

Mahāmudrā: Natural Mind in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism

Roger Jackson*
Carleton College

Abstract

Mahāmudrā, usually translated as ‘the great seal’, is a vital term in the tantric traditions of Buddhist India and most schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In early Indian Buddhist tantras, it refers primarily to a hand-gesture (*mudrā*) accompanying visualization meditation. In the later and more esoteric Indian Mahāyoga and Yoginī tantras, it denotes, *inter alia*, one of a sequence of experiential ‘seals’ to meditation; a ‘consort’ in sexual yoga practices; and a non-dual gnosis in which great bliss and awareness of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) are inseparably conjoined. In the songs and treatises of the Indian great adepts (*mahāsiddhas*), Mahāmudrā is an index of ultimacy, regarded as the luminous, empty nature of mind, i.e. our buddha-nature; a type of meditation for realizing mind’s nature; a set of unconventional practices that express that realization; and the final fruit of meditation, buddhahood. In Tibet, Mahāmudrā was known during the imperial period, but gained prominence only during the Tibetan ‘renaissance’ that began in the 11th century. Although a topic of analysis in nearly every Tibetan tradition, it is most central to the Kagyü, or ‘oral lineage’. Introduced to the Kagyü by Marpa and Milarepa, Mahāmudrā was popularized by Gampopa, who analyzed it from many angles, and suggested it was as much a practice rooted in the sūtras as in the tantras. Subsequent Kagyü masters developed Gampopa’s analysis further, produced anthologies of Mahāmudrā texts, and related Mahāmudrā to a variety of important Indian and Tibetan Buddhist ideas and practices. As a meditation practice, Mahāmudrā often is divided into sudden and gradual approaches. The sudden approach involves simply abiding in the natural mind, which is tantamount to buddhahood. Gradual approaches may involve complex tantric visualizations and the manipulation of forces within the subtle body or a sequence of meditations that focus on the nature of mind, which is found to be empty, luminous, non-dual, and blissful. Discourse on mahāmudra in India and Tibet raises a number of important issues for Buddhist thought and practice, such as the soteriological sufficiency of a single, sudden insight; the place of reason and ethics in contemplative tradition; and the unity or diversity of meditative realization. Those issues resonate, in turn, with discussions elsewhere of mysticism, religious experience, and the nature of mind.

Introduction

Mahāmudrā, Sanskrit for ‘the Great Seal’, is a term of great importance in the latter-day Buddhist traditions of India (9th–12th century CE) and occupies a central place in many Tibetan Buddhist doctrinal and contemplative systems. Mahāmudrā has multiple connotations. It may be a hand-gesture displayed in tantric ritual, a consort in sexual yoga practices, one of a set of experiences that ‘seal’ one’s progress in advanced tantric meditation, an index of the empty and paradoxical nature of reality, or the state of buddhahood that lies at the end of the tantric path. Above all, it refers to a unified set of ideas and practices that takes as its main basis the empty and luminous nature of the mind, as its main meditation a series of gradual or sudden insights into mind’s nature, as its main expression a

compassionate, creative, and sometimes unconventional engagement with the world, and as its main outcome the form and dharma bodies of a fully awakened buddha. At its most basic level, it is simply the practice of the ‘natural mind’ (*nijacitta*). Mahāmudrā (Tibetan *chakgya chenpo*) is most closely associated with the Kagyü order of Tibetan Buddhism and absolutely central to its discourse. It also is important to varying degrees in other Tibetan traditions. In both India and Tibet, it was for many centuries a focal point for metaphysical speculation, meditative exploration, philosophical disputation, poetic expression, and ethical reflection. In the late 20th and early 21st century, as Tibetan Buddhism has begun to spread outside its traditional cultural sphere, Mahāmudrā has become familiar to an ever-widening circle of people. For them, as surely as for traditional Indians and Tibetans, it provides at least one answer to the central, unceasing Buddhist question, “what is mind, and how may mastery of it make us free?”

This article will survey uses of the term Mahāmudrā in the Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions, describe several typical Mahāmudrā meditation practices, and briefly discuss some important religious and philosophical questions raised by the study and practice of Mahāmudrā.

A Very Brief History of Mahāmudrā

IN INDIA

The term Mahāmudrā first appears in the Buddhist tantras. The tantras—which, like the sūtras of Mainstream and Mahāyāna Buddhism, traditionally are attributed to the Buddha himself—came to prominence in the final phase of the development of Buddhism in India (7th–12th century CE). The tantras and their commentaries focus on complex rituals and meditations—some overtly magical, others more gnostic—that have as a common element the practitioner’s identification with the body, speech, and mind of the buddha: in the rhetoric of the tradition, rather than a path to a goal, it is the goal as path. The identification with buddhahood may come about gradually or suddenly. In a gradual approach, the tāntrika receives a series of initiations and practices transmitted by a guru, and then transforms conventional modes of seeing and being into awakened vision and activity. He or she presides as a royal buddha/deity at the center of a divinity-filled maṇḍala-realm, expressing awakened mind through ritual gestures (*mudrās*) and magical speech (*mantras*), sometimes harnessing such basic forces as sex, aggression, and death to spiritual ends. In the end, the tāntrika attains a perfect, adamant gnosis and the power to manifest for suffering beings in limitless forms, i.e. buddhahood (see Snellgrove 1987; Williams *et al.* 2000, pp. 192–244; Davidson 2002). In a sudden approach, following initiation or special instruction by the guru, the tāntrika identifies with awakened mind instantaneously and without mediation—or, it is sometimes said, meditation (see Ruegg 1989).

Although Buddhist tantrism differs in method from the earlier sūtra-based traditions, its cosmology and metaphysics are grounded in the Mainstream Buddhist assumption that (a) “all events are preceded by mind, founded in mind, composed by mind” (*Dhammapada* 1); (b) the mind is naturally pure and its afflictions adventitious (a claim first made at *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1:10) but it is necessary to remove these in order to realize this pure nature; (c) the key to training the mind is the achievement of a meditative tranquility that can serve as the basis for direct insight into our lack of an enduring self, belief in which is the root of our afflictions; and (d) it is possible to attain a blissful liberated state (*nirvāṇa*) that transcends delusion and suffering (see Gethin 1998). The tantric approach

also is grounded in such Mahāyāna concepts as (a) *bodhicitta*, the bodhisattva's altruistic aspiration to buddhahood; (b) skillful means, the sometimes unconventional methods used by buddhas and bodhisattvas to assist others; (c) emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the idea—prominent in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras and Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka school—that all entities and concepts lack intrinsic existence; (d) 'mind-only' or 'consciousness-only', the Yogācāra-school notion that the whole cosmos is merely conceptual; (e) buddha-nature (*buddhadhātu* or *tathāgatagarbha*), the potential for awakening inherent in all beings because of the mind's natural purity; and (f) the perfect dharma and form 'bodies' (*kāya*) of a buddha, which are attained through mastery of wisdom and compassionate means (see Williams *et al.* 2000; Williams 2008).

