

Compassionate Violence?

On the Ethical Implications of Tantric Buddhist Ritual

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Buddhism has typically been portrayed, by both insider advocates and outside observers, as a peaceful religion, one which condemns violence and seeks rather to cultivate, internally, states of mental calm and clarity, and externally, a compassionate mode of engagement with others.¹ This portrayal is supported by the fact that most Buddhist traditions emphasize the cultivation of compassion and loving-kindness as indispensable aids to spiritual development. Yet despite this important focus, violence has not been completely repudiated within many Buddhist schools of thought. Rather, it is left open as a possible mode of action, albeit an exceptional one, to be used by exceptional beings under exceptional circumstances. This caveat supported the development of an ethical double standard, in which behavior that is normally condemned, especially when committed by members of other religious or ethnic groups, can be seen as justifiable when committed by members of one's own group. In this paper I will seek to examine this ethical tension as it arises in Tantric Buddhist ritual literature, a genre which challenges Buddhist self-representation as peaceful and non-violent through its description of ritual procedures that are believed to yield violent results.

Buddhists of virtually all orientation generally condemn violent behavior, and uphold instead the virtues of loving-kindness (*maitri*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), virtues

which are typically defined as powerful inclinations to seek augment the happiness and minimize the suffering of others, respectively, often at the expense of one's own self-interest. The virtue of compassion was given a central role in Mahāyāna Buddhist soteriology, as an indispensable aid to the achievement of Buddhahood. On the popular level, the virtues of compassion and generosity were highlighted in narratives such as the *Jātaka* tales, which relate the Buddha's past lives. These themes are dramatically illustrated in stories such as the bodhisattva's self-sacrifice to feed a hungry tiger family, or in the stories of King Śibi, who sacrificed his own eyes at the request of a beggar, as well as his own flesh to save the life of a pigeon. The importance of these stories are such that they stand at the beginning of Ārya Śūra's *Jātaka* collection,² and they were also illustrated on a number of Buddhist monuments.³

Mahāyāna Buddhists advocate universal compassion, which is nondiscriminatory and active in all contexts. This, naturally, reflects a distinctive worldview. As Charles Taylor argued, moral reactions "seem to involve claims, implicit or explicit, about the nature and status of human beings....a moral reaction is an assent to, an affirmation of, a given ontology of the human."⁴ Mahāyāna Buddhist scholars such as Śāntideva would agree with this assessment. In their view, ordinary individuals' moral reactions are discriminatory, and as a consequence their compassion is limited in scope, typically

¹ This portrayal is common in introductory literature on Buddhism. Some authors, such as the current Dalai Lama, have gone as far as to advance Buddhist ethics as a remedy for many of the contemporary world's problems. See his *Ethics for the New Millennium* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999).

² For a translation of these tales see Peter Khoroché, *Once the Buddha was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra's Jātakamālā* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 5-17.

³ For example, a number of *jātaka* narratives, including the *vyāghri* and *śibi* narratives, were illustrated in the Ajanta cave complex. For an excellent study of these illustrations and their connections to the narratives see Dieter Schlingloff, *Ajanta: Handbüch der Malereien*, 1.1 *Erzählende Wandmalereien, Narrative Wall-paintings, Interpretation* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag).

restricted to friends and family. This is because they adhere to a limited view of the self as an isolated and independently existent entity. Universal compassion, on the other hand, arises from the realization of selflessness and interdependent origination. On the basis of this realization, the *bodhisattva*, or person dedicated to the attainment of Awakening, realizes the interdependence of all living beings, a realization which necessitates compassionate moral reactions in all contexts.⁵

Despite their emphasis on universal compassion, Mahāyāna Buddhists did not unequivocally rule out the practice of violent actions such as killing. Several Mahāyāna scriptures permit killing under exceptional circumstances as an exercise in expedience or “skillful means.” For example, the *Upāya-kausalya Sūtra* relates what has become a famous episode in the past life of the Buddha. According to this scripture, the Buddha was previously a captain named “Greatly Compassionate,” *Mahākaruṇika,⁶ who was transporting five hundred merchants on a journey. He becomes aware that a notorious bandit is planning to attack and kill the merchants. He realizes that he has three possible courses of action, to, first, do nothing, and allow him to kill the merchants, which would be terrible for all involved. Secondly, he could warn the merchants, who would then preemptively kill the bandit. The only problem with this is that the merchants would suffer the karmic consequences of killing. Thirdly, he could kill the bandit himself, and

⁴ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5.

⁵ For an excellent overview of Buddhist ethics see Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Regarding Śāntideva’s arguments on this subject, see his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9.89-186, trans. in Vesna and Alan Wallace, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1997), 100-113.

⁶ “Greatly compassionate,” hypothetically reconstructed from the Tibetan *snying rje chen po dang ldan pa* (To. 82, 60b).

thereby take the karmic burden onto himself, sparing both the bandit and the merchants. He chose the latter action.⁷

This story presents a situation which is clearly an ethical dilemma, especially if one believes in *karma* and rebirth. It presents a scenario of “compassionate killing,” in which a spiritually advanced being, a *bodhisattva*, engages in violence as a last resort. The story makes very clear that his underlying motivation is not anger or hatred, but rather compassion for all involved.⁸ This is plausible within the general scope of Buddhist ethics, since Buddhists have long privileged intention as the key feature for ethically evaluating an action. The Buddhist focus on intention and the introspective orientation that it implies allows considerable ethical flexibility. This focus shifts emphasis away from outward adherence to rules of morality, and promotes the view that the individual is an ethical agent engaged in what Foucault termed “ethical work,” in which one strives “not only.... to bring one’s conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behavior.”⁹ As an agent who is a locus of a complex and ever changing social network, the *bodhisattva*’s goal is to act so as to maximize benefit for all involved, but since these decisions to act are purely contextual, it is not possible to adequately formulate ethical rules that would apply to all situations.

