

The Significance of Yoga Tantra  
and the *Compendium of Principles (Tattvasaṃgraha Tantra)*  
within Tantric Buddhism in India and Tibet

Steven Neal Weinberger  
Indianapolis, Indiana

B.A., Amherst College, 1986  
M.A., University of Virginia, 1991

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Religious Studies

University of Virginia  
May, 2003

© Copyright by  
Steven Neal Weinberger  
All Rights Reserved  
May, 2003

## *Abstract*

The *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas* (*Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*) is arguably *the* single most important development of Indian Buddhist tantra. In this text we find the coalescence of a variety of tantric elements organized around two new and seminal narratives—Śākyamuni’s enlightenment recast in tantric terms and Vajrapāṇi’s subjugation of Maheśvara—that for the first time self-consciously announce tantra as a new and distinct form of Buddhism. In declaring tantra’s independence, these narratives present a clearly defined soteriological goal, a new paradigm for this liberative path in which ritual is central, and innovations such as deity yoga (self-generation as an enlightened figure), consecration rites, and practices involving violence and sex. These reflect both developments within Buddhism and external pressures, including violence and the exercise of power predominant in early medieval Indian socio-political forms as well as a decline in patronage of Buddhist institutions.

The *Compendium of Principles* marks the emergence of mature Indian Buddhist tantra at the end of the seventh century, and it immediately spawned a body of literary progeny that has played a central and enduring role in the development of tantric Buddhism in India, Tibet, China, and Japan. Consolidated over time into traditions known in some Indian circles as Yoga Tantra, they spread as widely as Śrī Lanka, Southeast Asia, Khotan, Mongolia, and Sumatra.

The *Compendium of Principles* and its constellation of texts form the first Buddhist tantric corpus, as many texts amplify practices and doctrines of the *Compendium of Principles*. The continued growth and development of these traditions resulted in

subsequent phases of tantra later classified as Mahāyoga. While these tantras, which include the *Secret Assembly (Guhyasamāja)*, *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas (Sarvabuddhasamayoga)*, and *Secret Nucleus (Guhyagarbha)*, exhibit strong non-monastic influence, the roots of their characteristic practices focusing on violence and sex reach back to the *Compendium of Principles*. In Tibet, the *Compendium of Principles* and texts classified as Yoga Tantra played a central role in the transmission and development of Buddhism from the eighth through eleventh centuries, and continued to exert influence even after the introduction of new tantric developments.

# *Contents*

Acknowledgements	i
Technical Note	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The <i>Compendium of Principles</i>	13
Chapter 2: The Yoga Tantra Corpus	92
Chapter 3: Import and Innovations	173
Chapter 4: Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga	219
Chapter 5: Yoga Tantra in Tibet	292
Chapter 6: Conclusion	327
Bibliography	333

## *Acknowledgments*

A multitude of people have aided me in writing this dissertation, and I cannot thank them all. I would like to thank my parents for their unwavering support, in so many ways, for so long. They and my sister have been my bedrock throughout this project, my safety net when it seemed I had fallen off the dissertation writing wire. I am also forever grateful to Jeffrey Hopkins for the training in Tibetan language and Buddhist systems I have received, for his friendship, and for the example he sets. He suggested this project and has guided it since its inception. I would also like to thank David Germano for expanding my intellectual horizons and expanding my view of Tibetan and Buddhist studies. His copious, insightful suggestions for each chapter gave this work a coherent structure and brought the larger issues into clear relief. The other members of my committee, Paul Groner and Bill McDonald, also offered numerous valuable suggestions, for which I am grateful. I have also both enjoyed and benefited from a cyber-dialogue with Stephen Hodge concerning early Indian tantra.

I would also like to thank my graduate school cohort at the University of Virginia, and particularly Gregory Hillis, Maricel Cruz, Nathaniel Garson, Bryan Cuevas, and Derek Maher, with whom I developed lasting friendships while navigating the shoals of graduate school coursework and the dissertation writing process. I would also like to thank my more recent colleague-friends Hun Lye, with whom I traveled the writing path, and Kevin Vose. In addition, Hun and Dominick Scarangelo generously lent their expertise in locating texts in the Chinese canon related to my research, identifying data concerning their translation, summarizing passages, and so forth.

Research for this project was carried out under Fulbright-Hays and American Institute of Indian Studies dissertation research fellowships, for which I am grateful. Numerous Tibetan lamas have kindly contributed to my education. I can only mention here those directly involved in this work, explaining textual passages and answering my questions: Khenpo Dorje Tashi, H.H. Sakya Trizin, Denma Lochö Rinpoche, the monks of Likir Monastery (Ladakh), Khetsun Sangpo Rinpoche, Luding Khen Rinpoche, the late Geshe Tubten Gyatso, Senkar Rinpoche Tubten Nyima, the late Pema Lozang Chögyen, Kirti Tsanshap Rinpoche, Jonang Khenpo Tsultrim Dargye, Geshe Tenzin Dhargye, and Khenpo Künga Wangchuk. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to H.H. the Dalai Lama for his inspiration, for entertaining a barrage of my questions over the course of a thirty-minute audience—and for everything else.

## *Technical Note*

In order to make this work more accessible to non-specialists and to facilitate ease of reading, wherever possible I have translated foreign-language text titles and terms into English. Also, in order to render Tibetan names in a pronounceable manner, I have adopted a modified version of Matthew Kapstein's essay phonetics (*The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], pp. xv-xvi) that approximates the pronunciation of modern Central Tibetan. I also include parenthetically at the first occurrence of a Tibetan word the transliteration according to a system devised by Turrell Wylie ("A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 22 [1959], pp. 261-267). When pairs of Tibetan and Sanskrit terms are given, the first term is always Tibetan unless otherwise noted.

Kapstein's essay phonetics system is this: the vowels *a*, *i*, *e*, *o*, *u* are pure vowels and are pronounced as in Italian. The final *e* is always pronounced as *é*; thus, *dorje* is pronounced *dorjé* and not *dorj*. The vowels *ö* and *ü* are pronounced as in German.

Most consonants are pronounced approximately as they are in English. *C* is always soft, resembling the English *j*. I have diverged from Kapstein's system in rendering the first two consonants in a series with the same letter. Thus, the guttural consonants *k* and *kh* are both rendered as *k*. While this creates some ambiguity, it is preferable to a system in which the labials *p* and *ph* are used, since this *ph* is an aspirated vowel and is never pronounced as an *f*. This also eliminates the confusing use of *th* for the aspirated dental, since this is an aspirated *t* (as in *Tom*) and is never pronounced *th* (as in *the*). The same



holds for the palatals and affricates. Retroflex consonants are rendered by *tr* (for both unaspirated and aspirated letters, which avoids the unwieldy convention *trh*) or *dr*.

In rendering Chinese terms I have followed the Wade-Giles transliteration system. Sanskrit words are transliterated according to the standard system employed in scholarship concerning India.

## *Introduction*

The *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas* (*Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*) and the group of textual traditions associated with it play a critical role in the historical development of tantric Buddhism and literature in India, Tibet, China, and Japan. The *Compendium of Principles* marks the emergence of mature Indian Buddhist tantra at the end of the seventh century, and immediately spawned a body of literary progeny that, over time, was consolidated into traditions known in some Indian circles as Yoga Tantra. These traditions represent one of the most widely disseminated Buddhist systems, exerting significant influence not only in the aforementioned regions but also in Śrī Lanka; southeast Asia; central Asian centers of Buddhist activity such as Khotan; Mongolia; and Sumatra.

During the first quarter of the eighth century the *Compendium of Principles* and texts associated with it were transmitted to China. These south Indian traditions organized the texts into an eighteen-part tantric corpus called the Vajraśekhara Yoga system. Because the flowering of tantra in China occurred during the eighth century, later developments of Indian tantra did not have a significant impact there (or in Japan, whose traditions of esoteric Buddhism stem from China during this period). Therefore, the *Compendium of Principles* and its associated corpus of texts were never displaced by newer developments and continued as central fixtures of tantric Buddhism in China (until its decline) and in Japan to the present.

In contradistinction, by the middle of the eighth century north Indian traditions began consolidating the *Compendium of Principles* and the texts that it spawned into a tradition

they referred to as “Yoga Tantra.” Beginning in the middle of the eighth century these traditions were transmitted to Tibet, where they were further developed and codified under the rubric of Yoga Tantra already established in India. The transmission of the *Compendium of Principles* and its corpus of associated tantras in India and Tibet continued even after subsequent tantric developments replaced them on the cutting edge of Buddhist tantra.

The *Compendium of Principles* is arguably *the* single most important development of Buddhist tantra, representing the first expression of mature institutional tantra in India. Ronald Davidson has cogently argued that the keystone of mature tantra is its central metaphor of coronation as a king and the deployment of royal power, and that this reflects the internalization of the dominant early medieval Indian socio-political forms revolving around violence and the exercise of power—the cultural milieu in which tantra developed.<sup>1</sup> While Davidson subsumes the many elements considered to be “tantric”—including consecration, the use of mantras (verbal incantations), mudrās (physical gestures), and deity yoga (generation of oneself as an enlightened figure)—under this central metaphor,<sup>2</sup> this is only a partial explanation.

Although I agree with Davidson that narrative is extremely important to the emergence of mature Indian tantra, I will argue that central to this importance is narrative’s function of self-consciously announcing and promoting its identity as a new and distinct Buddhist tradition, and that this importance is multi-faceted. Furthermore, I will argue that these narratives occur for the first time in an Indian Buddhist tantra in the *Compendium of Principles*, and that this seminal Buddhist tantra is also the source of many distinctive tantric features that are developed further in subsequent tantras. Thus, it is my claim that

---

<sup>1</sup> Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 121.

the *Compendium of Principles*, with its two central narrative structures, clearly stated soteriological program in which consecration and ritual are central, detailed presentation of the process of deity yoga, fivefold maṇḍala structure, and so forth represents the moment when mature Buddhist tantra emerges in India; that it, the *Compendium of Principles* is the decisive moment of the revolution that is Buddhist tantra.

## Issues

The questions that underly this study are: what are the distinctive features of the *Compendium of Principles* and the corpus of tantras associated with it, and what is their relationship to earlier and later developments of Indian Buddhist tantra? What are its innovations, and how did it launch the revolution that is tantric Buddhism? How did it subsequently grow into a full-blown tradition, with a constellation of tantras around it, exegetical traditions dedicated to it, and so forth? Wherever possible, I will relate this examination to the social structures and historical realities within which these texts and traditions developed, in both India and Tibet.

In chapter one I will discuss the provenance and historical development of the *Compendium of Principles* in India, paying particular to the cultural context in which it arose. I will also set the text within the broader context of Buddhist tantra, elucidating elements that distinguish it from earlier strata of tantra as well as those that influence and prefigure later developments. I will then present the structure and contents of the *Compendium of Principles* as well as the Indian exegetical traditions associated with it (as preserved in Tibetan translation).

In chapter two I will present the individual texts that developed around the *Compendium of Principles* and were later classified under the rubric “Yoga Tantra,” and will discuss their intertextual relationships, drawing on the fourteenth-century Tibetan scholar Butön’s sixfold typology of tantras to underscore the importance of these texts as the first true tantric cycle in India. In chapter three I will treat the significant innovations

and developments of the *Compendium of Principles* and will present the arguments for my thesis that this text represents the “declaration of independence” of mature tantra. I will then discuss significant aspects of the tantras closely associated with the *Compendium of Principles*.

This discussion will focus on several innovative elements of the tantra. First, I will examine the specifically tantric mythologies found in the *Compendium of Principles*, which are expressed in the narrative of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment through the distinctly tantric process of the five manifest enlightenments and the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi’s subjugation of Maheśvara. This will include a discussion of innovative tantric technologies, practices involving sex, violence, and even murder, and other death-related practices. I will argue that the *Compendium of Principles* contains many elements not seen in earlier Buddhist tantras and also that several elements characteristic of later Buddhist tantras, such as practices involving violence and sex, are already found here in embryonic form. I will also examine the status of the *Compendium of Principles* in the development of maṇḍala structure from earlier three Buddha-family systems to five-family systems.

I will then discuss the importance of other texts included in the Yoga Tantra corpus such as the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, the *Conquest over the Three Worlds*, the *All Secret Tantra*, the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*, the *Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, and the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*. I will conclude the chapter with an examination of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* and the significance of its many rites designed for practical purposes, with a particular emphasis on its funerary rites. Throughout this chapter I will draw out implications of my argument against the backdrop of Indian culture of the seventh and eighth centuries.

In chapter four I will examine the relationship between texts classified as Yoga Tantra and the texts of the next major development of Indian Buddhist tantra, Mahāyoga. I will

present an argument for the *Compendium of Principles* and its related texts as the source of much—but not all—of what constitutes tantras of the Mahāyoga class. A particular focus of this chapter will be the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, the central Mahāyoga tantra-text. I will begin with a brief inquiry into the use of the term “mahāyoga” and will then proceed with a presentation of the Mahāyoga corpus and the relationship of several of its texts with Yoga Tantra. This investigation will include the structure of maṇḍalas and iconography as well as an examination of the Buddha figures Mahāvairocana and Samantabhadra in Mahāyoga and their likely roots in the *Compendium of Principles*. I will also discuss the relationship between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga in terms of two important narratives—the Maheśvara subjugation myth and an origin myth—and the developments and interrelationships they reflect.

I will then examine features shared by tantras of the Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga classes, beginning with the common structural element of an eighteen-text cycle. I will continue with tantras included in both Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga systems such as the *Śrī Paramādyā*, and the intriguing case of the *Collection of All Procedures* and its relationship to the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*. Finally, I will examine the relationship between the traditions of Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga in terms of important eighth-century Indian exegetes involved in both systems such as Buddhaguhya and Padmasambhava.

In chapter five I will discuss the role of traditions surrounding the *Compendium of Principles* and the corpus of Yoga Tantras in Tibet, with a particular emphasis on two critical periods: the first dissemination of Buddhism from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the ninth century, and the beginning of the second dissemination during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. This will examine the continuation in Tibet of a process—began in India—of consolidating and codifying the *Compendium of Principles* and its related tantras into a coherent tradition called “Yoga Tantra.” I will ground this

discussion in the Tibetan socio-political context into which the texts and traditions of the Yoga Tantra class were transmitted, and will focus on issues such as royal patronage and proscription, the cult of the deity Vairocana, and funerary rites. I will also use the accounts of the translation and transmission of several Yoga Tantras and their commentaries to illustrate important aspects of the translation process.

## Sources

While I use Tibetan translations and, where available, Sanskrit editions of various tantras and their exegetical literature, throughout this study I will draw heavily on an extensive introduction to and history of Yoga Tantra by the Tibetan polymath Butön Rinchendrup (*Bu ston Rin chen grub*, aka *Bu ston Rin po che* or *Bu ston Thams cad mkhyen pa*, 1290-1364). This text, *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra*,<sup>3</sup> includes a mytho-history of the origins of the *Compendium of Principles* and other individual Yoga Tantras as well as a detailed summary of each tantra-text, a

---

<sup>3</sup> *rNal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings* , in *Collected Works of Bu ston* , Part 11 *da* (Lhasa: Zhol Printing House, 1990; photographic reproduction Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), 1a.1-92b.2.

The two known editions of Butön's *Collected Works* both stem from the same source: the traditional xylographic edition published by the Zhöl Printing House (*zhol par khang*) in Lhasa. I came into possession of the volume of Butön's *Collected Works* with the Yoga Tantra texts I am using through the kindness of my adviser Jeffrey Hopkins, who brought the volume from Tibet and gave it to me when I began this research.

The photographic reproduction of the Lhasa wood-block prints produced in Delhi under the direction of Lokesh Chandra made the *Collected Works* much more widely available than it otherwise would have been. While one might expect this edition to be a faithful reproduction of the Lhasa edition, it is not. "Corrections" were made to the negatives before the Delhi edition was printed. In almost every case of a variant reading that I have checked, the Delhi version's "correction" was in fact a "miscorrection": it actually introduced errors by changing correct readings in the Lhasa edition to incorrect readings. Therefore, I have used the Lhasa edition of Butön's Yoga Tantra texts, and page references are to this volume. The pagination of the two editions differs, since the Delhi edition assigns Arabic numeral page numbers to each folio side of the Lhasa edition. However, the Lhasa edition page numbers can easily be located by reading the margin pagination on the front side of the folios in the Delhi edition.

historiographical account of their development in India, and an account of their translation and dissemination in Tibet. Thus, it provides much of the structural framework for this study in addition to much detailed information.

