PACIFIC WORLD
Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies

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A Comparison of the Tibetan and Shingon *Homas*

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INTRODUCTION

This essay is part of a larger work in progress. The goal of that work is a cross-cultural comparative study of the *homa.* There is also, at the same time, a broader theoretical goal, which is to establish a cognitive theory of ritual. In brief, this argument is that ritual is a product of human cognition and as such the ways in which rituals are structured manifest the structuring principles of cognition. The intellectual frame within which this theoretical venture is being undertaken is that ritual is part of a larger category of rule-bound behaviors that include such phenomena as language, games, drama, and so on, all of which are manifestations of the structuring principles of cognition.[1] This is a heuristic decision, and is not, of course, the only intellectual frame within which ritual can be placed. The decision to place ritual in relation to other kinds of organized activities does not mean that other possible frames—economic, psychological, theological, performative, and the like—are being rejected out of hand; rather, they must themselves be examined for whatever heuristic value they might have.

While some rule-bound behaviors, such as chess and football, have explicit rules, others do not. Some theorists have taken this as a fundamental flaw in the formation of the category, that is, that it attempts to bring together into a single category members of what are basically two different kinds of things. One way in which this critique may be formulated is in terms of natural and artificial. Under this theoretical formulation, artificial behaviors would be those whose existence depends upon the formulation of an explicit set of rules—thus, for example, while poker and gin are both played with a standard deck of cards, their difference is determined by the difference in the rules of the game. In this reading, artificial behaviors would stand in semiotic

opposition to natural behaviors whose rules emerge by analysis and generalization. Definitionally, however, as long as being "rule-bound" is understood as indicating regularity and predictability, the category can be of heuristic value, even if it includes diverse instances and is not, therefore, metaphysically unitary. A more highly theorized response, however, is that first, no categories are in fact metaphysically unitary, and second, since we are discussing the cognitive basis of behaviors, the natural–artificial distinction is not perfectly cogent. Consider, for example, how children make up the rules of their games as they go along. Such rules frequently emerge in response to changing conditions—yesterday, the dumpster is the goal of play, but today the dumpster is gone, so something else has to be designated.

Additionally, this essay is intended to serve two more short-term goals, which will contribute to the development of a cognitive theory of ritual. The first is to demonstrate the utility of a syntactic analysis of ritual as a systematic means of describing ritual structures.[2] This approach was pioneered by Frits Staal, whose work analyzing Vedic ritual first established the syntactic approach to the study of ritual. The second is to add to the body of rituals that have been analyzed syntactically. Many additional such studies employing a shared analytic method will be required to adequately ground a cognitive theory of ritual.

An incidental goal of this essay is to bring attention to the very large corpus of rituals in the tantric Buddhist tradition. Not only is this a large corpus of rituals, it is one whose history is rooted in the Vedic ritual culture and which is found in a wide range of different cultures. Therefore, the study of the tantric Buddhist ritual corpus can contribute to such theoretical questions in ritual studies as (1) studying the historical development of a ritual and (2) studying the cultural transformation of a ritual.

The balance of this introduction will first give a brief survey of the theoretical grounds of a cognitive theory of ritual. This will be followed by a brief historical introduction to the tantric Buddhist *homa* and a discussion of the variety of *homas*, comparing the Tibetan and Shingon traditions. Finally, the specific ritual elements of the Tibetan *homa* analyzed will be compared with a Shingon *homa*. The main body of the study will then be devoted to a syntactic analysis of a Tibetan *homa*, followed by a discussion of the syntactic principles that may be generalized when it is compared with the Shingon *homa*.

THEORETICAL GROUNDS OF A COGNITIVE THEORY OF RITUAL

Fundamental to the idea of a cognitive theory of ritual is the analogy between ritual and language. As mentioned above, both are rule-bound behaviors and are the products of human cognition. By examining the structure of these products one can hypostatize the organizing principles by which they were generated.

The concept of "generation" is ambiguous. There is a formal sense, as is found in "generative grammar." It was this sense that Staal had in mind when he initially proposed a syntax of ritual in his seminal 1979 essay "The Meaninglessness of Ritual."[3] A formalized analysis is concerned with the rules of a system that constitute a logic. In a generative grammar, analysis is intended to demonstrate how by the systematic application of some set of rules (transformation rules) particular sentences are generated. This is simply an instance of the reduction of apparent complexity to underlying simplicity found throughout the scientific endeavor.

The eventual goal toward which my own attempts are intended, that is, a cognitive theory of ritual, develops out of an intuition that regular patterns of ritual organization reflect in some way the cognitive structuring of behavior. It is important to clearly distinguish between this latter, simultaneously looser and more ambitious, cognitive sense of "generate" from the former sense as theorized in the context of generative grammar.

The analogy between ritual and language can be made explicit in the form of the following argument by analogy:

1. Language and ritual are alike in being (a) rule-bound behaviors and (b) products of human cognition.
2. The study of language (i.e., linguistics) reveals important characteristics of human cognition.
∴ The study of ritual (i.e., ritual studies) can also reveal important characteristics of human cognition.

This is a general analogy between ritual and language that provides a theoretic basis for the more specific analogy between a ritual and a linguistic expression.[4] It is this latter sense that is at work in the application of a syntactic analysis to any particular ritual.

Attempting to understand human cognition on the basis of its products, whether the regularities of language or of ritual, is an instance of "reverse engineering," or "artifact hermeneutics."[5] Such an approach

makes a default assumption that the product is in some way optimal, and further assumes that the producer had some "good reason" for designing the product in the way that it was. (Daniel Dennett refers to this latter as the "intentional stance."[6]) We can then extend our notion that the systematic character of both ritual and language reflects underlying cognitive organizing principles, some of which may be manifest in both language and ritual, by including the idea that these principles are in some way optimal, that is, that they have a functional utility beyond the scope of some specific application. As Staal notes, "Language originated by chance, like everything else in the evolution of living beings; and was selected because of its extraordinary fruitfulness."[7] Before extending our discussion to principles, however, it is necessary to understand the regularities of ritual structures empirically. In order to generalize about such regularities, it is in turn necessary to have a shared analytic procedure that makes such structures evident. The use of inverted tree diagrams, as in the following, allows for just such empirically-based generalizations. Metaphors other than trees have been suggested by different theorists, including boxes, boilerplate, and frames. In her discussion of ordinary sacrifices (*iṣṭi*), such as the daily A*gnihotra*, Stephanie W. Jamison talks about "ritual boxes" that are first opened and then closed. For example, she discusses the "preparation of grain at the beginning of the ritual" by the sacrificer's wife as the opening of a box that "is closed at the end."[8] Employing the imagery of "boilerplate," Charles Orzech notes that the application of ritual "for specific purposes starts with the fundamental template, which governs the deployment of the mandala/altar itself, the names and iconography of the divinities in it, and their mantras and *mudrās*."[9] He goes on to point out that this "modular approach makes the system learnable, infinitely expandable, and easily adapted to whatever needs a new context might require."[10]

The terminology of "ritual frames" is employed by Yael Bentor in her study of Tibetan consecration rituals.[11] In her presentation of the three days of a consecration ritual, we can see a clear instance of recursive embedding (see fig. 1).

