

SKULL BOWL/KAPĀLA AND INNER OFFERING IN OLD UYGHUR

Eski Uyğurcada Kafatası Kâsesi/Kapāla ve İç Sunu

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ABSTRACT

There are many terms with symbolic value in the texts of Old Uyghur Tantric Buddhism. One of the most interesting of these terms is *kapāla*, meaning skull bowl. The skull bowl is a symbolic object that angry gods and goddesses hold in their left hand, the hand of wisdom. At the same time, this skull bowl is used by Kāpālikas in various offerings. These offerings are interrelated offerings, which are called *bali tapig* (bali offering) and *iç tapig* (inner offering) in Old Uyghur. Because blood sacrifices are prohibited in Buddhism, cakes, and cereals are often used in the bali offering. But, as expressed in the Old Uyghur example, the person performing the ritual, such as the sacrifice of the first human Puruṣa, imagines that he cuts off all his limbs from head to toe and puts them in a skull bowl. This has a fully symbolic meaning. However, there are mixtures in the skull bowl, and the most important of these mixtures is *rasāyana*, the elixir of immortality. The term, expressed as *beṣ rasiyan* in the Old Uyghur texts, provides immortality and staying young. *Rasāyana* consists of human excreta, urine, semen, menstrual blood, marrow. At the same time, this skull bowl contains five meats consisting of bull, dog, elephant, horse and human flesh. Of course, they also have various symbolic meanings. This study is about explaining the above-mentioned symbolic terms based on Old Uyghur texts.

Keywords: Old Uyghur, skull bowl, bali offering, inner offering, divine body.

ÖZ

Eski Uyğurca Tantrik Budizm'e ait eserlerde sembolik değere sahip pek çok terim bulunmaktadır. Bu terimlerin en ilgi çekicilerinden biri kafatası kâsesi anlamındaki *kapāla*'dır. Kafatası kâsesi öfkeli tanrı ve tanrıçaların bilgelik elleri olan sol ellerinde tuttıkları sembolik bir nesnedir. Aynı zamanda bu kafatası kâsesi Kāpālikalar tarafından çeşitli sunularda kullanılmaktadır. Bu sunular özellikle Eski Uyğurcada *bali tapig* (bali sunusu) ve *iç tapig* (iç sunu) şeklinde adlandırılan ve birbiriyile bağlantılı olan sunulardır. Budizm'de kanlı kurbanlar yasaklandığı için bali sunusunda genellikle kek ve tahıl ürünleri kullanılır. Fakat Eski Uyğurca örnekte ifade edildiği üzere ilk insan Puruṣa'nın kurban edilişi gibi ritüeli uygulayan kişi bedenini baştan ayağa ka-

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dar tüm uzuvlarını kesip kafatası kâsesine koyduğunu hayal eder. Bu durum tamamıyla sembolik bir anlam taşır. Bununla birlikte kafatası kâsesi içerisinde karışımlar bulunur ki bu karışımlardan en önemlisi ölümsüzlük iksiri olan rasâyana'dır. Eski Uygur metinlerinde *beş rasiyan* şeklinde ifade edilen terim ölümsüzlüğü ve genç kalmayı elde etmeyi sağlar. Rasâyana insan dışkısı, idrar, meni, âdet kanı, ilikten oluşur. Aynı zamanda bu kafatası kâsesinde boğa, köpek, fil, at ve insan etinden oluşan beş et bulunur. Elbette bunların da çeşitli sembolik anlamları vardır. Bu çalışma Eski Uygur Türkçesi metinlerine dayanarak yukarıda bahsedilen sembolik anlam taşıyan terimlerin açıklanması üzerinedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Eski Uygurca, kafatası kâsesi, bali sunusu, iç sunu, tanrısal beden.

Introduction

The general purpose of the rituals in different religions and beliefs is the idea of either re-entering the heaven from which they were expelled or regaining the divine characteristics they had in the heaven from which they were expelled. Regardless of which of these, rituals are generally the idea of regaining divinity by attaining immortality, which is a divine feature of man. To achieve this, each society performs different actions within the framework of different religions and beliefs, which can be symbolic, and in the same way, the materials used in the actions can also have a symbolic meaning. For example, Siddhas, who have an important place in Buddhism, are people who walk around naked in their ways and represent purity away from spiritual pollution. They must be above the continuum of divinity with Buddhism's other arhat, bodhisiddhas, and monks used in institutional esoteric mythology. They are in a perverted but symbolic state with their human bone ornaments, carrying skull bowls and tridents, defeating demons, flying *dākinīs* to their land, and mating in cemeteries (Davidson, 2002: 170). Especially the skull bowl/cup that they used takes place in many societies and is used in different meanings. For this skull, Plato uses the expression soul, spirit seed, semen. This seed is embedded within the skull and spinal cord. Breath is blown through the reproductive organ (Eliade, 2019: 156). Thus, the spirit, which is here in the skull of the father, passes to the child. However, according to the belief of the Tibetans, the child's soul enters the body through the mother's skull, that is, the Brahma hole, during reproduction, and at the time of death, the soul leaves the same hole from which it came (Eliade, 2019: 134). Since the Alexandrian alchemists express the skull as an envelope of thought and perception, they advise it to be used as