A few remarks about Butön are necessary at the outset. He is arguably the most influential redactor of the Tibetan *Kangyur* (*bka' 'gyur*) and *Tengyur* (*bstan 'gyur*), the translations of Buddha-voiced texts and Indian commentaries on them, respectively; author of one of the central Tibetan histories of Buddhism in India and Tibet; translator and reviser of Sanskrit texts; one of the foremost Tibetan experts in the *Kālacakra* and *Secret Assembly* (*Guhyasamāja*) tantras; an important figure in the lineages of many tantric systems and author of liturgical commentaries who established his own school of Tibetan Buddhism (Tib: *bu lugs*);<sup>4</sup> and one of the most prolific writers in Tibetan history, with his *Collected Works* comprising some thirty volumes. Of particular import to the study at hand, he is also the most prominent scholar in the field of Yoga Tantra that Tibet has produced.

Butön's literary style also warrants mentioning. He often employs a "cataloguing" technique in which he lists several opinions (of both Indian and Tibetan masters) on the topic or point he is discussing, using the Tibetan term *kha cig* ("someone says" or "a certain scholar says") to indicate each individual position. This provides at once a wealth of information and frustration: while in some cases Butön refutes or modifies a mistaken position, in other cases he simply states the view and says it should be investigated, or moves on without commenting on its veracity or fault. This style runs throughout the

---

<sup>4</sup> D.S. Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston rin po che: With the Tibetan Text of the Bu ston rNam thar* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1966), pp. xi-xii. The view that Butön established a separate school still has currency in contemporary Tibetan culture. Kushog Wangdi, a scholar of the Sakya monastery just outside Gangtok, Sikkim, stated that there were five schools of Tibetan Buddhism: the standard four (Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü, and Geluk), to which he added a fifth, Butön's Buluk school (personal communication, December, 1994).



*Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra* as well as other texts on Yoga Tantra he composed.

Throughout this study, it is important to bear in mind that one cannot simply transpose Tibetan systems and accounts of tantra back into India and presume that one is looking at a clear picture of the Indian state of affairs. However, Tibetan traditions and sources do provide important clues concerning the contours of Indian tantric systems, and, while these at times may be sketchy, in many cases they are the only sources of information available to us. Thus, with caution the use of such sources provides important evidentiary materials for understanding Indian Buddhist tantra as well as illuminating how Tibetans understood, presented, and developed Indian tantric traditions in Tibet.

### ***The Compendium of Principles***

There are two extant Sanskrit manuscripts of the tantra, both from Nepal. Guiseppe Tucci obtained a nineteenth-century Nepalese manuscript of the tantra, and in 1956 David Snellgrove and John Brough discovered an Indian palm-leaf manuscript that they identified as a ninth or tenth-century work from Bihar, India.<sup>5</sup> Snellgrove and Lokesh Chandra published a photographic reproduction of this manuscript,<sup>6</sup> and Isshi Yamada produced a romanized Sanskrit version of this edition of the *Compendium of Principles* with reference to Tibetan and Chinese translations.<sup>7</sup> Kanjin Horiuchi produced a critical romanized edition using both extant Sanskrit manuscripts as well as translated materials in Chinese and Tibetan.<sup>8</sup> Lokesh Chandra also published a Devanagari edition of

---

<sup>5</sup> Lokesh Chandra and David Snellgrove, *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha: Facsimile Reproduction of a Tenth Century Sanskrit Manuscript from Nepal* (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1981) p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Chandra and Snellgrove, *Facsimile Reproduction*.

<sup>7</sup> Isshi Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha nāma mahāyāna-sūtra: A Critical Edition Based on the Sanskrit Manuscript and Chinese and Tibetan Translations* (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Kanjin Horiuchi, ed., *Shoe Kongōchōkyō no Kenkyū, Bonpon Kōteihen Bonzōkan Taishō*, 2 vols (Kōyasan University: Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1983).

Snellgrove's manuscript that offers no improvement over Yamada's romanized edition and in fact introduces textual errors.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest extant translations of the *Compendium of Principles* are eighth-century Chinese works. In 723 CE the Indian master Vajrabodhi (641-741) produced the *Recitation Sūtra Extracted from the Vajraśekhara Yoga*.<sup>10</sup> This text, in four fascicles, is not a translation proper; rather, it is Vajrabodhi's introduction to the *Compendium of Principles* and a larger system of eighteen tantras, of which the *Compendium of Principles* was the most prominent member. Dale Todaro, in the introduction to his translation of the first five chapters of the *Compendium of Principles* from Yamada's Sanskrit edition, describes Vajrabodhi's text as "a somewhat unorganized and partial outline of the major practices in the *Tattvasaṃgraha* lineage."<sup>11</sup> This text does, however, include many passages that correspond verbatim to sections of the first chapter of the extant Sanskrit edition.<sup>12</sup>

Vajrabodhi's disciple Amoghavajra (705-774) in 754 translated the first chapter of the tantra.<sup>13</sup> The Indian monk Prajñā (Chi: Hannya, 744-810) also produced a partial

---

<sup>9</sup> Lokesh Chandra, ed., *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha: Sanskrit Text with Introduction and Illustrations of Maṇḍalas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> *Chin kang ting yü ch'ieh chung lia ch'u pien sung ching*, T. vol. 18, No. 866 (Dale Todaro, *An Annotated Translation of the "Tattvasaṃgraha" [Part 1] with an Explanation of the Role of the "Tattvasaṃgraha" Lineage in the Teachings of Kukai* [Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1985], p. 11; Stephen Hodge, "Considerations on the Dating and Geographical Origins of the *Mahāvairocanaḥhisambodhi-sūtra*," in *The Buddhist Forum*, eds. Tadeusz Skorupski and Ulrich Pagel, vol. 3 [London: School of Oriental and African Studies; rpt. New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1995], p. 66).

<sup>11</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> *Chin kang ting i ch'ieh ju lai chen shih she ta hsien cheng ta chiao wang ching*, T. vol. 18, No. 865, 207a-223b (Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 10).

translation.<sup>14</sup> A complete translation was not made until the beginning of the eleventh century, when the Indian monk Dānapāla (Chi: Shih-hu) produced a thirty-fascicle translation of the *Compendium of Principles* between 1012 and 1015.<sup>15</sup> This text corresponds closely to the extant Sanskrit manuscripts and also the Tibetan translation.<sup>16</sup> Amoghavajra also composed the *Indications of the Goals of the Eighteen Assemblies of the Yoga of the Adamantine Pinnacle (Vajraśekhara) Scripture*, which consists of a detailed summary of the *Compendium of Principles* and abbreviated summaries of seventeen other tantras. Rolf Giebel has published a heavily annotated translation of this text,<sup>17</sup> which I have made extensive use of in this study. The Tibetan translation of the *Compendium of Principles* is a late tenth- or early eleventh-century work attributed to Rinchen Zangpo and Śraddhākaravarman,<sup>18</sup> although, as I will discuss in chapter five, the tantra likely was first translated during the latter part of the eighth century.

While various fields of Buddhist philosophy have been relatively well developed in modern scholarship,<sup>19</sup> in general the study of Buddhist tantra is still in its early stages.

---

<sup>14</sup> T. vol. 18, No. 868 (Kenneth W. Eastman, “The Eighteen Tantras of the Vajraśekhara/Māyājāla,” unpublished paper presented to the 26th International Conference of Orientalists in Japan [Tokyo, 8 May, 1981], p. 1, n. 3; summary in *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan*, No. XXVI, [1981]).

<sup>15</sup> *I ch’ieh ju lai shen shih she ta che’ng hsien cheng san mei ta chiao wang ching*, T. vol. 18, No. 882 (Ian Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō: The Sino-Japanese Tantric Prajñāpāramitā in 150 Verses [Amoghavajra’s Version]* [Tring, U.K.: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1991], p. 18, n. 70; Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 10).

<sup>16</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 127, n. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*, T. vol. 18, No. 869 (Rolf W. Giebel, “The *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*: An Annotated Translation,” in *Journal of Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies*, No. 18 [1995], p. 107).

<sup>18</sup> *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsodus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo*, in *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking Edition*, ed. Daisetz T. Suzuki (Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1956), P112 (Toh. 479), vol. 4, 217.1-283.2.2.

<sup>19</sup> I use the word “modern” here to indicate the contemporary scholarly conventions employed in Europe, America, and other places. In contradistinction, I will use the word “traditional” to refer to indigenous

The *Compendium of Principles*, although one of the most important tantras, has not received the scholarly attention it merits. Giuseppe Tucci opened scholarship in a western language on the *Compendium of Principles* with his work on the Maheśvara subjugation myth it contains.<sup>20</sup> David Snellgrove expanded these inroads in both his introduction to the facsimile reproduction of the Sanskrit manuscript he published and his presentation of tantra in volume one of *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, throughout which is woven a discussion of the *Compendium of Principles* and translations of several passages from it.<sup>21</sup> Dale Todaro produced a serviceable although mechanical translation from the Sanskrit of the first section of the tantra, together with a study of the role of the *Compendium of Principles* and associated texts in the system of Kūkai, founder of the Japanese Shingon School.<sup>22</sup> While there are a smattering of short articles and sections in larger works concerning the narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment found in the

---

Buddhist traditions, such as those that developed in India, Tibet, and elsewhere. This is not to say that “traditional” types of scholarship are not undertaken outside India, Tibet, China, Japan, and so forth, or that “modern” scholarship is not done in places such as Japan and other non-Western nations.

<sup>20</sup> Giuseppe Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica*, Reale Accademia d'Italia Studi e Documenti I (Rome: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1932), vol. 1, pp. 135-145. Tucci also discussed the enlightenment narrative in the *Compendium of Principles* (Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* [Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949], p. 225).

Other works on the Maheśvara subjugation myth, which I will discuss in chapters one and three, include Rolf A. Stein, “La soumission de Rudra et autres contes tantriques,” *Journal Asiatique* 283: 1, pp. 121-160; Ronald M. Davidson, “Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka,” in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1991), pp. 215-217; Ronald M. Davidson, “The Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's Subjugation of Śiva,” in *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 547-555; and Nobumi Iyanaga, “Récits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokyavijaya—d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises,” in Michel Strickmann, ed., *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein* (Brussels: Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, vol. xxii, 1985), pp. 633-745.

<sup>21</sup> David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, vol. 1 (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1987), pp. 117-330.

<sup>22</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, pp. 128-368.

*Compendium of Principles*, there have not been any full-length studies of the tantra in a western language even though it represents a significant stage in the development of Indian Buddhist tantra.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> There is, however, a large corpus of scholarship on the *Compendium of Principles* in Japanese.

# *Chapter 1: The Compendium of Principles*

## **Introduction**

The aggregation of traditions known as Buddhist tantra represents a distinctive development of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Ronald Davidson presents a view of the near-total innovation of what he calls “mature institutional esoteric Buddhism”—mature tantra as it developed in Indian monasteries during the seventh century (I will discuss the meaning of “mature tantra” below, p. 21). Davidson presents his case that the new metaphor of royal coronation and the exercise of dominion is the single dominant aspect of tantra, with all other distinctive features subordinate to and in service of it.<sup>24</sup>

While Davidson only explicitly mentions the *Compendium of Principles* on occasion, I will argue that this text represents the pivotal point in the development of Buddhist tantra, the moment at which the revolution that is Buddhist tantra emerges as a distinct and self-conscious tradition. In chapter three (see p. 173) I will discuss the important aspects and innovations of the *Compendium of Principles* and the continuities and discontinuities these display in relation to earlier Buddhist traditions. In this chapter, I will provide the background for chapter three, and will address the following issues: What is Buddhist tantra? What are its sources (I will continue this discussion in chapter three)? How do we locate the *Compendium of Principles* within Buddhist tantra? How do we understand the term “Yoga Tantra” devised later to categorize the *Compendium of Principles* and related texts, and the terms “Action Tantra” and “Performance Tantra,” also devised later

---

<sup>24</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 121.

as doxographical rubrics for organizing early Buddhist tantras? What is the structure of the *Compendium of Principles*, and what are its contents?

## Buddhist Tantra: An Introduction

### Tantra as a Category Term

According to Monier-Williams' Sanskrit dictionary, the word "tantra" itself means "loom" or "warp."<sup>25</sup> It is employed in traditional Buddhist usage with much the same meaning as the word "sūtra"—the sense of a thread or something drawn out, and by extension a discourse. The term is discussed in several texts later classified as Yoga Tantra. In the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra* the term is described in this way: "Tantra is explained as 'continuum'."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* says, "A tantra is explained as 'that which is continuous'."<sup>27</sup> The fourteenth-century Tibetan exegete Butön further delineates tantra as two types: tantras that are the "expressed meanings" and tantras that are the "expressive words."<sup>28</sup> The latter are the tantra-texts themselves, and the former are the meanings their words convey. Butön further subdivides tantras in the sense of expressed meanings into causal tantras (*rgyu'i rgyud*), resultant tantras (*'bras bu'i rgyud*), and method tantras (*thabs kyi rgyud*), and his explanation of all the above usages of "tantra" includes the sense of continuum or continuation.<sup>29</sup> As for tantras that

---

<sup>25</sup> Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899; Rpt: New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1994), p. 436.

<sup>26</sup> *rgyud ni rgyun zhes bya bar bshad/* (Butön Rinchendrup [Bu ston Rin chen grub], *An Extensive Explanation of Ānandagarbha's "Source of All Vajras": A Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, rDo rje thams cad 'byung ba'i rgya cher bshad pa yid bzhin nor bu*, in *Collected Works of Bu-ston*, Part 11 (da) [Lhasa: Zhol Printing House, 1990; photographic reproduction Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968], 19a.2).

<sup>27</sup> *rgyud ni rgyun chags zhes bya ste/* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 18b.5).

<sup>28</sup> *rgyud ni/ brjod bya don gyi rgyud dang/ rjod byed tshig gi rgyud gnyis* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 18b.2).

<sup>29</sup> Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 18b.2-19a.3.

are the expressive words (that is, the texts themselves), Butön explains that because the collections of words that teach the meanings expressed are “connected and continuous”<sup>30</sup> they are tantras.

We see in this explication of “tantra” the emphasis on the sense of continuity and/ or continuum. Thus, the word “tantra,” like “sūtra,” comes to indicate a discourse and, by extension, a type of text. While “sūtra” is used to denote a text of Buddha-speech from the earliest strata of Indian Buddhism through the development of Mahāyāna, works that include the word “tantra” in their title almost always belong to a corpus of texts that contain the distinctive doctrines and practices that represent the last stage in the development of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. In traditional works, while the texts themselves are termed “tantras,” this stage of Mahāyāna Buddhism is identified as a tradition not by the word “tantra”<sup>31</sup> but rather by the word “mantra” or the term “secret mantra” (Skt: *guhya-mantra*; Tib: *gsang sngags*; Chi: *chen-yen mi-chiao*; Jap: *shingon mikkyō*). However, modern scholarship has adopted the convention of using “tantra” as a category term that refers to the vast and varied corpus of such texts and their related practices.<sup>32</sup> I will follow this convention of using “tantra” as a category (which includes the use of the adjective “tantric”) since it is the established norm in academic discourse, but it is important to remember that this usage of the term “tantra” is a modern and non-traditional convention.

---

<sup>30</sup> *de nyid ston par byed pa'i sgra'i tshogs 'brel cing rgyun chags pas na/ rgyud* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 19a.3).

<sup>31</sup> Traditional scholarship *does* employ the word “tantra” in doxographical discussions categorizing tantric texts. See the doxographical discussion below.

<sup>32</sup> Among scholars employing the word “tantra” in this way are David Snellgrove, Yukei Matsunaga, Jeffrey Hopkins, and Samten G. Karmay. It should be noted that in scholarship on East Asian Buddhism the term “esoteric Buddhism” is often used instead of the term “tantric Buddhism.”



