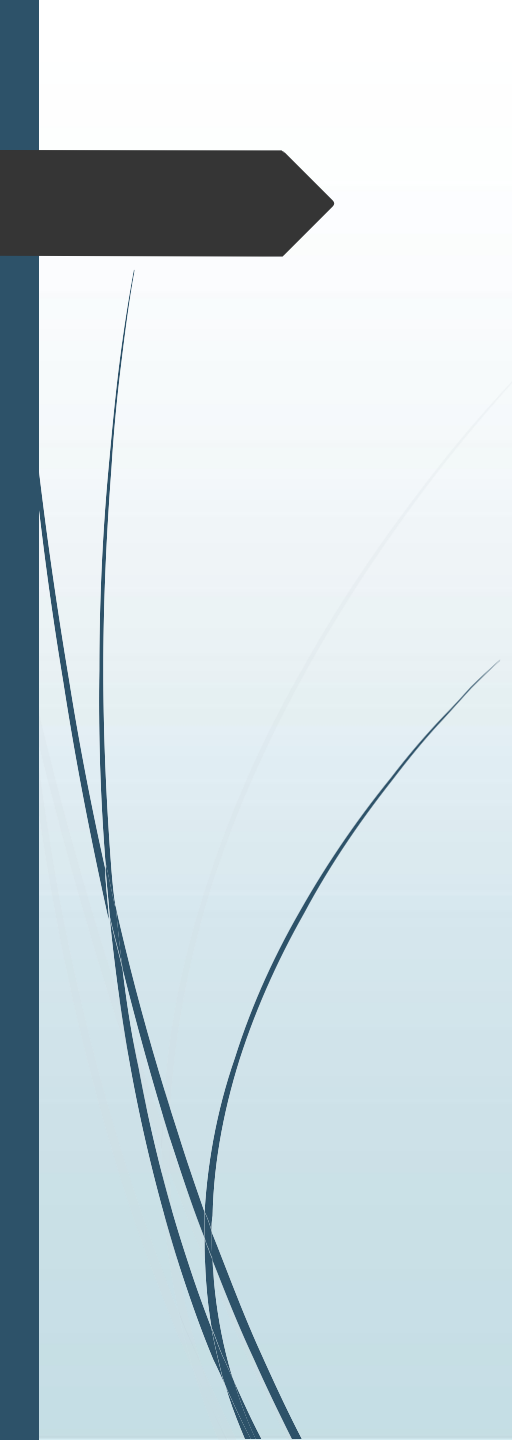




Divination in Theurgy and Tantra

Dr Dawn H. Collins

Cosmology, Magic and Divination 2025



Student Activity

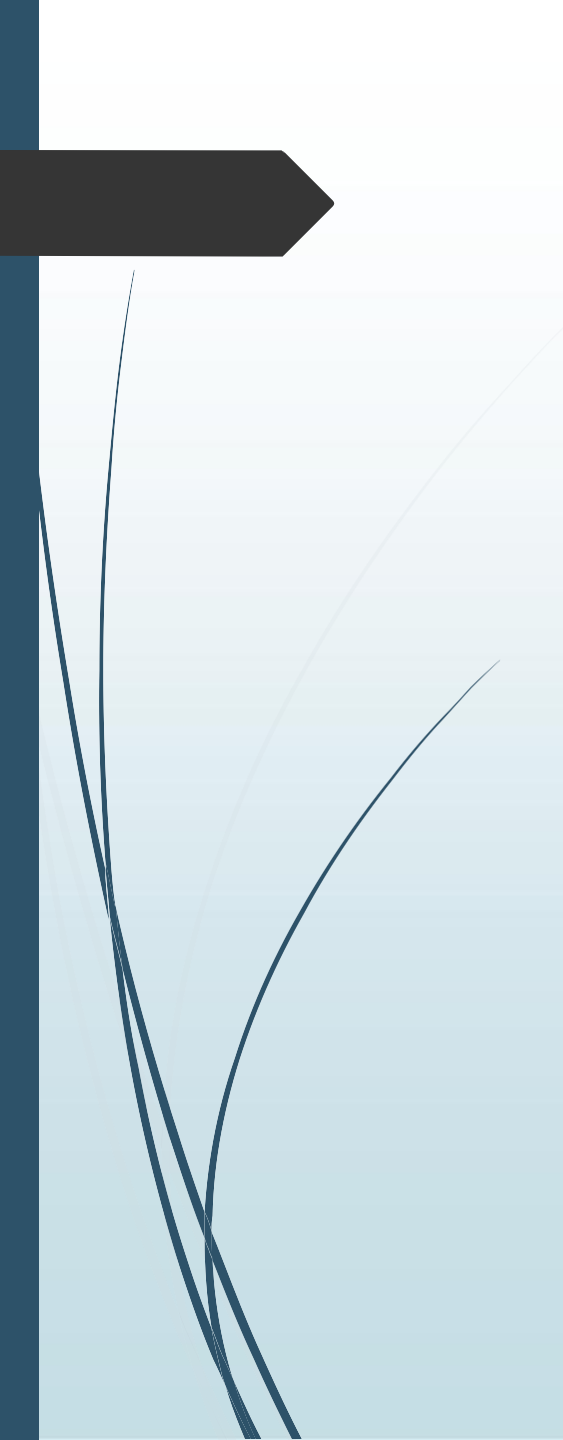
A Brief Introduction to Theurgy

- Listen to the lecture by Dr Crystal Addey, 'Theurgy, Magic and Philosophy', which can be found via the link on moodle.
- Give a short presentation of around 10 minutes, identifying seven key aspects of theurgy and outlining them for the class.



Questions to be considered...

- What cosmological ideas and conceptions underlie and provide a framework for forms of divination used by practitioners of theurgy?
- What cosmological ideas and conceptions underlie and provide a framework for forms of divination used by practitioners of tantra in Tibetan traditions?
- Is the use of divination in conflict with belief in fate or destiny in Neo-platonic traditions?
- Is the use of divination in conflict with belief in karma in Tibetan traditions?
- Can we consider divinatory practices relating to theurgy and tantra as forms of magic?
- What parallels, similarities and differences can you identify between forms of divination undertaken in ancient Greece and those practiced in Tibetan tantric contexts?



Topics to be considered...

- The emergence of theurgy in Late Neoplatonism: What was theurgy? Can it be classified as a type of magic? Was it spiritual purification and, if so, how did it work?
- Theurgy as spiritual purification and ritual practice
- The Cosmology, worldview and Metaphysics of theurgy: the animated cosmos, cosmic sympathy (*sympatheia*) and divine love (*theia philia*), will and providence, grades of being and reality
- The role of divination within theurgy
- The emergence of tantra in Mahayana Buddhism: What is tantra? Can it be classified as a type of magic? Is it spiritual purification and, if so, how does it work?
- Tantra as spiritual purification and ritual practice
- The Cosmology, worldview and metaphysics of tantra: mount meru, the wheel of *karma*, spirited agencies, the tantric mandala and deity yoga
- The role of divination within tantra



The emergence of theurgy in Late
Neoplatonism: What was theurgy? Can
it be classified as a type of magic?
Was it spiritual purification and, if so,
how did it work?

Neoplatonism

- Neoplatonism was a philosophical school or movement within Late Antiquity.
- Neoplatonists were pagan philosophers, beginning with Plotinus, who developed Plato's philosophy between the 3rd and 6th centuries AD.
- 'Neoplatonism ' and 'Neoplatonist' are modern terms.
- Impact of their work: their religious and moral ideals, **their conception of reality as spiritual activity or states of consciousness**
- They viewed **the human soul as a voyager whose ultimate aim was re-ascent to its divine origins:** divine assimilation or 'becoming like a god'. Most endorsed the idea of reincarnation (the transmigration of souls).

Important Neoplatonist Philosophers

► Iamblichus (c. AD 245 – c. 325)

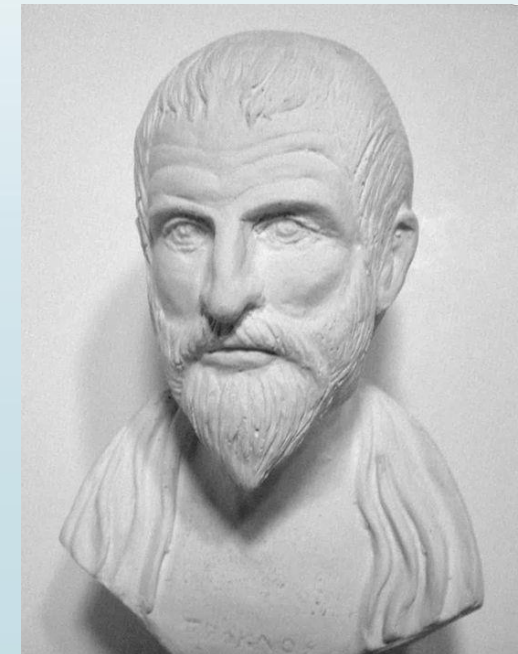
► Neoplatonist philosopher.