⁷ For a translation of this story see Mark Tatz, *The Skill in Means (Upāyakaūśalya) Sūtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), 73-76.

⁸ For an analysis of this and related scriptural passages see Harvey 2000, 135-138.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality Volume 2*. Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 27. For an excellent application of Foucault to Mahāyāna Buddhist ethical thought see Susanne Mrozik, “Cooking Living Beings: The Transformative Effects of Encounters with Bodhisattva Bodies,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32.1 (2004): 175-194.

Mahāyāna Buddhists' equivocal attitudes toward violence persisted, and was in fact greatly heightened in the Tantras. This is in part due to the general philosophical continuity between early Mahāyāna thought and its later phase of development, which is Tantric.¹⁰ Tantric Buddhist thinkers advanced the proposal that *bodhisattvas*, on account of their underlying compassionate orientation, are exempt from ordinary ethical norms. An extended defense of the seemingly unethical behavior of *bodhisattvas* was undertaken by the great eighth century Buddhist philosopher Śāntarakṣita. In his *Tattvasiddhi*, he quotes from a number of sources to support the view that *bodhisattvas* transcend conventional rules of morality. He claims that “As it is stated in all of the Yogatantras such as the *Guhyendutilaka*, ‘for the mind endowed with wisdom and expedience, there is nothing which should not be done.’”¹¹ Here, as in the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra*, the idea of expedience is advanced in defense of transgression. Śāntarakṣita continues his argument in a more philosophical bent as follows, supported by a quote from Āryadeva:

Āryadeva explained that “From the perspective of *bodhisattvas*, virtue and non-virtue are all conceptions.” Taken in terms of this, they attain the distinctive fruit on account of the fact that these are conceptual distinctions that result from distinguishing things in terms of merit and demerit, which are themselves conceptual constructs, and also because they are distinctions made with regard to form, etc. Thus this position must be admitted even by those who do not hold it.¹²

This argument, that human ethical codes are conventional and hence lack any basis in ultimate reality, is, from the Buddhist perspective, the strongest argument that can be mustered in defense of the position that a *bodhisattva* must, when dictated by

¹⁰ “Tantra” is the school of Buddhism that arose in India during the seventh century and which places great emphasis on complex systems of ritual and meditative practice, which they claim can rapidly effect Buddhahood, within a single lifetime. This school was disseminated from South Asia to East, Central and Southeast Asia from the eighth century onward.

¹¹ *Tattvasiddhi*, To. 3708, rgyud ‘grel vol.tsu, 27b, IASWR ms. MBB II-248, 3a.4,5.

compassion, violate these rules, for compassion is the dominant moral value in Buddhist ethics, which trumps all other considerations.

This debate was not entirely restricted to the realm of philosophical discourse, but had a serious impact on Tantric Buddhist practice. For there is a significant body of Tantric Buddhist literature that either evokes violent imagery or describes violent ritual practices. These passages are problematic even within the tradition, for while Mahāyāna Buddhists saw violence as ethically justified under certain exceptional situations, Buddhists had a long history of resisting ritual violence, and Buddhist identity was in part defined vis-à-vis the Vedic ritual tradition that they rejected on these grounds.¹³ As a result, violence in Tantric Buddhist ritual literature frequently inspired fascinating commentatorial responses. I will look at two genres of Buddhist ritual literature. First, I will explore the violent imagery found in Buddhist *sādhana* or meditation manuals, with a particular focus on the commentatorial treatment of this imagery. Second, I will examine the debates concerning the justifiable use of violence, in this case, ritual violence, centering around the *abhicārahoma* or fire sacrifice performed in order to kill one's foe or foes.

My first example concerns the deity Heruka, a prominent Tantric Buddhist deity. Like many other fierce Tantric deities, and his ferocity is mirrored in the myths of his violent origins. These accounts relate that he and his retinue are *nirmāṇakāya* emanations of the cosmic Buddha Mahāvajradhara and his retinue, who manifested in the world in Śaiva garb in order to subdue the Hindu deity Bhairava and his retinue. This

¹² My trans. of the *Tattvasiddhi* from the Tib. at To. 3708, 29b as well as the Sans. in IASWR ms. MBB II-248, 5b.5-6a.2.

itself is portrayed as a paradigmatic act of compassionate violence, for the Hindu deities and their followers are accused in the myths of being guilty of numerous acts of violence. These accounts were written in reaction to the Hindu myths in the *Purāṇas* that demonize Buddhists. These myths relate the descent of deities such as Viṣṇu and Śiva into the world to combat the *pāṣaṇḍas* or heretics, a loose category which often was explicitly applied to Buddhists.¹⁴ The Buddhist myths, in turn, demonize Hindus, portraying them as heretical on account of their alleged penchant for violence. Ironically, the “solution” to this problem is their violent subjugation.¹⁵

I will not dwell on these myths any further here, as I have analyzed several of them at length in my forthcoming book. Instead, I would like to turn to a justification for Heruka’s fierce persona authored by an important Tantric Buddhist scholar, Buddhajñāna. Active during the late eighth and early ninth centuries, he is the author of numerous works, and also the founder of an important school of Tantric exegesis.¹⁶ He composed two works on the fierce deity Heruka, a *sādhana* and an autocommentary on it. His *Śriherukasādhana* contains the following passage: “[Visualize] a vajra¹⁷ generated

¹³ This issue is discussed in greater depth in my forthcoming paper “Eating the Heart of the Brahmin: Representations of Alterity and the Formation of Identity in Tantric Buddhist Discourse.”

¹⁴ Regarding Hindu demonization of Buddhists see Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, “Image of the Heretic in the Gupta *Purāṇas*,” in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 107-127.

¹⁵ For good surveys of Buddhist myths of this sort see Nobumi Iyanaga, “Récits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokyavijaya—d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1985), 633-745, as well as Ronald Davidson, “Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14.2 (1991): 197-235. Regarding Hindu demonization of Buddhists see Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, “Image of the Heretic in the Gupta *Purāṇas*,” in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 107-127.