Michael Witzel also employs the terminology of ritual "frames" in his discussion of the *Agnihotra* in Nepal. Witzel's analysis of the *Agnihotra* performed in Patan shows that the frames are crossed. Specifically, the tantric element in which the practitioner calls the deity into his own body (*nyāsa)* is not matched until after the closure of the Vedic
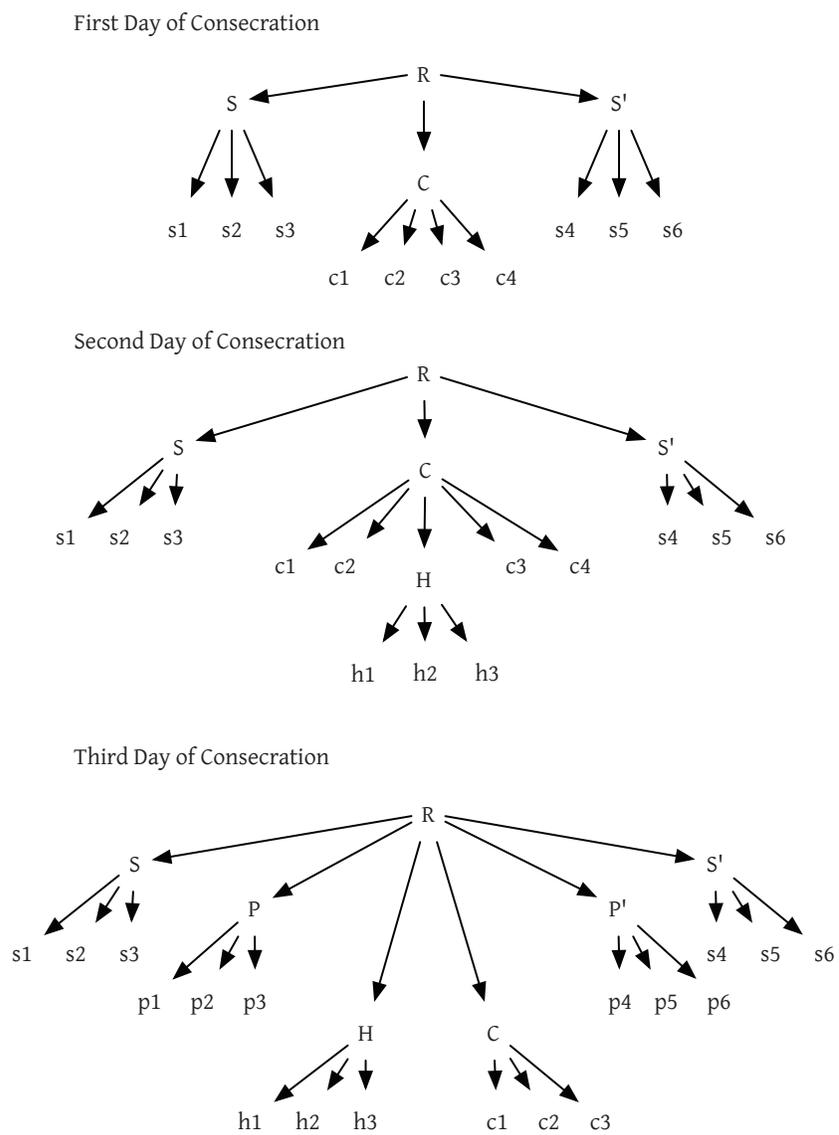
First Day of Consecration

Second Day of Consecration

Third Day of Consecration

Figure 1. Recursive embedding in the Tibetan consecration ritual

rites that started prior to the ritual identification. Because of this "crossing" of ritual frames, Witzel argues that "Ritual does not have, as Staal will have it, a structure similar to an inverted tree, so well known from modern grammarians, but rather a complicated frame structure."[12] Staal had also noted these kinds of ritual interruptions, saying that "an embedded ritual may be interrupted, to be continued or completed afterwards."[13] Thus, in addition to symmetry, discussed more fully *infra*, we have evidence of another regular pattern, the interruption and later continuation of a set of ritual activities, or what may be—given the linguistic analogy we are employing here—called a "phrase."[14]

Despite the complications created by interrupted ritual phrases, the methodological issue is analysis of the structure of the ritual, not the symbolic representation by which that structure is made evident. Considering rituals as trees, boxes, frames, or boilerplate is, however, not simply incidental to the goal of developing a systematic analytic machinery that can reveal the structure of ritual as part of a larger category of rule-bound behaviors. The decision as to which symbolic representation to employ is a heuristic one—which is most useful for what kinds of applications? While it may seem that there is no substantive difference between the four metaphors for thinking about structure—boxes, boilerplate, frames, trees—Staal has pointed out that there is a significant advantage to employing an analytic technique that is both intuitively accessible and allows the analysis of ritual to be related to other kinds of rule-bound behaviors. Most importantly, there are things that can be analyzed in terms of trees that cannot be analyzed in terms of frames—sentences. "All frames are trees but all trees are not frames."[15] Since tree diagrams can be applied to both language and ritual, thus expanding the scope of formal investigation of rule-bound behaviors, this is an important advantage of inverted tree diagrams over other metaphors, such as boxes, frames, and boilerplate.

There are, however, several ways in which ritual and language are not alike. Two of the most important are that while rituals are frequently symmetrical, language is not; and while linguistic expressions are usually spontaneous, ritual is (almost) always scripted.

A structural characteristic of the *homas* and other tantric Buddhist rituals that I have examined is symmetry. The symmetry of tantric Buddhist rituals is already found, not surprisingly, in Vedic rituals. This, then, is one of the ways in which language and ritual differ. Where

language allows for the asymmetrical addition of elements, ritual seems to mandate that no matter what kind of additions are made to a ritual, it must keep its basic symbolic symmetry. If it is indeed the case that rituals are symmetrical while language is not, it would be important to understand why. Is there something unique about symbolic action that requires symmetry? The assumptions of artifact hermeneutics would lead us to assume that there is a "good reason" for this difference.[16] Additional research by scholars familiar with other kinds of rituals is, however, needed to determine whether this generalization is accurate or not.

Second, while sentences are usually spoken in some spontaneous fashion, rituals are not. Like other performative arts, they usually have an established "script," a text of some kind.[17] The analogy between ritual and dramatic performance may also be a heuristically valuable one, but it is outside the range of this particular study.

Ritual also allows for the repeated embedding of a ritual element, creating a larger ritual structure. This is a particular kind of recursive rule, and according to Staal it is "the one type of structure in which ritual differs markedly from the syntax of language."[18] The open-ended character of this kind of recursion allows for the (at least theoretical) generation of rituals of in(de)finite length. Thus, A ➤ BAB ➤ B(BAB)B ➤ B(B(BAB)B)B, and so on.[19]

We now turn to the *homa* per se, introducing it first historically, then examining some of the varieties of *homas*.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The *homa* is a votive ritual in which offerings to deities are made by burning them in a fire. The roots of the *homa* are in the Vedic ritual tradition, which in turn connects the *homa* to a wide range of Indo-European ritual practices. The *homa* has been a part of every form of tantra—Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain, from Mongolia to Indonesia.[20] The late medieval Indian situation sees a change, with an increasing shift to internalized forms of practice. Shaman Hatley points out that "As for homa: from my standpoint as an Indologist, it seems reasonable to assert that homa has a role in virtually all early medieval tantric traditions. Post twelfth-century, it seems to me that the situation becomes more complicated. The hathayoga/Nath cult strand of Śaivism, for instance, moves away from much of the 'external' ritual characteristic of earlier tantric ritual systems. Sufi Yoga, which seems to arise

largely in the context of interactions with Nath yoga/yogīs, seems parallel insofar as homa and much of the early ritual repertoire have little role."[21] In addition to Nath yoga, then, other limiting edges of the spread of *homa* are in Sahajiya Vaiṣṇava and in the forms of Sufism influenced by tantra.[22]

Practices identifiable with later, explicitly tantric forms of Buddhism[23] appear to have started in India about 200 CE. Between that time and the appearance of the first fully tantric texts around 600 CE, a variety of elements from the Indian religious cultural context were integrated into Buddhist tantra.[24] One of these elements was the *homa*, which at some point was adapted into the tantric Buddhist ritual corpus. It is for example described in one of the three earliest Buddhist tantras, the *Mahāvairocana*, which dates from sometime in the seventh century.

Some Shingon scholars suggest a relatively early date for the *homa*'s integration into Buddhism on the basis of the apotropaic burning of mustard seeds found in the text describing the ritual preparation of an enclosure for reciting the *Peacock Spell Sutra* (*Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī*). This preparatory ritual is attributed to Śrīmitra, active in the Eastern Chin court from ca. 317 to 343, and is found in conjunction with an early sixth-century version of the *Peacock Spell Sutra* (*T.* 984). Such apotropaic burning of mustard seeds continues to be a part of the Shingon *homa*. In addition to disputing the attribution, Strickmann has pointed out that this differs from the *homa* per se in that the apotropaic function is distinct from the *homa*'s propitiatory function. In its propitiatory function, the ritual model employed in the *homa* is that of a feast offered to guests, the offerings of food, drink, incense, perfumed water, and so on being given to Agni—present as the fire—who purifies and transmits the offerings to the deities. Additionally the burning of mustard seeds also lacks the typically tantric element of ritual identification between deity and practitioner.