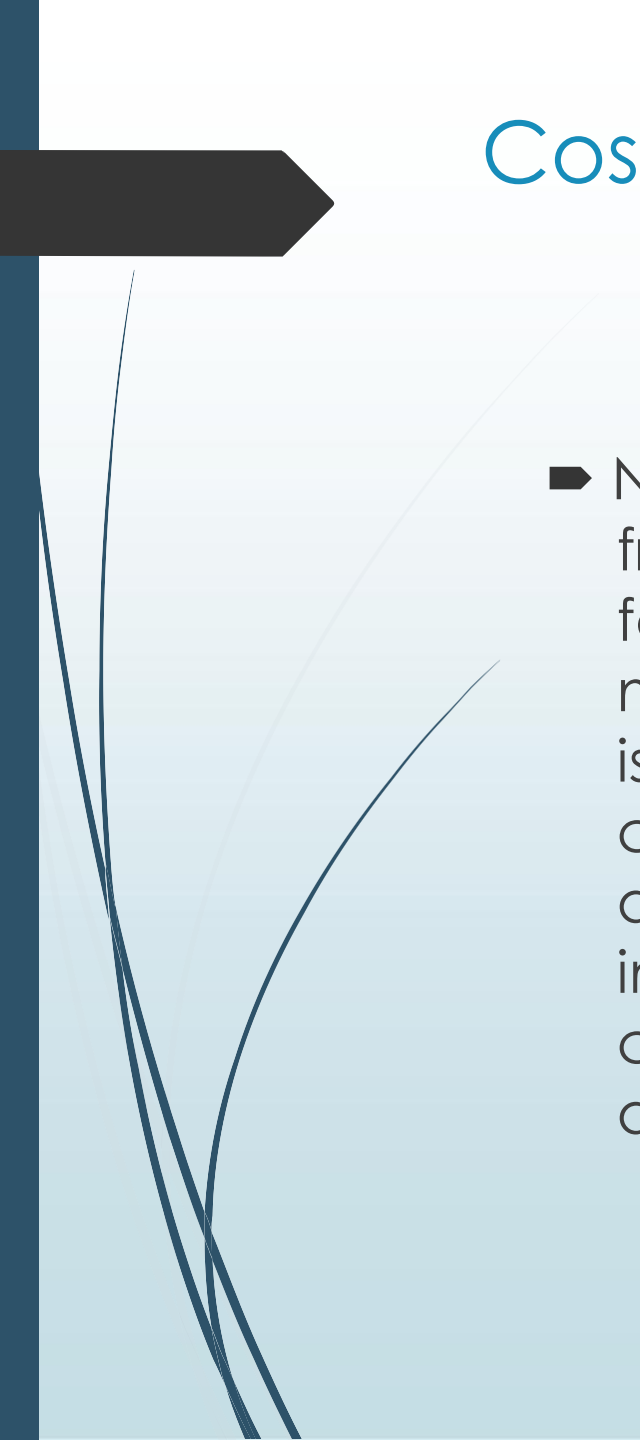
Possible student and colleague of Porphyry. Established his own Platonic school in Syria. The first Neoplatonist to use and advocate the use of theurgy.



► Proclus (AD 410/ 412 - 485)

► Neoplatonist philosopher. He became head of the Academy (the Platonic school) at Athens in AD 437. He made extensive use of theurgy and other types of polytheistic (i.e. 'pagan') religious rituals (traditional Graeco-Roman religion).



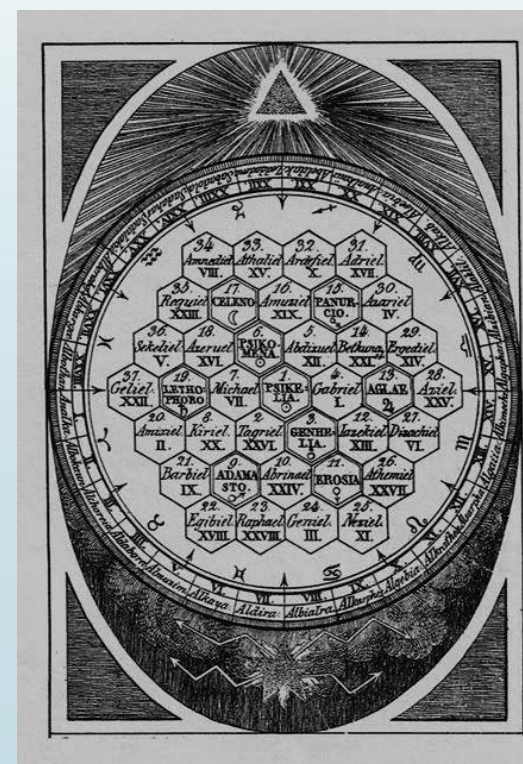


Cosmology for Neoplatonist Philosophers – the Universe as a living being

- Neoplatonist philosophers from Plotinus onwards followed Plato in maintaining that the cosmos is a single living being, complete with soul, reason and intelligence, an interconnected entity containing all other entities, and a harmonious whole.
- Interconnection between all parts of the cosmos
- **Macrocosm and microcosm:** the human being reflects, expresses or contains (on a smaller scale) the macrocosm - the universe
- Influence of Plato (especially the *Timaeus*)

What was Theurgy?

- **Theurgy** = literally “god work” - a lifelong endeavour incorporating a set of (polytheistic or ‘pagan’) ritual practices alongside the development of ethical and intellectual capacities ...
- Used by and written about by later Neoplatonist philosophers during the late antique period (Iamblichus, Proclus etc.)
- Main texts: Chaldean Oracles, Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries* and Proclus' *On the Sacred Art*



The Emergence of Theurgy

“During the first few centuries CE, there arose many mystic religious movements that combined elements of Platonic philosophy, practices drawn from traditional cult, and newer doctrines that adherents claimed were revealed to them directly by the gods. One of the earliest and most influential of these movements was theurgy, which particularly emphasized the importance of worshiping the gods through ritual...”

Sarah Iles Johnston (ed.), *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (Cambridge, MA 2004), p.649

- It covered a range of religious and philosophical practices, including the use of divination and oracles.
- It was based on a synthesis of ancient Greek, Egyptian and Syrian (or Chaldean) religious traditions

The Goals of Theurgy

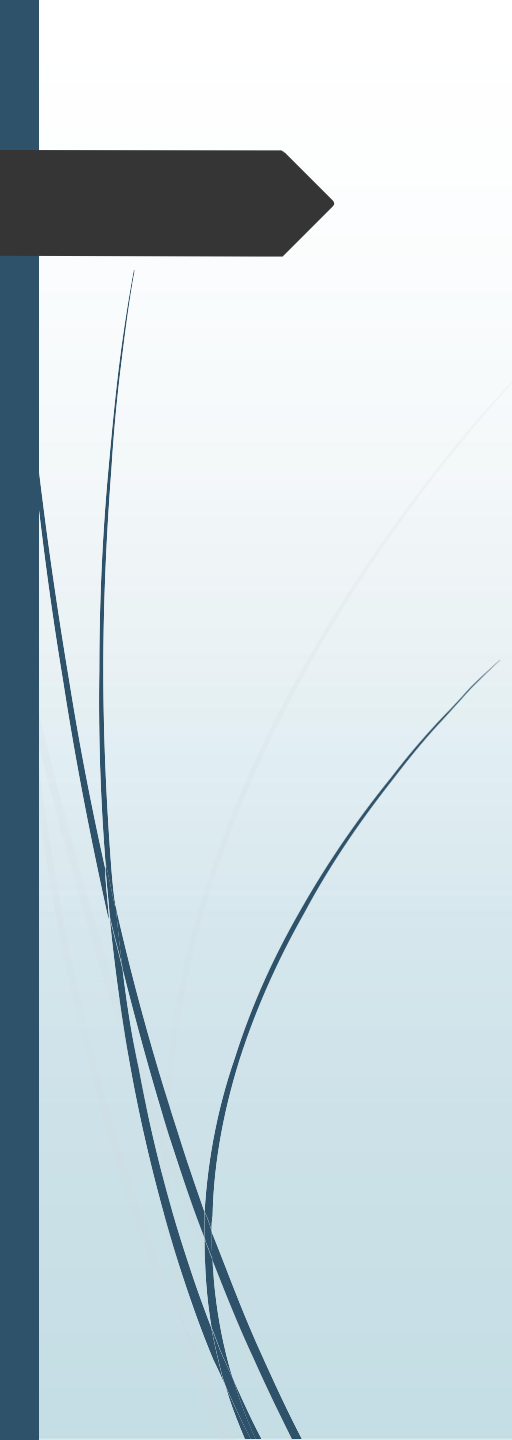
- Main purpose: **to use ritual practices to encourage the ascent of the soul to the divine** (a spiritual, mystical goal) **in cumulative stages:**
 - Contact with the gods
 - Assimilation to the gods ('becoming like a god')
 - Union with the divine
- Main purpose 2: the **manifestation (or expression) of the divine in human, embodied life** (concrete, practical goals)
 - *Philanthropia*: the theurgist's care or love of humanity
 - The theurgist as seer or diviner (Iamblichus, Sosipatra etc.)

