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Matrix of Mystery. Scientific and Humanistic Aspects of rDzogs-chen Thought, by Herbert V. Guenther. Boulder: Shambhala, 1984. 317 p.

Matrix of Mystery is divided into nine chapters: Introduction to the Scope of Being, The Problem Situation, The Recognition of the Problem Situation as the Evolutionary Zero Point, Interlude, In-Depth Appraisals and Configurational Processes, The Aesthetics of the Virtual Patterns, Fury of Being, Optimum Attainments Standards as Preprograms, and In Praise of Wholeness. In addition, there are footnotes, a bibliography and three indexes. Finally, the work has many graphs and charts that are most helpful in understanding some of the difficult points.

The book is not written for beginners. That is, it is not for either beginners in Buddhist Studies or those who are not fully initiated into Professor Guenther's works. I do not wish here to entertain any criticism of the professor's unique way of translating Tibetan texts or his creative use of the English language; suffice it to say that this work is primarily written for experts.

There is much in *Matrix of Mystery* that an expert in ontology, epistemology or other disciplines might wish to investigate. As the title indicates, Professor Guenther presents a scientific and humanistic explanation of *rDzogs-chen*. He accomplishes this primarily by using models taken from physics (a methodology previously employed by him), as well as from research in artificial intelligence (i.e., computer terminology) and from more traditional philosophy.

The combination of these models and methods of evaluation is extremely interesting, and it truly does shed new light on this little explored field of study. Prof. Guenther's explanations, although idiosyncratic, do seem to present an accurate picture of *rDzogs chen* thought—given the limitation of the methods utilized. His explanations do *not* resemble those that a Nyingma lama would ever "transmit" to a student—not that this latter should necessarily be used as a standard. I mention it here only to draw a distinction between the two approaches and thus arrive at a more accurate picture for those interested in reading this work.

In general, I have only one major criticism of this work: that there is insufficient information on and evaluation of the Mahāyoga level of this tantra.

The *Matrix of Mystery* is, of course, the major Nyingma Mahāyoga Tantra (Tb. *gSang ba'i sNying po*, Skt. *Guhyagarbha*). Although little studied presently by native scholars because it

has been usurped by the later *gTer ma*, it is not altogether forgotten. Like the *Guhyasamāja*, it is primarily directed to the development stage of the tantric path.

Prof. Guenther has provided neither a translation nor, really, a study of the text; primarily, he presents his version of the interpretations of such later Nyingma scholars as kLong chen pa. *rDzogs chen* has been present in the Nyingma since the very beginning, and one can certainly apply a *rDzogs chen* explanation to the lower tantras, as noted in the *rDo rJe Sems dPa' Nam Kha' Che rTse Ba'i rGyud sKye Ba Med Pa*, translated by Vairocana (*Vairo rGyud 'Bum*, vol. 1). However, the *Guhyagarbha*, being a Mahāyoga tantra, does have its own Mahāyoga level of explanation. This level of explanation is not brought out sufficiently. It is not, of course, Prof. Guenther's intention to bring out the Mahāyoga aspects of the work, but I feel that the inclusion of this level of explanation would have done more justice to the basic text, and provided a greater basis for understanding the text, as well as the later "*rDzogs chen*" overlays placed upon the text.

I do find Prof. Guenther's presentation of the *rDzogs chen* explanation of the maṇḍala outstanding. Some of this material is scattered throughout the work, but most of it is found in the chapter entitled "The Aesthetics of the Virtual Patterns." There is much of interest here, not only on the *rDzogs chen* understanding of maṇḍalas, but on the maṇḍala in general. This section should be read by anyone interested in maṇḍala interpretation, and is a welcome addition to other works on this topic.

I wish that Professor Guenther had not relied so heavily on his own personal library. That is, in his bibliography, he often cites works without the necessary dates and places of publication. I assume these works are part of his personal collection. Even though it is unavoidable in the field of Tibetan studies to make such omissions because of the unorthodox manner in which some of these manuscripts are "published," many of them *are* published in a more orthodox manner at a later date. Such information, of course, is crucial for scholars who wish to check certain passages, since a difference in editions may lead to a difference in conclusions. I might add, on a more positive note, there do seem to be fewer such omissions than in previous works.

In conclusion then, *Matrix of Mystery*, although not for a beginner in the field, is an accurate evaluation and explanation of the *rDzogs chen* understanding of this important Mahāyoga tantra. Even though this explanation is limited, one will find that the utilization of models taken from physics and artificial intel-

ligence, for example, reveals new levels of understanding of the *rDzogs chen* system. Moreover, there is much information that helps explain *rDzogs chen* in its own right, and experts in other fields of inquiry will find here useful information on epistemology, etc.

A.W. Hanson-Barber

The Sutra of Contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. Kyoto: Ryukoku University Translation Center, 1984. XL + 169 pp., appendices.

This is a translation and a study of what is commonly referred to as the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* or *Meditation Sutra*, a Mahāyāna devotional text. In this work the text is identified as the *KMK*, the abbreviation of the Japanese reading (*Kan-muryōju-kyō*) of the text. The *KMK*, together with the *Larger-* and *Smaller Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*, constitute the *Triple Pure Land Sutra* in the Japanese Pure Land tradition. The *KMK* is in Chinese. There is no Sanskrit text and no Tibetan translation. This work consists of a comprehensive introduction, an annotated translation, and appendices.

The introduction identifies the *KMK* as a Buddhist devotional text of a unique kind—the chanting of the name of Buddha Amitāyus rather than bodhisattva practices to realize salvation, indicating a switch from monastic Buddhism to lay Buddhism. It speculates on the place of origin of the text (Central Asia or China) and the period of compilation (5th century) by making reference to a variety of textual sources, both classical and modern. It provides bibliographical information of the translator (Kālayaśas) and the historical circumstances surrounding the translation of the text. It also provides an excellent structural and content analysis, the basis on which it speculates on the purpose for which the text was written. Finally, the introduction describes the impact this text has had in Central Asia, China, and in particular, Japan.

The translation was initially accomplished by Meiji Yamada, an Indologist-Buddhologist, and Ronald Takemota, a Japanese-American scholar, both affiliated with Nishi Hongwanji. The translation was then reexamined meticulously and revised by the members of the Ryūkoku University Translation Center. In-