It is notoriously difficult to establish even relative chronologies among pre-Muslim-era Indian texts, but there is tentative agreement among scholars that the development of tantric literature between the 7th and 12th centuries roughly corresponds to the succession of classes of tantra delineated by Tibetan scholars; one typical scheme identifies Action, Performance, Yoga, Mahāyoga, and Yoginī tantras, with each class being more esoteric and inward-oriented than its predecessor. Among the early tantras in which Mahāmudrā is mentioned are the *Mañjuśrī-nāmasaṅgīti*, where it is identified as one of six great buddha families (3:2; Wayman 1985, p. 65), and the *Mañjuśrī-mūlakaḷpa*, where it refers both to a 'five-peaked' ritual hand-position signifying the attainment of all worldly and ultimate aims (e.g. 2:26:15–17), and, more abstractly, "the highest dharma, undeclining, the highest step" (43:22:370) (see Wallis 2002, pp. 238–39n49). In the Yoga tantras (e.g., the *Sarvadurgati-pariśodhana*, *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṅgraha*, and *Vajrasēkhara*), Mahāmudrā is sometimes said to be the hand-gesture made by any deity, but most often is a hand-gesture that accompanies and 'seals', or confirms, an internal state, such as the clear visualization of oneself as a buddha/deity. In several texts, it is the lowest in a series of four such confirmatory *mudrās*, the others being the Karma, Dharma, and Pledge seals. In the *Māyājāla* collection of the Mahāyoga class of tantras, Mahāmudrā once again signifies the clear visualization of oneself as a buddha/deity. In the most influential Mahāyoga Tantra, the *Guhyasamāja*, it describes a meditation, accompanied by mantras, that helps assure the attainment of a buddha's adamant body, speech, and mind (11:1–3, 17:45), and also is a 'consort' in sexual yoga (10:21) (Fremantle 1971, pp. 59, 130, 58).

The Yoginī tantras, the last major class of tantras to emerge in India (starting around the ninth century), aim to produce a blissful, non-dual gnosis through worship of and identification with female (and male) deities in their maṇḍalas (the 'creation stage'), meditations centered in the channels and cakras of the subtle body (the 'completion stage'), and the practice of sexual yoga and other unconventional types of behavior (*caryā*, or tantric conduct). It is in the Yoginī tantras that Mahāmudrā becomes a term of central philosophical and soteriological importance. In such systems as the Cakrasaṅvara, Hevajra, and Kālacakra, it still may be seen as one of three or four *mudrās* that 'seal' tantric experiences, but it now usually is the highest in the sequence, the great seal that betokens a full understanding of the nature of reality. At the same time, Mahāmudrā increasingly is treated on its own as a synonym for ultimacy. In the *Samvarodaya Tantra*, it is "the clear and perfect awakening to great bliss" (3:16; Tsuda 1974, p. 246). In the *Hevajra*, Mahāmudrā is a synonym for emptiness (1:10:20); a consort for sexual yoga (2:8:2–5), as well as the bliss arising from that yoga (2:4:50); an initiation that produces great bliss (2:2:31); and the 'eternal state' that is the goal of tantric practice (1:8:43), the final achievement of the mind of co-emergent and inseparable bliss and emptiness (2:8:5) (Snellgrove 1960, part I, pp. 116, 105, 91, 77, 116.). In a Hevajra-related tantra called the *Mahāmudrāṭīlaka*, it is, among other things, the "sublime mystery, indefinable, inexhaustible, and unborn" (cited

in Lhalungpa 2006, [1986], p. 103). Finally, in the *Kālacakra*, Mahāmudrā is the inexpressible, unchanging bliss transcending other *mudrās* (1:12), as well as the empty-formed buddha-aspect in which one awakens (1:15) and the final attainment (*siddhi*) that is the gnosis of buddhahood (1:41) (Newman 1987, pp. 224, 225, 231).

The major Indian exponents of the Mahāyoga and Yoginī tantras were the ‘great adepts’ (*mahāsiddhas*) (see Kvaerne 1977; Robinson 1979; Linrothe 2006). These colorful and sometimes controversial figures made Mahāmudrā a central topic of discourse. For many adepts, Mahāmudrā is at once the empty nature of mind/reality; the luminous, non-dual, and blissful gnosis that comprehends that reality through meditations either direct or mediated; a mode of enlightened conduct in the world; and the buddhahood at the end of the path. In their tantric commentaries, the adepts often read Mahāmudrā in this exalted sense back into earlier texts, and in their treatises and songs, they celebrated it as the acme of Buddhist theory and praxis. Of adepts concerned with Mahāmudrā, three stand out as especially important: Saraha, Tilopa, and Maitrīpa.

Saraha (9th–10th century?) is regarded by Tibetan traditions as the human source of most Mahāmudrā lineages (see Schaeffer 2005). His ‘essential trilogy’ of poetic *Dohākoṣas*¹ does not often mention Mahāmudrā, but articulates a variety of related themes, including emptiness, space-like meditation, great bliss, the natural mind, the co-emergent (*sahaja*) (see Kvaerne 1975), the single taste (*ekarasa*), and the yoginī—whether as deity, consort, or symbol of emptiness. In his less celebrated trilogy of adamant songs (*vajragīti*) Saraha does deal explicitly with Mahāmudrā, which he describes, variously, as mind itself, suchness, thatness, unarisen, beyond mind, space-like, and instantaneous full awakening (Braitstein 2005, pp. 187–229). Sudden though the realization of Mahāmudrā may be, Saraha does at times divide its practice into stages, such as the quartets of memory, non-memory, non-arising, and transcendence; and view, meditation, conduct, and result. He is reputed to have been the guru of the great philosopher (and adept) Nāgārjuna, and of the mountain-hermit Śavarīpa, both of whom figure importantly in Tibetan Mahāmudrā lineages.

