

THE VAJRAKILAYA SADHANA:  
AN EURO-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE  
OF A NYINGMA RITUAL

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The emergence of an obscure Tibetan wrathful deity ritual, "The Extremely Secret Vajrakilaya" of the Palyul lineage, in North American culture is traced through the movement of Nyingma lamas living in diaspora. Since the mid 1960's, Buddhism has grown exponentially in North America. Part of this growth can be attributed to Asian immigration, but a significant and influential portion of North American Buddhists are Euro-Americans seeking meditation techniques that engage unconscious psychic energies and cognitive potentials for healing and transformation. This thesis explores the reasons for Euro-American engagement with Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism), while a questionnaire and a series of in-depth interviews focus on Euro-Americans' subjective experience of one particular ritual, the Vajrakilaya sadhana. Carl G. Jung's concepts of mystical experience, individuation, and libido analogues, as well as biogenetic structuralism serve as a basis for coding and analyzing data.*

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## 1.

**COMING TO AMERICA**

*Shall we be able to put on like a new suit, ready made symbols  
grown on foreign soil, saturated with foreign blood, spoken in a  
foreign tongue nourished by a foreign culture, interwoven with a  
foreign history...*

*(Carl G. Jung 1969:14)*

*The obscure text of fifteenth century Nyingma terton, Ratna Lingpa, entitled **The Daily Practice of the Secret Attainment of the Extremely Secret Vajrakilaya: The Essence of the Play of Concerned Activity** made its way to North America in the mid 1980's through a series of global political events triggered over a half century ago in the north-eastern Tibetan province of Kham. Immediately following the civil war of 1949, the newly formed communist government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) announced that one of its primary political objectives was to liberate Tibetans from the oppressive economic conditions of a feudal order steeped in religious superstition and technological backwardness (Goldstein 1997). Initially nomadic chieftains in the outlying border regions of Kham, antagonistic towards the centralized authority and bureaucracy of the Lhasa government (Lopez 1998:197), provided guides and interpreters to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) facilitating Chinese recognizance and infiltration of Tibetan borders (Grunfeld 1996:108).*

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1950, the PLA officially entered eastern Tibet (Schell 2000:25) establishing military headquarters for the expressed purpose of supervising and guiding Tibetans towards economic and political reform; the advent of modernization and prosperity under the

progressive socialist policies of the PRC. The government of Lhasa, unable to garner international support through the United Nations, reluctantly signed the “Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” in Beijing on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1951 (Goldstein 1989:751). The Seventeen-Point agreement accorded the Tibetan Autonomous Region an unique status among other ethnic territories under PRC governance (Norbu 1998:7; Jiaqi 1996:141-143). Although point one of the agreement required Tibet to acknowledge itself as part of the PRC and to relinquish any future claims to self-determination, point eleven allowed the region to retain its theocratic government and its religious customs and beliefs “until such time Tibetans wanted reforms” (Goldstein 1997:47-48).

The Tibetan Autonomous Region, however, did not include the ethnographic region of Kham, and consequently, the conditions of the Seventeen-Point agreement did not apply. Under socialist reforms, monastic and hereditary estates were confiscated and divided into communal properties, while immigration policies encouraged a large influx of Chinese Han, threatening the Kham with cultural genocide (Jiaqi 1996:142; Norbu 1998:3). Once allies of the PLA, Kham chieftains resorted to armed insurrection in 1956, assembling and organizing at religious festivals and using local monasteries to store ammunition and supplies (Patterson 1961:81). To crush the insurgence, the PLA searched and destroyed monasteries and prohibited public religious events (181).

Amid the political turmoil, Penor Rinpoche the eleventh throne holder of the Palyul lineage, selected two hundred monks from the Palyul monastery and Scholastic college in Bubor, one of six regions in the province of Kham, to practice the Vajrakilaya sadhana in an extensive one month retreat to reverse and annihilate negative forces associated with Chinese aggression



(Zangpo 1988:125). The Vajrakilaya sadhana, part of the short terma lineage of Ratna Lingpa in the Palyul tradition, was revealed to the seventeenth century tertön Migyur Dorje in a mystical vision, who then transmitted it directly to Kunzang Sherab, the founder and first throne holder of the Palyul lineage (29 - 30). At the time of Chinese annexation, the Palyul monastery was one of four major Nyingma centers in Kham. Among the four sects of Vajrayana the Nyingma have the longest history of transmission, tracing lineages back to the establishment of the first monastery in Samye by the great adept and cultural hero Padmasambhava, who is credited with converting Tibet to Buddhism in the eighth century after the common era (Powers 1995:318).

Guru Padmasambhava and his consort YesheTsogyel are said to have created and concealed the Nyingma terma system (Thondup 1997:60) in an effort to preserve the authenticity of the early teachings. The Nyingma hold that at the time of Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet, his disciples lacked the necessary spiritual aptitude and maturity to understand the more advanced teachings of Tantra. These teachings were hidden to await re-discovery by tertöns in a time auspicious for their dissemination (Powers 1995:330-31). The termas took three forms: earth termas which were symbolic scripts written on scrolls of paper and hidden in various rocks, lakes and temples; mind termas which were re-discovered in the awakening minds of realized incarnated disciples of Guru Padmasambhava; and pure vision termas in which deities and masters transmitted teachings directly to the tertöns (Thondup 1997:61).

According to Khenpo Namdrol's English translation of the Palyul lineage's *Vajrakilaya* (1999), Padmasambhava received the teachings of the Vajrakilaya tantra directly from the deity himself, "being introduced to space and wisdom through Vajrakilaya's enlightened mind, and finally coming to know all objects of knowledge without impediment. In this way, he received the

entire transmission of Vajrakilaya directly from Vajrakilaya himself” (Namdrol 1999:24). The same text purports that Guru Padmasambhava while on his way to central Tibet was forced to manifest as Vajrakilaya in order to subjugate local gods and demons, binding them by oath to preserve and protect the dharma (24-25). The Vajrakilaya sadhana was among the first teachings Padmasambhava transmitted to his twenty-five disciples at Samye in order to remove forces antithetical to their practice. Palyul tradition indicates that Padmasambhava would later appear in one of Ratna Lingpa’s many revelations to prophetically announce the rebirth of one his first disciples, the tertön Migyur Dorje, to whom Ratna Lingpa would transmit his short term lineage (Zhangpo 1988:46).

As Palyul monks completed their one month Vajrakilaya retreat in 1956, various signs arose indicating that the Chinese occupation of Tibet was irreversible (125). Biographical details of Penor Rinpoche’s life on a North American Palyul website state that, based on these signs he decided to flee Kham and seek refuge in India, because “lineages that had over thousands of years preserved the purity and authenticity of Buddhist’s teachings were in danger of being broken or lost forever” ([www.palyul.org](http://www.palyul.org) 1998). Although highly controversial, rumours suggest that Penor Rinpoche and two thousand Palyul monks were forced to fight their way out of Kham with guns and hand grenades (Sherrill 2000:31). After passing through central Tibet and finally crossing the Indian border into the eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, only Penor Rinpoche and twenty-six monks had survived the ordeal (Mackenzie 1996:69). This tragic loss of human life, however, enabled thousands of Palyul terma scrolls to be saved from certain destruction under Chinese rule (Sherrill 2000:31).

As part of its resettlement program for Tibetan refugees, the India government offered

parcels of land in southern India (Mackenzie 1996:69). In 1963, Penor Rinpoche accepted five acres of land near Mysore and moved his small following of Palyul monks and several hundred Kham refugees, including children orphaned during the Tibetan-Chinese conflict, to the new location (Zhangpo 1988:126). Once at the site, Penor Rinpoche began the immediate construction of the Namdrolling monastery, often doing hard physical labour himself (Sumegi, personal communication 2000). In 1965, the monastery was able to hold its first rainy season retreat (yarney) which became an annual institution (126). The retreat traditionally ends with the teachings and empowerments from the terma of Ratna Lingpa's Vajrakilaya for the purpose of expunging the negative influences of the old year and ushering in auspicious conditions for the new (126). The establishment of the Scholastic college at the Namdrolling monastery followed in 1978, and the monastery rapidly expanded in the 1980's to incorporate a nunnery, an orphanage, an elementary school and medical center. By 1999, the monastery clothed, housed, and fed fifteen hundred monks, two hundred and fifty nuns, and six hundred and fifty children of elementary school age. All of these projects were in part sponsored by generous financial donations from Western lay Buddhists.

Because of the growing number of Western patrons, Penor Rinpoche decided to "turn the wheel of dharma" in America, establishing the Yeshe Nyingpo center in Ashland, Oregon in 1984 ([www.palyul.org](http://www.palyul.org) 1998; Zhangpo 1988:128). Penor Rinpoche appointed Gyaltrul Rinpoche, the recognized incarnation of the Palyul founder Kunzang Sherab, to direct the first Palyul center in the West (Sherrill 2000:65). Another Palyul center opened in the small Canadian community of Madoc, Ontario in the same year, under the direction of a German South American, the Venerable Lama Jampa Rabjampa Rinpoche.

Journalist Orville Schell (2000:23) notes that “(u)ntil the twentieth century, the West was little more than a footnote in Tibetan history.” The inhospitable conditions of the Himalayas and conservative Tibetan clergies’ resistance to Western contact thwarted nineteenth century French, British, and Russian expeditions into the interior of U-Tsang, the central province of Tibet. Lhasa remained impenetrable until 1904, when the British Viceroy of India, George Nathaniel Curzon, fearing possible Russian domination of Asian trade routes ordered British troops under the command of Colonel Younghusband to forcefully enter and take control of the city (188–189). The dispute ended with the signing of the Anglo-Tibetan convention which opened up several new trade routes for the British and forbade the Tibetan government from having diplomatic relations with any other power, except the Chinese (200). Despite this accord, Tibet “enjoyed substantial autonomy” for the next forty-five years (Jiaqi 1996:141), declaring its uncontested sovereignty from the disintegrating and weak Qing dynasty in 1911 to form its own government and military, control its own legal and economic institutions, and negotiate and sign its own international agreements (Goldstein 1997:4).

Tibetologist Donald Lopez (1998) suggests that its geographic isolation and successful resistance to colonialism gave Tibet an irresistible magnetism which fed Western fantasies of a mystical land untouched by civilization. Conflated with esoteric knowledge and mysticism, Tibet became a projection of Westerners’ conflicting desire for ancient wisdom, yet fear of the unknown (Batchelor 1994:234). Richard Hayes, a professor of Sanskrit and Indian studies at McGill university, believes that Westerners’ burgeoning interest in Tibetan Buddhism over the last two decades may be partially attributed to an appetite created by popular culture (Bell 2000). This includes Hollywood movie productions such as *Little Buddha*<sup>1</sup> ( Bertolucci 1994) *Seven Years*

*in Tibet*<sup>2</sup> (Annaud and Johnston 1998) and *Kundun*<sup>3</sup> (Walt Disney Touchstone Pictures and Scorese's Refuge Productions 1997), numerous international documentaries ( for example, *Windhorse*<sup>4</sup> 1999), high profile spokespersons, like actor Richard Gere, who have made the struggle for Tibetan independence a celebrity cause, the elevation of the Dalai Lama to a pop culture icon after his international speaking tour in the late 1980's, and a proliferation of Buddhist books claiming mystical insights and remedies for maladies of living in a modern technocratic society<sup>5</sup>.

Edward Said ( 1979) first coined the term orientalism to encompass Western perceptions of Asian culture, that is, a set of images, ideas and generalizations that began to emerge in the mid nineteenth century. Orientalism has had a profound influence on academic and popular culture's representations of Tibetan Buddhism. Starting in the late 1800's, quasi-intellectual organizations such as the Theosophical Society, founded by Helena Petrovna von Hahn (Madame Blavatsky), and Mahatma Kooi Hoomi's Great White Brotherhood ushered in "a period when members of the intelligentsia fell under the sway of Eastern mysticism and spiritualism" (Schell 2000:227).

Alexander David-Neel's novels, in which she describes her apprenticeship with Tibetan lamas in the 1920's and their supernatural activities, further fueled Westerners' infatuation with Tibetan Buddhism. Recapitulating these early representations, German and Nyingma convert, Anagarika Govinda, would allude to Tibetan Buddhism as a repository of ancient, esoteric knowledge that was somehow lost to Western civilization. In *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, Govinda (1969:13) writes: "Tibet due to its natural isolation and its inaccessibility has succeeded in not only keeping alive traditions of the most distant past, but the knowledge of hidden forces of the human soul and the highest achievements and esoteric teachings of Indian saints and adepts."

Oriental scholar Walter Evans-Wentz would posit that Tibetan Buddhism is a “living example of an underlying worldwide wisdom religion” which traces its origins to the earlier Western traditions of Gnosticism and the Greek mysteries (Fields 1992:286). With the assistance of Kazi Dawa Samdup, Evans-Wentz published the first Western translation of Padmasambhava’s terma, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, in 1927. The text includes a psychological commentary from Carl G. Jung in which he states the book has been his “constant companion” since its publication and a source of many of his fundamental insights into the “secrets of the human psyche” (Jung in Evans-Wentz 1960:xxxvi). Expounding upon Jung’s insights, Vienna-trained Buddhist Herbert V. Guenther would employ concepts from depth psychology in his translation of Nyingma texts generating controversy and criticism from more conservative religious scholars, not given to “mixing metaphors from various disciplines” (Fields 1992:316). As Guenther’s credentials as a Nyingma scholar were unassailable, his innovative translations buttressed the storm of criticism to open the doors for a more inter-disciplinary approach to textual interpretation and for the study of consciousness itself (316).

The Nyingma remained a relatively unknown and obscure branch of Vajrayana until the mid 1960's, when the French film producer and writer, Arnaud Desjardins, traveled to India to produce a documentary on Tibetan Buddhists living in exile (Batchelor 1994:69). Under the auspices of the Dalai Lama, Desjardins filmed interviews with lamas in several refugee communities. While filming in Darjeeling, he met an eccentric and charismatic Nyingma lama, named Kangur Rinpoche who had fled Kham in the mid 1950's. The showing of Desjardins’ documentary in France generated a general interest in the Nyingma, and Kangur Rinpoche in particular. In the early 1970's, a small group of Europeans keenly interested in Tibetan Buddhism,

traveled to Darjeeling to become disciples of Kangur Rinpoche. During one of his teachings to his European disciples, Kangur Rinpoche prophetically proclaimed that Buddhism was destined to spread and thrive in the West. But he himself would turn down repeated appeals from his Western students to relocate to France, dying in Darjeeling in 1975 (70).

Prominent Nyingma lama, Dujom Rinpoche, “mindful of the prediction” his lineage would spread to the West, however, did agree to relocate to Dordogne, France in 1972, where he established the first Nyingma center in Europe on a tract of woodland donated by the wealthy patron, Bernard Benson (71). Later in the same year, Kangyur Rinpoche sent his eldest son, Tulku Pema Wangyal, to teach at the center on his behest. Accompanying Pema Wangal was the renowned and well loved Nyingma lama Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche who immediately embarked upon a teaching tour of Britain, Scandinavia, Europe, and North America. Recognizing a growing demand for Nyingma teachings in the West, Dilgo Khyentse recruited lamas, fluent in English and French, to teach and co-ordinate Nyingma centers located in major British, European, and North American cities. Soygal Rinpoche would become the most famous of the recruits, founding the Rigpa association in the 1970's and writing the *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* in 1994.

Prior to the 1960's, the Kham province had consisted of nomadic pastoralists who “were divided into rigid social classes of either tribes or principalities ruled by hereditary chiefs and monastic lords” (Grunfeld 1996:18). The various autonomous lineages of the eastern provinces had never been united by religion or state (Samuel 1993:92). Historically Kham cultural identity had been more closely related to local lamas and clan affiliations than to the centralized government of Lhasa (Lopez 1998:197). It was only in the refugee communities, under the concerted effort of the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile, that the cultural/national

designation of “Tibetan” incorporated refugees from the provinces of Amdo and Kham (197). Further in 1971, the Dalai Lama for the first time in Nyingma history appointed a Supreme Head of the sect, Dujom Rinpoche. The appointment was part of a larger political strategy, by the Dalai Lama and his Western supporters, to unit formerly disparate ethnic groups, preserve Tibetan solidarity in diaspora, and mobilize refugees in the struggle for international recognition of an independent Tibet. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche succeeded Dujom Rinpoche, and upon his death, Penor Rinpoche was appointed the next Supreme Head of the Nyingma in 1993 ([www.egroups.com/message/the\\_daily\\_enlightenment/284](http://www.egroups.com/message/the_daily_enlightenment/284)).

Penor Rinpoche made his first visit to North America in the spring of 1985 (Mackenzie 1996:69). The Namdrolling monastery had sent a representative, Kunzang Lama, the previous year to sell carpets in America to raise funds for its orphanage. In the fall of 1984, Kunzang Lama made a presentation to a New Age group in the suburbs of Washington D.C. called the Center for Discovery and New Life, where he met the group’s organizers and founders, Catherine Burroughs and her husband, Michael (Sherrill 2000:54). Within several months of his visit, the group had managed to sponsor seventy-five orphans. Because of the group’s generous financial support, Kunzang Lama contacted Catherine Burroughs announcing Penor Rinpoche’s intentions to visit her in America. Although Catherine Burroughs had been involved in various New Age groups for approximately twenty years and was well known in the Washington area for her reported psychic abilities, she described her first encounter with Penor Rinpoche as “ a miraculous and stunning awakening” (Sherrill 2000:56). On the conclusion of his American visit, Penor Rinpoche announced that Burroughs, without the benefit of formal instruction, exhibited a profound understanding of Mahayana Buddhism, and attributed this ability to many lifetimes of



Buddhist practice (57). Inspired by Penor Rinpoche's observation, Burroughs and her group took out a substantial mortgage to establish The Kunzang Odsal Palyul Changchub Choling in Poolesville, Maryland in 1986. The center rapidly expanded due to a significant financial contribution from American actor, Steven Seagal, in 1987 (Schell 2000:73), becoming the largest ordained Tibetan community in the United States (Mackenzie 1996:72).

Burroughs eventually left the Poolesville center in 1997, amid allegations of financial corruption and accusations of physical and emotional abuse of its members (Sherrill 2000:373). A new board of directors was appointed, and the community of lay and ordained Buddhists continued to develop under the direction of Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso, Penor Rinpoche's envoy in the West. In the same year, Penor Rinpoche's recognition of Steven Seagal as not only a tulku<sup>6</sup>, but the incarnate of the seventeenth century tertön, Chungdrag Dorje, drew heavy criticism from the American Buddhist community (Schell 2000:73). Trying to stem the rising tide of negative publicity surrounding Burrough's and Seagal's recognition as "enlightened beings", Penor Rinpoche made several press releases stating that he would not recognize any more Americans as tulkus because of their "problem with pride" (Sherrill 2000:374). During the summer of 1997, Penor Rinpoche gave the teachings and empowerment for the terma of Ratna Lingpa: *The Daily Practice of the Secret Attainment of the Extremely Secret Vajrakilaya* in Rochester, New York to reverse and annihilate negative influences blocking the dissemination of Palyul teachings in America.

Undeterred by the negative publicity, new Palyul centers opened in New York City and McDonough, New York in 1998. Located on a former dairy farm near the Catskills, the site in McDonough was donated by a wealthy Vietnamese-American, and offers annual summer retreats

for the transmission of the Palyul termas, including the Termas of Ratna Lingpa. Over the last three summers I have attended the retreat in McDonough and have had two private audiences with Penor Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso. In a 1998 audience, I and three other Canadians asked his Holiness Penor Rinpoche to visit Ottawa for the millennium. His acceptance of our invitation led to a series of teachings and empowerments<sup>7</sup> held at the St. Elias community hall from May 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

Along with one hundred and twenty other participants, I received the initiation for the *Daily Secret Attainment of the Extremely Secret Vajrakilaya* from Penor Rinpoche on May 16<sup>th</sup>, in Ottawa. Of all the initiations offered during the public event, Vajrakilaya drew the largest attendance. As I visually scanned the predominantly Caucasian group, the question that forms the basis of my thesis surfaced again in my thoughts: why are Euro-Americans practicing Vajrayana ritual? Gordon Mathews (2000:104) argues that of all forms of Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism is obviously the most foreign, offering “an array of meditative practices and symbols that seem very far from the conventional patterns” of Canadian and American life worlds. I would hasten to add that, Vajrakilaya with its wrathful and blood thirsty imagery, is perhaps one of the most foreign of Vajrayana rituals. Like Carl G. Jung’s (1969:14) query cited at the beginning of this chapter, I wondered how Euro-American Buddhists experience and assimilate the ready made symbols of Vajrakilaya ritual; a ritual nourished by a foreign culture and interwoven with a foreign history?

In this chapter, I have briefly grounded the Vajrakilaya ritual in its Tibetan cultural historical context. In the next chapter, I will situate Buddhism within a North American context and discuss: the apparent cultural differences between ethnic Asian and Euro-American practice of Buddhism in North America, postmodern societies and the rise of Buddhism in North America,

the construction of a Euro-American Buddhist profile, including a profile of Euro-Americans attending the Ottawa Vajrakilaya initiation in May, and the possible connection between Western Buddhism and Gnosticism.

## 2. **EURO-AMERICAN BUDDHISM**

*The various forms of religions no longer appear to the modern man to come from within - to be expressions of his own psychic life; for him they are to be classed with things in the world. He is vouchsafed no revelation of spirit that is not of this world; but he tries on a number of religions and convictions as if they are Sunday attire, only to lay them aside like worn-out clothes.*

*(Carl G. Jung 1933:206)*

*It is clear that, although they may adopt Asian Buddhist names, dress, and mannerisms, white Buddhists cannot help but drag their Judeo-Christian identities and shadows with them wherever they go.*

*(Ryo Imamura, 18<sup>th</sup> generation Jodo Shinshu priest)*

### a. Buddhism in North America

Despite the recent proliferation of academic literature, statistical data on the number of Buddhists in North America remains vague and even contradictory. Without an accurate data base, monitoring the future trends of the North American Buddhist movement or establishing a reliable profile of Euro-American Buddhists<sup>8</sup> will be difficult, if not impossible (Prebish 1999:49). Martin Baumann (1997:198) estimates that there are currently between three and four million Buddhists in the United States, 1.6 % of the American population. Although the overwhelming majority of American Buddhists are of Asian ethnicity, a significant portion (800,000) are of Euro-American descent (198). The 1991 Canadian census ([www.statscan.ca](http://www.statscan.ca)) reported 163,000

Buddhists living in Canada, but did not distinguish between Buddhists of Euro-American descent and other ethnic groups. In the early 1990's, Buddhism was identified as the second fastest growing religion in Canada, surpassed only by charismatic forms of Protestantism (Given cited in Bibby 1993:21). The 2001 Canadian census will confirm whether this growth rate has been sustained over the last decade.

Buddhism experienced an explosive growth in North America, amid the social unrest and counterculture movements of the late 1960's. Several social factors may have contributed to this expansion: Euro-Americans' disillusionment with rationalism, science, and materialism (Ellwood 1973:266); Euro-Americans' experience of severe social anomie heightened by massive social change and ethical ambiguity in the later half of the twentieth century (Prebish 1995:4); conventional Christian denominations failure to address the spiritual concerns of its Euro-American patrons (Ellwood 1973; Bibby 1993); an increasingly pluralistic society (Berger 1967:134); the common usage of psychedelic drugs and the experience of altered states of consciousness (Ellwood 1973:266); and the influx of Asian immigrants, including Buddhist teachers (Prebish 1999:51). Ellwood (1973:266) parallels the Buddhist movement in America with changes in the Western collective consciousness during the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century, there was a great interest in the atheistic rationalism of Theravada<sup>9</sup>, while Mahayana was viewed as superstition and Vajrayana as a debased form of Buddhism. Later in the 1950's, Mahayana Buddhism gained entrance to North America, when Zen became popular in the beatnik counterculture. The esoteric teachings of Vajrayana, particularly of the bardo states in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, came to the fore after the wide spread use of psychedelic drugs in the 1960s. Like many other new age religions cropping up in North America, Vajrayana ritual

offered a means of accessing altered states of consciousness, analogous to drug induced states, and a method for individual transformation and spiritual maturation (266).