A Summary of Theurgy

- Proclus, *Platonic Theology* 1.25.7-10 (ed. Saffrey and Westerink 113; trs. Dodds 1951, 291), states that theurgy is a: “power greater than all human wisdom and knowledge, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word all the operations of divine possession.”
- Theurgy as a lifelong endeavour of devotion and endurance: a way of life or a way of being
- It used and drew on traditional ritual practices: divination and oracles, sacrifice, prayer and invocations.



Theurgy as spiritual purification and ritual practice



How did theurgy work?

The 'locative' worldview

- 1/ There is a cosmic order that permeates every level of reality.
- 2/ This cosmic order is the divine society of the gods.
- 3/ The structure and dynamics of this society can be discerned in the movements and patterned juxtapositions of the heavenly bodies.
- 4/ Human society should be a microcosm of the divine society.
- 5/ The chief responsibility of priests (and theurgists) is to attune human order to the divine order.



The Cosmology, worldview and
Metaphysics of theurgy: the animated
cosmos, cosmic sympathy
(*sympatheia*) and divine love (*theia
philia*), will and providence, grades of
being and reality

Theurgic Symbols and Rituals

► Theurgic 'symbols'

- Animals, plants, gemstones, incense and any natural entity or object that was considered to be permeated by the divine.
- Written texts and characters, including oracles themselves
- These symbols were used within theurgic ritual: placed in statues of the gods, worn or spoken by the theurgist.
- Theurgic views of the 'connected cosmos': all things are connected to each other and the gods



“Observing this, and discovering in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them, the theurgic art in many cases links together stones, plants, animals and aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated receptacle.”

On the Mysteries 5.23

Symbols and Tokens

- The solar 'chain' (symbols connected with the sun god):
- The lion
- The cockerel
- The heliotrope (sunflower)
- The lotus
- The stone called 'Bel's eye'

(see Proclus, *On the Sacred Art according to the Greeks*)





The operation of theurgy and traditional religious ritual

“... priests [including theurgists] – **observing how all things are in all from the sympathy that visible things have for one another and for the invisible powers** – have also framed their priestly knowledge. For they were amazed to see the last in the first and the very first in the last; in heaven they saw earthly things acting causally and in a heavenly manner, in the earth heavenly things in an earthly manner... So by observing such things and connecting them to the appropriate heavenly beings, the ancient wise men brought divine powers into the region of mortals, **attracting them through likeness.**”

(Proclus, *On the Sacred Art* 3-7)



A Theurgic worldview

“Why do heliotropes move together with the sun, selenotropes with the moon, moving around to the extent of their ability with the luminaries [i.e. sun and moon] of the cosmos? All things pray according to their own order and sing hymns, either intellectually or rationally or naturally or sensibly, to heads of entire chains. And since the heliotrope is also moved toward that which it readily opens, if anyone hears it striking the air as it moves about, he perceives in the sound that it offers to the king the kind of hymn that a plant can sing.”

Proclus, *On the Sacred Art* 8-11

The Ecocentric nature of Theurgy



- Note the ecocentric nature of the theurgical view of the cosmos (cosmology)
- This worldview sees the cosmos
 - as an interconnected, holistic entity (ecocentrism)
 - All things are connected and everything in the universe communicates – internal self-communication of the universe
- This worldview extends further than the biocentric view (biocentrism), since even stones are connected to the gods and the divine



The role of divination within theurgy

Theurgic Lineage and Initiation (Esoteric?)

The result of his instruction in such matters was that he attained theurgic virtue in a higher and more perfect degree. Consequently he did not live according to only one of the modes that characterise divinity, that of pure thought and aspiration to the better, but he also displayed a more divine consideration [*pronoia*] of things in the second rank, not merely in the political way recorded earlier. For he made use of the conjunctions and supplications of the Chaldaeans, together with their divine and ineffable revolutions. These he acquired for himself, and from Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Plutarch, he learned the invocations and the rest of the apparatus. For she alone preserved the rituals, and the whole process of theurgy, handed on to her from the great Nestorius by her father.

(Marinus, *Proclus, Or on Happiness*, 28)

Divination and Theurgy: The Theurgic Seer and Adept

This, then, is one kind of mantic [i.e. divination], which is undefiled and sacerdotal, and truly divine; and 'this does not need,' as you say, 'either myself or anyone else to umpire, in order that I prefer it to any others', but it is itself entirely removed from all, supernatural and eternally pre-existent, neither admitting any comparison nor pre-eminence among many; it is free from all this, and takes precedence over all according to its uniform self. **And it is proper for you and everyone who is a genuine lover of the gods to surrender himself to it wholly.** For in such a fashion arises, at the same time, both infallible truth in oracles, and perfect virtue in souls. With both of these, ascent to the intelligible fire is granted to theurgists, a process which indeed must be proposed as the goal of all foreknowledge and of every theurgic operation.

(Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 3.31 [178.13-179.8])

Theurgic Lineage and Healing (Esoteric?)

And if one wished to make a long story, one could say a great deal in relating the theurgic practices of the happy man [i.e. Proclus]. But I shall recall just one of a myriad, for it is marvellous even to hear. Once Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Archiadas and Plutarque, and the wife of Theagenes our benefactor, while she was still a maid and being reared by her parents, was gripped by a severe illness which the doctors were unable to cure. Archiadas, whose hope of offspring rested entirely in her, was distraught and full of grief, as one would expect. **When the doctors gave up, he went as his custom was to the philosopher who was his final anchor [i.e. Proclus], or rather his benevolent saviour, and earnestly begged him to come quickly and make his own prayers on behalf of the daughter.** Taking with him the great Pericles from Lydia, a man who was himself no mean philosopher, **Proclus visited the shrine of Asclepius to pray to the god on behalf of the invalid. For at that time the city still enjoyed the use of this and retained intact the temple of the Saviour. And while he was praying in the ancient manner, a sudden change was seen in the maiden and a sudden recovery occurred, for the Saviour, being a god, healed her easily.** And when the sacred acts were done, he went to Asclepigeneia and found that she had just been released from the critical sufferings of her body and was in a healthy condition.

(Marinus, Proclus, or on Happiness 29)



The emergence of tantra in Mahayana Buddhism: What is tantra? Can it be classified as a type of magic? Is it spiritual purification and, if so, how does it work?

The Emergence of a New Tradition

- After the Buddha's death, disagreements arose between his followers – on aspects of monastic practice and doctrine.
- Around the early centuries CE, a new tradition began to emerge in distinction from the Theravāda.
- Some records suggest that disagreements between this and the older tradition, caused by a later group wanting to modify the monastic rules (vinaya), gave rise to this formation.
- Others suggest it arose regarding the status of an arhat or a pratyekabuddha (both of whom hear the Buddha talk – the former in community and the latter in solitude – as prelude to attaining nirvāṇa), compared to a 'Buddha' (who achieves nirvāṇa alone).
- The two groups emerging from these divergent strands within Buddhist communities are now broadly referred to as Theravāda and Mahāyāna

Mahāyāna Buddhism

- Whatever the case regarding formation, we do know that in the early centuries CE, this new tradition, the Mahāyāna ('Greater Vehicle') Buddhist tradition, began to distinguish itself from early Buddhism by a number of key factors – philosophical and ideological.
- The highest ideal in this tradition is the dedication of the individual's life to the wellbeing of the world. There is, therefore, a huge emphasis on 'compassion' in this tradition.
- In the Mahāyāna, a bodhisattva is someone who has achieved enlightenment, pledging to be reborn constantly in order to help others become enlightened.
- New Mahāyāna sutras appeared and were viewed as visionary texts – emanating from the Buddha residing in a higher cosmos.
- The Buddha came to be seen as more of a 'supernatural' being.
- Buddhist teachers started to write commentaries and treatises on these and philosophic additions to Abhidharma literature to accompany core texts.



Emerging Mahāyāna - Focus

- In reality, the Mahāyāna was probably a movement which emerged gradually in many different places, based on philosophical differences and differences in focus.
- Its earliest known literature is the prajñāpāramitā (perfection of wisdom) sutric texts.
- This new movement had a slightly different focus – on compassion, and it called itself the Mahāyāna ('Greater Vehicle').
- The development of bodhicitta, a particularly Mahāyāna 'mind of enlightenment' is key to this focus on compassion.



Mahāyāna: The Path of the Bodhisattva

- The most important stage on the Mahāyāna path is the arising of bodhicitta (buddha-mind, or 'thought of enlightenment'): the desire to attain buddhahood in order to relieve all sentient beings from suffering.
- As well as 'taking refuge', the Mahāyāna Buddhist takes a vow to help all beings attain enlightenment.