Tilopa (10th–11th century) (see Thrangu Rinpoche 2002) is said to have received from male and female teachers, human and divine, a range of esoteric teachings, including Mahāyoga and Yoginī tantra subtle-body practices and Mahāmudrā. He focuses on the latter in his *Mahāmudrā-gaṅgamā*, where he asks rhetorically,

... [I]n space what is resting on what? In one’s mind, Mahamudra, there is nothing to be shown. Rest relaxed in the natural state without attempting to alter anything. If this fetter or bondage of thought is loosened, there is no doubt you will be liberated (Thrangu Rinpoche 2002, p. 35).

Tilopa was the teacher of Nāropa, who in turn is said to have instructed Marpa (1012–1097), the first Tibetan master in the lineage to which Mahāmudrā is most central, the Kagyū.

Maitrīpa (11th century) (see Tatz 1987; Brunnhölzl 2007, pp. 125–90), who is credited with visionary encounters with Saraha’s disciple, Śavarīpa, is said by Tibetan tradition to have composed 25 texts on Non-mentation (*amanāsikāra*), a formless meditation on the empty/luminous nature of mind that he explicitly links to Mahāmudrā, non-duality, the co-emergent, and a buddha’s dharma-body (see Mathes 2006; Higgins 2006). Maitrīpa is credited with reviving the early buddha-nature treatise, the *Uttaratantra*, as a text for Mahāmudrā study, and also explored Mahāmudrā’s relation to Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, thereby aligning tantric Mahāmudrā discourse with traditional Mahāyāna metaphysics. His disciple, Sahajavajra, went so far as to suggest that—as the ultimate nature—Mahāmudrā could as readily be found in the sūtras as the tantras. Another disciple of

Maitrīpa, Vajrapāni, helped transmit a wide range of Mahāmudrā teachings to Tibet, and Marpa, the father of the Kagyü, credited Maitrīpa, whom he met in India, with helping awaken him to the truth of Mahāmudrā (Nālandā 1982, pp. 26–33).

IN TIBET

When Buddhism first spread in Tibet during the so-called imperial period (7th–9th century), concepts of Mahāmudrā were still developing in India, yet the term is mentioned in a variety of tantras that were translated into Tibetan during this time, most notably the various texts of the *Māyājāla* collection and the ever-influential *Guhyasamāja*. The term also made its way into the early Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary, the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, where it is listed among 60-odd terms ‘originating in the Abhidharma’ (Sakiki 1972, #8031). It was only during the second dissemination of Buddhism, the so-called Tibetan renaissance (10th–13th century) (see Davidson 2005), that Mahāmudrā gained major importance in Tibet. As Tibetans visited India to collect teachings and texts, and Indians came to Tibet to promote Buddhism and collaborate on translations, the newest and most intriguing texts coming out of India were the Yoginī tantras and the writings of the great adepts, both important sources of Mahāmudrā discourse.

A variety of masters who stand at the source of major Tibetan lineages included Mahāmudrā in their repertoire of teachings. The early masters of the Sakya focused on the teachings of the *Hevajra Tantra*, and regarded Mahāmudrā as the supreme attainment entailed by initiation into the tantric path—though in both the sūtra and tantra divisions of their Path-and-Result (*lam ’bras*) teachings, they included meditations akin to those elsewhere called Mahāmudrā (see Stearns 2001, 2006; Rhoton 2002). The south Indian master Pha Dampa Sangyé (d. 1117) brought anthologies of writings by Indian Mahāmudrā adepts to Tibet and taught the Zhijé practice of pacifying suffering through direct realization of the nature of mind (see Molk 2008). His female disciple, Machik Lapdrön (1055–1143), developed the practice of Severance (*chö*), in which Mahāmudrā realization is elicited in a complex, self-sacrificial visualization (see Edou 1996; Harding 2003). The founder of the Shangpa oral lineage, Khyungpo Neljor (d. 1135?) taught the Amulet-box, a tantric Mahāmudrā meditation for joining bliss with awareness of emptiness, which he had learned from Nāropa’s consort, Nigumā (see Kapstein 1980; Riggs 2000). Proponents of the old imperial-period teachings and translations, the Nyingma, ranked Mahāmudrā as one of the highest possible realizations, though generally placing it below their own index of ultimacy, the Great Perfection (*dzokchen*) (see Dudjom 2002). The Indian source for the ascetic Kadam lineage, Atiśa (982–1054), brought instructions on Saraha’s songs to Tibet, and although their dissemination was discouraged by his conservative disciple, Dromtönpa (1005–1054), who felt that Tibetans were unready for so radical and easily misunderstood a teaching (Roerich 1976, [1949], p. 261), some Kadam masters read and commented on them nonetheless.

Mahāmudrā was important for all these lineages to some degree; for the Kagyü lineage, though, it would prove essential (see Nālandā 1980; Konchog Gyaltzen 1990; Brown 2006; Roberts 2010), and through the influence of Kagyü masters, it would eventually gain even greater significance in the other schools.

As already noted, the Kagyü’s Tibetan source, Marpa, is said to have learned Mahāmudrā in India from Maitrīpa and Nāropa. He also is said to have received Mahāmudrā teachings from Saraha in a vision. Songs attributed to him often feature Mahāmudrā, understood as a blissful, luminous gnosis that is brought about through interweaving the complex subtle-body practices of the tantras (the ‘path of means’) with

direct, non-referential contemplation of the nature of mind and reality (the ‘path of liberation’) (see Nālandā 1982).

Marpa’s great disciple, the poet-yogi, Milarepa (1040–1123), frequently celebrated Mahāmudrā in his songs, singing, for instance, of how,

To perceive ultimate reality,
I mark everything with the great seal of emptiness
...the quintessence of non-duality (Lhalungpa 2006, [1986], p. 167)

and

When I practice Mahāmudrā,
I rest myself in the intrinsic state,
Relaxing without distraction or effort. (Chang 1989, [1962], vol. 2, p. 378)

Milarepa sometimes divided Mahāmudrā into such classic phases as ground, path, and result, or view, meditation, conduct, and result; at other times, he treated it as an indivisible ultimate. He often related Mahāmudrā practice and realization to tantric initiation, though it is not clear whether he believed initiation to be an invariable prerequisite.

