

Wrathful and Peaceful Sound: Musical and Religious Logics of the Two-armed Mahākāla Ritual

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*'For supplication, it cannot work without being able to recite in clear and loud tone. If the reciting is in the good tone, melody, and so on, from Lama's lineage, there would be much feeling and difference. Like that, one still can control consciousness if one prays as the voice of dog'*¹ (The Seventeenth Karmapa Orgyan 'phrin las rdo rje 2006: 4. Trans. Yanfang Liou).

Ritual performance was first rejected within the Buddhist tradition, but was then gradually accepted. Concepts about music were also transformed in the development process of Buddhism and nowadays have various meanings according to different contexts. The concepts of Tibetan Buddhist ritual influence the music itself, musical behavior, and function of music. Terry Ellingson stated 'In exploring these traditions, we will contradict a second widespread assumption in Western scholarship--i.e., that Buddhism was primarily, or in its "original" form, an anti-ritual and anti-musical religion' (Ellingson 1979: 115). In fact, in Tibetan Buddhism, different orders or sub-orders have their own way in which ritual music is performed while even different monasteries of the same orders have their own style.

In research on Tibetan ritual music, some scholars have emphasized ritual functions. For example, although Walter Kaufmann analyzed the musical characteristics of chanting music, he assessed that the instruments, except for shawms, such as long horns, rattle drums, hollow cymbals, bells, conches and trumpets,² have no musical function or have more ritual function than musical function (Kaufmann 1975: 16-18). On the contrary, Rinjing Dorje and Ellingson have stated that 'the presence of "meaning" in the music does not make the music less "musical"'. The meaning, technique, aesthetics,

¹ [Tib.] *gSol 'debs skad gsangs mthon pos 'don mi nus pa'i bzo de 'dra byas pa yin na 'grigs kyi med. Bla ma brgyud pa'i phyag bzhes nas byung ba'l, gdangs dang dbyangs la sogs pa 'then thub na gzhan dang mi 'dra ba yud shas red. De ltar ma byung n'ang so so'i rgyud 'khul thub pa gcig byung phyin gsol ba khyi skad ma ru btab kyang 'grigs kyi yud red.*

² The instruments used in Tibetan Buddhist rituals are rattle drum (Tib. *da ma ru*), hollow cymbals (Tib. *rol mo*), flat cymbals (Tib. *sil snyan*), drum (Tib. *rnga*), shawm (Tib. *rgya gling*), trumpet (Tib. *rkang gling*), long horn (Tib. *dung chen*), vajra (Tib. *rdo rje*), bell (Tib. *dril bu*), and conch (Tib. *dung dkar*).

and musical symbolism should be discussed altogether (Rinjing Dorje & Ellingson 1979: 76). Ellingson argues that the acoustic beauty is as important as its ritual function. An effective offering (Tib. *mchod pa*) shall be constructed by being beautiful (Tib. *snyan pa*) and being meaningful (Tib. *don yod*). “‘Meaning’ (Tib. *don*) is a multivalent concept, with both cognitive and motivational dimensions’ (Ellingson 1979: 356). Unlike what Kaufmann assessed, Ellingson argues that ritual instruments all present their own ‘beauty’ in different ways. For instance, bells and rattle drums are played throughout a piece. These two instruments present a special richness to the sound of instrumental ensemble. The beats and rhythm of these two instruments are contrast with cymbals’ pulses, which produces polyrhythm. Conches also add enrichment to the beauty of the ensemble. Long horns might be the melodic instruments of instrumental ensemble (Ellingson 1979: 642-643, 662-663).

In scholarship, some scholars had explored the concepts of ritual music from historic literature or fieldwork, the general categories of music, the specific techniques of instruments, the symbolic meanings of chanting and instrumental music, and the musical characteristics. However, it is difficult to learn various rituals in their full form because of the requirement to take the empowerment. It might mean that these scholars were not able to show the whole musical structure of rituals and discuss the musical logic within the whole rituals. How ritual music works as a mechanism based on musical logic and religious symbolism has not been comprehensively discussed. In this article, I mainly take the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual, which I received permission to learn during my fieldwork at Rumtek (Wylie Rum bteg) Monastery³, Sikkim, India, as an example. I combined and compared

³ Rumtek Monastery is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Sikkim, Northeast India. It has a long history, and maintains traditions that uphold the transmission of Buddhist teachings from India and Tibet. It is said that the old Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim was founded by dBang phyug rdo rje (1556-1603), the ninth Karmapa because of the invitation of the Sikkimese king (Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche 2006: 157). However, the date is before the foundation of the Sikkimese kingdom (1642). Therefore, it may not be correct. Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya argues that the event should be traced back to the eighteenth century. The fourth king of Sikkim, Gyur med nam rgyal (1707-1733), visited Tibet and became the disciple of the twelfth Karmapa, Byang chub rdo rje (1703-1732). After the king returned to Sikkim, he built three Bka' brgyud monasteries in Sikkim: Karma rab brten gling at Ralang (South Sikkim), Karma thub bstan chos 'khor gling at Rumtek (East Sikkim), and Bkra shis chos 'khor gling at Phodong (North Sikkim). The twelfth Karmapa prayed at and blessed the three monasteries at mTshur phu in Tibet (Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya 2005: 55-56). It was not set up as a central Karma bka' brgyud monastery. In 1959, the sixteenth Karmapa, Rang 'byung rig pa'i rdo rje (1924-1981), left his primary seat, mTshur phu Monastery, Central Tibet because of the political situation and fled into exile with 150 tulkus, gurus, monks, and lay disciples. Their

the ritual music and texts to investigate the musical logic in their musical texture and the religious logic behind ritual music.