Today in the United States and Canada, there are more than one thousand Buddhist meditation centers (Morreale 1998:xvi). Of these, only 2 % were founded prior to 1964, their numbers increasing fivefold by 1975. This total then doubled between 1975 and 1984 ,and again between 1985 and 1997 (xvi). In the United States, Zen centers are the most numerous (42% of all centers). However in Canada, Vajrayana has the greatest number of centers (49% of all centers), with the highest density in Ontario (38% of the Canadian centers) (xvi -xvii). A further statistical breakdown reveals that, over the last decade, the number of Theravada and Vajrayana meditation centers have doubled in North America, while Mahayana have tripled. But an astounding ten fold growth of “poly-denominationalism” or non-sectarian centers suggest a new trend towards Buddhist ecumenicalism (xvi).

Ecumenicity is possible in pluralistic societies where various religions come into contact, permitting inter-cultural and inter-denominational communication and collaboration (Berger 1967:140-141). At the “Buddhism in America” conference held in Boston in 1997, several prominent Euro-American Buddhists (Lama Surya Das, Jack Kornfield) called for a ecumenical Buddhism in America, and advocated for the establishment of non-sectarian meditation centers, the exchange of lamas and teachers, and the sharing of resources (Prebish 1999:91). Part of the motivation for ecumenicalism stems from a need to reconcile the growing rift between ethnic Asians’ and Euro-Americans’ vision of a North American Buddhism. At the heart of the ecumenical debate lies the politics of representation: who defines North American Buddhism and sets the agenda for the future? Ethnic Buddhist temples tend to serve as a focal point for minority

communities and act to preserve cultural identity and group solidarity. The temple not only meets the spiritual needs of its members, but provides social support, especially for the most recent immigrants (Tanaka 1998:287). Centers, serving Euro-American Buddhists, focus primarily on meditation (287).

Anthropologist Robert Redfield (cited in Ellwood 1993:121-125) distinguishes between “little” and “great traditions” of religion. Religion and culture tend to merge in the “little traditions” and encompass the religious festivals, norms, values, myths, and practices of a community. It is the religion of the common people, analogous to popular culture in Western societies. The “great tradition” refers to the elite, the intellectuals and scholars of a religion. While the little traditions tend to be transmitted orally and are lived out in a “taken-for-granted” way, the “great traditions” rely on textual material and are associated with the ruling and upper classes, monastic and university centers. In her analysis of the North American Buddhist movement, Jan Nattier (1995:40) differentiates between import religion (forms of Buddhism imported from Asia to satisfy a domestic demand) and baggage religion (the cultural and religious traditions of Asian immigrants). Ethnic communities tend to fall within Redfield’s “little traditions” and Nattier’s baggage religion, in that, Buddhism is an integral component of cultural identity and community cohesion. Middle to upper class, educated Euro-American Buddhists tend to gravitate towards the “great traditions” (interaction with high profile Asian teachers rather than ordinary ethnic practitioners; see Lavine 1998:112), and under Nattier’s import category, create a demand for meditation centers, textual material and the importation of acknowledged Asian masters for the teaching/lecture circuit.<sup>10</sup>

Although Euro-Americans constitute a minority of North American Buddhists, they tend

to be over represented due to their affluence, access to the media, and scholarly activities which include conferences, publications, and the development of university syllabuses in Buddhist studies. As a result, Buddhism in America is increasingly defined by Euro-Americans, who emphasize lay practice over monasticism (Lopez 1998: 174), democracy rather than authoritarian hierarchies (Tanaka 1998: 289-290), the inclusion and equality of women as opposed to patriarchy (Gross 1998:246 -251), and meditation over devotional activities and ethical precepts (Nattier 1995:45). Kenneth Tanaka (1998:294-295) posits that under the hegemony of Euro-Americans, Buddhism is becoming more and more Westernized, and differs significantly from the Buddhism many Asians brought to North American shores a quarter of a century ago. Jan Nattier (1995:45) observes:

*Long before actual contact with a living Buddhist culture takes place, the importer (Euro-American) has already formed his or her own idiosyncratic notions of what Buddhism is all about, generally from an ad hoc assortment of books. Once these preliminary ideas have taken shape, even the most fervent efforts of a Buddhist teacher may be insufficient to uproot them. At the very core of Orientalism is the creation of an imagined and artificial East,....a largely invented tradition that may bear little resemblance to any living form of Asian Buddhism.*

Tanaka (1998:295) points out that, although there has always been a process of acculturation, as Buddhism diffused to neighboring Asian cultures, “the pace and fervor” of its acculturation to modern Euro-American culture is “unprecedented”. Naturally, this rate of rapid acculturation has caused concern within Asian ethnic communities (Prebish 1999:65). Ryo Imamura (cited in Prebish 1999:65) in a letter to the *Sanga Newsletter* expresses some of these tensions: “White Buddhist centers rise and fall dramatically like ocean waves whereas Asian temples seem to persist uneventfully and quietly through the generations. White practitioners practice intensive psychotherapy on their cushions in a life and death struggle with ego whereas

Asian Buddhists just seem to smile and eat together.” Nattier (1995:49) seems to concur with Imamura, and notes that ethnic Buddhism spans generations and “involves the entire fabric of life” (49) rooted in “a communal past”(48). Euro-American Buddhism, with its exclusive emphasis on meditation, is a somewhat truncated version.

It is not my intention to explore these tensions in any depth, but merely to highlight the cultural differences that exist between ethnic Asian communities and Euro-Americans, and how these differences impact on the practice of Buddhism in North America. At the present, the ecumenical trend appears to be the initiative of Euro-American Buddhists. Ethnic Buddhists tend to remain “mono-ethnic” in an effort to preserve cultural identity and community traditions, and resist interaction with other ethnic Buddhist communities (49). Although there has been some contact between ethnic and Euro-American Buddhist groups (49), the ecumenical trend mostly occurs between Euro-American meditation centers, practicing various forms of Zen, Vipassana, and Vajrayana Buddhism.

#### b. Pluralism, Postmodernism, and the Global Cultural Supermarket

Peter Berger (1967:136-137) indicates that the secularization of modern Western societies leads to pluralism. In a pluralist society, religions no longer hold a monopoly over their memberships, but must compete with other religious and non-religious rivals (ideological and social-political movements). Since allegiance to any religious institution is voluntary and there are numerous religious and non-religious choices in a pluralistic society, religions are forced to “market” themselves. Their product “must be sold to a clientele that is no longer constrained to buy. The pluralistic situation is, above all, a market situation” (Berger 1967:137). Reginald



Bibby (1993:266) claims that since the 1950's, most Christian institutions suffered from "marketing myopia"<sup>11</sup> and lost touch with their members' needs. In a survey of Protestant denominations, Bibby (308) found that most churches focus on financial and administrative concerns, rather than the spiritual needs of individual members. Bibby states that conventional churches typically promote "personal forms of faith that are products of a religious assembly line", and members become "clones of each other, who use the same words and phrases, think the same thoughts, act the same, and yes, sometimes even look remarkably similar" (309). He writes (309):

*In short, a good number of people involved in churches lack a religion that has individuality - a deeply personal faith that is the end result of the absorbing of information, serious reflection, and uncomfortable and sometimes painful struggle. For many faith is prefabricated. Observations of others that, religion is learned much like the multiplication table or is the result of imitation rather than urgency are not gross exaggerations. It seems particularly clear that the narrow views of spirituality and quest that are prevalent in the churches typically are blinding members and leaders to some of the blatant social indicators. Many "church people" fail to spot such obvious signals as the widespread fascination with the meaning of myth; burgeoning enrolments in self-actualization courses; growing interest in teachings emphasizing oneness with nature; intrigue with the fusion of faith and physics. Such emphases are often not understood and are rejected outright.*

What Bibby seems to be describing is a dogmatic formulation of religion that denies the immediacy of direct experience. Robert Ellwood (1994:15 -16) states that in many respects, churches are products of Enlightenment thinking and modernity: favoring the rational over the mystical, the historical narrative over the mythological, uniformity over plurality, and a dehumanizing bureaucracy over individual needs. "Modern religion, then sets itself up, as a parallel institution to the modern state....the great denominations were in effect unitary states within a unitary state, with local centers as outposts of a headquarters, each parish retailing the

denominations own version of universal truth (17).”

Church attendance has steadily declined over the last three decades, leading Bibby to conclude that many denominations will die out with their aging membership (16). Canadian baby boomers, those born between the years of 1945 and 1965, are half as likely as their parents to attend church, and the majority have never been actively involved in a church organization (16-19). Consequently, boomers’ children are less likely to be indoctrinated into their parents’ and grandparents’ natal religion. Yet a 1990 survey reveals that the majority of Canadians, under the age of 45, are fascinated with mysticism (117), need ritual (particularly during life transitions such as, birth, puberty, marriage, and death) (147), and quest for meaning (138).

Just as church attendance began to decline in the 1970's, the Canadian government liberalized immigration policies<sup>12</sup>, and introduced legislation to protect and promote multiculturalism (20-21). These policies produced even greater ethnic and religious diversity. A 1991 survey measuring religious affiliation, reported a significant increase (12%) in the number of Canadians claiming no religious preference (22). 81% of these respondents were under the age of 45 (158). In a 1988 survey of religion, Philip Hammond (1992:141, 143), noted a similar trend in California. 15 % of the respondents claimed no religious affiliation and another 15% claimed to have switched religions. In the same survey, 76% of the respondents felt that it was possible to develop one’s own beliefs independent of a church organization (80). Hammond links the decline of church attendance to the rise of personal autonomy in religion; a reliance on one’s own inner compass rather than church doctrine or affiliation (74). With this new sense of independence, individuals are more willing to switch religions for subjective reasons (169 -170). Religion becomes a matter of personal choice; a pragmatic choice of “what works for me” (Clark Roof

cited in Ellwood 1994:9). The external authority of the church is subordinated to the individual's rights, that is, the right to have his/her spiritual needs met (9). Wade Clark Roof (1993:44-47) posits that the baby boomer ethos of self-fulfillment, personal growth, and self expression naturally leads to spiritual experimentation, and in a pluralistic society, there is a supermarket of options.

Postmodern anthropologists suggest that cultural identities and activities are constructed through the dynamic interaction of "multiple agents in varying contexts or places (Marcus 1998:52)". The idea of studying isolated, culturally static groups, at the end of the twentieth century, is all but obsolete in an era of globalization. Massive flows of people, products, and intellectual property, including religions, cross international borders with greater rapidity and ease. The result is not only the diffusion of meanings, as well as goods and people, between cultural regions, but the formation of complex relationships that mutate into new hybrids of cultural identities and activities. Lash and Urry (1987:313) refer to this mix of cultural meanings and modes as pastiche. In response to globalization, Marcus (1998:90) discusses the need for multi-site as opposed to "place-focused" ethnographies, whereby cultural forms are traced via the movement of people, objects, or intellectual property. In the previous chapter, I tried to illustrate how postmodern conditions led to the emergence of an obscure Palyul terma in North America, by tracing the movement of key Nyingma lamas living in diaspora.

Gordon Mathew (2000) states that culture can no longer be defined as a way of life endemic to a group living in a specific geographic area (11), but has become "a matter of personal taste (23)". "We seem to pick who we are, in the music we listen to, the food we eat, and perhaps even the religion we practice (5)." Bits of information and cultural identities may be

selected from a “global cultural supermarket” to construct what Jay Lifton (1993:17) refers to as a “protean self”; a fluid, multi-faceted, composite of selves that have access to “any image or idea originating anywhere in the world, or from any cultural moment in history”. As a consumer par excellence of culture, the protean self pragmatically chooses what works and discards what doesn't. In the case of religion, Euro-American Buddhists choose the experiential dimensions, but eschew institutional practices that constrain personal freedom and individual choice. Prebish's (1995:4) description of how Euro-Americans' integrate Buddhism into their daily lives provides some insight into the dynamics of the protean self.

*They (Euro-Americans) continue to identify with American culture as much as previously, but they also continue to make space every day for religious practice. They play tennis, but they also go to the temples and/or do sesshins. They use word processors and sophisticated computers, but they also read the Diamond Sutra. They laugh at Ren and Stimpy, but visit the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. They eat at Pizza Hut, but still appreciate the Tea Ceremony.*

Clifford Geertz (1976:225) points out that the Western notion of a unique, indivisible, separate, and autonomous self is somewhat of a “peculiar idea” among other world cultures. Postmodern philosopher, William V. Dunning (1993), locates the emergence of an indivisible and autonomous self in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, a by-product of Enlightenment and modernity. The notion of a separate, bounded self gave rise to a monophasic consciousness (Laughlin 1995), the concepts of private property and private selves, the division of time into linear units and historical narratives, and the precepts of rationalism and science which deny any reality beyond the five senses. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud's theories of a personal unconscious, and later Carl Jung's collective unconscious would challenge this notion of an undivided self. In the advent of globalization and multi-media technology, Dunning (1) posits that

Euro-Americans are exposed to a profusion of “alternative modes of thinking, derived from other cultures”, and have the opportunity “to investigate many alternative realities”. He states (1) “more and more we suspect that the twentieth century Euro-American sense of self is no longer truly unified or indivisible, but is instead composed of parts and pieces from other cultures”. Dunning (6-7) concludes that the pluralist, postmodern identity is more “effected by powers that are not entirely rational, and pursues meaning through....myth rather than history, religion rather than science, and a science of time that is cyclic rather than linear ”.

Since the mid 1970's, technological advances have produced a profound shift in the Western collective consciousness (Urry and Lash 1987). The influence of electronic media, such as television, cinema, and advertisements, and the rapid movement of information and people around the globe have blurred the boundaries of nation states, social classes, high and popular culture, and perhaps most significantly, virtual and everyday realities. Because of the increasing fluidity of social organizations and relationships within Western industrial societies, modernity characterized by rationalism, ego consciousness, and the printed text, is being displaced by postmodernity with its emphasis on multi-media images, sounds, and impulses that engage the libidinous energies of the unconscious (14). Representations of social reality produced by television, movies, video games, and home computer software appear increasingly “natural”, because they incorporate the discourse of popular culture and every day life (287). Repeated exposure to media representations tends to condition postmodern audiences and influence cultural tastes (292). The personal tastes of middle-class professionals in occupations of representation and presentation, that is, education, journalism, advertising, civil and social services, technological services, therapy and counseling services tend to exert a hegemonic influence on popular culture

(Bourdieu 1984:220).

Bernard Crane (cited in Stein 1999:38), suggests that the “existential anxieties” of the baby boomers, has been instrumental in spawning a proliferation of Buddhist imagery in the media. At a week long retreat held in Arnprior, Ontario in June of 2000, the Venerable Sona, a Canadian Theravada monk, commented that the “boomer generation is the biggest component of our practitioners. They have a lot of influence in society and that shows up....” He observed that most Euro-American Buddhists “are not interested in devotional practices. They’re more into meditation (July 2000)”. After interviewing participants of several Buddhist centers in Ottawa, Ontario, Citizen reporter Jocelyn Bell (July 21 , 2000), discovered that the majority were middle-class, educated, white professionals, over the age of thirty-five. Although many of those interviewed attend the centers for meditation practice, they did not identify themselves as Buddhists.

Robert Ellwood (1994:331) firmly anchors the advent of the postmodern consciousness in the 1960's. He views postmodernism as an underground movement, fed from the “non-rational basement of the mind” and the margins of society. Postmodernism brought forth a “free market place of ideas” and a profusion of nonconformist, alternative religions that would radically destabilize the uniform doctrines and authority of modern religious institutions. Reacting to the notion that divine revelation was the “sine qua non of the neo-orthodox Protestantism and the pre-Vatican II Roman Catholicism of the 1950's”, the sixties’ counterculture moved “towards natural religiosity” which believed the divine dwelled within each individual (332). The realization of one’s divinity came through personal revelation, not church mediation, and was aided by various techniques that engaged hidden psychic energies and powers of the mind (332). “Natural

mysticisms” tapped into congenital potentialities of the mind through ecstatic states induced by psychedelic substances or techniques of meditation (333). Getting in touch with one’s divinity was therapeutic for both the individual and the wider society. Radical subjectivity became the “wellspring of religion”, enhanced via drugs, meditation, and the “evocative power of traditional symbols” (335). The new religiosity was “expressed in the recovery of the primitive, in fashionable Jungianism, the conscious and the unconscious prestige of the shaman and the shaman like performances of rock stars such as Jim Morrison” (335). Power shifted from the centralized authority of religious institutions to the margins of society and alternative religious movements that valued subjectivity, egalitarian organizations, and direct occult\mystical experience (335). Ellwood concludes that postmodern religion is not so much innovative, as restorative. It is a return to “the more fluid, sentimental, charismatic, psychic, magical, communalistic, and righteous-prophetic styles of the first decades of the (American) Republic, perhaps, especially the 1840s and 1850s...These were also years when New England transcendentalism was in flower, with its restless idealism and orientalism...”. Ellwood views the sixties’ counterculture movement as essentially compensatory, a corrective measure to the dehumanizing and stultifying impact of religious institutions reconstructed at the height of modernity (the late 1800’s through 1950’s), “amid the immense traumas of industrialization, urbanization, and two world wars”(335-336).

At a superficial level, Buddhism in the postmodern era, may be perceived as matter of personal taste. As consumers, we need only walk into a “Le Chateau” clothing outlet to purchase “Buddha beads” as a fashion accessory or into a local “Chapters” book store to purchase a “Buddha in a Box” for a gift. We can attend a dinner with high profile lamas to raise funds for the

Tibetan cause in our own community, and feel like a kindred spirit to Richard Gere as he advocates for a free Tibet on CNN's Larry King show. More succinctly, media representations have integrated Buddhist imagery and concepts more and more imperceptibly into Western popular culture. Consequently, Euro-Americans have become more receptive to various forms of Buddhism as an alternative religion. In pluralistic societies where religions are forced to compete for market shares, Charles Prebish (1999:256) observes that "American Buddhism has simply done an outstanding job of marketing its product".

Large, impersonal, bureaucratic Christian institutions and their dogmatic formulation of religion failed to recognize or accommodate the religious needs of dissatisfied patrons. The large demographic of baby boomers expressed their dissatisfaction by abandoning their natal religion to experiment with alternatives that emphasized subjective experience and personal autonomy. At a deeper level, Ellwood (1994) describes the advent of postmodern religion, in Jungian fashion, as a compensatory process and as an expression of an innate human drive to contact inner divinity through meditation and the evocation of traditional symbols. It is my hypothesis that a small component of Euro-Americans, influenced by media representations in popular culture, choose Tibetan Buddhism among other religious options, because it offers meditation techniques and an elaborate array of symbols conducive to transformation. In effect, Tibetan Buddhism is perceived as a means of satisfying a deeper psychic need for spiritual maturation.

### c. The Euro-American Buddhist: A Hypothetical Profile

In summarizing the discussion of the two previous sections, the average Euro-American Buddhist is probably a baby boomer between the ages of 35 and 55 years, as likely to be female as



male, well educated (usually a university degree but a substantial percentage will have graduate or post doctorate degrees) (Nattier 1995:44) and a middle to upper class, professional (a high percentage will be therapists or involved in the field of mental health) (Tanka 1998:291).

Although her natal religion is Christian, church involvement has been minimal. Dissatisfied with Christian institutions, she has sought alternative forms of religion, and living in a pluralistic society, has probably experimented with several. After reading numerous books on Buddhist philosophy and psychology, he is drawn to Buddhism because of its meditation training and promise of personal transformation. Being middle to upper class, he is most likely to practice Vipassana, Zen or Vajrayana forms of Buddhism (Nattier 1998:188). If Canadian, she will most likely practice Vajrayana; if American, Zen. He will emphasize meditation practice over devotional activities, and will usually incorporate Buddhist meditation into his daily routine. There is a strong association between meditation and psychotherapy (Tanaka 1998:291) as meditation is deemed conducive to personal development, transformation, and psychic maturation. She probably practices meditation with a small group of fellow Buddhists (usually ten to fifteen participants) in a private home on a weekly basis (Morreale 1998:xvi), and attends larger public events sponsored by Buddhist organizations (usually lectures or initiations given by high profile Buddhist leaders/teachers). Although there may be participation in extensive meditation retreats on an annual or semi-annual basis, religious practice remains flexible and highly individualized (Lavine 1998:112). He typically meditates "virtuoso" (Nattier 1995:45) and is not required to convert or commit to an institutional organization (Lavine 1998:112). A smaller portion of Euro-American Buddhists will be under the age of 30 (some the children of boomers); an undergraduate or graduate student who has had no exposure to her parents or grandparents natal

religion. A significant percentage of this demographic will express no religious affiliation.

At the Vajrakilaya empowerment held in Ottawa on May 16th, I distributed a questionnaire in an attempt to develop a profile of Euro-Americans (Canadians and Americans) attending the event. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section consisted of a series of closed questions designed to develop individual profiles, that is, gender, age, occupation, income and the regularity of meditation practice. The second section asked open questions to explore participants' subjective reasons for practicing Vajrayana. Eighty participants agreed to respond to the questionnaire, but only sixty-four of the questionnaires were returned. Five had to be discarded because of insufficient data. Responses to section one are summarized in charts I and II, and tables I, II, and III. Excerpts have been taken from section two to highlight participants' description of mystical-ecstatic and transformative experiences, their reasons for practicing Tibetan Buddhism, and why some have decided to switch from their natal religion of Christianity to Buddhism.

Chart I indicates that women outnumber men in all age categories (the questionnaire format could not explain these differences), while Chart II clearly illustrates that baby boomers make up the overwhelming majority of participants.

Chart I

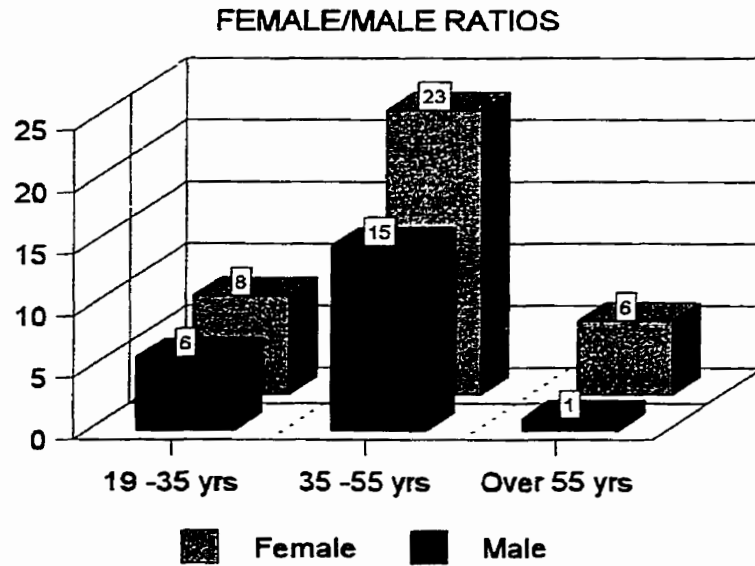
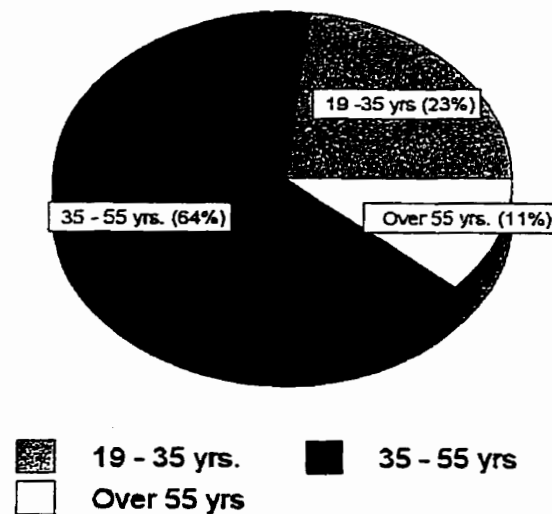


Chart II

### AGE OF VAJRAKILAYA PARTICIPANTS



**Table 1**  
**RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND AND AFFILIATION**

RESPONSES:	19-35 YRS..	35-55 YRS.	OVER 55 YRS	TOTAL #
1. % who identify Christianity as natal religion	21% 3	95% 36	100% 7	46
2. % who claim no religious affiliation.	57% 8	22% 8	28% 2	18
3. % who experimented with other religions.	35% 5	84% 32	100% 7	44
4. % who synthesize Buddhism with other religions & psychotherapeutic techniques	35% 5	22% 8	28% 2	15
5. % who claim to have switched from Christianity to Buddhism	21% 3	42% 16	100% 7	26
TOTAL #	24	100	25	149

Table I reveals a significant percentage of baby boomers and those over the age of 55 years identify Christianity as their natal religion, while 57% of participants under the age of 35 years claim no religious affiliation. Participants over the age of 35 years show a stronger tendency to experiment with several religions. A smaller percentage in all categories synthesize Buddhist practice with other forms of religion and psychotherapy. A significant percentage of baby boomers have switched from Christianity to Buddhism, while all over the age of 55 years indicate switching from their natal Christian religion to Buddhism. Table II indicates that those over the age of 55 years meditate the most, although a high percentage of boomers meditate on a daily basis. Those under the age of 35 are split; 57% meditating daily and 43% meditating on a weekly or monthly basis.