The development of Buddhism over the centuries involved the development of a wide variety of doctrines and practices. At some point during the early centuries of the common era some Buddhist exegetes considered their systems different enough from earlier doctrines and/ or practices to make a distinction between them. They employed the term “vehicle” (Skt: *yāna*) and, based on their view of the differences in goals, methods, and doctrines, began to call their own traditions the “Great Vehicle” (*mahāyāna*) while referring to earlier traditions as the “Lesser Vehicle” (*hinayāna*). Early Indian tantric commentators situate tantra as a subcategory of Mahāyāna rather than as a separate vehicle on the level of the pair Hinayāna and Mahāyāna. For example, the eighth-century exegete Buddhaguhya, in his *Word Commentary on the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*, employs the term “mode of mantra” (Tib: *sngags kyi tshul*; Skt: *mantranaya*) in contradistinction to the term “mode of the perfections” (Tib: *pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul*; Skt: *pāramitānaya*), which he uses for non-tantric Mahāyāna.<sup>33</sup> This is not a novel usage of these terms, however, as we find in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* itself, which dates to the middle of the seventh century,<sup>34</sup> the terms “mode of secret mantra” ( *gsang sngags kyi tshul*; \**guhya-mantra-naya*)<sup>35</sup> and “mode of mantra practice” ( \**mantra-caryā-naya*).<sup>36</sup> Thus, in early

---

<sup>33</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> *rNam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa byin gyis rlob pa shin tu rgyas pa mdo sde'i dbang po'i rgyal po zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs, Mahāvairocanābhisambodhivikurvitādhiṣṭhāna-vaipulyasūtrendrarāja-nāma-dharmaparyāya*, translated by Śilendrabodhi and dPal brtsegs, P126 (Toh. 494), vol. 5, 240.4.6. The corresponding phrase in an English translation of the tantra can be found in Stephen Hodge, *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra with Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> J. W. de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature in India,” in *Acta Indologica VI* (1984), p. 92.

Indian tantric literature tantra is conceived of as a new type of Mahāyāna Buddhism that is distinguished by its innovative and unique practices.

Later in India tantra gained a sufficiently separate status and, as a result, new terms were formulated to refer to tantra as a category. For example, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries the tantric exegetes Advayavajra and Ratnākaraśānti employ the term “mantra-yāna” (“mantra vehicle”) for tantra, in contradistinction to “pāramitā-yāna” (“perfection vehicle”).<sup>37</sup> Although this pair of terms represents the two divisions of Mahāyāna, they are referred to as “vehicles.” It is not clear whether “mantra vehicle” and “perfection vehicle” at that time were used with the status of “vehicle” on the order of the Hinayāna/ Mahāyāna distinction. However, they were certainly moving toward such a meaning and beyond the earlier terms “mode of mantra” and “mode of the perfections” (which, to further confuse matters, Advayavajra and Ratnākaraśānti also use).<sup>38</sup>

It is clear, however, that tantra would come to be seen as a distinct and important category of Buddhist practice. As David Snellgrove points out, with the use of the term “vajra-yāna” (“vajra-vehicle”) in India we find a shift to a self-conscious demarcation that, while still considering tantra to be a form of Mahāyāna Buddhism, now elevates it to a status on the level of Hinayāna and Mahāyāna.<sup>39</sup> It is odd for Vajrayāna (that is, tantra),

---

<sup>37</sup> de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” pp. 92-93.

<sup>38</sup> de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” pp. 92-93.

<sup>39</sup> Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 129-130. It is interesting to note here the usage of the terms “vajra-vehicle” (*rdo rje'i theg pa*, \*vajra-yāna) and “definition vehicle” (*mtshan nyid kyi theg pa*, \*lakṣaṇa-yāna) to refer to tantric and non-tantric Mahāyāna, respectively, in the *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions* (I will discuss this text in more detail in chapter four). This work is traditionally attributed to the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava, who came to Tibet during the second half of the eighth century. Such a provenance would place the usage of the term “vajra-vehicle” in eighth-century India. Some scholars have questioned the attribution of authorship to Padmasambhava, in which case the text’s date could be pushed forward, into the ninth century.

a subdivision of Mahāyāna, to be considered a vehicle in its own right, on the same level as the category of which it is a part. However, this underscores the innovation of tantric doctrine and praxis in comparison with non-tantric Mahāyāna (in which it had its roots) and the importance given to it by its adherents.

### Characteristics of Tantra

Attempting to formulate a comprehensive definition of tantra that covers all tantric texts is a difficult task that in the end is not of great use. No single definition is broad enough to cover all cases of tantra and still retain much meaning, and many important aspects of tantra, such as visualization, are also found in non-tantric Mahāyāna traditions. As a result, most attempts to define or outline tantra are polythetic in nature. Several scholars have elucidated lists of features that characterize Buddhist tantra, with the caveat that the list is not exhaustive and that not all the elements will be found in every tantric text.<sup>40</sup> I will briefly describe some of these characteristic elements.

The proliferation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas found in Mahāyāna literature continues in tantric literature. The clustering of deities arrayed in maṇḍalas—representations of the universe in enlightened form—is also a characteristic of tantra, the roots of which likely

---

We do, however, find the term “vajra-yāna” used in an eighth-century Chinese text written by the Indian tantric master Amoghavajra. This text, the *Indications of the Goals of the Eighteen Assemblies of the Yoga of the Adamantine Pinnacle (\*Vajraśekhara) Scripture* (Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei, T. vol. 18, No. 869), employs the term “vajrayāna” (Chi: chin-kang-ch’êng) in its concluding line (Rolf W. Giebel, “The Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei: An Annotated Translation,” in *Journal of Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies*, No. 18 [1995], p. 200). I will discuss this important text by Amoghavajra later.

<sup>40</sup> Four such lists are as follows: Stephen Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 59; Jeffrey Hopkins, *The Tantric Distinction: An Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Anne C. Klein, (London: Wisdom Publications, 1984), pp. 155-164; David Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” in *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, eds. G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1988), p. 1359; and Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 117 & 121.

extend to pre-tantric Mahāyāna texts.<sup>41</sup> While recollection and worship of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas—as well as other types of interaction with them—occur in earlier Mahāyāna developments, one practice that is perhaps unique to tantra is the practice of identifying with the deity itself. In conjunction with various specifically tantric techniques, practitioners recreate themselves as deities. This practice, usually termed “deity yoga” (*lha'i rnal 'byor*, *devatā-yoga*), is one of the unique features of tantra (although we must bear in mind that it is not found in every instance of tantra).<sup>42</sup> I will discuss deity yoga and its importance in the *Compendium of Principles* in more detail in chapter three (see p. 176).

In addition to deity yoga (and often in conjunction with it), tantric practice involves many other characteristic elements, among which is the employment of mantras. Mantras, which may be short (a few syllables) or several sentences long, are recited to a specific effect (and as such the word “mantra” is sometimes translated as “spell”). While mantras are an important element of tantra, they are also found in pre-tantric Mahāyāna texts, where they are often called *dhāraṇī* and are employed for mundane or practical purposes such as protection from various harms, stopping storms, causing rain, and so forth.<sup>43</sup> The use of mudrās—generally speaking, a gesture (or symbol) that “seals” the practitioner’s identity as the deity through symbolizing various of the deity’s attitudes and attributes—is also a common feature of tantra. Another unique component of tantra is initiation or consecration (Tib: *dbang*; Skt: *abhiṣeka*), a ritual process by which a

---

<sup>41</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1365.

<sup>42</sup> In fact, the fourteenth/fifteenth-century Tibetan scholar Tsongkapa ( *Tsong kha pa bLo bzang grags pa* , 1357-1419) states that deity yoga is the main distinguishing feature of tantra. For a discussion of this see Hopkins, *Tantric Distinction*, esp. pp. 155-164). Tsongkapa’s view is, however, just one opinion from among a host of Indian and Tibetan presentations of the difference between sūtra and tantra.

<sup>43</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” pp. 60 and 62. It is important to remember that the use of spells in India dates back to the Vedas and thus has long been entwined in the cultural fabric.

teacher admits a student into a maṇḍala and then authorizes and instructs him/her in its various rites. Finally, the use of desire and sexual yoga, as well as the use of violence and other afflictive emotions, is often found in tantric practices.<sup>44</sup>

These are some of the techniques employed in tantra that are said to distinguish it from non-tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism. While there was a long history of rituals in Mahāyāna Buddhism alongside the philosophical aspects that have been emphasized in western scholarship, in tantra ritual moves from the periphery to the center, and innovative methods of practice are also introduced, as I will discuss in chapter three (see p. 173 ff). We also find the metaphor of coronation as a king and the exercise of dominion that is one of tantra's central features.<sup>45</sup> While this brief description of tantra is admittedly lacking and incomplete, it provides some background for topics I will discuss later.

### **Indian Cultural Context**

Ronald Davidson has written a groundbreaking monograph on the Indian cultural context in which tantric Buddhism developed. He examines medieval India after the break-up of the Gupta Empire, focusing on the period between the sixth and twelfth centuries. This period witnessed the feudalization of India, with the rise of regional centers and military adventurism in the absence of a central imperial power. Also characteristic of this period was the apotheosis of these new rulers of petty kingdoms, their reliance on new sources of legitimatization such as the discourse of violence employed by emerging Śaivite sects, and so forth.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> For a more extensive discussion of tantra, see for example Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1, pp. 117-303.

<sup>45</sup> Ronald Davidson argues that the exercise of dominion is *the* central metaphor of tantra (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 2).

<sup>46</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 2-4.

In terms of the effects such cultural changes had on Buddhism, Davidson enumerates the following: the loss of guild-based patronage; the contraction in the number of Buddhist institutions, and their concentration in the northern and extreme southern areas of India; the decline in women's participation in Buddhism; the development of philosophical skepticism and "non-Buddhist epistemological axioms"; and the rise of large monastic institutions.<sup>47</sup> It is within this milieu—both of the broader Indian culture and of the Indian Buddhist sub-culture—that tantric Buddhism developed.<sup>48</sup>

## Tantric Doxography

Before discussing the *Compendium of Principles* and other tantras in more detail, a brief discussion of tantric doxography is necessary. Texts now classified as tantras began to be produced at the beginning of the seventh century, but the first Indian doxographical discussions of tantra did not arise until the middle of the eighth century in northern India. Furthermore, this might represent a regional development, as south Indian traditions of approximately the same period do not categorize the tantras.<sup>49</sup> Thus, it appears that for more than one hundred years tantras were not classified or stratified. Moreover, the evidence cited above also suggests that the conception of "tantra" as a distinct Buddhist tradition did not emerge until the middle of the eighth century at the earliest.

Before presenting doxographical strategies employed by Indian exegetes, I must state that, although both traditional and modern scholars have categorized Buddhist tantras, these schemes seem rather artificial at best for the earliest strata of texts. Studying the various early tantric texts themselves—those that would later be classified under the rubrics of Action Tantra (*bya rgyud*, *kriyā-tantra*) and Performance Tantra (*spyod rgyud*, *caryā-tantra*)—is necessary. I have not studied the requisite range of texts, and I cannot

---

<sup>47</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 4-5, 76-77, & 91.

<sup>48</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> I am referring here to Chinese translations and traditions stemming from Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra.

discern distinguishing features in the translations and partial translations I have read sufficient for meaningful categorization. Additionally, although I will argue that the *Compendium of Principles* includes many features that distinguish it from earlier tantras and that it presents for the first time a self-conscious tantric identity, I have found no doxographical references in the text itself. The category to which it is assigned—Yoga Tantra—does not appear until fifty or seventy-five years after the tantra’s production. Therefore, when referring to the early tantra texts, I will attempt to avoid using terms such as Yoga Tantra with a sense of a monolithic tradition that emerged at the same time as the tantras themselves. I will, however, use doxographical category terms when referring to subsequent traditions as they became consolidated in India and, later, as they are further standardized in Tibet.

In an early Indian doxography the eighth-century author Buddhaguhya mentions *three* types of tantra in his *Commentary on the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra: Action Tantra* (*bya ba’i rgyud, kriyā-tantra*), *Yoga Tantra* (*rnal ’byor gyi rgyud, yoga-tantra*), and *Dual Tantra* (*gnyis ka’i rgyud, ubhaya-tantra*), a special category for the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* that is called such because it contains elements of both Yoga Tantra and Action Tantra.<sup>50</sup> Vilāsavajra (aka Varabodhi), another important tantric exegete of roughly the same period, mentions only the three divisions of

---

<sup>50</sup> Buddhaguhya, *rNam par snang mdzad mngon par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa’i byin gyis brlabs kyi rgyud chen po’i bshad pa*, \*Vairocanābhisambodhivikurvitādhiṣṭhānamahātantrabhāṣya, P3490 (Toh. 2663A), vol. 77, 231.2.3-231.3.1. In particular, 231.2.8-231.3.1 reads: *de bzhin du rnam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa byin gyis rlob pa’i rgyud ’di yang thabs dang shes rab gtso bor gyur pa rnal ’byor gyi rgyud yin mod kyi/ bya ba la mos pa’i gdul bya’i ’gro ba rnams gzung ba’i phyir bya ba’i rgyud kyi rjes su mthun pa’i spyod pa dag kyang bstan pas/ bya ba’i rgyud dam/ gnyis ka’i rgyud lta bur so sor brtags shing grags so/.*

Action, Performance, and Yoga Tantra in his commentary on the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*,<sup>51</sup> which dates to the latter part of the eighth century.<sup>52</sup>

The Sarma (*gsar ma*) schools of Tibetan Buddhism—those deriving mainly from the second period of translation activity that commenced at the end of the tenth century—principally employ a fourfold system to categorize tantra: Action Tantra (Tib: *bya rgyud*; Skt: *kriyā-tantra*), Performance Tantra (*spyod rgyud*; *caryā-tantra*),<sup>53</sup> Yoga Tantra (*rnal 'byor rgyud*; *yoga-tantra*), and Highest Yoga Tantra (*bla med rnal 'byor rgyud* or *bla med rgyud*; *anuttara-yoga-tantra* or *anuttara-tantra*). This fourfold doxography, however, did not enter Tibet until the latter half of the tenth century, and therefore in all probability reflects later Indian developments.<sup>54</sup> It is important to remember that this was only one of a number of doxographical strategies employed in India to organize tantric texts into affiliated traditions,<sup>55</sup> and that while at times these categories seem quite natural, at other times they seem rather contrived.

The fourfold scheme derives from later Indian traditions; therefore, because it was among the last systems transmitted, it has been one of the two dominant tantric doxographies employed in Tibet. While the fourfold tantric doxography predominates in

---

<sup>51</sup> Ronald M. Davidson, “The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī: Text and Translation of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein, Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, Vol. 20, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels: Institute Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1981), p. 15 (hereafter abbreviated as “Names of Mañjuśrī”).

<sup>52</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> This category is also referred to as *Upa-Tantra* (or *Upa-yoga*), *Upāya-Tantra*, and *Ubhaya-Tantra* (Tib: *gnyis ka'i rgyud*) (Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1357).

<sup>54</sup> In this regard, Snellgrove mentions Kaṇha’s commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*, which discusses the series Kriyā Tantra, Caryā Tantra, Yoga Tantra, and Anuttarayoga Tantra. He tentatively dates this text to the ninth century, although he says that it might well be later (Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1383).

<sup>55</sup> Yukei Matsunaga identifies several Indian categorization schemes for tantra, including fivefold and sevenfold doxographies in addition to the threefold and fourfold systems (de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” p. 93).



the Sarma schools that developed from the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet, Nyingma schools—which trace their origins to the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet that began during the eighth century—employ a nine-vehicle system that encompasses both non-tantric and tantric forms of Buddhism. In this system, tantra is divided into six categories classified in two divisions: the outer tantras (vehicles 4-6), which roughly correspond to the categories of Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, and Yoga Tantra as found in Sarma systems; and the inner tantras (vehicles 7-9) of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga. The nine-tiered classificatory scheme has been the chief alternative to the fourfold tantric doxography in Tibet since the tenth century.

There is evidence for Indian origins of the nine-vehicle doxography, as we find a proto-nine vehicle system already in the dynastic period work *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions*.<sup>56</sup> This important text is attributed to the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava (c. eighth century), a central figure in traditional accounts of the early dissemination and establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. Moreover, Padmasambhava is a central figure in many traditions of the Nyingma School, as he is believed to have initially “concealed” the vast majority of texts and practices later discovered as “treasures” by subsequent generations of Tibetans.

The *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions* divides tantra into three categories: Action Tantra, Dual Tantra (the category into which Buddhaghosha classified the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*), and Yoga Tantra. Yoga Tantra is then subdivided into two: 1) outer yoga, the vehicle of the tantra of asceticism<sup>57</sup> and 2) inner yoga, the

---

<sup>56</sup> Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions*, *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*, in *Selected Writings (gsun' thor bu) of Roñ-zom Chos-kyi-bzañ-po*, Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod vol. 73 (Leh, Ladakh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1974), pp. 1-18. The text also appears in the Peking edition of the *Kangyur*: Padmasambhava, *Man ngag gi rgyal po lta ba'i phreng ba*, P4726, vol. 83, 83.3.7-85.3.5.