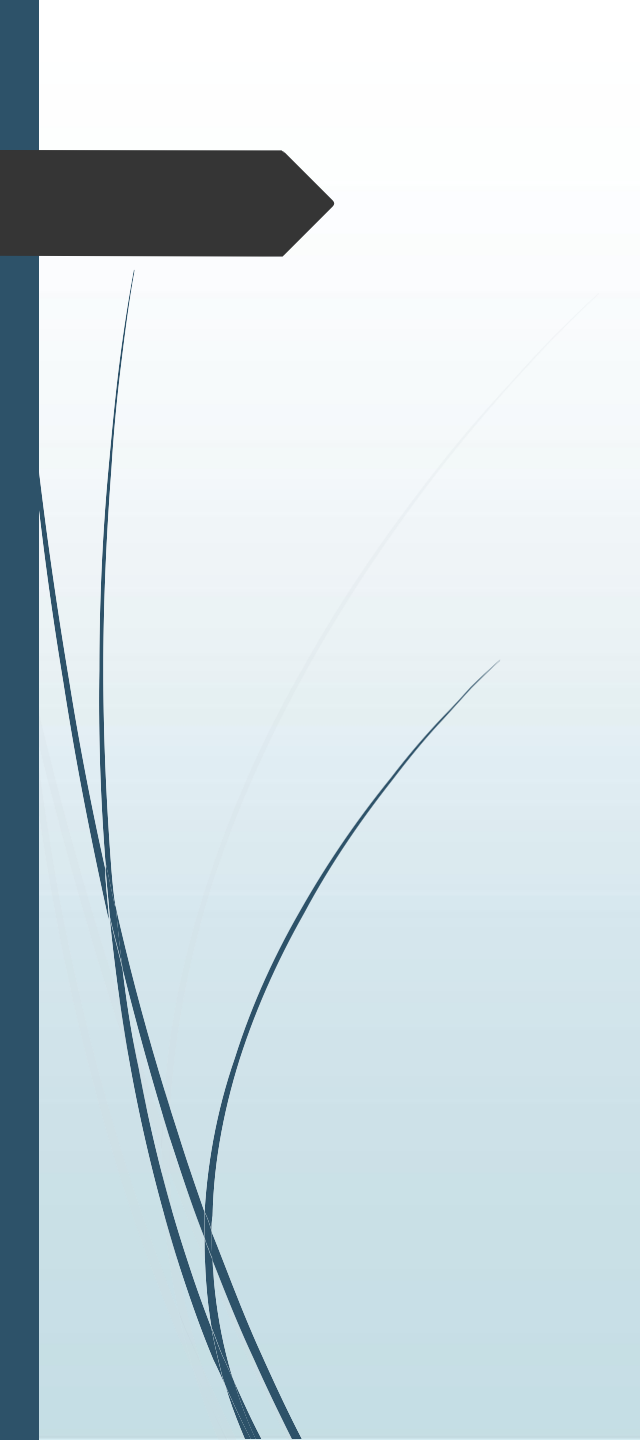
The Six Perfections

- The 'Six Perfections' are central to Mahāyāna practice:
 - i) Generosity
 - ii) Morality
 - iii) Patience
 - iv) Courage
 - v) Meditation
 - vi) Wisdom
- Practising these takes one further along the *bhumi* – ten stages on the way to *nirvāṇa*.
- Advanced bodhisattva such as Avalokiteśvara & Mañjuśrī are viewed as in the final stages to become enlightened buddhas.



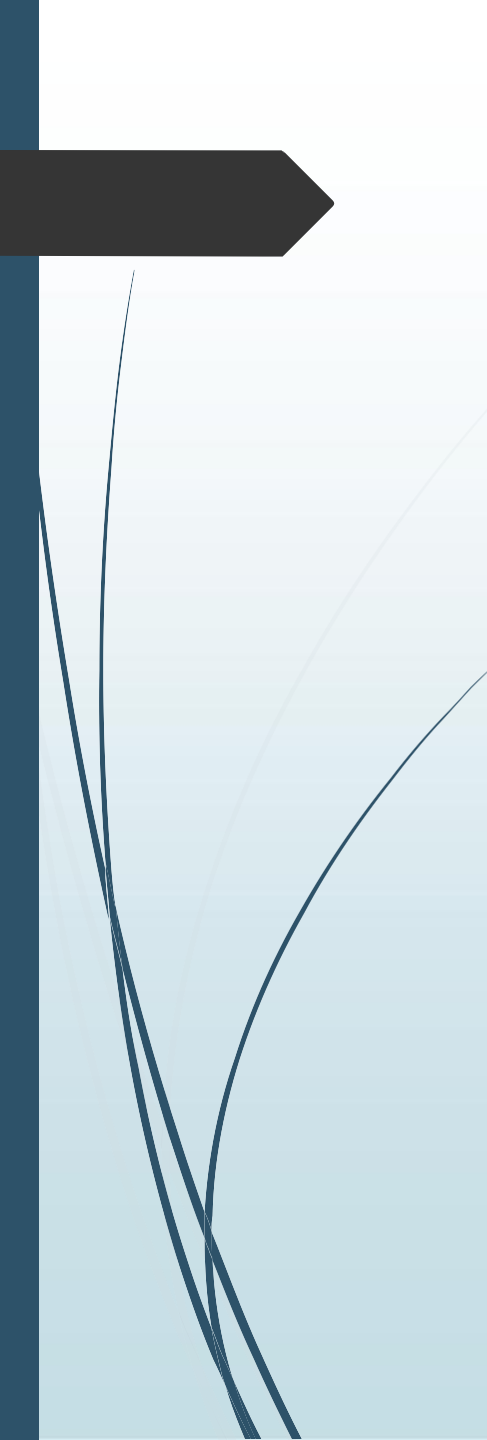
Tibetan Buddhism: Vajrayāna

- Over time, Buddhism spread as far as Afghanistan and Iran in the West, and to Japan, Taiwan and Korea in the East.
- Additionally, as Buddhism spread, it encountered different traditions and new ideas.
- It survived by adapting to and absorbing aspects of local traditions.
- Buddhism entered Tibet – in its Tantric form – in the 7th Century – key characteristic of tantric meditation and practice being deity yoga.



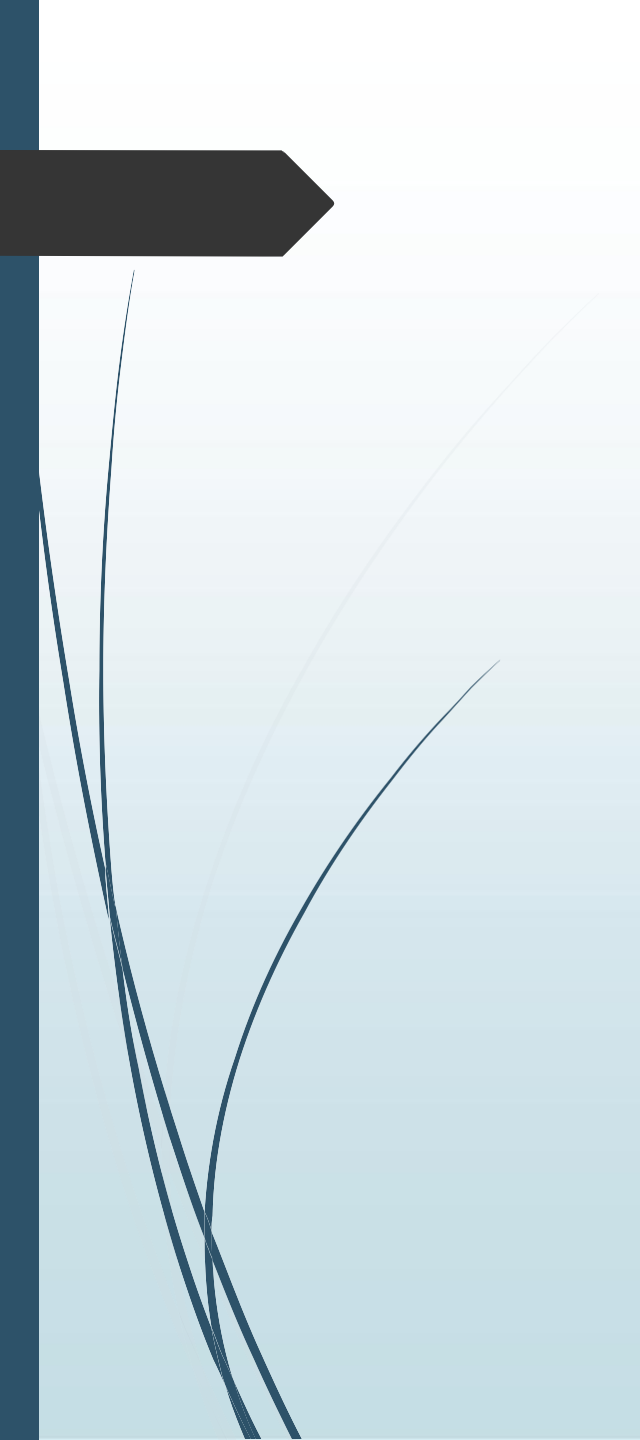
Tantric Practices

- Vajrayāna teachings (Tantric teachings) are viewed as 'advanced' teachings – difficult, dangerous and effective.
- They should only be undertaken by advanced practitioners.
- Tantric practices and teachings are passed down through teaching lineages, and there is a lot of variation between the different cycles of texts and oral transmissions.
- Lamas conduct lengthy retreats during which they practice under the supervision of a skilled teacher.
- Initiation is given by a guru (T. lama, teacher), which empowers the practitioner to evoke a particular deity.