first destination was Bhutan, but it proved difficult to stay there. Later, the King of Sikkim, Bkra shis rnam rgyal (1914-1963) invited the Karmapa to live in Sikkim. The sixteenth Karmapa re-established his main seat in exile at Rumtek, on a ridge facing Sikkim's capital city, Gangtok. The new Rumtek Monastery, part of Dharma Chakra Center, was inaugurated in 1965. The sixteenth Karmapa also established many monasteries, retreat centres, and Buddhist centres in other places in Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, Ladakh, India, the United States, Canada, several European countries, and Asia (Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche 2006: 180-183; *Rumtek Dharma Chakra Center*, viewed 27 Aug, 2018). The sixteenth Karmapa passed away in 1981. A controversy over the identity of the seventeenth Karmapa began when the prediction letter to find the seventeenth Karmapa was not found. The main four incarnates are the fourteenth Zhwa dmar pa, Mi pham chos kyi blo gros (1952–2014), the twelfth Ta'i si tu pa, Pad ma don yod nyin byed dbang po (1954-), the twelfth rGyal tshab pa, Gags pa bstan pa yar 'phel (1954-), and the third 'Jam mgon kong sprul, Karma blo gros chos kyi seng ge (1954-1992). After the sixteenth Karmapa passed away, these four lineage incarnates were mainly responsible for the affairs at Rumtek. Ten years after the sixteenth Karmapa passed away, the twelfth Ta'i si tu claimed that in 1981 the sixteenth Karmapa gave him a talisman in which he had found the prediction letter. The fourteenth Dalai Lama also supported the tour heading to Tibet to find the seventeenth Karmapa. Unfortunately, the third Jam mgon kong sprul passed away because of a car accident. Finally, only the twelfth Ta'i si tu pa and the twelfth Rgyal tshab pa went to Tibet and found and recognized Orgyan 'phrin las rdo rje (1985-) as the seventeenth Karmapa in 1992. The fourteenth Dalai Lama and People's Republic of China confirmed this recognition of the seventeenth Karmapa (Terhune 2004: 144, 169-196). However, the fourteenth Zhwa dmar pa claimed that, first, the Dalai Lama's approval of the Karmapa reincarnation is not necessary. The Dalai Lama as the religious and political leader of Tibet confirmed the Karmapa reincarnation based on the prediction letter written by the previous Karmapa. Nevertheless, there is no historical evidence showing that the previous Dalai Lamas appointed or helped to recognize previous Karmapas. Second, in the past, previous Zhwa dmar pas had recognized more Karmapas than had previous Ta'i si tu pas. Therefore, the Zhwa dmar pa claimed that he had more right to recognize the seventeenth Karmapa. Third, Zhwa dmar pa argued that the prediction letter preserved by the Ta'i si tu pa is fake according to the handwriting, signature, and poetic texts on the prediction letter. Fourth, Zhwa dmar pa claimed that Ta'i si tu pa is an agent of the Chinese government (Curren, 2006: 73-74, 119-138). In 1994, Zhwa dmar pa announced that 'Phrin las mtha' yas rdo rje (1983-), who was born in Tibet, is the seventeenth Karmapa (Maheshwari 2000: 113). 'Phrin las mtha' yas rdo rje renounced monkhood and married in 2017. In 1999, Orgyan 'phrin las rdo rje left Tibet and arrived in India. Now, the monks at Rumtek follow the instruction of Orgyan 'phrin las rdo rje. Because of the conflict between the supporters of the two seventeenth Karmapas and the doubt about the Chinese government's interference, the two Karmapas are not allowed to settle at Rumtek Monastery. Orgyan 'phrin las rdo rje's temporary residency is rGyud stod tantric Monastery, which belongs to the dGe lugs order near Dharamsala (Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche 2006: 180-183; *Rumtek Dharma Chakra Center*, viewed 27 Aug, 2018). Because of the settlement of the monks and laypeople and the building of new institutes, Rumtek Monastery is not only a historical monument. The religious, cultural, and daily activities construct a new cultural context in different communities.

In this article, the first class analyzed is 'the texts transmitting meanings' in the ritual manuals. Like lyrics, the texts transmit meanings in the form of a song. Ritual performance consists of music and ritual texts. The ritual texts contain chants with various kinds of chanting music. The meanings in the texts are clearer than music. Through studying the structure of the texts in each section of the rituals, the logic and pattern of ritual and its function are understood. The second class is 'music is music', which illustrates musical logic and pattern. The third class is 'the musical performance for transmitting meanings'. Combining the structures of music with ritual meaning and function identifies the relationship between music and ritual. A particularly important point is to investigate if and how musical performance transmits meanings. Finally, I conclude with a theory of Tibetan Buddhist ritual music from both musical and religious perspectives.

Ritual Structure

This Two-armed Mahākāla ritual performed at Rumtek Monastery is the medium version of the ritual.⁴ It is not as complicated as the full version. Generally speaking, at the generation stage (Tib. *bskyed rim*)⁵, practitioners need to perform the self-generation⁶ as Vajra Yoginī, who is an important personal deity in the Karma bka' brgyud order and perform the front-generation⁷ as Mahākāla, Mahākāli, deities, and protectors. In this version, although the self-generation is not written in the ritual texts, practitioners can still perform the self-generation at the beginning.

The Vajra master (Tib. *rdo rje slob dpon*) is the spiritual master of the ritual. After performing the front-generation and inviting protectors

⁴ In Tibetan Buddhism, before reading ritual manuals and doing ritual practices, the practitioners all need to receive the tantric empowerments (Tib. *dbang*), an oral transmission (Tib. *lung*), and instructions (Tib. *khrid*) on the practices from gurus (spiritual teachers). Gurus are instructed to judge if the students have the intelligence to receive the empowerment and practice. If the students are not qualified, it is dangerous to practice *tantra* (Powers 2007: 267). When I was learning ritual music and ritual manuals, these monks were concerned that I had not received the empowerments for these rituals. I promised that whatever I learned would be used for this research and not for any personal practice. Moreover, from the religious perspective, I have no right to transmit and teach ritual manuals and music. This right belongs to reincarnates. For these reasons, I do not include or translate all the ritual texts and scores, but only the sections that are necessary and relevant to the issues.

⁵ In this stage, practitioners need to create the images of deities.

⁶ Practitioners visualize and generate deities as themselves.

⁷ Practitioners visualize and generate deities in front of themselves.

and deities, practitioners also generate offerings to them. The assistants to the Vajra master (Tib. *las kyi rdo rje*)⁸ also offer physical offerings. The deities and protectors are pleased by the offerings. In particular, practitioners need to praise, offer to the protectors, and fulfil protectors' wishes in order to pacify protectors so as to prevent them from bring disease and disaster to the world, as well as reminding them of their promise to protect dharma, and requesting them to do their duty. The protectors in the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual may have a negative characteristic, which is the source of disaster and needs to be removed through the offering made by the practitioners. Once this is done, then, the protectors perform their function.

There are some kinds of Mahākāla ritual that are practiced in different orders. Although the Two-armed Mahākāla is the main protector of the Karma bka' brgyud order, the short section of the Six-armed Mahākāla is also included in this ritual. Some peaceful and wrathful protectors and local spirits are invited, offered, and become pleased to perform their function.

After the protectors dissolve, these protectors leave the ritual field. If the practitioners received training at visualization, they can still finish the completion stage (Tib. *rdzogs rim*)⁹ in their mind in this ritual. The ritual structure is as below.

Front-generation of Mahākāla, Mahākāli, deities, attendants, and demons in the four *maṇḍalas*)¹⁰

Invitation
Offering
Empowerment
Prostration

Generating offerings
Offering and eight offerings
Generating offerings
Offering
Inviting lineage masters, guru, Guru Rinpoche, deities
Offering
Inviting Buddha, bodhisattvas, deities of four levels of *tantra*
Offering
Asking for the fulfilment of accomplishment
Offering to the protectors and *dākinī* (Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma*, female wisdom being),
requesting the fulfilment of wishes

⁸ Because the Vajra master cannot leave the seat, the assistant to the Vajra master is responsible for purifying offerings, displaying offerings, and any work for the Vajra master.

⁹ In this stage, practitioners need to transform themselves into the deities.

¹⁰ *Maṇḍala* is the residence of deities.