<sup>57</sup> *rnal 'byor phyi pa thub pa rgyud kyī theg pa* (Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views*, P4726, vol. 83, 84.1.1).

vehicle of the tantra of method.<sup>58</sup> The former represents Yoga Tantra as found in the fourfold doxographical systems, while the latter is further divided into three: the mode of generation, the mode of completion, and the mode of great completion.

## History of Tantra

Attempting to determine precisely the history of tantric Buddhism in India is an undertaking of great difficulty. Sanskrit manuscripts have often been lost, particularly for the earlier tantric works. Additionally, because tantras were often composed/ compiled in stages, settling a date for the earliest version of a text that we have now only in its final form is problematic. However, extant Sanskrit texts as well as Chinese and Tibetan translations (when dates are available and reliable) provide some evidence for dating.

## The Earliest Tantras

Yukei Matsunaga traces the historical development of Indian tantric texts by tracking the changes in the deployment of new concepts and techniques that occur over time in the Chinese translations of earlier and later versions of individual texts. He begins with the use of spells employed for practical purposes in various Mahāyāna sūtras.<sup>59</sup> These develop further in the earliest tantric phase and include rituals for various purposes—controlling nature (avoiding storms, causing rain), warding off evil (robbers, poisonous snakes and the like), and so forth<sup>60</sup>—combined with the recitation of spells, meditation on Buddhist images, and so forth.<sup>61</sup> It is not clear exactly when these tantras were produced. However, elements they contain are found in Mahāyāna sūtras translated

---

<sup>58</sup> *rnal 'byor nang pa thabs kyi rgyud kyi theg pa* (Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views*, P4726, vol. 83, 84.1.1- 84.1.2).

<sup>59</sup> Yukei Matsunaga, “A History of Tantric Buddhism in India with Reference to Chinese Translations,” in *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization: Essays in Honor of Herbert V. Guenther on His Sixtieth Birthday*, eds. Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott (Emeryville, CA: Dharma Publishing, 1977), pp. 171-174.

<sup>60</sup> de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” pp. 95-96.

<sup>61</sup> Matsunaga, “A History of Tantric Buddhism,” pp. 173-174.

into Chinese as late as the sixth century,<sup>62</sup> and therefore it appears that these early tantras—which might not have been clearly distinguished from other Mahāyāna sūtras—developed at the latest by the first quarter of the seventh century.

This early stratum of tantric texts was retrospectively designated “Action Tantra” by Buddhaguhya around the middle of the eighth century. He identified the following texts as constituting this category: the *Susiddhikara*, the *General Secret Tantra*, the *King of the Three Vows*, and the *Vajrapāṇi Initiation Tantra*. It is important to remember that even after new developments emerged, texts of older types continued to be produced; thus, not every tantra in this group necessarily dates to the beginning of the seventh century,

Another feature of many tantras that reflects historical development is the division of deities into families (Tib: *rigs*; Skt: *kula*). According to Snellgrove, the employment of “families” as an organizing structure represents the process by which originally non-Buddhist deities were admitted into the Buddhist fold.<sup>63</sup> In the early strata of tantra we find deities that populate the maṇḍalas organized into three families, at the head of each of which is a leading figure: the Tathāgata family, at the head of which is Śākyamuni (sometimes represented by Mañjuśrī); the lotus family, headed by Avalokiteśvara; and the vajra family, led by Vajrapāṇi.<sup>64</sup> Initially a hierarchy obtained between these three families. The Tathāgata family, consisting of traditional Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, was held to be the highest. Below it was the lotus family, comprising peaceful deities of non-Buddhist origin. Lowest of the three families was the vajra family and its cast of wrathful deities, also of non-Buddhist origin.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Matsunaga, “A History of Tantric Buddhism,” p. 173.

<sup>63</sup> Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 191.

<sup>64</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1364.

<sup>65</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1364.

## Provenance of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*

The *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* represents the next stage in the development of Indian Buddhist tantra.<sup>66</sup> It contains a clear soteriological thrust that is not readily apparent in many earlier tantras, in which the emphasis is on practical aims such as protection from various misfortunes and so forth.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, we find also the inclusion of specifically Buddhist doctrinal content in its first chapter, a lengthy presentation of the nature of the mind that strongly reflects the influence of the Yogic Practice School (*rnal 'byor spyod pa*, *yogācāra*; aka Mind-Only School, *sems tsam*, *cittamātra*).<sup>68</sup> Additionally, this text demonstrates the systematic organization of rituals around the three secrets of body, speech, and mind.<sup>69</sup> In terms of Buddha-family structure, the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* embodies a three-family system.<sup>70</sup> Significantly, however, in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* we find the beginning of the shift from Śākyamuni as the central figure of the maṇḍala to Vairocana as the central figure.

In terms of later doxographies, the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* is categorized under the rubric of Performance Tantra (*spyod rgyud*, *caryā-tantra*), although the terms “upa-tantra” and “upāya-tantra” are also used. Because it combines elements common to both the earlier and subsequent strata of tantra (that is, the later categories of

---

<sup>66</sup> *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*, *rNam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa byin gyis rlob pa shün tu rgyas pa mdo sde'i dbang po'i rgyal po zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs*, *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhivikurvitādhiṣṭhāna-vaipulyasūtreन्द्रarāja-nāma-dharmaparyāya*, tr. by Śilendrabodhi and dPal brtsegs, P126 (Toh. 494), vol. 5, 240.3.2–284.3.1.

<sup>67</sup> de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” p. 96.

<sup>68</sup> Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana*, p. 31 ff.

<sup>69</sup> de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” p. 98.

<sup>70</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 65. Hodge points out that the Supplement (*rgyud phyi ma*, *uttara-tantra*) to the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*, which likely represents a later outline of the tantra's rituals, exhibits inclination toward a five-family format.

Action Tantra and Yoga Tantra), Buddhaghuhya refers to this category as “Dual Tantra” —obviously a designation formulated in hindsight, since it is only *after* the *Compendium of Principles* is produced and then classified as Yoga Tantra that a text could be considered to combine elements from it and the earliest stratum of Buddhist tantra.

Stephen Hodge sets the period for the composition/ compilation of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* between 630 and 640.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Matsunaga cites archeological evidence—the occurrence of Padmapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi together in the cave temples of Aurangabad at the end of the sixth century—to support the possibility that the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* was composed during the first half of the seventh century.<sup>72</sup> Based on references to various flora in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*, Hodge locates the site of its production in northeast India, and particularly in the tract that runs from Nālandā Monastery 100 miles north to the foothills of the Himalayas.<sup>73</sup> Hodge also indicates that those involved in the production and early transmission of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* were closely connected with Nālandā Monastery.<sup>74</sup>

### **Origin and Development of the *Compendium of Principles***

The next major development after the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* is the *Compendium of Principles Tantra*, the text with which this study is chiefly concerned. This tantra is of particular importance because in it we find the coalescence of a variety of earlier tantric aspects as well as the introduction of several innovative features of doctrine, ritual, and narrative, the result of which is the emergence of mature Indian Buddhist tantra. Drawing largely on Chinese sources, Stephen Hodge situates the early

---

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Hodge, personal communication, 13 March 2002.

<sup>72</sup> de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” p. 100.

<sup>73</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” pp. 70 and 74.

development of the *Compendium of Principles* in south India during the last quarter of the seventh century.<sup>75</sup> Soon thereafter, the three central Indian figures in the dissemination of tantric Buddhism to China during the eighth century—Vajrabodhi (671-741; Chi: *Chin-kang-chih*),<sup>76</sup> his disciple Amoghavajra (705-774; Chi: *Pu-k'ung chin-kang*),<sup>77</sup> and their elder countryman Śubhakarasiṃha (637-735; Chi: *Shan-wu-wei*)<sup>78</sup>—arrived in China. Of these three Indian tantric masters, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra were the central figures in the translation and transmission of the *Compendium of Principles* and related traditions to China.

In terms of the historical development of the *Compendium of Principles*, the earliest datable reference to the tantra, found in the Chinese biography of Vajrabodhi, locates the tantra right at the turn of the eighth century. According to this biography, Vajrabodhi received teachings on the *Compendium of Principles* in 700 CE in south India from Nāgabodhi.<sup>79</sup> In 723 Vajrabodhi authored a text, preserved in Chinese, summarizing the central practices of the *Compendium of Principles*. This text, the *Recitation Sūtra Extracted from the Vajraśekhara Yoga*, was drawn from the teachings he received in south India circa 700 CE.<sup>80</sup> The title “Vajraśekhara Yoga” here refers to an eighteen-text cycle of tantric texts and is not to be confused with the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, an explanatory tantra of the *Compendium of Principles* known in Indian and Tibetan traditions but not in China. I will discuss this issue in more detail below (see p. 94).

---

<sup>75</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 66.

<sup>76</sup> Dale Todaro, *An Annotated Translation of the “Tattvasamgraha” (Part 1) with an Explanation of the Role of the “Tattvasamgraha” Lineage in the Teachings of Kukai* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 66.

<sup>80</sup> *Chin kang ting yü ch'ieh chung lia ch'u pien sung ching*, T. Vol. 18, No. 866 (Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 66; Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 11).

In 753, some twelve years after Vajrabodhi had died, his disciple Amoghavajra translated the first chapter of the *Compendium of Principles*, using a manuscript of the tantra he had obtained in south India<sup>81</sup> when he visited there from 743 to 746.<sup>82</sup> This text is thought to represent a later and more developed version of the *Compendium of Principles* than the one Vajrabodhi received at the beginning of the eighth century.<sup>83</sup>

Sometime between Amoghavajra's return from south India in 746 and 771<sup>84</sup> he wrote the *Indications of the Goals of the Eighteen Assemblies of the Yoga of the Adamantine Pinnacle (Vajraśekhara) Scripture*,<sup>85</sup> a summary of the contents of the eighteen texts that comprise the Vajraśekhara Yoga cycle. The *Compendium of Principles* is the first and foremost text of this eighteen-text cycle that represented the latest developments in Indian Buddhist tantra. The centrality and importance of the *Compendium of Principles* is evidenced by the fact that roughly half of Amoghavajra's presentation of the Vajraśekhara canon is a summary of the *Compendium of Principles*, while the second half consists of his summaries of the other seventeen texts.<sup>86</sup> Amoghavajra describes the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles* much as they appear in the extant complete versions of the tantra (Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese). Furthermore, he briefly describes additional material that suggests he was familiar with the contents of the Supplement (*rgyud phyi ma, uttara-tantra*) and Second Supplement (*rgyud phyi ma'i*

---

<sup>81</sup> Ian Astley-Kristensen specifies that Amoghavajra returned to China from Sri Lanka (Ian Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō: The Sino-Japanese Tantric Prajñāpāramitā in 150 Verses [Amoghavajra's Version]* [Tring, U.K.: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1991], p. 10).

<sup>82</sup> Hodge, "Considerations," p. 66. Amoghavajra's translation is T. Vol. 18, No. 865: *Chin kang ting i ch'ieh ju lai chen shih she ta hsieng cheng ta chiao wang ching* (Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 10).

<sup>83</sup> Hodge, "Considerations," p. 66.

<sup>84</sup> Giebel, "*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*," p. 109.

<sup>85</sup> *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*, T. Vol. 18, No. 869 (Giebel, "*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*," p. 107).

<sup>86</sup> Giebel, "*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*," p. 112.

*phyi ma, uttarottara-tantra*) of the complete versions of the tantra as we have them today, although his text of the *Compendium of Principles* might have contained these elements in earlier stages of their development.<sup>87</sup>

Since Amoghavajra composed his digest of the eighteen-part *Vajraśekhara* cycle after he returned to China from south India in 746, we can assume it was based on the version of the *Compendium of Principles* he obtained and the related teachings he received during his trip. Furthermore, because his description of the *Compendium of Principles* and his translation of its first chapter—both produced after his trip to south India—closely resemble the extant versions of the tantra, we can conclude that by the middle of the eighth century in south India the *Compendium of Principles* had developed into something closely resembling the final form in which we have it today in Sanskrit as well as Tibetan and Chinese translations.

Buddhaguhya also refers to material in all five sections of the tantra—the four sections plus the fifth section consisting of the Supplement and Second Supplement—in his commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*,<sup>88</sup> although the way he refers to them suggests that they might have represented a cycle of independent texts rather than a single organic text.<sup>89</sup> Thus, since Buddhaguhya flourished during the middle of the eighth century and was a resident of Nālandā Monastery in northeastern India, we can conclude that by the middle of the eighth century something close to the final version of the *Compendium of Principles* existed in northeastern India as well as in south India. By the

---

<sup>87</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” n. 155, pp. 163-164.

<sup>88</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 29. He draws this information from Takeo Kitamura, “*Tantrārthavatāra* o Chūshin to shita *Kongōchōkyō* no Kenkyū, I,” *Mikkyōgaku* No. 7, 1970, pp. 6, 14-15; *ibid.*, II, *Mikkyōgaku* No. 8, 1971, pp. 3, 6, 11, 19, and so forth. Further research into Buddhaguhya’s text—checking the passages he quotes from the *Compendium of Principles* against the text of the tantra itself and so forth—is necessary to determine more precisely the development of the *Compendium of Principles*.

<sup>89</sup> Stephen Hodge, personal communication, 14 April 2002. This requires further investigation.



time Śākyamitra composed his *Kosala Ornament*<sup>90</sup>—the first word-by-word commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*—probably near the end of the eighth century, the tantra had developed into the final form in which we find it today.<sup>91</sup>

Therefore, based on the evidence from Chinese sources as well as the Tibetan translations of commentaries by Buddhaguhya and Śākyamitra, we can conclude that the *Compendium of Principles* developed in India over time from its initial composition during the last quarter of the seventh century until sometime in the middle of the eighth century. How this composition and development occurred, and how texts and practices circulating independently might have been included in the tantra during the development of the *Compendium of Principles*, remains far less clear.

As for the location of the *Compendium of Principles*' production, Chinese sources point to south India. Vajrabodhi received teachings in south India from Nāgabodhi, a disciple of Nāgārjuna (according to Sino-Japanese traditions).<sup>92</sup> Chinese traditions relate that the *Compendium of Principles* appeared when a *bhadanta* (perhaps Nāgārjuna)<sup>93</sup> took it from the Iron Stūpa in south India.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament: Extensive Explanation of the "Compendium of Principles," De kho na nyid bsdus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa ko sa la'i rgyan*, *Kosala-alaṅkārayatattvasaṃgrahaṭīkā*, P3326 (Toh. 2503), vol. 70, 189.1.1–vol. 71, 94.2.6. This text consists of 12,000 stanzas (Butön, *Ship*, 64b.1).

<sup>91</sup> The *Kosala Ornament* as preserved in Tibetan translation comments on all five sections of the *Compendium of Principles* as we find it today. Aside from some minor differences in translation, I have found the *Compendium of Principles* as quoted in the *Kosala Ornament* to be the same as the tantra as preserved in the extant Sanskrit version and in its Tibetan translation. While I have located passages in the *Kosala Ornament* that comment on all five sections of the *Compendium of Principles*, thoroughly checking the tantra quoted in the commentary against the entire text of the tantra itself remains a desideratum. I will discuss below Śākyamitra's dates.

<sup>92</sup> Hodge, "Considerations," p. 66.

<sup>93</sup> Charles Orzech relates that the Chinese disciples of Amoghavajra identify the *bhadanta* as Nāgārjuna, and present the lineage passing from him to Nāgabodhi and then to Vajrabodhi himself ("The Legend of the Iron Stūpa," in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. D.S. Lopez, Jr. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995], p. 314). Although this Nāgārjuna is often identified as the same person as the fourth-century Nāgārjuna who is the central figure in the Mādhyamaka philosophical school, this is an error. Here it

The location of south India as the place of the *Compendium of Principles*' origin also finds support in a Tibetan source. Butön includes in his *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra* a passage (in Tibetan but translated from Sanskrit) in which the *Compendium of Principles* and related tantras are described as descending onto the roof of King Prakāśacandra<sup>95</sup> of Patikirti, a city near Śrī Parvata in south India.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Butön records an oral tradition from fourteenth-century Tibet explaining the lineage as passing through Nāgārjuna and Nāgabodhi (as Chinese traditions assert),<sup>97</sup> and a contemporary Tibetan oral tradition holds that Nāgabodhi is still alive in south India.<sup>98</sup>

The reference to Śrī Parvata suggests further corroborating evidence for south India as the place of the *Compendium of Principles*' production. David Lorenzen not only locates Śrī Parvata in south India (and specifically in the state of Andhra Pradesh), but he also identifies it as a center of tantric activity by the seventh century:<sup>99</sup>

---

refers to the tantric Nāgārjuna, whose full name is sometimes given as Nāgārjunagarbha and who authored several tantric commentaries preserved in the Tibetan canon. This figure probably lived during the mid to late seventh century.