- 
- Tantric rituals are frequently complex and elaborate.
 - There is a heavy emphasis on esoteric practices, symbols, mantras, diagrams and visualisation.
 - Tantric practices centre on the ritual evocation and worship of (usually enlightened) deities through the invocation of the Tantric deities *within oneself*.
 - Successful evocation of a deity is thought to give the practitioner much spiritual power.
 - Tantric teachings can be understood at different levels: some viewed them as literal, others as allegorical.
 - In Buddhist art, the male figure represents skilful means, and the female figure represents wisdom: their union the bliss of *nirvāṇa* – awakening.

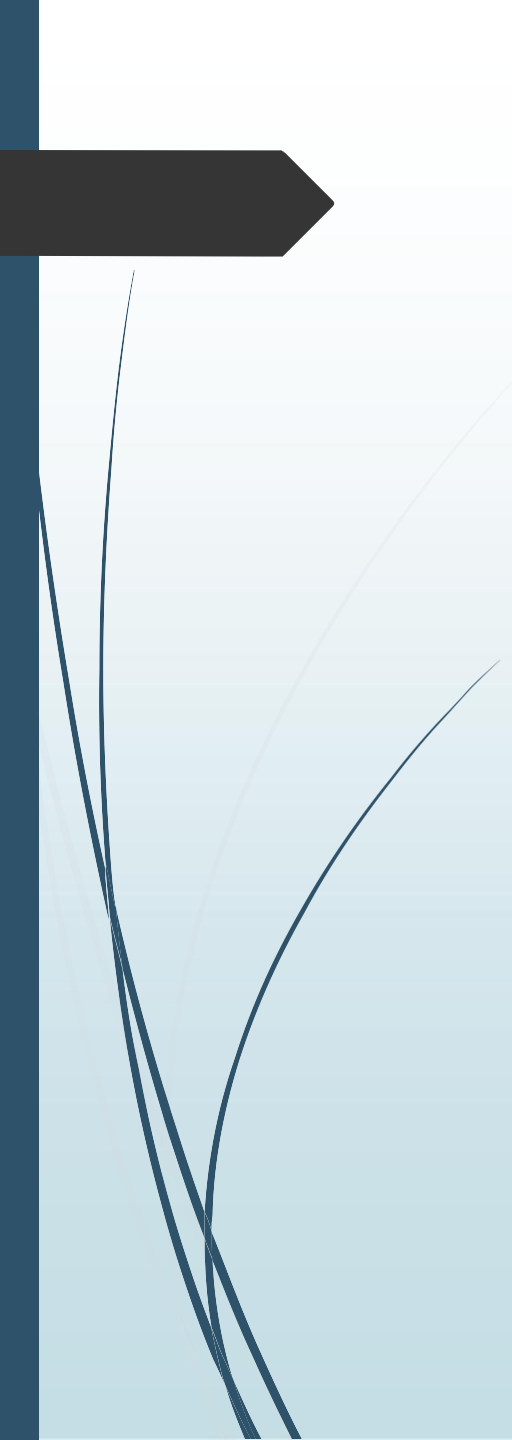


Tantra as spiritual purification and ritual practice



Buddhahood is not just a question of ‘knowledge’ in an intellectual or cognitive sense. It is thought of as grounded in a total transformation of the mind-body of the practitioner. One has to be a Buddha in order to see and understand the world as a Buddha does, and that involves achieving a radical transformation of the emotional and physical basis of one’s existence.

(Samuel 2012, p. 27)



Tantric transformations: non-duality

- The Buddha, by attaining freedom from suffering (*nirvāṇa*), but choosing not to abandon those in *saṃsāra*, went beyond the duality of *nirvāṇa* vs. *saṃsāra*.
- If *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are essentially not different, then anything – even desire – can be used as a means to liberation, and passions are viewed as no more than powerful energies which can be harnessed.
- Tantric practices aim to transcend the illusion of separation between the individual and the universe.
- There is no duality between subject and object; they are relative and perception is a dance between them.
- Practitioners aim to transcend duality – to attain full realisation of the true nature of things and events.

Four Classes of Tantra

- **Action Tantra:** these focus on external activities during which symbolic actions are conducted
- **Performance Tantra:** these emphasise external activities and internal (yoga) activities equally, e.g. generating an image of oneself as an enlightened being as well as generating an image of the deity in front of oneself as a 'template', practitioner and deity are 'companions'
- **Yoga Tantra:** these emphasise internal yoga techniques, the practitioner visualises himself as the actual deity. The practitioner 'develops a profound awareness of one's body as being composed of subtle energies called winds. One then generates oneself as a fully enlightened buddha composed entirely of ... subtle energies and possessing a buddha's wisdom consciousness' (Powers 1995, p. 244)
- **Highest Yoga Tantra:** this encompass 2 stages: generation and completion. The aim is that the practitioner's mind and body are completely transformed into the mind and body of a buddha

Mind-body transformation

- The cultivation of *bodhicitta* is associated with the manipulation of the energetic currents of the body (T. *rlung*; Skt. *prana*).
- These energy currents are part of the 'subtle body' – an internal physiological system of energy centres (*cakra*), channels, winds/currents and 'drops' (which correspond to male/female substances: compassion / wisdom).
- Consciousness is said to 'ride' on these winds as a person rides a horse.
- Tantric practices include the control and redirection of these winds and the consciousness which rides upon them, in the cultivation of *bodhicitta*.