It was Milarepa’s disciple, the ‘doctor from Dakpo’, Gampopa Sōnam Rinchen (1079–1153), who began the process of organizing the Kagyü into a religious order, and it was he, too, who brought Mahāmudrā firmly to the center of the Kagyü world-view and set the terms for most subsequent discourse about the term (see Roerich 1976, [1949], pp. 451–62; Kragh 1998). For Gampopa, Mahāmudrā could relate to either the sūtras or the tantras—or perhaps (as ‘essence Mahāmudrā’) combine and transcend the two. He transmitted a number of distinctive Mahāmudrā practices, including such instantaneous methods as the Thunder-strike and the White Panacea, and such gradual techniques as Joining the Co-emergent and the Four Yogas: one-pointedness, non-elaboration, single taste, and non-meditation. Gampopa also was renowned for introducing a sūtra-vehicle Mahāmudrā practice—found in, e.g., the *Samādhirāja Sūtra* and the *Uttaratantra*—that did not require tantric initiation but only an experiential introduction to the nature of one’s mind through the ‘pointing-out instruction’ (*ngo sprod*) of the guru. At times, he simply described Mahāmudrā as the realization of the nature of the ordinary mind (see Lhalungpa 2006, [1986]; Jackson 1994).

The disciples of Gampopa and their lineage successors (12th–14th century) founded the great sub-orders of what came to be known as the Marpa or Dakpo Kagyü, each with its particular lineage and teachings, each with its own perspective on Mahāmudrā. Phakmo Drupa (1110–1170), of the Phakdru sub-order, emphasized the practice of Joining the Co-emergent and analyzed Mahāmudrā in terms of sudden and gradual approaches (see Roerich 1976, [1949], pp. 552–69). Zhang Rinpoché (1123–1193) of the Tselpa sub-order, wrote a great poetic summary of Mahāmudrā that featured both gradual and sudden approaches, but was famed in particular for its emphasis on the sudden White Panacea practice (see Martin 1993; Jackson 1994). Drigung Jikten Sumgön (1143–1217) of the Drigung sub-order, taught Mahāmudrā both as the sudden Single Intention and as the more gradual Fivefold practice, which consists of generating the awakening mind, visualizing oneself as a buddha/deity, serving the guru, abandoning conceptual thought, and dedicating merit (see, respectively, Roberts 2010; Konchog Gyaltsen 1986). Tsangpa Gyarepa (1161–1211) of the hermetic Drukpa sub-order, focused on such practices as Joining the Co-emergent and the Six Teachings on Same Taste (see Roerich 1976, [1949], pp. 664–70). The third hierarch of the Karmapa sub-order, Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339), composed great spiritual songs, including an influential poetic epitome of

Mahāmudrā, wrote treatises on Buddha-nature, and aligned Mahāmudrā with the Nyingma Great Perfection, as well as the Jonangpa ‘extrinsic emptiness’ (*zhentong*) view, in which the awakened mind is said to be intrinsically real but empty of all that is not it (see Jamgön 2001; Brunnhölzl 2009).

In the 15th century, the great historian, Gö Lotsawa Zhönu Pel (1392–1481) supplied much narrative material about Mahāmudrā lineages in his compendious *Blue Annals*, and wrote important commentaries on the topic (Roerich 1976, [1949]; Mathes 2008). The ‘madman’, yogī, and publisher, Tsangnyön Heruka (1452–1507) wrote brilliant biographies of Marpa and Milarepa, and edited Milarepa’s songs (see Nālandā 1982; Chang 1989 [1962]; Quintman 2010). The Seventh Karmapa, Chödrak Gyatso (1454–1506) compiled a massive anthology of source-material, *Indian Mahāmudrā Texts* (see Mathes forthcoming). The 16th century witnessed an unparalleled flowering of systematic Kagyü thought about Mahāmudrā (see Brown 2006). Notable contributors included the Eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorjé, who analyzed Mahāmudrā in terms of the various branches of Madhyamaka philosophy (see Ruegg 2010, p. 323–55; Brunnhölzl 2004); Dakpo Tashi Namgyel (1512–1587), whose *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā* remains a vital source of textual citations and meditation instructions to this day (Lhalungpa 2006, [1986]); Drukchen Pema Karpo (1527–1592), whose historical and philosophical investigations of Mahāmudrā linked it in a sophisticated way with important trends in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist thought (see Broido 1984, 1985); and the Ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorjé (1556–1603), whose three treatises on Mahāmudrā, especially the vast *Ocean of Definitive Meaning*, remain widely read classics (see Wang-ch’uk 1981; Thrangu Rinpoche 2002, 2003).

The focus on Mahāmudrā in Kagyü traditions, combined with inter-sectarian contacts and influences, led in subsequent centuries to the development of various synthetic tendencies. The First Panchen Lama, Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen (1570–1662), publicized a Geluk Mahāmudrā practice—which he traced back to the order’s founder, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419)—combining elements of Kagyü instructions on meditation technique with Geluk analyses of the nature of reality (see Gyatso 1982; Willis 1995; Dalai Lama & Berzin 1997; Jackson 2001). The Kagyü master, Karma Chakmé (1613–1678), promoted a meditation system that fuses elements of Kagyü Mahāmudrā and the Nyingma Great Perfection (see Kathar Rinpoche 2008). Many of the great figures of the 19th century Nonsectarian (*rimé*) movement emphasized Mahāmudrā: the poet-yogī Zhapkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (1781–1851), for instance, sang of how “Madhyamika, Mahamudra and Mahasandhi/Are like sugar, molasses, and honey:/One is as good as the other” (Ricard 1994, p. 138), and the polymath Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thayé (1813–1899), collected and edited vast numbers of texts related to Mahāmudrā and other Tibetan practice-traditions, emphasizing points of similarity along with their obvious differences (see Jamgön 2008). Since the beginning of the Tibetan diaspora in 1959, Tibetan teachers have discovered that the apparent directness and simplicity of Mahāmudrā appeals to modern people, especially in the West. As a result, Mahāmudrā is frequently taught by lamas and practiced by modern Buddhists, dozens of Mahāmudrā texts have been translated into Western languages, and scholarship on Mahāmudrā has grown steadily in the world of Buddhist studies (see Jackson forthcoming a).