a transmutation vessel (Eliade, 2020: 167-168). Hence, in Tantric Buddhist practices, the “drink of immortality” in rasāyana/amṛta is usually made in a skull bowl. However, skulls are used in rituals prepared to achieve immortality and youthfulness, and medicines are prepared in them by considering various Buddhas (Chui, 2019: 1-18). In Western culture, although it is not made of skulls, there is the idea of the holy grail, and these bowls are the sources of abundance, fertility, healing of the sick, and resurrecting of the dead, especially in Celtic mythology (Akça, 2022: 89). Again for Christians, Golgotha, the hill where Jesus was crucified, is located in the center of the world and this is the peak of the cosmic mountain. At the same time, in this place where Adam was both created and buried, the blood of Jesus is poured onto the skull of Adam, who was buried at the bottom of the cross, which means that Jesus paid the price and purified Adam from sins, that is, Adam was baptized with the blood of Jesus (Eliade, 2018: 336). As can be seen, the blood spilled on Adam’s skull as a result of the price Jesus paid with his life to save Adam from his sins. This situation is similar to the practice made for the atonement of Śiva’s sin in the Kapalika practices that will be mentioned below.

In addition to all these, the making of bowls from human skulls is also found among the Turks, but it is not known exactly when it emerged. Turks usually make bowls from the skulls of their enemies and believe that their strength and courage will pass over them (Akıncı, 2021: 12-14). The vocabulary about the skull bowl in the Old Uyghur texts is a translation of the Tantric Buddhist texts.

Skull Bowl/Kapāla and Inner Offering

Priest Odoric of Pordenone, who traveled from 1316 to 1330, gives important explanations about the burial customs of the Tibetans and tells at great length how the monks dismembered the corpses in the mountainous regions, and how the eagles and vultures descended and ate the dismembered corpses. Afterward, it is stated that the community there said, “This man is a saint, the angels of God come and take him to heaven”. At funerals, the son thinks he is honored when he sees his father being carried in this way. So he takes his father’s head, cooks it, and eats it right away. From the skull, he makes a glass that he and the whole family drink sincerely in memory of the deceased father, and by behaving in this way, it is expressed

that they have great respect for their father¹ (Laufer, 1923: 3). In the continuation of his work on the subject, Laufer states that these narratives are based on hearsay information, not observations (1923: 3). It should be noted that although the information given in the travels of the medieval priests is important, it is certain that they are hearsay and exaggerated. However, apart from what the Priest Odoric told about the head of the corpse, it is still practiced today. However, it is not known whether the above statement about the head of the corpse is true or not. However, as in other cultures, the skull bowl/cup is very important in Tibet, and this skull bowl/cup is used in Buddhist traditions, especially in Tantric iconography. In general, in Tantric Buddhism, bones and objects made with bones are considered important divine images, and these objects are used in various Buddhist rituals. The most striking of these Tibetan objects made of bones, or rather human bones, is the skull bowl, as mentioned above. In Tantric Buddhist texts, violent goddesses are often depicted with skull bowls/cups, most notably Vajravārāhī, the consort of Heruka. In iconographies, Vajravārāhī wears a crown of five skulls on his forehead, holding a vajra in his right hand and a skull cup filled with blood in his left, and is depicted as if he were drinking it (Carmen, 2019: 65). This skull bowl is held not only by goddesses but also by angry gods. For example, Yama/Yamāntaka holds a blood-filled skull-cup or a lasso in his left hand and a vajra or bone mace in his right hand (Lopes, 2020: 117–118). Yamāntaka is represented by the evil and fearful face of Rākṣasa. The Rākṣasas are anthropomorphic creatures of Vedic origin and are described in Purana literature as insatiable flesh-eating demons, with fangs protruding above the mouth, burning red eyes, and drinking blood from skull cups (Lopes, 2020: 121). Thus, the skull bowl/cup held by the enraged gods in their left-hand expresses wisdom, while the curved blade or vajra, which denotes the “method” they hold in their right hand, represents destroying obstacles (Lopes, 2020: 122), and this is a very common image in Tantric Buddhist texts. It is possible to see an example of the subject in the Old Uyghur text below.

¹ A similar narrative is also found in the text of Herodotus. According to this; “Some of the customs attached to the Issedons; when someone’s father dies, all his relatives bring him herd animals; they sacrifice, they cut into pieces; they also slaughter the father of the host, and mix his meat among other meats, and have a feast. They dig up the head of the dead, take out the brain from it; they cover it with golden leaves and glorify it with great sacrifices every year like the face of a god. Just as death anniversaries are celebrated in Greece, so every son does for his father here.” (Herodotos, 2017: 304; Akinci, 2021: 10).

beş kurug toklılar üzä tidimlig älig yaş kişi başları üzä monçuklug altı törlüg süñük itiglar üzä itiglig tümäglig anıñ koyunınta ög vaçıra varahi kızıl öñlög 1 yüüzlög iki kollug oñ eligintä narvaskart tutup ontın sıñar korkıtu turur sol eligi üzä beş rasiyanlar üzä tolgurulmış kapala tutup kañnı kuça turur (Kara & Zieme, 1976: lines A407-415). There is a crown of five dead skulls, a wreath of fifty (bloody) wet skulls and decorated with six kinds of bone ornaments. That mother Vajravārāhī is red in color, one-faced, two-armed. She holds a knife in her right hand and scares ten directions. She holds a kapāla filled with five rasāyanas in her left hand and embraces the father.