¹⁶ Regarding his dates and oeuvre, see Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 309-316.

¹⁷ The term *vajra*, literally “thunderbolt” or “diamond,” here refers to a Tantric Buddhist ritual scepter which symbolizes expedience or skillful means. It thus is the weapon of choice of fierce deities.

from [the seed-syllable] *hriḥ*, which blazes like a destroying fire. From that the Compassionate Fierce One is born, the Great Terrifier (*mahābhairava*) bearing a skull garland.”¹⁸ Buddhajñāna comments on this as follows:

If ferocity (*krodha*) is a virtue which arises in the compassionate mind, yet as is it [one of the] subsidiary afflictions (*upakleśa*) classified with anger, how can it be called “compassionate ferocity?” It is generated preceded by compassion, just as the son is of the mother. Thus, it is prescribed as a method of anger which is an effect proceeding from the cause which is compassion, and it is like fire. As for the other, it arises from the cause of the “me” and the “mine,” and it is an effect which manifests in having an afflicted mind, in the manner of good and bad fortune.¹⁹ It is on account of this that it is said that it “blazes like a destroying fire,” for it manifests the appearance of that. He is a “Terrifier” (*bhairava*) because he terrifies Mahādeva and so forth. Since he is unusually terrifying he is “Great” (*mahābhairava*).²⁰

Here Buddhajñāna puts forward what would become a very popular interpretation in Tantric Buddhist circles. Although Buddhist deities such as Heruka appear in fierce forms, their ferocity is not believed to be a manifestation of mental afflictions such as anger. Rather, Buddhists claim that these deities’ ferocity is rooted in compassion, and hold that their fierce demeanor is an exercise in skillful means. This accords with their emphasis on intention in ethically evaluating an action.

Perhaps due to the success of this argument, the vast majority of Tantric Buddhist commentators from the ninth century onward did not seem to feel that such ferocity is worthy of commentary. There were, however, exceptions to this pattern. One of the most notable exceptions occurs in the writings of Atiśa Dipaṅkarajñāna, a Bengali

¹⁸ Buddhajñāna, *Śriherukasādhana* To. 1857, DT rgyud ‘grel vol. di, 43a.

¹⁹ Buddhajñāna’s text here reads *sva sti dang a ri sha lta bu’o* (45a). I read *a ri sha* as an attempt to transliterate *ariṣṭa*, “ill-omen,” “bad luck,” “misfortune,” etc., which is the opposite of *svasti*. His point here may be that an afflicted mind, due to failure to apprehend causality, is obsessed with good and bad fortune, and experiences the ups and downs of “fortune,” which is really, in the Buddhist view, the unanticipated and misunderstood effects of past actions.

²⁰ Buddhajñāna, *Śriherukasādhanavṛtti* To. 1858, DT rgyud ‘grel vol. di, 45a.

Tantric Buddhist scholar who was active at Vikramaśīla monastery in Eastern India, in what is now West Bengal, during the early eleventh century.²¹ It occurs in his *Abhisamayavibhaṅga*, a commentary on the important Cakrasamvara *sādhana* attributed to the great saint Lūipa.²² When he comes to the fierce deities who guard the periphery of the maṇḍala, Atīśa makes a unique commentatorial move. While all of the other ten commentators on this text are content to merely describe these deities' appearances,²³ Atīśa reflects upon the ethical implications of these deities, whose role is to crush any interlopers into the maṇḍala's sacred precincts. This fact alone confirms that this text was in fact written by Atīśa, who was a subtle thinker deeply concerned about ethical issues, and troubled by the apparent breaches of ethical norms in the Tantric praxis of his day. He begins with a quote from the *Yoginisamcāra Tantra*, the text on which Lūipa's *sādhana* is based: "Krodha Vijaya and so forth make effort for the sake of beings by the expedience of diverse disciplines, at the doors and in the quarters."²⁴ In Atīśa's commentary we learn that the expression "expedience of diverse disciplines" is a euphemism for violent action, a euphemism that is quite ancient, since the concept of expediency was long offered as an apology for violence in Buddhist literature. What the guardians really do, Atīśa informs us, is "plant their spikes in order to expel all of the

²¹ Atīśa lived from 982-1054 CE, and journeyed to Tibet in 1040 CE. See Alaka Chattopadhyaya, *Atīśa and Tibet* (1967, repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), 66, 311, 364.

²² Lūipa, *Śribhagavad-abhisamaya*, To. 1427, rgyud 'grel vol. wa, 186b-193a.

²³ The seven additional commentaries occur at To. 1465, 1492, 1498, 1509, 1510, 3795, and 3796. Three additional ones occur at PTT #4659, 4660, and 4661.

²⁴ My trans. of *Yoginisamcāra Tantra* 17.4c-5b, as ed. in J. Pandey, *Yoginisamcāratāntram* (Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1998), 148). This text is quoted in Atīśa in his *Abhisamayavibhaṅga* (AV) To. 1490, DT rgyud 'grel vol zha, 188a.

demons, and utter *om gha gha* etc. Then they beat them with mallets.”²⁵ He continues with the following justification for this behavior:

Thus, in order to separate and analyze them with the indestructible characteristic and action of discerning wisdom (*prajñā*), and also isolate and burn them, there are, [respectively,] the vajra fence, the fierce fence, and the wall of fire. It is not that they strike out of an upsurge of anger, however.²⁶

Atiśa agrees with Buddhajñāna that anger is not the underlying motivation for the instances of violence imagined or implied in Buddhist meditation or ritual. He thus goes on to explore the reasoning underlying the claim that violence is acceptable under certain conditions. He wrote that “Thinking that conventionally there is no one injured nor an injurer is to revile [the doctrine of] cause and effect.” Here he evokes and rejects the famous claim advanced in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, namely, that ultimately there is no killer or killed, since the true basis of the self, the *ātman*, is indestructible. But if Atiśa rejects this argument in favor of justifiable violence, how then does he legitimate such actions? Even the demons who haunt the periphery of the maṇḍala, after all, would seem to be sentient beings, and are thus deserving of the universal compassion that Mahāyāna Buddhism advocates. He continues his explanation as follows:

Although there is no lack of causality conventionally, it is not, however a matter of getting rid of them through the application of actions motivated by anger, because conventionally one also has the armour of love, etc., and, ultimately, the knowledge of birthlessness.