As a part of the ritual corpus of tantric Buddhism, the *homa* was conveyed to both Japan and to Tibet, where it continues to play an important part in the practices of the two traditions.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
IN THE CONTENTS OF THE TWO RITUALS

The similarities and differences between the Tibetan and Japanese forms of the *homa* offers insight into the process by which a common

ancestral ritual form was adapted to local situations. The categorical schema into which rituals are grouped, both *homas* and other kinds of rituals, is one of the important similarities. More specific to the *homas* themselves, both forms have Agni as a central figure in the ritual and share the organizing metaphor of feasting an honored guest that derives from Vedic rituals.

Varieties of Homas

The *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* (also, *Vairocanābhisambodhi-tantra*, common Japanese name *Dainichikyō*, 大日經, *T.* 848) describes two *homas*, internal and external, saying that the internal aspect frees one from karma, and that anyone performing the external rite without this understanding "will not obtain any results."[25] Elsewhere, in what I would personally suspect is an older portion of the text, the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* identifies forty-four different fires by name and function. Here, in addition to "quelling calamities," "increasing benefits," "vanquishing foes," and "attracting property,"[26] one finds fires associated with conception, bathing, bathing of a pregnant woman, birth, naming, first feeding and making a topknot of a child's hair, and other such functions. These, however, are identified as the "practices of brahmans, and read by those who practice the Vedas."[27] The Buddha then explains that he performed these without proper knowledge, and did not achieve any results. Having attained *bodhi*, he expounded twelve fires, each described by name, and attributes.[28] Perhaps this elaborate system of different kinds of fires did not serve the interests of tantric scholastics, for the system we are now familiar with has been reduced markedly, and structured according to a more limited set of functions.

As explained by Skorupski, the many differing types of *homa* rituals were codified into four principal types,[29] though, as discussed below, a system of five categories is also known. This system of four kinds of *homas* (Tib. *sbyin sreg,*སྦྱིན་སྲེག) in the Tibetan tradition is also found in Shingon. The terms for these four kinds of *homas* are:

pacifying	Skt. *śāntika*	Tib. *zhi-ba* ཞི་བ	Jpn. *soku sai* 息災
increasing	Skt. *pauṣṭika*	Tib. *rgyas-pa* རྒྱས་པ	Jpn. *sō yaku* 増益
subjugating	Skt. *vaśīkaraṇa*	Tib. *dbang-gi* དབང་གི	Jpn. *kei ai* 敬愛
destroying	Skt. *abhicāraka*	Tib. *drag-po* དྲག་པོ	Jpn. *gō buku* 降伏

These four categories are generally applied to the entire range of rituals in the tantric Buddhist tradition.[30] That the system of four kinds of *homas* is common to both the Shingon and Tibetan traditions suggests that either the system originated in India and came to be the predominant category system before the transmission out of India to Tibet and China, or that there was contact between the two traditions. The system of four kinds of rituals did not eradicate all traces of other kinds, however. In Japan a fivefold system (Jpn. *goshuhō*, 五種法) is also known, adding a type of ritual whose function is "acquisition" (Skt. *aṅkuśa*; Jpn. *kō shō,* 鉤召). As with the Japanese case, Kong sprul adds a fifth type to the standard four, "called all-encompassing which combines into one ritual the four rites."[31] In Tibetan this is *las bzhi* ལས་བཞི and is also known as "the highest rite" (*mchog gi las,* མཆོག་གི་ལས). Despite the dominance of the four and five ritual category systems, other ritual types are also known.[32]

Agni is central to the performance of *homa* in both Tibetan and Japanese forms. Agni is, of course, one of the premier Vedic deities, essential to the Vedic ritual tradition as the purifier and conveyor of offerings to all of the other deities. Just as Agni as a shared feature of both versions of the *homa* points to the relatively close relation between the two, it also points to just how strong the connection is between Vedic ritual culture and tantric Buddhist ritual culture, wherever it has been transmitted. One difference in the rituals I have examined, however, is that the fundamental ritual in the Tibetan case is an Agni *homa*, whereas in Japan Agni is the first of the set of "mini-*homas*" that are inserted into a fundamental ritual which is not itself a *homa*. This apparent difference may, however, simply be a difference in interpretation, one more issue that syntactically detailed comparisons of the two kinds may help to resolve. Further on this below.

As with the importance of Agni, the Vedic origins are shown in the common basic model of the *homa*, the feasting of honored guests. John Makransky has indicated the influence of this basic model on Tibetan tantric ritual:

> Some Indologists have noted that the term *pūjā* in Hindu *sūtras* and epic literature referred primarily to a ritual for venerating guests through offerings. The structure of ancient Indian customs for entertaining esteemed guests is retained throughout the history of Buddhist *pūjā* practice in India and Tibet, where the "guests" . . . are sacred beings or their representations.[33]

The same is certainly also true of East Asian tantric Buddhist ritual as well.

There are several noteworthy differences between the two forms, including the location in which the rituals are performed, whether the ritual is a "stand-alone" ritual or primarily performed as part of a larger ritual complex, and a variety of ritual details. In my observations Tibetan forms are generally performed outdoors, while in Japan *homas* are performed indoors. An important exception is the Shugendō *saitō goma* 齋燈護摩. Since the Indian origins of the tantric Buddhist *homa* seem to have generally been performed outdoors, it would appear to be the case that it is the Japanese move indoors that requires explanation. Three possible explanations may be considered.

First, the destructive effects of the climate on the altar may have motivated its location inside of a *goma* hall (*gomadō*, 護摩堂). The Japanese altar is an elaborate, permanent installation requiring a substantial investment, while the Tibetan altar seems to be fairly simple and created anew for each performance. From this correlation, two scenarios are possible: either at some point in the development of tantric practice in East Asia the altar was moved indoors to protect it, or because the altar was indoors, it could become more elaborate. Second, there is the possibility that the two may have been based in different ritual cultures. While most of the different kinds of Vedic and Brahmanic fire rituals are performed outdoors, it seems that the most common, the daily *Agnihotra*, was performed indoors at the household fire. The Nepali ritual studied by Witzel mentioned above is identified as an *Agnihotra*, with definite tantric adaptations, and is performed inside a temple.[34] Perhaps the ritual cultures within which the two differing forms developed employed alternative ritual conceptions, ideas about the performance of fire rituals drawing on either the domestic (*gṛhya*) rites performed at the family fire altar, or the solemn (*śrauta*) rites performed in temporary, outdoor settings.[35] Third, there is also the possible influence of Daoism on the formation of esoteric Buddhist ritual culture in China. Daoists performed some of their rituals indoors in what is known as a "pure chamber" (*ching-shih*), a closed space with a central altar upon which incense is burned.[36] This may have provided a model of ritual behavior, itself adaptive to the climate of China and Japan, that was borrowed by Buddhist practitioners.

In addition to differing as to location of the ritual performance, the Tibetan and Shingon traditions also seem to differ in terms of the

context of performance. The Tibetan version can be performed as an isolated ritual, as part of a larger ritual sequence, or as a propitiatory rite in conjunction with a retreat period. In his study of the cult of Tārā, Beyer describes the Tibetan uses of the ritual:

> The burnt offering may be performed as an addendum to a large ritual of evocation or at the end of a period of ritual service to correct any errors of fill in any omissions (in which case it is a minor ritual function); or the burnt offering may be performed by itself as the most important part of the ritual, as a pure exercise of power in a ritual function toward a specific end, such as the pacifying of one's own sins or of a community's diseases; in this instance the burnt offering is the major ritual function and the ceremony of pacifying should be performed during the fortnight of the waning moon, and that for increasing during the fortnight of the waxing moon (for sound astrological reasons).[37]

In Japan, however, the *homa* seems to always be performed as a separate, independent ritual.