<sup>94</sup> Orzech, "Legend of the Iron Stūpa," p. 314. If Nāgārjuna is indeed the first human in the lineage, this further supports the argument that the *Compendium of Principles* first appeared in the last quarter of the seventh century, since Vajrabodhi would then be the third human in the lineage and he is said to have received teachings on the tantra around 700 CE.

<sup>95</sup> I have reconstructed this Sanskrit from the Tibetan *rab gsal zla ba*. Leonard van der Kuijp reconstructs the Sanskrit as Pradyotacandra rather than Prakāśacandra (Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "Notes Apropos of the Transmission of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," in *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 16 [1992], p. 124, n. 25).

<sup>96</sup> Butön Rinchendrup (Bu ston Rin chen grub), *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra* (*rNal 'byor rgyud kyī rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings*), in *Collected Works of Bu ston*, Part 11 *da* (Lhasa: Zhol Printing House, 1990; photographic reproduction Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), 59a.6-59a.7.

<sup>97</sup> *de'i gnam rgyud dang mthun par rgyal po indra bhū ti che chung gsum la brgyud nas/ klu sgrub/ klu byang/...la brgyud par kha cig 'chad do/* (Butön, *Ship*, 61a.4-61a.5).

<sup>98</sup> Geshe Jampel Thardo, personal communication, May, 1999.

<sup>99</sup> David N. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972; revised edition, 1991), pp. 50-51.

The famous holy center Śrīparvata (also called Śrīśailam) is located in Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh. It is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as a place sacred to Śiva and Devī...These two references by Bāṇa indicate that Śrīparvata was already famous as a center of tantric worship by the first half of the seventh century...

Additionally, a short modern work on Andhra Pradesh more specifically locates Śrī Parvata in the Nagarjunakonda Valley of the Krishna River.<sup>100</sup>

In conclusion, all the available evidence—from Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan sources—points to south or southeastern India as the locus of production of the *Compendium of Principles*. Furthermore, the initial composition of the tantra most likely occurred during the last quarter of the seventh century, and the *Compendium of Principles* developed into its final form—probably in part through incorporating one or more independent texts—by the middle of the eighth century.

I will discuss in some detail the innovative practices and doctrines found in the *Compendium of Principles*, along with their import, in chapter three (see p. 173 ff). In brief, we find in this seminal tantra and texts related to it the continued development of distinctly tantric contemplative practices, deities in their wrathful reflexes, and the introduction of practices involving sex and violence. In terms of Buddha families, the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* and most of its associated texts exhibit an expansion of the three-family structure found in earlier tantras into a five-family structure. Vairocana and his Tathāgata family are still at the center of the maṇḍala, but the hierarchical relationship between the three families found in earlier tantras has now fallen away, and all the families of deities stand on equal footing. However, Vajrapāṇi takes on a central role in much of the *Compendium of Principles* and several related

---

<sup>100</sup> N. Ramesan, *Temples and Legends of Andhra Pradesh* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962), p. 15.

texts,<sup>101</sup> and this prefigures the ascendancy of the vajra family and its wrathful deities that we find in later tantric texts (classified under the rubrics of Mahāyoga, Yoginī Tantra, Highest Yoga Tantra, and so forth).

Although the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* and its family of tantras are arranged around five Buddha families, the contents of the tantras are frequently divided into sets of four. This indicates the transitional status of these texts in Indian tantric Buddhist development from three-family to five-family systems, which I will discuss in chapter three (see p. 200 ff). In terms of later doxographical categorization, the *Compendium of Principles* and the group of texts that it spawned (the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, the *Conquest over the Three Worlds*, the *Śrī Paramādyā*, and so forth) are classified as Yoga Tantra.

## **Mahāyoga**

As one analyzes the pattern of changes from the earliest tantras to the *Compendium of Principles* and the family of texts it generated, one finds a number of features that distinguish mature Indian tantra, including a clear soteriological bent, narrative structures bound up with both legitimization and the introduction of new doctrines and practices, and a self-conscious identity as a new and distinct tradition (I will discuss these in detail in chapter three, p. 173 ff).<sup>102</sup>

The continued development of doctrines and practices growing out of the *Compendium of Principles* and the texts it directly spawned resulted in the next phase of Indian Buddhist tantra—texts such as the *Secret Assembly Tantra* (*Guhyasamāja*), the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* (*Buddhasamayoga*), and the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* (*Guhyagarbha*)—which would later be classified as Mahāyoga. As David Germano and

---

<sup>101</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1364.

<sup>102</sup> Traditional scholarship has explicitly focused on the shift away from external rites and to internal contemplation in defining the *Compendium of Principles* and the corpus of tantras related to it.

others have argued, these developments were initially seen as extensions of the texts that would be included under the rubric of Yoga Tantra—they were “great” or “supercharged” Yoga Tantra. As a result, the term “Mahāyoga” (“Great” or “Super Yoga”) was used to classify them (at least in some quarters).

I will discuss Mahāyoga, and particularly its relationship with the *Compendium of Principles* and its family of texts, in detail in chapter four (pp. 219-291, and especially pp. 236-289 for the relationship between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga), so I will make only brief remarks here. Practices involving ritualized sex and violence found in the *Compendium of Principles* and texts of its ilk are expanded and amplified in the corpus of texts classified as Mahāyoga. Two of the most important of these texts are the *Secret Assembly Tantra* (*Guhyasamāja Tantra*) and *Secret Nucleus Tantra* (*Guhyagarbha Tantra*). Amoghavajra discusses the *Secret Assembly* as the fifteenth text in his synopsis of the eighteen texts of the *Vajraśekhara* cycle.<sup>103</sup> Matsunaga concludes that this represents a nascent form of the tantra as we have it today in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, and that this early version must have been in existence in India before 746 CE.<sup>104</sup> The *Secret Nucleus* is likely a later work that dates to the latter half of the eighth century.<sup>105</sup>

In terms of Buddha families, the *Secret Assembly Tantra* refers to both five families and six families; this apparently transitional status between five- and six-family systems also suggests a relatively early date for the tantra. In some of the Mahāyoga tantras Vairocana and his Tathāgata family are at the center of the maṇḍala, as is the case with the *Compendium of Principles* and most of the texts classified as Yoga Tantra. In the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, however, Akṣobhya and his vajra family of wrathful deities are

---

<sup>103</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 193.

<sup>104</sup> Matsunaga, cited in Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 195.

<sup>105</sup> See p. 235 ff for a discussion of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*’s dates.

central. This shift to wrathful deities is further developed in later tantras, and indicates that the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* is a later composition than the *Secret Assembly Tantra*.

There are Indian commentaries on the *Secret Nucleus* preserved in Tibetan translation and attributed to the Indian exegetes Vilāsavajra and Buddhaguhya, places the tantra's production sometime during the eighth century. We must bear in mind that, while the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* is the central Mahāyoga tantra in Tibetan Nyingma traditions, Amoghavajra does not mention it in his description of the eighteen-tantra cycle—nor to my knowledge do any Chinese materials. Amoghavajra also does not refer to the category “Mahāyoga”—or indeed to any doxographical classifications. Thus, the construction of “mahāyoga” as a category of tantra, and indeed tantric doxography itself, must be seen as a later development, and perhaps one that represents only regional Indian tradition.

The tantras grouped together under the rubric of Mahāyoga reflect the continued development of extreme or radical practices found in inchoate form in the *Compendium of Principles* and the family of texts that developed out of it. In particular, we find more advanced forms of wrathful practices and sexual practices (for instance, the *Secret Assembly Tantra* was taught when the Supramundane Victor was residing in the female vagina).<sup>106</sup> It seems unlikely that the introduction of practices involving the subtle body and the manipulation of life-energies at internal psycho-physical centers (and the subtle levels of consciousness associated with them) occurred with these tantras. Certainly the later commentarial traditions include such practices, but the evidence suggests that the earliest traditions of the tantras themselves do not.

---

<sup>106</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” p. 193.

## Yoginī Tantras and Highest Yoga Tantra

Mahāyoga constitutes the first of the three inner vehicles in nine-vehicle systems. However, fourfold doxographical systems subsume texts such as the *Secret Assembly Tantra* under the rubric of Highest Yoga Tantra (Tib: *bla med [rnal 'byor] rgyud*; Skt: *anuttara-[yoga]-tantra*). Again, this demonstrates the artifice involved with doxographical constructs. A further example of this is a group of tantras sometimes referred to as yoginī tantras, of which there is some overlap with texts classified as Mahāyoga in nine-vehicle doxographies and as Highest Yoga Tantra in fourfold classification systems. The continued development of practices and doctrines found in Mahāyoga, and particularly those involving wrathful deities, sexual yoga, and the subtle body, resulted in tantras that would eventually be classified as Highest Yoga Tantra. The antinomian bent of the violence and sex in these tantras reflects their origins outside monastic institutions, in the traditions of the “Perfected” (Skt: *siddha*) yogi cults (and perhaps also local deity cults).<sup>107</sup> The earliest known yoginī tantra is the *Yoga of the Equality of all Buddhas*,<sup>108</sup> which is included in Amoghavajra’s summary of the Vajraśekhara Yoga cycle and so dates, at least in an early stage of its development, to the middle of the eighth century (and probably earlier).<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, in the latter half of the eighth century Vilāsavajra quotes from the *Laghusaṃvara*, a Yoginī Tantra, in his commentaries on the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* and the *Secret Essence Tantra*,<sup>110</sup> so

---

<sup>107</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 294-299.

<sup>108</sup> Giebel reconstructs the Sanskrit as *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinisaṃvarajālayoga* (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 180, n. 197).

<sup>109</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” pp. 180-181, n. 197 & p. 193. Matsunaga also dates the development of other texts later classified under the rubric of Highest Yoga Tantra from the middle of the eighth century on (Matsunaga, “A History of Tantric Buddhism,” p. 179).

<sup>110</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 8.

we know that such tantras had reached a more advanced stage of development by that time.

The maṇḍala structures in these texts diverges from the five- and six-family structures found in texts classified as Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga. In many tantras of the yoginī type, the central figure resides in union with his female partner and is surrounded by eight female deities (often termed *yoginīs* or *ḍākiṇīs*).<sup>111</sup> In the *Hevajra Tantra*, for instance, we find Hevajra and his consort surrounded by eight female deities, arranged in the four cardinal directions and the four intermediate directions.<sup>112</sup> Other texts portray a central female deity surrounded by other female deities; still others include rituals involving a single deity, of both male and female gender.<sup>113</sup> Continuing the trend of the Mahāyoga tantras, the vajra family is the central fixture of the maṇḍala, and the central deity is thus identified as an emanation of Akṣobhya.<sup>114</sup>

As the production of such tantras continued, their exegetical proponents—and some of the texts themselves—came to call themselves “Highest Yoga Tantra.” This category was further subdivided, with Mahāyoga tantras such as the *Secret Assembly* classified as Father Tantras and Yoginī Tantras such as the *Hevajra* and *Cakrasaṃvara* classified as Mother Tantras.<sup>115</sup> The last subcategory to develop historically was that of Non-Dual Tantras, to which the *Kālacakra Tantra*, the final stage in the development of Indian Buddhist tantra, belongs. There has been much speculation about the relationship between Śaivite-type tantras of Bengal, Bihar, Kashmir, and so forth and Buddhist tantras included under the rubric of Highest Yoga Tantra—some arguing for wholesale unilateral

---

<sup>111</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 295-297.

<sup>112</sup> Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 209.

<sup>113</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 295-297.

<sup>114</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1365.

<sup>115</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 244 and de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” p. 105.



influence in one direction, some arguing for it in the other direction, some arguing for mutual sharing and bilateral borrowing. However, this fascinating and complex issue is beyond the purview of the current study. **Structure of the *Compendium of Principles***

The received text of the *Compendium of Principles* as we have it today is a rather lengthy text, especially for a tantra. One of the two surviving Sanskrit manuscripts consists of 150 palm-leaf pages; since the text is written on both the front and back of each palm leaf, it totals 300 sides in all.<sup>116</sup> The Tibetan translation by Rinchen Zangpo and Śraddhākaravarman as it appears in the Peking edition of the *Kangyur* spans some 260 folio sides. The Chinese translation of the tantra in its final form by Shih-hu (Dānapāla) consists of thirty fascicles.<sup>117</sup>

An introduction, a body, and an appended section constitute the *Compendium of Principles*. The introduction describes the qualities of Vairocana—the teacher of the tantra—as well as the audience, location, and time of the teaching. It also includes descriptions of Mahāvairocana and Samantabhadra. The body of the tantra consists of the emanation and description of five cycles of maṇḍalas as well as their respective rites. These are arranged in four sections, referred to in the commentarial tradition as the Vajra-Element Section (Tib: *rdo rje dbyings kyi dum bu*; Skt: *\*vajradhātu-khaṇḍa*),<sup>118</sup> the Conquest over the Three Worlds Section (Tib: *'jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba'i dum bu* or *kham s gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i dum bu*; Skt: *\*trilokavijaya-khaṇḍa*), the Taming Transmigrators Section (Tib: *'gro ba 'dul ba'i dum bu*; Skt: *\*jagadvinaya-*

---

<sup>116</sup> Snellgrove, *Facsimile Reproduction*, p. 7. This refers to the Sanskrit manuscript discovered in Nepal by Snellgrove and Brough, a romanized edition of which Isshi Yamada has published under the title *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha nāma mahāyāna-sūtra*.

<sup>117</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 10.

<sup>118</sup> An alternate title for this section, “Manifest Realization of all Ones Gone Thus (Tib: *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi mngon par rtogs pa*; Skt: *\*sarva-tathāgata-abhisamaya*), is less frequently used.

*khaṇḍa* or \**sakalajagadvinaya-khaṇḍa*), and the Achievement of All Aims Section (Tib: *don thams cad grub pa'i dum bu*; Skt: \**sarvārthasiddhi-khaṇḍa*).<sup>119</sup> There is also an appended fifth section consisting of a Supplementary Tantra (Tib: *rgyud phyi ma*; Skt: *uttara-tantra*) and a Second Supplementary Tantra (Tib: *rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma*; Skt: *uttarottara-tantra*), but the body of the tantra—in this context referred to as the “root tantra” (Tib: *rtsa ba'i rgyud*; Skt: *mūla-tantra*)—is taken to be the four sections. I will discuss the Supplementary Tantra and the Second Supplementary Tantra below (see p. 69 ff).

Each section consists of a number of chapters, which total twenty-six in all. The first section spans five chapters, and the third, fourth, and fifth sections contain four chapters each. The anomalous second section, which unlike the other three sections that comprise the body of the tantra contains two maṇḍala cycles rather than one (I will discuss this section in more detail below, p. 77 ff), encompasses nine chapters. In terms of length, however, the first section is the longest. This reflects both the introductory material that occurs only at the beginning of the text and the fact that the maṇḍalas in the first section

---

<sup>119</sup> These section titles appear in the Indian exegete Amoghavajra's Chinese work summarizing the eighteen texts of the *Vajraśekhara Yoga* system, so they were current by the middle of the eighth century (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” pp. 127, 141, 154, and 158). Ānandagarbha, a prolific Indian author of the ninth century, also employs these same section titles in his *Illumination of the Principles* (P3333, vol. 71, 146.5.7-146.5.8; 142.3.6; 144.1.3).

In the tantra itself these sections are identified, respectively, as the “Manifest Realization of the Great Vehicle of All Tathāgatas Great King of Procedures (*de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi theg pa chen po'i mngon par rtogs pa zhes bya ba'i rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po, sarvatathāgatamahāyānābhisamayanāmamahākālpārāja*),” the “Vajra Pledge of All Tathāgatas Great King of Procedures” (*de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi rdo rje'i dam tshig zhes bya ba'i rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po, sarvatathāgatavajrasamayanāmamahākālpārāja*), the “Doctrine Pledge of All Tathāgatas Great King of Procedures” (*de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi chos kyi dam tshig zhes bya ba'i rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po, sarvatathāgatadharmasamayanāmamahākālpārāja*), and the “Action Pledge of All Tathāgatas Great King of Procedures” (*de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi las kyi dam tshig zhes bya ba'i rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po, sarvatathāgatakarmasamayanāmamahākālpārāja*).

as well as the various rites associated with them serve as prototypes for the maṇḍalas and rites that occur in the subsequent sections. Thus, the explanations in the first section are more detailed and thorough, as they are to be carried over to the explanations in subsequent sections, which become increasingly more abbreviated.