Generating main sacrificial cake, nectar, and blood.
 Offering main sacrificial cake, nectar, and blood and requesting the fulfilment of wishes
 Inviting family and attendants of Mahākāla, and requesting the accomplishment of supreme and ordinary activities
 Requesting the local deity in Rumtek to fulfil wishes
 Generating offerings
 Inviting guru, personal deity, ḍāka (Tib. *dpa' bo*, male equivalent of *mkha' 'gro ma*), different protectors to accept offerings and requesting them to fulfil wishes and four activities
 Inviting White Mahākāla to accept offerings and fulfil the request
 Offering to all the dharma protectors, Mahākāla, and Mahākāli, and requesting

The Six-armed Mahākāla

Generating offerings
 Front-generation of the Six-armed Mahākāla and attendants
 Invitation and offering
 Front-generation of Avalokiteśvara
 Offering and asking for the fulfilment of wishes

Generating offering and offering to rNam sras (a peaceful protector) and requesting
 Generating offering and offering to sNgags bdag (a peaceful protector) and requesting
 Generating offering and offering to Dam can (a wrathful protector) and requesting
 Generating offering and offering to Srin mgon (a wrathful protector) and requesting
 Generating offering and offering to Zhing skyong (a wrathful protector) and requesting
 Generating offering and offering to Mkhar nag (a wrathful protector) and requesting
 Generating offering and offering to A phyi (a peaceful protector) and requesting
 Generating offering and offering to Tshe ring ma (a peaceful protector) and her four sisters and requesting
 Prostrating and offering to the protectors of mTshu phu¹¹, which is in Tibet
 Front-generation: protectors in mTshu phu
 Requesting protectors to come to listen to instruction
 Offering
 Requesting them to do their duty
 Generating offerings
 Offering to ḍāka, ḍākinī, and protectors
 Requesting
 Generating offerings
 Offering to gZhi bdag (a local deity in Tibet)
 Requesting
 Praising and prostrating

gSol kha: praying, offering, and requesting
 Generating offerings
 Offering and eight offerings

¹¹ The main seat of Karmapa is in mTshur phu.

Requesting
 Inviting family and attendants of Mahākāla, protectors, and messengers
 Offering and requesting

Inviting Mahākāli and protectors and offering
 Confessing and requesting
 Confessing to Mahākāla's son and requesting
 Confessing to all the protectors and requesting
 Generating fulfilling offerings
 Requesting, warning
 Blessing offerings
 Fulfilling wishes of Mahākāli and deities
 Requesting
 Fulfilling wishes of protector of Mi la ras pa, five sisters
 Confessing and requesting
 Requesting Mahākāla and Mahākāli
 Dissolving into sacrificial cake
 Requesting to destroy enemy
 Requesting to do wrathful actions
 Removing obstacles
 Fulfilling wishes
 Dissolving into the practitioners
 Asking for blessings and requesting

Physical offerings
 Offering leftovers
 Praising and confessing
 Completion stage
 Letting all the protectors and deities leave
 Fulfilling wishes

Dedication

Ritual is the performance for deities. Although the monks perform full versions, medium versions, or concise versions of rituals, the basic structure is the same. The structure is as follows: generation stage → offering → requesting and performing function → completion stage. Through the ritual performance, the invisible deities or protectors and the invisible world can be generated to connect the invisible world with this world. The physical offerings, the offering of musical instruments, and the inner offering generated by ritual performance are for the deities. Monks perform to please the deities or protectors and to request them to perform their function. At the end of the ritual, the deities or protectors dissolve into the minds of monks, or sentient beings. This dissolution needs to be accomplished by the outer performance which is chanting and visualization.

During my fieldwork at Rumtek, many interviewees claimed the most important thing is the mind and motivation. If this is the case, then why do they need different kinds of ritual performance? In the

following sections, I will discuss the issue of how music as the outer performance in rituals activates the functions and purposes of both music and ritual.

Chanting Music

There are three kinds of chanting music:

A. *'don* :

The word *'don* means recitation. There is no notation for *'don* works. The texts are recited without any intentional tone or melody. The number of syllables in each sentence is usually not regular. These chanted forms can be accompanied by drums or not. When they are accompanied by drums, the drum beats are evenly made without any accent.

B. *gdangs*:

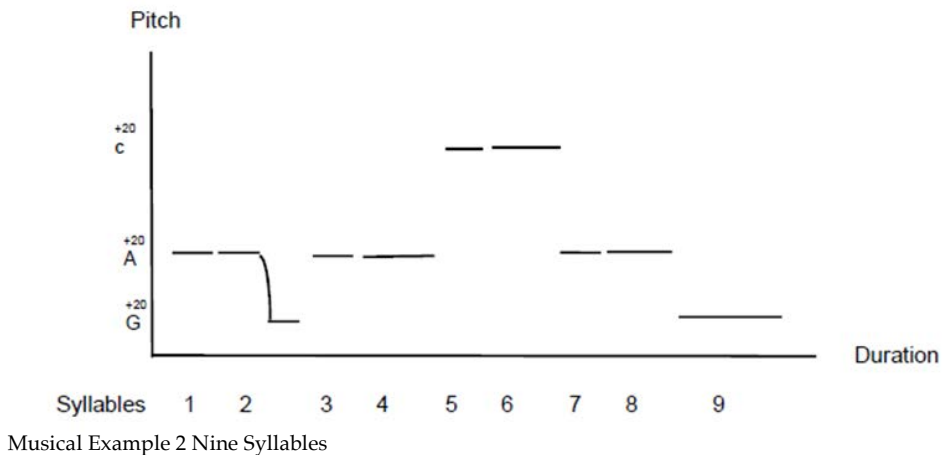
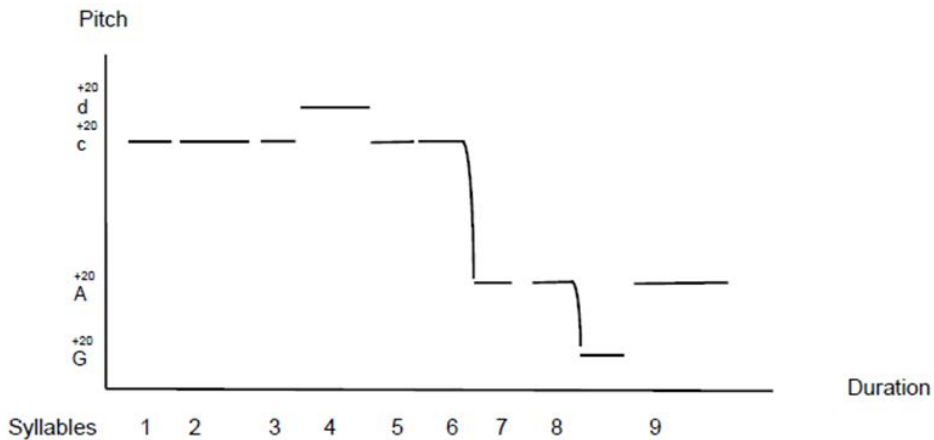
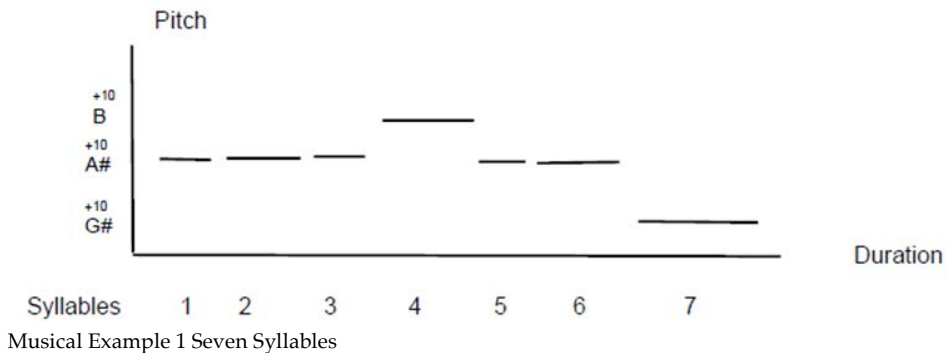
gDangs means tone or melody. There is no notation for *gdangs*. It is, basically, the chanting with melody. The melody consists of discrete tones with rhythm. The number of syllables in each sentence is usually regular. It can be accompanied by drums playing or the holding of a vajra to beat the head of a bell. When it is accompanied by drums, the drum beats on the odd syllables are stronger than those on the even syllables.

