

T A N T R A I - III

(Three ceremonies for one performer or a group)

(unfinished)

The Kalacakra Tantra reveals a doctrine of the Buddha that one achieves enlightenment through ones own body--a process possible since the body contains the whole cosmos. This teaching may be seen to display some similarity to the doctrine of the "inner man" in St. Paul. Although the Christian apostle is Platonic in his conception of an enforced dualism, there is evident a strong sense of internalized contemplation--". . .and I was caught up into the third heaven"; "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day."

That music should be a prime vehicle for enlightenment is suggested by the Hindu doctrine of nada as the central cohesive force of the universe, linking the physical and spiritual worlds.

Classic Tantric religion reveals four levels or stages of spirituality:

1. Symbolic ritual acts
2. Outward rites combined with contemplation
3. Pure contemplation
4. Maithuna: contemplation incorporating realization of the eternal void.

Tantra I-III is a design for three ceremonies--actually one basic ceremony performed in different ways, in differing degrees, at differing Tantric levels:

- Tantra I: Symbolic ritual actions that produce physical music, which may be accompanied by contemplation
- Tantra II: Choreography of the same ritual actions, accompanied by silent contemplation
- Tantra III: Purely ideated ceremonial actions, with sounds and gestures merely ideated in the aural and visual imagination of the performer(s), accompanied by internalized contemplation.

These "tantras" should not be viewed as acts of worship, but merely as Tantric ceremonies. What levels of meaning the performer(s) wish to apply to them is left unspecified.

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T A N T R A I

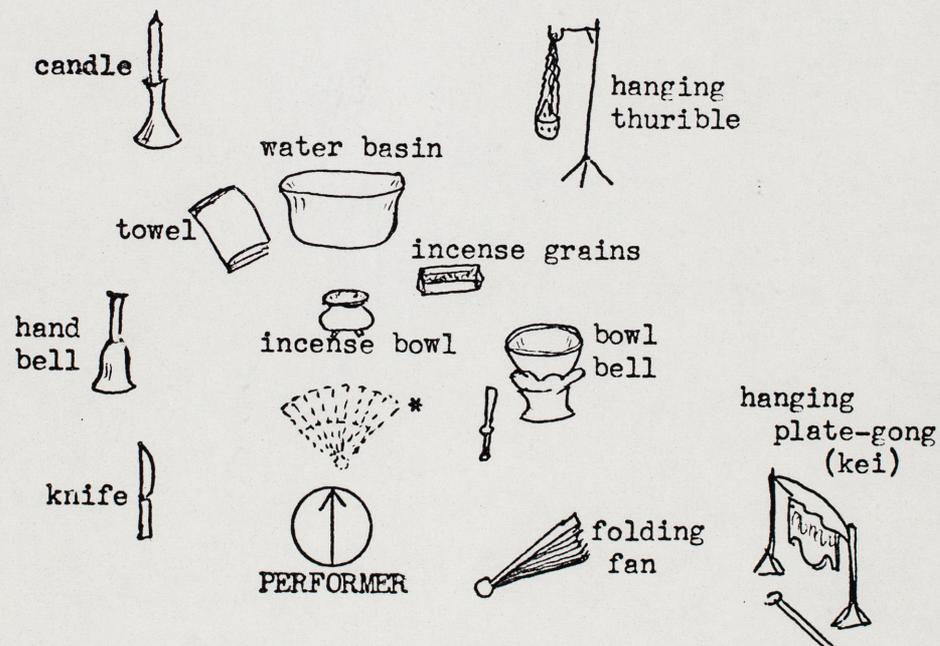
(A ceremony with gestures that produce their own natural music)

The performer(s) may accompany the nine gestures (mudras) with chanting or with intoned or silent mantras. Alternatively, the nine liturgical actions may be separated by interludes of chanting or mantra-intonation if so desired. In most cases, however, a performance in silence except for the music produced by the gestures themselves is to be preferred.

The following instruments and equipment will be required:

Japanese suspended plate-gong (kei) (or small bowl-bell)
 Japanese bowl-bell or equivalent (6-8 inch cast iron pipe cap, e.g.)
 Small Japanese hand bell (or dinner bell)
 A basin of still water and a white towel
 A knife or sharp instrument
 A folding fan
 Bowl-shaped incense pot
 Incense thurible or hanging incense burner
 Incense charcoal (burning in pot and in thurible)
 Incense (granulated frankincense or equivalent; commercial incense cones or sticks are not to be used)
 A single candle in a candle stand
 Wooden matches

Floor plan for Tantra I:



*Place for fan at end of No. 4.

Tantra I

After being seated on the floor, the performer relaxes into a quiet state. When the moment seems right, the liturgical actions begin. All actions are performed solemnly, slowly, and deliberately. The sounds that the actions produce are not to be disguised or concealed, but are to be treated as true and actual music.

