *tantra* and a causal Hevajra (*hetu-hevajra*), with a geneological line (*gotra*), or a *vajra*-family.

A *tantra* is a connected discourse (*prabandha*). It is of three kinds: the causal *tantra* (*hetu-tantra*), resultant *tantra* (*phala-tantra*), and method-*tantra* (*upāya-tantra*). Therefore, Hevajra is also of three kinds: the causal Hevajra, resultant Hevajra, and method-Hevajra. A cause (*hetu*), a geneological line (*gotra*), and a family (*kula*) are synonyms. Here, a *vajra*-family itself is called a “causal Hevajra” and a “causal *tantra*” due to being a receptacle of virtues that have sublime compassion (*mahā-karuṇā*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) as their essential part. Why is it Hevajra? Because Hevajra is the cause. Why is it a connected discourse? On account of the multitude of sentient beings who belong to the *vajra*-family and owing to the power of a causal Hevajra, the state of sublime Vajradhara, which is attainable through the long-term practice of the method-Hevajra, is called a “resultant Hevajra” and a “resultant *tantra*.”⁸

In the *Guhyasamāyatantra* (Ch.18, vs. 34-35), the causal aspect is the material nature (*prakṛti*), which is the cause of a form, or appearance (*ākṛti*).⁹ In the *Guṇavatīṭikā* commentary on the *Mahāmāyātāntra*, (1992, p. 2-3), it is the beginningless and endless mind of sentient beings, which is luminous by nature (*prakṛti-prabhāsvara*) and the cause of spiritual awakening.¹⁰

As for the method aspect of a *tantra*, all the aforementioned texts describe it as a means of transforming a *tantra*'s causal aspect into its resultant form. As will be demonstrated later in this paper, the method aspect of a *tantra* is an embodied practice; it is a performative facet of an embodied tantric text.

Furthermore, the resultant form of a *tantra*, which is reality (*tattva*), or the gnosis of supreme and imperishable bliss, is said to have its origin and place in the body. In the *Amyrtakaṇikā*, the gnosis of sublime bliss (*mahā-sukha-jñāna*) is referred to as a sublime *tantra* (*mahā-tantra*) and as a sublime *mantra* (*mahā-mantra*).¹¹ In this and other Buddhist tantric texts, the identification of a *mantra* with the gnosis of sublime bliss is justified on the basis that the *mantra* secures protection (*trāṇa*) of the mind (*manas*) through the manipulation of *prāṇas*, while innate bliss is the source of the origination of all *mantras* and their accomplishments.¹² In the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratāntra*, Ch. 4, v. 7, the state of supreme, indestructible bliss (*paramākṣara-sukha*) is identified with the syllable *a*, which, as the first syllable of the Sanskrit alphabet, stands for the *dharma*-source (*dharmodaya*) and for the *vajra*-womb of all the Buddhas. As such, it is seen as the fundamental cause of all expressions, as the birthplace of all *mantras*.¹³ In light of this view, the individual syllables that constitute a tantric discourse are declared to be of the nature of a *mantra*;¹⁴ and the *mantra* is said to be in the body. Thus, a *tantra*, which is identified with *mantra* on this ground, is a text that is encoded in the individual's body in the form of mantric syllables.

Here too then, that which is being transformed on the tantric path is not something outside the *tantra* itself, but rather, one aspect of a *tantra* is transformed into its other aspect by means of yet another aspect of a tantric discourse. This suggests that a *tantra* as a text that

is encoded in a human body is malleable and therefore can be altered. It is an embodied tantric text that can be changed not through an external agency but through its own internal workings. As will be shown later, only the inner workings of an embodied tantric text, or its own self-manipulation, leads to its transformation.

II. A Perspective from the Indian Kālacakra Tradition

In the *Sekoddeśa*, the following is said with regard to the *Ādibuddhatantra*:¹⁴

Thus, the *Ādibuddha* [*tantra*], denoting the Kālacakra, is purified by means of the six points (*koṭi*),¹⁵ four *vajra-yogas*,¹⁶ four perfect awakenings, six families of the psychophysical aggregates (*skandha*), elements (*dhātu*), and sense-bases (*āyatana*), by means of the five chapters known as “Cosmos,” and so on, and by means of the two truths^{17, 18}.