Divisions in the *Compendium of Principles* primarily come in sets of four. Each of the four sections of the tantra is associated with a central Buddha figure, a Buddha family, and an aspect of enlightened expression. The first section is associated with Vairocana (the central figure in Yoga Tantra as a whole), the Tathāgata family (Tib: *de bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs*; Skt: *tathāgata-kula*), and enlightened body; the second, with Akṣobhya, the vajra family (Tib: *rdo rje'i rigs*; Skt: *vajra-kula*), and enlightened mind; the third, with Amitāyus (aka Lokeśvararāja and, in later traditions, Amitābha), the doctrine family (or lotus family; *chos kyi* or *padma'i rigs*, *dharma-* or *padma-kula*), and enlightened speech; and the fourth, with Ratnasambhava, the jewel family (*rin po che'i rigs*, *ratna-kula*), and enlightened action.

There are also four main types of maṇḍalas and four types of mudrās found in the *Compendium of Principles*, with one type of maṇḍala and one type of mudrā being emphasized in each of the four sections of the tantra (although all four types of maṇḍala and all four types of mudrā are found in each section). Before discussing the individual maṇḍalas and rites of the *Compendium of Principles*, I will make a few comments on maṇḍalas and mudrās.

In general, maṇḍalas are representations of the state of enlightenment, and comprise both the deities who represent various aspects of the enlightened state and the multi-chambered, multi-walled, multi-storied palaces in which they reside. The four types of

maṇḍalas found in the *Compendium of Principles* are great maṇḍalas<sup>120</sup> (*dkyil 'khor chen po, mahā-maṇḍala*), retention maṇḍalas (*gzungs dkyil, dhāraṇī-maṇḍala*),<sup>121</sup> doctrine maṇḍalas (*chos dkyil, dharma-maṇḍala*), and action maṇḍalas (*las dkyil, karma-maṇḍala*).<sup>122</sup> There are two additional types of maṇḍalas presented in each section of the *Compendium of Principles*, the four-mudrā maṇḍala and the single-mudrā maṇḍala. However, these are condensed versions of the four central maṇḍalas, and their rites are abbreviated versions of the extensive rites of the four maṇḍalas. According to Butön the *Compendium of Principles* has a total of 213 maṇḍalas,<sup>123</sup> although it is not at all clear how he arrived at this figure.

The deities in the great maṇḍalas appear in physical form. The deities in the retention maṇḍalas appear as their respective hand-symbols, such as a vajra, bell, hook, noose, and so forth.<sup>124</sup> In the doctrine maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* the central deity is in physical form while the other deities take the form of their respective hand-symbols on their respective seats, with the deity in the center of its hand-symbol. In the action

---

<sup>120</sup> This fourfold typology of maṇḍalas is taken from Butön's fourteenth-century Tibetan exegesis, although the Indian tantric master Amoghavajra employs the same categorization in his eighth-century Chinese work on the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara cycle. In the text of the *Compendium of Principles* itself the maṇḍalas are identified by their individual names and these four categories are not mentioned.

<sup>121</sup> This type of maṇḍala is also called "pledge maṇḍala" ( *dam tshig gi dkyil 'khor, samaya-maṇḍala* ) or "vajra maṇḍala" (*rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor, vajra-maṇḍala*). While the *Compendium of Principles* itself identifies this type of maṇḍala as a vajra maṇḍala, Tibetan commentarial traditions refer to them as retention maṇḍalas. The eighth-century Indian tantric master Amoghavajra also refers to them as retention maṇḍalas (Giebel, "*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*," p. 132).

<sup>122</sup> Each section of the *Compendium of Principles* actually includes two additional maṇḍalas—the four-mudrā and single-mudrā maṇḍalas. However, the four maṇḍalas just mentioned are the primary maṇḍalas; the four-mudrā and single-mudrā maṇḍalas are less elaborate and the rites associated with them are abbreviated versions of the full rites employed in the four maṇḍalas.

<sup>123</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 26a.4.

<sup>124</sup> In some Chinese translations of texts related to the *Compendium of Principles* the deities appear in female form, holding their respective hand-symbols (Giebel, "*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*," pp. 133-134, n. 28).

maṇḍalas the five Buddhas appear in physical form while the other deities appear in the form of female deities such as the offering goddesses and so forth.

The four-mudrā and single-mudrā maṇḍalas that appear in each section are condensed versions of the four maṇḍalas just described. The central figure in the four-mudrā maṇḍalas is one of the five Buddhas, who is surrounded by the other four Buddhas in the form of mudrās (and hence the name “four-mudrā maṇḍala”). There are five four-mudrā maṇḍalas in each of the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*, with each of the Buddhas of the five families at the center of his own four-mudrā maṇḍala, surrounded by a distinctive set of four mudrās (vajras, lotuses, hooks, and so forth). The single-mudrā maṇḍalas consist of a single deity on a moon-disc in the center of the maṇḍala.

In the strictest sense mudrās are symbolic gestures made with the hands. However, they often entail postures of the entire body, such as the lean of the torso or tilt of the head, and sometimes involve movement of the hands, arms, and so forth. Basically, the mudrā of a deity is the embodiment of the characteristics of enlightenment that the deity represents, and constructing a deity’s mudrā means taking on those characteristics. The literal meaning of “mudrā” (Tib: *phyag rgya*) is “seal,” and relates to official seals used by the government. An official’s seal on a document mandates that the instructions contained therein cannot be transgressed. Similarly, “sealing” oneself as a deity means that one does not pass beyond visualizing oneself as that deity and thinking and acting accordingly.

The four types of mudrās found in the *Compendium of Principles* are great mudrās (Tib: *phyag rgya chen po*, abbreviated to *phyag chen*; Skt: *mahā-mudrā*), pledge mudrās (*dam tshig gi phyag rgya*, abbreviated to *dam rgya*; *samaya-mudrā*), doctrine mudrās (*chos kyi phyag rgya*, abbreviated to *chos rgya*; *dharma-mudrā*), and action mudrās (*las kyi phyag rgya*, abbreviated to *las rgya*; *karma-mudrā*). Great mudrās differ from the other three types of mudrās in that their “construction” entails not physical postures but

rather creating oneself as the deity through visualization itself. There is a proliferation of mudrās in the *Compendium of Principles* not seen in prior or subsequent developments of Indian Buddhist tantric,<sup>125</sup> for reasons that are as yet unclear.<sup>126</sup>

Types of mantra represent another set of four employed in the tantra. The four types of mantras appear to be mantras (Tib: *sngags*), essence mantras (*snying po*, *hṛdaya*), knowledge mantras (*rig pa*, *vidyā*), and mudrās. Though this last term in general refers to gestures, in some instances in the tantra it refers to a type of mantra, as Snellgrove has noted.<sup>127</sup> While I have not found commentaries linking the four types of mantras with corresponding maṇḍalas or mudrās, they are important components of the *Compendium of Principles*.

The Tibetan translation of the *Compendium of Principles* has an additional structural component: the text is divided into nine parts (*bam po*) of roughly equal length. The nine parts usually break the text at logical points (such as the ends of chapters) and so might represent divisions based on content. However, they also likely reflect the physical characteristics of the Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscripts from which the Tibetan translation was made, as the nine parts probably represent nine bundles into which the palm-leaf manuscript was tied for ease of transport and storage.

The tantra most likely represents a compilation of several shorter texts (or parts thereof) in existence during the middle to late seventh century. The beginning of the tantra in particular appears to be an amalgamation of seemingly unrelated pieces that

---

<sup>125</sup> When the topic of Yoga Tantra is broached with Tibetan lamas, their initial response most often is to comment on the large number of mudrās in Yoga Tantra.

<sup>126</sup> Ronald Davidson has suggested that the proliferation of mudrās in Indian royal initiation rites found in the *Dharmottara Purāṇa* and the *Agni Purāṇa* may be the source of the proliferation of mudrās in the *Compendium of Principles* (Ronald Davidson, personal communication, 4 November 2000). Further investigation is necessary.

<sup>127</sup> Snellgrove, "Categories of Buddhist Tantras," p. 1363, n. 10.

lurch from one to the next without explanation or transition. In addition, the narrative of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara with which the second section of the tantra opens, and the anomalous structure of the second section itself (two cycles of maṇḍalas rather than a single cycle), reveal what was likely an independent text (or texts) incorporated into the *Compendium of Principles*. Finally, the fifth section of the tantra, consisting of a Supplementary Tantra (Tib: *rgyud phyi ma*; Skt: *uttara-tantra*) and a Second Supplementary Tantra (*rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma*; *uttarottara-tantra*), also represents appendices added to the text after the compilation of the beginning material and the four sections of the body. I will discuss each of these components of the text below.

All the extant versions of the *Compendium of Principles* in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese consist of a combination of prose and verse. Although the text is extensive, the style is often terse. As is characteristic of Buddhist tantras in general, details are often omitted from descriptions of maṇḍalas, meditations, and other rites and activities. Buddhist traditions hold that tantras are purposely truncated. Such abbreviation restricts access to all but those qualified by initiation and guidance from a qualified teacher and so forth. Butön explains the secrecy of tantra this way:<sup>128</sup>

In order to stop [people] from becoming involved with tantras of their own accord, tantras are set forth in an incomplete way, in an unclear way, and with confusion.

The necessity of filling out the missing details, clarifying what is unclear, and so forth compelled the composition in India of exegetical literature of various types. These include commentaries proper as well as practice texts such as descriptions of maṇḍalas

---

<sup>128</sup> *rgyud du/rgyud la rang dgar gzhus pa dgag pa'i phyir ma tshang ba dang/mi gsal ba dang/ 'khrugs kyi tshul du gsungs bas* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 15a.4).

and rites performed therein (Tib: *dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga*; Skt: *maṇḍalopāyika* or *maṇḍalavidhi*), descriptions of meditative practices focused on particular deities (Tib: *sgrub thabs*; Skt: *sādhana*), and so forth.

An example of a commentary proper is Śākyamitra's *Kosala Ornament*, a word-by-word explication of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>129</sup> Ānandagarbha's *Rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala: Source of All Vajras*<sup>130</sup> represents a text that sets forth in extensive form the rite of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala taught in incomplete form in the first chapter of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>131</sup> For instance, in the tantra itself the description of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala rite does not even mention the preliminary activities that must be carried out *before* a vajra-master (*rdo rje'i slob dpon, vajra-ācārya*) can perform the rites of admitting students into the maṇḍala, initiating them

<sup>129</sup> Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 189.1.1–vol. 71, 94.2.6.

<sup>130</sup> Sanskrit: “Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyikā-Sarvavajrodayanāma—bonbun tekisuto to wayaku—(I),” in *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University (Taishō Daigaku Sōgō Bukkyō Kunkyūjo nenpō)*, Issue 8 (1986), pp. 258-224 and “Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyikā-Sarvavajrodayanāma—bonbun tekisuto to wayaku—(II),” in *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University (Taishō Daigaku Sōgō Bukkyō Kunkyūjo nenpō)*, Issue 9 (1987), pp. 294-222; Tibetan *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rdo rje thams cad 'byun g ba zhes bya ba, Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyikasarvavajrodayanāma*, P3339 (Toh. 2516), vol. 74.

<sup>131</sup> Butön indicates the several sources upon which Ānandagarbha draws in composing this maṇḍala rite:

He [Ānandagarbha] mainly gathers together this material from all texts that have a contribution for the rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala in the *Compendium of Principles Tantra*. He will gather together important features of the rite from all texts that contribute to a rite of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, these being other maṇḍalas—for instance the retention maṇḍala of the Vajradhātu section [of the *Compendium of Principles*]; other procedures—for instance the second section [of the *Compendium of Principles*]; other tantras—for instance the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*; and other tantra sets—for instance [the Performance Tantra] the *Questions of Subāhu Tantra (de nyid bsdus pa'i rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po ston pa'i skabs nas gtso bor btu la/ dum bu de nyid kyi gzungs dkyil lta bu dkyil 'khor gzhan dang/ dum bu gnyis pa lta bu rtog pa gzhan dang/ dpal mchog lta bu rgyud gzhan dang/ dpung bzang lta bu bya rgyud sde gzhan te/ rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga la phan pa ston pa'i gzhung kun nas cho ga'i khyad par gal che ba rnam btu bar bya'o/* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 19b.4-19b.6).



therein, and so forth.<sup>132</sup> In contrast, Ānandagarbha's ritual text spends some time describing the preliminary procedure.<sup>133</sup> The vajra-master first performs bathing to purify his body. Then through a series of steps he visualizes his tongue as a vajra on a lotus, and thereby blesses his speech and gives it powerful ritual efficacy. He similarly visualizes his hands as vajras (and each individual finger as a single-pointed vajra); this gives the actions performed by his hands powerful ritual efficacy. There follows an extensive and thorough series of practices to secure the area where the maṇḍala will be constructed and the rite will be performed. This includes visualizations in combination with the construction of various mudrās and the recitation of various mantras to drive out obstructive entities from the environs of the rite. In this preliminary phase of the rite each of the ten directions are secured at least once.

These preliminary practices, which are not even mentioned in the *Compendium of Principles*, presuppose that the reader possesses a body of ritual knowledge necessary to fill in required material that is absent from the tantra's description of the rite. Such knowledge would likely be gained from familiarity with other tantras, other rites, and so forth, as well as from one's own teacher (that is, from oral tradition). Thus, the brevity and truncation of much of the *Compendium of Principles* (and Buddhist tantras in general) must be set within a larger context of assumed knowledge and a culture in which much requisite information was still transmitted primarily, and sometimes exclusively, orally.

Ānandagarbha's *Rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala: Source of All Vajras* represents an attempt to commit to writing the complete rite—the terse and incomplete description found in the *Compendium of Principles* filled out with the missing but

---

<sup>132</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 229.3.1.

<sup>133</sup> This presentation is drawn from Ānandagarbha, *Rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala*, P3339, vol. 74, 3.1.1-3.1.5.

requisite parts drawn from other texts (both written and oral). However, as Butön’s mammoth 700-side commentary on Ānandagarbha’s *Source of All Vajras* attests, such texts are never complete, nor are such bodies of knowledge closed.

## The Tantra’s Introduction

The *Compendium of Principles* begins, as do almost all texts claiming to have been spoken by a Buddha (or elicited by and/ or confirmed by a Buddha), with the familiar refrain: “Thus have I heard at one time: ...”.<sup>134</sup> The introduction then continues with the standard pentad of excellences (Tib: *phun sum tshogs pa lnga*) that serve as the criteria by which a work is considered to be an authentic Buddha-voiced text (Tib: *sangs rgyas kyi bka’*; Skt: *buddha-vacana*): the teacher, location, audience, time, and teaching. Vairocana is identified as the teacher of the tantra. A description of the Akāṣiṣṭha Pure Land<sup>135</sup>—the location of the teaching—follows a rather lengthy list of Vairocana’s attributes. The audience is described as 990,000,000 Mahāsattva-Bodhisattvas, of which eight are identified by name: the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteshvara, Ākāśagarbha, Vajramuṣṭi, Mañjuśrī, Sahacittotpādadharmacakrapravartin, Gaganagañja, and Sarvamārabalapramardin. In addition there are also Tathāgatas<sup>136</sup> as numerous as the

<sup>134</sup> Skt: *evam mayā śrūtam ekasmin samaya*; Tib: *’di skad bdag gis thos pa dus gcig na*.

<sup>135</sup> The location is more specifically the abode of the king of the gods of Akāṣiṣṭha.

