

Ph.D. Dissertation: *The Tibetan Buddhist gCod Ritual Meditation Practice: A Study of the Music, Liturgy, Transmission and Performance*

By Jeffrey W. Cupchik, Ph.D.

Re: Prof. Ter Ellingson, External Examiner's Report

Prof. Ter Ellingson (University of Washington-Seattle) has been the leading authority in the field of Tibetan ritual music studies for the past thirty years since his own dissertation work, *The Mandala of Sound* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979). Prof. Ellingson is Professor of Ethnomusicology, Comparative Religion, African, Canadian, and South Asia Studies and Adjunct Professor of Anthropology.

Prof. Ellingson wrote in his examiner's report (April 24, 2009):

“This dissertation has some of the most skillfully drawn and solidly supported analyses of Tibetan ritual since Beyer's classic *Cult of Tara*,* a generation ago.”

“[This dissertation has an] unusually detailed synthesis of interdisciplinary interests and approaches drawn from ethnomusicology, anthropology, Buddhist studies, and Tibetology...”

“It is clearly an original contribution to scholarly knowledge in ethnomusicology, anthropology, Buddhist and Tibetan studies – not just in terms of filling gaps in the individual disciplines, but more importantly in mapping out some of the complex interactions in the vitally productive mindspace that forms the field of interaction of Buddhist ideas, actions, and performances in the context of Tibetan ritual...”

“The great strength and achievement of the work lies in what it does...to provide an exceptionally rich interweaving of investigative dimensions of emic significance.”

*Note: Stephan Beyer's groundbreaking work – *The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) – despite its admittedly outmoded and unconventional title – has been widely regarded among scholars of Tibetan ritual as a foundational work. It proceeds from Beyer's insight, that “Buddhism is basically a performing art” (a notion which I think is an appropriate and beautiful descriptor) and points to the integral connection of ritual to social meaning and individual spiritual transformation.