Here are two pieces of the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual that can act as examples for this. The number of syllables in each sentence is usually odd. There are two kinds of melody. One is for seven syllables, and the other is for nine syllables. In the two examples below, Musical Example 1 and Musical Example 2, the duration of the odd syllables is shorter than that of even syllables. The last syllable of each sentence is the longest.¹²

The two kinds of melody are chanted repeatedly. The first tone of the two kinds of melody is different. When the number of syllables changes from seven syllables to nine syllables or from nine syllables to seven syllables, then the chanting masters (Tib. *dbu mdzad*)¹³ chant a different first tone to lead the chanting of the other monks.

¹² Chanting music presents difficulties for those wishing to present it in Western notation; it is too complicated for readers to understand the visual representation. Therefore, in this article, one method I use is the coordinate axes to present the relative pitch and duration.

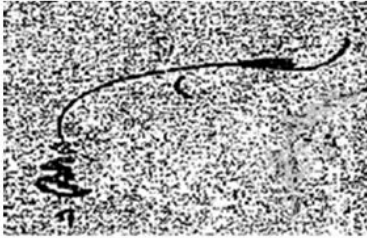
¹³ Chanting masters lead ritual performance.



C. *dbyangs*

dByangs means vowel, tone, or melody. In these three kinds of chanting, only *dbyangs* has notation. The melody is the prolongation of a vowel. The number of syllables of each sentence is usually regular, and it can be accompanied by drums or the holding of a vajra to beat the head of the bell. The tempo is very slow.

The score consists of curved lines and texts. The contour of the lines represents the melodic contour. Each ritual text is followed by a meaningless syllable. Take the invitation part of the Two-armed Mahākāla as an example (Musical Example 3). In this example, 'Hūṃ', the syllable to be chanted, is at the beginning of the line. 'Nga', the meaningless syllable following 'Hūṃ', is used to prolong the first syllable. It is represented in the middle of the line.



Hūṃ Nga

Musical Example 3 Score of *dByangs*

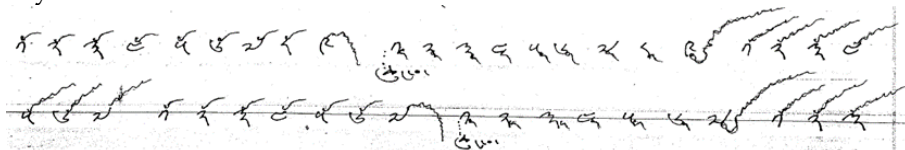
According to the musical characteristics and function, the chanting music can be divided into descriptive sections with less melody and object-centred sections with more melody. The descriptive sections such as generation are the sections in which invisible participants and offerings are generated. The monks recite *'don* to describe the figures and residence of deities, such as Mahākāla, Mahākāli, and offerings, like eight offerings, written on ritual manuals. These pieces are not melodic. However, when the ritual sections, such as praising, are object-centred—for the sacred objects, such as deities—the monks chant *dbyangs* and *gdangs*. This shows that these pieces of ritual are supposed to be a formal and pleasant performance for the deities by performing more melodic music. After these deities had been generated in the descriptive sections, these deities participate in the ritual and watch the performance in the object-centred sections such as those for offering.

Instrumental Musical Structure

Percussion and wind instruments are played in ritual performances. The percussion constructs the musical frame, and wind instruments accompany the percussion. The percussion instruments consist of rattle drums, flat cymbals, hollow cymbals, and another drums. The wind instruments include shawms, trumpets, long horns, and conches. In addition, vajras and bells are played in the musical frame constructed by percussion or are played alone to accompany chanting music.

Percussion

Different patterns are played to end each part of the ritual and to connect them with the following part. There is a notation for hollow cymbals as shown in Musical Example 4. The score as figures consists of numbers, lines, texts, and other signs to present the techniques and rhythm.

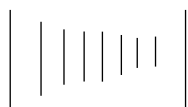


Musical Example 4 Score of Hollow Cymbals from the Collected Scores of *Rolmo* (Instrumental Music)

The four basic techniques are presented by texts. To explain the basic techniques and patterns and for them to be easily understood, I have used my own set of symbols.¹⁴ The longer lines show that the sound is stronger, while the shorter lines shows that the sound is weaker. The distance between two lines shows duration.

a. *'bebs*: *'bebs* means descending and falling. Thus, the sound starts as a strong beat that gradually becomes weaker.

¹⁴ The pitch and duration of Tibetan ritual music are not fixed but relative, thus it is not suitable to adopt Western notation to present the music. In Ellingson's thesis (1979), in addition to showing the notation of Tibetan Buddhist rituals and explaining the musical techniques, he adopted revised Western notation, combining the revised Western notation with graphs to represent chanting music. For the music of cymbals, he mainly presented the Tibetan notation with a timeline. In some pieces, he used some lines to show a fall or prolonged acceleration. The marks of forte and piano show the dynamics. The revised Western notation is adopted to represent shawm's music. Long horn music is only shown by Tibetan notation without any transcription. In my MA thesis (2009), I used a descriptive method to represent instrumental music. During my fieldwork in Rumtek Monastery for this research, one chanting master recognized it as an efficient method to represent instrumental music.



b. *'bebs ring*: *ring* means long. Hence, *'bebs ring* is the long version of descending.



c. *bzhag*: *bzhag* means putting down. Therefore, it is played at the end of musical pieces when the hollow cymbals are placed down. There are two kinds of *bzhag*.