Why is that? Conventionally all things are none other than mind alone. Thus the very wavering astray of mind is Māra²⁷ and the demons. Furthermore, insofar as

²⁵ AV 188a.

²⁶ AV 188a.

²⁷ Māra, lit. “Death,” is the “evil one” of Buddhist literature, who takes delight in tempting sages and in disrupting their meditations. See Trevor Ling, *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil*, (London: George, Allen and Unwin, 1962).

the mind wavers astray into the path which leads to the wrong way, to just that extent can Māra operate. So it is said. The very straying of mind from its medicine is Māra and so forth.²⁸

Atīśa here invokes the *Yogācāra* theory of the baselessness of imputations of independent existence to phenomenal reality in order to deny the external reality of the demons who are the targets of the *sādhana*'s ritual violence. This is an old defense, invoked, for example, in the seventh century *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra*, which states: “Obstacles arise from your own mind, due to previous indulgence in avarice. In order to destroy their cause I teach *bodhicitta*.”²⁹ This text then lists a number of violent rites for destroying demonic obstacles. This argument seems a bit inconsistent; if the demons do not in fact exist as independent entities, what need is there to insist that their destruction should be performed with a compassionate motivation?

Atīśa then turns to an examination of authoritative statements on this subject.

He continues, arguing:

Now, it is well known to everyone that there is no one more knowledgeable than the Buddha. Did he explain this in a Tantra? While this is so, there are no literal passages [to this effect]. Thus it says in the *Abhidhānottara*, “There is no killing nor non-killing by those who have controlled their minds. Yet those whose minds are bound kill one another.” And also “Wearing the armour of love is the armour of the *dharma* of compassion. Those who have the sword of wisdom eliminate the demons of the afflictions. The wheel of authority³⁰ is the great protection, and with the stake one succeeds without demonic interference. With these rites of defense, awakening is bestowed upon the adept, and he is caused to take up the authority of the Lord, and wherever he abides is seen as being free of all demonic interference.”

²⁸ AV 188a,b.

²⁹ Trans. in Stephen Hodge, *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra with Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 153.

³⁰ The *adhiṣṭhānacakra*, also known as the *samayacakra*, is the outermost wheel in the Cakrasamvara maṇḍala containing the fierce goddesses who guard the maṇḍala's periphery.

One who is not like this, who has a wrong understanding of that authority, who is headed toward lower modes of existence through the actuality of evil actions, who is bound by the noose of the afflictions, etc., cycling like a water-wheel, and who lacks distinction— such a person is not a yogin who abides on this path.³¹

Atīśa finds solace in the formula propounded in the *Abhidhānottara*, namely that “killing” is a conventional phenomenon that the awakened transcend, although he carefully accords this passage provisional rather than ultimate status, since he is uncomfortable with the denial of causality that such passages imply. This justifies violence by those who have controlled their minds, and are thus not motivated by the passions, but rather by the cool calculus of compassion, which calls for violence as a defensive strategy, that is, as a way preventing evil doers from committing greater acts of violence. This denial of the reality of violence differs somewhat from the earlier Mahāyāna Buddhist view, in which the negative ethical impact of violence is not denied, but rather embraced as a manifestation of the *bodhisattva*’s self-sacrifice.

The Tantric Buddhist tendency to downplay the negative consequences of necessary acts of violence is rooted in the imperatives of praxis. Buddhists did not just abstractly debate the possible use of violence for defensive purposes. They actually created ritual techniques that were thought to effect the “pacification” or outright elimination of evildoers who threatened the teachings, institutions, and well-being of Buddhists. Probably the best known and most widely practiced of these was the *abhicāra-homa*, or the rite of fire sacrifice deployed for destructive purposes. The *abhicāra-homa* is a subset of a larger class of *homa* rituals employing a sacrificial fire. This ritual system is a modified Buddhist version of the archaic Indian *homa* rite which

³¹ AV 188b.

formed the cornerstone of the Vedic ritual system. The Buddhist *homa* rite could serve multiple purposes, and could be deployed for positive as well as violent purposes.³²

This rite occurs in the early strata of esoteric Buddhist literature, such as the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra*. This text makes a brief reference to it, namely “When subduing hated foes, one should employ the fierce fire.”³³ This inspired the following commentary by Śubhakarasiṃha and Yixing, writing during the early eighth century:

Regarding the “fierce” (*krodha*, 忿 怒) [fire sacrifice], fire becomes the basis that gives rise to things. This basis is the mind. It is said that there are conditions that compel one to do hostile things in order to subdue people. It is from within the mind that anger arises. This anger is not like the anger of worldly people. It is said that the true nature of anger manifests from a mind of great compassion. Moreover, it is generated as an expedience in order to subjugate evil teachings.³⁴

These authors agree with Buddhajñāna in rooting this practice in compassion. Although the *abhicārahoma* is intended for the purpose of killing one’s foe or foes, it is to be employed as an expedience for the purpose of “subjugating evil teachings,” that is, eliminating those who propound them.

That the performance of hostile rites was considered legitimate by some Indian Buddhists is indicated by Bhavyakīrti, a scholar active during the early tenth century. He

³² For general overviews of Buddhist forms of the *homa* rite see Richard Karl Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan, Feeding the Gods: The Shingon Fire Ritual* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1991), Giovanni Verardi, *Homa and Other Fire Rituals in Gandhāra* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1994), and Michel Strickmann, “Homa in East Asia,” in *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, ed. Frits Staal (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), 2.418-455. Regarding the destructive *abhicāra* rites see Hans-Georg Tüerstig, “The Indian Sorcery Called Abhicāra,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archive für Indische Philosophie* 29 (1985): 69-117, as well as Gudrun Bühnemann, “The Six Rites of Magic,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 447-62.