**Table II**  
**FREQUENCY OF MEDITATION**

RESPONSES:	19-35 YRS.	35-55 YRS.	OVER 55 YRS.	TOTAL
1. % who meditate 3 to 4 times per month or less	15% 2	/	/	2
- who meditate 3 to 4 times per week	28% 4	14% 5	/	9
- who meditate daily	57% 8	86% 33	100% 7	48
- who meditate more than once per day	/	37% 14	100% 7	21
TOTAL #	14	42	14	70

Table III  
LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND OCCUPATIONS

EDUCATION	19-35 YRS.	35-55 YRS	OVER 55 YRS	TOTAL
1. % who hold post secondary degrees	78% 11	92% 35	57% 4	50
- hold post graduate degrees	28% 4	65% 25	57% 4	33
-hold post doctorate degrees	/	5% 2	29% 2	4
2. % of full time students	64 % 9	1% 3	/	12
TOTAL #	24	65	10	99

Table III clearly indicates that the majority of participants are highly educated professionals.

OCCUPATIONS	19 - 35 YRS.	35 - 55 YRS.	OVER 55 YRS.	TOTAL
3.% of Professionals	21% 3	97% 37	71% 5	45
<u>SUBTOTAL</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>45</u>
-medical/mental health/therapy	/	42% 16	14% 1	17
-elementary/secondary teachers/ university professors	/	18% 7	29% 2	9
- artists/writers/creative arts	/	15% 6	14% 1	7
- high tech (writers/software designers/support/consulting	21% 3	12% 5	/	8
- Business/Consulting	/	10% 4	/	4
- Retired	/	/	14% 1	1
<u>SUBTOTAL #</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>45</u>
4. % who work in non-professional occupations (bar tender, waitress, clerical)	15% 2	3% 1	29% 2	5
SUBTOTAL	5	38	7	50

## SECTION 2 : SUBJECTIVE REPORTS

### A. Subjective reports of mystical-ecstatic experiences during meditation:

- 73% of all respondents reported having mystical-ecstatic experiences. Descriptions of these experiences include: a high level of emotion accompanied with uncontrollable weeping or laughter, a sense of floating, a feeling of being out-of-body, extreme peace and calm, bodily sensations of ecstasy, profound insight into spiritual questions and personal problems, an opening of the heart, sympathetic joy and sorrow for others, and 58% described their experience as ineffable, beyond description.

### B. Subjective reports of transformative experiences as the result of meditation:

- 81% report that regular meditation practice has been transformative. Descriptions include changes that are so continuous and subtle that they are hard to detect at the time, but are realized later. 12 % claimed to have gained increased confidence, greater emotional stability and a reduction of anxiety. 12% reported meaningful dreams, and one respondent reported visions. 42% reported greater insight into the meaning of life that led to significant changes in their relationships, and the way they interact with others.

### C. In response to the question: If you switched from Christianity to Buddhism, please state your reasons for doing so, subjects reported:

- *Christianity was in my view narrow-minded and blind to the realities of life. Sectarian and in many ways rigid and unyielding - 53 yr. female*
- *I find it (Buddhism) a religion more directed towards integration of the psyche and less*

- involved with ego-oriented aspects such as soul etc. - 60 yr. male*
- *It (Buddhism) works and doesn't demand belief but investigation and developmental experience and so confidence! - 54 yr. female*
- *They (Christianity) would not answer my questions of spiritual things happening to me - 61 yr. female*
- *I reject the dogmatic aspects of Christianity and the practices of Buddhism (i.e. meditation) allows one to experience the teachings, that is, it goes beyond the notion of an intellectual concept. - 27 yr. female*
- *I was raised in the Christian faith, but from a very young age felt a hypocrisy about it. Those teaching didn't seem to actually walk their talk. In Buddhism, the teacher embodies the teachings and are the clear lights of the path.- 42 yr. female*
- *I switched to Buddhism after a long period of atheism and scientific positivism. - 43 yr. male*
- *I find Catholicism can't explain my life situation - 47 yr. female*
- *I never was engaged by Christianity - 40 yr. male*
- *In the east, meditation was kept alive. - 54 yr. female*
- *When the time came for me to face and prepare for death and dying, I felt that my Catholic background and upbringing had left me utterly unprepared - I felt instinctively that I had to face death/dying as a Buddhist, and not as a Christian -that was very clear to me. - 42 yr. male*
- *Mainly because of my perception that Christianity as very patriarchal - being a woman, I find more meaning in Buddhism. -41 yr. female*
- *Christianity has lost its esoteric and inner teachings. Although it can be found in theosophy. - 60 yr. female*
- *Catholic doctrine (well seen as Christian imperialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) is not satisfactory. It denies one's own spirituality. " I am a worthless sinner saved only through the doctrine- keeps fools going to Church. - 62 yr. female*
- *My Christian affiliation or rather I should say my Christian practice was minimal to begin with . Because Christianity stresses faith over judgement, does not expound a rigorous methodology of practice and I feel that it is less autonomous than Buddhism. -36 yr. male*

D. In response to the question: Describe why Tibetan Buddhism appeals to you, the following reports were given:

- *Because it is a rigorous spiritual technology. Because personal judgement and insight are integral to it. Because it advocates compassion. Because it is unifying practice which transcends duality and I have always had an innate notion that dualities should and can be overcome. - 38 yr male*
- *Provides me with all the tools I need to get on with my life. 53 yr. old female*
- *The visualizations appeal to me. I find meditation very beneficial (cleansing of the psyche). - 60 yr. male*
- *The shamanic quality of active deities is a comfortable activity. - 61 yr. female*
- *Puts the breaks on my ego and grounds me with the broader forces of life. -43 yr. male*
- *It is my answer to a long search. - 40 yr. male*
- *It works!!! - 43 yr. male*
- *It fills a void I was experiencing in my atheist view of the universe. - 49 yr. male*
- *Its precise prescriptions for manipulating the psyche. -55 Yr. female*
- *Teachings just make sense. - 23 yr. female*
- *Provides relevance to life experience. - 46 yr. male*
- *I have developed as a person in patience and wisdom. I can see my growth and will happily continue to practice on the path. - 48 yr. female.*

#### Summary of Results

Based on the results of the data collected at the Vajrakīlaya initiation, participants seem to be fairly representative of the population of Euro-American Buddhists in Canada and the United States. Data on the average level of income could not be calculated, as a significant portion of



Canadian respondents left this section blank on their questionnaire. However, individual participant's profiles seem to closely align to the hypothetical one outlined at the beginning of this section. The survey clearly reveals Euro-Americans' preference for Tibetan Buddhism because of its experiential dimension, meditation practices and potential for personal growth, healing, and transformation. A need many felt could not be met in their natal religion of Christianity.

d. The Gnostic Undercurrents of Western Buddhism.

Writing in the early 1930's, well before the advent of postmodernism, C.G. Jung (1933:203-205) noted a growing disillusionment with rationalism, science, and materialism in the West. Since the "enlightenment era", European and American psychic energies had been invested more and more exclusively into conscious life. Jung (205) attributed much of the "evil in the world", including the atrocities of colonial rule and the horrors of the first World War, to the West's collective shadow; a systematic repression and denial of unacceptable drives and motivations that continued to operate autonomously outside of conscious awareness. According to Jung (209), the overemphasis on conscious life gave rise to a compensation in the European and American unconscious. This was evidenced in an apparent bent: 1) to "discover what exists in the psyche outside of consciousness", 2) to gain first hand knowledge of the psyche itself (207) through subjective experience (208) and not through the dogmatic formulation of religion based on faith alone (207), 3) to experience the psyche without reference to one particular creed (207), and 4) to experiment with other "recognized religions and genuine sciences"(208). To Jung, "the crux of the modern spiritual problem" was manifested by Europeans' and Americans' psychological interest in and expectations of psychic life; expectations that Western religions seemed to no longer meet (206). It was this psychological interest in invisible, imponderable

psychic forces, elemental to the transformation of human life, that birthed new religious movements and promised “far-reaching spiritual changes in the West” (217). New religious movements always originate, Jung contended, in the social deeps and margins - among people of the “lower social levels who follow the unconscious forces of the psyche” and “who are less infected with academic prejudices” (211). He posited that “the passionate interest in these movements arises undoubtedly from psychic energy which can no longer be invested in obsolete forms of religion” (207).

Jung associated the widespread interest in psychic phenomena with the emergence of several new religious movements (206), including a growing number of avowed Theosophists in Europe and America. He compared this religious fervor to the “flowering of Gnostic thought” in the first and second centuries after the common era, and in fact, believed that the “spiritual currents” of the new religious movements had a deep affinity with Gnosticism (206). Gnostic systems were based on direct religious experience, that is, knowledge of unconscious psychic forces, and moral teachings which incorporated the shadow aspect of the psyche (207).

Jung felt that the modern spiritual crisis stemmed from Western theology’s historical suppression of gnostic sects and their emphasis on mystical experience (Jung 1967:68). He posited that the psyche is innately religious and its telos moves towards mystical experience (Dourley 1998:124). As complimentary functions, religion denotes an “inward movement of the libido into the unconscious” (Jung 1974: par 423), while mystical experience is a particularly vivid experience of the collective unconsciousness (Jung cited in Dourley 1998:124). The collective unconsciousness is comprised of archetypes ( Jung 1959/1990:42). Archetypes are inherited structures that are analogous to patterns of instinctual energies (44), “forms without content”,

that carry a potential for certain types of perception and action (48). Jung indicates that mystical experience is a direct experience of archetypes (Jung cited in Dourley 1998:124). As latent propensities of the collective unconsciousness, archetypes are vested with such intense energy “that when they impact on the consciousness, they create a sense of the numinous. This experience of the numinous is the basis of the human experience of the divine in both its benevolent and malevolent forms” (124). It should be noted that archetypes are in themselves unknowable, and are made conscious through images and affective tones. Archetypal representations are expressed via religious symbols and the universal motifs of mythologies (CW 8 par.92). Religious ideas in psychological reality do not rest solely on faith and tradition, but originate with the archetypes (CW 8 par. 427).

Between the third and fourth century, Christian orthodoxy politically organized and united disparate religious factions that might otherwise threaten the institutional integrity of the fledgling church (Pagels 1979:120). The new institution asserted its authority by declaring only the church could mediate salvation (Cupitt 1998:108). Divine revelation had been once and eternally imparted to the founders of the church, and personal revelation evoked through mystical states was suppressed (108). The divine became transcendent, self contained, needing neither humanity nor its imperfections (Pagels 1979:121). The unification of the Christian church was made possible through the suppression of dissident voices, most notably those belonging to Gnostic sects. Gnostic sects eschewed all forms of organized religion, espoused the equality and leadership of men and women, were egalitarian in structure, and sought personal revelation through hermeneutic engagement with sacred texts and mystical experience (McGinn 1991:97). “Only on the basis of immediate experience could one create poems, vision accounts, myths, and

hymns that Gnostics prized as proofs that one had actually gained gnosis (Pagel 1979:145).” The Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* (67:9-12 cited in Pagels 1979) states that “truth must be clothed in symbols. Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images. One will not receive the truth in any other way”. In effect, this describes mystical experience as a direct encounter with archetypes. Elaine Pagels (1979:123) writes “ For Gnostics, exploring the psyche became explicitly what it is for many people today implicitly - a religious quest. Some who seek their own interior direction, like the radical Gnostics, reject religious institutions as a hindrance to their progress”.

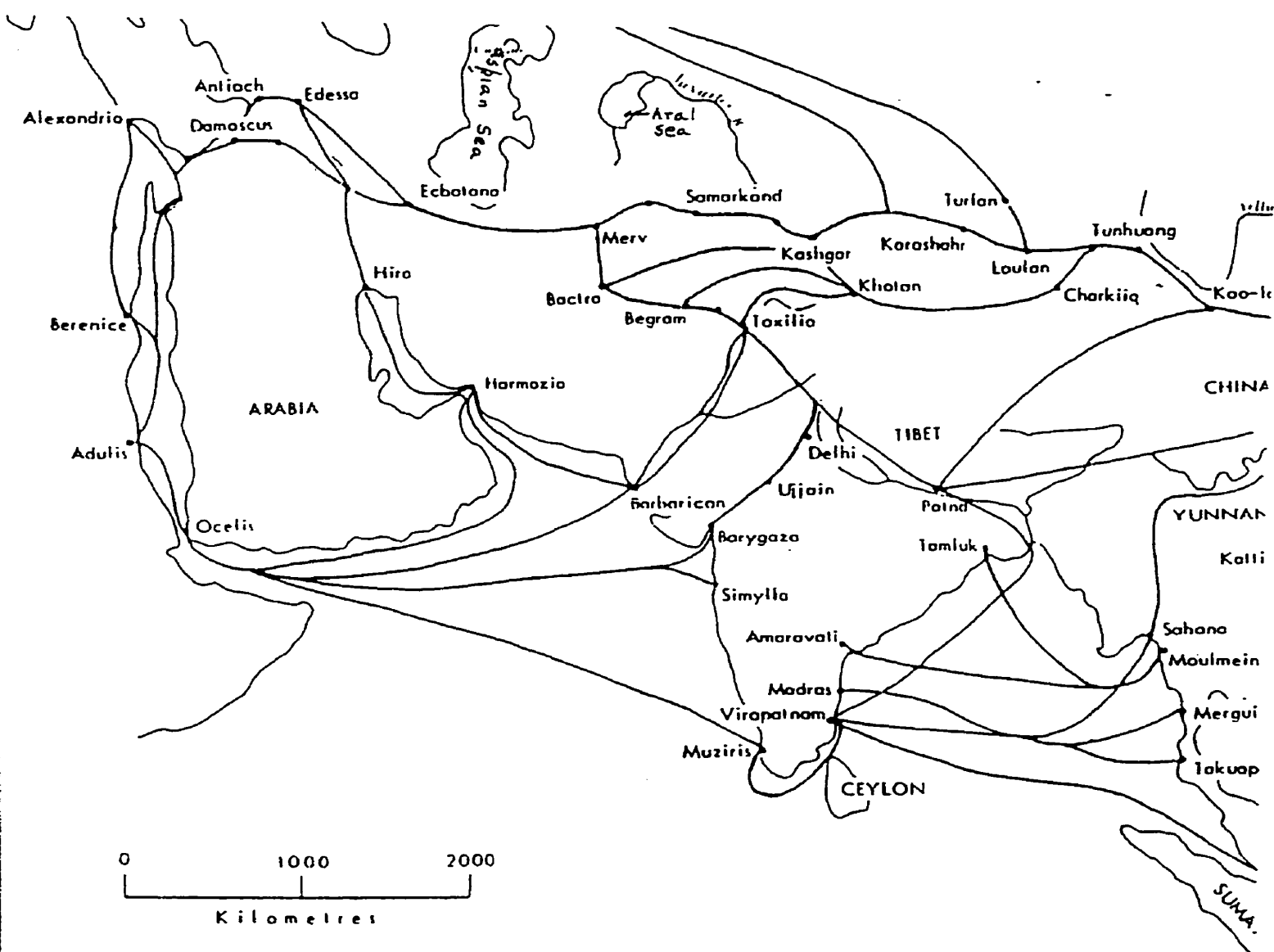
Unlike the church whose sacraments were administered to a wider society, Gnostic ritual and teachings remained esoteric and were transmitted by a recognized master to a select group of worthy initiates (Burkett 1987:231). The methods of Gnosticism, which tried to discover the divine within, “did not lend themselves to mass religion” (Pagels 1979:140). Although cautious of oversimplification, Robert Ellwood (1973:42-43) suggests that, between the first and third centuries of the common era, Western religious life divided into two modes of religious expression: emissary and exemplary. The former mode emphasized the revelations of founding prophets, the authority of religious doctrine and historical narratives as determined within a linear time construct, and the domination of humanity over nature which would eventually give rise to rationalism, science, and materialism, “as well as to certain evils” of Western civilization. The later’s orientation is traceable to early Greek and Roman contact with India and Asiatic shamanism, “movements watered by Eastern wells or fed by shamanistic springs” (43), that valued mystical-ecstatic experience, secret initiatory rituals, the guidance of an exemplary, charismatic master, and spiritual techniques conducive to insight and transformation (44-45). Ellwood (26)

links the current vogue for Eastern religious imports in North America to the Protean self's disdain of traditional Western emissary modes of religion and preference for "exemplary, ecstatic religious styles" (27). Gnosticism developed within the syncretistic and cosmopolitan culture of the eastern Mediterranean cities of Antioch and Alexandria, where Greco-Roman and Egyptian philosophies and deities fused with imports from the far East (44). In many respects, Gnostic sects may be viewed as the predecessors of twentieth century exemplary movements (46), including the Euro-American Buddhist movement. Euro-American Buddhists' democratic and egalitarian orientation, as well as their emphasis on meditation as a psychotherapeutic technique, seem reminiscent of early Gnostic themes. However, it should be noted that, the optimistic attitude towards humanity's fate and the notion of social progress that prevails within current Euro-American Buddhism, stands in sharp contrast to the existential despair and the world denying orientation that characterized early Gnostic sects (47).

Many scholars have questioned whether Gnostic sects were influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism (Pagels 1979:xxi). Gnosticism began to flourish during a period when Greco-Roman trade alliances were being forged along the northern and southern silk routes that connected eastern Mediterranean cities to the far East; routes that Buddhist missionaries had proselytized on for generations (Pagels 1979:xxi; Guenther 1994:26). Based on his translations of Nyingma terms, Herbert Guenther (Fields 1992:315) speculates that Buddhist teachings entered Tibet not from India, but from Khotan, a city along the southern silk trade route in central Asia. Going against conventional scholastic interpretations that Uddiyana, the reported birthplace of Padmasambhava, was located in the Swat Valley of Pakistan, Guenther (1994:26) instead posits

# ANCIENT TRADE ROUTES

(circa 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E.)



that, the suffix “ana” suggests a location in Central Asia. Guenther (26) claims that all evidence, including legends surrounding Padmasambhava’s birth near a lake, points to a location south of the Aral sea (modern Turkestan/Afghanistan), a region that had been inhabited by the Sogdhians. Archeologist Edgar Knobloch (1972:54) states that the Sogdhians were a cosmopolitan and highly educated populace whose religion “ was a synthesis of many creeds and currents, incorporating elements of Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Buddhism, and Christianity, together with Greek and Indian mythology”. Guenther (1994:27) suggests that it is highly likely that Padmasambhava fled from Khotan as a refugee to Tibet during the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E., when Arab Moslems invaded and crushed Sogdhian civilization. Despite some fundamental philosophical differences which, I will discuss in chapter three, Guenther notes striking similarities between Padmasambhava’s writings and statements made by the “foremost Gnostic thinker”, Basilides (85-145 C.E.), suggesting an earlier Buddhist-Gnostic confluence.

Several parallels may be drawn between early Gnosticism and Buddhism. Gnosticism, like higher levels of Buddhism, disciplined the mind and required intensive periods of training under a realized master (Pagels 1979: 132,140). Resembling the Buddhist Guru-Chela relationship, the gnostic initiate submitted to the authority of a master as a provisional measure. As the psyche matured, the master and his teachings would be outgrown, and eventually even the need for an external authority figure would be outgrown (131) as the gnostic became a “disciple of (his) own mind” (132). Ignorance not sin was regarded as the source of suffering. Elaine Pagels (125) notes: “ The Gnostic movement shared certain affinities with contemporary methods of exploring the self through psychotherapeutic techniques. Both Gnosticism and psychotherapy value, above all, knowledge - the self knowledge which is insight. They agree that, lacking this, a person

experiences the sense of being driven by impulses he does not understand". Evil was not attributed to an external cause, but to ignorance of unconscious psychic forces that generated inner emotional and mental disturbances (146) that were then projected unto others in the world. The Gnostic interpretations of suffering and evil is philosophically comparable to the Buddhist "chain of co-dependent origination"; a teaching fundamental to all forms of Buddhism. In the chain of co-dependent origination, ignorance and the evils of greed, hate and delusion perpetuate the suffering of cyclic existence as unconscious psychic energies come into being moment by moment to create conscious experience (Devdas 1995:27). Gnosticism, like Buddhism, asserted that the potential for liberation or destruction, therefore, resides within the psyche itself (Pagels 1979:126). Analogous to lay Buddhists, Gnostics married, raised children, and had a livelihood, but these pursuits were regarded secondary to gnosis (146). The Greek word gnosis is synonymous with the Sanskrit term jhana, meaning wisdom through contact with the divine (Griffiths 1989:231), and Gnostic techniques, akin to Buddhist meditation, claimed to transform consciousness via direct contact with the divine (Burkett 1987:113). Similar to the terms of Tibetan Buddhism, Gnosticism incorporated multiple sources of revelation including "new revelatory texts based on hidden messages" transmitted by Jesus to select souls during a vision (McGinn 1991:97).

Jung first encountered Gnosticism through a revelation of his own in 1916; an encounter that would profoundly alter his approach to depth psychology (Hoeller 1982:xv). Indeed Jung would view Gnostics as the progenitors of Western depth psychology (Pagels 1979:133) and interpret Valentinus' creation myth as a description of the psychological processes by which ego consciousness emerges from the abyss of the unconscious. When the Christian church suppressed



mystical practices of Gnosticism, to a large extent Western consciousness lost its symbolic connectedness and became alienated from the re-vitalizing energies of the collective unconsciousness necessary for psycho-physical healing and transformation (Dourley 1998:126).

Despite the growing number of “Buddhist enthusiasts” at the end of the nineteenth century, Jung (1933) noted that Western religious movements such as the Theosophical society were little more than an “amateurish imitation of the East” (216) and were in fact, “Gnosticism in a Hindu dress” (206). He quipped that Theosophists have an amusing idea that Mahatmas “seated somewhere in the Himalayas or Tibet, direct every mind in the world”. (216). Jung viewed the Theosophical myth of Tibetan monasteries full of wise Mahatmas directing world affairs as more representative of spiritual forms that arise from the depths of Westerners’ own psychic life; unconscious psychic forces that impel a quest for meaning and mystical knowledge. When this impetus is turned outwards, it co-opts Eastern forms of Buddhism, but when it leads inward to the depths of the unconscious psyche, like a Buddha, one sweeps aside all dogmatic formulations of religion to directly experience the renewing depths of the collective unconsciousness (218). Jung observed that oriental texts and their attendant practices are the fruition of ten centuries of active psychic investigation. Western psychoanalysis which employs dream analysis and active imagination<sup>13</sup> is “only a beginners attempt compared to what is an immemorial art in the East” (216).