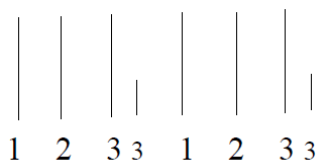
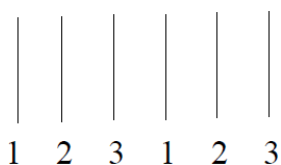


The cymbals are played once.



The cymbals are played lightly twice and heavily once.

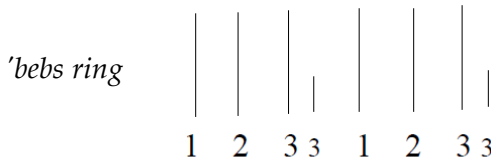
d. For different deities, *'gnyis brdung* (two beats)', *'gsum brdung* (three beats)', and *'bzhi brdung* (four beats)' are played. Take *gsum brdung* (three beats), the most common way, as an example. There are three kinds of *gsum brdung* (three beats):





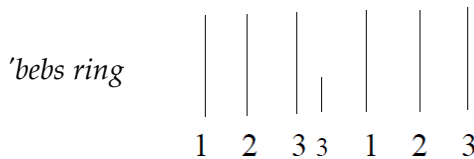
I analyzed and concluded all the pieces of the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual that there are eight general patterns to connect the ritual's different parts (I have not included the music played for invitation, drinking offering, and deities leaving, which has different characteristics).

- a. (Part A) Unaccompanied reciting—(Part B) Playing the drums heavily once and then lightly once, with chanting.



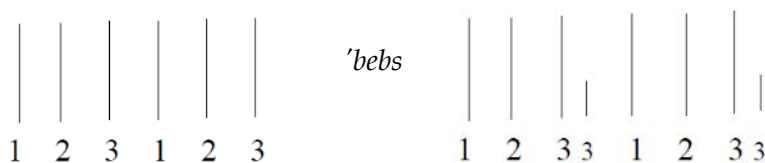
(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed. It depends on which deity is going to be offered or praised.)

- b. (Part A) Unaccompanied reciting—(Part B) Playing drums evenly, with reciting.



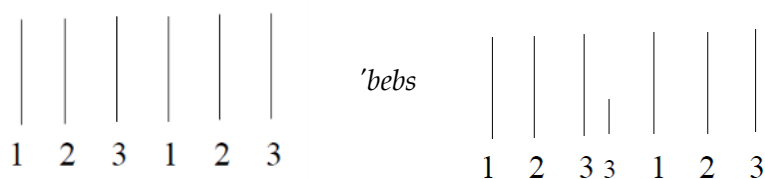
(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed, depending on which deity is going to be given offerings to or praised.)

- c. (Part A) Playing drums, heavily once and then lightly once, with chanting—(Part B) Playing drums, heavily once and then lightly once, with chanting.



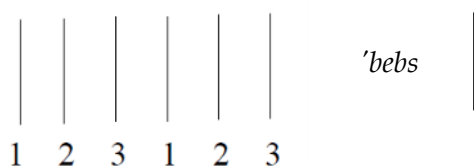
(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed, depending on which deity is going to be given offerings or praised.)

- d. (Part A) Playing drums, heavily once and then lightly once, with chanting—(Part B) Playing drums evenly, with reciting.

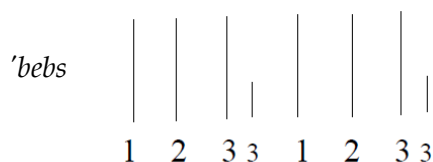


(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed, depending on which deity is going to be given offerings or praised.)

- e. (Part A) Playing drums, heavily once and then lightly once, with chanting—(Part B) No drums are played.

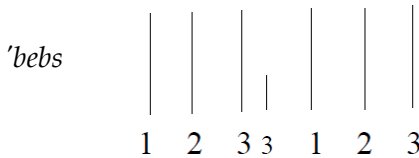


- f. (Part A) Playing drums evenly, with reciting—(Part B) Playing drums, heavily once and then lightly once, with chanting.



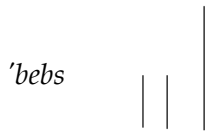
(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed. It depends on which deity is going to be offered or praised.)

- g. (Part A) Playing drums evenly, with reciting—(Part B) Playing drums evenly, with reciting.



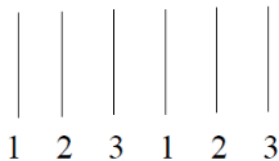
(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed, depending on which deity is going to be given offerings or praised.)

- h. (Part A) Playing drums evenly, with reciting—(Part B) No drum are played.



According to these patterns above, I conclude the rules are as follows:

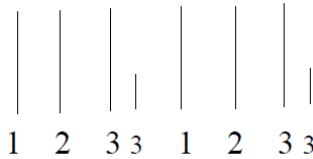
- When part A is unaccompanied reciting, it is followed by *'bebs ring*.
- When part A is chanting accompanied by drums heavily once and then lightly once, it is followed by



(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed, depending on which deity is given offerings or praised.)

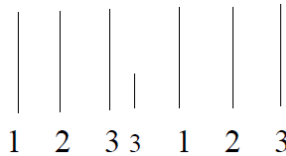
- When part A is reciting accompanied by drums played evenly, it is followed by *'bebs*.

- d. When the following part B, is the chanting accompanied by drums played heavily once and then lightly once, it shall be played:



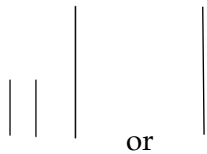
(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed, depending on which deity is going to be given offerings to or praised.)

- e. When part B is reciting accompanied by drums played evenly, it shall be played:



(The *gsum brdung* (three beats) may be changed, depending on which deity is going to be given offerings to or praised.)

- f. When part B is unaccompanied reciting, it shall be played:



These patterns show a musical function that indicates how different parts connect with each other through music.

Wind Instrument

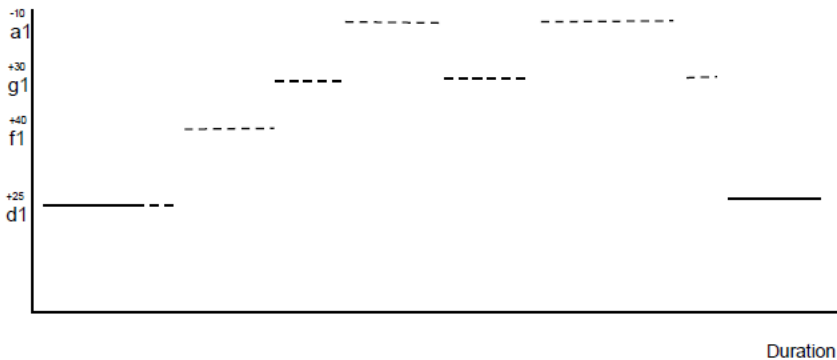
Except for conches, shawms, trumpets, and long horns have various musical techniques of performance.