³³ T.848.18.43a29: 降 伏 怨 對 時 。 當 以 忿 怒 火 。 Note that the Tibetan reading is slightly different, reading “The Fierce Fire is famed for all violent procedures.” (To. 494, rgyud ‘bum vol. tha, 227b: drag shul spyad pa thams cad la // khro bo’i me ni rab tu bsgrags); cf. Hodge, 2003, 382.

³⁴ T.39.1796.782a.3-8.

was also an abbot of the Vikramaśīla monastery.³⁵ He makes this clear in his commentary on chapter thirty-one of Cakrasamvara Tantra, which describes a fierce *homa* rite for the purpose of subduing a rival kingdom, as follows:

Then the vajra-born destroyer of all³⁶ is recalled with the great meat. This is the dreadful destruction of all the cruel ones. Should one thus perform without hesitation the rites of eating, fire sacrifice and sacrificial cakes with the meats of dogs and pigs, and even of [chickens] which have copper [colored] crests, everything without exception will be achieved, and all kingdoms will be subdued.³⁷

The rite is thus doubly violent in both its end and means, since its performance requires the meat of several animals, including possibly a human being.³⁸ Bhavyakīrti acknowledges the sinful nature of these actions, but attempts to resolve it by claiming an ethical double standard, as follows:

Regarding **dog**, etc., some claim that [killing] them, except in cases where their appointed time [of death] has arrived, is to undertake a great sin, that desire to perform this sinful action is difficult to alleviate, and that these are cases of oneself committing murder. The ten non-virtuous actions,³⁹ however, are not necessarily downfalls for [those who have realized] the reality of selflessness. Moreover, the *Śrī Guhyasamāja* states “Bereft of gnosis, they undertake the ten virtues and the paths of action.”⁴⁰ And it is explained that “Enduring my own suffering, risking⁴¹ [myself] for the suffering of others, I proceed to the Avīci Hell.”⁴² Being endowed with great compassion and having realized the reality of selflessness, one will not fall even if one practices the ten non-virtues for the sake of beings. According to Śāntarakṣita, bodhisattvas endowed with expedience and wisdom, including those who are on the paths of the ten non-virtuous actions, will achieve distinctive results. With regard to the [question of] this distinctive group

³⁵ Regarding the dating and vocation of Bhavyakīrti, see section 1.3 of the introduction to my forthcoming book.

³⁶ The Sanskrit here reads *sarveṣāṃ nāśanaṃ*, which is translated here. The Tibetan translations read “terrifier,” *jigs byed* (PM 234b, SL 124a).

³⁷ My trans. from my ed. of *Cakrasamvara Tantra* 31.1a-3b.

³⁸ The term “great meat,” *mahāmāṃsa*, is commonly interpreted in the Tantras as a euphemism for human flesh.

³⁹ These are a traditional Buddhist list of sins, the first of which is killing.

⁴⁰ *Guhyasamāja Tantra* 17.15: *daśakuśalān karmapathān kurvanti jñānavarjitāḥ*, ed. in Yukei Matsunaga, *The Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Osaka: Toho Shuppan, 1978), 97.

⁴¹ Here I read *bsdar* as *bsdos*.

⁴² Avīci is the lowest hell in the Buddhist cosmology, into which fall the greatest sinners.

giving rise to distinctive results, one cannot say that this is not the case, as these [ethical] conventions all arise from mental distinctions.⁴³

Furthermore, it is well known that if those who are not yogins consume poison without understanding the reality of poison, they experience the cause of death. But yogins who understand the reality of poison rely on the excellent cause of alchemy and transform it to ambrosia. What objection could there be to these ten non-virtues giving rise to distinctive results for those who have a mentality that unifies emptiness and compassion, who have no regard for their own happiness, and who are extremely apprehensive about the suffering of others? Rudra destroyed the Triple City, and the army of Viṣṇu demolished eighteen massive armies,⁴⁴ and even naked [ascetics] destroy subtle life forms through a mere touch....[There was also] a sage (*ṛṣi*) whose mind burned with the fire of wrath, who incinerated like wood the king's army with the fire of malediction. These heretics, because they kill, give rise to the suffering of the hells and so forth. This is because their non-virtue arises from previous tenacious attachment to the 'me' and the 'mine.'⁴⁵

Overall, this is a fascinating example of what J. Z. Smith calls “rationalization,” an attempt to accommodate the discrepancy between Buddhists' non-violent self-identity and the violent elements present in their scriptures and rituals.⁴⁶ Bhavyakīrti employs several strategies to reconcile these, including the deployment of both rational and mythic discourse. Like Śāntarakṣita, he advances the ethical double standard that allows *bodhisattvas* to engage in behavior that is otherwise prohibited. He also evokes the old idea that they do so as an act of compassionate self-sacrifice, even though willingly taking on the evil karma of violent actions might plunge them into the Avīci hell, the lowest hell of “no respite” into which the worst sinners fall.

His apology then proceeds with a series of examples from Hindu mythology in which deities or sages are portrayed as engaging in violence. He specifically refers to the

⁴³ Bhavyakīrti here summarizes Śāntarakṣita's argument in his *Tattvasiddhi*, which is translated above.