These two verses clearly suggest that the *Kālacakratantra* text, which is purified by its content and structure, should be understood not only as a mere discourse on the Kālacakra, but also as the Ādibuddha himself. Sādhuputra and Nāropa, commenting on these two verses in the *Sekoddeśaṭippanī* and *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* respectively, point to the *Ādibuddhatantra* as the Ādibuddha Kālacakra himself. For Sādhuputra, the *Ādibuddhatantra* is “without beginning or end, devoid of adherence to the two doctrinal positions, and imparting the complete mundane and supramundane knowledge.”¹⁹ Referencing the verse cited in the *Vimālaśīlā*, Vol. 1, 1986, p. 43, which gives the Kālacakra tradition’s etymological explanation of the phrase “*kālacakra*” and reads:

*kākārāt kāraṇe śānte lakārāt layo 'tra vai
cakārāc calacittasya krakārāt kramabandhanaiḥ*

Sādhuputra identifies the *Ādibuddhatantra* with the resultant aspect of the *tantra*, the Buddha Kālacakra. Nāropā does the same by explaining the *Vimalaprabhā*'s above-cited exposition of the term “*kālacakra*” in the following way. With regard to the syllable *kā*, he asserts, “The cause (*kāraṇa*), called the body of *bodhicitta*, is peaceful and free from conceptualizations (*vikalpa*) on account of the destruction of the waking state; and it is a *Nirmāṇakāya* owing to the cessation of the drop of the body (*kāya-bindu*) in the *lalāṭa*.” With regard to the syllable *la*, he says: “When it is so, a dissolution (*laya*) of *prāṇa*, which is of the nature of the destruction of the dreaming state, is a *Sam̐bhogakāya* owing to the cessation of the drop of the speech (*vāg-bindu*) in the throat.” With respect to the syllable *ca*, he states: “A motion (*cala*) that moves toward the sense-objects such as sound and the like in the waking and dreaming states is the mind that is of the nature of [seminal] emission (*cyuti*), overcome by darkness, and acquired through a transformation of the eighteen bodily constituents. Its binding is a removal of darkness, a destruction of the dreamless state owing to the cessation of the drop of the mind (*citta-bindu*) in the heart, a *Dharmakāya*.” Lastly, with regard to the syllable *kra*, he comments: “A sequential process (*krama*) is an emission of the drops of the body and so on. A binding of that [emission] is a destruction of the fourth

state by means of innate bliss. Owing to the cessation of the drop of gnosis (*jñāna-bindu*) of perishable [bliss], it is a Sahajakāya. Thus, [Kālacakra] consists of the four bodies.”²⁰

Moreover, since Kālacakra is said to be a unity (*ekatva*) of the knowledge of indestructible bliss, referred to by the term “time” (*kāla*), and of the object of knowledge, or the world characterized by endless beings of the three realms, referred to by the term “wheel” (*cakra*),²¹ the *Kālacakratantra* with which he is identified, is to be seen not only as a representation of the Buddha Kālacakra’s mind but also as the representation of the body of sentient beings. Nāropā supports this interpretation with the verse from the *Kālacakratantra* (1994, Ch. 5, v. 56), which identifies all sentient beings within the six realms of existence with a *cakra*, referred to in the same text as the body of the Buddha.²²

In the *Kālacakratantra* and in the *Vimalaprabhā*, a *tantra* is also identified with the body of the individual, as a sublime *mantra*, and as a tantric discourse and its subject matter. One reads in the *Vimalaprabhā*²³ that the original *Ādibuddhatantra*, which consists of 1,620 deities, is the *nāḍīs* in the body. From that root-*tantra* emerged the *Kālacakratantra* in accordance with the classification of the *nāḍīs* of the heart-*cakra*. According to the Kālacakra tradition, the number of *nāḍīs* in body is 72,000. It is worth noting that this number of bodily *nāḍīs* corresponds the number obtained by adding the 12,000 lines of the *Kālacakratantra* to the 60,000 lines of the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary.²⁴ Since the significance of the number of lines in these two texts has not been discussed by their authors, it is not

clear whether or not the authors or redactors of these texts wrote the aforementioned numbers of lines with intention to correlate them to the number of the *nāḍīs* in the body.