1. Shawm: No notation is provided for shawm. Nevertheless, there are thirty-two pieces of melody that have been played and recorded by monks themselves in Rumtek Monastery. There are seven holes on a shawm. The three fingers of the right hand and the three fingers of the left hand stop the first six holes. The last hole can be opened or stopped by a plug. Generally speaking, '*bdun pa* (seven)' in which the final hole is plugged, is played in the morning; '*drug pa* (six)', in which the final hole is opened, is played in the afternoon. 'Bri gung rgyal tse Rin po che (1960–), one of the authority figures at Rumtek

Monastery, indicated that there is also a way to play the shawm with 'Inga pa (five)' holes, which apparently means only using the first five holes. The tempo is faster when playing the shawm with five holes and therefore if they need to play a quick melody, they may choose the 'Inga pa (five)' style of playing.

There is no absolute duration, only relative for the length of the sounds, and depends on the cymbal playing of the chanting masters. The chanting masters are the leaders. Other instrumental players need to play their instruments based on the chanting masters' playing. The first and last tones are played longer, showing the beginning and ending of each piece. The variety of tones is in the middle.

Take a short piece from 'mtshur phu gar glu', as an example, the musical contour is presented, as shown in Musical Example 5. One technique to play shawm is similar to a *trill* in Western music, as presented by the dotted lines.

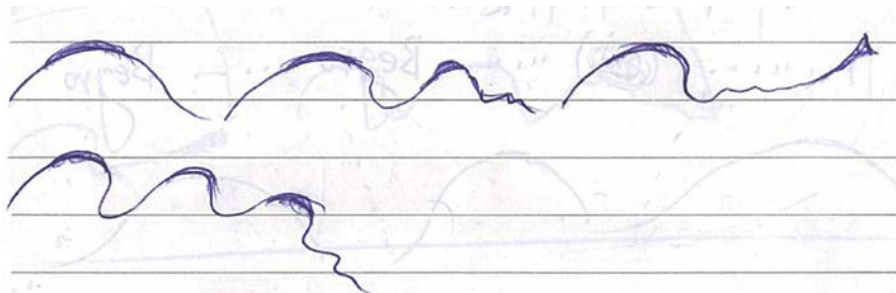


Musical Example 5 Musical Contour of Shawm

2. Conch: No notation is made for the conch, and no melody or specific technique is played. One monk explained to me that three or four fingers are put in the mouth of the conch to produce a beautiful sound. Two fingers may produce a sound similar to a dog's barking. Therefore, the beauty of sound is the main consideration. In the ensemble, conches are played from the beginning to the end of musical pieces.
3. Trumpet: The curved lines are the notation for the trumpets. They can present the contour of sound and the techniques. The most common patterns are 'gsum 'bud (three blowing)' as shown in Musical Example 6 and 'bzhi 'bud (four blowing)', as shown in Musical Example 7.



Musical Example 6 'Three Blowing' of Trumpet



Musical Example 7 'Four Blowing' of Trumpet

4. Long horn: There is a notation for the long horn. The long horn is played using five kinds of techniques.

- a. *rdor*: The lower lip covers the upper lip, and then, the air vibrates the lips. Compared with *kha rdor*, the duration is longer.



- b. *kha rdor*: Only the air vibrates the lips.



- c. *rgyang*: The sound is produced directly without any specific embouchure. The contour of sound is straight.



- d. *tir*: The tongue is put between the lower and upper teeth. The sound is as strong as an elephant's trumpet.



- e. *tsag*: Overtone is played lightly.



Musical Texture

These wind instruments accompany cymbals, drums, and rattle drum. Take one piece of the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual as examples to show the musical texture as Musical Example 8.

	<i>'bebs ring</i>	<i>gsum brdung (three beats)</i>
Hollow cymbals		
Drums	X	X X X XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX X X X X x X X X x
Rattle Drum	X	X X X XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX X
Trumpets	<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/> <i>gsum 'bud (three blowing)</i>	
Long horns	<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/> <i>kha rdor</i> <i>tsag</i> <i>kha rdor</i> <i>rgyang</i> <i>tsag</i>	

Musical Example 8 Musical Texture of the Two-armed Mahākāla Ritual

Chanting masters play hollow cymbals as the leaders of ensemble. Drums and rattle drum are played following hollow cymbals' rhythm. Trumpets and long horns accompany percussion. Three blowing of Trumpets ends before three beats of cymbals. The pattern of long horns consists of various techniques and ends with *tsag*, which is played lightly.

Religious Function of Music and Meanings of Music

'Bri gung rgyal tse Rin po che said that music can help performers to concentrate on their meditation. This statement demonstrates how ritual performance is not only understood to be musical but also has a religious function. After learning ritual music and the meanings within the ritual manuals, as well as the musical logic, I also examined the logic of the religious function of ritual performance. The variety of chanting music and instrumental music constructs different levels of musical performance.

One interesting point is that the musical variety of the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual is more than the rituals for one main deity, such as the Red Avalokiteśvara (Tib. *rGyal ba rgya mtsho*) and the Green Tārā ritual (Tib. *Zab tig sgrol ma*). The Red Avalokiteśvara ritual and the Green

Tārā ritual are only performed for peaceful deities, but various ritual music are performed for peaceful and wrathful deities and protectors in the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual. The ritual structures show that the deities and religious functions are more prominent in the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual. That is an example of the complexity of ritual structure.

I conclude that the complexity of ritual influences the complexity of the music used within it. Both the characters of deities and their actions influence the choices the monks make about the use of instruments. I tested this rule by examining the longest version of the Mahākāla ritual, one which I did not learn, and found that the rule also holds in this ritual. For confirmation of my findings, I also asked 'Bri gung rgyal tse Rin po che about these tendencies. He told me that this rule existed, which confirmed my conclusion. In this section, I discuss the function of music, how the instruments and music interact with each other to embody the ritual meanings and function as a method of attaining awakening, and the integrated performance from the three vajras: body, speech, and mind.

In different contexts, music and instruments have various functions. For example, in the past, people played conches to transmit messages, such as inviting people to participate in religious activity (Bian Duo 2006: 18). It is said that when Wencheng princess was building Ra mo che Temple, conches were used to suppress demons (Bawo Zulachenwa 2009: 65). Instruments themselves have symbolic meanings. For instance, vajra is the symbol of the diamond vehicle; bells represent the perfection of wisdom (Beer 2004: 233, 243).

Ritual music is formed to achieve a certain purpose. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa proposes that "The role of sacred music lies primarily in the process of inner transformation towards an ever higher and purer state technically known as "Enlightenment [awakening]" (Lhalungpa 1969: 3). How the purpose can be achieved relies on the religious and symbolic function of music.