The Old Uyghur phrase above is an iconographic image of the goddess Vajravārāhī. According to the Old Uyghur text, Vajravārāhī has a crown made of five skulls on his head, while he has a necklace/wreath from fifty wet/moist/bloody heads. Her dress is adorned with six kinds of bones. She is also the mother of that life and has one face, her face is red and she has two arms. She is scary enough to hold a knife in her right hand and strike fear in ten directions. The skull bowl/cup he holds in her left hand is filled with rasāyana, the five immortality drinks, and as such she is depicted as embracing the father, Heruka. Here, Vajravārāhī, the mother of life, symbolizes death and life. Vajravārāhī is depicted as red because of the fire of life, expressing her lust and fertility. In his womb, the whole universe resides. She is shown as the creative power, the immortal mother, and the immortal virgin. Also, Vajravārāhī is visualized as both the womb and the tomb. It is a sow that eats its offspring. This is not only his personality but also displaying his two universal states, combining “good” and “evil” (Campbell, 2020: 107). Vajravārāhī’s skull bowl is filled with intestines and blood drips from his mouth. She threatens all things, along with gods, titans, and humans (Gray, 2007: 169). While what is written above in the Old Uyghur text is a visualization of Vajravārāhī, in Abhayākara Gupta the Cakrasamvara maṇḍala, or Heruka, is defined as: “...In his right hands he holds a ḍamaru drum, an ax, a knife, and a trident. On one of his remaining left hands is a khatvanga stick marked with a vajra, a skull bowl filled with blood, a vajra lasso, and the head of Brahma. A necklace of fifty moist/bloody human skulls hangs around his neck... He has five skulls in a row on his forehead and a black frightening hair cluster with a left-facing crescent and vajra on top.” (Gray, 2007: 44-45). The symbolic objects in Heruka’s iconography are identical to those of Vajravārāhī. Thus both Heruka and Vajravārāhī repre-

sent one body in two separate bodies with the same symbolic objects: The divine body.

In Tantric Buddhism and its parallel texts, it is known that human beings perform many rituals to get rid of mediocrity and to have a divine body. The purpose of these rituals is generally to free the living being, or rather the person, from earthly life and to make him/her take on a divine structure. As far as mythologies and religious narratives are concerned, Adam and Eve, who are accepted as the first human beings, were expelled from paradise and consequently turned from immortality into mortality. Human beings perform various rituals to regain this lost feature, namely paradise, and immortality. One of these rituals is the Kāpālika rites based on the skull, used as the chief instrument and symbol by yogins, whose appearance, equipment, and behavior are interesting for the practices they undertook while living in the cremation grounds of ascetics. In these rituals, Heruka and his consort, Vajravārāhī, may embrace and worship their master, while the retinue of other gods and goddesses in Heruka's maṇḍala may also engage in sexual intercourse (English, 2002: 4). The Kāpālikas are ascetics with a bad reputation. They are rebuked in many texts for their excessive behavior involving ritual intercourse and the sacred ingestion of substances that governed a system ranging from intoxicating to lethal. The greatest heresy of the Kāpālikas is their bloody behavior, and in early mythologies, they celebrate in a fit of rage the legendary killing of the god Brahma by Śiva². Since Brahma's skull adheres to Śiva, the lord of the graveyard has to engage in intense penance to get rid of the adhesive skull. The Kāpālikas celebrate the penance of their god with primary and secondary symbols. While carrying a skull bowl is the defining characteristic of a Kāpālika, it comes from the penance literature in the Dharmaśāstra (Davidson, 2002: 178). Moreover, the prototypical image of the penitent Śiva begging with the skull bowl may represent the existence of the Kāpālikas (Davidson, 2002: 186). There is therefore hope of atonement in the Kāpālika rites. The Kāpālikas, however, are radical Śaiva ascetics who, carrying the skull bowl, immerse themselves like Rudra and abandon all notions of purity and impurity (Bisschop, 2009: 749). Hence, the bone ornaments on the Kāpālikas signify their nakedness, while the skull signifies the lotus bowl (Davidson, 2002: 263). In an ancient text, a Kāpālika says: "My necklace and orna-

² Śiva is the archetype of the gods and goddesses, he regularly destroys and recreates the entire universe (Eliade, 2003: 400).