After collecting extensive empirical data from the subjective accounts of healthy and pathological clients, Jung (1959/1990:par 498) proposed that the collective unconsciousness has a Janus face: one face points to the raw instinctual energies, vestiges of archaic ancestral structures, while the other points to humanity’s future or fate. Patterns of instinctual energies

are extremely conservative and resist deviation from their natural course (CW 8 par. 80). Jung posited that the transformation of instinctual energy is possible through its canalization into a libido analogue (CW 8 par.83). “Just as a power-station imitates a waterfall and thereby gains possession of its energy, so the psychic mechanism imitates the instinct and is thereby enabled to apply its energy for special purposes ( CW 8 par. 83).” The psychological mechanism that transforms energy is the symbol (CW 8 par. 88), and “only where the symbol offers a steeper gradient than nature is it possible to canalize libido into other forms” (CW 8 par. 91). In his discussion of libido analogues, Jung (CW 8 par. 91, par.92) writes:

*Only where a symbol offers a steeper gradient than nature is it possible to canalize libido into other forms...The fact that the symbol makes this deflection possible proves that not all the libido is bound up in a form that enforces the natural flow, but that a certain amount of energy remains over, which could be called excess libido.*

*I have called the symbol that converts energy a libido analogue. By this I mean an idea that can give equivalent expression to the libido and canalize it into a form different from the original one. Mythology offers numerous equivalents of this kind, ranging from sacred objects such as churingas, fetishes etc., to figures of gods. The rites with which the sacred objects are surrounded often reveal very clearly their nature as transformers of energy....The transformation of libido through the symbol is a process that has been going on ever since the beginnings of humanity and continues still. Symbols are never devised consciously, but were always produced out of the unconscious by way of revelation or intuition.*

Numerous mythological and philosophical systems formulate libido analogues (unconscious psychic energies) that can only be known through subjective experience (CW 5 par. 198). Vajrayana or Buddhist Tantra is one such system. Chapter three will examine in detail one particular Tantric ritual, the Vajrakilaya sadhana. Concepts from C.G. Jung’s depth psychology and biogenetic structuralism will serve as a basis for Western comparison.

### 3. THE VAJRAKILAYA SADHANA: A TANTRIC RITUAL

*Space is form and ...as space penetrates form, form is space.  
Lankavatara Sutra*

*Nothingness is the same as fullness. In infinity full is no  
better than empty. Nothingness is both empty and full.  
This nothingness or fullness we name pleroma. Therein  
thinking and being cease...It is quite fruitless to think  
about pleroma for this would mean dissolution.  
Jung (1963:379)*

#### a. The Nyingma's Tantric Heritage

Tantra refers to “systems of practice and meditation derived from esoteric texts emphasizing cognitive transformation through visualization, symbols, and ritual” (Powers 1995:220). Nyingma Tulku Thondup Rinpoche (1997:39) claims that Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) contains all levels of Tantric literature and methods of practice. Each school of Buddhism (Sakya, Kagyu, Gelug, and Nyingma) has its own distinctive Tantric practice, and lineages within each school, are affiliated with a particular Tantric text or a group of related texts (Powers 1995:219). Tantric texts are divided into two main traditions: Ancient and New (Thondup Rinpoche 1997:39). The Ancient Tantras, the first to be imported to Tibet, are revelatory termas based on the direct teachings of various Buddhas to visionary sages. The New Tantras entered Tibet from India, after the eleventh century, and are purported to be actual historical accounts of Shakyamuni Buddha's life and teachings (39). Yet, historical evidence indicates that Tantra did not develop in India “for at least a millennium after the death of Shakyamuni” (Powers 1995:220). It is more likely that Tantra emerged from the margins of Indian society in the form of “cults and secret lineages”, eventually “penetrating the bastions of

established Buddhism” sometime during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century (220-221). The Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelugpa lineages are associated with the New Tantras, but the Nyingma (the ancient ones) trace their lineages to the Tantras of founding visionary sages. According to Nyingma sects, the newer Tantric translations, more concerned with technical and historical accuracy, lack the spiritual essence of texts originally composed and transmitted by realized masters (Powers 1995:319).

Traditionally, it is believed that Tibet’s first contact with Buddhism occurred in the second century, when a text consecrated by Avalokiteshvara (Buddha of compassion) fell from the sky unto King Totori Nyentsen’s palace roof (Samuel 1993:440; Powers 1995: 126). However, it is more likely that Tibet’s first contact with Buddhism came during its military incursions into Central Asia (as far west as the River Oxus and northeastwards to and including Chinese Turkestan), Nepal, and India ( as far south as Magadha in central India) in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries ( Powers 1995:125-126; Thondup 1997:53). In 727, a Chinese traveler reported: “As far as the country of Tibet in the East is concerned, there are no monasteries there, and the teachings of the Buddha are unknown (cited in Hoffman 1975:127)”. After the Tibetan King, Trisong Detson, attacked and captured the Chinese capital of Ch’ang an in 763 C.E., the T’ang emperor formed a military alliance with the Arab caliph Harun al-Rashid, who feared Tibetan armies would advance westward beyond the River Oxus (Powers 1995:125; Thondup 1997:53). The Arabs subsequently drove Tibetan forces out of several Central Asian regions, including Sogdhian.

Under the reign of Trisong Detson’s predecessor, Songsten Gampo (618- 650 C.E.), Tibet became a major power in Asia. Songsten Gampo and a large portion of the Tibetan elite viewed Chinese and Indian culture as superior to their own (Williams 1991:190). In an effort to elevate

Tibetan civilization and forge new political alliances, Songsten Gampo married two princesses: the daughter of the T'ang emperor and the daughter of the Nepalese king (187). According to legend, Songsten Gampo's brides (said to be emanations of the Buddhist goddess Tara) converted him to Buddhism (Powers 1995:126-127). The king built the first Buddhist temples in Lhasa to display the numerous sacred Buddhist artefacts given to him as gifts from his wives (Williams 1991:187). On the encouragement of his Chinese bride, Songsten Gampo's sons and the sons of Tibetan aristocracy were sent to China to be educated in the finer aspects of culture and bureaucratic organization (Samuels 1993:440). Songsten Gampo would also send the Tibetan scholar, Tonmi Samghota, to study in Kashmir, where he developed the first standardized Tibetan script and grammar (Powers 1995:128). Essentially, Tonmi Samghota adapted Indian Sanskrit to Tibetan phonetics. As a result Sanskrit syllables, which are believed to elicit specific archetypes within the collective unconsciousness (Stablein 1991:72), remain an integral component of Tibetan Tantric ritual.

Although Songsten Gampo is credited with introducing Buddhism to Tibet, Trisong Detson established Buddhism as its state religion (Samuels 1993:440). Trisong Detson viewed Buddhism as a means of centralizing state control and civilizing the unsavory elements of Tibetan society (Powers 1995:128-129). At Trisong Detson's request, several Buddhist sages traveled to Tibet, where they began to translate the Ancient Tantras and ordain the first monks (Samuels 1993:44). Vimalamitra, a Tantric master born in west India, was instructing the King of Oddiyana (Indrabodhi), when Trisong Detson's delegation arrived to invite him to teach in Tibet (Powers 1995:322). Like many of his contemporaries, Vimalamitra had a syncretistic background, studying Hinyana (Vinyana code of ethics and the psychology of the abhidharma) and Mahayana (sutric

texts and the path of the Bodhisattva) Buddhism in India, training with the Tantric master, Buddhaguhya at a Mount Kalish hermitage, and the Dzogchen master ( the highest level of yogic training in the Nyingma lineage), Shri Simha, in China (321-322). Vimalamitra accepted Tisong Detson's invitation, and taught and translated in Tibet for thirteen years, before departing to a mountain retreat in China. At the time of his death, Vimalamitra predicted he would reincarnate every century as long as the Dharma remained in Tibet (322). Reincarnation plays a crucial role in Tibetan Buddhism as each incarnate revitalizes a lineage through his inspired teachings and translations of texts (323). Victor Turner (1988:516) notes that revitalistic religions aim to "restore the social bond of their communicants with the pristine vigor of that religion in its days of generative crisis and ecstasy". The "incarnational lineage" of Vimalamitra continues today with Penor Rinpoche, the eleventh throne holder of the Palyul lineage ( Powers 1995:323).

Guiseppe Tucci (1949:155) once observed that any scholar searching for historical truth in Tibetan accounts is bound to encounter a great deal of frustration. Because politics, religion, social and economic structures are so completely integrated in the Tibetan cosmology, historical events tend to be revised and overlaid with Vajrayana mythopoeia. To the consternation of rational and linear thinking Western scholars, the distinction between myth and "factual" historical events tend to blur. Several Western scholars (Grunfeld 1996; Lopez 1998; Batchelor 1994) suggest that it is not unusual for Tibetans to re-construct historical events so that they become imbued with religious significance. But as one Nyingma scholar asserts, "in the Tibetan mythic world view, what happened is not nearly as important as the meaning of what happened" (A. Sumegi, personal communication 2000). In his comparison of postmodern consciousness to that of pre-literate tribal societies, William V. Dunning (1993:3,6) posits that:

*(P)re-literate tribal societies gradually translate the narrative of recent history into myth by telling and retelling stories. And myth, with its accompanying sense of cyclic time, tends to compress the past, present, and future into one inseparable body....Myth is understood as timeless: it transcends historical possibilities... Buddhists and Taoists have retained this perception of circular time, and they consider history to be a fiction, because things always return to their former state. ....This cyclic view allows (pre-literate tribal societies) to use historical and mythic images to imply contemporaneous relationships with earlier generations.*

Victor Turner (1988:508-509) claims that pre-literate tribal societies transmit a culture's gnosis from one generation to the next through ritually induced liminality<sup>14</sup>. Drawing on Levi-Strauss' structuralism, Turner (509) contends that the same deep structures of the mind that produce habitual thinking in terms of binary oppositions, also provide the innate structural components of ritual: segregation, mediation, and transformation. The intermediary stage is one of liminality; "an essentially ambiguous, unsettled and unsettling" space full of creative potentials that are both liberating and dangerous (Turner 1974:274). It is associated with death, darkness, the womb and falls between the interstices of mental categories that structure conceptual thought and ordinary ego consciousness. It is a state in which unconscious material is accessed and symbols proliferate. The integration of unconscious and conscious processes lead to the re-aggregation and emergence of a new state of being (Turner 1974:273), a process that Carl Jung refers to as "individuation". Liminality is conducive to "communitas"; a timeless condition, a mythic dimension in which masked figures representing deities, deceased ancestors, cultural heroes, and chthonic powers appear in grotesque and beautiful forms (Turner 1988:508). "(M)yth is recited to explain the origin, attributes, and behavior of these strange and sacred inhabitants of liminality"(508). Sacred visual or auditory symbols, that are incorporated within a mythology, serve as foci for hermeneutics and religious interpretations and impart knowledge about

“cosmologies, values, and cultural axioms” (508). Mythology is particularly significant in pre-literate cultures, “where the cultural deposit has to be transmitted either through speech or by repeated observation of standardized behavioral patterns”(508).

Anthropologist Geoffrey Samuels (1993:19) suggests that Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism) is largely an oral tradition, and its gnosis is transmitted from one generation to the next via a lineage of living teachings, said to originate with divine beings in the “Great Time of myth”. The Great Time is distinguished from ordinary everyday life, and is a timeless space occupied by Tantric deities, great Tibetan and Indian masters of the past, and cultural heroes. The activities, attributes, and behavioral patterns of the beings in Great Time represent cognitive potentialities for humans in general, and a prototype for Tantric practice and ritual in particular (19). Perhaps the greatest cultural hero and Tantric master is Padmasambhava, known to Tibetans as Guru Rinpoche (precious teacher). All four schools of Vajrayana regard Padmasambhava as the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, but the Nyingma trace their lineage to his first teachings and translations at the Samye monastery, and believe him to be the second Buddha (Thondup 1997:50).

Tibetan mythology indicates that Padmasambhava was born in Uddiyana during a period of great drought and starvation. Seeing Uddiyana’s suffering, the Buddha Avalokiteshvara projected a beam of red light from his tongue striking a lake from which a lotus unfurled. Avalokiteshvara then projected the syllable hrih unto the lotus which took the form of a vajra. The vajra transformed into a magnificent eight year old boy, Padmasambhava, who miraculously dispelled Uddiyana’s drought (Batchelor 1994:64).

In Nyingma ritual, the tongue, especially a fiery tongue, is associated with the Buddha



Kuntzangpo and primordial consciousness (a state free of all conceptualization). The lotus is a mandala symbol, an archetypal image designating order, psychic integration and wholeness (Moacanin 1988:70). Jung (1959/1990:130) states: “ Mandalas are birth places, vessels of birth in the most literal sense, lotus-flowers in which the Buddha comes to life. Sitting in his lotus-seat, the yogi sees himself transfigured into an immortal”. In Sanskrit, mandala means “ circle” which connotes wholeness, psychic centering, the reconciliation of binary oppositions, and non-duality; in other words - primordial consciousness (Moacanin 1988:70). During meditation the yogi visualizes the mandala which in turn becomes a vehicle for great transformation (Jung CW 6 par.789). The aim of the sadhana ritual is to achieve Buddhahood by visualizing oneself as the incarnated deity situated at the center of the mandala. (Govinda 1969:181).

The five-point vajra is, in fact, a double mandala (63). The vajra center ( bindu or zero-point) represents undifferentiated form, a transcendental state of in-potentiality (62) free of “conceptual determinations and conditions”, what Shakyamuni Buddha described as the uncreated and unformed (64). Out of this undifferentiated unity at the center of the vajra, two opposite poles (binary oppositions) unfold like lotus blossoms and give rise to the dualistic nature of consciousness (62). The tension between the opposites produces the three dimensional space (akasha) of sensory-perceptions which generate the multiplicities of form (137). The emergence of the three dimensional space of Akasha from the formless dimension of primordial consciousness (three from the one) is symbolized by the quaternity of the mandala (62). At a public lecture in Ottawa, Nyingma Khenpo Tsewang Geyasto (Nov.1998) said it is only a slight mistake, a slight flickering of mind, that sets this process in motion. The four elements of earth (inertia), water (cohesion), fire (radiation) and air (vibration) are all modifications of Akasha

(space-ether) (57-58, 138). At its grossest level, Akasha is solidified into matter, at its most subtle, it merges imperceptibly with spiritual forces. Govinda (1969:58) explains the process by which the formlessness of primordial consciousness becomes form:

*The term anidassanam (invisible, imperceptible) alludes to the fact that consciousness, when differentiated or objectivated, steps into visible appearance, incarnates itself, coagulates into material form, which we call our body and which in reality is the visible expression of our past consciousness, the result of (vipaka) of previous form-creating states of consciousness.*

*Vinnanam anidassanam (primordial consciousness), therefore, can only be understood as consciousness in its undivided purity, not yet or no more split into duality of subject and object. Buddhaghosa, the author of Visuddhimagga, declares this consciousness to be identical with Nirvana. The term anatam confirms this idea, because consciousness can be infinite only when it is not limited by objects, when it has overcome the dualism of ego and non-ego. The purity of this state of consciousness is also emphasized by the expression sabbato pabham: radiating to all sides, penetrating everything with light (bodhi). In other words it is a state of enlightenment.*

The double aspect of the vajra “expresses the polarity, the relative dualism in the structure of consciousness and the world”, but at the same time “postulates a unity of opposites” (64). It suggests a relationship between the highest and ordinary states of consciousness, a continuum between material and immaterial worlds, and consequently the potential for transformation (64). While Akasha is the medium of movement, the principle of movement is prana (137). Prana is a dynamic principle that encompasses physiological and spiritual functions. It regulates respiration, the cardiovascular system, and the central nervous systems, but also is intrinsic to consciousness (mental activities) and the unconsciousness (psychic energies) (138). Tantric rites visualize channels through which psychic energies flow to accomplish the “greatest of all transformations, the evolution from ordinary, limited, deluded ego consciousness” to that of a fully awakened

Buddha (Lama Yeshe 1987:17). Akasha also corresponds to psychic energy centers (chakras) which overlay, but are not identical to organs of the body. Prana may either flow through these centers revitalizing the organism and facilitating spiritual development, or it can be dammed up thwarting the individuation process and causing illness (138). Mantric seed syllables (vibrations) correspond to each center, and are utilized by the Tantric adept to access these centers for the purpose of healing and transformation.

Although the religious philosophies of Gnosticism and Vajrayana were probably incubated in the same intense intellectual and syncretistic hub of Asia Minor in the first centuries of the common era, each developed different formulations of primordial consciousness or the primordial ground. Guenther (1994:2-3) argues that Gnosticism's static-monistic formulation of the ground perpetuated dualistic forms of thought, such as creator/created and good/evil. This dualism profoundly influenced the Gnostics' soteriology and explained, in part, the low esteem in which they held humanity and the world. Based on his translation of historical documents and religious texts of the period, Guenther (1994:9) concludes that Padmasambhava's systematization of Vajrayana texts (including Dzogchen) resulted from his tutelage under Garap Dorje in Oddiyana. Padmasambhava (and the Nyingma) posits that the ground is a dynamic, fluid, and process-oriented structure. Guenther (12) draws an analogy between the Nyingma primordial ground and modern quantum physics. He writes:

*It is a single indivisible and irreducible reality whose "oneness" or "uniqueness" may be likened to a single quantum state that in its not being a thing (whether material or immaterial) is an "openness" - (a dynamic) "nothingness" of pure intensity. Because of its pure intensity it is for ever active in the manner of the quantum state's quantum wave functions (replete with possibilities and probabilities). .....We may conceive of this pure intensity as intense matter, unformed yet allowing patterns to emerge.*

The Nyingma refer to the primordial ground as the “Foundation of All” which carries latent propensities or potentials (Dalai Lama 1997:120). “Archetypal Man”<sup>15</sup> (Guenther 1994:9) is a “process-structure” in which being unfolds and manifests from the latent potentials of the primordial ground in the form of psychic structures that are pre-figured, but not pre-determined. The experience of three dimensional space is a “world-spanning function” that may reach the “loftiest realms of spiritual wakening” or plummet to the “darkest regions of spiritual blindness” (5). According to Padmasambhava the break from primordial consciousness occurs as primal Being stirs and consequently perceives itself as an object in space, rather than space itself (5). The “wind” of primal being gusts into actuality in the dynamic principle of movement producing space-time (6). As the winds of primal Being intensify, they become “Being-as-fundamental-forces”. These forces become the building blocks of the physical body and the world, and mark a reversible process by which “radiation-dominate”energy becomes “matter-dominated” energy (6). Guenther (6) writes:

*Here the idea of energy is introduced by Padmasambhava himself and according to him this energy in itself is indistinguishable from what has been referred to (not defined) as “Being/ground/the whole” except for its emphasizing the dynamic character of wholeness that is “felt” by us as a pervasive energizing force.*

As this energizing force moves further from the ground into individual beings, it scatters into various luminosities (6). Govinda (1969:62) compares this process to light traveling through a prism and breaking into various color frequencies. In the Padmasambhava myth, the two lotus blossoms of the vajra issue five light rays which are represented by its five metal ribs. These energies concretize into five fields or gestalts ( Geunther 1994:51) that constitute the somatosensory functions (metabolic/neural systems) of the human organism. These fields also

carry a spiritual potential to evolve into higher psychic states (101). The instinctual-affective energies of the archaic layer of the psyche resist deviation from old established patterns (101), and seem diametrically opposed to the spiritual qualities of intuition and insight. Analogous to Jung's Janus face of the collective unconsciousness, the Nyingma posit that the generatrix of all psychic life points on the one hand to raw instinctual drives and compulsions, and on the other, towards the potential of spiritual emancipation (101). The triune dynamics of the process-structured ground force its unitary and formless state to "cross (an) instability threshold" and to break into ma-rig-pa (matter/instinctual-affective) and rig-pa (spiritual resonance of primordial awareness/wholeness) (92). Akin to the Gnostic concept of archons, the descent of energies into the subject/object dualism of the ego consciousness produces a dulling out (vikalapa) of the ground's ecstatic-luminosity. The instinctual-affective turns into the pollutants of passion, hatred, ignorance, arrogance, and jealousy (klesha), when the ego fails to recognize them as manifestations of psychic energies and represses them (48, 101).

Although the psyche has been fragmented, the memory of its source remains, and is expressed as a yearning to return its unitary state (6). By gathering together dispersed psychic energies into the single pointed concentration of meditation, the Tantric adept achieves greater psychic integration and unity. The same triune dynamics that results in the original symmetry break from the primordial ground are at work as the adept breaks through to states of consciousness beyond ordinary ego awareness; a state "in which archetypal conceptions and instinctual perceptions, spirit and matter confront one and other on the psychic plane" (see Jung CW 8 par. 420). The five points of the vajra represent the five Buddha families, or the yogic transformation of the instinctual-affective into the spiritual qualities of the Buddhas.

In his theories of the psyche's structure and dynamics, Jung appeared unable to "scientifically reconcile his conviction that archetypes are at once embodied structures and bear the imprint of the divine; that is, archetypes are both structures in the human body, and represent the domain of spirit" (Laughlin 1996:381). Yet, he intuited a psycho-physical continuum that bridged the physical and the psychic worlds (CW 8 par. 440). Laughlin (1996:388) attributes Jung's quandary to a Western phenomenological problematic that bifurcates experience and science, individual consciousness and the quantum universe. Laughlin (388) writes:

*In contrast, the experience of a contemplative - and I am including Jung in this category - is one of a continuum of increasing subtlety from awareness of form (termed rupa mindstates in Buddhist psychology) through the awareness of the energies that make up experience, but without form (the arupa mindstates), to experience of the Plenum void (the nirvana awareness). There simply is no disjunction between experiences typical of everyday awareness- experiences dominated by the awareness of objects and relations among objects - and the experience of the Plenum. There is a continuum of experienced subtlety differing in degrees of materialization and level of structure . Experience thus parallels the range of organization from the level of quantum to the level of gross matter.*

Tantra provides a model of reality at three levels of experience: outer, inner, and secret. The outer experience relates to form ( the external world), the inner relates to the subtleties of form in space ( fantasies, dreams, visions), and the secret experience is the realization that space and form are the same (primordial consciousness) (Trungpa 1975:25). Secret experience is the direct experience of primordial consciousness. The obstacle to this realization is the subject/object dualism of ego consciousness; the split between the ego and its projections (26). The ego's projections generate and condition mental obstructions and emotional disturbances (klesha) that perpetuate cyclic existence (Guenther 1975:32), and consequently cut the ego off from the renewing depths of its source (vikalapa) (33). Through the intensification of cognitive potentials

during meditation, ego fictions and distortions are cut through (symbolically represented by a knife or phurba), so that wisdom (jnana experienced subjectively as clear light) is realized .

“Because kelsha is a distortion of jnana it can be, so to say, rectified and returned to its source (32).” When the distortions of ego consciousness are penetrated and its habitual compulsions overcome, the positive qualities of mind (bodhi) arise spontaneously in the form of compassion (karuna) (33). If cognitive potentials are intensified to the point that wisdom and compassion are indivisible, bodhi-citta (Buddha mind) emerges. The limitations and compulsions of ego consciousness fall away and Buddhahood is realized (32-33).