One is further informed in the *Vimalaprabhā*, that not only the *Ādibuddhatantra* but also all other *tantras* are contained in the body. In some places, it is said that the *yoginī-tantras* are present in female bodies, and the *yoga-tantras* are in male bodies;²⁵ and in other places it is asserted that both of these classes of *tantras* are in a single body. The body is described as a collection of the kings of *tantras* (*tantra-rāja*)—namely, the threefold *Māyājālatantra* and the six-fold *Samājatantra*.²⁶ The origination of the two mentioned *tantra-rājas* within the body is described as a process of their gradual composition. The expansion of the number of their emerging sections is understood to accord with the development of a child from the moment of its conception to the age of sixteen. Thus, the three phases of the *Māyājālatantra*'s composition in the body take place in the following way. With the arising of the five psychophysical aggregates (*skandha*), five elements (*bhūtas*), eight bodily constituents (*dhātu*), twelve sense-bases (*āyatana*), six faculties of action (*karmendriya*), four *cakras*, and three *doṣas*—*vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha*—the *Māyājāla* emerges as a text having forty-two parts, or sections. With the development of the *uṣṇīṣa* and secret (*guhya*) *cakras*, it expands into a text with forty-five sections; and with the arising of the mental afflictions (*kleśa*) of attachment, aversion, delusion, and pride it becomes a complete text consisting forty-nine sections.²⁷

The process of the composition of the *Samājatantra* in the body is also understood to accord with the development of a human being from the initial embryonic state to a sixteen year-old person. With the arising of the psychophysical aggregates and elements of the fetus, the *Samājatantra* emerges as a text that has nine sections. Upon the origination of the four *cakras*, it has thirteen sections; and with the arising of the sense-faculties (*indriya*) and sense-objects (*viṣaya*), it extends into a text with twenty-five sections. Afterwards, with the emergence of the faculties of action, the secret *cakra* and *uṣṇīṣa*, it has thirty-two sections; and with the arising of the divine faculty (*divyendriya*) and bliss (*sukha*), it becomes a complete text with thirty-four sections.

Furthermore, according to the *Kālacakratantra* tradition, one becomes the Buddha Mañjuvajra by knowing the manner in which the *Ādibuddha* and all other *tantras* that are included in the *Ādibuddhatantra* are present in the body.²⁸ Here too then, right insight into one's own body as a tantric text and its subject matter is a requisite for spiritual transformation. One should know the *tantras* that are present in the body by their respective classes of consonants, which are the letters of a *mantra*. Here, like in other *anuttara-yoga-tantras*, a tantric body is constructed on a specific linguistic model, on the taxonomic order of syllables. This suggests that Indian Buddhists considered linguistic structures of the embodied tantric texts to be important and powerful.

Consonants are referred to as the presiding deities of the *nāḍīs* and the lords

(*nātha*) of the *cakras*. For example:

1. In the joint of the left shoulder and upper arm are gutturals with short vowels of space, etc. in inverted order.

In the joint of the right shoulder and upper arm are gutturals with long vowels of gnosis.

In the joint of the left upper arm and forearm are palatals with short vowels of space, etc.

In the joint of the right upper arm and forearm are palatals with long vowels of gnosis, etc.

In the joint of the left hand and forearm are retroflex consonants with six short vowels of space, etc.

In the right joint of the left hand and forearm are retroflex consonants are retroflex consonants with long vowels of gnosis, etc.

In the joint of the right hip and thigh are labials with six long vowels of gnosis, etc.

In the joint of the left hip and thigh are labials with six short vowels of space, etc.

In the joint of the right knee and thigh are dentals with six long vowels of gnosis, etc.

In the joint of the left knee and thigh are dentals with six short vowels of space, etc.

In the joint of the right foot and shin are sibilants with six long vowels of gnosis, etc.

In the joint of the left foot and shin are sibilants with six short vowels of space, etc. in the inverted order.

Thus, every single class of consonants, making up thirty syllables, is in the twelve *cakras*, which have thirty spokes—in the action (*karma*) *cakras* and in the activity (*kriyā*) *cakras*.

2. In every joint of the right thumb are gutturals with 6 long vowels of gnosis, etc.

In the joint of the lower knuckle of the thumb are 6 *nāḍīs*, or gutturals with 6 long vowels of gnosis, etc.

In the joint of the right forefinger is the syllable *kha*.

The syllable *ga* is in the middle finger.

The syllable *gha* is in the joint of the right ring finger.

The syllable *ṅga* with six long vowels of gnosis, etc. is in the joint of the right little finger.