ments are made of human bones. I sit among the ashes of the dead and eat my food from skulls (...) We drink from the skulls of Brahmans; we feed our sacred fires with brains and lungs mixed with human flesh, and we appease the Terrible God (Mahā Bhāirava) with human sacrifices soaked in fresh blood gushing from the wounds in their throats (...). He who resembles the gods, who combed his hair with the Moon-wheel, who embraces women as beautiful as Pārvatī, it is he who knows supreme happiness...” (Eliade, 2013: 361-362). Of these Kāpālika rites, the rituals of the internal offering are particularly important, of which the following are examples in Old Uyghur.

suk äñräklärniñ atsız ulug äñräk üzä saça parmanular sanınça kapalalar bilgä biliglig rasiyan üzä tolu bolup tapınmışın sakınu (Kara & Zieme, 1976: lines A751-754). Imagining that he worships by scattering it with his index finger, ring finger, and thumb and filling it with rasāyana knowledgeable like atoms.

As can be seen, in the above text the mudra formed by the sign, ring, and thumb is confused with the rasāyana inside the skull. Kapāla is also called “inner offering” because it is used especially in “inner offering, inner votive offering”. In the Tsongkhapa text, the Lama’s position in the Yama is as follows: “Hold the skull with your right hand with the front-facing you. With your left ring finger, stir or move the inner offering clockwise three times. Sprinkle the offering to the Maṇḍala gods... to Dharmaraja, the sworn protectors, and the dakas, dākinīs, and the like. While making the internal offering, vividly visualize the production of happiness and wisdom of emptiness in the guests of the offering.” (Fuentes, 2011: 19). Here the rasāyana prepared inside the skull is scattered, or rather offered, to the gods. In Tantric Buddhism, the “internal offering” is very important and the main material is the skull bowl, as mentioned earlier. The following Old Uyghur examples should be analyzed separately.

anta basa bali tapıg ärsär balıka iç tapıg birlä suv bägni kodup oom vaçıra amırta darnını sözläyü yänä iç tapıgtın saçıp arıtıp suvaba-wa darni üzä kurug sakınıp kurugta a ujiktin keñ alkıg kapalanıñ içintä om a huñ ujiklärtin bilgä biliglig rasiyanlıg ulug taloy ügüz tolu törütüp (Kara & Zieme, 1976: lines A293-299). Then, as for the Bali offering, one should put water (and) beer into Bali with the inner offering, and again from the inner offering one should dispense and purify Dharani om vajra amṛta. With Svabhāva-dhāraṇī one should visualize (the sacrificed objects) as empty; in the empti-

ness in the syllable aḥ, in the vast Kapāla in the syllables om āḥ hūṃ, one should fill the great sea₂ of wisdom-nectar.

anta basa öz ätöz birlä bahşınıḡ arasınta üç adrok toklular isiç adakı asuḡluḡ barın sakıḡu ol antın bilgä biliglig bir yiti biçäk üze öznüḡ kaş tuşıntın başnı käsip öḡdüñki isiç adakı üzä alının öz ätözke bakıtıp urmişın sakınıp anta basa öznüḡ oḡ butın käsip kapalanıḡ içintä urmişın sakınu antın käzigçä sol butın antın bilin kögüzin antın sol eligin antın kalmış başın anta soḡ oḡ eligin käsip kapala içintä urmişın sakınu ...öz ätözkä bakıtıp urmişın sakınıp (Kara & Zieme, 1977: lines 314–328). Then one should imagine that between his own body and the Guru there are three marvelous skulls like the feet of a vessel. Then one should imagine that with a sharp blade of wisdom (prajna) one cuts off one’s head where one’s eyebrows are and put one’s forehead on the feet of the vessel in front of oneself, seeing one’s own body so that it stands on its own. Then imagine that you cut off his right foot and put it in the skull bowl. After that, he should imagine cutting off his left foot, then his waist and chest, then his left, [then] his remaining head, then his right hand and placing it in the skull bowl. After that, one should imagine [looking at] one’s own body one after the other [placing all parts of the body in the skull bowl].

tört maharanç täḡrilärkä yavḡan bali bėrgü (Kaya, 2021: lines 599–600). The four Mahārājas will give meatless bali.

tört maharanç täḡrilärkä torma ötünäyin tep (Kaya, 2021: lines 606–607). So that I may offer gtor-ma sacrifice to the four Mahārājas.

torma şišini üntürmişdä tört maharanç täḡriläriḡ terini kuvraḡı birlä (Kaya, 2021: lines 664–665). With four Mahārājas assemblies₂ when he sacrificed.