Returning to the myth of Padmasambhava, Avalokiteshvara projects the syllable HRIH unto a lotus which turns into a vajra. HRIH is a mantric solar symbol associated with fire, luminosity and the qualities of insight, spiritual illumination, and intuitive knowledge. Fire (incandescence) is a state of aggregation in which material is energized (Govinda 1969:139). Jung(CW 6 par. 351) associated fiery images with energetic tension and the release of dammed up energy, and posited that it was the tension of binary oppositions that produced currents of energies (CW 6 par. 337). He conceptualized libido as energy of varying intensities, and like physical energy, psychic energy associated with libido is capable of transformation. These energetic transformation processes appear in fantasies, dreams, and visions (CW6 355), and are recapitulated in religious ritual and mythology. Although Jung (CW 8 par . 418) would view psyche and matter as two aspects of the same thing, he would construct their relationship as two distinct cones whose apices meet at a zero-point, “touch and do not touch”. Paradoxically, Jung (CW 8 par108) does not seem to make this distinction when he writes: “The spiritual appears in the psyche also as an instinct, indeed as a real passion, a “consuming fire,” as Nietzsche once

expressed it". Here Jung's comments seem very similar to the Tantric notion of the tapas; "a creative principle which acts on matter as well as the mind" (Govinda 1969:161). In relation to matter, it is an order-creating principle. On a spiritual level, it is a transformative principle, the flame of inspiration nourished by direct insight and mystical knowledge (161).

The vajra is transformed into a magnificent eight year old boy, Padmasambhava. The archetypal motif of the "divine child" is commonly experienced in connection with the mandala, and represents a synthesis of conscious and unconscious elements of the psyche (Kast 1992:110). Jung differentiates personal symbols that are conditioned by individual life histories (including repressed memories in the personal unconsciousness) and culture from suprapersonal symbols, which are archetypal and originate in the collective unconsciousness (Kast 1992:90).

Suprapersonal symbols may be presented to consciousness through personal complexes, so that tensions blocking the individuation process are confronted. Essentially, the symbol must be consciously recognized and then integrated into ego consciousness (102-103). When the divine child is integrated with the mandala, ego consciousness moves towards greater psychic integration (Kast 1992:110), and self-healing "springs from an instinctive impulse" (Jung cited in Kast 111).

If tensions of binary oppositions collapse, there is a dynamic sense of fluidity, accompanied by feelings of ecstasy, exhilaration, and revitalization as bodily and mental tensions are released (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:110). In states of hyper-concentration and bliss during meditation, repressed energy may be released "with greater and greater force until the whole consciousness appears to the adept to be filled with something like a roaring river of fire" (209).

In Tibetan mythology, this psychic revitalization and renewal is symbolized by the divine child Padmasambhava's dispelling of Uddiyana's drought.



The next segment of the myth follows an archetypal pattern similar to that of Shakyamuni Buddha. Padmasambhava is adopted by the King of Oddiyana ( the same Indrabodhi who received instructions from Vimalamitra) and is groomed for kingship. But he becomes disillusioned and rejects this lifestyle to become a wandering mendicant. At this juncture, the myth diverges from the usual Buddha archetypal pattern (Batchelor 1994:64). Before Padmasambhava can depart, he kills the son of a minister in his father's court (to prevent the son's further accumulation of negative karma), and by law is banished to a cemetery (Thondup 1997:51). Batchelor (1994:64) observes: "This peculiar twist to the renunciation story gives the first intimation of Padmasambhava's wrathful interactions with society, a quality that distinguishes him from Guatama and heralds his role as a Tantric adept who uses force to counteract the unstable conditions of society".<sup>16</sup>

While staying in the cemetery, Padmasambhava is initiated into the secret level of Tantra by the khadroma, Vajra Yogini. The Tibetan term khadroma refers to a female ethereal being having the quality of space that makes movement possible and form appear ( Govinda 1969:192). The numerical symbol of the Khadroma is zero (192). As an archetypal image, Vajra Yogini is a mediator, a messenger (62), a redeeming power that recovers " treasures of eons of experience, which lie dormant in the subconscious, and raises them into the realm of a higher consciousness, beyond that of our intellect ( 172)".<sup>17</sup> Vajra Yogini's semi-wrathful expression suggests the ambivalence of the archetype, and khadromas in general, possess divine and demonic qualities (Moacanin 1986:62). During his initiation, Padmasambhava takes a crystal knife and cuts open Vajra Yogini's breast to reveal the inner psychic forces of the body. Crystal often symbolizes the union of extreme opposites, and suggests a spiritual ordering principle in matter (Von Franz

1964:221). In doing so, Padmasambhava realizes that despite the transitoriness of the body, it is a vehicle for the highest of transformations, enlightenment (Govinda 1969:195). He then becomes an accomplished Tantric adept by mastering the channels of hidden psychic forces.

Wrathful and semi-wrathful khadromas carry a hooked knife in their right hand to symbolize the cutting through of the delusions of ego consciousness (198). Their male counterparts, the terrifying blood drinking Herukas, represent the dynamic triune aspect of enlightenment, the ecstatic breakthrough (sadhaka) towards the “unthinkable” and the “intellectually unattainable”. Herukas entail the dynamic process of becoming a Buddha and the bringing forth of unlimited compassion into the world (198-199). Embraced in ecstatic sexual union (yab-yum figure), the khadroma and heruka exemplify the mystic’s path of psychic integration and unity (199). Govinda (201) summarizes the qualities of wrathful deities:

*The inspirational impulse of the (khadromas) drives us from the protected narrowly fenced circle of our illusory personality and our habitual thought, until we burst the boundaries of this circle and our ego-hood in the ecstatic thrust towards the realization of totality. In ecstatic thrust, all bonds, all worldly fetters, all prejudices and illusions are destroyed, all conventional concepts are swept away, all craving and clinging is cut off at the root, past and future are extinguished, the power of karma broken, and the Great Void is experienced as the eternal present and ultimate Reality and Suchness. The violence and the power of this breaking through can only be visualized in a superhuman, demoniacal, many-armed and many headed figure, as a many dimensional, all-seeing being, penetrating simultaneously all directions, transforming the “three times” (indicated by the three eyes in each face) into timeless present.*

*Such a being cannot appear other than terrifying on the plane of mundane consciousness, because in the warlike symbols which it wields, and which indicate the inner struggle, the worldly man does not see tools of liberation, but weapons of destruction, which annihilate all that belongs to the world.*

Addressing Jung’s apprehension to embody the archetypes, biogenetic structuralist, Charles

Laughlin (1996:385) posits that archetypes are, in fact, neural structures. These neurognostic structures (dendritic-axonic-synaptic interconnections between living neural cells) (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:57) produce the activity of the unconscious including archetypal imagery and moods that surface in conscious awareness (Laughlin 1996:385), and account for the universal attributes of the psyche (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:44). Biogenetic structuralism differentiates three levels of reality: the cognitive environment, the operational environment (Laughlin 1996:385), and the zone of uncertainty (387). The cognized environment consists of neurophysiological models that mediate experience. The lifelong development of neural entrainments throughout the body, by the intentional processes of selecting and focusing upon specific stimulus, activates some neural structures, while allowing others to remain dormant. Some neural entrainments continue to operate autonomously outside of conscious awareness ( Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili 1992:134). Neural networks not entrained to conscious networks ( the unconscious aspect of psyche) may operate in concert to promote greater integration or compete fragmenting and blocking intercellular communication (134). Numerous interconnected neural entrainments form into extensive sets of creodes (habitual responses and patterns of adaptation) which tend to resist change and are self regulating (56). Ego consciousness is essentially an uniform and stable set of creodes. Intentionality, selecting and focusing upon specific stimuli, elicits subject/object duality that creates the illusion of a separate self who acts upon and is acted upon by the environment. It is only in higher states of consciousness that the dualism of subject/object is transcended to experience totality, or the operational environment (102-103) which Laughlin extends to include the quantum level of reality (Laughlin 1996:385). Inherent in the biological structure of the body is a drive towards

homeomorphogenesis or wholeness (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:150). Neural structures which mediate experience exhibit a "holistic imperative" towards greater and greater integration which results in the fundamental reconstitution of neural entrainments. This process can be accelerated through meditation techniques. Neural reconstitution may be experienced as a building of inner psychic tension as the unknown or the threshold of the "zone of uncertainty" is experienced, such as occurs during the psychic transition to altered states of consciousness. According to Dr. Martin Jerry (1996:1738) as the homeostatic threshold of ego consciousness is reached, it may be subjectively experienced as dread or terror. Breaking through the barrier of ego consciousness, however, tends to promote profound perceptual shifts of reality and psycho-physical healing (1738).

After several years of exile, Padmasambhava returned to Uddiyana, where he exhibited his Tantric abilities and was asked to stay and instruct Indrabodhi. Padmasambhava willingly taught the king and his court for thirteen years before leaving for a cave in Nepal, where he received the transmission for the Vajrakilaya sadhana from the wrathful deity himself (Thondup 1997:52). In the later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Indian scholar and monk, Shatarakshita, was commissioned by Trisong Detson to establish the first Buddhist monastery in Lhasa. Because of numerous calamities and setbacks attributed to indigenous bon spirits and demonic forces, his efforts were thwarted. Historical documents from the period indicate that several tribal war lords opposed Trisong Detson's plans to centralize state authority as it would mean a loss of autonomy and power within their jurisdictions. As part of their political strategy, tribal lords formed coalitions with priests of the indigenous Bon religion in order to resist the establishment of Buddhism as a state religion (Williams 1991: 188; Samuels 1994:440). Before fleeing to India in 770,

Shatarakshita advised Trisong Detson, “ if gentleness cannot prevail, we must rely upon one before whom all negative forces tremble and become powerless” (Batchelor 1994:64).

Shatarakshita’s monastic discipline and ethical precepts prevented him from harming other sentient beings, and he therefore recommended Trisong Detson solicit the powerful yogi Padmasambhava to tame the Bon-po demons. This portion of the myth seems to indicate that the use of force was required for Tibet’s conversion to Buddhism. Padmasambhava agreed to accept the challenge, and along the road to Tibet transformed into Vajrakilaya (Khenpo Namdroll 1999:24-25) to defeat local bon demons and bind them to the dharma (Williams 1991:189).

By 779, Padmasambhava had succeeded in building the first monastery in Tibet, Samye, and commenced to train twenty-five disciples (Batchelor 1994:66). A scandal erupted when Trisong Detson offered his young wife, Yeshe Tsogyel, to Padmasambhava as a consort. Although it was customary to offer the Guru a gift of a woman after receiving an initiation in India, this act violated the norms of Bon society. Padmasambhava and his consort were forced to flee Lhasa and live in Kham, until the controversy abated. It was during this time that Padmasambhava dictated the termas to Yeshe Tsogyel (Dowman 1996:254).

The myth of Padmasambhava, in many respects, is about Tibet’s conversion to Buddhism, but it also illustrates the cultural tension between monastics and yogis (Samuel 1993: 434-435). As archetypal patterns, the prototypes of Shatarakshita and Padmasambhava exemplify different models for attaining enlightenment. Philosophical differences underlying these models culminated in a debate between Kamalashila ( a disciple of Shatarashita) and Hashang Mahayana (Dzogchen master) at Samye in 792. The former would emphasize the path of gradual enlightenment through scriptural study, ethical precepts and monastic discipline, while the later taught enlightenment

could be attained through sudden insight and minimized the role of ethical discipline (Powers 1995:130 -132). Kamalashila argued that mental obscurations and emotional affliction, accumulated over lifetimes, could not be removed all at once (130), but gradually through meditation and moral cultivation (132). The gradual alleviation of mental defilements led to a progressively deeper understanding of reality and eventually to Buddhahood (132). Hashang Mahayana counter argued that mental defilements arose from conceptualization. The transcendence and cessation of conceptual thought through meditation practice resulted in sudden enlightenment. Moral precepts were irrelevant to enlightenment as mental afflictions related to conceptual thought. In other words, compassion arose spontaneously from the accumulation of wisdom. Teachers who advocated sudden enlightenment (usually wandering yogins outside of monastic orders) eschewed social convention and niceties (Samuel 1993:303) and often employed controversial, and in some instances cruel tactics, to liberate disciples from their conceptual prisons. Although it is unclear who won the debate, hostilities between proponents of both sides escalated, leading to the murder of Kamalashila and the banishment of Hashang Mahayana to China (132-133). Relations between monastic orders and wandering yogins have always been strained (Samuels 1993:435; Williams 1991:189). Some schools of Vajrayana veer more towards one prototype than the other. The Gelug and Sakya follow Shatarakshita's monastic model, while the Nyingma and the Kagyu gravitate towards the yogic figures of Padmasambhava and Naropa, respectively (Samuels 1993:435). The later is closely associated with the Bon who emphasized sudden enlightenment through shamanistic techniques (22).

Although the myth of Padmasambhava would suggest otherwise, ethnographic evidence indicates that Vajrayana ritual is heavily loaded with shamanistic techniques and symbols of the

indigenous Bon ( Samuel 1993:9). Samuels (1993:8) defines shamanism as “the regulation and transformation of human life and society through the use (or purported use ) of alternate states of consciousness by means of which special practitioners are held to communicate with a mode of reality alternate to and more fundamental than, the world of everyday experience”. In complex literate societies, shamanism tends to be subordinated to state governments and marginalized by clerical religions. (360). This certainly seems to have been the case in India. The shamanistic practices and folk religions of the tribal Harappans of the Indus Valley were pushed to the margins of Indian society by the Aryan hierarchy and its Vedic religion. However, this tribal gnosis was preserved by the descendants of the Harappans who continued to live in isolated and remote areas of the region. These early shamanistic practices would re-emerge in Indian Tantric cults and be imported to Tibet (368). Tibetan Tantra is a rare exception, in that, shamanistic techniques were not marginalized, but incorporated into all four sects of Vajrayana in varying degrees (8, 368).

More than the other three sects of Vajrayana, the Nyingma have retained the methods, the teachings, and the deities ( in particular wrathful deities) of the indigenous Bon (Thondup 1997:173). While the other sects rely more heavily on historical narratives and doctrines of the New Tantras, Nyingma lineages re-establish contact with founding figures in Great Myth time through the evoking of altered states of consciousness (Samuel 1993:21). Lineages are not “handed down from some distant past”, but are constantly revitalized through the subjective experiences of living lamas (21). Padmasambhava’s termas are re-discovered in their revelations (225).

The Tantric doctrines and texts of the Nyingma are transmitted in two ways: 1) termas and

2) teachings. The teachings are divided into three major categories: 1) sutras (anuyoga), 2) tantras (mahayoga), and 3) mind transmission (dzogchen). The tantras differ from the sutras, in that, “they contain practices, symbols, and teachings not found in Mahayana texts” and are regarded as a more potent method for transformation (Powers 1995:221). “In general, Tantra focuses on ritual, visualization, and symbols in order to effect rapid transformation to the state of Buddhahood. The Tantra systems are said to be much more effective in bringing about this transformation than the Sutra system” (Powers 1995:222). Samuels (1993: 8, 344-345) contends the primary difference between sutras and tantras, is that, the later incorporates shamanistic techniques. According to the Nyingma tradition, Kuntazangpo of the Great Myth time, transmitted the eighteen inner tantras of the mahayoga to Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra who brought them to Samye and translated them (Powers 1995:328; Khenpo Namdrol 1997:20). Ratna Lingpa compiled and preserved the eighteen inner tantras in the Nyingma Tantric canon in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Powers 1995:329). The “Eight Heruka Sadhanas” have historically been the most influential terms of mahayoga, and contain the instructions for the practice of sadhana rituals (331), of which Vajrakilaya is one (Thondup 1997:187).

Radmila Moacanin (1986:17) states “ the aim of Buddhist Tantra is to penetrate into, harness, and transform the dynamic forces of the universe, which are no different from the psychological forces and archetypal constellations of our own psyche”. Sadhana rituals are associated with a meditational deity, its mandala, mantra, and attendant symbols, “who embodies a particular aspect of fully evolved, enlightened mind” (Lama Yeshe 1987:100). The anthropomorphic symbols of sadhanas may be regarded as archetypal, and with repeated visualization during meditation, tend to ‘take on a life of their own’, gain numinosity, and



become infused with such intense emotion that bliss or ecstasy may be experienced (Moacanin 1986:59). Prolonged periods of intense concentration energizes the practitioner to the extent that altered states of consciousness are evoked (59). Govinda (1969:91-92) asserts that transformative anthropomorphic symbols are not born of the intellect, reason, or convictions, but out of a direct and vivid experience of archetypal material in the collective unconsciousness. In sadhana ritual, the Tantric's body is the mandala, a vehicle in which all polarities are united into a primordial whole and the attributes of the deity (archetypes) are incarnated (Moacanin 1986:19, 54). The central act of the sadhana, the visualization of oneself as the deity, involves an analogic shift and exhibits what Samuels (1993:15) refers to as "the primary mode of shamanic activity" in Vajrayana.

#### b. The Empowerment

Before commencing sadhana meditation, the practitioner must be empowered to do so through an initiation ceremony (abhishekas). The empowerment is more than a formality. It connects the practitioner to the meditational deity's "vital lineage of transmission"; an "unbroken lineage" of accomplished Tantric adepts who have performed the sadhana and have attained the enlightened aspects of the deity ( LamaYeshe1987:101). "To be authentic and reliable this lineage must have its source in the fully enlightened experience of a true master (101)." In the Palyul lineage, the tantric novice traditionally practices the Vajrakilaya sadhana in dark retreats for a period extending from three to ten years ( Khenpo Namdrol 1999; Wangal 1993:11). Dark retreats involve practicing in a stimulus deprived and secluded location, usually a cave, and replicate Turner's liminal conditions of death, blackness, invisibility and being in the womb, a timeless condition of *communitas*. The auditory (mantras) and visual (the deity's mandala and

accoutrements) symbols of the ritual are designed to segregate and activate specific archetypal energies, that is, images, sounds, and moods (Stablien 1991: 28, 72, 128, 134; Moacanin 1986:54-55). It is during this period of isolation that the deity may appear to the adept in a vision to guide his progress and impart the wisdom of the lineage (Samuels 1993:20-21).

Within a biogenetic structuralist paradigm, the chanting of mantras and the intense visualization of the deity's mandala in a sensory deprived environment, are shamanistic techniques that act as "drivers" to induce an altered state of consciousness (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:317). Expounding on Gellhorn's (1967) concept of ergotropic-trophotropic balance, biogenetic structuralism posits that external stimuli, such as the symbols in ritual, can be utilized to penetrate various levels of neurophysiological functioning. The ergotropic system incorporates the sympathetic nervous system, specific endocrine glands, portions of the reticular activating system, the posterior hypothalamus, portions of the limbic system, and frontal cortex and corresponds to states of intense excitation and desynchronized EEG patterns (313). The trophotropic system is closely aligned with parasympathetic functions and includes higher frontal cortical functions, various endocrine glands, the anterior hypothalamus, and portions of the limbic and reticular activating systems, and corresponds to states of relaxation and synchronized EEG brain waves (313). The ergotropic and trophotropic systems relate to somatosensory functions (metabolic/neural) and are antagonistic, in that, the activation of one system inhibits the other (315). Drivers (external stimuli of ritual) penetrate the autonomic nervous system to produce the simultaneous discharge of both systems and re-tune the balance of the ergotropic and trophotropic systems (317). Re-tuning the balance of the ergotropic- trophotropic systems in ritual produces a gap in the interstices of structured consciousness giving rise to altered states of

consciousness (147). Neural structures organize conscious awareness in moment by moment phases, and the gap between these phases are the junctures where neural reconstitution may occur. The ritual re-tuning of these systems leads to greater psycho-physical integration (homeomorphogenic penetration) (318). During reconstitution, the break down of the body-image entrainment may lead to the direct perception of metabolic activities, that is, currents of psychic energy (302).

Symbolic penetration techniques of ritual utilize sensory stimuli to access latent neurophysiological networks operating outside of awareness, and to integrate these structures into conscious neural networks (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:195). The sadhana's symbolism is designed to penetrate and activate the intentionalities (195) of archaic neurognostic structures - archetypes (Laughlin 1996:385). The symbolism of Vajrakilaya penetrates the intentionalities of older limbic structures of the brain associated with unconscious and affective functions through the symbolic penetration of higher functioning cortical structures, associated with consciousness and cognition (Ashbrook and Albright 1999:17). The symbolic penetration of higher cortical structures through the intense visualization of the sadhana and the metaphorical apprehension of its related text, may profoundly re-structure limbic neural networks. More succinctly, the sadhana promotes individuation, that is, archetypal material is integrated into ego consciousness within the particular mythopoeia of the deity (see Laughlin's "Cycle of Meaning" 1995).

Having incarnated the enlightened qualities of the deity, the Rinpoche officiating an empowerment can inspire, awaken, and energize the same potentials in the disciple ( Lama Yeshe 1987:100-101). In effect, the Rinpoche's appearance as the deity during the empowerment may

elicit the same archetypal potentialities in those receiving the initiation. In very rare instances, a high degree of intimacy between the Rinpoche and initiate may result in the direct apprehension of the deity's attributes. The term intimacy alludes to the transcending of ego boundaries. There is no separation between the Rinpoche's and the initiate's mind. The Nyingma refer to this as mind transmission.

All sadhana empowerments have a similar structure (Thondup 1997:177). The Vajrakilaya empowerment, held in Ottawa, began with initiates making several prostrations to Penor Rinpoche as a sign of devotion and as an indication of taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma (the teachings), and the sangha (the Buddhist community). After the initiates were seated, Penor Rinpoche offered a blessing for protection, while ringing the dharma bell (symbol of wisdom) and clacking the damaru (a shaman's rattle) to dispel obstacles.

A long historical description of the Vajrakilaya transmission lineage, including mythology surrounding Padmasambhava, ensued. During this interval, monks dispersed into the seated audience pouring small amounts of water from a vase into the hands of participants which they drank immediately, symbolizing the purification of the body. This was followed by the distribution of red strips of cloth, blind folds representing the blindness of spiritual ignorance, which participants tied around their foreheads. Lotus petals and small portions of rice were distributed likewise. Participants then requested Penor Rinpoche to bestow the empowerment for Vajrakilaya. Small portions of their rice were thrown signifying the offering of the mandala to the master. The request was repeated three times, after which Penor Rinpoche accepted. Before opening the mandala of Vajrakilaya, Penor Rinpoche emphasized the significance of taking refuge and generating the four immeasurables: love, compassion, joyfulness, and equanimity, qualities

which reverse the effects of *kelsha*.

At this juncture, monks again dispersed into the audience offering a sweet wine from a vase to the participants which represented the bond between Penor Rinpoche and those receiving the initiation. After purification rituals for body, speech and mind, participants were invited to enter the mandala and visualize themselves as Vajrakilaya. In the next segment of the ritual, each participant dropped their lotus blossom onto a mandala (a wooden board) divided into the five Buddha families. The Buddha family upon which the lotus blossom fell signified the transformation of a particular pollutant into an enlightened quality. For example, if the lotus fell on the Buddha family of Ratnasambhava, the participant should focus on transmuting pride into the wisdom of equanimity. After reciting mantras to dispel negativities and obstacles, initiates removed their blindfolds to symbolize the overcoming of spiritual blindness. At this point, Penor Rinpoche read the Vajrakilaya text (*lung*) and invoked Vajrakilaya to bestow his empowerments and blessings. Ritual implements (vase, *torma*, vajra, bell) and several pictorial cards representing the sacred attributes of Vajrakilaya were held aloft during the reading.

Upon completion of the *lung*, participants were asked to come forward and receive the symbolic empowerments from Penor Rinpoche. Each participant lightly touched or was touched by a number of the ritual implements symbolizing the purification of the five pollutants and the attainment of Vajrakilaya's noble qualities. In some Vajrakilaya empowerments participants are asked to strike the *torma* (a cake representing phenomenal existence) three times with a *phurba* to signify the penetration of *kelsha* to the pristine awareness of *rig-pa*.

The empowerment concluded with a prayer for good fortune, and that all merit and wisdom acquired through Vajrakilaya practice be dedicated to the benefit of all sentient beings.

Participants threw the remaining rice, again signifying the offering of the mandala to the Penor Rinpoche, in gratitude for the empowerment. The small grains of rice represent the transitoriness of phenomenal existence and the continuum of the material and immaterial, form and formlessness.