The syllable *ṅga* with six short vowels of space, etc. is in the joint of the lower knuckle of the left little finger.

The syllable *gha* with six short vowels of space, etc. is in the joint of the left forefinger.

The syllable *ga* with six short vowels of space, etc. is in the left middle finger.

The syllable *kha* with six short vowels of space, etc. is in the left ring finger.

The syllable *ka* with six short vowels of space, etc. is in the left thumb.

The six classes of consonants—*ka*, *ca*, *ṭa*, *pa*, *ta*, and *sa*—make up thirty consonants due to their respective five-fold divisions.²⁹ These thirty consonants together with *ha*, *ya*, *ra*, *la*, *va*, and *kṣa*, are considered to be the lords of the thirty-six bodily *cakras*. Each class of the six consonants is further divided into thirty-six syllables, in accordance with the accompanying short and long vowels, *guṇas* and *vṛddhis*. These thirty-six syllables of each consonantal class are declared to be the lords of the *cakras* in thirty-six *tantras* in the body, namely, in the *ka-vajra-tantra*, *kha-vajra-tantra*, and so on.³⁰ Thus, each class of consonants with its thirty-six syllables is itself a *tantra*.³¹ This implies that each *nāḍī-cakra* is an individual *tantra*. These diverse individual *tantras* are linked together, forming a single, all-inclusive *tantra*, namely, the *Ādibuddhatantra*, or the *Kālacakratantra*. Among these multiple *tantras*, not a single *tantra* exists independently of other *tantras*. The numerous *tantras* in the body are linked together by their common pervader (*vyāpaka*), which is the mind (*citta*), or gnosis (*jñāna*). Perhaps, this presentation of the interconnection of the multiple *tantras* in the body could be interpreted as a unique *Kālacakratantra*'s theory of intertextuality, one that pertains to the embodied texts.

The aforementioned thirty-six consonants are also identified as the six psychophysical aggregates, six elements, six faculties of action and their activities, sense-

faculties, sense-objects, and the like.³² Thus, every bodily constituent is to be known as an individual tantric text, and the body is to be seen as a multi-volumed *tantra*. These individual tantric texts in the body, represented by the groups of thirty-six syllables, are also identified as the *yoga* (method) and *yoginī* (wisdom) *tantras*.³³

However, due to being a corporeal text, this inclusive *tantra* in the body is characterized by finitude, as it is subject to destruction. It carries the meaning of ordinary, conventional reality, which must be transcended. For this reason, this corporeal and provisional *tantra* is in need of transformation into the definitive text. Its transformation requires a certain kind of translation, a transition from presentation to reality. Its transition from a finite text with a provisional meaning to a transcendent text with a definitive meaning is a process of transformation from the conceptually constructed text to the non-conceptual text. This transition of a text from one state of being to another involves a rewriting of personal history. In this process of rewriting, the old signs must be reinterpreted and subsequently replaced by new signs needed for capturing reality. The signs that express the unitary and partless reality are deemed as non-conceptual signs; and thus, although functioning as signs, ultimately they are not signs at all.

It is the earlier mentioned, third aspect of a *tantra*, known as the method, or *sādhana*, that provides the new encoding necessary for such transition. In the course of the *sādhana*, or the stage of generation practice, the earlier discussed groups of thirty-six consonants of

various *tantras* are mentally dissolved. The embodied tantric text is disintegrated. Upon this disintegration, a new *tantra* is generated, the thirty-six consonants are encoded in a new form—in the form of a deity-*maṇḍala*—and their new meaning is produced. The consonants are transformed into the textual body of mantric deities (*mantra-devatā*). By being generated with new meanings into the new textual form, the consonants undergo a gradual transformation in the same six-phased sequence in which they initially had emerged from the time of the individual’s conception till the age of sixteen. Upon their regeneration in the new form with new meaning, they continue to undergo further metamorphosis in the six main *cakras* (*uṣṇīṣa*, *heart*, *lalāṭa*, and *guhya*) brought by the intervention of different sets of vowels.³⁴ The vowels are the six types of wisdom (*prajñā*), or the pure psychophysical aggregates, elements, and the like. “Spliced” on the top of the consonants, which carry the meaning of compassion in relation to the vowels, they take possession of the consonants. In the context of the *Kālacakratantra* practice, this process of altering the embodied text, carried out through the “splicing” of the completely different classes of sounds—namely, the consonants and vowels—is called “sealing,” or “printing” (*mudraṇa*) of the revised text of the body, speech, and mind. In this phase too, the redacted consonants, or the revised *yoga* and *yoginī tantras*, in the body are mutually linked by the mind (*citta*), or the pervading gnosis (*jñāna*), which is their presiding deity (*nāyaka*).