There are many additional similarities and differences in the ritual details. A sample of the similarities between these rituals includes minor deities, types of offerings, specific ritual actions, and ritual implements. Both rituals employ the same relatively minor deities as ritual agents, specifically the "four embracing deities." In the Japanese form, when the deities come to the altar hearth they are fixed in place by hook, snare, chain, and bell, which corresponds to B.2.e. to B.2.h. in the Tibetan form outlined below. Both traditions employ both symbolic and material forms of offerings. One of the specific ritual actions found in both is that the final material offering is a mixture of the remnants of the previous material offerings. In addition to other ritual details regarding colors, time of day, and shape of hearth, the rituals also employ similar ritual implements. For example, as in the Vedic fire rituals, both employ two ritual implements, a ladle and a spoon, for making some of the offerings.

One of the notable differences is that the Tibetan version seems to consider that there are "commitment beings" (*dam-tshig sems-dpa'*, དམ་ ཚིག་སེམས་དཔ) already present in the altar hearth and that it is "wisdom beings" (*ye-shes sems-dpa*, ཡེ་ཤེས་སེམས་དཔའ)[38] who are escorted from the mandala to the altar hearth and join with the commitment beings. This idea that there are beings already present in the altar hearth is not the case in Japan. This may reflect the developments in Buddhist tantra

in India after the transmission to China that formed the basis for the Japanese system, or within Tibetan tantric practice itself.

The most significant difference is that the Japanese form includes in its frame ritual an explicit act of ritual identification between the chief deity (*honzon*, 本尊) and the practitioner. The Tibetan version does not have such an action, and although ritual identification is not found in all tantric rituals, it is possible that the just mentioned union of commitment being and wisdom being has at least something of the same significance. Again, this may be the result of developments in Indian tantric Buddhism after the transmission to China or in Tibet.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF A TIBETAN *HOMA*

Sharpa Tulku and Michael Perrott have translated and compiled a set of six *homas* from various sources. The very way in which they have compiled these demonstrates the characteristic embedding of ritual elements into larger ritual sequences. Both the Shingon and the Tibetan *homas* employ what might be called a "prototype ritual" that provides the basic structure into which offerings to specific deities are embedded.[39] As noted above, the Tibetan prototype ritual is itself an Agni *homa*. Sharpa and Perrott have organized their text as (A) a first round of offerings to Agni, which with appropriate modifications can precede any of (B) six different offerings to various deities, which are (C) closed by a final round of offerings to Agni. In other words, the following structure (fig. 2) applies to the six *homas* described in Sharpa and Perrott's presentation:
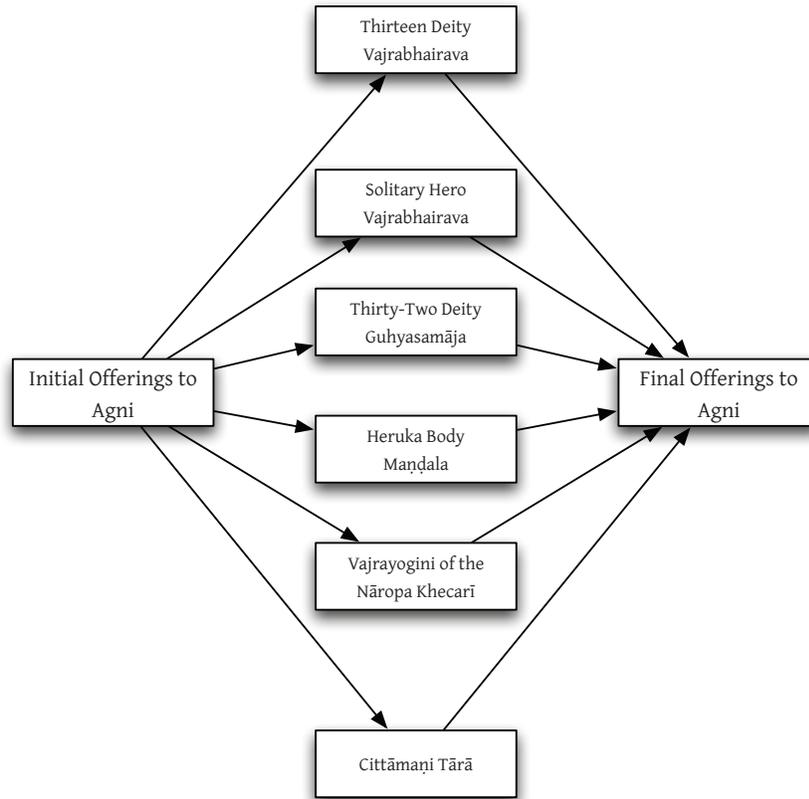
Figure 2. Embedding of *homa* offerings to specific deities into the Agni *homa*

If one were to remove the central section of offerings to a specific deity, the initial and final offerings alone would together constitute a complete ritual—an Agni *homa*. Significantly, the insertion in the Tibetan form comes at a spot comparable to that in the Shingon, that is, in the sequence of offerings to the main deity of the frame ritual. Likewise, the inserted set of offerings to specific deities itself has a complete ritual structure, as is the case in the Shingon *goma* as well. In order to study the ritual structure at a more detailed level, it is first necessary to identify each ritual action, as is done in the following.

Pacification Homa for the Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava, based on the compilation of Lobsang Yeshe (Second Panchen Lama, 1663–1737) reconstructed from the translation by Sharpa Tulku and Michael Perrott in *A Manual of Ritual Fire Offerings* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1987).

I. The First Round of Offerings to Agni, the Mundane Fire Deity
A. Preliminaries
    A.1. Ritual Cake Offering to the Lord of the Site
        A.1.a. mantra
        A.1.b. visualization
        A.1.c. mantra
        A.1.d. mantra
        A.1.e. Verse of the Four Buddhas
        A.1.f. offering statement
        A.1.g. The Power of Truth
    A.2. Blessing the *Vajra* and Bell
        A.2.a. visualization/conceptualization
        A.2.b. mantra
        A.2.c. mantra
        A.2.d. statement
        A.2.e. mantra
        A.2.f. mantra
        A.2.g. ring the bell
    A.3. Cleansing and Blessing the Hearth, Offerings and Practitioner
        A.3.a. sprinkle the offerings, hearth and practitioner, mantra 3X
        A.3.b. sprinkle with the inner offering, mantra 1X
    A.4. Generating and Blessing the Offerings
        A.4.a. sprinkle offerings to the fire deity, mantra 1X
        A.4.b. visualization/conceptualization
        A.4.c. mantra and mudra
    A.5. Purifying and Blessing the Materials to Be Burned
        A.5.a. all materials, mantra
        A.5.b. offering sticks, mantra
        A.5.c. clarified butter, mantra
        A.5.d. grains, mantra
        A.5.e. visualization/conceptualization, mantra
    A.6. Lighting the Fire
        A.6.a. light the torch, mantra 3X

   A.6.b. purify with cleansing water and inner offering, mantra 3X

   A.6.c. light the fire, mantra 1X

   A.6.d. fan the flames, *bīja* mantra (HUṂ) 1X

   A.6.e. revive the fire, 7 scoops clarified butter, mantra (7X?)