Immediately following the empowerment, Penor Rinpoche made a special blessing of participants' phurbas, ritual daggers, used in Vajrakilaya practice. Rawson (1991:80) states the phurba is a shamanic implement used for the gathering and concentrating of psychic energies. The hilt of phurba represents the lightening energy of the vajra, the concentrated in-potentia energy of the primordial ground in which all opposites are united (15). The mantric recitations and blessings of the phurba by the tantric master is a shamanistic technique that charges the ritual instrument with additional power.

### c. The Vajrakilaya Sadhana

Soygal Rinpoche (1999:7) claims that the wrathful heruka Vajrakilaya is a meditational deity who "embodies the enlightened aspect of all the buddhas, manifesting in an intensely wrathful yet compassionate form in order to subjugate delusion and negativity that can arise as obstacles to the practice of Dharma. In fact, the practice of Vajrakilaya is....an exceptionally powerful method to remove obstacles, destroy forces antithetical to compassion, and purify spiritual pollution".

All sadhanas, including Vajrakilaya, have a similar structure: the preliminary vows, followed by the generation stage, and the completion stage, respectively. (Samuel 1993: 233-235). Preliminary refuge and bodhisattva vows ensure the right motivation. The practitioner takes refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, and develops the Bodhisattva's aspiration of

compassion through the four immeasurables of love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. In the generation stage, the mandala of the deity is mentally constructed in order to transform ordinary consciousness into the enlightened aspects of bodhi-mind. Initiation is received from the deity through the repetition of the mantra and the visualization of psychic energy channels (Jackson cited in Samuel 1993:235). Through the invocation of visual and verbal symbols, the deity's gnosis (archetypal essence) is transferred to the practitioner in the completion stage (Moacanin 1986:51; Khenpo Namdrol 1999:46). Finally, the merit (compassion) and wisdom (insight) accumulated during the practice is dedicated to the welfare of all sentient beings, and the deity and the entire mandala is dissolved into primordial consciousness. Before generating the nature of the Vajrakilaya, three samadhis (meditation skills) must be actualized (Khenpo Namdrol 1999:48).

The first samadhi relates to the nature of primordial consciousness (50). Many schools of Buddhism posit that conscious awareness is a continuum of cognitive impulses. However in the process of perception, there are milliseconds when external stimuli is not ascertained due to inattentiveness (Wallace 1999:177). An inattentive mind is viewed as an unreliable instrument for the introspective investigation of mind. An over-excited mind (distracted or impulsive) or a lax mind (drowsy or dull) are considered impediments to the generation of the deity (A. Sumegi, personal communication 1998). The excitation or laxity of the mind is associated with breath and is linked to the ultradian rhythms of nasal dominance (Jerry 1996:1737; Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:312). Cortical EEG readings indicate that nasal dominance is correlated to the activity of cerebral hemispheres. Under the influence of the sympathetic nervous system, one nostril remains open and dominant, easily breathing in and out, while the other nostril, under the influence of the parasympathetic stays congested, and air flow is

constricted (Jerry 1996:1737). The autonomic and cerebral hemispheres are ipsilateral, and cerebral hemispheric dominance changes in relation to nasal dominance (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:312). For a brief period as the cycle of dominance alternates, air intake through both nostrils is equalized. Yogic literature calls this period of equal nasal dominance, sushumna (Jerry 1996:1737). Sushumna is synonymous with zero-point or primordial consciousness and is subjectively experienced as clarity and luminosity. According to the Palyul scholar, Khenpo Namdroll (1999:50), this state has the fiery nature of the sun which dispels the darkness of spiritual blindness. Practitioners are taught to evoke this state through breath control.

Focused concentration on the breath tends to elicit a calm state of heightened alertness which Buddhist psychology terms "access concentration" (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:319). Trophotropic activity is "tuned exceptionally high", and the meditator may experience "oceanic tranquillity and peace" (319). The control of breath is a method for integrating autonomic and cerebral cortical activity. The link between breath, the autonomic and cortical activities are apparent in cross-cultural studies of psycho-physiological changes during higher states of samadhi (Wallace 1999; Shear and Jevning 1999). The central nervous system's activity tends to increase as exhibited by EEG readings, while physiological processes tend to slow. Meditators' pulse rate and blood pressure decrease. Respiration may slow, and in some cases, cease. Thyroid stimulating hormones integral to cellular metabolism decline, as well as cortisol production related to the fight or flight response of the sympathetic nervous system (Shear and Jevning 1999:208).

After periods of intense and sustained concentration, trophotropic activity becomes so extreme that a "spillover" occurs and the ergotropic system is activated (d' Aquili and Newberg



1999:25). There may be a “tremendous release of energy” which the meditator experiences as ecstasy, bliss, or as currents of energy. Buddhist psychology calls this state *appana samadhi* (25). The eruption of ergotropic activity may induce altered states of consciousness (25). Normally the right and left hemispheres of the brain create what seems to be two separate consciousnesses (28). States of hyper-intentionality exhibit high inter-hemispheric EEG coherence which alleviates this dichotomy (Shear and Jevning 1999:192). When a simultaneous and maximal discharge of the trophotropic and ergotropic systems occurs, “there is a complete breakdown of any discrete boundaries between objects, a sense of the absence of time, and the elimination of the self-other dichotomy. In other words, it may be related to the *unio mystica*, the perfect experience of the void or Nirvana” (d’Aquili and Newberg 1999:26). The meditator becomes completely absorbed in the projection of the deity and the subject/object dualism of ego consciousness is transcended. The meditator and deity are one and the same.

In an altered state of consciousness, the practitioner becomes highly susceptible to symbolic penetration. Prattis (1997:212) argues that the process of analogy enables a symbol to “register with the mind and the senses”. The transition from analogy to form inevitably involves entry into an altered state of consciousness, without which “behavioral re-structuring and personal transformation are highly unlikely” (212). Much of this consolidation occurs in the “void energy” (zero-point) (213). Rossi and Cheek (1988:167) posit that the limbic-hypothalamus-pituitary system plays an integrative role in “mind modulation” of the autonomic, endocrine, and immune systems. The limbic-hypothalamus-pituitary systems transduce symbolic information “down via receptors to a cellular level” producing physiological and psychological modifications - transformation. In other words, the limbic-hypothalamus-pituitary systems translate analogues

into cellular modifications. Tibetan yogis have long contended that during higher states of meditation unconscious processes are accessed and physiological functions are altered. Chang (1959:xlii) asserts that the respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems of enlightened beings are “quite different from that of ordinary men”.

Dr. Candace Pert (1993) argues that neuropeptides and their receptors are correlates of emotions (181), and that emotions are the currency by which mind and matter interconvert (187). Neuropeptides are the agents of inter-cellular communication, and are integral to metabolic processes that govern levels of energy and its distribution in the body (184). This includes lower levels of energy for the basal metabolic rate ( homeostasis) , and higher levels required for endergonic metabolism ( the exchange of energy/matter between the cell and its environment, such as, breathing and eating) (186). Therefore, it might be argued that breath control, as well as the visualization of psychic energy channels modify the energy levels and emotional states of the practitioner.

Laughlin (1996:390) argues that neurocognitive processes mediating consciousness, also influence and are influenced by events at the quantum level. “(N)eurognosis operates not only at the level of organization of neural cells into neural networks, but also at the quantum level (390).” Events at a quantum level can produce coherence in an “entire expanse of neural networks”, and conversely the activity of neural networks can effect events at the quantum level (390). The relationship between consciousness and the quantum level may in part explain Tantric siddhis such as, the transpersonal experiences of clairvoyance, telepathy, and prophecy, and non-local and a-causal events that Jung called synchronistic. The interpenetration of consciousness and the quantum level may correspond to the coherent properties of microtubules. The ordering of water

molecules in the microtubules of cells creates a super radiance that transforms incoherent electromagnetic energies into coherent photon impulses (392). Cellular language is comprised of biophoton emissions that promote greater intercellular communication and integration (Narby 1998:125-127). Photon impulses are a “kind of soliton, in that, it might propagate without energy loss and with little energy requirement” (Laughlin 1996:392). It might be concluded that the greater inter-hemispheric coherence of higher states of samadhi connect the consciousness of the practitioner to events at the quantum level, and in doing so, their whole psycho-physical constitution is energized.

The second samadhi is the experience of appearances arising out of primordial consciousness (Khenpo Namdroll 1999:50). In his translation of the Ratna Lingpa’s *Secret Essence of Vajrakilaya*, Khenpo Namdroll (1999:51) describes these appearances “as luminously radiant light of empty forms” that “intensify” into “visionary forms” as consciousness integrates them; in other words - archetypes. During the generation stage of the deity, the practitioner is to train the mind to imaginatively envision oneself as the deity. The practitioner is to recollect, recall, and reconstruct the image of the deity and the mandala in the mind’s eye. The visionary forms acquire increasing clarity and luminosity as concentration intensifies. The Nyingma claim that the lucidity of these appearances purifies and transforms ordinary ego perception into the transpersonal, that is, the deity’s perception (59). Pure recollection entails remembering the most minute details of the deity, its retinue and accouterments in order to glean their symbolic significance (60). The Vajrakilaya symbolism is a heuristic devise which elucidates the relationship between the three levels of tantric experience: secret (primordial consciousness), inner (archetypal), and outer (conscious awareness) (61).

Depending on the skill of the practitioner the symbolism may be simple or elaborate.

Stabilization occurs when the outer symbol is internalized in an eidetic image and maintained for long periods of time without reference to an external stimulus (Laughlin, McManus, and d'Aquili 1992:200). Tantric adepts emphasize the importance of preparing the psyche for an encounter with archetypal material. Archetypes have a dualistic quality, in that , they can manifest in beautiful or terrifying guises (Moacanin 1986:98). When the terrifying aspect of the archetype emerges it can shatter a fragmented or fragile psyche into psychosis (97). The purpose of psychic preparation is to ensure that material is integrated without seriously disrupting ego integrity. Tantric mythopoeia is designed to bring about a controlled and gradual encounter with the collective unconsciousness ( Powers 1995:237). When the inner symbol is stabilized and concentration becomes intense and focused in sadhana ritual, the ground work is laid for contact with archetypal material. Images, feelings, sounds arise unbidden from the unconscious (Stablein 1991:13). Biogenetic structuralists would contend that this is indicative of the radical reconstitution of neural networks (Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili 1992:201). The most archaic neurognostic structures of the brain are in the limbic region. The limbic region is connected to autonomic functions and “ is associated with complex aspects of emotional expression and is involved with assigning emotional valence or content to various objects and experiences and directing these emotions to the external world through our behavior” (d'Aquili and Newberg 1999:27). The nature of ergotropic and trophotropic systems indicates that raw archetypal energies of limbic structures are manifested as symbols in higher cortical structures. Conversely, the symbols of sadhanas can penetrate and activate archetypes in the limbic region through higher cortical structures. The sadhana's libido analogues facilitate the integration of

unconscious material into the conscious through the transcendent function (Jung CW 8 par. 191). The transcendent function is “ the arduous task of conscious confrontation with the unconsciousness” which leads to the expansion of consciousness (CW 8 par. 193), the integration of unconscious networks with conscious ones (Laughlin 1996:390), and the renewal and transformation of the personality (Moacanin 1986:34).

The third samadhi relates to the blue mantric syllable HUM (Namdroll 1999:52). The blue HUM is an integrative vibration that signifies the “ non-dual integration” of archetypal material into consciousness. The symbolism of Vajrakilaya serves as a libido analogue that purifies the distortion of ego consciousness and its projections. The five light rays (energy fields of the constituents) which perpetuate spiritual blindness are transformed into the primordial wisdoms; “the essence of the enlightened minds of the Buddhas” - bodhi-citta. At the time of human conception, five light rays emerge from the bindu (sexual fluid of the mother and father). In sadhana ritual, these five light rays or psychic energies are gathered into the central psychic channel, the sushumna, so that ego consciousness may be transcended. In the transformative process of the completion stage, the practitioner incarnates the qualities of the deity which results in the spontaneous arousal of compassion and the revitalization of the psycho-physical organism (52 -53). Compassion naturally wells up for sentient beings who in their ignorance fail to recognize the illusory nature of phenomenon; a spiritual blindness that perpetuates their suffering (51). The letter HUM corresponds to the life-force or the vitality of the heart psychic energy center (53). Psychic energies gathered into the sushumna are then dissolved into the indestructible bindu (zero point) at the heart. The complete dissolution of psychic energies (inner winds) in the heart results in the unification of binary oppositions and the experience of primordial

consciousness. This process simulates death, and respiration may cease. When the winds of psychic energies begin to stir again, the practitioner regains conscious awareness. After entering this state, Vajrayana contends the five energy fields are purified, and the conditions that create klesha have been reversed. The practitioner's mind turns towards enlightened activities (Powers 1995:249-251; Lama Yeshe 1987: 130-131; Khenpo Namdroll 1999:46). In his psychological commentary to Evans-Wentz's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Jung (1960:xl) discusses this transformation. He writes:

*It is so much more straight-forward, more dramatic, impressive, and therefore more convincing, to see that all things happen to me than to observe how I make them happen. Indeed, the animal nature of man makes him resist seeing himself as the maker of his circumstances. That is why attempts of this kind were always the object of secret initiations, culminating as a rule in a figurative death which symbolized the total character of this reversal.*

All Nyingma teachings (nine vehicles) are divided into four categories: the basis, the path, the fruition and the method (Powers 1995:329). The basis of Vajrakilaya is the “primordially unborn nature of mind, free from all discursive elaboration, within which all the buddha bodies and primordial wisdoms are spontaneously present” (Khenpo Namdroll 1999:45).

The path of Vajrakilaya is the visualization of symbols related to the three levels of tantric experience (inner, outer, secret) and the five primordial wisdoms (purified energy fields) as personified in the form of Vajrakilaya. Through skillful means of visualizing Vajrakilaya, the practitioner incarnates the deity's enlightened attributes. The fruition of Vajrakilaya is the enlightened mind of all Buddhas, and the method is compassion.

### The Generation of Vajrakilaya

HUM! Various apparitional appearances are the celestial palace, in a triangular, blue-black blazing mandala, surrounded by the eight carnal grounds. In the center is an expansive blazing fire mass of primordial wisdom. Accomplished from one's own perception of primordial wisdom is a celestial palace with a lotus in the centre and a sun and a moon... From this self nature arises the ...glorious Vajrakilaya, blue black with three faces, six arms and four legs in the advanced posture....He is in union with his consort Khorlo Gyei Debma...

In this section I would like to briefly touch on the more salient symbols of the Vajrakilaya sadhana. The above quote is an excerpt from the generation stage of Ratna Lingpa's *The Secret Essence of Vajrakilaya*. The blue-black colour of the triangular mandala represents non-dual consciousness and psychic integration. In general triangles are associated with wrathful deities (Namdroll 1999:56). The triangle denotes the dynamic triune process which causes the original break from primordial consciousness into the multiplicity of form, and the reverse process of ego consciousness breaking through to higher states of consciousness and psychic unity. The breaking through usually entails neural reconstitution and the sudden release of energy. This may lead to the direct apprehension of metabolic activities (psychic energies) as the body-image entrainment breaks down. The threshold of the break through may be experienced subjectively as ecstatic or terrifying. The triangle also represents the transcendent function; the birth of a new state of being out of the tension of opposites ( Jung CW 8 par. 189).

Out of the blazing fire mass (primordial consciousness) emerges Vajrakilaya. Vajrakilaya

has three faces symbolizing the three levels of tantric experience and the compression of past, present and future into a timeless space of being. The third eye in each forehead conveys esoteric knowledge and the accomplishment of siddhis. His advanced posture indicates the dynamic process of becoming a buddha. Vajrakilaya has six arms signifying the six transcendent functions of one-pointed, non-conceptual meditation that lead to spiritual insight and intuition (62). His two right hands hold a nine point and a five point vajra, signifying the nine vehicles of the Nyingma and the five primordial wisdoms, respectively (Namdroll 1999:62). In his left hands, he holds the blazing fire-ball mass and a three pointed trident symbolizing the incineration of emotional distortions and the annihilation of spiritual pollutants, respectively (62). In the two lower hands, Vajrakilaya rolls a phurba. By rolling the phurba, he cuts through dualistic thinking and the grasping of the ego, so that indivisible primordial consciousness is experienced subjectively as clarity and luminosity (rig-pa). The phurba has a triangular blade and embodies the energy of the physical power of the mantra HUM. In essence, it is a symbol of transformation and psychic integration (Rawson 1991:80).

Vajrakilaya's wrathful mandala is a "circle with the spokes being triangles that protrude from its outer perimeter" (Khenpo Namdroll 1999:56). The lotus in the center represents psychic unity, while the sun symbolizes the consciousness and the moon, the unconsciousness. Vajrakilaya emerges from the center of the mandala in sexual union with his consort, the wrathful Korlo Gyei Debma, symbolizing the unification of all binary oppositions (62). Korlo Gyei Debma is light blue in colour conveying the inpotentia energy of zero-point. In her right hand she holds a hooked knife to cut through conceptualization, while in her left hand, she holds a skull cup filled with blood representing the stagnating force of instinctual-affective drives and compulsions (62). All



wrathful deities wear the accouterments of the charnel grounds, serpents and garlands of skulls which signify the instinctual drives and death of the physical body (Rawson 1991:32).

Vajrakilaya is a winged being and is associated with the element of air, prana, and the life-force of the breath. The element of air corresponds to sacred sound, spiritual inspiration and unfoldment, and inner winds (currents of psychic energy within the body)(Khenpo Namdroll 1999:56; Govinda 1969:202). In the Vajrakilaya sadhana, currents of psychic energies are visualized for the purpose of transformation. There are two separate systems of libido analogues. In the first, the practitioner visualizes light rays emanating from her heart center which invoke the deities of the three roots: Amitabha ( connected with life-breath and mantric sounds which activate esoteric wisdoms) ; Kuntazangpo (primordial consciousness); and the Queen of Great Bliss (associated with qualities of khadromas). From the body, speech, and mind of the three root deities, white OMs, red AHs, and blue HUMs descend like rain to dissolve unobstructedly into the forehead, throat, and heart of the practitioner, respectively. All sadhanas are designed to involve the three aspects of body, speech, mind. “Their purpose is to conjure up powerful but dormant forces from the deep levels of the unconscious; it is a confrontation with our innermost nature to awaken us (Radmilla Moacanin 1986:22).”

The practitioner then visualizes the powers, blessings, and compassion of all the buddhas and boundless hosts of Vajrakilaya deities descending like snowflakes to dissolve into her being. Male and female deities of the psychic channels open like sesame pods, as the practitioner recites the mantra **OM BENZAR KILIKILAYA SARWA BIGNAN BAM HUNG PHAT** which vibrates like the sound of a disturbed bee hive. The mantra activates archetypes, infuses the practitioner with the vibration of the deity which is translated to form at the cellular level, and

generates the potencies associated with siddhis (Khenpo Namdrol 1999:68). The meaning of the mantric syllables are as follows:

- OM - The five energy fields are transmuted into the five buddha wisdoms.
- VAJRA - The uncompounded nature of the three times: past, present, and future
- KILI - The energization of the deity and the phurba
- KILAYA - Piercing all phenomenal experience with the phurba
- SAWRA - The destruction of all enemies and hindering demons
- BIGNAN - The subjugating of negative forces
- BAM - When combined with HUM means to bring order
- PHAT - The liberation from negative forces

In the second system of analogues, the meditator is to imagine Vajrakilaya in front of her. The mantra emerges as a chain of radiant syllables from the practitioner's mouth and enters Vajrakilaya's. The mantric chain descends down Vajrakilaya's central channel to the navel psychic center, and then circulates back to the practitioner's. The mantric chain ascends through the practitioner's central channel to re-emerge from her mouth. The mantra continues to cycle as a means of purifying the practitioner's central channel and of imbibing the deity's essence. During this phase, the visualization of the deity may become increasingly clear and luminescent. The practitioner may experience periods of extreme bliss and ecstasy. As the vision of Vajrakilaya and the emotion of bliss intensifies, the practitioner may enter an altered state of consciousness.

Following the empowerment for Vajrakilaya on May 16<sup>th</sup>, Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso, gave the teaching for the sadhana. He indicated that the Vajrakilaya sadhana contains the symbolism of alchemy, in that, it transforms ordinary ego consciousness into that of the deity. We all possess the enlightened mind of a Buddha(bodhi-citta), but mara (the struggle with unconscious compulsions and inner conflict) blocks this realization. Dualistic conceptualizations give rise to our sense of concrete appearances and identities which the ego tries to grasp. This is the source

*VAJRAKILAYA SADHANA OF THE PalyUL LINEAGE*



In the center of the mandala is Vajrakilaya in union with his consort Korlo Gyei Debma. Directly above Vajrakilaya is the archetypal Buddha Amitabha. To Amitabha's left is the Great Queen of Bliss, and to his right is the Buddha Kuntazangpo in union with his consort Kuntazangmo representing primordial consciousness.

of all suffering. The alchemical symbolism of Vajrakilaya is designed to clear mental and emotional obstructions and eliminate the illusory boundaries of a separate and concrete ego identity. When the realization dawns that all appearances have no inherent existence in the completion stage of the sadhana, the practitioner apprehends that the deity is none other than the self, and the self is none other than the deity.

Jung (1961/1989:201) had initially thought that the thread between Gnosticism and the contemporary world had been severed. But in his discovery of medieval alchemy, he felt that he had found a bridge between Gnosticism and modern depth psychology (201). The symbolism of alchemy expressed the process of individuation as the unification of opposites: the unconsciousness and the consciousness, dark and light, evil and good, matter and spirit, open and hidden, masculine and feminine (Jung cited in Moacanin 1986:36). In medieval alchemy, the source of all opposites resides in the *prima materia*. Through the chymical marriage, alchemists united the opposites to produce the philosopher's stone. The philosopher's stone healed and bestowed immortality, and was analogous to *unio mystica* and enlightenment (39). The unification of opposites could not be accomplished by the rational, analytic capacity of consciousness (*logos*) alone, nor by the holistic propensities of the unconsciousness (*eros*). It required the intervention of a third factor, a transcendent function, symbolized by the figure of Mercurius (37). The androgynous and paradoxical Mercurius embodied the tensions of spirit and matter, the lowest and highest aspects of consciousness. Although Mercurius contained the bi-polar aspects of the spiritual (*lapis*) and instinctual (serpent), he also represented a *tria prima* (the birth of a new state out of the tension of opposites) (Edinger 1995:130). Mercurius represented the process of individuation, as well as the Janus face of the collective unconsciousness (Moacanin 1986:38). In

many respects, the Vajrakilaya sadhana plays a similar transcendent function in Vajrayana.

Jung (1961/1989:202) argued that unlike the patriarchal orientations of Protestantism and Judaism, medieval alchemy regarded the feminine principle as playing an equal role with the masculine. The Gnostics had regarded the kater (the feminine principle) as the vessel in which transformation, spiritual renewal, and rebirth occurred (201). It was through the inner dynamics of the human psyche that the divine came into the world. Jung (1961/1989:201) would call this process individuation (201).

Despite cultural differences, the Vajrakilaya sadhana may appeal to Euro-Americans, because its alchemical symbolism facilitates the process of individuation. In chapter four, I will explore Euro-Americans' subjective experiences of Vajrakilaya practice through a series of in-depth interviews with seasoned, intermediate, and novice practitioners.