⁴⁴ The Tibetan trans. here reads *a kṣo hi*, no doubt a transcription of *akṣauhīni*, an army consisting of 21,870 elephants, 21,870 chariots, 65,610 horse, and 109,350 foot soldiers (Monier-Williams 2002:4 col. 1)

⁴⁵ Bhavyakīrti, *Śricakrasamvarapañjikā-śūramanojñā-nāma*, To. 1405, D rgyud 'grel vol. ma, 29b-30a.

myth of the destruction of the Triple City (*tripurāntaka*), several versions of which were powerful anti-Buddhist polemics.⁴⁷ This, along with his reference to the myths of Viṣṇu’s military exploits in several of his *avatāras*, indicates that Bhavyakīrti was familiar with this genre of Hindu mythic literature, which, just like the legend of Mahākaruṇika, could be interpreted as a justification for necessary violence.⁴⁸ Moreover, his statement that “even naked [ascetics] destroy subtle life forms through a mere touch,” implying that violence is an inescapable element of worldly existence, evokes the argument propounded in chapter three of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, namely, that action is intrinsic to all living beings,⁴⁹ but he goes further than the *Gīta*, using this as a justification for violence. Yet Bhavyakīrti condemns the violence allegedly performed by non-Buddhists, even as he defends the use of ritual violence by Buddhists. He thus evokes the ethical double standard in a highly sectarian manner, failing to observe that some Hindus might justify exemplary violence in the same way that he does. This is no doubt due to the common Buddhist tendency to depict non-Buddhists as immoral, despite, or perhaps because of, their similarity to one’s own position. He justifies this by making the typical Buddhist claim that the practice of morality is necessarily rooted in a realization of selflessness, but this is a divisive claim which non-Buddhists would not accept. This also likely reflects the contentious religious atmosphere in Northern India at

⁴⁶ See J. Z. Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” in his *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 53-65. See esp. pp. 62-63.

⁴⁷ Regarding this myth see Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 180-211.

⁴⁸ Regarding the flexibility and contextual orientation of traditional Hindu ethics, see S. Cromwell Crawford, *Hindu Bioethics for the Twenty-first Century* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 19-30.

⁴⁹ See *Bhagavad Gītā* 3.5.

this time, an atmosphere which was in part conditioned by the political divisiveness of this era.⁵⁰

What were the historical consequences of this permissive attitude toward ritual violence, provided that it is performed by the right person in the right circumstances? There is no doubt that this ethically troubling position hindered the dissemination of Tantric Buddhism. Many Buddhists found texts that advocated violent rituals such as the *abhicāra-homa* offensive. Only a fraction of the texts that contained these practices were successfully transmitted to East Asia, and those that were tend to be bowdlerized, with the offensive passages ambiguously translated or eliminated entirely.⁵¹ In cases where these texts were accurately translated, they were subject to emendation to rationalize their transgressive character. An example of this occurs in the Song dynastic Chinese translation of the *Vajrabhairava Tantra*.⁵² This text, like the Tibetan translation,⁵³ contains a chapter on *homa* fire-sacrifice that appears to be less bowdlerized than other Chinese translations of the Tantras, and it does describe the transgressive *abhicāra-homa* rite. Undoubtedly for this reason, the translator(s) appended to the beginning of the text the following prologue, which is not found in the Tibetan version:

Then Vajrabhairava addressed the Buddha saying, “As I now desire to benefit sentient beings, I will teach the method of all magical powers. I beg that you, Buddha, compassionately bestow fearlessness upon me.”

⁵⁰ Ronald Davidson has argued that this was a major factor influencing the development of Tantric Buddhism. See Davidson 2002, esp. chs. 2-4.

⁵¹ See Willemens’ comments regarding this in his introduction to his *The Chinese Hevajatantra: The Scriptural Text of the Ritual of the Great King of the Teaching, the Adamantine One with Great Compassion and Knowledge of the Void* (Belgium: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1983).

⁵² That is, the 佛說妙吉祥瑜伽大教金剛陪囉縛輪觀想成就儀軌經。 T.1242.21.203b-207b. This title could be reconstructed as **buddhabhāṣita-śrīvajrabhairava-mahāyogatantra-cakradhyāna-siddhikalpa-sūtra*.

⁵³ The corresponding Tibetan text is not, as the titles suggest, the *Śrīvajrabhairava-tantrarāja-siddhikalpa* (Toh. 470), but is rather the *Śrīvajrabhairava-nāma-tantrarāja* (Toh. 468). Both texts are translated into English, on the basis of the Tibetan and Mongolian trans., in Siklós 1996.

The Buddha replied, “Excellent, Bhairava! Teach widely in order to benefit the licentious.” Then Bhairava, receiving the command of the Buddha, manifested to the host of humans and gods a very fierce demeanor, and taught all of the method of the magical powers (*siddhi*, 成就).

[He proclaimed,] “If there are wizards (*vidyādhara*, 持明之人) who wish to practice this teaching of mine, they should first give rise to an attitude of [wishing] great benefit for all sentient beings. Then, seeking to receive consecration (*abhiṣeka*, 灌頂) from the Vajra Master (*vajrācārya*, 金剛阿闍梨) they will attain consecration. [Then they can] make use of the various methods in the text to fix the magical powers.

“Moreover, a wizard may see sentient beings of evil karma who rebel against the king’s mandate, throw off all restraint in rebellion and are not filial to their parents, harbor hateful intentions toward the master, destroy the Three Jewels and defame the Mahāyāna and Secret Teachings, or who disrespectfully transgress their commitments (*samaya*, 三昧), and passionately and perversely give rise to peril and harm. With regard to this sort of person, one should make use of this teaching to subdue him, and even give instruction to those who repent. Yet should a wizard harbor in his or her own mind childish envy toward ordinary, passionate beings or virtuous people, and perversely use this teaching to distress them, when he arrives at the karmic consequence of this he will enter into the Howling Hell (*raurava*, 號叫大地獄).”⁵⁴

This apology, with its recourse to the Confucian virtues of loyalty and filiality, clearly represents an attempt to reposition the potentially subversive rituals described in the text, by presenting them as tools to be compassionately deployed in the service of empire, against its foes. It thus sends a stern warning to those un-filial and disloyal practitioners who might be tempted to use them against the state. This particular attempt to reposition the text and the practices it described, while superfluously successful in that outright censorship was avoided, apparently failed, in that the practice tradition associated with the text was evidently not successfully transmitted to China, perhaps in part due to anxiety concerning the dissemination of these destructive ritual technologies, which