First of all, it is necessary to explain about “bali offering” that Old Uyghur *bali tapıḡ* “bali offering”, *yavḡan bali* “meatless bali sacrifice”, *torma* “gtor-ma, sacrifice”, *torma şiši* “gtor-ma, 祭祀 *jisi*, sacrifice” or “sacrificial cake” have an important place, especially in Tantric texts. This Old Uyghur expression for *bali tapıḡ* and *torma* is Skt. bali, Tib. gtor ma, and the word is used in the sense of “sacrificial cake”. The Tibetan ritual is derived from ancient Indian sacrificial offerings consisting of various food offerings to the gods. The Balinese offering is a symbolic ritual made of dough, often deco-

rated with colorful ornaments made of chipped butter and barley flour, and is combined with the Bon tradition (Beer, 1999: 201). Offered as a sacred “gift” to the peaceful gods, the offering of *bali*, *torma*, and *torma šiši*, usually consists of food such as fruit, cereals, rice cakes, or sweets. For angry gods and goddesses, this ritual often takes the form of an animal sacrifice or blood offering. Buddhism, which forbids violence and emphasizes the sanctity of all life, forbids animal sacrifice and instead symbolizes blood offerings (Beer, 2003: 212). However, eating meat is not forbidden in Tantric Buddhism. According to the Guhyasamāja-tantra, lust is permissible, as is the eating of any kind of meat, including human flesh (Eliade, 2013: 256). In the Old Uyghur example above, the placing of human body parts in the skull bowl is described, and in fact, a sacrifice ritual is encountered here. This sacrificial ceremony is associated with the sacrifice of puruṣa, the first human being, and this is the multiplication of “one” by division. By disintegrating the body of multiplicity, “unity” is regained. The body of Puruṣa depicted in the Vāstu-puruṣa-maṇḍala is the body of God incarnated on the ground of existence (Snodgrass, 1985: 110). In addition, it is the demon that is slain here, the meditator’s offering of his body to the violent gods through visualization eliminates attachment to the body and expresses virtuousness (Buswell & Lopez, 2014: 857). The meat offering here is none other than the bali offering. The Old Uyghur example clearly shows that the bali offering and “inner offering” are related to each other. Accordingly, in Old Uyghur, *ič tapıg* means “inner offering, sacrifice” and is explained in detail in the Old Uyghur example. Important in Tantric Buddhism, the “inner offering, votive” is a symbolic type of offering used in the visualization practices of the highest yoga tantras, such as the Cakrasaṃvara, Vajrayoginī, Hevajra, Kalacakra, Guhyasamāja and Yamāntaka Tantras. This offering consists of a large white skull cup with a single central fissure (Beer, 2003: 112). This bowl is called *kapala* “skull bowl” in Old Uyghur texts and is expressed as Skt. *kapāla*, Tib. *thod-pa*, *ka-pa-la*, *ban-dha*, *dung-chen* (Beer, 2003: 110). As mentioned above, the skull bowl/cup is depicted in the left hand of the gods and goddesses as a rasāyana drink. This, again, is none other than the quest for immortality, as already mentioned. In Tibetan Buddhism in general, the use of human bones is important, and human skulls are of particular interest here. Jesuit Father Andrada, who visited Western Tibet in 1625, mentions that the Lamas were in the habit of playing instruments made of metal or bones of the dead, especially human limbs while praying. When Father Andrada asked the Lama what the bones were used for, he replied:

“When people hear such instruments, they cannot help thinking of death. In order to be more in touch with melancholic and sad remembrance, one drinks from the skull.” According to the same Lama, the idea of death contributes as much as prayers to restrain passions and regulate behavior. The skull bowls prevent people from becoming too addicted to uncertain and worldly pleasures so that the drinks in the skulls become a spiritual antidote to passions and vices (Laufer, 1923: 5). This skull is red inside and sits on a tripod with three truncated heads in white, red, and blue (Beer, 2003: 112). Again in the Old Uyghur text, as seen above, the *üç adrok toklular isiç adaki* is shown as “the feet of the vessel consisting of three extraordinary skulls”. These three heads stand in the center of the red triangular fire maṇḍala pointing downwards and the blue arc-shaped wind maṇḍala pointing upwards. On either side of this wind maṇḍala are two vases filled with white or golden nectar, on the top of which rise red sandalwood poles sealed with a vajra and a yak-tail flag. A victory flag is affixed to each pole in the form of a triangular flag. These flags flutter in the wind because the vortex of the wind maṇḍala causes the fire maṇḍala to flash upward and melt the substances within the large skull cup (Beer, 2003: 212–213). The skull bowl is made from the oval top of a human skull and is used as an offering, eating, or drinking bowl for numerous Vajrayana deities. This bowl is usually held in the left hand of yogins, siddhas, ḍākinīs, yidams, and guardian deities and contains amṛta, semen, alcohol, divine buns, and tormas, fresh blood, marrow, intestines, fat, and the brains, hearts, lungs of the demonic enemies called mara and rudras. The kapāla, used as a skull bowl, is attributed to various human bones. These may consist of the skull of a Brahman or of a murdered or executed victim. However, the skull of a child who dies at the beginning of puberty has a great influence on the “skull” of a seven or eight-year-old child born of an incestuous union. The skull of an illegitimate child, filled with “magical blood”, is a feature of the enraged goddess Śrī Devi in the form of the “Queen fending off the Great Army”. The skull cup is usually held in the left “wisdom” hand and is often placed in front of the deity’s heart, where it can be paired with right-handed “method” tools such as a vajra or curved knife (Beer, 2003: 111). Since rituals and the symbolic objects used in them are interrelated in Buddhist texts, it is not possible to consider them separately from each other. Here the ritual of inner offering in maṇḍala ceremonies is very important. According to this, the inner offering is the individual offering to the gods, which creates meditative offerings through the gods, and after they have arisen in one’s mind in the form of