#### **4. THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE VAJRAKILAYA SADHANA: THE EURO-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

*In religious matters it is a well-known fact that we cannot understand a thing until we experience it inwardly, for it is the inward experience that the connection between psyche and the outward image or creed is first revealed as a relationship or correspondence like that of sponus and sponsa.*

*Jung 1944/1968*

*I know that our unconsciousness is crammed full of Eastern symbolism.*

*Jung - Munich, May 30, 1930*

In an attempt to understand the reasons for Euro-American engagement with a wrathful deity ritual, I asked participants to briefly explain their interest in Vajrakilaya practice in a questionnaire I distributed at the Ottawa empowerment in May. The responses fell into seven

main categories and are summarized in Table IV. Forty-five percent of the respondents stated the removal of obstacles, the clearing of emotional afflictions and mental obscurations, as their primary reason for practicing Vajrakilaya. Although categories tend to overlap, another twenty-two percent stated their reason for doing the practice related to purification and protection from negative forces. This seems to indicate that at least half of the respondents understood the practice within its Vajrayana context. In these categories, there seemed to be no correlation with the level of practice. Buddhist meditation experience ranged from one to thirty years.

Table IV  
REASONS FOR EURO-AMERICAN ENGAGEMENT  
WITH VAJRAKILAYA PRACTICE

Reasons for Practicing Vajrakilaya Sadhana		
1. Part of the week long program of empowerments.	33%	19
2. The development of compassion and skill-in-means	9%	5
3. Experiential (curious, want to try a different ritual)	13%	8
4. Spiritual teacher/guide advised the participant to take the empowerment	13%	8
5. A means to remove obstacles ( emotional afflictions and mental obscurations, including shadow integration) to spiritual realization.	45%	27
6. Protection from negative/demonic forces	13%	8
7. Purification	9%	5
Total #		80

Transpersonal anthropology is a movement towards validating empirical data of experiences “that somehow go beyond the boundaries of ordinary ego consciousness” (Laughlin

1989:17). Typically, ethnographers are trained to be outside observers. Few enter altered states of consciousness in order to understand their informants' transpersonal experience (18). Prattis (1997:172) observes: " Without a corresponding ability to enter an A.S.C. (altered state of consciousness), it becomes exceedingly difficult for the observer to understand and code what may be communicated to him or to her" (172). In order to better understand and code information collected from Vajrakilaya practitioners, I attended and received the empowerment for the practice in Ottawa. After receiving the empowerment, I endeavored to do the practice over the next several months. In a journal, I recorded my meditation experiences, the contents of my dreams, and any significant events that occurred in my daily life.

I did the Vajrakilaya meditation on an average of three times per week for several months. On alternate days, I simply focused on my breath. My meditation sessions lasted usually ninety minutes, but on one occasion the session stretched to four hours. Although a number of meaningful experiences arose, perhaps the most significant one occurred after approximately four months of practice. I hadn't been keen to do the practice that morning. In fact, I had wanted to skip it, because I had a lot of things to do that day. I usually did two hundred and sixteen repetitions (two rounds of the mala) of the mantra while visualizing the circulation of energy within the channels. But on this particular day, when I had completed the repetitions, I felt a strong urge to keep reciting the mantra. In the previous four months, I had spent most of my meditation sessions improving my recollection of the details of the mandala. Up to this point, the deity, his consort and retinue had largely been mental constructs. However, as I kept reciting the mantra, the figures seemed to take on a quality of appearance that was not congruent with my regular imagination. The inner chakras of the deity began to intensely glow, emanating their

corresponding colours. The deity, the consort, and retinue became increasingly brilliant, glowing, light beings. Eventually all the shapes and colours bled into each other producing a bright golden light. I had began the meditation at 9:30 in the morning, and had thought perhaps an hour had passed, but when I looked at the clock, it was 1:30 in the afternoon. I didn't want to get up from the meditation mat at this point. Somehow what I had planned to do that day seemed irrelevant, and I suddenly understood what Tibetans meant by the term calm abiding. I didn't want to leave the state. Two days later, I had a very lucid dream. The light in the dream was definitely of a different quality. Although there was no physical presence in the dream, I received instructions on the meaning of various symbols within the sadhana; specifically the relationship between the principle deity in the heart, and the trikaya, that is, the dharmakaya (mind/formlessness), sambhoghakaya (speech/archetypal forms), and nirmanakaya (body/form in the external world). In my view, this was a triad symbol of body, speech, and body which Buddhist thought links to the evolutionary impetus (see Thurman 1994:248), or what Jung refers to as the process of individuation.

Between the months of May and September of 2000, I interviewed fourteen practitioners of Ratna Lingpa's terma *The Daily Practice of the Secret Attainment of the Extremely Secret Vajrakilaya: The Essence of the Play of Concerned Activity* (See Appendix C). The practitioners' Buddhist meditation experience ranged from three to thirty years, with a mean of ten years. Most had received their initiation from Penor Rinpoche. At the end of this section, I have included excerpts from five of the interviews. After collecting and coding the data, I noticed several similar strands running through practitioners' subjective reports of their Vajrakilaya practice. First, most viewed the practice as means of removing obstacles, mental and emotional



afflictions, from their spiritual progress on the Buddhist path. Several reported that it was a powerful method of purification, and associated this purification with the clearing of emotional baggage and mental clutter. Their bodies felt cleaner and their mental functions more acute and clear. Secondly, all of the practitioners reported experiences that went beyond ordinary ego consciousness. Thirdly, all seemed to report some type of archetypal encounter, although the form of the archetype varied. Some experienced auditory, some visual, others strong emotional or somatosensory manifestations. In some cases, practitioners experienced cross sensory manifestations such as a reverberating, electrical, red light. Fourthly, all stated that they had experienced profound perceptual shifts. Many would never view reality or relationships the same again. Fifthly, all practitioners stated that the practice was extremely energizing. Finally all report feeling a greater sense of compassion, loving-kindness, towards others.

### **INTERVIEW # 1**

Vajrayana teacher: 46 year old, male (Buddhist practitioner for 25 yrs in Kagyu/Nyingma tradition.)

QUESTION: How did you come to practice Vajrakilaya?

RESPONSE: I started meditating - didn't know that it was meditation at the time - at about fifteen (years old). I attended the Anglican church from a very early age -studied the bible as a child. But my experience of the church- the congregation itself- was it was full of hypocrites. The teachings of the church and the behaviour of the people were completely at odds with one and other. Growing up, I attended an Anglican boarding school. When it came time for my confirmation - I was thirteen (years old) - I finally had a chance to ask questions. But the good

minister couldn't answer a lot of my questions. He couldn't because it really came down to an experiential understanding - He just had no basis.

After years of practicing Buddhist meditation, I now see the beauty, the power of the (Anglican) liturgy. Unfortunately, I think this is still a secret to most Christian practitioners. There's no teachings to get it. At thirteen I experienced a shift of consciousness during communion. It was transformative, cleansing. I felt connected to something larger. For most of the people around me, church was just something you did once a week. You buy in and you do your thing once a week. I think some types of Buddhist mediation could be adapted to Christian practice and would be of great benefit.

In my later adolescence, I was a bit of bad actor. My behaviour didn't conform to the Christian community, so I left the church. At nineteen, a friend gave me a book on yoga, and I was hooked. I studied hatha yoga and Hindu philosophy. My Vajrayana training has been primarily with a Christian Bishop who became an ordained Buddhist monk while living in India. He eventually came to live in Toronto. He very rarely gave the Vajrakilaya empowerment. I wouldn't receive the Vajrakilaya empowerment until 1997 in Syracuse (New York) from Penor Rinpoche.

QUESTION: Can you describe your experience of Vajrakilaya? Were there any psycho-physical changes?

RESPONSE: Well of course wrathful is a type of energy manifestation. That's because the energy of wrath is anger- not alienated anger, but the energy behind the anger that is very

energetic. The earliest known Tantras of Vajrakilaya were used for the absolute suppression and destruction of obstacles. It was used to kill people. There were huge battles between Vajrakilaya practitioners and other schools of Vajrayana. They used to kill one and other psychically in Romanistic style battles. Vajrakilaya can generate plenty, plenty, and plenty of aggressive energy. The Nyingma won't own up to it, but it is believed that Milarepa (a Tibetan saint) used Vajrakilaya practice to kill his uncle. Most Vajrayana traditions say that if you are doing Vajrakilaya in an aggressive way, you are not doing it correctly. It has become twisted somehow. But I can tell you that from speaking to other practitioners - I know other practitioners- that get into that aggressive energy. The practice is extremely shamanistic. Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso doesn't want to hear that, but that is in fact what (the practice) is. In my view, the whole idea behind Vajrakilaya, which is very shamanistic, is to effect phenomena at a distance. This is why, in the context of wrathful deity practice, it is best to do the foundational practices (Foundational practices are sadhanas requiring 400,000 prostrations and are elementary to all schools of Vajrayana).

The four foundations deal with self cherishing; the sense of personal hurt, outrage, abandonment, and rejections that comes from alienation, of feeling separate. Parental conditioning, the traumas of life that cause negativity and obscurations are worked out. The prostrations knock out some of the lumps in the personal armor, to put it in Western terms. We build up stuff over the years, stuff that we shove down to keep going, and this stuff becomes frozen. Meditation practice stirs it up. Vajrakilaya in particular - stuff gets stirred up. Issues must be dealt with. There is no more evasion. It's a form of purification. Signs or symbols arise as the process unfolds. The foundation practices basically knock the starch out of the ego. The path is

not about making a bigger and better you. You don't set out to get results in meditation. If you do, you'll be disappointed. You'll get frustrated and quit. You set goals, but you stay open. The whole process is tricky. In terms of Vajrakilaya, the foundations ripen you for the full benefit of the practice. Having completed the four foundational practices you have some basis from which to operate. So a lot of places its hard to get the Vajrakilaya empowerment without the foundational practices, because they think the practice is dangerous. You must have a wholesome base, or like taking L.S.D., the practice could provoke some kind of schizoid state.

There is a misconception that compassion must be nice. But in fact, compassion in Vajrakilaya has nothing to do with nice. Vajrakilaya is the essence of the play of concerned activity. Compassion is wrathful intervention. Compassion is interventionist. It can be peaceful or it can be like surgery, its like cut that thing out. That's a tumor and its going to kill you! The basis of the practice is loving kindness - peace on earth, good will towards others. GOODWILL. To be wrathfully compassionate, sometimes you must be prepared to be a nasty bitch or bastard. With fearless compassion, you are not concerned with being liked, with looking nice. This is self referential. If you start thinking this way, you're back to alienation and isolation. This practice is strongly interventionist. I've experienced this intervention from teachers, and let me tell you, there's been times I could barely drag my ass back to practice.

There's a whole apothecary of meditations and practices in Vajrayana. Basically, they're all about balance, balancing the personality. There are three types of personalities: aversion, greedy, and dull. Dull people are unable to make decisions. They're stuck. They need somebody or something to cut through it for them; to show them, what to cut through. The dull type need a good wack to wake up. Wrathful intervention is good for this type or even the greedy, but not the

aversion type. You wouldn't display wrathful intervention with people who have an absolutely horrendous amount of aversion. These are extremely sensitive types, and you could drive them to suicide or deep depression. The lama doesn't want to club anybody over the head. Its just with some students it is the most effective expenditure of energy to get results. You get the aversion type to meditate on flowers or loving kindness. You never give a loving kindness meditation to a greedy type. Otherwise they'd be having sex with everybody. Best to give this type a meditation on the decomposition of a corpse.

According to the southern school of abhidharma, there is in fact no loving-kindness after you experience absolute bodhi-citta. Why? Because there is no other. There is no separation between self and other. The entire concept of meditating on loving kindness is there is another. When you get to absolute bodhi-citta - stream entry - there is no other. So there is no loving kindness. However, for other beings sitting in proximity of (those who are stream entries) there would be an effect, and that effect would be compassion. Absolute bodhi-citta is a kind of letting go. It is a letting go of alienation and separate existence in a major way.

There are psycho-physical changes clearly evidenced in this practice. This is an extremely powerful practice. It is an intense practice. Generating loving-kindness, the four immeasurables, by implication, things are being moved. We are already into shamanism 101. CHANGE YOURSELF, YOU CHANGE EVERYTHING. The body mandala in Vajrakilaya is engulfed in flames. This is a major physical transformation. (In visualizing the psychic channels), the sesame pod is a symbol of the cell. When the buddhas melt into the body and dissolve like snowflakes - it's a cellular event. As you begin to circulate energy through the channels , all the deities are awakened - the whole body is enlivened. You feel blissful cellular dancing in your body. It re-

connects you. You loose your sense of alienation. You get in touch with Vajrakilaya pride. With the pride of Vajrakilaya, you let go of you; your hurt, your vanity, your fears. As Vajrakilaya you emit light rays that are beneficial to all human beings. This is the pride of Vajrakilaya not the ordinary mind of the practitioner.

I've had visions during meditation. Vajrakilaya has been before me as real as you sitting in front of me now. I have felt the movement of his wings. One time when a large truck passed my house, instead of hearing its rumbling, I heard the mantra of Vajrakilaya. The meditation changes your perception. It changes your world.

## **INTERVIEW # 2**

Vajrayana teacher/ film producer: 52 yr. old, female ( Buddhist practitioner for twenty years in Palyul lineage).

**QUESTION:** How did you come to practice Vajrakilaya?

**RESPONSE:** I had practiced guru yoga for fifteen years in the Palyul lineage, before receiving the Vajrakilaya initiation in Rochester, New York from Penor Rinpoche in 1997. I received the initiation again at the McDonough, New York retreat in the summer of 1999. At the time I was planning Penor Rinpoche's visit to Ottawa and was facing a lot of obstacles. Penor Rinpoche recommended doing the practice to remove the obstacles. I have been doing the practice intensively for a year now. I felt a strong need to do a practice dedicated to the destruction of

negativity . Vajrakilaya is a very energetic practice. Its powerful for removing outer obstacles. It is an invisible force. You can accomplish whatever you set out to do with Vajrakilaya practice. Of course all outer obstacles are manifestations of inner ones. Vajrakilaya stirs up the insides, and it generates the energy to remove outer obstacles.

QUESTION: Could you describe your experience of Vajrakilaya practice? Have you experienced any psycho-physical changes because of the practice?

RESPONSE: Obstacles of self will not go away with a mild approach. The practice won't change your personality, but it does generate a fierceness, a strong motivation to overcome obstacles. Wrathfulness is not regarding another with anger or hate, but an inner fierceness to overcome one's own and others negativities that create obstacles. The practice musters energy for effort, for overcoming. It generates the psychic energy to do whatever work is required.

My voice changes when I do the mantra of Vajrakilaya. It becomes deep, gruff, and rumbles from the back of my throat. I am not visually oriented, but last winter during intensive practice, I had a strong vision of a crossed vajra. This is the sign of Amoghasiddhi of the Vajra family. The family is associated with overcoming karmic activities, and is one of the signs of empowerment for the Vajrakilaya practice. I have yet to understand its significance. I asked Penor Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso what significance it may have, but neither one gave me an answer. I was told to just continue my practice.

Several times, I've experienced being enormous. I expanded to include all of space. I have had several dreams of huge bird beings, and frequently I've heard the swishing of wings during

the day when I'm awake.

Usually my experiences during meditation are sensual. Currents of energy running through my body. I enter a shamanic trance very easily. My eyes will roll back in my head and I emit high pitched sounds. This state is not desirable. You're best to let go of these states. But sometimes they just occur spontaneously to me, when I am doing Vajrakilaya - or for that matter any meditation.

What I noted about this practice is the energy it generates. You really are invigorated. This energy, really any energy, is projected or directed into the outer world. With Vajrakilaya, the energy can act like a shield, a form of protection, but it can also break up obstacles and remove barriers. The Nyingma talk about tendra -connections that aren't apparent on the surface; connections that are invisible, but nonetheless there. We just don't see them. Vajrakilaya or any meditation practice sensitizes the mind to these connections. We come to realize that when we observe things, we change the dynamics of the situation. Our mind, our thoughts change the dynamics. We begin to understand how our mind interfaces with the connections, the tendra. How our mind can either attract or repulse certain phenomena.

### **INTERVIEW # 3**

Software designer : 36 yr. old, male ( 5 years of Buddhist practice in Nyingma)

**QUESTION:** How did you come to practice Vajrakilaya?

**RESPONSE:** My partner and I are both phurba practitioners. For me, it is my primary practice. For him, it is one of his main practices, as well as a number of ancillary practices, throughout the



day. My partner and I have done phurba practice since 1995. When I first began with phurba practice, I will admit that I was immediately attracted to it, and it was actually the primary reason I ended up taking the refuge vow. Had it been another deity empowerment, I might not have felt that tug to attend the event. So in a way it was a swift and direct attraction to phurba that drew me to the dharma. Well, that and the profound kindness of Jetsun Kalu Rinpoche, through my partner Michael. Our first receipt of the Ratna Lingpa Vajrakilaya was in 1996, from Orgyen Kusum Lingpa, a lineage holder whose organization is called “Vajrakilaya Centers”.

As for why I am drawn to phurba? Wow, I guess if I have to put it in a nutshell, it’s because of the sorcery, pure and simple. The visualizations grab my attention. It isn’t always pleasant, but it is engaging—just like life in the cyclic existence. There’s realism, a revelry and a morbidity I find satisfying. The vivid quality of the consuming flames in which the deities dance - the clarity and sharpness the images acquire....Add to this formula the sounds of bells, clangings, damarus, eerie whistles, and rhythmic claps, all to support one’s vivid and yet ephemeral visualization...the generation of bliss...the practice is perfectly suited to my temperament.

QUESTION: Could you describe your experience of the practice and any psycho-physical changes?

RESPONSE: My experiences seem to happen in spurts, usually as a result of extended or brief retreats. At a retreat in 1997, I began to cry and cry. Energetically, my heart felt like it was opening up, and I reached a point of intense joy mingled with sadness. The truth of suffering was right before me, and I felt it beyond myself and touching every sentient being, and it was at once

painful yet filled with compassion. There was a surreal quality to my perception, as if everything were seen and heard exceptionally clearly, with no distortion.

Not sure of the occasion, but one time, I awoke from a dream in which I crossed a street, and on the other side was a small roadside shrine of whitewashed mud-clay construction, not very large, but with a window through which I climbed and entered a huge meeting hall with a dirt floor and mud-clay walls. Inside, folks were waiting for an event in which goat meat was to be consumed. On television monitors suspended from the wall (much like the ones you see in sports bars) was a dancing Vajrakilaya complete with wings and six arms, in union with his consort.

The visualization of Vajrakilaya has grown clearer with time. Often after doing it, I feel revitalized, since what I'm actually doing is reclaiming energy I've given to my own cyclic obscurations, as well as liberating the obstructing forces for my and others' practice. The post mantra dissolution has only just recently become a satisfying part of the practice for me, and I can sit in post dissolution meditation for an increasingly longer period of time.

As for visual, auditory, and energetic manifestations, I think at least with the visualization and auditory stuff, they happen more in conjunction with external phenomena. So, if I hear a low roar outside our apartment, sometimes it will sound to me as the roaring of the Kila mantra of Vajrakilaya or his horrible laugh.

#### **INTERVIEW # 4**

Retired: 58 yr old female ( thirty years meditation experience with Zen/Vipassana and the Kagyu/Nyingma)

**QUESTION:** Why are you interested in Vajrakilaya practice?

**RESPONSE:** After looking into Tibetan practice over time I have to say that for me I don't find tantric practice at all helpful. I have received the Vajrakilaya empowerment several times- usually at retreats as part of the program. I always did Vajrakilaya with other (meditation) practices. But like I said, I've lost interest in Vajrayana. In fact, I'd say a lot of what we practice is Lamaism not Buddhism. I began practice over thirty years ago as a Zen/Vipassana student and have returned to Vipassana. This winter, I'm going to Burma for a few months of intensive Vipassana

**QUESTION:** How would you describe your Vajrakilaya practice? Were there any psycho-physical changes?

**RESPONSE:** Well the only change I noticed was greater insight. Insight into relationships and issues in my life. But like I said, I find Vipassana more effective. Years ago when I was practicing Zen, I was walking down the street with my son in a stroller and suddenly the whole world was engulfed in fire. It was a powerful vision. Luckily nothing happened to my son or I. Somehow I had navigated my way to a bench on the side of the street. I sat shaken for sometime after the vision. This was perhaps for me the most powerful experience of purification. I felt energized for days.

## **INTERVIEW # 5**

Soft Designer: 32 yr. old, female ( ten years of experience with Nyingma)

QUESTION: How did you come to practice Vajrakilaya?

RESPONSE: Well I've been interested in Buddhism for several years. Started off doing week end retreats. I was living on the west coast (San Francisco) and noticed a pamphlet for Penor Rinpoche's teachings in Rochester. I was immediately drawn to Penor Rinpoche. So in 1997, I flew to Rochester, and it was there that I received the Vajrakilaya empowerment. So I guess you could say what drew me to Vajrakilaya was my connection to Penor Rinpoche. I returned to New York in 1998 for the (McDonough) retreat and received the (Vajrakilaya) initiation again. My commitment to Penor Rinpoche just keeps growing, getting deeper. I marvel at his generosity and his concern for everyone, their welfare. It really touches my heart.

QUESTION: Could you describe your experiences of Vajrakilaya and any psycho-physical changes?

RESPONSE: I have a busy life. Vajrakilaya and Guru Yoga have been my main practices. I felt a strong attraction to Vajrakilaya. (The practice) takes me out of myself - out of the daily routine. Its powerful - I mean it is really empowering . Its has an eerie beauty. Its magical... emotionally moving. (After meditation) reality gets very real, clear, vivid. I feel really focused, confident. I have a resolve to get things done, see things through.

As far as dreams - I woke up several mornings hearing the Kila mantra reverberating in my ears. But on the whole I would say the effects of the practice are subtle. I feel like this vast reservoir of energy is building inside. My commitment to Penor Rinpoche and the dharma is

deepening. I feel a deeper compassion for others.

5.

### **CONCLUSION**

*There are, and always have been, those who cannot help but see that the world and its experiences are in the nature of a symbol, and that it really reflects something that lies hidden in the subject himself, in his own transsubjective reality.*

*Jung (Psychological commentary in Tibetan Book of Dead 1960:xlvi)*

*The transformation of the unconscious that occurs under analysis makes it the natural analogue of the religious initiation ceremonies, which do, however, differ in principle from the natural process in that they forestall the natural course of development and substitute for the spontaneous production of symbols a deliberately selected set of symbols prescribed by tradition. We can see this in the Exercitia of Ignatius Loyola, or in the yoga meditations of the Buddhists and Tantrists.*

*Jung (Psychological commentary in Tibetan Book of Dead 1960:xlvi)*

As discussed in chapters one and two, postmodern anthropologists posit that cultural identities and activities are constructed through the dynamic interaction of “multiple agents in varying contexts or places” (Marcus 1998:52). Although the rate of inter-cultural exchange may have accelerated in the later part of the twentieth century due to technological advances, Samuels (1993) observes a similar dynamic at work in the formation of Vajrayana in the eighth century. He (1993:440) argues that Vajrayana is a hybrid of Buddhism that came from India, China and Central Asia and fused with the shamanistic techniques of the indigenous Bon religion. The

importation of Asian Buddhism to North America seems to be producing yet another cultural hybrid. In contrast to forms of Asian Buddhism, Euro-Americans emphasize lay practice over monasticism, democracy rather than authoritarian hierarchies, the inclusion and equality of women as opposed to patriarchy, and meditation over devotional practices and ethical precepts (Lopez 1998; Tanaka 1998; Gross 1998: and Nattier 1995). Tanaka (1998:295) points out that the rate of Asian Buddhism's acculturation into modern North American societies is unprecedented, and this has created concern in Asian communities trying to preserve their ethnic identity. In an effort to alleviate some of these inter-cultural tensions, several prominent Euro-American Buddhist leaders have advocated for ecumenicalism (Morreale 1998).