However, the embodied tantric discourse that is redacted in this way is still a provisional and conceptually constructed text, which is said to be a fabrication of the individual's own mind.³⁵ Although in this new form it continues to be a complete and coherent unit, it is still structured as a composition of the mutually connected but disparate parts. Consequently, a further redaction is needed for its complete alteration, the redaction that will amalgamate the mutually differing parts of the text in a novel way. A subsequent phase of revision entails the mutual assimilation of the different classes of consonants that have been earlier sealed by their respective vowels. In Buddhist tantric jargon, this is referred to as an “embracing of a different family” (*para-kula-līṅgana*). It is a preparatory phase for the actual merging of the body's *yoga* and *yoginī tantras* into each other, forming a unitary text, devoid of diverse parts. It is followed by a further redaction by means of which the embodied text becomes a partless and nondual text, in which all the letters of the *nāḍī-prāṇas* are unified into the single word “*evaṃ*.” The word *evaṃ* is said not to be a term, or a conceptual sign, because it is the union of wisdom and method. *E* is a syllable *a*, or emptiness, the space-element, in the locative case; and *vaṃ* is gnosis, sublime bliss, which arises from and abides in emptiness, or space. Thus, the multi-syllable text is reduced to a two-syllable text, which is neither a *yoga* or *yoginī tantra*.

In the final phase of revision, the embodied text is completely transformed with the incineration of the all of its letters by the fire of the same gnosis that previously linked them

together. Following the model of the six-phased composition, dissolution, and reconstruction of the text's two earlier forms—phenomenal and conceptual—the process of its incineration is also carried out in six consecutive phases. This new text, which is devoid of parts and signs (*nimitta*), is said to have a unique non-conceptual form, characterized by non-pronounceable consonants and vowels. It is reduced to the single syllable *a*, referred to as a supreme syllable (*paramākṣara*), a sublime emptiness (*mahā-śūnya*), the *dharmadhātu*, the *vajra*-womb, and the cause of the body, speech, and mind of all the Buddhas. As such, it is likened to formless, non-embodied (*arūpa*) space and is characterized as inexplicable (*anirdeśya*) and ungrounded (*apratiṣṭha*) in anything.³⁶ On account of being reduced to the single letter, it transcends the subject-object duality and is thereby self-cognizant in the sense that it is an indivisible union of the discourse, its subject matter, and the author. In contrast, the embodied, conceptual text, consisting of many letters, exists as an object of knowledge in relation to the reader as its subject. Furthermore, the embodied, conceptual text, which is composed of a complex set of systems, exists in dialectical relationship with other sets outside its boundaries; whereas, the non-embodied and non-conceptual text is seen as free from controversial relations due to being non-localized. Although the disembodied tantric text is not characterized by form, it is said not to be characterized by formlessness either, since it exists in the vowel *a*, which is its empty form.³⁷

The discussed revisional methods and their results suggest that a tantric text is always productive of what it denotes. Arising from the syllable *a*, the source of all expressions and gnosis in the body, a sublime *tantra* takes on various phenomenal forms. In order to elucidate the mundane and transcendent truths and paths, it takes on the form of a book, consisting of *mantra* symbols, characterized by articulation. It also assumes the form of the text embodied in a human figure, consisting of the *nāḍīs*, psychophysical aggregates, and the like. Due to sharing a common source (*yoni*), these two phenomenal forms of a sublime *tantra*—the book and the body—are fundamentally nondual. In this regard, they are not just mere metaphors of each other, but two different manifestations of the same reality. A reader of a *tantra* who knows this truth also knows that he is not a mere consumer of the text but also its producer. He knows that it is his mind alone that links all the letters together into a single text and gives it different meanings until it finally absorbs them into its own gnosis, from which they initially arose. By knowing himself to be all of these—the text itself, its author and revisionist, and its subject matter—one is said to become liberated from the mind's ideation and spiritual ignorance. One's impermanent body, subject to illness, aging, and disease becomes altered into the blissful body of gnosis.