generosity, one offers them to the gods individually (Wayman, 2009: 72). As mentioned above, during the ceremony various substances are melted in this skull bowl using fire and wind maṇḍala. These substances are rasāyana, which cure diseases of the body and soul, delay old age, increase mental power, generate strength, increase vital energy, strengthen vision and memory, aid digestion and cleanse the skin (Puri, 2003: 4). Related to Ayurvedic medicine and alchemy aimed at delaying aging, prolonging life, and perhaps achieving immortality, rasāyana is also expressed by amṛta “the drink of immortality” and is represented by the five “drinks of immortality” or “five nectars” of “human feces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, marrow” (Wayman, 2009: 34). However, in rituals, five meats can be placed in the skull bowl. These; consist of a bull, a dog, an elephant, a horse, and human flesh. The five nectars are arranged in a maṇḍala formation, with yellow excrement in the east (front), green marrow in the north (right), white semen in the west (back), red blood in the south (left), and blue urine in the center. The five meat are in a similar formation, with the meat of a black bull in the southeast (front left), the meat of a red or blue dog in the southwest (left back), and the meat of the white elephant in the northwest (right back), the meat of the green horse in the northeast, and the meat of the red human corpse in the center. In the “production phase” of meditation practice, the wind tong, the fire torch, the skull pot, and the melting matter represent the four elements, respectively, wind, fire, earth, and water. The three severed heads symbolize the practitioner’s body (white head), speech (red head), and mind (blue head) as the three “essentials” to be purified. The white syllable A, from which the skull bowl is made, symbolizes emptiness, and the skull bowl itself signifies great happiness. The white outer surface of the skull represents the white bodhicittas (semen) of the father and the red interior of the red bodhicittas (menstrual blood) of the mother. The single central crack of the skull symbolizes the inseparability of method and wisdom, compassion and peace, form and emptiness (Beer, 2003: 218–219). The five nectars inside the skull signify the five defiled skandhas, the five elements, and the five poisons of greed, miserliness, jealousy, attachment, and wrong mind. The five defiled skandhas and the elements are the essential elements to be purified during the practice of the completion stage. The contents of the skull of bliss and emptiness symbolize the generations and their purifications and transformations (Gyatso, 1997: 126). Feces signify Vairocana, sight and form; marrow, Amoghasiddhi, touch and will; semen, Amitābha, taste, and perception; blood, Ratnasambhava,

smell and feeling; urine, Akṣobhya, sound and the total of consciousness. The five meat symbolize the five mothers or wives of the Five Buddhas, the five elements, and the five delusions or poisons. The bull represents Locanā, the earth element, and the illusion of ignorance. The dog indicates the water element, Māmakī, and the illusion of aggression; the elephant, the fire element, Pāṇḍara, and the illusion of desire; the horse, the wind element, Tārā, and the illusion of jealousy; the human being in the center, either the consort of the god of meditation or Vajradhātviśvarī, the space/ether element, and the illusion of pride (Beer, 2003: 219). An Old Uyghur example can be given below.

ög täñri kızı... yer mahabut arığı buda-... sarıg öñlög oñ eligintä navaskart sol eligintä kapala tutup kañni kučmak... yañ üzä olurur terin kuvrag altmış tört täñri kızları ol ok yañlığın taşgaru korşayu turur barča ärdinitä ulatı beş şantıklärtä tükällig sakingu ol kizläk orunta kişä ujik işniñ arığı amogasidi burhan yaşıl öñlög oñ eligintä kılıç solında kılıç saplıg čañ tutar ög täñri kızı yel mahabut arığı samaya tara ol burhanka okşatı öñlög oñ eligindä navaskart solında kapala tutup ögin kuča yañ üzä olurur (Yakup, 2016: lines D1-18). With the daughters of the mother goddess... the purity of the earth mahābhūta... yellow in colour. She holds a butcher's knife in her right hand, a skull in her left hand, and sits so as to embrace the father/man. The company of sixty-four goddesses thus come out and surround (them). One should imagine that all the jewellery and the five Śāntika are part of it. In the secret place is the syllable kṣha, Amoghasiddhi Buddha, the purity of deed, coloured green, holding a sword in his right hand and a sword-hilt rattling bell in his left. Samaya-Tārā, the purity of the mother goddess wind mahābhūta, is similar in colour to that Buddha. She holds a butcher's knife in her right hand, a skull in her left, and is seated embracing the mother/woman.