Cakra

<http://wallpapercave.com/wp/PhWlcO8.jpg>

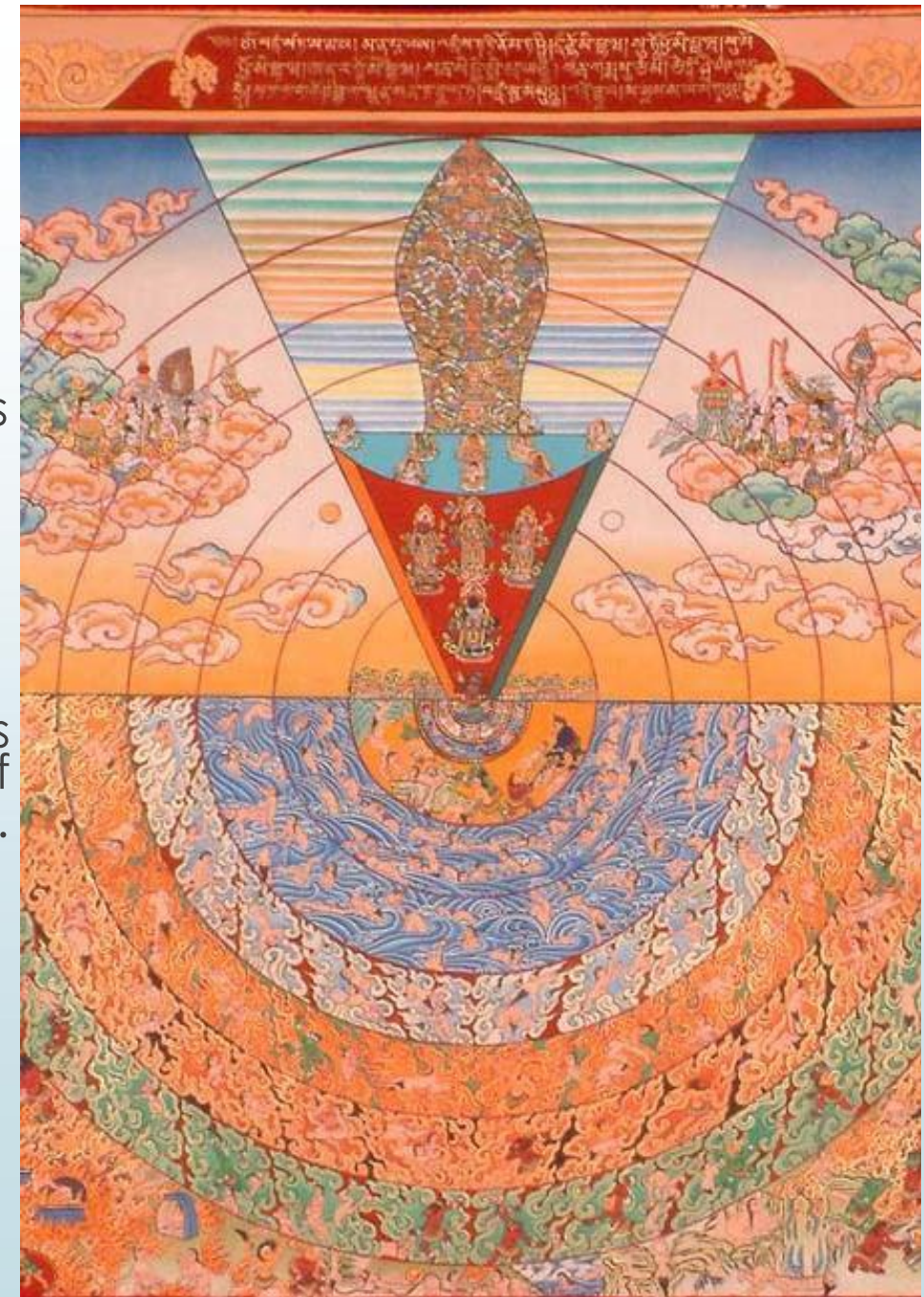




The Cosmology, worldview and
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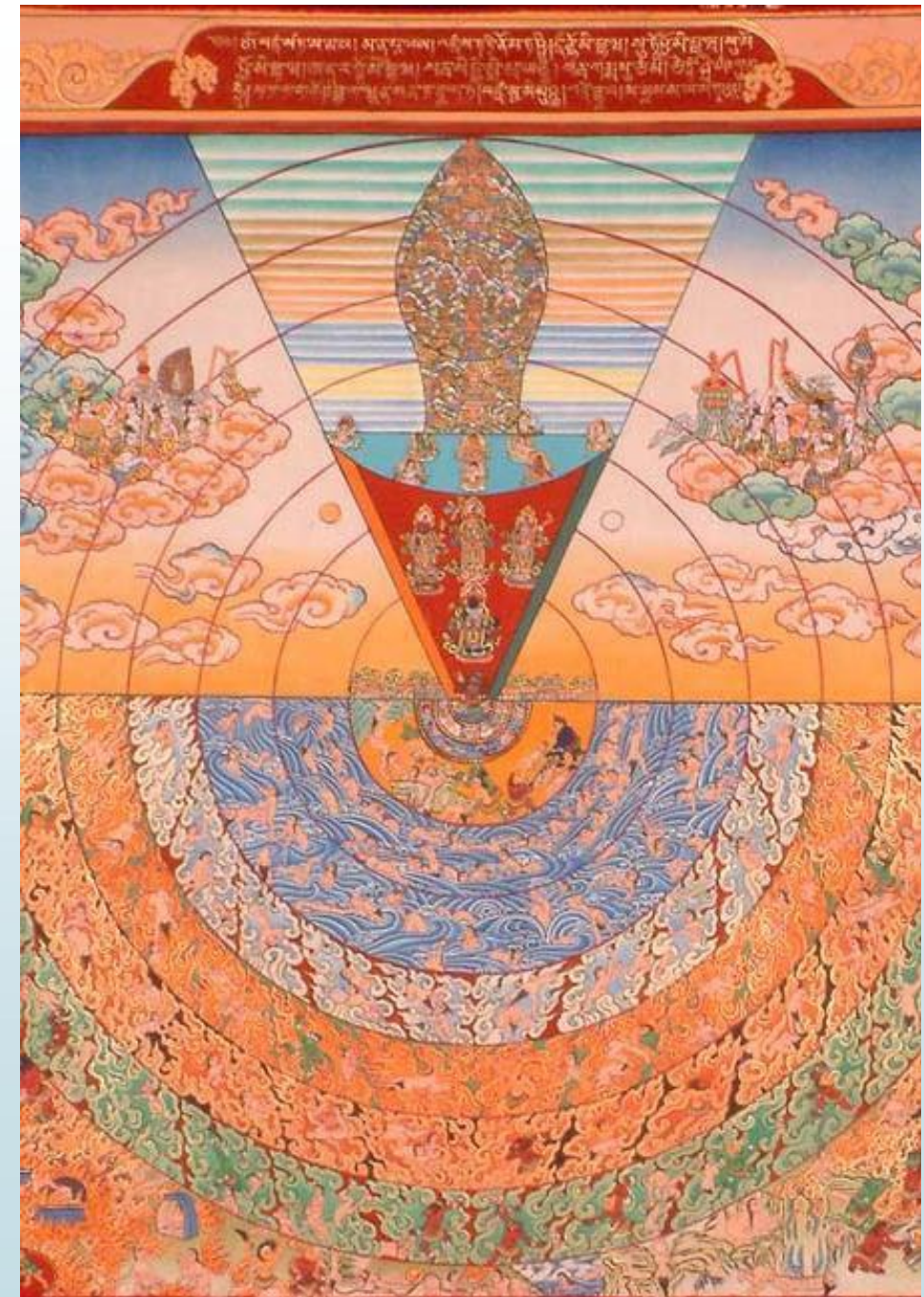
Indo-Tibetan Cosmology - Deity Loka

- The whole mandala-like structure of Mount Sumeru constitutes a *cakkavala*, or world system.
- Mount Meru, 84,000 *yojana* high (a *yojana* is c. 3-17.5 miles)
- Halfway up Mt Meru is the Heaven of the Four Great Kings and at its peak Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods presided over by Sakka, their king and the overlord of the terrestrial realm.
 - Surrounding Mt Meru are 7 circular ranges of mountains, each one half the height of the preceding one, separated by circular seas.
 - The whole area is surrounded by the world's ocean and by a steep range of iron cliffs, forming the wall of the world.
 - In the outermost ocean are the four great continents, too far apart for human navigation – we inhabit the southern continent of Jambudipa, the Rose-Apple Land.



Naga नाग – Guardians of the Heavens

- *Nāga* inhabit *nāgaloka* and also various parts of the human-inhabited earth - some are water-dwellers, living in streams or the ocean; others are earth-dwellers, living in caverns.
- They can be conceived of as followers of Virūpākṣa (Pāli: Virūpakkha), one of the Four Heavenly Kings who guard the western direction in the Mount Meru scheme of the cosmos.
- As guardians of Mount Meru, they protect the gods of the 33 heavens (Trāyastriṃśa) from attack by the jealous gods, the *asura*.



Cosmologies and Deity Presences

- Nagārjuna, dated around the 2nd Century CE, is attributed as founder of Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophy.
- As can be seen from the image, he taught *nāga* alongside human students and this is normal within context of Indo-Tibetan understandings of identity and existence.





Tibetan Deity Yoga: Ritual Process

- Preparatory phase – preparing grounds and evocation of the Lineage for inspiration and blessing (refuge)
- Elimination of obscuration/defilements to view (purification)
- Setting the motivation - bodhicitta (well-being)
- Front and Self Generation (Imagination)
- Dissolution, Offerings to protectors, Ablution,
- Dedication (well-being)



Tibetan Deity Yoga: Core Aspects and Process

- Initiatory lineage – coded texts (tantra)
- Purification
- Imagination – Visualisation
- Macro/micro correspondence
- Mandala cosmos
- Union with the divine



<http://www.artzotec.com/avalokiteshvaramandala.html>



Example of Tantric Practice 1: Long Life Ritual

Lama Zopa Rinpoche Long Life Puja in Bodhgaya, India January 2012

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's
Long Life Puja in
Bodhgaya, India 2
January 2012 Offered
by all the monks of Sera
Je Monastery, Kopan
Monastery and FPMT
Filmed and directed by:
Matteo Passigato



others, your disciples: please, please live long

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLbfQjE4rRU>

(16 mins)

Example of Tantric Practice 2: Chöd Ritual

Troma Nagmo Chöd at Bodha Gaya, February 2011

Chöd is traditionally a lay practice. Garab Dorje Rinpoche hosted the 4th Troma Nagmo Tsök Festival at the Maha Bodhi Temple in Bodha Gaya, India. This practice originates from Dudjom Lingpa, with the beautiful melodies contributed by his daughters as transmissions from Yeshe Tsögyal.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_Vd4hpgFmk
(7mins)



The role of divination within tantra

Divination and Tibetan Deity Yoga: The Tantric Seer and Adept

- Initiatory lineage – coded texts (tantra) outlining deity yoga
- Realisation - a process of becoming, embodying deity
- Adepts in Tantric practice develop deity-like capacities, such as other realms, clairvoyance, divination and healing – also power over the nāga and other local deities



The Nechung Oracle

- The Nechung Oracle is shown here in trance during the long-life offering to the Dalai Lama at Tsuglakhang Temple in McLeod Ganj, India, on 17 May 2019.
- The people and deities of Tibet offer the long-life prayer to the Dalai Lama.



The Nechung Temple, Lhasa

There are a number of oracular traditions within the Himalaya of which the Nechung is but one.

The word "oracle" is used by Tibetans to refer to a presence who possesses a medium in order to access the phenomenal natural world and the subtle spiritual realms.

The Nechung Oracle is a medium of Peihar Gyalpo. Peihar is a powerful Dharma protector. Dorje Drakden (Nechung)

The Nechung Oracle plays a principal role in State and those concerning the protection of the Dalai Lamas (from the time of the 5th)

Medium can be known as *kuten*, which literally means, "the physical basis". Post-possession, the medium may require a lengthy recovery period.