  A.7. Making the Kuśa Grass Seat for the Deity

   A.7.a. hold kuśa stems, mantra 7X

   A.7.b. recitation

   A.7.c. lay out the stems

   A.7.d. request Vajrasattva to pacify hindrances

B. The Main Ritual

  B. 1. Generating the Hearth and the Mundane Fire Deity for the Vajrabhairava Ritual

   B.1.a. lustrate with cleansing water

   B.1.b. action mantra

   B.1.c. visualization

  B.2. Inviting the Wisdom Beings of the Fire Deity

   B.2.a. fearlessness *mudrā*, wave the thumb, proclamation

   B.2.b. mantra, seating directions

   B.2.c. lustrate, action mantra

   B.2.d. offer the four waters, 4 mantra

   B.2.e. draw the wisdom being close to the commitment being, mantra

   B.2.f. wisdom being enters the commitment being, mantra

   B.2.g. bound inseparably, mantra

   B.2.h. brought under control, mantra

   B.2.i. holding the *vajra* and bell make the *mudrā* of embracing, snap fingers

  B.3. Making Offerings and Praises to the Fire Deity

   B.3.a. mantra, offer cleansing water to the first receptacle 3X with the kuśa stems

   B.3.b. pick up flowers between index fingers, make *mudrā* of down-turned fist, release from little fingers (apparently dropping flowers into first receptacle)

   B.3.c. mantra, offer the face cooler to the first receptacle

   B.3.d. mantra, open *vajra*-palms *mudrā*, offer libation to second receptacle

   B.3.e. pick up flowers, fist *mudrā*, circle three times, open up-turned fist from index fingers

   B.3.f. mantra, offer foot bathing water to third receptacle

B.3.g. five sensory offerings and music, 6 mantra

B.3.h. inner offering, mantra

B.3.i. praises while ringing bell

B.3.j. commitment (mantra) 3X

C. First Round of Offerings to the Fire Deity

C.1. Visualize the Tongue

C.2. Instructions on Holding the Ladle and Funnel

C.2.a. funnel in the left hand, upturned Tathāgata fist

C.2.b. ladle in the right, downturned Tathāgata fist

C.2.c. in *mudrā* of Supreme Enlightenment, circle both together clockwise 3X (this is apparently understood to open Agni's mouth)

C.3. Offering of Clarified Butter: 3 or 7 ladles of clarified butter with one of three mantras

C.4. Joining Mantras and Appended Lines of Request

C.4.a. mantra and appended lines of request

(optional: C.4.b. investigate for hindrances in the fire and correct if needed:

C.4.b.i. lustrate with cleansing water, 7 ladles of clarified butter

C.4.b.ii. repeat appended lines with addition

C.4.b.iii. lustrate with cleansing water, 1,3, or 7 ladles of clarified butter, mantra)

C.5. Actual Offering of the Materials to Be Burned

C.5.a. offering sticks: holding the offering sticks between thumb and ring finger in the *mudrā* of Best Bestowing, statement, mantra, request

C.5.b. clarified butter: mantra, request (?statement?)

C.5.c. sesame: mantra, request

C.5.d. dūrvā grass, in pairs: mantra, request

C.5.e. unbroken rice: mantra, request

C.5.f. *sho-zen* (sweet tsampa-based dairy mixture): mantra, request

C.5.g. kuśa grass, in pairs: mantra, request

C.5.h. mustard seed: mantra, request

C.5.i. coarse barley: mantra, request

C.5.j. husked barley: mantra, request

C.5.k. pulses: mantra, request

C.5.l. wheat: mantra, request

C.5.m. mixed items: mantra, request (mantra varies in later phases)

 C.6. Offering the Face Cooler and Cleansing Water

  C.6.a. offer face cooler, mantra

  C.6.b. offer cleansing water, mantra

II. Offering to the Supramundane Deity Vajrabhairava (and Retinue)

D. Generating the Celestial Mansion

 D.1. Visualization of the Celestial Mansion in the Hearth

 D.2. Escort the Deities from the Mandala to the Hearth

 D.3. Call the Deities by Their Mantras and Invite Them to Take Their Seats, 14 mantras, throw a flower into the hearth with each mantra

 D.4. Seating the Deities: recitation of deities and location

 D.5. Offerings and Praises to the Deities (extended form, pp. 63–66)

  D.5.a. four waters

   D.5.a.i. cleansing water: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.a.ii. face cooling water: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.a.iii. supreme libation: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.a.iv. foot cleansing water: offering praise and mantra

  D.5.b. preliminary offerings

   D.5.b.i. perfume: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.b.ii. flowers: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.b.iii. incense: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.b.iv. butter lamps: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.b.v. food: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.b.vi. music: offering praise and mantra

  D.5.c. five objects of desire

   D.5.c.i. three kinds of forms: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.c.ii. three kinds of sounds: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.c.iii. three kinds of scents: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.c.iv. three kinds of tastes: offering praise and mantra

   D.5.c.v. three kinds of tangibles: offering praise and mantra (end extended form)

  D.5.d. inner offering: 14 mantras

  D.5.e. praises

  D.5.f. visualize the tongue

E. Actual Offering of Materials to Be Burned

 E.1. Appetizer /and the Way to Join and Count Mantras (explanatory section, not ritual directions)/

E.1.a. seven ladles of clarified butter, mantra (7X?) and request

E.1.b. visualize the deity promising enlightened activities

E.2. Offering the Thirteen Substances to the Principal Deity

E.2.a. offering sticks: statement, mantra, request

E.2.b. clarified butter: mantra, request

E.2.c. sesame: mantra, request

E.2.d. dūrvā grass, in pairs: mantra, request

E.2.e. unbroken rice: mantra, request

E.2.f. *sho-zen*: mantra, request

E.2.g. kuśa grass, in pairs: mantra, request

E.2.h. mustard seed: mantra, request

E.2.i. coarse barley: mantra, request

E.2.j. (husked) barley: mantra, request

E.2.k. pulses: mantra, request

E.2.l. wheat: mantra, request

E.2.m. special mixture: mantra, request

E.3. Offering the Thirteen Substances to the Retinue

E.3.a. offering sticks: mantra, request

E.3.b. clarified butter: mantra, request

E.3.c. sesame: mantra, request

E.3.d. dūrvā grass, in pairs: mantra, request

E.3.e. unbroken rice: mantra, request

E.3.f. *sho-zen*: mantra, request

E.3.g. kuśa grass, in pairs: mantra, request

E.3.h. mustard seed: mantra, request

(E.3.i. coarse barley: mantra, request—not listed, by error? other procedures include both, and section title refers to 13 items)

E.3.j. (husked) barley: mantra, request

E.3.k. pulses: mantra, request

E.3.l. wheat: mantra, request

E.3.m. special mixture: mantra, request

E.4. Purifying the One for Whom the Ritual Is Being Performed: visualization

F. Concluding Activities

F.1. Offerings, including garments and toothpaste (?, toothstick?), and Praises

F.1.a. 3, 7, or ? ladles of clarified butter with mantra of principal deity

F.1.b. libation, mantra

F.1.c. cleansing water, mantra
F.1.d. face cooling water, mantra
F.1.e. garments: statement, mantra
F.1.f. toothpaste, mantra
F.1.g. sense offerings and music, mantras only
F.1.h. inner offering, 14 mantras
F.1.j. verses of praise and homage
F.1.k. libation, mantra
F.2. Apology for Mistakes and Request for Accomplishments
F.2.a. holding a flower, join the palms together at the heart, recitation and mantra
F.2.b. hundred syllable mantra of Yamāntaka
F.2.c. good-bye, 14 mantras
G. Departure
G.1. Mantra
G.2. Deities Are Returned to the Mandala
III. Final Offerings to Agni, the Mundane Fire Deity
H. Final Offerings
H.1. General Offerings
H.1.a. five sense offerings, mantra
H.1.b. music offering, mantra
H.1.c. inner offering, mantra
H.1.d. cleansing water, mantra
H.1.e. face cooling water, mantra
H.1.f. toothpaste, mantra
H.1.g. garments, statement, mantra
H.2. Offering Materials to Be Burned
H.2.a. offering sticks, mantra, request
H.2.b. clarified butter, mantra, request
H.2.c. sesame, mantra, request
H.2.d. dūrvā grass, in pairs, mantra, request
H.2.e. unbroken rice, mantra, request
H.2.f. *sho-zen*, mantra, request
H.2.g. kuśa grass in pairs, mantra, request
H.2.h. mustard seed, mantra, request
H.2.i. coarse barley, mantra, request
H.2.j. barley, mantra, request
H.2.k. pulses, mantra, request
H.2.l. wheat, mantra, request
H.2.m. special mixture, mantra, request