Although all of the *anuttara-yoga-tantras* agree that a single-syllable text of the gnosis of sublime and imperishable bliss is fundamentally same in all sentient beings, they offer different transcriptions for it. For example, in the *Hevajratantra*,³⁸ it is transcribed as the

syllable *he*, standing for Hevajra, in the Kālacakra tradition as the syllable *kā*, or Kālacakra, and so on. Its different transcriptions are determined by differing forms in which it may appear and not by any other factors. Thus, in the context of the *anuttara-yoga-tantras*, just as the evolution of the physical body corresponds to the creation of a canonical *tantra*, so the closing of the physical body corresponds to the closing of the canonical tantric text. In the case of the *Kālacakratantra*, which is the latest Indian Buddhist *tantra*, the closing of the body intimates the closing of Indian tantric tradition. The implications of these notions are intriguing. One of the implications that is significant for the Indian Buddhist tantric tradition is that a canonical tantric text and the body, which are seen as ultimately nondual and functional as a vehicle to spiritual awakening, are like a raft that is discarded when its purpose is accomplished. In that respect, a canonical tantric text and the body can be understood as the Vajrayāna itself. Moreover, while being closed and cast aside in the case of the individual who has reached his final goal, a canonical *tantra* continues to be open and functional for those who have not yet reached spiritual awakening. Thus, being simultaneously closed for one person and open for another, a tantric text calls for diverse hermeneutical approaches.

¹*Samyuta Nikāya*, III.

²*Paṭisambhidamaggā Aṭṭhakathā* cited in the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, 1979-1989, Vol. 4, pp. 371-372.

³*Ugraparipṛcchāsūtra*, 2003, Ch. 7, pp. 319-320.

⁴*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka or The Lotus of the Good Law*, 1963, Ch.18, pp. 349-353.

⁵*Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 1983, Vol. 2, pp. 673-674.

⁶See the *Guhyasamājantra*, 1965, Ch. 18, v. 34, the *Mahāmāyātantram with Guṇavatīṭikā*, 1992, p. 2, *Amṛtakanikā* commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, 1994, p. 200, the *Yogaratnamālā*, 1959, p. 105:

tantram prabandham, tantram iti prabandhaḥ.

⁷The *Amṛtakanikā* commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, , 1994, p. 9, v. 13:

*tantram prabandham ākhyātaṃ saṃsāraṃ tantram iṣyatel
tantram guhyaṃ rahasyākhyātaṃ uttaraṃ tantram ucyatel*

⁸*Hevajrapañjikā-muktāvalī*, 2001, p. 9.

⁹*Guhyasamājantra*, 1978, Ch.18, p. 115, vs. 34-35:

*prabandham tantram ākhyātaṃ tat prabandham tridhā bhavet/
ādhāraḥ prakṛtiś caiva asaṃhāryaprabhedataḥ//
prakṛtiś cākṛter hetur asaṃhāryaphalaṃ tathā/
ādhāras tadupāyaś ca tribhis tantrārthasaṃgrahaḥ//*

¹⁰*tantram iti prabandham/ trividham tantram—hetutantram phalatantram upāyatantram ca/
tatra prakṛtiprabhāsvaram anādinidhanaṃ cittam bodhicittam/ sa hetus tadbījam/ kasya bījam/
bodheḥ/*

¹¹The *Amṛtakanikā*, 1994, pp. 9, 21.

¹²The *Amṛtakanikā*, 1994, p. 200, the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakrantra*, Ch. 4, v. 7, Ch.1, v. 1. Cf. the *Hevajrapañjikā-muktāvalī*, 2001, p. 29: “It is a *mantra* due to protecting the world from cogitating on reality.” (*tattvārthamananāj jagat trāṇāc ca mantrah.*)

¹³The *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, vs. 28-29, cited in the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakrantra*, 1986, Ch. 1, v. 3. Cf. the *Hevajrapañjikā-muktāvalī*, 2001, p. 24: A *mantra* itself is reality (*tattva*), the letter *a*, and so on. Gnosis itself is reality, free from mental elaborations (*niṣprapañca*) and unexcelled (*anuttara*) gnosis of bliss (*sukha-jñāna*).

¹⁴The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakrantra*, Ch. 4.