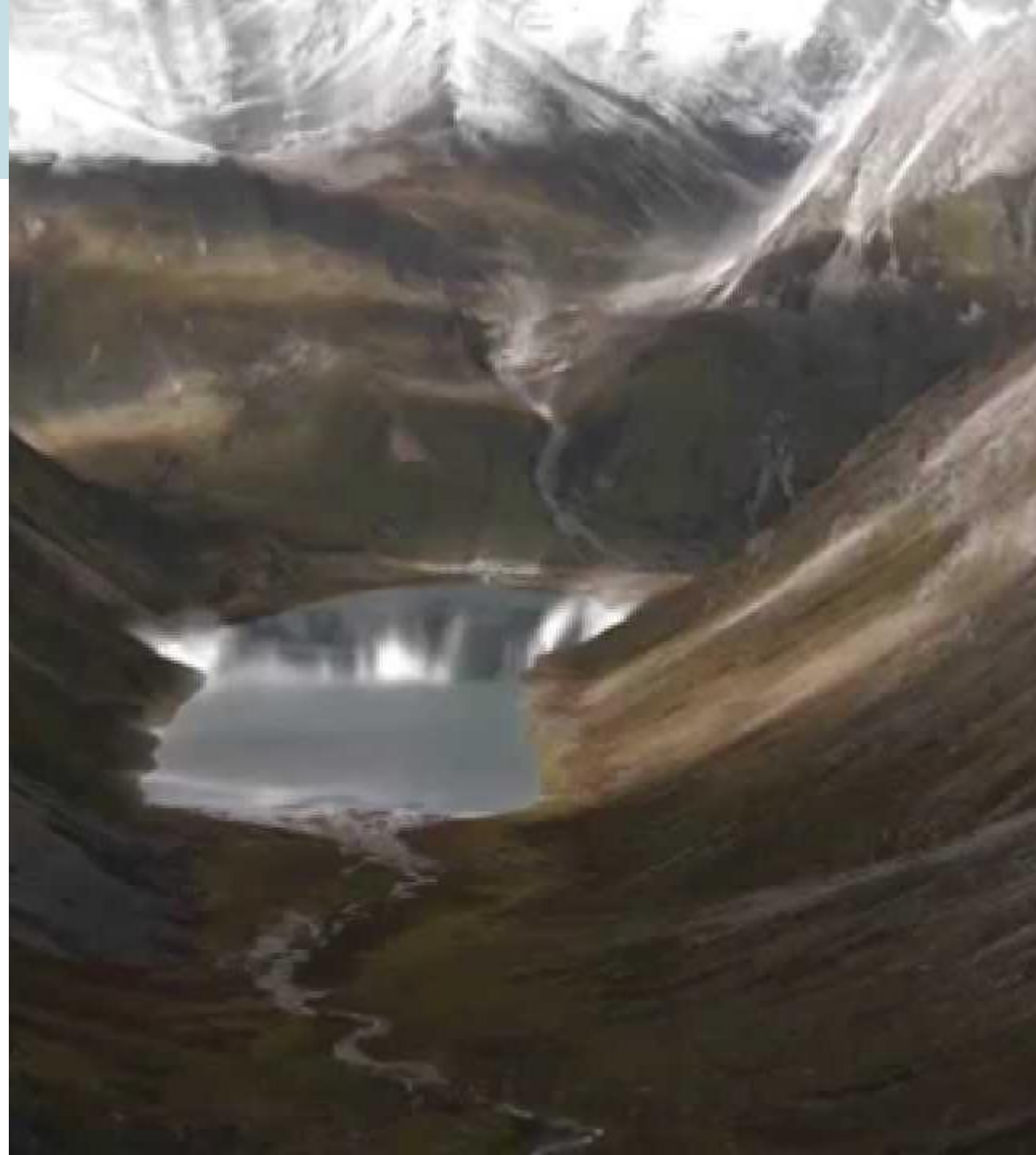


The Nechung Oracle Temple and Statue at Drepung Monastery, Lhasa, TAR, PRC

Lhamolhatso - the Lake of the Goddess

- Palden Lhamo's clairvoyance is manifested in her ability to predict the time and place of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, whom she protects.
- Lake Lhamolhatso, her lake, is visited by high officials and lamas after the death of each Dalai Lama, and she is consulted there
- Signs and visions appear on the surface of the lake. Examining this information, high lamas interpret clues about where and when the next Dalai Lama will be reincarnated. (for the search preceding recognition of the present Dalai Lama (Goldstein 1989, Kundun)
- Instead of Palden Lhamo herself, *dPal ldan dmag zor ma*, one of her emanations, may often be evoked (e.g. *Don kun grub pa*), though the nature of these two are identical.

(Murakami 2013)



Palden Lhamo



- Palden Lhamo is a protector goddess of the Dalai Lamas, and the supreme guardian deity of Tibet, particularly of its capital, Lhasa.
- This wrathful goddess is believed to have the clairvoyant power of seeing the future, and also, even the capability to “determine the karmic outcome of any situation” (Beer 2003: 158).
- Two or three dice are attached to her body as “magical weapons” (ibid.) with which to conduct divine deeds. If someone can successfully evoke the goddess in dice divination (Mo), it is believed possible to predict the future according to the numbers of the thrown dice, empowered as it is by Palden Lhamo’s blessings.
- Thus, religious specialists employ dice divination for various purposes, such as determining the cause of sickness for followers, prescribing treatment, and predicting the prospects for marriage.

Divination and the use of Amulets

- Lay tantric practitioners famed throughout Tibetan regions for their powerful healing powers gained through tantric practice. This nukwa of Rebgong is performing ritual over an amulet to help a woman conceive.