<sup>136</sup> I am leaving untranslated the Sanskrit term “*tathāgata*” (and its Tibetan translation equivalent *de bzhin gshegs pa*). It is sometimes translated as “one gone thus” or “thus-gone one.” The Indian exegete Śākyamitra explains the Sanskrit term “*tathāgata*” in this way, in the context of describing the Tathāgata Vairocana:

Because of realizing (Tib: *thugs su chud pa*, Skt: *\*adhigama*) reality (*chos nyid, dharmatā*) in exactly the way (*de bzhin du, tathā*) previous Buddhas realized [it, Vairocana] is a Buddha, that is, a **One Gone Thus** (*de bzhin gshegs pa, tathāgata*), because “**gone**” (*gshegs pa, gata*) means “realize” [and hence *tathāgata* means “realizes (reality) in exactly the way (previous Buddhas realized it)”. Or, in another way, because of teaching phenomena in exactly the way they exist, in a creative etymology in which letters have been transformed, it is One Who Teaches Thus (*de bzhin gshegs pa, \*tathā-darśana*) (*sngon gyi sangs rgyas rnam kyis ji ltar thugs su chud pa de bzhin du chos*

grains of sand of the River Ganges in attendance. The occasion when Vairocana was residing in Akaniṣṭha surrounded by this audience indicates the time of the teaching, the fourth of the five excellences.

The introduction then elaborates further on the host of Tathāgatas present in the audience in this way:<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, it is thus: the bodies of these limitless, innumerable Tathāgatas appear together in Jambudvīpa, completely filling it like sesame seeds [fill a sesame pod]. Also, from each Tathāgata's body innumerable, limitless Buddha-fields appear.

Here we find an expression of the proliferation of Buddha-fields (also called Pure Lands) found in Mahāyāna literature—and particularly in Pure Land texts and some of the visionary Perfection of Wisdom texts. While the use of the sesame simile occurs again just below in the *Compendium of Principles*—at the beginning of the enlightenment narrative that is such a crucial feature of the tantra<sup>138</sup>—here its presence seems rather abrupt. It is possible that this represents material added later to the *Compendium of Principles*, or material added from a source other than that of the description of Vairocana's qualities, the audience, and so forth. I will discuss further the possibility that the tantra was composed from multiple sources below.

---

*nyid thugs su chud pas na sangs rgyas ni de bzhin gshegs pa ste gshegs pa ni thugs su chud pa'i don yin pa'i phyir ro/ yang na chos rnams ji ltar gnas pa de bzhin du ston par mdzad pas na nges pa'i tshig gi tshul gyis yi ge bsgyur ba byas pas de bzhin gshegs pa'o/; Śākyamitra, Kosala Ornament, P3326, vol. 70, 192.4.5-192.4.6).*

<sup>137</sup> *de yang 'di ltar 'dzam bu'i gling na de bzhin gshegs pa tshad med grangs med pa de dag gi skus kyang til gyi gang bu bzhin du gang bar snang ngo/ (Compendium of Principles, P112, vol. 4, 219.1.6-219.1.7).*

<sup>138</sup> *Compendium of Principles, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.3-219.4.4.*

After the description of the audience, the introduction indicates that the fifth excellence, the teaching, is to follow: “In these Buddha-fields this mode of doctrine is taught.”<sup>139</sup> This consists of the various maṇḍalas and the teaching of their rites that comprise the body of the text.

The tantra continues with a description of Mahāvairocana that seems to be pasted in without any clear relation to what precedes it in the tantra, or to what follows it. The long description of Vairocana’s qualities is situated within the context of the five excellences. It not only distinguishes the salient features of Vairocana, the teacher of the tantra, but it also indicates the location and audience: Vairocana was residing in the abode of the king of the gods of Akaniṣṭha, accompanied by 999,000,000 Bodhisattvas. Within this there is even a sub-description of Akaniṣṭha, but this too is in a particular context—the location of the teaching—and so relates to both the material that comes before it and the material that follows it.

In contrast to the litany of Vairocana’s qualities at the beginning of the text, the long description of Mahāvairocana (which spans more than one and a half folio sides) is not set in any context; it is simply a description. There has been no previous mention of Mahāvairocana (“Great Vairocana”; Tib: *rnam par snang mdzad chen po*, usually abbreviated to *rnam snang chen po*), and a search of an electronic edition of the *Compendium of Principles* located no other references to Mahāvairocana in the tantra.

Butön uses the two terms with two distinct meanings throughout his several Yoga Tantra texts. For instance, he speaks of the three meditative stabilizations (*ting nge ’dzin gsum, tri-samādhi*) as “the method of attaining [the states of] Vairocana and Mahāvairocana.”<sup>140</sup> Butön elucidates the difference between Vairocana and

---

<sup>139</sup> *sangs rgyas kyi zhing de dag na yang chos kyi tshul ’di ’chad do/* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.1.7).

<sup>140</sup> *rnam snang dang rnam snang chen po thob pa’i thabs* (Butön, *Ship*, 12b.1-12b.2).

Mahāvairocana by quoting from both Ānandagarbha’s *Commentary on the Earlier Part of the Compendium of Principles*<sup>141</sup> and Śākyamitra’s *Kosala Ornament*. Butön presents Ānandagarbha’s explanation of the difference this way:<sup>142</sup>

Someone asks, “What is the difference between these two?” The one who became manifested and completely buddhified in Akaniṣṭha—the essence of the bodies of the five Tathāgatas—is Vairocana. Vairocana’s non-dualistic mind and the sphere of reality having the character of beginninglessness and endlessness which serves as the cause of generation in the mode of Vairocana and Vajrasattva and so forth who are arisen from [that non-dual] mind are Mahāvairocana.

Śākyamitra characterizes Mahāvairocana in this way:<sup>143</sup>

Mahāvairocana is the nature of enlightened wisdom—liberation from the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience—that which causes the thorough display of the individually appearing natures of all things.

In contrast, he states, “Vairocana is a Form Body.”

Thus, Vairocana is the enlightened form of the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi (aka Siddhārtha; I will discuss his enlightenment narrative below). In contrast,

---

<sup>141</sup> This refers to the first part of Ānandagarbha’s *Illumination of the Principles*, P3333 (Toh. 2510), vol. 71.

<sup>142</sup> *’di gnyis kyi khyad par ci zhig yin zhe na/ ’og min gyi gnas su mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa de/ de bzhin gshegs pa lnga’i sku’i ngo bo nyid ni/ rnam par snang mdzad yin la/ de nyid kyi gnyis su med pa’i sems dang sems las byung ba’i rnam par snang mdzad dang/ rdo rje sems dpa’ la sogs pa’i tshul du bskyed pa’i rgyur gyur pa chos kyi dbyings/ thog ma dang tha ma med pa’i mtshan nyid can ni/ rnam par snang mdzad chen po yin no/* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 10b.4-10b.6).

<sup>143</sup> *rnam par snang mdzad chen po ni/ ye shes kyi rang bzhin te/ nyon mongs pa dang/ shes bya’i sgrib pa las rnam par grol ba/ dngos po thams cad kyi rang bzhin so sor snang ba yang dag par ston par spyod pa’o/* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 10b.6-10b.7).

Mahāvairocana represents the non-dualistic expression of enlightened mind—the beginningless and endless mind of enlightenment, pure of all defilements and so forth—and reality which it realizes. This non-dual entity of the mind of enlightenment and the sphere of reality—that is, Mahāvairocana—gives rise to the various expressions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (and, it seems, to the appearances of all things). Butön sums this up elsewhere in his *Extensive Explanation* by describing Mahāvairocana as “the non-duality of the sphere of reality [emptiness] and enlightened wisdom”<sup>144</sup>

Following the litany of Mahāvairocana’s attributes—which appears without any explanation of how it might relate to the material it precedes or follows—there is a presentation in verse of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra’s qualities. This is the debut of Samantabhadra (“All Good”; Tib: *kun tu bzang po*) in the *Compendium of Principles*. There is no explicit link made between Samantabhadra and Mahāvairocana or his list of attributes. However, after listing Samantabhadra’s qualities, the text states, “The Supramundane Victor mind of great enlightenment, the great Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, resides in the minds of all Tathāgatas.”<sup>145</sup> Thus, unlike Mahāvairocana, he is tied into the larger narrative of the introduction through his relationship to all Tathāgatas. Additionally, it is possible that Samantabhadra represents the embodiment of Mahāvairocana, since, as we have seen, Mahāvairocana represents the non-dual entity of enlightened wisdom (or the mind of enlightenment) and the sphere of reality, and Samantabhadra here is described as the mind of enlightenment. Samantabhadra becomes the central figure of tantric traditions transmitted to Tibet beginning in the middle of the

---

<sup>144</sup> *dbyings dang ye shes gnyis su med pa* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 9a.2).

<sup>145</sup> *bcom ldan byang chub chen po'i thugs/ byang chub sems dpa' chen kun tu bzang po ni de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs la gnas so/* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.2-219.4.3). The Tibetan text treats *bcom ldan byang chub chen po'i thugs* as the last line of verse, while Yamada’s Sanskrit edition treats the corresponding Sanskrit, *bhagavān mahābodhicittaḥ*, as the beginning of the prose section (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7).

eight century, so it is possible that his appearance in the introduction to the *Compendium of Principles* represents an early stage of his development in Indian tantra. It is also possible that this material represents a slightly later stratum of Buddhist tantra that was incorporated into the text as it underwent revision. In any case, the presentation of Samantabhadra and his attributes is at least somewhat contextualized: he resides in the minds of all Tathāgatas, and there has already been some discussion about all Tathāgatas earlier in the *Compendium of Principles*.

Samantabhadra does appear in the enlightenment narrative that follows, although it is not clear whether the term is used as a name or simply as an adjectival description or epithet for the mind of enlightenment. In any case, as with the presentation of Mahāvairocana's attributes, the litany of Samantabhadra's attributes seems rather disconnected from the rest of the tantra. The litanies of the respective qualities of Mahāvairocana and Samantabhadra perhaps represent independent texts (or sections thereof) spliced into the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles*.

The purpose of such an operation is not immediately clear. It is possible that the section on Mahāvairocana is designed to communicate the more abstract qualities of enlightened mind and the state of enlightenment, and, although they are not that dissimilar from the attributes of Vairocana with which the *Compendium of Principles* opens, that this represents a later stratum of development. The characterization of Samantabhadra as the mind of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi sems, bodhicitta*) perhaps ties him in with Mahāvairocana, which is the mind of enlightenment and reality as undifferentiable. It also perhaps connects to the narrative of the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi's enlightenment through the process of the five manifest enlightenments (Tib: *mngon byang lnga*; Skt: *pañca-abhisambodhi*), in which the generation of the mind of enlightenment is described as "*samantabhadra*" ("all-good"); and to the generation of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, in which the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra appears as the mind of

all Tathāgatas.<sup>146</sup> It is possible that the litany of Samantabhadra’s attributes was an independent entity added as further description for the term “*samantabhadra*” that occurs in the enlightenment narrative; however, it would seem more logical to place such a description *after* the enlightenment narrative rather than before it. It is also possible that the description of Samantabhadra’s qualities represents a later (or at least separate) development inserted into the text to expand on the references to Samantabhadra in the sections on the five manifest enlightenments and the generation of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. Whatever the case, the passages on Mahāvairocana and Samantabhadra are not explicitly tied to the rest of the tantra. Thus, these two sections, although perhaps related to each other, seem to float unmoored in the waters of the tantra that surround them.

Stephen Hodge has suggested that in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhist literature (which includes tantras) texts are often reworked, and that this process sometimes involves a “new front-end”—the insertion of new material at the beginning of a text.<sup>147</sup> Hodge discusses such a process in the context of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, suggesting that the entire first chapter of this important Buddhist tantra existed as an independent Mahāyāna work before being incorporated into the text.<sup>148</sup> The *Compendium of Principles* begins with seemingly unrelated sections on Vairocana, Mahāvairocana, Samantabhadra, Śākyamuni’s enlightenment narrative, and the generation of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala that follow one after the other without any transition or explanation of how they relate to each other. Thus, it is possible that the rather haphazard character of the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles* reflects the

---

<sup>146</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs kun tu bzang po zhes bya ba* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 220.3.3-220.3.4).

<sup>147</sup> Stephen Hodge, personal communication, April 17, 2002.

<sup>148</sup> Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana*, pp. 14-15.



process of the tantra's composition and perhaps its compilation from multiple sources and its reworking over time.

After the passage in which it is revealed that Bodhisattva Samantabhadra resides in the minds of all Tathāgatas, the frame-story of the *Compendium of Principles* begins. This is the narrative of the final stage of Śākyamuni's enlightenment, albeit recast, as we shall see, in tantric terms.<sup>149</sup> There is no transition out of the Samantabhadra section. Rather, after “The Supramundane Victor mind of great enlightenment, the great Bodhisattva Samantabhadra resides in the minds of all Tathāgatas,” the tantra abruptly and disjointedly continues, “Then all Tathāgatas thoroughly filled this Buddha-field as for example [sesame seeds completely fill] a sesame pod.”<sup>150</sup> Then all these Tathāgatas assemble and proceed to where the great Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi is seated on the platform of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi snying po, bodhimaṇḍa*). They display their Complete Enjoyment Bodies for his benefit and address him thus:<sup>151</sup>

Son of [good] lineage, how will you complete the unsurpassed complete and perfect enlightenment, you who act with energy for all austerities without the knowledge of the principles of all Ones Gone Thus?

The dialogue continues as Sarvārthasiddhi, compelled by all the Tathāgatas who have gathered and addressed him, rises from the unfluctuating meditative stabilization (*mi g.yo*

---

<sup>149</sup> I am summarizing the narrative mainly from the Tibetan ( *Compendium of Principles* , P112, vol. 4, 219.4.3-220.2.7.

<sup>150</sup> *de nas de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi/ /sangs rgyas kyi zhing 'di dper na til gyi gang bu bzhin du yongs su gang bar gyur to/* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.3-219.4.4).

<sup>151</sup> Tibetan: *rigs kyi bu khyod kyi gang gi phyir de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid mngon par ma rtogs par dka' ba spyod pa thams cad la spro ba bskyed cing/ ji ltar bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub mngon par rdzogs par bya snyam* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.5-219.4.6); Sanskrit: *katham kulaputrānuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambhotsyase, yas tvam sarvatathāgatatatvānabhijñatayā sarvaduḥkarāṇy utsahasiti* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7).

*ba'i ting nge 'dzin, āsphānaka-samādhi*) and asks them what the principles of all Tathāgatas are like and how he should practice. As I will argue in chapter three, the ramifications of this short query posed to the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi by all the Buddhas are far-ranging not only for the *Compendium of Principles* and the corpus of texts later classified as Yoga Tantra but also for the establishment of tantric Buddhism itself and its very claim as an authentic Buddhist development.

The Tathāgatas' response to Sarvārthasiddhi's question and the dialogue that follows presents the process of the five manifest enlightenments (Tib. *mngon par byang chub pa lnga*, usually abbreviated to *mngon byang lnga*; Skt: *pañcābhisambodhi*)—the process by which the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi becomes enlightened. This is *the* foundational practice set forth in the *Compendium of Principles*, as well as many of the texts it directly spawned. Furthermore, it can be viewed as the *sine qua non* of Buddhist tantric practice subsequent to the *Compendium of Principles*. I will discuss this in more detail below (see p. 176 ff) but will summarize it here.

The Tathāgatas instruct Sarvārthasiddhi to examine and meditate on his own mind and to repeat the mantra *oṃ citta-prativedhaṃ karomi* (oṃ I perform penetration of the mind). The Bodhisattva responds that he sees what he has realized as a moon-disc at his heart. The structure of the Tathāgatas instructing the Bodhisattva in a specific meditative practice (which includes a specific mantra to recite) is employed for the four subsequent manifest enlightenments as well.

This is the first of the five manifest enlightenments. Commentarial traditions call this “manifest enlightenment through examination of the mind” and identify it with the mirror-like wisdom (from among the five aspects of a Buddha's wisdom) and the Buddha Akṣobhya, head of the vajra family.<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 7b.4-7b.5.