Distinctive Practices

There are nearly as many ways to organize Mahāmudrā practice as there are masters who have taught it, but over the course of time, certain important categories and patterns emerged, in the Kagyü tradition and elsewhere. The practice frequently was analyzed through the triad of ground, path, and result, or the tetrad of basis, path, conduct, and

result. Paths to awakening were often divided into sudden and gradual approaches, with gradual paths themselves broadly divisible into approaches focusing on either complex tantric procedures (the path of means) or straightforward cultivation of non-dual gnosis (the path of liberation). These practices might be undertaken by monastics or laypeople, in the context of daily ritual or in the course of intensive retreat.

The sudden approach, exemplified by such practices as the White Panacea or the Single Intention, entails instantaneous buddhahood—the Mahāmudrā attainment—through an unmediated realization of the nature of mind as luminous, blissful, and non-conceptual. It is reserved for those who have assiduously practiced gradual paths in earlier lives, hence are spiritually so ripe that the fruit of liberation will fall from the tree at the slightest prompting. Zhang Rinpoché expresses this sudden path thusly:

As for sudden practitioners,
 Either as soon as they examine the mind
 Or as soon as a guru with the nectar of realization
 Teaches them the precepts,
 The triad of experience, realization, and settling
 Occurs at once, without their taking time to meditate. (Martin 1993, p. 274; adapted)

For most, a gradual approach is required. The path of means (in some contexts, ‘tantra Mahāmudrā’) includes a variety of complex esoteric practices, which may begin with preliminary devotions and include maṇḍala and mantra practices but focus above all on the subtle-body yogas described in the traditions of the Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantras. For most Kagyūpas, these are equivalent to the six doctrines of Nāropa: meditations on inner heat, illusory body, dream, luminosity, transference of consciousness, and the intermediate state. For Gelukpas, they are the ‘completion-stage’ yogas, as described by the First Panchen Lama:

First, we receive the four initiations purely and keep all the vows and pledges associated with the practice in the proper manner. Then, when our familiarity with the generation stage has stabilized, we use various external and internal methods to penetrate the vital points of the subtle body, etc., causing all the energy-winds to enter, abide and dissolve in the central energy-channel. With the deep awareness that is a greatly blissful, co-emergent awareness that comes from this ... we first gain a conceptual understanding of emptiness through an accurate idea of it based on its meaning. This is known as the illustrative or approximating luminosity. When this deep awareness has straightforward, non-conceptual perception of emptiness, it is the actual or ultimate luminosity. The illustrative and actual luminosity states are the great seal of mahamudra. (Dalai Lama & Berzin 1997, p. 229; adapted)

That objective luminosity—path Mahāmudrā—then is used as a basis to purify mind and body, turning them into the dharma and form bodies of a buddha: the resultant mahāmudra attainment.

The gradual path of liberation (in some contexts, ‘sūtra Mahāmudrā’) is the most frequently described approach. In the Ninth Karmapa’s influential *Ocean of Definitive Meaning*, it involves such preliminaries as an aspiration for the dharma, finding a teacher, recognizing the nature of mind in general terms, and attempting to observe mind as it is. The main practice is divided into tranquility and insight meditation. In tranquility meditation, one assumes the proper posture, then focuses on various external and internal objects of meditation, eventually settling on the present mind itself, and remaining settled on that, non-conceptually, in a relaxed but alert manner, neither suppressing nor chasing the thoughts that naturally arise. In insight meditation, one first examines the mind in movement and at rest, then ‘cuts to the root’ by searching mind to see if it has an

intrinsic nature. When no such nature is found, one is prepared for the four ‘pointing-out instructions’, to the effect that appearances are mind, mind is empty, emptiness is natural presence, and natural presence is self-liberated. In the concluding practices, having learned to avoid various pitfalls of meditative experience and developed various skills, one traverses the Four Yogas of Mahāmudrā—one-pointedness, non-elaboration, one taste, and non-meditation. At the culmination of the last of these yogas, one attains buddhahood, or final Mahāmudrā, from which one acts creatively and compassionately in the world for the sake of others. Alternatively, the Karmapa explains the practice in terms of ground, path, and result, with the ground being proper understanding of our buddha-nature; the path consisting of the preliminaries, tranquility and insight meditations, cutting to the root, the four pointing-out instructions, and the Four Yogas; and the result being full buddhahood (see Thrangu Rinpoche 2004).

Eleven Questions

Discussions of Mahāmudrā over the centuries raised important questions, which were much debated. These questions reverberated within the Buddhist world² and find echoes beyond it, too.³ Here, we will very briefly touch on eleven of them.

1. *Is there Mahāmudrā outside the tantras?* Starting with Gampopa, Kagyü thinkers insisted there was, since Mahāmudrā ultimately is about the nature of mind and reality, and this is addressed in all Buddhist traditions. The Sakya scholar Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) insisted that Mahāmudrā was a strictly tantric term, referring only to the final gnosis achieved after initiation. Later Kagyüpas, as well as Gelukpas, criticized Sapaṅ and upheld Gampopa’s position. The larger question is: How restricted must religious insights and practices be if they originate in esoteric contexts?

2. *Is sudden realization possible?* Many Kagyüpas described practices (e.g. the Thunder-strike) in which Mahāmudrā could be realized instantaneously. Sakya Paṇḍita insisted that, while realization itself may be instantaneous, it must always be preceded by gradual progress along the path. Later Kagyüpas defended their view by citing Indian texts that distinguished gradual from sudden approaches. The broader question is: Does mystical experience have to be preceded by particular practices, or is it *sui generis* and independent of all effort?

3. *Can a single realization suffice?* Many Kagyüpas also described practices (e.g. the White Panacea) in which a single realization is sufficient to complete the entire path. Sakya Paṇḍita argued that the Mahāyāna path always requires both wisdom and compassionate methods, and that the Kagyü approach makes buddhahood impossible. Later Kagyüpas again cited Indian precedent, and pointed out, as well, that they did not claim that Mahāmudrā realization precludes the exercise of compassion—only that, rather than preceding realization, it should flow from it. The broader question is: Can any single realization or practice ever be regarded as sufficient for salvation?