H.3. Offering of Praise: while ringing bell, recitation
H.4. General Offerings and the Ritual Cake
    H.4.a. face cooling water, mantra
    H.4.b. cleansing water, mantra
    H.4.c. five sense offerings, mantras
    H.4.d. music, mantra
    H.4.e. inner offering, mantra
    H.4.f. offering the ritual cake
        H.4.f.i. bless and purify the cake
        H.4.f.ii. mantra, 3X
        H.4.f.iii. offer the cake
    H.4.g. five sense offerings, mantra
    H.4.h. music, mantra
    H.4.i. inner offering, mantra
H.5. Prayers: while ringing the bell, recitation, mantra
H.6. Verses of Apology: recitation, mantra
H.7. Departure of the Mundane Fire Deity
    H.7.a. good-bye, mantra, visualization
    H.7.b. optional: milk pudding offering
    H.7.c. Prayer of Aspiration
    H.7.d. verses of auspiciousness

This linear presentation of the ritual obscures the internal structure. Writing about a linear representation of an *Agniṣṭoma*, Staal notes that "A *linear* representation of this type is not only extremely cumbersome, but it obscures all the elements of structure."[40] Such a presentation of the ritual represents the sequence of events as observed, and is analogous to the surface structure of a sentence. Surface structures alone do not allow us to understand the *systematic* relation between sentences that we recognize intuitively as being different ways of expressing the same declarative meaning, such as "John has gone for bread at the store" and "John has gone to the store for bread." It is the systematic relation in grammatical structure (movement of one element in relation to the others) that motivates the understanding that there is a difference in emphasis—one being on why he has gone, and the other being on where he has gone. Thus, if our concern is with how language and ritual work, and not with John's location or intention, then we must look through the surface structures to the underlying structures, patterns, and relations.

If we examine the relations between activities within the beginning of the ritual and the end, the similarities between the activities begin to reveal a kind of repetition—in some cases repetition of activity per se, and in other cases a repetition of meaning. The first issue, however, is to identify the transition point between the beginning and end. Clearly the place in the ritual where the offerings to Vajrabhairava and his retinue is embedded marks a transitional moment in the Agni *homa.* What I am calling here a "transitional moment" occurs between ritual actions, or sets of ritual actions, that allow for the embedding of additional ritual elements. There is no formal reason that additional ritual elements may not be embedded between any ritual actions; however, within a ritual tradition, it seems that there are typically relatively fixed sets of actions that are usually performed together, without interruption, that is, ritual phrases. For example, the demarcation of the ritual enclosure, its purification, the invitation of deities into the enclosure, and its protective sealing usually form one coherent set of actions, that is, a ritual phrase.

Also, while there can be any number of transitional moments where embedding can occur, in this case, particularly when viewed at a macro-level, the offerings to Vajrabhairava and his retinue do constitute the transition between beginning and end of the Agni *homa.* This could be diagrammed at the macro-level as follows:

$$13 \cong A \; V \; A'$$

"13" representing the "Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava *Homa,*"
"A" the first half of the Agni *homa,*
"V" the offerings to Vajrabhairava and his retinue, and
"A'" the second half of the Agni *homa.*
"$\cong$" is used to indicate "congruence" in the sense that the two are identical in form.
The relation between the Agni *homa* and the Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava *homa* is one instance of the pattern indicated in fig. 2, *supra.*

Turning our attention to the internal workings of the Vajrabhairava *homa,* we find that the offerings per se mark the midpoint. Using the notations from the detailed presentation above, we can summarize the Agni *homa* as

$$Agni \cong A \; B \; C \; H$$

and then the surface structure of the Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava *homa* detailed above may be represented in more summary form as

$$13 \cong A \ B \ C \ (D \ E \ F \ G) \ H$$

But considering the syntactic structure of the ritual reveals that although the sets of actions identified in the linear detailing above as F and G—described in the manual as separate, sequential sets of activities—structurally they are part of the activities of D. Turning to fig. 3, the structure is identified with D' (prime markers indicate the repetition of a set of actions in the second half of the ritual). At this point in the analysis, it appears that D' displays a mirror image symmetry, with the terminal abbreviation of D.1. and D.4. Terminal abbreviation is the tendency to simplify actions and reduce the number of actions in the second half of the ritual. It is very typical of other tantric Buddhist rituals I have examined.

Similarly, rather than being another, separate set of actions, the Final Offerings to Agni are symmetrical with the Initial Offerings to Agni. As far as I have been able to analyze this section of the ritual, it appears to be a complicated interlacing of repeated actions, hence the B', C', B', A', C', B' sequence. We can see the value of a syntactic analysis of ritual by contrasting fig. 3 with fig. 4. Based on the structure made evident in fig. 3, fig. 4 traces the sequence of actions as they would be observed. Beginning at the open circle, and proceeding along the sequence indicated by the arrows, until the closed circle, would trace the actions in a flat, linear description. Such a representation of the ritual, however, actively obscures how individual ritual actions are grouped together into larger, meaningful units, or phrases. Thus, contrary to the criticisms leveled against a formalistic analysis as being irrelevant because it is meaningless, it is clear that an empirical observation of the ritual sequence simply as performed, instead of grouped as syntactic elements, would inhibit understanding the reasons why the ritual is performed in the way that it is, a critical element in understanding the ritual's meaning.
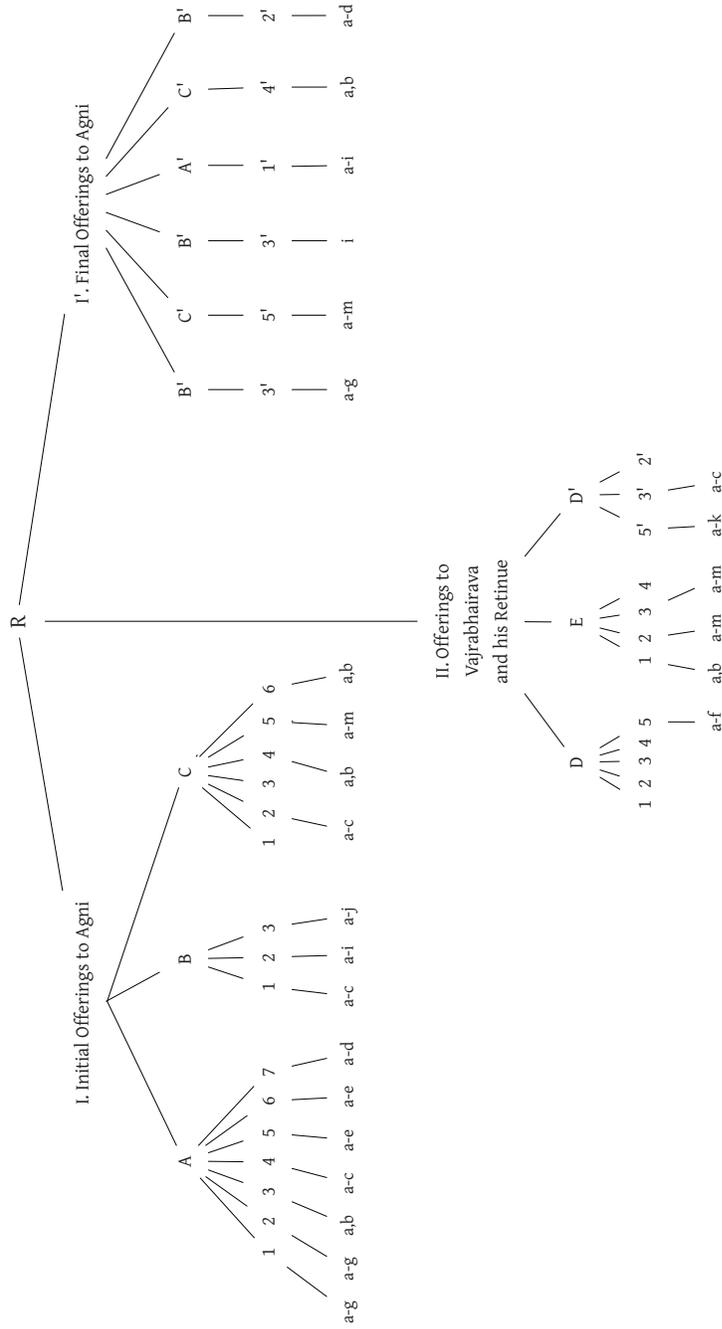
Figure 3. Syntactic structure of the Thirteen Vajrabhairava *homa*

Figure 4. Observed sequence of the Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava *homa*

In sum, however, the Tibetan Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava *homa* displays structural characteristics similar to the Japanese *homas.* Its structure is basically symmetrical, appearing to have both mirror image and sequential symmetries, and the terminal actions are abbreviated.