However, the directional sequence of the five nectars and five meats as described above corresponds to the “mother tantra” descriptions of the Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī Tantras. In the “father tantra” practices of Guhyasamāja and Yamāntaka, however, the concentration sequences of these ten substances are modified. Here the five meats are positioned in the cardinal directions, corresponding to the five Buddhas, and the five nectars in the intermediate directions, corresponding to the five mothers. The color of the human corpse in the center corresponds to that of the consort of the

main yidam deity, blue in the case of Guhyasamāja and Yamāntaka and red in the case of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī. This “human flesh” corpse lies in the urine in the center of the skull cup, with its head facing west or back. The other four animals lie on their right sides with their heads facing the center and are marked on their left sides with the corresponding syllables. All five meats are described as “boneless”, meaning that each of their boneless skins is filled with the chopped meat of that animal. In the “completion stage” of meditation practice, the wind maṇḍala symbolizes the “downward discharging wind” that carries vital energy below the navel chakra. The fire maṇḍala represents the “inner fire” of tummo activated at the navel chakra. The waving flags symbolize the intensity of the downward-discharging wind that causes tummo’s fire maṇḍala to shine upwards. As Tummo’s inner fire rises, it dissolves the winds and melts the drops in the middle channel. This gives rise to the three inner signs of “white appearance”, “red increase”, and “black convergence”, which appear as the fifth, sixth, and seventh signs of the death process. The white, red, and blue severed heads symbolize these three signs. The large white skull bowl symbolizes the “mind of clear light”, which appears as the eighth and final stage of the death process. The single ascending crack of the skull represents the spontaneous experience of great bliss. The five nectars and five fleshies represent the five impure aggregates and elements that are transformed into the five Buddhas and five mothers through meditation on the clear light. Their melting into nectar symbolizes the distillation of these ten substances as pure wisdom into the elixir of “one taste”. The four main nectars of feces, bone marrow, semen, and blood rotate anti-clockwise around the central urine. These nectars express the “four joys” experienced as the drops of bodhicitta descend from the crown to the throat, heart, and navel chakras. Similarly, the four main types of meat of bull, dog, elephant, and horse rotate clockwise around the central human being. As these meats ascend from the navel to the heart, throat, and crown chakras, they symbolize the reversal of these four joys. During the visualization process of the internal presentation, each of the components is born from the corresponding seed syllable. After the first stage of visualized formation and activation, which causes the ten ingredients to melt into an orange liquid, several subsequent stages of visualization follow. A white Hūṃ syllable appears on the molten liquid and turns into an inverted white bodhicitta khatvanga. The heat causes this khatvanga to melt and drip into the skull cup, turning the orange liquid into a sweet elixir that looks like mercury. On

this elixir, there are three rows of Sanskrit vowels and consonants colored white, red, and blue. These syllable rows dissolve collectively towards their center until they finally merge into three inverted syllables consisting of white Om̐, red Āḥ, and blue Hūṃ. These three syllables eventually descend, dissolve in the elixir and turn it into an alchemical panacea that bestows happiness, vitality, immortality, and wisdom (Beer, 2003: 219–220). In particular, the connection between the chakras and the skull bowl is given in the following Old Uyghur example.

*taštın törütgülük yañça kılsar tört buluñtaki tört kapalalarta rasiyan
tolgurmiş ärür içtin uçukguluk yañça kılsar tört tamırlar içindä beş
rasyan akar* (Zieme & Kara, 1978: lines 426–429) If one produces
(them) according to the method of external creation, rasāyana is
filled into the four skull bowls at the four corners. When (it) arises
by the method of internal perfection, five rasāyana flow in the four
veins.

Here *tört tamırlar* “four veins” refers to the four chakras in the body, while *tört buluñtaki tört kapalalar* “four skull bowls on four sides” refers to the skull bowls placed at the four corners in the maṇḍala diagram. This maṇḍala diagram is again related to the four chakras in the human body in the body maṇḍala.

In addition to all these, when the examples in Old Uyghur are examined, there are expressions such as *kañni kuča* “embraces the father”, *ögin kuča* “embraces the mother”, which is none other than the sexual union of mother and father or man and woman described above. In the ritual of “internal offering”, the aim is to obtain the divine body, that is, “unity”. This is achieved through sexual union. The white bone of the skull represents the “form” of white male bodhicitta (semen), and the hot red blood content from the female navel center represents the “emptiness” of red female bodhicitta (menstrual blood). Esoterically, the skull bowl fills the mind of the deity (white skull) with great bliss (red blood) and, on a deeper level, represents the emergence of the “illusory body” (white skull) from the state of “clear light” (red blood) (Beer, 2003: 112). The practical aspect of Tantric Buddhist sexual practice, however, is characterized by the physical intercourse of male and female practitioners. During coitus, the male and female fluids merge and the resulting mixture is considered the nectar of immortality. The resulting mixture is then withdrawn by the male practitioner. While doing so, the practitioner stands in meditation on the five wisdom Buddhas, and light radiates from the practitioner’s heart center (Chui,

2019: 5). However, in the Nyingma tradition, during the practice of maṇḍala, which signifies the blessing of medicine, a Brahmin skull bowl is placed in the center of the maṇḍala. This skull bowl/cup should be of pure lineage and round like a yoni. The medicine is then placed in the skull cup. During menstruation, sexual intercourse is performed by the yogin and his wife, and the semen and menstrual blood produced are of superior quality rasāyana (Chui, 2019: 10). Therefore, the rasāyana obtained from sexual intercourse signifies immortality and, in connection with this immortality, the attainment of the divine body.