⁵⁴ My trans. from T.1242.21.203b,9-25.

could be employed by the state, but also against it. Destructive fire sacrifices were in fact frequently deployed in East Asia in conjunction with military activities. In addition to their deployment by Tibetans, which will be discussed below, hostile fire sacrifices were also deployed in medieval Japan as a method of dealing with military foes.⁵⁵

A similar process was at work in the case of Tibet during the imperial period, when Buddhism was first transmitted there. During the imperial period the Tibetan kings were understandably apprehensive about the *abhicāra* rites, which often include ritual procedures to subdue or destroy the king, that are included in many of the tantras, and which occur abundantly in the “Mahāyoga” or “Anuttarayoga” Tantras such as the *Vajrabhairava* and *Cakrasamvara* Tantras. While we do not know what Tantras were actually censured during the imperial period, we do know that some were selectively translated, with transgressive passages excluded. For example, the absence of passages describing the fierce *abhicārahoma* rite in the early dynastic translation of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra* was evidently due to censorship.⁵⁶ This supported by the Tibetan scholar and historian Bu-ston, who reported that:

Tibet’s king and high ranking ministers observed that dishonest sentient beings of the future would not understand the profound intentional import [of the texts], and would apprehend the symbols literally. Without even the slightest unification of expedience and wisdom, they would be educated in the mantras without being bound to even a single commitment concerning [what behaviors are] to be avoided or cultivated. These practitioners of the immodest, deviant, semblant Tantras of the heretics would denigrate the Teachings of the Buddha and engage

⁵⁵ See Allan Grappard’s description of the Shijōkō fire ritual in his “Religious Practices,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan. Volume 2. Heian Japan*, ed. John Whitney Hall et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 539-541.

⁵⁶ Leonard van der Kuijp reports that “Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan refers to some earlier exegetes who opined that these two passages were lacking in the SDP [*Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*] because earlier kings and ministers had prohibited their translation out of fear of antagonistic tantric practitioners. He, however, is of the view that they were indeed translated....but were never included in the authoritative translation.” See his “Notes Apropos of the Transmission of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet,” *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 16 (1992), 116, insert mine.

in a method of destroying both self and other. Hence it was decided through royal proclamation that there was to be no translation of the Mahāyoga Tantras except when permission is granted.⁵⁷

These Tantras were eventually translated into Tibetan and openly practiced in Tibet, but not until after the fall of the Tibetan empire, which also was the end of the centralized power necessary to enforce censorship. While later rulers such as Lha bLa-ma Ye-shes-'od and his descendents in Western Tibet attempted to control the translation and dissemination of the new influx of transgressive Tantric texts,⁵⁸ their efforts were ineffective, no doubt because they failed to achieve hegemony over a politically fragmented Tibet. Moreover, their fears concerning the misuse of violent rituals were apparently justified. Chinese sources indicate that several centuries later, the Mongols employed Tibetan lamas for magical assistance in battle. This assistance entailed performing rites focusing on fierce deities such as Mahākāla for the purpose of destroying their enemies.⁵⁹

The Tibetans, however, were not unequivocal advocates of ritual violence. While King Lha bLa-ma Ye-shes-'od could not prevent the spread of Tantric texts and practices, he was so concerned about the ethical implications of these that he went to great expense and effort to bring Atiśa to Tibet, largely on account of Atiśa's reputation as an ethically

⁵⁷ My trans., *rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzahag pa rgyud sde rin po che'i mdzes rgyan zhes bya ba*, in *The Collected Works of Bu-ston*. Lokesh Chandra, ed. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1966, vol. ba, p. 127.

⁵⁸ Regarding this see Samten Karmay's "The Ordinance of Lha Bla-ma Ye-shes-'od," in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson: Proceedings of the International Seminar of Tibetan Studies, Oxford 1979*, ed. Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (Warminster, U. K.: Aris & Phillips, 1980), 150-162, as well as his "An Open Letter by the Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od," *The Tibet Journal*, 5 (1980): 2-28.

⁵⁹ See Elliot Sperling, "Rṭsa-mi Lo-ṭsā-ba Sangs-rgyas grags and the Tangut Background to Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies. Fagernes 1992*, ed. Per Kvarene (Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 2:801-24.

sophisticated Buddhist scholar.⁶⁰ Doing so in no way advanced a program of censorship—Atiśa was an accomplished Tantrika himself, and aided in the translation of several texts, including the transgressive *Abhidhānottara Tantra*. But he was nonetheless deeply concerned with the ethical implications of Tantric practice, and this was a major influence on the thinking of his key disciple, ‘Brom-ston, who founded the bKa’-gdams-pa school that highlighted the moral precepts. And while this school did not reject the study and practice of the Tantras, it sought to carefully regulate them.⁶¹

The legacy of the school that resulted inherited the mantle of the bKa’-gdams-pa, the dGe-lugs, whose name literally means “The Virtuous System,” is somewhat mixed. The founder of the dGe-lugs school, Tsongkhapa, was famed for his efforts to reform Buddhist practice. Yet he was strangely unconcerned about the ritual violence described in the Tantras. For example, in commenting upon the *abhicāra-homa* in the *Cakrasamvara Tantra*, he does not even attempt to defend such practices. He comments on the opening of the chapter as follows:

Then, after the thirtieth chapter, I will explain the thirty-first, that is, I will explain undeceptively the **vajra-born** fire sacrifice with the **great meat**, i.e., human meat, etc., which **destroys** the life-force **of all the cruel ones**. It is also explained that these [rites] are performed with the gnosis that is inseparable from the vajra, that is, by the concentration of the body of Vajradhara which is generated from that. **This** human flesh fire sacrifice is described as the **dreadful**, i.e., powerful, **destroyer** of the life-force **of all the cruel ones**. Is human flesh the sole requisite? In the same manner as human flesh, the cruel ones are destroyed even if one offers fierce **fire sacrifices** (*homa*) and **sacrificial cakes** (*bali*) to the deity **with the meats of dogs and pigs, and even of chickens** which **have copper** [colored] **crests**. However, here the power of human flesh is

⁶⁰ Regarding the history of this invitation see Chattopadhyaya 1981, 279-366.