4. *Are we all already buddhas?* Because the rhetoric of Mahāmudrā is rooted in discourse about buddha-nature, with the attendant idea that the mind is fundamentally pure, critics sometimes suggested that this discourse implied that we all already are buddhas, so practice is unnecessary. Defenders of Mahāmudrā refuted the charge in various ways, e.g. by suggesting (as Gelukpas did) that discourse on buddha-nature is merely a metaphor for the empty nature of mind or (as many Kagyüpas did) that our natural buddhahood has been forever obscured by delusion, which must be cleared away by practice. The broader question is: Is the basic state of our mind truly free, merely waiting to be discovered, or must our freedom be cultivated?

5. *Of what is buddha-mind empty?* At the end of the path, buddhahood and Mahāmudrā are synonymous. Buddha-mind is, of course, regarded as empty, but there was disagreement among Tibetans as to what it was empty of. Those upholding the ‘intrinsic emptiness’ view (Gelukpas, above all) said that buddha-mind is empty of self-existence just as samsaric phenomena are, while those propounding ‘extrinsic emptiness’ (Jonangpas above all, but also many Kagyüpas and others) claimed that it was empty of anything samsaric, but was itself intrinsically pure and real. The former accused the latter of propounding a permanent self, the latter accused the former of reducing buddha to the level of conventional phenomena and of failing to understand the nature of Mahāmudrā experience. The broader question is: How important is any particular ontology or metaphysics to spiritual realization?

6. *What is tranquility and what is insight?* Most gradual Mahāmudrā practices center on attaining both tranquility and insight, with the mind itself as the object. Because both types of meditation may involve placing the mind in an open and formless state, the lines between tranquility and insight are sometimes hard to draw. Gelukpas, for instance, criticized Kagyü claims that certain experiences of bliss, clarity, and non-duality were aspects of insight, insisting that they were merely functions of tranquility, hence of lesser salvific value. Kagyüpas, on the other hand, supported their view with both textual and philosophical arguments. The broader question is: What kinds of inner experience are liberative and which are not, and why?

7. *Is there a place for reason in Mahāmudrā?* Much Mahāmudrā discourse is dismissive of conceptuality in general and philosophy in particular. It is unclear whether this critique should be taken at face value. Some Mahāmudrā practices do seem to dispense almost entirely with thought and reasoning, while others incorporate it to a significant degree. The broader question is: Does rationality have a place in religious traditions that insist that reason must be transcended, and if so, what?

8. *Is there room for ethics in Mahāmudrā?* If Mahāmudrā is above all a gnostic realization of the emptiness of mind and reality, and Mahāmudrā practitioners sometimes flouted social conventions, the question arises as to whether there is a place for ethics in it. Dromtönpa and Sakya Paṇḍita both raised this question, and proponents of Mahāmudrā responded by pointing out that emptiness not only does not negate ethics, but may serve as a basis for it, and that the unconventional behavior of some tāntrikas was, in fact, an expression of compassionate skillful means. The broader question is: Do negative ontological discourses obviate ethical attitudes and behavior, and if not, why?

9. *Is Mahāmudrā expressible?* In the ultimate sense, as a transcendental realization of emptiness, Mahāmudrā is ineffable, yet it has spawned an enormous literature. Pragmatically, this is a function of its importance in human life: It is too vital *not* to be expressed. Philosophically, because the conventional world and activity within it are not entirely negated by the ultimate, expression of Mahāmudrā, whether in poetry or philosophy, is legitimate—as long as one recognizes the groundlessness of all that one says and does. The broader question is: Does mystical experience silence the mystic, and if not, then what sort of expression is appropriate to the significance of the experience?

10. *Is all Mahāmudrā realization the same?* All Tibetan traditions contain both ecumenical and exclusivist factions, and the question whether ultimate experiences were identical across sectarian lines was often debated within traditions. Nyingmapas and Kagyüpas, for instance, argued about whether Mahāmudrā and the Great Perfection were the same or different, and Gelukpas disagreed over whether a Geluk Mahāmudrā realization could be the same as that of a Kagyüpa, given philosophical differences between the schools. Some modern commentators debate whether Mahāmudrā can be equated to non-Tibetan meditation

traditions like Vipassanā or Zen. The broader question is: Are mystical experiences the same cross-culturally, or even intra-traditionally, and how might this be ascertained?

11. *What is mind?* Mahāmudrā theorists did not always agree on the definition of mind, debating, for instance, which of mind's characteristics are conventional and which ultimate, or how many consciousnesses sentient beings possess—but they did agree that the most vital of human concerns is with mind's *ultimate* nature, and that an understanding of that nature, however described, is not just a matter of academic interest, but an experience that leads to genuine freedom and joy, and a creative and compassionate engagement with the world. The broader question, looming as much today as it did 2500 years ago, is, simply, what *is* mind, and can a real understanding of it make us free?

Short Biography

Roger R. Jackson is John W. Nason Professor of Asian Studies and Religion at Carleton College, where he teaches the religions of South Asia and Tibet. He also has taught at Fairfield University and the University of Michigan. He received a BA in Religion from Wesleyan University, and an MA in South Asian Studies and a PhD in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. His special interests include Indian and Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, meditation, and ritual; Buddhist poetry; the cross-cultural study of mind; and contemporary Buddhist thought. Professor Jackson's publications include dozens of book reviews and articles in edited volumes and refereed journals. He has written or edited six books: *The Wheel of Time: Kalachakra in Context* (co-author, 1985), *Is Enlightenment Possible?* (1993), *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre* (co-editor and contributor, 1996), *Buddhist Theology* (co-editor and contributor, 2000), *Tantric Treasures: Three Collections of Mystical Verse from Buddhist India* (2004), and, most recently, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems: A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought* (editor and co-translator, 2009). He served for many years as editor of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, and is currently co-editor of the *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies*. He has received support from the American Institute of Indian Studies, National Endowment for the Humanities, American Council of Learned Societies, Fulbright Foundation, and Freeman Foundation. His current research focuses on Mahāmudrā, the 'great seal' meditation tradition of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, on which he has published several articles, and on which he has three books in preparation: a co-edited volume of conference papers, an anthology of texts on Mahāmudrā from the Geluk tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, and a monograph on the history and significance of the term.