In scholastic studies, the function and symbolic meaning of music and, within the ritual context, the instruments themselves in ritual context have been studied. Generally, the ritual music and instruments are categorised into peaceful (Tib. *zhi ba*) or wrathful (Tib. *drag po*) ones, depending on the characters of the deities they evoke. For example, the conch is associated with peaceful deities, but the long horn is regarded as an instrument for fierce deities (Pertl 1992: 90). Flat cymbals are played in the rituals of peaceful deities; hollow cymbals are played in the rituals of wrathful deities (Beer 2004: 229). The shawm is played in peaceful music, and the trumpet is played in fierce music (Ellingson 1979: 645). The peaceful style is played for teachers and some personal deities (Tib. *yi dam*) with flat cymbals, drums, and

conches. The fierce style is played by hollow cymbals, human bone drums and trumpets, and metal trumpets (Ellingson 1979: 684). Although Ivan Vandor also connected shawms, conchs, and cymbals with peaceful deities and short trumpets and smaller hollow cymbals with fierce deities, he claims that long horns and drums are for both (Vandor 1974: 145). From these scholars' research, we can see similarities and differences in the symbolic meanings. For example, conches are for peaceful deities, but long horns may be used only for wrathful deities, or be for both wrathful and peaceful deities.

In different rituals, instruments may have different symbolic meanings. For example, Rinjing Dorje and Ellingson stated:

Crossley-Holland mentions that "The hand-bell and hand-drum [ḍa ma ru]...symbolize Wisdom and Method..." (1968: 83-4). This statement is correct on one level of interpretation, in connection with a particular type of ritual. However, according to the text of the Gcod yul ritual, the ḍa ma ru is associated with "balanced Wisdom", the bells with "the Wisdom that comprehends separate aspects", and the rkang gling with yet a third aspect of Wisdom, "Mirror-like" (Gcod yul: 3a-b) (Rinjing Dorje & Ellingson 1979: 77).

So far, we can see that there are various definitions and symbolic meanings of instruments and instrumental music. This may be due to the various interpretations and rules of different orders or the different logic adopted in various contexts.

The characters of deities influence the selection of instruments. Ellingson claims that the characters of deities decide which musical characteristics, such as types of orchestration, tempo, and rhythm are used (Ellingson 1979: 372). Rinjing Dorje and Ellingson propose that the musical characteristics are used depending on the preference of different deities. Peaceful deities generally prefer relatively slow, soft, and smooth music, while fierce deities like fast, loud, and rough music (Rinjing Dorje & Ellingson 1979: 75). In addition, Bian Duo has stated that the timbre of long horn is similar to that of a tiger's roar, a loud sound that represents invincible guardian deities. The timbre of shawm is thought to be soft, which represents the kindness of female deities (Bian Duo 2006: 208). These arguments show that the timbre of instruments is a musical characteristic that is connected to the characters and preference of the deities.

After learning the ritual music and the meanings in ritual manuals, I have concluded that the function of the individual instrumental music is an additional element within ritual music. My analysis of this is as follows.

First, music is the tool to define the start and end of a ritual. In a narrow sense, a ritual starts when the senior chanting master chants the first syllable. In a broad sense, rituals can start with the preparation of religious objects or the waiting outside of shrine rooms. A junior monk strikes a drum several times outside the main hall, and on hearing the sound, all the monks gather outside. When the Vajra master, the chanting masters, and the discipline masters (Tib. *chos khrims*) show up and go inside the main hall, all the monks follow them to in. At the same time, a junior monk plays 'bebs ring and three beats. After that, the curtains of the doors are drawn down. If any monk goes inside after the curtains are drawn, that means they are late and will need to do prostrations as the punishment until indicated to stop by the discipline masters. When the ritual is paused for a break, a junior monk strikes the drum outside the main hall once. Then, when the break is over, a junior monk strikes a drum again to gather all the monks back. In this way, the drum-playing sends a message for all the monks to gather together and defines the time in which the monks are to stay in the ritual field.

Second, music embodies the ritual performance. The ritual texts have to be chanted, and then the outer performance and visualization can be activated. As discussed above, in the stage of generation, the monks recite (not musically) the ritual texts to generate the deity and offerings. In the section of invitation, praising and displaying offerings have the object to do the action, the ritual texts are chanted with *dbyangs* or melody, which is musical. Therefore, when the section of ritual is object-oriented, the music is more melodic. In addition to more formal performance, playing musical performance more is the method through which the deities become pleased. Moreover, during visualizing, the monks take more time to visualize the invitation, praise, and offerings to the deities. The *dbyangs* and melody that are slower than the recitation allow the practitioners more time for them to create the visualization.

Third, the function and action of each section in the rituals and the characters of the deities decide the choice of instruments. As I have described above, in previous research, scholars usually connected flat cymbals, shawms, and conches with peaceful deities, and hollow cymbals, trumpets, and long horns with wrathful deities. Ellingson indicated the relation between ritual action and instruments, but he did not present them with clear examples (Ellingson 1979: 624).

In Rumtek Monastery, shawms and conches are for peaceful deities, and trumpets are for wrathful deities. Different pieces of long horns are for either wrathful deities or peaceful deities. I found that the rule governing the playing of flat cymbals and hollow cymbals is not based on the characters of the deities but on the function and action in rituals.

The function and action in the rituals consist of peaceful actions and wrathful actions: pacifying (Tib. *zhi ba*), enriching (Tib. *rgyas pa*), empowering (Tib. *dbang*), and destroying (Tib. *drag po*). Wind instruments are played according to the characters of deities. The characters of deities include peaceful and wrathful aspects.

In both the Red Avalokiteśvara and the Green Tārā rituals, because these two deities are peaceful, only shawms and conches are played. The actions in these two rituals are all peaceful, such as inviting, prostrating, offering, praising, receiving blessing and empowerment, dissolving, and dedication. Therefore, flat cymbals are played without the use of hollow cymbals.

In the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual, Mahākāla and its family and attendants are wrathful, and various kinds of wrathful or peaceful protectors are invited to the ritual field. Shawms and conches are played for peaceful deities, while trumpets are played for wrathful ones. The actions the monks do—more specifically, require the protectors to do—include praising, offering, or removing obstacles, which influence the choice between hollow cymbals and flat cymbals. If they perform peaceful actions, such as praising and offering, then they play flat cymbals. If they ask the deities to perform wrathful actions, such as removing obstacles, they then play hollow cymbals. Peaceful deities cannot do wrathful actions. Therefore, according to these two rules, we can find three patterns in the Two-armed Mahākāla ritual:

- a. Peaceful action+ Peaceful deity= Flat cymbals + Shawm
- b. Peaceful action+ Wrathful deity = Flat cymbals + Trumpet
- c. Wrathful action + Wrathful deity = Hollow cymbals + Trumpet

The basic techniques of chanting and instrumental music, the characters of deities, and the ritual function are the elements of structure. The character of deities and function decide which instruments are played. Then, the varieties of musical techniques construct various patterns. Finally, the musical surface structure¹⁵ is presented. These elements cooperate with each other to produce ritual music with musical function and religious meanings.

