Passionate Enlightenment - Women in Tantric Buddhism
by Miranda Shaw (1994)

This book wasn't in the Feraferia library, but it would have been if Fred had discovered it. A dense piece of scholarship by a Harvard graduate student, it explores the female origins of much of Tantric Buddhism. Women were, in many cases, the honored teachers of the famous male *founders* of the tradition.

However, it seems that of all the Western writers on the Tantric Buddhism, only **one** before Shaw held out the possibility that the women of the tradition were important! As Ms. Shaw so clearly points out, how likely is it that a monk alone in his cell would dream up this intimate, joyous, body-oriented method of enlightenment?

Author Miranda Shaw's points are carefully researched, with copious notes and sources quoted. Shaw received approval, offers of assistance and an indispensable interview with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and spent literally years researching the book in India and Nepal.

This was[1] a method used by co-equal couples of men and women, seeking enlightenment together. Along with descriptions of esoteric methods and requirements for the practice itself, we find a lovely mention of the practice of envisioning, while in union, the 8 Buddhas in a mandala around the lotus (female point of union), with the sacred couple in the middle. The couple then also engages in seeing themselves and their partner as the male and female Buddha in union. This inner yoga of visualizing is what gives the practice its depth and efficacy - bliss upon bliss!

Note to you Feraferians: Does this remind you of visualizing dressing the circle with Goddess shrines when doing the Ground Star ritual? And the eight Buddhas could certainly be seen as guardians of the sacred directions...

There is much more to it, of course - it is a real delight to read, and has many expressive line drawings of female Buddhas, yoginis and daikinis.

1 - Tantrism flourished in 9th - 11th century India before migrating to Tibet where it became more a metaphorical system for monks.