The nine liturgical actions:

1. Bell. With the right hand strike the plate-gong (kei). Allow the sound to hang in the air and then to hang in the mind for at least 20 seconds. (This action is a paradigm of the striking of the summoning bell at the beginning of a Buddhist hōyō, the Roman angelus, or the anglican bells that peal as a call to Evensong.)
2. Water. Wash the hands slowly and ceremonially in the basin of water. Allow the music of the dripping and the disturbing of the surface of the water to permeate the silence. (Water purification: Except ye be born of water and the spirit, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven).
3. Pain. With the point of the knife make the empty gesture of cutting the hand or arm. Then with the point of the knife, push into the flesh hard enough to produce a fairly intense amount of pain. The performer may, in fact, wish actually to draw blood. (Suffering symbolism: the notion of suffering in life inherent in classic Buddhism and suffering in the sacrifice and blood-symbolism in Christianity. "This is my blood, shed for many." "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained redemption for us (Heb. 9:12). There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and water, and the blood (1 John 5:8). . . . Drop the knife, to fall flat on the floor with a clatter, from about 18 inches.
4. Fan. Slowly and ceremonially spread a folding fan in front of you; extend your arms out in front of you, offering the fan. Bring the fan back in to your stomach and close it quickly with a quick flutter. Slowly "offer" the fan, extending arms to their full length and lay the fan silently on the floor in front of you, near or far, wherever there is room, with the spread side away from you. (Praise symbolism: homage).
5. Bell. With the right hand, strike the bowl-bell (kin) ceremonially three times, each tone absolutely the same in timbre, intensity, and tone as the other two strokes. Allow the third tone to hang in the air and then in the mind. (Punctuation: articulation of the mystic number 3; the trinity. The punctuation of the service in a Shingon hōyō).

continued

6. Incense. With the right hand reach outward and pick up a few grains of incense and slowly bring it to the forehead, then put the grains of incense on the charcoal in the bowl pot. Allow the hissing of the incense to hang in the air and in the mind. Repeat twice (for three times in all). (Penitence and prayer, as in the offering of incense in a Buddhist service, and in Jewish and Christian ritual. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Ps. 141:2).
7. Light. Take the candle and move it to a position in front of you and light it deliberately with a wooden match. Strike the match audibly and let the sound hang in the air. (New life: "Dominus illuminatio mea.")
8. Incense. Take the hanging thurible and open it deliberately and audibly, allowing the chain and lid to rattle and clatter. When the thurible is open, place a good amount of grained incense on the already burning charcoal. Close the thurible audibly and swing it to and fro several times. Allow the thurible to swing freely and the chains to clatter audibly. Let the sound hang in the air and in the mind. ("Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Ps. 141;2).
9. Bell. With the left hand deliberately take the handle of the clapper-bell and raise it to the forehead. At forehead level, tilt the bell back-and-forth nine times to produce nine double-rings. Allow the sound to hang in the air. Return the bell to the floor silently. (The Amen; like the twelve double strokes of the hand-bell that terminate a Shingon hōyō).

Meditate quietly until the moment seems right in which to rise and terminate the ceremony by walking slowly and quietly away.

End of Tantra I

continued

T A N T R A I I

Tantra II: A ritual to be performed in gesture but in silence--choreography, mudra. The meanings are completely internalized or absent entirely.

Perform the following actions in silence, slowly and deliberately.

1. Bell. Raise the right hand as though to strike a bell. Do not make the striking action. (Explanation as in Tantra I/1.)
2. Water. Form the mudra of placing the hands folded palms-down in front of you as though in a basin of water. (Explanation as in Tantra I/2, etc.)
3. Pain. With the right hand make the gesture of cutting the left arm. Meditate upon the gesture and mentally realize the pain. Explanation as before.
4. Fan. With the right hand, make the gesture of spreading a folding fan and laying it on the floor in front of you. (As before).
5. Bell. With the right hand, make the gesture of striking a bowl bell three times absolutely even in tone and volume. Mentally meditate upon the sound of the bell. Let the tone hang in the mind. (As before).
6. Incense. Touch the gathered fingers of the right hand to the forehead and lower them to the floor three times, as though placing grains of incense on charcoal. (As before).
7. Light. Make the gesture of lighting a candle, slowly and deliberately. (As before).
8. Incense. Make the gesture of swinging an incense thurible back-and-forth from five to ten times. Mentally listen to the sound of the thurible clattering and imagine the scent. (As before).
9. Bell. Raise the left hand as though to make the gesture of ringing a hand bell at forehead level. Imagine ringing the bell nine times. (Explanation as before in Tantra I/9.)

End the ceremony as in Tantra I, by waiting and leaving when the moment seems right to do so.

End of Tantra II

continued

T A N T R A I I I

Tantra III: A ritual to be performed only in the mind. The ideated gestures are to be performed solemnly, slowly, and with deliberate meditation on each paradigm.

Begin with quiet meditation as in Tantra I.

1. Bell. Solemnly imagine striking a Japanese plate-gong (kei) with the right hand. Meditate upon the sound and let the sound hang in the mind. (Explanation as in Tantra I/1).
2. Water. Ideate the action of washing the hands in a stone basin. (Explanation as in Tantra I/2).
3. Pain. Ideate cutting the left arm with a knife. Meditate upon the sensation of ideated pain. (Explanation as before).
4. Fan. Ideate the action of spreading a folding fan. (Explanation as before).
5. Bell. Ideate the action of striking a bowl-bell three times with the right hand. Allow the sound of the bell to hang in the mind. (Explanation as in Tantra I).
6. Incense. Ideate the action of touching the fingers of the right hand to the forehead three times in the gesture of offering grains of incense. Let the scent of the incense hang in the mind. (Explanation as before).
7. Light. Ideate the gesture of lighting a candle. Let the brightness of the light hang in the mind. (Explanation as before).
8. Incense. Ideate the action of swing an incense thurible back-and-forth in front of you. Visualize the clouds of smoke and let the scent hang in the mind. (Explanation as in Tantra I/8).
9. Bell. Ideate the action of striking a bowl bell or ringing a small handbell nine times with the left hand. Let the sound of the bell hang in the mind. (Explanation as in Tantra I/9).

End the ceremony as in Tantra I.

End of Tantra III

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