Integration of Body, Speech, and Mind

Ritual performance consists of the outer performance and visualization. When the instruments are played, ritual texts are

¹⁵ "Surface structure" is adopted from *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* written by Noam Chomsky.

chanted, and the figures of deities are mentally visualized, the ritual function is shown. Take the invitation section of the Two-armed Mahākāla as an example, a piece which Ellingson discussed in his thesis. He connected the movement of striking cymbals with the figure of the *maṇḍala* (Ellingson 1979: 623-634). Although the version I learned also belongs to the Karma bka' brgyud order, the way to perform this section is a little different to that shown by Ellingson. Furthermore, the function of chanting the *mantra* (Tib. *sngags*)¹⁶ and striking cymbals and how body, speech, and mind integrate in the ritual performance were not discussed. My discussion showing the integration of body, speech, and mind is below.

The ritual texts are chanted first and include four *maṇḍalas* of deities, such as the deity of cemetery, Mahākāla, local deities, Shiva, Ragacha, Lord of death, and female deities, and so forth, which are surrounded by attendants.

After this, the chanting masters play flat cymbals. They hold and rotate the right piece of flat cymbals towards the left piece. Then, they hold the right piece of flat cymbals to strike one point (1, 2, 3), as Musical Example 9, on the left piece of flat cymbals for three times. On the third time (3), the chanting masters chant *dza*, the first syllable of *Dza Hūṃ Baṃ Ho*, the four-syllable *mantra*. Then, the chanting masters strike the three points (a, b, c) on the cymbals and chant *Hūṃ, Baṃ, and Ho*, the following three syllables. *Dza Hūṃ Baṃ Ho* symbolizes that these four *maṇḍalas* of deities are combined one by one in visualization through chanting and playing instruments.

Because an invitation is a peaceful action, and many of the deities are fierce, flat cymbals are played accompanied with trumpets, drums, and long horns. The musical texture is shown in Musical Example 9. Through the integration of body, speech, and mind, these deities are generated, invited, and shown into the ritual field.

¹⁶ *Mantras* are the ritual words or sound having religious power in tantric practice.

The diagram shows a sequence of five circles representing cymbals. The first has a blue curved arrow above it. The second is labeled '1', the third '2', the fourth 'Dza 3', and the fifth 'a Hūm', 'b Bam', 'c Ho'. Below this is a horizontal line with 'Long horns' on the left and 'rdor' in the middle. A dashed blue line separates this from the first musical staff. The staff shows rhythmic notation with vertical stems and labels '1', '2', '3' under the first three groups. Below the staff are three parts: 'Drums' with 'X' marks under the first three groups and a long 'XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX' under the rest; 'Long horns' with 'One monk: rdor' and 'The other monk: tsag' under the first three groups, and 'kha rdor' and 'rgyang' under the rest; and 'Trumpets' with 'Four blowing' centered under the entire staff. A second dashed blue line separates this from the second musical staff. The second staff shows rhythmic notation with labels '1', '2', '3', '3', '1', '2', '3', '3' under the groups. Below it are 'Drums' with 'X' marks under groups 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 'x' marks under groups 4 and 8. Below that is 'Long horns' with 'tsag' centered under the entire staff.

Musical Example 9 Musical Texture of the Invitation of the Two-armed Mahākāla Ritual

The other important function embodied in ritual performance is method (Tib. *thabs*) and wisdom (Tib. *shes rab*). In Rumtek Monastery, all the instruments are played in pairs, which forms small networks. In the ensemble, the instrument on the right side symbolizes method and the instrument on the left side symbolizes wisdom. When the chanting master plays flat cymbals and hollow cymbals, one piece of flat cymbals or hollow cymbals that is held in the right hand symbolizes method; while the other held in the left hand symbolizes wisdom. Consequently, when these instruments are being played, method and wisdom are interwoven. Furthermore, the practice of method and wisdom is the practice of Father *tantra* (skilful-means) and Mother *tantra* (wisdom), the highest types of *yoga* within this tradition.

Moreover, the master of the retreat center in Rumtek explained that all the practices are the method that connects to the practitioners' inner wisdom. There are six perfections (Tib. *pha rol tu phyin pa drug*) to

practice. The six perfections are associated with a person's cultivation of generosity (Tib. *sbyin pa*), morality (Tib. *tshul khrims*), diligence (Tib. *brtson 'grus*), tolerance (Tib. *bzod pa*), meditation (Tib. *bsam gtan*), and wisdom (Tib. *shes rab*). The saying is that the first five perfections are the method or skillful means for accumulating merit; the sixth one, the perfection of wisdom is for accumulating pristine cognition (Beer 2003: 255). Practitioners practice the six perfections for the pursuit of awakening through self-cultivation. These six perfections are not only the methods for awakening but are also the goal and the ideal qualities, which are to be developed within the practitioner. The six perfections provide the guidance to construct and transform the practitioner's character on the way to awakening (Wright 2009).

The perfection of wisdom is not only the highest *bodhisattva's* virtue but also the guide of the first five perfections. The perfection of wisdom raises the first five perfections from the ordinary level up to the level of perfection (Wright 2009: 219). In one Mahāyāna *sūtra*, the Buddha instructed his disciples that the goal of enlightened wisdom cannot be attained if one is dull-witted, does not practice, learn, and or ask questions (Wright 2009: 178). Skill in means, which is essential to the practice of *bodhisattvas*, comes from and is contained in the perfection of wisdom. The development of skill in means and a profound realization of emptiness work together for liberation (Wright 2009: 226).

Consequently, the first five perfections, as the skills and means, are to be integrated with wisdom in the practice of the *bodhisattvas*. In ritual music, method and wisdom are always played together during the practice. Furthermore, all practices are designed to connect us to the wisdom within our own minds—the Buddha nature. Tibetan Buddhism holds that every living being has Buddha nature (Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*)—the enlightened state

Conclusion

Music has been accepted in Tibetan Buddhism and is regarded as a symbolism of wisdom. In the monastic system, as mentioned by the seventeenth Karmapa Orgyan 'phrin las rdo rje, ritual shows a sense of beauty and function of music. As a result of the monastic institutionalization, every lineage has created its own system of practice. In these lineages, monastics are required to play ritual music according to their own lineage's musical system and the instruction they have received within their monastery. The musical performance as an ensemble leads to the Tibetan Buddhist ritual performance.

Theoretically, I found that the structures of music and religious meanings work together. The musical rules of variations, different patterns, and musical texture increase the musical beauty and richness of the ritual. The variations of instrumental music are to accompany chanting music or to connect two sections with different chanting. Combined with the structure of ritual, the structure of music does not only show the aesthetic function but also reveal a religious purpose. The chanting music can be divided into descriptive sections with less melody and object-centred sections with more melody. The beauty of music is associated with the offering or performance for deities. Furthermore, by performing musical signs, the religious symbolic meaning attached to the music and instruments is activated. The instrumental music is influenced by the characters of the deities and the action within rituals. The other rule manifesting in instrumental music is the non-duality of method and wisdom.

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