Conclusion

In Tantric Buddhist texts and iconography, human bones, and symbolic ornaments of fierce gods and goddesses, symbolize purity away from pollution along with nudity. The most striking of these bones is the skull bowl, which in Old Uyghur texts is referred to as *kapala* “skull bowl”, Skt. *kapāla*. These skulls may be the skull of a Brahmin sacrifice or the skull of a seven or eight-year-old child born of an incestuous relationship. This bowl is found in the left hand of gods and goddesses, especially Vajravārāhī, Heruka, and Yama/Yamāntaka, and signifies wisdom. The presence of ornaments made of human bones, especially on pairs of deities such as Vajravārāhī and Heruka, is also an indication that they have the same body in two separate bodies. This bowl is also used in Tantric Buddhist rituals performed by the Kāpālīka, who are often considered heretics and ostracised by other communities. The greatest heresy of the Kāpālīkas is their bloody behavior and their copulation in graveyards because they emulate Śiva, the lord of the graveyard. These acts, which are considered heretical behaviors, are a representation of the killing of the god Brahma by Śiva in early mythologies and Śiva’s begging for repentance with a Brahma skull bowl. The most important of the Kāpālīka rituals is the ritual referred to in the Old Uyghur texts as *ič tapıg* “internal offering, sacrifice”. This ritual also includes the related “bali offering”, which in Old Uyghur is referred to as *bali tapıg* “bali offering”, *yavgan bali* “meatless bali sacrifice”, *torma* “gtor-ma, sacrifice”, *torma šiši* “gtor-ma, 祭祀 *jisi*, sacrifice” or “sacrificial cake”. This offering usually consists of food such as fruit, grains, rice cakes, or sweets, as bloody offerings and sacrifices are forbidden in Buddhism. But in fact, this ritual is an animal sacrifice or blood offering for angry gods and goddesses. Of course, this bloody sacrifice has evolved into a symbolic form due to Buddhism. As the Old Uyghur example shows, the practitioner’s dismemberment of his own body and placing it in the skull bowl is related to the sacri-

face of Puruṣa, the first human being, and this is the division and multiplication of the “one”. Afterward, this body of multiplicity is disintegrated and “unity” is achieved. In addition, offering one’s own body to the gods here eliminates attachment to the body and increases virtue. The outside of the skull bowl is white and the inside is red, the white outside symbolizes the male and the red inside symbolizes the female. In addition, this skull is placed on a tripod with three severed heads in white, red, and blue, which is expressed in Old Uyghur as *üč adrok toklular isič adakı* “the feet of the vessel consisting of three extraordinary skulls”. These three severed heads symbolize the body, speech, and mind which need to be purified. These three heads stand in the center of the red triangular fire maṇḍala pointing downwards and the blue arc-shaped wind maṇḍala pointing upwards. The wind fuelling the fire causes the substances in the skull bowl to melt. This skull bowl usually contains amṛta, semen, divine buns and tormas, fresh blood, marrow, intestines, fat, and the brains, hearts, and lungs of the demonic enemies called mara and rudras. However, the phrase *beš rasiyan*, which is specifically mentioned in the Old Uyghur text, is rasāyana, which is shown as the drink or nectar of immortality. These five rasāyana are listed as “human feces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, marrow”, and the five meat of “a bull, a dog, an elephant, a horse, and a human” are also included in the skull bowl. In the Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī Tantra, the five Buddhas correspond to the five rasāyana and the five mothers to the five meat, with the five Buddhas in the cardinal directions and the five mothers in the intermediate directions. In the Guhyasamāja and Yamāntaka Tantra the five Buddhas are related to the five meat and the five rasāyana to the five mothers. Here again, the five mothers are in the cardinal directions and the five Buddhas are in the intermediate directions. Moreover, the single central fissure of the skull signifies the inseparability of method and wisdom, compassion and peace, form and emptiness. The rasāyana crown/peak in the skull bowl is associated with the four chakras in the throat, heart, and navel, but also with the five skandhas and the five elements. The white outer surface of the skull represents the white bodhicittas (semen) of the father and the red inner surface represents the red bodhicittas (menstrual blood) of the mother. The mixture of the bodhicittas of the mother and father is regarded as the nectar of immortality and is drawn again by the father. In doing so, the practitioner dwells on the five wisdom Buddhas in meditation, and light radiates from the practitioner’s heart center. Thus immortality or divinity is achieved.

Abbreviations

Skt. Sanskrit

Tib. Tıbetan

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The following statements are made in the framework of “COPE-Code of Conduct and Best Practices Guidelines for Journal Editors”:

Funding: It is supported within the scope of TÜBA-GEBİP.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: The author has no potential conflict of interest regarding research, authorship or publication of this article.