Notes

* Correspondence address: Roger Jackson, Carleton College, 1 N. College St., Northfield, MN 55057, USA. E-mail: rjackson@carleton.edu

¹ See Guenther 1993; Jackson 2004; Thrangu Rinpoche 2006; Jackson forthcoming b.

² See, especially, Hookham 1991; Jackson 1994; Ruegg 1989; Dalai Lama & Berzin 1997; Jackson 2001; Rhoton 2002.

³ See, especially, Stace 1987, [1960]; Katz 1978; Proudfoot 1985; Forman 1997; Taves 2009.

Works Cited

Braitstein, L. E. (2005). *Saraha's adamantine songs: texts, contexts, translations and traditions of the great seal*. Unpublished PhD thesis, McGill University, Montreal.

- Broido, M. M. (1984). Padma dKar-po on Tantra as Ground, Path and Goal, *Journal of the Tibet Society*, 4, pp. 59–66.
- . (1985). Padma dKar-po on the Two Satyas, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 8(2), pp. 7–60.
- Brown, D. (2006). *Pointing Out the Great Way: The Stages of Meditation in Mahamudra Tradition*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Brunnhölzl, K. (2004). *The Center of the Sunlit Sky: Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- . (2007). *Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions*. Ithaca/Boulder: Snow Lion.
- . (2009). *Luminous Heart: The Third Karmapa on Consciousness, Wisdom, and Buddha Nature*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- Chang, G. C.-C. (1989 [1962]). *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*. 2 vols. Boston/Shafesbury: Shambhala.
- Dalai Lama, H. H. & Berzin, A. (1997). *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- Davidson, R. M. (2002). *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . (2005). *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture and the Rise of Sakya*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dudjom, Rinpoche (2002). *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. G. Dorje and M. Kapstein (trans.). Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Edou, J. (1996). *Machig Labdrön and the Foundations of Chöd*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- Forman, R. (1997). *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fremantle, F. (1971). *A critical study of the Guhyasamāja tantra*. Unpublished PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
- Gethin, R. (1998). *The Foundations of Buddhism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Guenther, H. V. (1993). *Ecstatic Spontaneity: Saraha's Three Cycles of Dohā*. Nanzan Studies in Asian Religions, 4. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.
- Gyatso, K. (1982). *Clear Light of Bliss: Mahamudra in Vajrayana Buddhism*. T. Norbu (trans.). London: Wisdom.
- Harding, S. (2003). *Machik's Complete Explanation Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd*. Ithaca/Boulder: Snow Lion.
- Higgins, D. (2006). On the Development of the Non-mentation (*amanasikāra*) Doctrine in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 29(2), pp. 255–304.
- Hookham, S. K. (1991). *The Buddha Within: Tathagatagarbha Doctrine According to the Shentong Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga*. SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jackson, D. (1994). *Enlightenment by a Single Means. Tibetan Controversies on the "Self-Sufficient White Remedy"*. Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens nr. 12. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Jackson, R. (2001). The dGe ldan-bKa' brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā: How Much dGe ldan? How Much bKa' brgyud? In: G. Newland (ed.), *Changing Minds: Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honor of Jeffrey Hopkins*, pp. 155–92. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- . (2004). *Tantric Treasures: Three Collections of Mystical Verse from Buddhist India*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . (forthcoming a). The study of Mahāmudrā in the west: A brief historical overview. In: R. Jackson and M. Kapstein (eds.), *Mahāmudrā and the Bka' brgyud tradition: Proceedings from the eleventh seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, pp. 3–54. Halle: IJTS.
- . (forthcoming b). Saraha's Queen Dohās. In: D. White (ed.) *Yoga in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Jamgön, Kongtrül (2001). *Cloudless Sky: The Mahamudra Path of the Tibetan Buddhist Kagyü School*. Boston/London: Shambhala.
- . (2008). *Esoteric Instructions. The Treasury of Knowledge, book 8, part 4*. S. Harding (trans.). Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- Kapstein, M. T. (1980). The Shangs-pa bKa'-brgyud: An Unknown Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. In: M. Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (eds.), *Tibetan Studies in Honor of Hugh Richardson*, pp. 138–44. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Kathar Rinpoche, Khenchen (2008). *Quintessence of the Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen*. Woodstock, NY: KTD Publications.
- Katz, S. T. (1978). *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Konchog Gyaltsen, Khenpo (1986). *The Garland of Mahamudra Practices: A Translation of Kunga Rinchen's Clarifying the Jewel Rosary of the Profound Fivefold Path*. K. Rogers (co-trans. & ed.). Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- . (1990). *The Great Kagyü Masters: The Golden Lineage Treasury*. V. Hucksenhahler (trans. & ed.). Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- Kragh, U. T. (1998). *Culture and subculture: a study of the mahāmudrā teachings of Sgam po pa*. Unpublished MA thesis, Copenhagen University, Copenhagen.
- Kvaerne, P. (1975). On the Concept of Sahaja in Indian Buddhist Tantric Literature, *Temenos*, 11, pp. 88–135.
- . (1977). *An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs: A Study of the Caryāgāthi*. Oslo/Bergen/Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget.
- Lhalungpa, L. (2006 [1986]). *Mahāmudrā: The Moonlight: Quintessence of Mind and Meditation*. Boston: Wisdom.