Anthropologist Gordon Mathews (2000:104) argues that of all forms of Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism is obviously the most foreign, offering symbols and meditation practices that appear cognitively dissonant with Canadian and American life worlds. However, by tracing Padmasambhava's terms to Atone, Herbert Guenther (1994:4) contends that Vajrayana and early Gnosticism may have shared similar philosophical origins. In her interpretation of the Gnostic Gospels, Elaine Pagels (1979:xxi, 146) also notes parallels between early Gnosticism and Buddhism. Cautious of oversimplification, Robert Ellwood (1973:42-43) suggests that during the first few centuries after the common era, Western religion split into two modes of religious expression: emissary and exemplary. While the former would evolve into the historical narratives and doctrine of institutional religions and the rationalism and materialism of secular societies, the later would value mystical-ecstatic experience, secret initiatory rituals, the guidance of exemplary, charismatic leaders, and spiritual techniques conducive to insight and transformation (44-45). The exemplary mode of expression is rooted in early Greek and Roman contact with India and Asiatic

shamanism (43). Ellwood (1973:1) links the current vogue for Eastern religious imports in North America to a “subculture which has long lived to taste these exotic spiritual experiences”, and the growing disdain of contemporary Euro-Americans for emissary type religions that tend to deny direct religious experience. These historical connections seem to imply that Vajrayana is not as foreign to Euro-American culture as first thought.

Jung (1933:206) felt that the spiritual currents of modern times evidenced in the Theosophical movement and in the widespread interest in astrology, parapsychology, and faith healing, “have a deep affinity with Gnosticism”. He (207) contended that the “passionate interest in new religious movements arises from psychic forces that can no longer be invested in obsolete forms of religion”; forces that originate in the depths and margins of society. Inherent to these movements is the impetus towards “more immediate and interior spiritual experience” (Dourley 1995:5). Likewise, Robert Ellwood (1994:331) firmly anchors the advent of postmodern religion in the counterculture movement of the 1960's; an underground movement fed from the “non-rational basement of the mind” and the margins of society. Ellwood (335) asserts that postmodern religion is, in part, the recovery of a more natural religiosity that existed prior to the Enlightenment era with its overemphasis on the consciousness, the rational, and the material. He (332-333) writes:

*Natural religion believes this innate presence may be tapped by a normal quickening of spiritual sensitivity, which can be aided by various techniques or insights but does not require extraordinary grace. Faith in nature and nature's God may affirm hidden (occult) natural forces that go beyond reason as ordinarily understood, including trust in psychic energies and powers of the mind that seem almost magical. But ultimately these realities depend on little known laws of nature and so are not strictly supernatural entities; their employment postulates religion less as response to “straight-down” revelation than as a gracious tool to be engaged therapeutically for*

*this-worldly healings of self and society.*

Both Jung and Ellwood (335 -336) view the new religious movements as essentially compensatory, an unconscious corrective measure to the dehumanizing and stultifying impact of religious institutions reconstructed at the height of modernity ( the late 1880's through the 1950's), “ amid the immense traumas of industrialization and two world wars”. This new religiosity recovers the evocative power of the symbol and the charisma of the shaman (335). Radical subjectivity becomes the “wellspring of religion” and is enhanced through psycho-tropic substances and meditation techniques (335).

In his essay *The Undiscovered Self* Jung (1957) argued that Western religions are no longer capable of directing their members to the renewing and healing depths of their own psyche, because of their rigid adherence to a dogma and creed that externalizes the divine (Dourley 1995:9). The modern consciousness, “uprooted” from “its native connectedness with the divine vitalities of its depths” (1), is exhibited in the spiritual restlessness of new religious movements. For those who still believe that the divine is external to the psyche, various religions are tried on and discarded like worn-out clothes (5). It is a matter of personal taste, a pragmatic choice. For others, there is the “dawning suspicion” that the “reality of deity or demon” is the creation of the psyche (4). At this juncture, there is an “inward turning of the libido into the unconscious” (Jung 1974: par. 423), and mystical experience arises from a vivid experience of the archetypes that comprise the collective unconsciousness (CW 18 par. 218). Religions originate with the archetypes, and subsequently religious expression cannot rest solely on faith and tradition (CW 18 par.218).

Humanity bears, on the one hand, a “cosmic correspondence” in their ability to reflect



and on the other by virtue of heredity, the archetypal nature of raw instincts (Jung 1957:73). The instinctual energies that bind humanity to the cosmos can also tear them apart through unconscious desires, drives, and compulsions; what Buddhism refers to as “attachment to ten thousand things”. This “condition cries out for order and synthesis”, and this is the function of the symbol (73). Jung (74) remarks:

(T)he individual in his dissociated state needs a directing and ordering principle. Ego consciousness would like to let its own will play this role, but overlooks the existence of powerful unconscious factors which thwart its intentions. If it wants to reach the goal of synthesis, it must first get to know the nature of these factors. It must experience them, or else it must possess a numinous symbol that expresses them and conduces to synthesis. A religious symbol that comprehends and visibly represents what is seeking expression in modern man could probably do this; but our conception of the Christian symbol to date has certainly not been able to do so.

Jung (1967:68) felt that the modern spiritual crisis stemmed from Western theologies suppression of mystical experience. Uprooted from their own psychic depths, Christian theologians lost sight of the revitalizing and healing powers intrinsic to “living symbols”, the primary carriers of religious experience (Dourley 1995:9). When consciousness is severed from the collective unconsciousness, “from the deeper life which precedes it and should enliven it, the logos, emasculated, degenerates into lifeless logic (13)”. Jung looked to Gnosticism and the symbolism of alchemy to recover the primacy of religious experience. The symbolism of alchemy connotes that “life’s healing, centering, and expanding powers lie in the depths of the psyche”, and is accessed by the ego through the symbol (23). Both Jung (Dourley 1995:11) and biogenetic structuralists (Laughlin, McManus, and d’Aquili 1992) contend that “humanity is wired” for symbolic expression. Symbols are the native language of the deeper psyche, the means by which

the deeper psyche engages the ego in dialogue. It is through this dialogue that the human psyche is revitalized, healed, transformed, and ultimately incarnates the divine (24). In effect, mystical experience is the process of individuation itself, a process which tends to transcend dualism and collapses the notion of God as divine other ( Dourley unpublished paper 2000).

In his discussion of Jung and post-modern mysticism, Dourley (2000) states that institutional religions of Western culture have become “increasingly religiously insipid”. Dourley (2000) writes:

It ( the religious Western orthodoxy) continues to lose its spiritually and intellectually sensitive membership even as its total numbers can swell through its appeal to a growing fundamentalism, occasionally bordering on fanaticism representing the most serious threat to humanity’s survival. In this societal context Jung’s re-visioning of mysticism and incarnation would address a number of constituencies. For those who once could, but no longer can, access their divine depths through the institution it offers the radical option of unmediated conversation with divinity in and through the psyche.... For those without a history of membership in a religious community Jung’s understanding of incarnation could reconnect the individual with their native divinity. Should this happen in significant numbers, the so called secular world could recover a humanity at once more sensitive to its interiority and more encompassing in its sympathy for the totality of humanity.

The current revived interest in mysticism at the academic, religious, psychological and personal levels may confirm Jung’s suspicion that religious communities which could not inform their thought and practice with a gnostic/mystical element have lost their credibility and so their capacity to suppress the very energies needed for their own renewal.

According to Jung, the externalization of the divine is unknown in Eastern religions (Dourley 1995:15). Chapter three discussed Vajrayana teachings and meditation techniques that enable the practitioner to access the deeper levels of the psyche , accelerate psychic integration and transformation, and ultimately to incarnate the enlightened qualities of the deity. In the process, compassion arises spontaneously and is extended to others in the wider community.

Vajrayana teachings and rituals are constantly revitalized through the subjective experiences of lamas and Tantric practitioners. Jung (1960 in Evans-Wentz) recognized parallels between Western and Eastern psychologies, but unlike Vajrayana, he did not believe it was possible to achieve a state of total non-duality or primordial consciousness. Further, he did not advise importing Eastern religions to compensate the “one-sided conscious pathology” of the West, but rather for Europeans and Euro-Americans to recover their “lost sense of an interior connectedness to the totality in the re-assimilation of traditions” driven to the margins of society, the “gnostic-chemical-mystical impulse grounded in a sense of the divine within humanity and nature” (Dourley 1995:15). Although several scholars (Pagels 1979:xxi) suggest Gnosticism was influenced by Buddhism, Jung would posit that these similarities arose from the collective unconsciousness, a common substratum, a common psychic structure, that evokes identical reactions regardless of culture (Moacanin 1986:93, 94). In regard to Eastern religions, Jung would, however, strongly advise Westerners to stay within their own traditions, their own symbols and mythology (92 -93). As Jung (1969:xlix) notes in the opening citation of this chapter, Buddhist Tantrism differs from the natural unfoldment and transformation of the psyche in psychoanalysis, in that, the spontaneous production of symbols is deliberately substituted for a select set prescribed by and embedded within a particular mythopoeia.

The Vajrakilaya sadhana, like other tantric rituals, harnesses the energies of instinctual-affective drives through corresponding libido analogues and uses this energy for psychic integration and transformation. The triangular symbolism of the wrathful deity sadhanas, in general, serve a transcendent function that facilitates the birth of a new state of being out of the tension of unifying opposites: matter/spirit, masculine/feminine principles, dark/light, the

conscious/the unconscious. The triangle also relates to the triune process, the breaking through of ego consciousness to access the renewing, revitalizing, and transforming depths of the collective unconsciousness. The various symbols of Vajrakilaya, his implements, consort and retinue are designed to activate the five archetypal deities/Buddhas: namely Varicochana (primordial consciousness), Akshobya (discriminating wisdom associated with the dissolution of ego projections), Ratnasambhava (equalizing wisdom representing that all peaceful and wrathful appearances are generated by the psyche), Amitabha (the wisdom of individuation), and Amoghasiddhi (the all-accomplishing wisdom that cuts through personal conditioning, traumas, and the negativities/obstacles these psychological conditions create). The five archetypal deities represent the transmutation of the five constituents (consciousness, form, sensation, conceptualization, and volitional activities) into enlightened qualities (Thurman 1994:258). The five poisons of instinctual-affective drives (ignorance, hate, pride, lust, and envy) are purified and transformed into bodhi-citta. The fierceness of wrathful deities represents a “tough love” approach, in that, the horrific appearance is designed to cut through habitual egotistical drives and to awaken the practitioner to the Buddha potentialities of the psyche. Jung would recover the transcendent function in the alchemical symbol of Mercurius.

So why are Euro-Americans interested in Vajrayana ritual? A literature review, data from a questionnaire distributed during the Ottawa empowerment for the Vajrakilaya sadhana in May, and a series of in-depth interviews with novice, intermediate, and seasoned practitioners of Vajrakilaya may provide some answers. Several research studies in the late 1980's and early 1990's (Bibby 1994; Hammond 1988; Ellwood 1993; Wade-Clark 1993) reveal that since World War II, there has been a steady decline in church attendance and affiliation. Despite declining

church attendance, Canadian and Americans under the age of forty-five express a strong interest in mysticism, ritual and quests for meaning. Bibby (1993:309) attributes the decline of church attendance, particularly among the baby boomers and their children, to conventional church hierarchies that promote forms of faith that resemble products of an assembly line, and that fail to spot the current widespread fascination with myth, with transpersonal experiences, with teachings emphasizing oneness with nature, and with techniques that engage hidden psychic forces, the cognitive potentialities of mind, for the purpose of renewal, healing and transformation (Bibby 1993:309; Ellwood 1994:335). The 1960's counterculture fostered a movement towards a more "natural religiosity which believed the divine lived within each individual and nature" (Ellwood 1994:332). The experience of the divine came through personal revelation and not through church mediation. In essence, it appeared to be a return to a more Gnostic orientation. The focus shifted from the centralized authority of religious institutions to the margins of society and alternative religions that valued subjectivity, egalitarian organizations, and direct occult/mystical experience (Ellwood 1994: 335). Victor Turner (1988:517) viewed the "raw and wild communitas" of the 1960's counterculture as a reaction against the "too rigid structuring of human life"; a revolt against the establishment and "American middle-class values" which conventional churches tend to represent.

Data from the questionnaire and in-depth interviews tends to suggest that Canadians and Americans engage in Vajrayana ritual because it evokes mystical-ecstatic experience which is conducive to healing and transformation. Many have switched to Vajrayana from their natal Christian religion, because they feel Christian ritual and mythology does not lend itself to interior religious experience. Others supplement their Christian faith with the more experiential,

mystical aspects of Vajrayana ritual and psychotherapeutic techniques. Euro-Americans who are drawn to Vajrakilaya practice indicate a need for purification, for resolution of inner conflicts that block greater psychic integration, and for protection from negative/demonic forces; a need some report is not met in the Christian tradition. What became clear from the questionnaire and in-depth interviews in chapter four, is that, Euro-Americans are interested in Vajrayana and the Vajrakilaya sadhana, in particular, because the symbolism of Tantric ritual tends to evoke mystical experience. Euro-Americans report that the symbolism of Vajrakilaya induces states of consciousness beyond ordinary ego awareness and that their imbibing of these experiences energizes, promotes profound spiritual insight and psychic integration, and is actualized in the world as compassion. All attributes Jung would posit as innate to religious experience and the process of individuation.

But how do Euro-Americans assimilate symbols nurtured on a foreign soil and interwoven with a foreign history? As the Buddhist monk, the Venerable Sona (Bell 2000), observes Euro-Americans are more into meditation techniques than acquiring the devotional orientation characteristic of Asian forms of Buddhism. In effect, the meditation techniques help Euro-Americans disengage from their over rationalistic, materialistic, technocratic and conscious lifestyles. It is an inward turning of the libido into the unconscious and the desire to engage in the numinous and awe inspiring religious dimension of the archetypes. It is compensation from the unconsciousness that produces the living symbol so crucial to the process of individuation. Charles Prebish (1995:4) contends that although Euro-Americans engage in Buddhist practices and maybe even have a sophisticated understanding of its attendant mythopoeia, they still remain firmly rooted in Western culture with its democratic and egalitarian value system. Despite the fact

that Euro-Americans make time to do Buddhist meditation on a regular basis, they identify with Western culture as much as ever. Because Euro-Americans are predominately lay practitioners, they may not be as heavily indoctrinated into the Vajrayana tradition as say those who seek a long and confined period of monastic training in an Asian culture. Most Euro-American lay practitioners simply integrate their meditation experiences into their surrounding life world. They attend lectures, empowerments, and teachings from recognized lamas, receive support from small meditation groups, and consume literature and audiovisual material related to Vajrayana in popular Western culture. Their practice on the whole remains flexible and highly individualized. It therefore should not be surprising that many Asians do not recognize forms of Buddhism as it is practiced in the West. This is not to trivialize Euro-Americans' subjective experiences of Vajrayana ritual. As the data from the questionnaire and interviews show, many report profound transformative experiences. Rather it may imply what Jung has long contended, Euro-Americans are not so much practicing forms of Buddhism as recovering their gnostic-alchemical- mystical impulses.

## **End Notes**

1. The film depicts the reincarnation of a high Tibetan Lama to a middle-class Euroamerican couple living in Seattle, Washington and also offers a brief biography of Gautama Shakyamuni's life and his teachings of the four noble truths.
2. The movie is based on Heinrich Harrer's autobiographical novel of the same name, and recounts the Austrian mountain climber's escape from a British prisoner of war camp in India during the second World War and his harrowing journey through the Himalayas to Lhasa. After arriving in Lhasa, Harrer befriends the fourteenth Dalai Lama, then a boy, and becomes his personal tutor from 1944 to 1945. In the film, Harrer is portrayed as the young Dalai Lama's first Western contact.

3. A biographical account of the fourteenth Dalai Lama's life that follows historical-political events leading to his flight from Tibet to India in 1959.
4. Shot by Academy-award winning documentarian Paul Wagner, the film is a life history of members of a Lhasa family living in a Nepal refugee community.
5. In 1997, entering the search term Buddhism on the amazon.com web site netted 1,200 book titles (Bell 2000). Today the same search produces over 4,500 titles.
6. Tulku is literally translated as an "Emanation Body of the Buddha" (Thurman 1994:273), and usually refers to lamas, who having acquired a high level of spiritual attainment in previous lives, are able to consciously choose the circumstances of their own reincarnation.
7. It is necessary to receive an empowerment (wang) from a recognized lama before practicing a sadhana. In Vajrayana or Tantric traditions, the lama elicits the right attitude from the practitioner by awakening dormant psyche forces or potentialities during the initiation (Trungpa 1975:54-56). The teachings are offered after an empowerment and give technical instructions for the ritual enactment of the sadhana.
8. Euro-American will refer to Canadians and Americans of European descent.
9. In the late 1800's the Buddhist Sangha in Sri Lanka was under heavy attack from Christian missionaries and the British Colonial administration. In an attempt to turn the tables on Christian missionaries and advance the Buddhist movement, Theosophists Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steele Alcott reformulated Buddhism. In his *The Buddhist Catechism*, Alcott argued against the superstitious practices and supernaturalism of Buddhism calling for a return to the purity of the Buddha's teachings with an emphasis on rational empiricism as opposed to the blind faith of other religions (Ekel 2000:58). Gananath Obeyesekere (cited in Ekel 2000:58) traces Walpola Rahula's construction of the Theravada tradition in *What the Buddha Taught* to Alcott's and Blavatsky's reformulation and sanitization of Buddhism for European and American audiences.
10. Donald Lopez (1998:165; 201-202) observes that the demand for accomplished teachers in the West led to a lama drain in the Tibetan Refugee communities of Nepal and India.
11. Bibby (1993:266) defines marketing myopia as a seller who likes the product so much, that the needs of the consumer are ignored or overlooked.
12. Prior to 1971, 90% of Canadians were of European ancestry and the same percentage of Canadians identified themselves as either Protestant or Roman Catholic (Bibby 1993:20). The liberalization of immigration policies in the early 1970's, allowed greater numbers of Asians and Central Americans to enter Canada. Previous to these reforms, immigrants had been predominantly European.



13. Dream analysis and active imagination were two psychotherapeutic techniques Jung devised to assist clients in accessing the collective unconscious and consequently engage with archetypal material.

14. Turner expands on Arnold Van Gennep's (1909) formulation of rites of passage. Rites of passage are typically a tri-partite process which involve: 1) separating the initiate from his previous social status, 2) a limen state ( a transitional phase between the old and new status), and 3) re-aggregation of the individual into society with a new social status. Turners concept of liminality is based on the second limen stage and is instrumental for the experience of *communitas*.

15. The Gnostics developed a similar concept of Anthropos: "a unitary being who existed before man and at the same time represents man's goal" (Guenther 1994:21).

16. Wrathful deity sadhana's can be utilized in advanced stages of yoga to destroy enemies (see Stablein 1991; Batchelor 1998:60-66) Rituals for annihilating not only mental obstacles, but others who present external obstacles, are included in the terma of Ratna Lingpa.

17. Keith Dowman (1996:254) compares the Khadroma to the anima in Western psychology. He claims that in Vajrayana metaphysics the physiological-sexual and psychological nature of woman is receptivity, and the Tantric symbols of the lake, the well, the empty vase and the yoni (vagina) represent this "openness", a state of relaxation imperative to the realization of primordial consciousness. Forms of perception are associated with the male Guru's compassion or skills-in-means. Each human psyche contains both the receptive and compassionate qualities, but the former dominates in the woman's psyche, while the later is recessive. The reverse is true for men. Radmila Moacanin (1986:64 -65)states that while the khadroma may correspond to the Western concept of anima, it may also relate to the "wise old man" or "wise old woman" archetype of superior insight. She argues: " In the male-oriented Western world, the concept of anima, as feminine counterpart of the masculine psyche, and the proper integration of the two aspects, is crucial in the psychological balance of the individual and culture. In the Eastern world, on the other hand, the feminine quality, the yin as well as the yang, the masculine quality, the goddess as well as the god, have been integral parts of the culture. There could be no god without a goddess; one is unthinkable without the other".

**APPENDIX A**

**Questionnaire**

Hello. I am a Masters candidate at Carleton University and my area of research entails an exploration of Euro-American engagement with Tibetan Buddhism. Your completion of the following questionnaire would be of immense benefit to my research endeavor. All responses will remain confidential and anonymous and used strictly for research purposes. The questions are brief and should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your assistance.

Elizabeth Cleland

**A. Please circle or fill in appropriate response**

1. Sex:            Male    Female

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Annual income: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Highest Level of Education Achieved: \_\_\_\_\_

5. I have been a practitioner of Buddhism for: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

6. I have practiced predominately with the: The Gelug  
The Sakya  
The Kagyu  
The Nyingma  
Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. I travel to regions outside of North America \_\_\_\_\_ times per year

**B. Please fill appropriate response**

1. Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_

3. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

4 a. I meditate \_\_\_\_\_ times per day  
          \_\_\_\_\_ times per week  
          \_\_\_\_\_ times per month

4b. During your practice have you had any experiences that you would describe as life altering?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, briefly describe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4c. During your practice, have you experienced periods of extreme joy or bliss?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, briefly describe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4d. Have you experienced improved physical or mental health as the result of your practice?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, briefly describe some of these benefits \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Have you ever been affiliated with a Christian denomination? \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes No

If you answered yes, please answer the following questions:

5b. Please state the Christian denomination \_\_\_\_\_

5c. Briefly describe why Tibetan Buddhism appeals to you \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5d. Please list any involvement with other religious or spiritual groups (Eastern or Western)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5e. Would you describe your affiliation with Tibetan Buddhism as spiritually fulfilling?

Yes     No

If yes, briefly explain why \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5f. If you have switched from Christianity to Buddhism, please explain your reasons for doing so. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Are you receiving the empowerment for Vajrakilaya?     Yes     No

6b. If yes, briefly explain your interest in Vajrakilaya practice?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation

**Appendix B**  
**In formed Consent Form**  
**For: Exploratory Study of Euro-American Experience of Vajrakilaya**

I am a masters candidate at Carleton University in the Anthropology and Sociology department. I am currently exploring Euro-American experience of the Nyingma Varjra Kilaya practice, specifically any psycho-physical changes during and/or after a sustained period of practice. As part of the research process, I would like to ask you about your experiences of Vajrakilaya.

All information will remain confidential and be used exclusively for my research project. Participation is voluntary, and you are not required to answer any questions you deem too private or personal for disclosure. You may discontinue the interview at any time, and if you decide, you may withhold any information or all information generated by the interview, if you feel compromised.

The duration of each interview should take approximately 2 to 3 hours and may require follow up interviews. Follow up interviews will be based upon your convenience and discretion.

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understood the conditions concerning my participation in this research project, and voluntarily consent to proceed with the interview (s).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Upon request, a copy of the final results of this research will be made available to you. Please contact by writing

Elizabeth Cleland  
M.A. Candidate  
Sociology and Anthropology Department  
Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario.

If you have any concerns or complaints concerning my conduct during the interview, the nature of my research and/or your participation in this research. Please contact:

Valda Blundell,  
Graduate Co-ordinator  
Sociology and Anthropology Department  
Carleton University  
613-520-2600 ext.2608

A photocopy of this signed consent form will be given to you for future reference.

## ***APPENDIX C***

### ***LIST OF INFORMANTS***

<i>Vajrayana Teacher</i>	<i>46 yr. old Canadian male</i>
<i>Film producer/Vajrayana Teacher</i>	<i>52 yr. old Canadian female</i>
<i>Software Designer</i>	<i>32 yr. old American female</i>
<i>Retired</i>	<i>58 yr. old Canadian female</i>
<i>Software Designer</i>	<i>36 yr. old American male</i>
<i>University Student</i>	<i>27 yr. old American male</i>
<i>Research Consultant</i>	<i>40 yr. old Canadian female</i>
<i>Translator</i>	<i>43 yr. old Canadian female</i>
<i>Entertainment Industry</i>	<i>48 yr. old American male</i>
<i>University Professor</i>	<i>62 yr. old Canadian male</i>
<i>Nurse (Mental Health)</i>	<i>34 yr. old American female</i>
<i>Real Estate Broker</i>	<i>53 yr. old American female</i>
<i>Technical Support Worker</i>	<i>29 yr. old British female</i>
<i>Housewife/mother</i>	<i>43 yr. old American female</i>

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