STEPS TOWARD A SCIENCE OF RITUAL

The utility of a syntactic approach to the study of ritual appears to this author as twofold. First, it allows for the development of a cognitive theory of ritual. Second, it allows for the exploration of the history of ritual systems. Both of these, however, can only follow from the establishment of a consistent method for the detailed description and close analysis of rituals as regular patterned behaviors, that is, as rule-bound. This is not the place for attempting to further develop either a cognitive theory of ritual or the historical application of syntactic analysis. However, since both depend upon the development of a consistent analytic method that can constrain speculative interpretations of ritual, some of the criticisms of the structuralist theoretical background behind syntactic analyses will be addressed.

Pierre Bourdieu critiques structuralism, specifically Saussure's linguistics, pointing out that the logic of deciphering, that is, language (*langue*), is given priority over the logic of function, or performance, that is, speech (*parole*). "It follows that, because it is constructed from the strictly intellectualist standpoint of deciphering, Saussurian linguistics privileges the *structure* of signs, that is, the relations between them, at the expense of their *practical functions*, which are never reducible, as structuralism tacitly assumes, to functions of communication or knowledge."[41] Bourdieu's critique, however, depends upon a sharp division between the creation of meaning through contrasts—structure as the relation between signs—and the creation of meaning through use—the practical functions of signs. A syntactic analysis, however, does not require a prior determination of the origin of the rules it discerns.

In other words, at the step of identifying the consistent patterns it is not important whether or not those patterns exist inherently in some kind of seventeenth-century Cartesian rationalist conceptions of mind, or arise through use—and indeed, the distinction feels suspiciously like a false dichotomy. For other theoretical inquiries, such as the development of a cognitive theory of ritual, such questions about

the location and origin of the rules discerned through a syntactic analysis do become relevant.

Another critique of structuralism is found in the work of Philip N. Johnson-Laird, who identifies two problems with structuralism, specifically in its anthropological form as developed by Claude Levi-Strauss.

> One problem is that the theorist imposes a classification on the data in much the same way that numerologists detect what are for them significant patterns in the works of Shakespeare. A theory may be so rich in descriptive possibilities that it can be made to fit any data. Moreover, if some cultural practice is correctly described by a theoretical structure, it does not follow that this structure is in anyone's mind apart from the theorist's. Ordinary members of the culture may use an entirely different representation, since there can never be just a single unique description of any set of data. Indeed, a cultural product such as a myth may be the result of factors, such as errors of translation, that are not represented in anyone's mind.[42]

First, it is certainly the case that an uncritical application of any interpretive technique, including Levi-Strauss's paired oppositions (such as upstream/downstream), can generate speculative interpretations only supported by the rhetorical abilities of the theorist. At least in relationship to ritual, however, a syntactic analysis is one means by which such speculative interpretations may be constrained. The determination of which actions form coherent sets, such as the set of actions involved in the installation of the deities in the ritual enclosure discussed *supra*, depends upon an understanding of the ritual structure. That this set of ritual actions form a group—a phrase—is not something that can be observed, that is, it cannot be determined by the examination solely of the linear sequence of ritual actions as they are performed. (Note in this regard that the "surface structure" of the Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava *homa* given above is already initially structured by the authors and is itself not a record of empirical observation, which is what is being referred to here.) In order to discern structures, a syntactic analysis is necessarily informed by an understanding of the meaning that ritual actions have within a ritual tradition. As such, a well-founded syntactic analysis is itself one means of constraining the flights of speculation that concern Johnson-Laird.

Again in relation to ritual, Johnson-Laird's second critique may be expressed as a concern about the location of the structures discerned by a syntactic analysis of rituals. Are these structures just in the mind of the analyst? Are they only cleverly constructed analytic artifacts

generated through the application of the analytic technique? In a sense, Johnson-Laird's critique is misplaced. From a technical perspective, that is the goal of creating a formalization of rituals: the location of the structures discerned is not relevant—though it is, of course, to the development of a cognitive theory of ritual. It is also, however, more fundamentally a question of the goal. Do we want (or need?) to know the mental representations of individuals? The moment we move beyond each individual, we are necessarily involved in generalizations. Those generalizations are only going to be in the mind of the researcher, not in the minds of the people about whom the generalizations are being made. We may indeed reverse the question and ask of Johnson-Laird, how would one determine that a myth is the result of a mistranslation, without recourse to a close comparative analysis of the structures of the source myth and the mistranslated target myth? And, although such an origin may not be represented in anyone's mind, other than the theorist speculating alternatives, certainly the resulting myth does exist in the minds of the people who know the myth. To take an example different from that of myth, to assert that people in capitalist societies generally think of labor in terms of its monetary value does not mean that in the minds of all or most of the members of that society could be found the thought "labor = money." That the generalization does not exist in any individual member of the group about which the generalization is being made does not mean that the generalization is not a true one, since it is being made at a different level from that of the mind of some individual member of that society. To that extent then, Johnson-Laird has committed a category mistake. Discussing the syntactic analysis of the sentence "John read the book," Staal says that "This tree does not give us a picture of the sentence; it gives us a picture of the *structure* of the sentence which, incidentally, is not a fiction."[43]

The critiques of structuralism made by both Bourdieu and Johnson-Laird, as well as others,[44] are important for the refinement of the theoretical bases of any attempt to understand the regularities of human behaviors. Like any tool, however, the utility of structural analysis may well exceed the conditions of its creation. If we had discarded rocks because they were used for making arrowheads, an activity now only pursued as part of the education of aspiring archeologists, then we would not have hammers. As a tool for the close description of rituals in a formal manner, syntactic analysis, although drawing on

structuralism broadly and the formalizing technology of linguistics specifically, is not dependent upon those theoretical backgrounds. It is a tool, and like any tool needs to be evaluated by its efficacy. It is in other words the heuristic value of the syntactic analysis of ritual that is of primary concern.

The goal of the syntactic analysis of the Thirteen Deity Vajrabhairava *homa* undertaken above has been to enable a principled comparison between a Tibetan form of the *homa* and those found in the Shingon tradition. The purpose of the comparison is to begin to establish the utility of tracing historical connections between rituals, in this case by examining two rituals that are known to be historically related. Without a principled analysis, such as that produced by a syntactic analysis, speculations based on superficial similarities are unconstrained. That both the *homa* and the Eucharist involve symbols of eating and of sacrifice may or may not be significant.[45] Whether such similarities are significant and if so, what that significance is, depends upon the development of a systematic technique for the close and detailed description of rituals, one that both allows for the comparative study of ritual and constrains speculative interpretations about the meanings of rituals.

NOTES

1. It may be of use to some readers to explicitly state that the idea of "rule-bound" behaviors does not mean either lacking in spontaneity or unchanging. When a quarterback "spontaneously" decides to run rather than pass, he is still bound by the rules of football. That behaviors change over time—from whist to bridge, for example—only means that such new behaviors can themselves be analyzed in terms of the rules employed.

2. Van Valin and LaPolla's comment regarding language can be adopted *mutatis mutandis* for ritual as well. "Developing serious explanatory theories of language is impossible in the absence of descriptions of the object of explanation. Understanding the cognitive basis of language is impossible in the absence of adequate cross-linguistic characterization of linguistic behavior. We cannot explain or posit cognitive mechanisms for something unless it has first been described." Robert D. Van Valin, Jr., and Randy J. LaPolla, *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

3. Frits Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual," *Numen* 26, no. 1 (June 1979): 2–22.

4. Although much attention is paid to the syntax of sentences, leading one to expect the sentence to be the basic unit of analysis and therefore one term

of the comparison of language and ritual, syntax has a wider scope. As Van Valin and LaPolla note, syntax may extend to the examination of "devices users of human languages employ to put meaningful elements together to form words, words form phrases, phrases together to form clauses, clauses together to form sentences, and sentences together to form texts." Van Valin and LaPolla, *Syntax*, 1.

