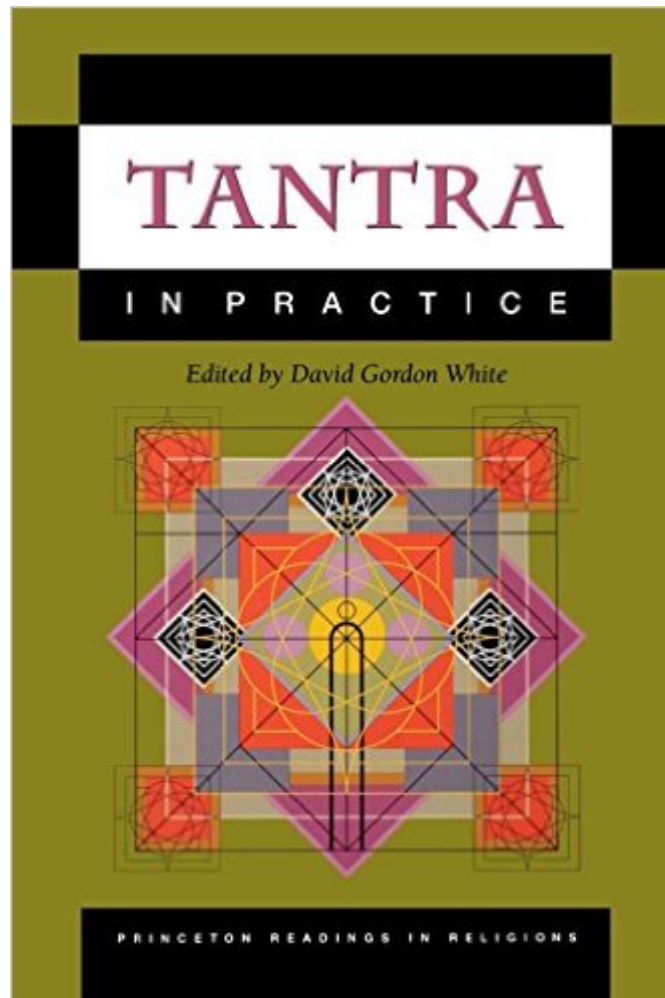


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Tantra In Practice



Synopsis

As David White explains in the Introduction to *Tantra in Practice*, Tantra is an Asian body of beliefs and practices that seeks to channel the divine energy that grounds the universe, in creative and liberating ways. The subsequent chapters reflect the wide geographical and temporal scope of Tantra by examining thirty-six texts from China, India, Japan, Nepal, and Tibet, ranging from the seventh century to the present day, and representing the full range of Tantric experience--Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, and even Islamic. Each text has been chosen and translated, often for the first time, by an international expert in the field who also provides detailed background material. Students of Asian religions and general readers alike will find the book rich and informative. The book includes plays, transcribed interviews, poetry, parodies, inscriptions, instructional texts, scriptures, philosophical conjectures, dreams, and astronomical speculations, each text illustrating one of the diverse traditions and practices of Tantra. Thus, the nineteenth-century Indian Buddhist *Garland of Gems*, a series of songs, warns against the illusion of appearance by referring to bees, yogurt, and the fire of Malaya Mountain; while fourteenth-century Chinese Buddhist manuscripts detail how to prosper through the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper by burning incense, making offerings to scriptures, and chanting incantations. In a transcribed conversation, a modern Hindu priest in Bengal candidly explains how he serves the black Goddess Kali and feeds temple skulls lentils, wine, or rice; a seventeenth-century Nepalese Hindu praise-poem hammered into the golden doors to the temple of the Goddess Taleju lists a king's faults and begs her forgiveness and grace. An introduction accompanies each text, identifying its period and genre, discussing the history and influence of the work, and identifying points of particular interest or difficulty. The first book to bring together texts from the entire range of Tantric phenomena, *Tantra in Practice* continues the Princeton Readings in Religions series. The breadth of work included, geographic areas spanned, and expert scholarship highlighting each piece serve to expand our understanding of what it means to practice Tantra.

Book Information

Series: Princeton Readings in Religions

Paperback: 664 pages

Publisher: Princeton University Press; F First Edition edition (September 15, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0691057796

ISBN-13: 978-0691057798

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.5 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #652,582 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #457 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Mysticism](#) #647 in [Books > History > Asia > India](#) #844 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Mysticism](#)

Customer Reviews

D.G. White, author of the excellent yogic study and adventure story, "The Alchemical Body," here presents an edited compilation of articles about authentic Tantra traditions taken from the length & breadth of Indian-influenced Asia. Countries & cultures include: India (obviously), China, Tibet/Nepal and Japan, with articles on Hindu, Buddhist, Jain (Jain? yes, Jain), Islamic (!) and Shinto tantric traditions. Before this volume, who would have guessed at the sheer geographical pervasiveness of Tantric traditions? Topics vary from architecture to ethnography to poetry. The quality of the contributions is uniformly very good--well-written and well-organized--and most chapters include a translation, in whole or part, of an important or obscure tantra. The strongest point is that the authors are scholars, not practitioners, with the associated advantage is that, at last (and at least) the reader can avoid the fluff, hype and BS that pervades the field of so-called "Tantra." Reading this volume will go a long ways toward removing our conditioned ignorance, delusion and gullibility about "sacred sex" and "sacred orgasms," the phallacy of worshipping the linga/yoni of your current hot-sex partner as a god/dess, and the like. The jewels herein are too numerous to recount, but some of my favorites include Hudson's chapter, "Tantric Rites in Antal's Poetry," which rather lovingly introduces the poetry of Antal, a kind of Tamil Mirabai. Kudos to numerous authors for emphasizing the relationship between bhakti and tantra.

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