¹⁴*Sekoddeśa: A Critical Edition of the Tibetan Translations With an Appendix by zRaneiro Gnoli on the Sanskrit Text*, 1994, 131, vs. 6-7. For the commentary on these verses see Raniero Gnoli, "La Sekoddeśaṭippanī di Sādhuputra Śrīdharānanda: Il Testo Sanscrito," in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, Vol. 70, fasc. 1-2 (1996), 1997, p. 119, and Francesco Sferra, *The Sekoddeśaṭīkā* by Nāropā (*Paramārthasaṃgraha*), 2006, p. 69.

¹⁵According to the *Sekoddeśaṭippanī* of Sādhuputra, 1997, p. 119, and the *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* of Nāropā, 2006, p. 69, the six points (*ṣaṭkoṭi*) refers to the sixfold division of the *Kālacakratantra* discourse, which is classified into the *uddeśa* (the abridged *Kālacakratantra*) and *nirdeśa* (the root, extensive *Kālacakratantra*), each of which is of three kinds: *pratyuddeśa*, *mahoddeśa*, and *pratinirdeśa*.

¹⁶The *yogas* of the body, speech, mind, and gnosis, which eliminate the four states of the ordinary mind—the waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and the fourth state—and which are of the nature of the four bodies of the Buddha on account of being free of the afflictive and cognitive obscurations (*āvaraṇa*).

¹⁷The two truths refer to conventional (*samvṛti*) and ultimate (*paramārtha*) truths.

¹⁸*evaṃ ṣaṭkoṭibhiḥ śuddhaṃ vajrayogaiś caturvidhaiḥ
catuḥsambodhibhiḥ ksandhadhātvaṅyatanaṣaṭkulaiḥ.
paṭalaiḥ pañcabhiḥ śuddhaṃ lokadhātvaṅdikair mataiḥ
satyābhyāṃ ādubuddhaṃ syāt kālacakrābhīdhānakam.*

¹⁹Raniero Gnoli, "Le Sekoddeśaṭippanī di Sādhuputra Śrīdharānanda," in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, Vol. 70, fasc. 1-2 (1996), 1997, p. 6.

²⁰The *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* by Nāropā, 2006, p. 73.

²¹The *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* by Nāropā, 2006, p. 74.

²²The *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*, 1941, p. 3.

²³The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1976, Ch. 2, vs. 56-57.

²⁴According to the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, these two texts are traditionally considered to consist of 60,000 lines and 12,000 lines, respectively.

²⁵The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, Ch. 2, v. 53.

²⁶The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1976, Ch. 2, v. 55.

²⁷The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1976, Ch. 2, v. 52.

²⁸The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1976, Ch. 2, vs. 56-57.

²⁹According to the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1976, Ch. 1.v. 1, the six classes of consonants with their individual fivefold divisions are:

*ka kha ga gha ṅga
ca cha ja jha ṅa
ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ṅa
pa pha ba bha ma*

ta tha da dha na

sa ḥpa ṣa ḥka

The vowels are listed as these: *a ā i ī u ū ṛ ṛ̣ ḷ Ḹ aṃ aḥ e ai ar ār o au al āl ha hā ya yā ra rā va vā la lā.*

³⁰The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1994, Ch. 5, vs. 7-8.

³¹The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1994, Ch. 5, v. 9: *kha-vajrādikaṃ tantram ucyata eka-vyañjānātmakaṃ śaṅtriṃśan-mātrā-bhinnam iti.*

³²The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1994, Ch. 5, v. 10.

³³The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1994, Ch. 5, v. 9.

³⁴The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1994, Ch. 5, v. 10:

A, i, u, ṛ, ḷ, aṃ--or Akṣobhya, Amoghasiddhi, Amitābha, Vairocana, Ratneśa, and Vajrasattva--for the transformation of the body.

ḷ, u, ṛ, i, a, for the speech, or prāṇa

oṃ, āḥ, hūṃ for the mind (citta)

a for gnosis (jñāna).

³⁵The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1976, Ch. 1, v. 1.

³⁶*The Sekoddeśaṭīkā of Naḍapāda*, 1941, pp. 57-58.

³⁷The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, 1976, Ch. 1, v. 1.

³⁸See the *Hevajatantra*, 2001, Ch. 1, v. 7, and the *Hevajrapañjikā-muktāvalī*, 2001, p. 9.

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