⁶¹ This concern went so far that the *dka’-dams-pa*, in collecting and disseminating the works of their founder, Atiśa, tended to downplay his Tantric works and highlight his Sūtric and philosophical works. None of the former are contained in the “Key Texts” category translated by Richard Sherburne in his misnamed work, *The Complete Works of Atiśa* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2000).

greater. In order to undertake these three,⁶² one is primarily engaged in left-handed conduct. If in doing this one does so having realized the natural clear light without consideration of whether this is proper or not, one will attain all of the great powers (*mahāsiddhi*) such as the sword and so forth, and the state of Buddhahood where there are no remaining powers [to be attained], and you will attain **all kingdoms** as a universal (*cakravartin*) or regional (*dikpāla*) monarch. It is also held that these fleshies are not produced by killing them oneself.⁶³

The juxtaposition of Bhavyakīrti's and Tsongkhapa's commentaries on this same text from the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* is striking. While Bhavyakīrti's commentary is purely apologetic, Tsongkhapa appears completely unconcerned with the ethical implications of this text. In fact, his vision of Tantric practice here is quite amoral. If we take this commentary out of context, we would be forced to conclude that, for Tsongkhapa, Buddhahood might be attained through violence, rather than through compassion. But this would be an unfair conclusion, one that could only be supported by ignoring Tsongkhapa's large body of work of ethical issues.⁶⁴ His lack of concern here is understandable in light of the different social contexts in which these commentaries were written. Both Bhavyakīrti and Tsongkhapa were influential figures in important Buddhist institutions. Tsongkhapa was a respected scholar and institution builder, while Bhavyakīrti was an abbot of the important Vikramaśīla monastery. However, during the early tenth century when Bhavyakīrti was active, the status of transgressive Tantric texts such as the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* as authentic Buddhist scripture was a hotly debated issue, and significant numbers of Buddhists considered it heretical on account of its

⁶² This refers to the three "rites of eating, fire sacrifice and sacrificial cakes" mentioned in the root text.

⁶³ Tsongkhapa, *bde mchog bsdus pa'i rgyud kyi rgya cher bshad pa sbas pa'i don kun gsal ba*. bKra-shis Lhun-po ed. (repr. Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1980), vol. nya, 170a,b.

⁶⁴ For example, he wrote extensively on these topics in his famous *lam rim chen mo*. See, for example, volume one of the translation of this work, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2000).

descriptions of ritual violence, as Bhavyakīrti indicated elsewhere in his commentary.⁶⁵ His defense here is thus understandable. However, by the time Tsongkhapa was writing in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries in Tibet, the authenticity of Tantras such as this one was no longer contested.

Another factor was undoubtedly the institutionalization of Tantric studies in Tibet. The treatise in which this commentary occurs, his *Illumination of the Hidden Import*, was not intended for public dissemination. Texts such as this were traditionally restricted to an elite audience of very well educated monks in the dGe-lugs tradition. This does seem to imply that the ethical double standard was institutionalized in the dGe-lugs school, which emphasizes conventional Mahāyāna ethics for the laity and lower clergy, and restricts the texts and practices which challenge this to the higher clergy, who are presumed to possess the hermeneutical tools to properly understand them.⁶⁶ There is also some evidence suggesting that advanced monks are believed to be exempt from conventional moral precepts under certain exceptional circumstances, on account of their superior training.⁶⁷ But here we should also note the last line of his commentary. In my experience, Tibetan Buddhists do not employ the flesh of living beings in any of the rituals that call for these, but use instead carefully constructed simacra, usually

⁶⁵ For a discussion of this see my forthcoming article, “Eating the Heart of the Brahmin: Representations of Alterity and the Formation of Identity in Tantric Buddhist Discourse.”

⁶⁶ For a fascinating discussion of how Tantric ritual reinforces a clergy-laity hierarchical distinction in contemporary dGe-lugs Tibetan practice see Martin A. Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 129-136.

⁶⁷ For example, there appears to be some indications that certain exemplary monks were believed to be suitable for *karmamudrā* sexual yogic practices, despite the fact that such practices would entail a violation of their *pratimokṣa* vows. See Glenn Mullin, *Tsongkhapa's Six Yogas of Naropa* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 70-71, 249 n. 17.

elaborate *bali* or *gtorma* offering cakes that are designed to simulate these substances.⁶⁸

But in so far as these rites are thus performed, this does not mitigate their ethical impact, given the fact that their intended result is murder, which is ethically problematic given the Buddhist ethical focus on intention.

I would like to conclude by noting an obvious point. Buddhists are not alone in struggling with the issue of the ethical implications of violence. While some of the texts that I have included herein did and still may seem repugnant to some Buddhists, as disgraceful examples of a fall from the Buddhist ideal of universal compassion, they reflect attempts by Buddhists to navigate the complex and sometimes violent field of social practice. Tantric Buddhist ritual, in its violent manifestations, appears to be a response to a certain sense of discrepancy, namely the discrepancy between the hierarchical cosmos as imagined by Tantric Buddhists, which naturally privileges the Tantric Buddhist world view, and the lived social world of these Buddhists, a context in which their world view was challenged from both within and without. From a certain perspective, the history of religions is a history of the very human attempts to reconcile the high and sometimes contradictory dictates of religious ideals with the messy realities of political life. Tantric Buddhists sought to reconcile these spheres in a rather ingenious way, but like all attempts of this sort, it was not perfect, but problematic, due to the very fact that the ethical double standard that it creates implicitly supports a social hierarchy, which, like all such hierarchies, was potentially hegemonic in practice.

⁶⁸ These are typically composed of a mixture of roasted barley flour and butter. For the fierce rites, they are often dyed red, and shaped so as to simulate the body parts of a sacrificial animal or person.