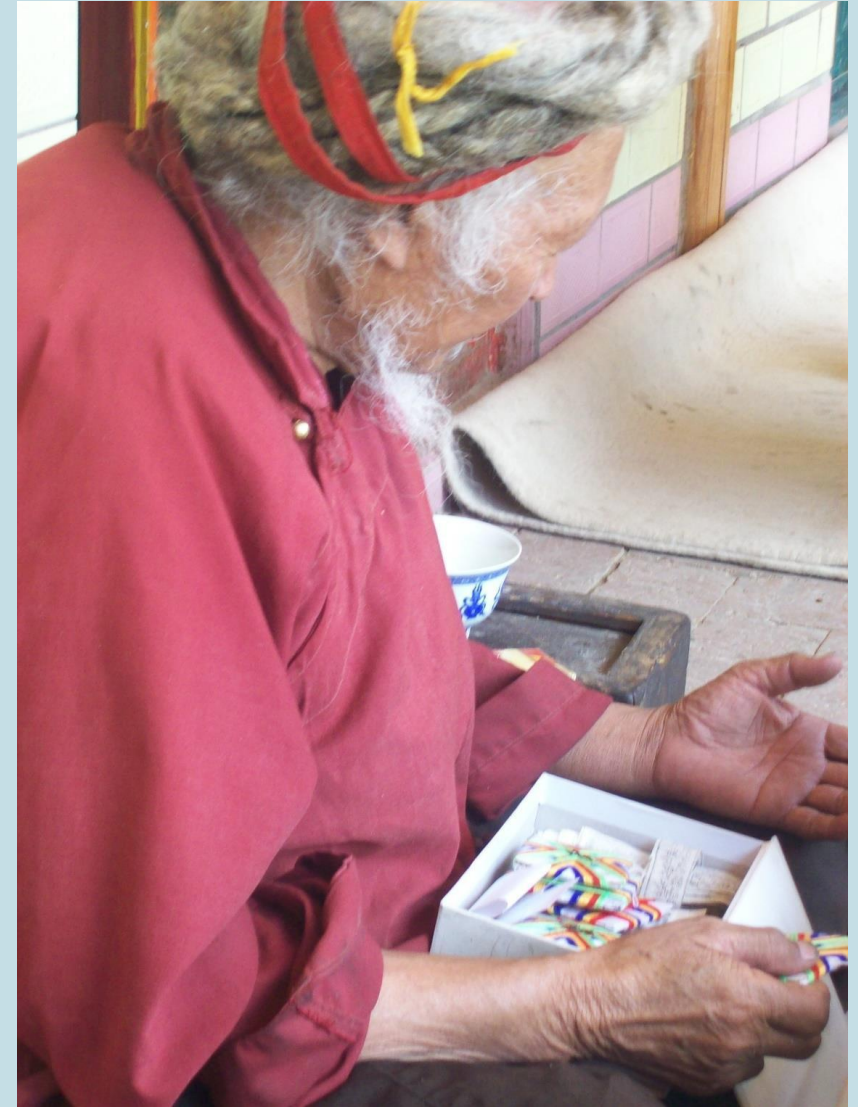


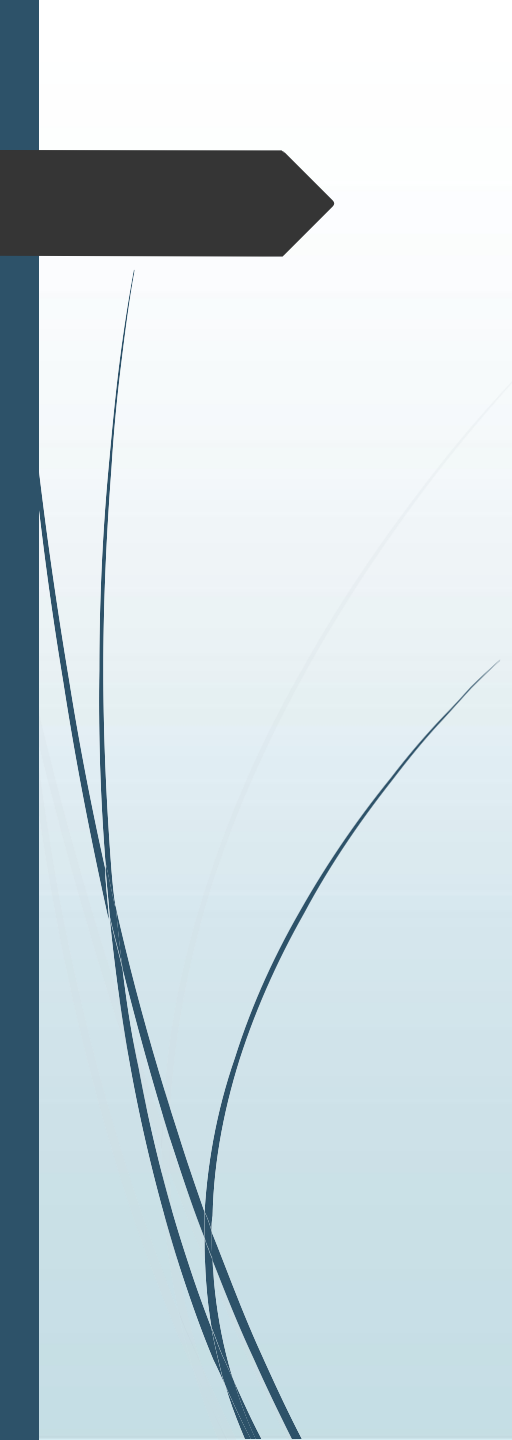
Photo - Dawn Collins, 2010

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a dark blue vertical bar on the far left. Overlapping this bar and extending into the main light blue area are several thin, dark blue curved lines. A solid dark blue arrow points to the right, positioned horizontally across the middle of the slide, partially overlapping the text.

Methodological Considerations for Comparative Study

Methodology and Comparison

- Smith, J.Z., *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1978): "... a comparative enterprise within closely adjacent historical, cultural or linguistic units which insists (in conscious distinction from the "parallelomania" which sometimes overwhelmed practitioners of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) that the comparison be between a total ensemble rather than between isolated motifs."
- The possibility of developing a rigorous argument, methods of comparison and the issue of the truth and interpretation of religious statement



Comparative Religion and Methodologies

- A total ensemble
- Mentalities/Worldview
- Cosmology/Divinatory Practices
- Landscape, place and the natural world: relationship, connection

Divination and Healing in Theurgy and Tantra

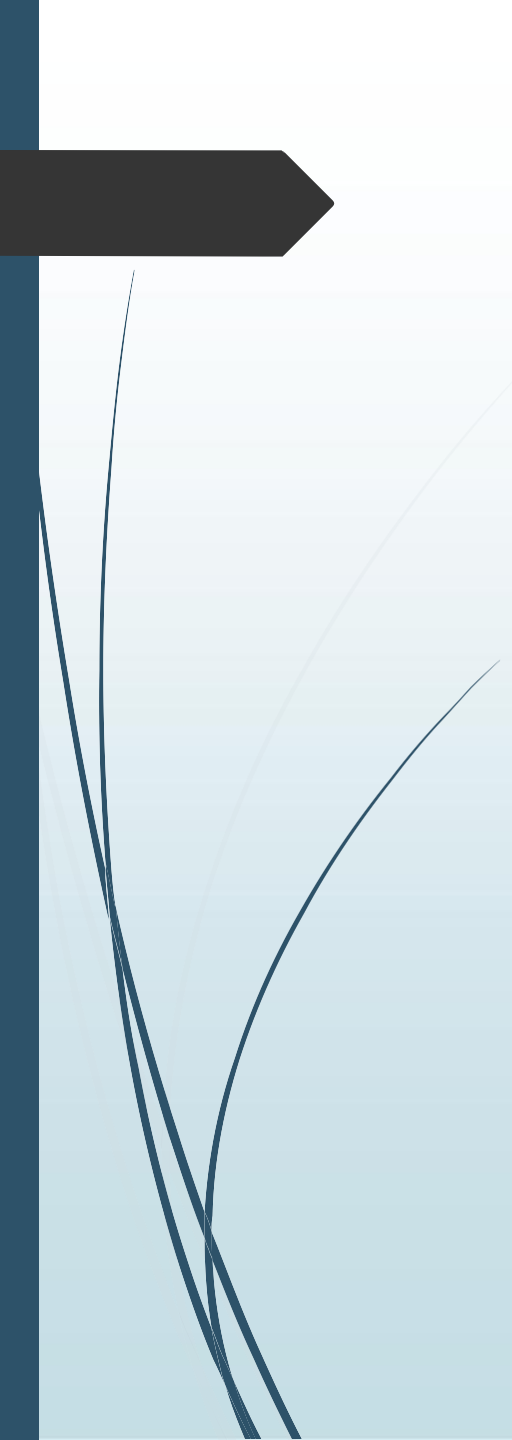
- Divination and Healing
- Framed by ritual practices facilitating receptivity to the divine
- Textual analysis (and images?) in Theurgy and Tantra
- Unbroken lineage and living traditions in Tibet
- Anthropological methodology: ethnographic fieldwork



Practicing Theurgy and Tantra in Nature

– Rituals for Apollo and Chenrezig in





Theurgy Further Reading: ancient sources (Primary sources)

- *Chaldean Oracles*. Text, translation and Commentary by Ruth Majercik (Leiden 1989 [2015]) [203.8 JULI.M]
- Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*. Translated by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta 2003) [186 IAMB]

Theurgy Further Reading (secondary sources)

- Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the gods* (Farnham, 2014) [203 ADDE]: see Chapters 1 and 7
- Blakeley, Donald N., "Plotinus as environmentalist?" in Laura Westra and Thomas M. Robinson, *The Greeks and the Environment* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 167-184 [363.7 WEST]
- Iles Johnston, Sarah (ed.), *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (Cambridge, MA 2004) [200.9 JON]: see especially **pp.649-650 on theurgy.**
- Mahoney, Timothy A., "Platonic ecology, deep ecology," in Laura Westra and Thomas M. Robinson, *The Greeks and the Environment* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 45-54 [363.7 WEST]
- Shaw, Gregory, *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park 1995 [2014]) [186 IAMB.S]
- Tanaseanu-Döbler, Ilinca, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition* (Göttingen 2013) [203.8 TANA]



Tantra Further Reading: ancient sources (primary sources in English translation)

- Clark, B. 1995. *The Quintessence Tantras of Tibetan Medicine*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.
- Wallace, V. (trans.). 2004. *The Kālacakratantra: The Chapter on the Individual together with the Vimalaprabhā*. Columbia: American Institute of Buddhist Studies.

Tantra Further Reading (secondary sources)

- Collins, D. 2014. *Presence in Tibetan Landscapes: spirited agency and ritual healing in Rebgong* (unpublished PhD thesis: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/89371/>)
- Hoban, Isabela Basombrio, 'Nechung: A Tibetan Oracle in Exile', *The Tibet Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 2008), pp. 33-64. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. Roney-Dougal, S. M. 'Tibetan Psychic Traditions'. *The Tibet Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2018), pp. 3-15. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Mayer, R. 2014. 'Indigenous elements in Tibetan tantric religion', in Berounský, D. (ed.), *Mongolo-Tibetica Pragensia '14: Ethnolinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Religion and Culture*, volume 7, no.2: 35-53. Prague: Charles University.
- Murakami, Daisuke. 'The Trapchi Lhamo Cult in Lhasa', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 27, Octobre 2013, pp. 21-54.
- Samuel, Geoffrey. 'Healing, Efficacy and the Spirits'. *Journal of Ritual Studies* 24, no. 2 (2010): 7-20. (*The Efficacy of Rituals, Part 2*. Second volume of two-volume special issue edited by William S. Sax and Johannes Quack.)
- Samuel, G., H. Gregor & E. Stutchbury (eds), 1994. *Tantra and Popular Religions in Tibet*. Delhi: Pradeep Kumar Goel
- Samuel, G. 2005. *Tantric Revisionings: New Understandings of Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Religions*. UK: Ashgate
- Samuel, G. 2008. *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press
- Tsong Kha pa (trans. Jeffrey Hopkins), 1980. *Tantra in Tibet: The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra – Volume 1*. London: George Allen and Unwin, [1977]
- van Shaik, S. 2022. 'Buddhist Magic and Vajrayana' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tantric Studies*.
- White, D. G. 2000. *Tantra in practice: Mapping a Tradition*, in (ed.) White, D. G., *Tantra in Practice*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press