5. See Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: A Touchstone Book, Simon and Schuster, 1995), 212–220.

6. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 229–230. The term "intentional" is used here in the sense of an analytic approach, and not in the sense of attributing conscious purpose.

7. Frits Staal, "From Meanings to Trees," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 11.

8. Stephanie W. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 52.

9. Charles D. Orzech, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: The* Scripture for Humane Kings *in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 155. Although Orzech refers here to "template," "paradigm" may be a more appropriate term, since "template" implies a pattern from which specific items may be made. However, my understanding is that the model is provided by some specific ritual, that is, a paradigm, which is then transformed to fit the need.

10. Ibid.

11. Yael Bentor, *Consecrations of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism*, Brill's Indological Library, vol. 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 7–8.

12. Michael Witzel, "Meaningful Ritual: Vedic, Medieval, and Contemporary Concepts in the Nepalese Agnihotra Ritual," in *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honour of J. C. Heesterman*, ed. A. W. van den Hoek, D. H. A. Kolff, and M. S. Oort, Memoirs of the Kern Institute, no. 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 781.

13. Frits Staal, "Ritual Syntax," in *Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Essays in Honour of Daniel H. H. Ingalls*, ed. Masatoshi Nagatomi et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: D. Reidel, 1980), 131.

14. The issue raised by Witzel and Staal regarding the asymmetries created by one set of ritual actions interrupting another in a way that is more complex than a simple embedding is both important and complex. The syntactic issues will require greater depth of study than is feasible in the scope of this particular essay, and will be treated separately in another, future essay.

15. Staal, "From Meanings to Trees," 21.

16. The symmetry of the rituals that I have examined in detail may be explained by reference to the cognitive impact of the "appropriated metaphor" that provides the model for the ritual itself. Specifically, the "guest feast" model imposes a certain logic on the ritual activities. This is in keeping with what John R. Taylor has called the "symbolic thesis" of cognitive linguistics, according to which "syntax itself is regarded as inherently symbolic." John R. Taylor, *Cognitive Grammar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22. It is important to note here that "symbol" in the context of Taylor's cognitive grammar means "the relation between a phonological element and a semantic structure." Ibid., 23. Syntax constitutes the third term, that is, the relational element between phonology and semantics. This means that "the syntactic (and morphological) facts of a language will be *motivated* by semantic aspects and that they can be exhaustively described by means of symbolic structures." Ibid., 29. What this does not mean, however, is that rituals are reducible to simply a set of symbols, but rather that attention must be paid to how the semantic component motivates the syntactic—specifically, here, how the feast model (» semantic element) serves to structure (» syntactic element) ritual activities. The characteristics of individual performances and ritual cultures as expressed in the physical aspects of a ritual performance would approximate to the phonological element.

17. Such scripts are not always written texts. In some cases, as for example in southern India, the manipulation of a written text is part of the ritual performance, but the performance is based on a memorized script.

18. Staal, "From Meanings to Trees," 19.

19. Ibid., 20. We are here employing the symbol "➤" as a technical operator meaning "application of a recursive rule." Thus the first step above would be read something like "by the application of a recursive rule A becomes BAB." This would be a more limited operator than the more usual →.

20. Although the field of "Jain tantra" is only now being explored, the *homa* is found there as well. For example, it is found "in the Jaina tantric text Bhairavapadmavatikalpa, in chapter 3 (devyarcanādhikāra: the section on worship of the goddess [Bhairava-padmāvatī]). Bhairavapadmāvatīkalpa of Malliṣeṇa Sūri. Śukadeva Caturvedī, ed. *Bhairavapadmāvatīkalpa.* Saṃskṛta Vivaraṇa evaṃ 'Mohinī' Hindī Vyākhyā Sahita. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999." Shaman Hatley, personal communication, 30 August 2010.

21. Personal communication, 29 August 2010. One suspects that the internalization of ritual appears to be an important element in setting the stage for the development of the *bhakti* traditions that share so much with tantra.

22. Personal communications, Glen Hayes and Carl Ernst, respectively, 2 September 2010.

23. By "proto-tantra" is meant the use of elements (e.g., mantra, *mudrā*, mandala) that would become part of tantra per se. Tantra per se is defined as the integrated use of these elements for ritual practice (*sādhana*) in the course of which the practitioner ritually identifies him/herself with the deity evoked.

24. Some scholars have interpreted the appearance of such elements within Buddhism as part of an increasing decadence of the tradition, a rhetoric that creatively plays with the ambiguity of "decadent": "impure" because of mixed with non-Buddhist practices, and "immoral" because of sexual and other antinomian practices. Although usually presented simply as factual, and then rhetorically linked with the decline (another metaphor of decadence) of Buddhism in India, these are basically judgments, the evaluative bases of which are usually obscured.

25. Rolf Giebel, trans., *The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra* (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center, 2005), 152; cf. Stephen Hodge, *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisaṃbodhi Tantra, With Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 272–273. Although read as referring to two kinds of *homas*, the text seems to my understanding to be talking about two different dimensions of the *homa* ritual, since the internal is not described in terms of a visualization, but rather in terms of its ability to eliminate karma. Cf. Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra,* 217, and Michel Strickmann, "Homa in East Asia," in *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, ed. Frits Staal, 2 vols. (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), 2:443.

26. Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra,* 214.

27. Ibid.

28. Cf. Strickmann, "Homa in East Asia," 438.

29. Tadeusz Skorupski, "Tibetan Homa Rites According to the gTer ma Tradition," *The Tibet Journal* 20, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 5.

30. See Yael Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 270n214.

31. Skorupski, "Tibetan Homa Rites," 5.

32. According to Strickmann "the earliest systematic classification of Homa types" is found in texts translated by Bodhiruci dating from ca. 709, one of which (*T.* 951.19: 261c et seq.) lists three types: *śāntika, pauṣṭika,* and *abhicāraka.* Strickmann, "Homa in East Asia," 2:434. Strickmann also indicates that by the end of the eighth century the other two kinds identified in this paper had become part of the ritual corpus of Chinese tantric ritual practice.

33. John Makransky, "Offering (*mChod pa*) in Tibetan Ritual Literature," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 314. Internal reference to Nancy E. Auer Falk, "Hindu Pūjā," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 83.

34. Witzel, "Meaningful Ritual," 774.

35. Even the grandest and most elaborate of altars for a *śrauta* rite, that of the *Agnicayana* rite, is considered a temporary one—upon completion of the twelve days of the ritual performance per se, the shelter over the altar is burned and the altar abandoned to the elements. Frits Staal, *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), 1:689; see plates 110 and 111.

36. Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen C. Duval (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993), 91–93. According to Isabelle Robinet, the Daoist pure chamber (trans. here as "purity chamber") is itself modeled on Confucian chapels that were used as places for reading the classics. Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 62.

37. Stephan Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1978), 264.

38. Tibetan names are from Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas*, xix.

39. "Prototype" is being used here in the sense of exemplar. Cf. George Lakoff, "Cognitive Models and Prototype Theory," in *Concepts and Conceptual Development: Ecological and Intellectual Factors in Categorization*, ed. Ulric Neisser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 64. For an application of prototype theory to syntax, see John R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization,* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

40. Staal, "Ritual Syntax," 127.

41. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology, no. 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 24.

42. Philip N. Johnson-Laird, *The Computer and the Mind: An Introduction to Cognitive Science* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977), 125–126.

43. Staal, "From Meanings to Trees," 23. Emphasis original.

44. For an informative review of criticisms of structuralism, particularly in its linguistic form as applied to the study of literature, see Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (orig. pub., 1975; repr., London and New York: Routledge, 2002), esp. "Part I: Structuralism and Linguistic Models."

45. See, for example, the speculations regarding violence and human nature growing out of René Girard's theology. As intriguing as these are, they may have nothing to do with the contemporary Japanese or Tibetan performances of the *homa*.