- Linrothe, R. N. (2006). *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas*. New York/Chicago: Rubin Museum of Art/Serindia Publications.
- Martin, D. (1993). A Twelfth-Century Tibetan Classic of Mahāmudrā: *The Path of Ultimate Profundity: The Great Seal Instructions of Zhang*. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 15(2), pp. 243–319.
- Mathes, K.-D. (2006). Blending the Sūtras with the Tantras: The Influence of Maitrīpa and his Circle on the Formation of Sūtra Mahāmudrā in the Kagyu Schools. In: R.M. Davidson and C.K. Wedermeyer (eds.), *Tibetan Buddhist Literature and Praxis: Studies in its Formative Period, 900–1400*, [PIATS 2003.] pp. 201–27. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- . (2008). *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within: Gö Lotsawa's Mahamudra Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhaga*. Boston: Wisdom.
- . forthcoming. The collection of 'Indian mahāmudrā works' (*phyag chen rgya gzhung*) compiled by the seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho. In: R. Jackson and M. Kapstein (eds.), *Mahāmudrā and the Bka' brgyud tradition: Proceedings from the eleventh seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, pp. 89–127. Halle: IJTS.
- Molk, D. (2008). *Lion of the Siddhas: The Life and Teaching of Padampa Sangye*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- Nālandā Translation Committee. (1980). *The Rain of Wisdom: The Vajra Songs of the Kagyü Gurus*. Boulder/London: Shambhala.
- . (1982). *The Life of Marpa the Translator*. Boulder: Prajñā Press.
- Newman, J.R. (1987). *The outer wheel of time: vajrayāna Buddhist cosmology in the Kālacakra Tantra*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison.
- Proudfoot, W. (1985). *Religious Experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Quintman, A. (2010). [Tsangnyön Heruka.] *The Life of Milarepa*. New York: Penguin.
- Rhoton, J. (2002). [Sakya Pandita.] *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes: Essential Distinctions Among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and Tantric Systems*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Ricard, M. (1994). *The Life of Shabkar: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogin*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Riggs, N. (2000). *Like an Illusion: Lives of the Shangpa Kagyu Masters*. Eugene, OR: Dharma Cloud.
- Roberts, P. A. (2010). *Mahāmudrā and Related Instructions*. Library of Tibetan Classics. Boston: Wisdom.
- Robinson, J. B. (1979). *Buddha's Lions: The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*. Berkeley: Dharma.
- Roerich, G. N. (1976 [1949]). [‘Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal.] *The Blue Annals*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Ruegg, D. S. (1989). *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
- . (2010). *The Buddhist Philosophy of the Middle: Essays on Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Sakiki, E. (1972). *Mahāvvyutpatti*. 2 vols. n.p.
- Schaeffer, K. R. (2005). *Dreaming the Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Snellgrove, D. L. (1960). *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study*. 2 parts. London: Oxford University Press.
- . (1987). *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*. 2 vols. Boston: Shambhala. [Reprint in 1 vol., 2002.]
- Stace, W. (1987 [1960]). *Mysticism and Philosophy*. New York: Tarcher.
- Stearns, C. (2001). *Luminous Lives: The Story of the Early Masters of the Lam ‘bras Tradition in Tibet*. Boston: Wisdom.
- . (2006). *Taking the Path as Result: Core Teachings of the Sakya Lamdre Tradition*. Library of Tibetan Classics. Boston: Wisdom.
- Tatz, M. (1987). The Life of the Siddha-Philosopher Maitrīgupta, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 107(4), pp. 695–711.
- Taves, A. (2009). *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Thrangü Rinpoche, Khenchen (2002). *The Life of Tilopa and the Ganges Mahamudra*. Crestone, CO: Namo Buddha.
- . (2003). *The Ninth Karmapa's Ocean of Definitive Meaning*. Lama Tashi Namgyal (trans.). Ithaca/Boulder: Snow Lion.
- . (2004). *Pointing Out the Dharmakaya*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- . (2006). *A Song for the King: Saraha on Mahamudra Meditation*. Michele Martin (ed.). Boston: Wisdom.
- Tsuda, S. (1974). *The Samvarodaya Tantra: Selected Chapters*. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press.
- Wallis, G. (2002). *Mediating the Power of Buddhas: Ritual in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Wang-ch'uk, Dor-je (1981). *The Mahamudra Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance*. A. Berzin (trans.). Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Wayman, A. (1985). *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī. The Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*. Boston/London: Shambhala.
- Williams, P. (2008). *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- , Tribe, A. & Wynne, A. (2000). *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*. London: Routledge.
- Willis, J. (1995). *Enlightened Beings: Life Stories from the Ganden Oral Tradition*. Boston: Wisdom.

*Appendix**Tibetan Titles and Terms*

Blue Annals = *Deb ther sngon po*
 Fivefold = *Inga Idan*
Indian Mahāmudrā Texts = *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*
 Joining the Co-emergent = *Ihan cig skyes sbyor*
Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā = *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer*
Ocean of Definitive Meaning = *Nges don rgya mtsho*
 Single Intention = *dgongs gcig*
 Six Teachings on Same Taste = *ro snyoms skor drug*
 Thunder-strike = *thog babs*
 White Panacea = *dkar po chig thub*

Transliterated Spelling of Phoneticized Tibetan Names and Terms

chakgya chenpo = *phyag rgya chen po*
 Chödtrak Gyatso = *chos grags rgya mtsho*
 Dakpo Kagyü = *dvags po bka' brgyud*
 Dakpo Tashi Namgyel = *dvags po bkra shis rnam rgyal*
 Drigung = *'bri gung*
 Drigung Jikten Sumgön = *'bri gung 'jigs rten gsum mgon*
 Dromtönpa = *'brom ston pa*
 Drukchen Pema Karpo = *'brug chen padma dkar po*
 Drukpa = *'brug pa*
dzokchen = *rdzogs chen*
 Gampopa Sönam Rinchen = *sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen*
 Geluk = *dge lugs*
 Gö Lotsawa Zhönu Pel = *'gos lo tsā ba gzhon nu dpal*
 Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thayé = *'jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas*
 Jonang = *jo nang*
 Kadam = *bka' gdams*
 Kagyü = *bka' brgyud*
 Karma Chakmé = *karma chags med*
 Karmapa = *karma pa*
 Khyungpo Neljor = *khyung po nral 'byor*
 Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen = *blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan*
 Machik Lapdrön = *ma gcig lab sgron*
 Marpa = *mar pa*
 Milarepa = *mi la ras pa*
 Nyingma = *nying ma*
 Panchen = *pañ chen*
 Pha Dampa Sangyé = *pha dam pa sangs rgyas*
 Phakdru = *phag gru*
 Phakmo Drupa = *phag mo gru pa*
 Rangjung Dorjé = *rang 'byung rdo rje*
rimé = *ris med*
 Sakya = *sa skya*
 Sakya Paṇḍita = *sa skya paṇḍita*
 Shangpa = *shangs pa*
 Tsangnyön Heruka = *gtsang smyon heruka*
 Tsangpa Gyarepa = *gtsang pa rgya ras pa*
 Tselpa = *tshal pa*
 Tsongkhapa = *tsong kha pa*
 Wangchuk Dorjé = *dbang phyug rdo rje*
 Zhang Rinpoché = *zhang rin po che*
 Zhapkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol = *zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol*
zhentong = *gzhan stong*
 Zhijé = *zhi byed*