The narrative continues as the Tathāgatas explain to Sarvārthasiddhi that this mind he has just realized the nature of is naturally luminous, and that it is transformed according to how it is trained or cultivated, just like a white cloth changes when it is dyed. They then instruct him to generate the mind of enlightenment, and provide him with a mantra with which to do so. The Bodhisattva reports that he sees a second moon disc.<sup>153</sup> This is the manifest enlightenment arisen from generating the mind of enlightenment, and is identified with the wisdom of equality and Ratnasambhava of the jewel family.<sup>154</sup>

Next, the Tathāgatas direct Sarvārthasiddhi to manifest the essence of all Tathāgatas—the all-good (*samantabhadra*) mind generation—and to stabilize it through visualizing a vajra on the moon-disc and reciting a specific mantra. The Bodhisattva reports back that he sees a vajra on the moon-disc at his heart. This is the manifest enlightenment arisen from a stable vajra, and is identified with the wisdom of individual analysis and Amitābha of the lotus (or doctrine) family.<sup>155</sup>

In the fourth manifest enlightenment all tathagatas instruct the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi to stabilize further the mind he has been developing, and they bless him and consecrate him with the name “Vajradhātu.” The Bodhisattva follows their instructions for meditation and recitation of another mantra, and reports that he sees all Tathāgatas’ bodies as himself. This is the manifest enlightenment through having a vajra nature, and is identified with the wisdom of achieving activities and Amoghasiddhi of the action family. This is the manifest enlightenment through having a vajra-nature.<sup>156</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> There is debate within commentarial traditions on this point. According to Butön, Buddhaguhya and Śākyamitra assert that in the first manifest enlightenment the moon appears as a crescent moon and that this is then completed in the second manifest enlightenment. Ānandagarbha, following the explanatory *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, says there are two individual moon-discs (Butön, *Ship*, 8b.1-8b.4).

<sup>154</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 8b.4.

<sup>155</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 9a.4.

<sup>156</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 10a.1.

In the fifth and final manifest enlightenment all Tathāgatas instruct the Bodhisattva in another meditation and mantra. With this, the Bodhisattva Vajradhātu (aka Sarvārthasiddhi) becomes a Buddha. This is the manifest enlightenment through being exactly as all Tathāgatas are, and is identified with the wisdom of reality and Vairocana of the Tathāgata family.<sup>157</sup>

Although Sarvārthasiddhi has now become a Buddha, he requests and receives from all the assembled Tathāgatas further blessings and consecrations. Butön identifies this continuation of the five manifest enlightenments as the process of the four magical displays (*cho 'phrul bzhi*, \**catur-prātihārya*).<sup>158</sup>

This narrative of the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi's enlightenment through the five manifest enlightenments (and the four magical displays) represents the frame-story of the *Compendium of Principles*. Although the relationship of the enlightenment narrative to the material that precedes it (descriptions of the attributes of Vairocana, Mahāvairocana, and Samantabhadra ) is not clear, its relationship to what follows is less confusing. The narrative leads out of the enlightenment account and into the generation of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala as the Supramundane Victor Vajradhātu leaves the site of his enlightenment—the Akaniṣṭha Pure Land—and travels to the peak of Mt. Meru. Here he is blessed again as all Tathāgatas and sits on the lion-throne. He is then joined by the four Tathāgatas who lead the four Buddha families—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Lokeśvararāja (aka Amitāyus), and Amoghasiddhi, who are also blessed as all Tathāgatas—seated in the four cardinal directions.

Although we find in this section of the narrative continuity with Sarvārthasiddhi's enlightenment narrative, we also find some discontinuities. Throughout the process of

---

<sup>157</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 10a.7.

<sup>158</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 10b.1.

the five manifest enlightenments the Bodhisattva is called Sarvārthasiddhi until he undergoes the name consecration during the fourth manifest enlightenment. After this point, he is referred to by his new name, “Vajradhātu”; this is the name by which Sarvārthasiddhi is known when he becomes a Buddha. Furthermore, it is under this name that he leaves Akaniṣṭha and travels to the peak of Mt. Meru. However, after arriving there and being joined by the Buddhas at the heads of the four Buddha families, Vajradhātu is referred to as Vairocana. The name “Vajradhātu” does not appear again in the body of the tantra. In fact, it appears only three more times in the entire text: once in the Supplement (*rgyud phyi ma, uttara-tantra*) and twice in the Second Supplement (*rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma, uttarottara-tantra*). As I will discuss below, the Supplements are most probably later additions to the text, so for all intents and purposes the Tathāgata Vajradhātu—the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi who became a Buddha through the five manifest enlightenments—disappears from the text and is replaced by the Tathāgata Vairocana. This happens abruptly: Vajradhātu goes to Mt. Meru and then is suddenly referred to exclusively as Vairocana, with no further mention of Vajradhātu.

This section also includes what appears to be a gratuitous reference to Śākyamuni in an apparent attempt to link explicitly the enlightenment narrative with the historical Buddha. Having blessed themselves as all Tathāgatas, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Lokeśvararāja, and Amoghasiddhi then observe or contemplate the equality of all directions before seating themselves in the four directions. This observation or contemplation is made “by way of (or due to) the Supramundane Victor Śākyamuni’s realization of the sameness of all Tathāgatas.”<sup>159</sup> While the meaning of this passage (in

---

<sup>159</sup> *bcom ldan 'das shākyā thub pa de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad mnyam pa nyid du rab tu rtogs pa'i phyir phyogs thams cad mnyam pa nyid du dmigs nas phyogs bzhir bzhugs so/* (P112, vol. 4, 220.3.2-220.3.3); *bhagavataḥ śākyamunes tathāgatasya sarvasamatāsuprativedhatvāt sarvadiksamatām abhyālambya catasṛṣu dikṣu niṣaṇṇāḥ* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 10).

both Tibetan and Sanskrit) is somewhat unclear to me, the line seems to be spliced into the narrative without apparent reason. Śākyamuni has in fact been mentioned nowhere else in the tantra to this point, even though it would seem logical to identify him as the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi after he has become a Buddha through the five manifest enlightenments. However, the name Vajradhātu is used rather than Śākyamuni.

I will detail the generation and arrangement of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala below (see p. 72). Here, the disjunctions just discussed likely indicate yet again the rather piecemeal compilation of the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles*. It is quite possible that the narrative of the generation of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala existed as a separate entity that was incorporated into the *Compendium of Principles*. How early this independent text—and the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala it describes—might have existed is unclear. However, the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*, another important tantra dated to approximately the same time period (late seventh or early eighth century)<sup>160</sup> as the *Compendium of Principles*, has a section of fourteen verses on the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala.<sup>161</sup> Thus, it seems likely that the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala existed in some stage of development prior to the compilation of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>162</sup> Given its importance not only in the *Compendium of Principles* but also in other included under the rubric of Yoga Tantras as well as in the development of Indian Buddhist tantra as a whole, it is quite possible that the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala represents the core practice of the

---

<sup>160</sup> Ronald M. Davidson, “The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī,” in *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 105 (hereafter abbreviated as “Litany”).

<sup>161</sup> Davidson, “Litany,” pp. 108-109.

<sup>162</sup> For a brief discussion of the developments that occur in the composition of maṇḍalas as drawn from Chinese translations, see Matsunaga, “A History of Tantric Buddhism,” pp. 174-176.

*Compendium of Principles* around which the rest of the tantra was composed/ compiled.<sup>163</sup>

## The Body of the Tantra

Following the introduction and narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment, the greater part of the *Compendium of Principles* consists of a series of maṇḍalas and their respective rites. For each maṇḍala, the deities that comprise it are first emanated, and then the maṇḍala is taught. This teaching includes both a presentation of the arrangement of the deities in the maṇḍala and an explanation of the rites that are performed therein.

In the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*, the five Buddhas of the five Buddha families enter into absorption in meditative stabilization and then emanate the deities of the maṇḍala through uttering their respective mantras (these short mantras are, in most cases, knowledge-mantras [Tib: *rig pa*; Skt: *vidyā*<sup>164</sup>]). This is an abbreviated rendering of the process; I have omitted several steps involving the emanation of light-rays from the hearts of deities that purify all worlds, the withdrawal of these rays back into the deities' hearts where they transform into various other deities, and so forth.

Butön summarizes this process in this way: since the first section of the *Compendium of Principles* is associated with the Tathāgata Buddha family, the maṇḍalas in this section are emanated by the five Tathāgatas. Then Vajrasattva, the Universal Monarch (*'khor los*

---

<sup>163</sup> I will argue below that the process of meditation detailed in the narrative of the five manifest enlightenments is a significant innovation for Indian Buddhist tantra. However, it is not explicitly related to the maṇḍala cycles presented in the body of the *Compendium of Principles*. Thus, although it is a major development for tantra in general, it likely represents an independent practice and text incorporated into the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles* after the four sections of the body had been composed/ compiled.

<sup>164</sup> The text actually reads *rig pa'i mchog / vidyottama*, but I take *mchog/ uttama* to be the adjective "supreme" rather than part of the name of the mantra itself.

*sgyur pa, cakravartin*) of the Tathāgata family,<sup>165</sup> carries out the explanation of the maṇḍalas and the teaching of their respective rites.<sup>166</sup> For the process of emanating the maṇḍalas of the other sections of the *Compendium of Principles* Vairocana is often joined by other deities—the Buddhas of the four directions, the Universal Monarchs of the four Buddha families, and so forth. The teaching of the maṇḍalas and their rites, however, is handled by the Universal Monarch of the Buddha family associated with that section of the tantra.

The second, third, and fourth sections all begin with all Tathāgatas assembling, praising the lead Bodhisattva of that section—Vajrasattva in the form of the Universal Monarch connected with the section—and requesting him to generate the deities of his Buddha family. The second section is anomalous in that it consists of two cycles of maṇḍalas whereas the other three sections have only a single cycle. I will further discuss the second section below (see p. 77 ff). For each of the four maṇḍalas of each of the four sections, the extensive rite that is set forth comprises the three meditative stabilizations—the meditative stabilizations of initial application (*dang po sbyor ba'i ting nge 'dzin, ādiyoga-samādhi*), supreme king of maṇḍalas (*dkyil 'khor rgyal mchog gi ting nge 'dzin, maṇḍalarājāgri-samādhi*), and supreme king of activities (*las rgyal mchog gi ting nge 'dzin, karmarājāgri-samādhi*). Although I have not found a clear elucidation of these three phases, initial application seems to include all the activities involved with the maṇḍala up to the point of the actual emanation of the deities, supreme king of maṇḍalas

---

<sup>165</sup> The tantra itself identifies this deity as Vajrapāṇi. However, at the beginning of the emanation of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala, Vajrasattva transforms into Vajrapāṇi, so there is some justification for identifying Vajrasattva as the Universal Monarch of the first section. It is possible that this substitution of Vajrapāṇi for Vajrasattva reflects continuing developments in Indian Buddhist tantra and the evolution of wrathful forms of deities.

<sup>166</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 13a.6-13a.7. Although Butön states that Vajrasattva performs the activities of explanation in the first section, the tantra in fact identifies him as Vajrapāṇi. However, these two figures are often interchangeable.



seems to consist of the emanation of the maṇḍala, and supreme king of activities seems to encompass all rites and activities subsequent to the emanation of the maṇḍala.<sup>167</sup> Whatever the exact parameters of the three meditative stabilizations may be, they comprise the complete rite in its most extensive form.

Each of the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles* also presents a middle-length rite and an abbreviated rite. The middle-length procedure for each section is associated with the four-mudrā maṇḍala and is a condensed version of the extensive rite set forth in the section's four main maṇḍalas<sup>168</sup> (viz., the great maṇḍala, retention-maṇḍala, doctrine-maṇḍala, and action-maṇḍala). While the particulars concerning this maṇḍala are not presented clearly in the *Compendium of Principles* itself, emanation of the maṇḍala is effected by Vairocana and the Buddhas of the four directions—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitāyus, and Amoghasiddhi.<sup>169</sup> The Bodhisattva who serves as the Universal Monarch for each section—in the first section this is Vajrapāṇi—then explains

---

<sup>167</sup> Daniel Cozort describes these three meditative stabilizations in the context of Highest Yoga Tantra ( *bla med rnal 'byor rgyud, anuttarayogatantra*) in this way: initial application is visualization of the external environment of the maṇḍala as well as its central deities; supreme king of maṇḍalas is the complete generation of the maṇḍala with all its deities; and supreme king of activities involves oneself, now visualized as the various deities of the maṇḍala, carrying out those deities' respective compassionate activities (Daniel Cozort, *Highest Yoga Tantra: An Introduction to the Esoteric Buddhism of Tibet* [Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1986], p. 51).

Stephan Beyer also presents a rendering of the three meditative stabilizations in Highest Yoga Tantra, albeit specifically from the *Diamond Garland Tantra* of the Guhyasamāja cycle: initial application involves preparatory activities and the generation of the central deity-pair of the maṇḍala; supreme king of maṇḍalas consists of the generation of all the deities of the maṇḍala; and supreme king of activities are all the deities of the maṇḍala engaging in activities for the benefit of all beings (Stephan Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973], p. 117).

<sup>168</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi rigs kyi rtogs* [sic; read *rtog*] *pa'i rgyal po chen po'i cho ga rgyas pa 'di'i dngos grub thams cad bsdu ba'i don du* (P112, vol. 4, 238.2.1); *asya sarvatathāgatakulamahākālpavidhivistarasya sarvasiddhisamgrahārtham* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 142).

<sup>169</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 238.1.8-238.3.1; Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, pp. 142-143.

how to draw the maṇḍala. However, this description is terse and does not depict the composition of the maṇḍala except in a brief and cryptic fashion.

The Indian exegete Śākyamitra, however, explains that the structure of the maṇḍala is similar to that of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala—it has four sides and four doors.<sup>170</sup> In terms of the residents of the maṇḍala, he explains that in Vairocana’s location in the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala—that is, in the center—one sets the physical form of a Buddha,<sup>171</sup> and in the locations of Akṣobhya and so forth—the Buddhas of the four directions—one draws the four female deities Sattvavajri and so forth.<sup>172</sup> Śākyamitra then further explains that in the single inner maṇḍala sealed with vajra-words(?) one places Vairocana, and in the middle of the eight pillars one sets the four mudrās—the vajra mudrā, jewel mudrā, lotus mudrā, and action mudrā.<sup>173</sup> We see here the reason this type of maṇḍala is designated “the four-mudrā maṇḍala”, since it consists of a central Buddha figure surrounded by four mudrās. Śākyamitra explicitly states this when he poses the hypothetical question, “Isn’t it the case that this also has a fifth [mudrā]—the

---

<sup>170</sup> *rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i tshul du gru bzhir bgyi zhing sgo bzhi* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 271.5.3-271.5.4).

<sup>171</sup> This seems to indicate a statue of the deity, as indicated by the use of the verb “*bzhag*” (in Tibetan translation)—to put or place—rather than the verb “*bri*”—to draw. This is how Giebel understands it also (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” n. 43, p. 138).

<sup>172</sup> *rnam par snang mdzad kyi gnas su sangs rgyas kyi sku gzugs la mi bskyod pa la sogs pa'i gnas su sems dpa' rdo rje ma la sogs pa bzhi bri bar bya'o/* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 271.5.5-271.5.6).

Amoghavajra states that the four-mudrā maṇḍalas of the second, third, and fourth sections of the *Compendium of Principles* consist of twenty-one deities. However, as Giebel states, the import of this number is not clear (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” p. 149 and n. 84, p. 149).

<sup>173</sup> *rdo rje tshig gi btab pa'i nang gi dkyil 'khor gcig tu rnam par snang mdzad bzhag par bya'o/ lhag ma ka ba brgyad kyi dbus su rdo rje la sogs pa'i phyag rgya bzhi dgod par bya.../sogs pa zhes smos pas na rin po che dang/ padma dang/ las kyi phyag rgya rnam bsdu'o/* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 271.5.6-271.5.8).

Buddha mudrā?”<sup>174</sup> He answers, “This is indeed true, but the fifth mudrā is not drawn; the actual physical form is set down. Four are drawn as mudrās; therefore, the name of the maṇḍala is designated from those.”<sup>175</sup>

Later, following his explanation of the rites performed in the four-mudrā maṇḍala, Śākyamitra’s explication of a brief passage in the *Compendium of Principles* elucidates five individual four-mudrā maṇḍalas. The first is that discussed above, with Vairocana at the center surrounded by four mudrās. This is referred to in the tantra itself as the “Vajra-Feat Four-Mudrā Maṇḍala.”<sup>176</sup> The tantra continues by saying that the maṇḍalas of Akṣobhya and so forth should be drawn just like the Vajra-Feat Four-Mudrā Maṇḍala, in the manner of a four-mudrā maṇḍala and with their respective mudrās.<sup>177</sup> Śākyamitra’s commentary explicitly renders the five individual four-mudrā maṇḍalas, saying:<sup>178</sup>

The same is extended—“the four-mudrā maṇḍalas of Akṣobhya and so forth also should be drawn” exactly as is Tathāgata Vairocana’s four-mudrā

<sup>174</sup> *dris pa lnga pa sangs rgyas kyi phyag rgya yang 'di na yod pa ma yin nam zhes na/* , (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 271.4.7).

<sup>175</sup> *bden mod kyi de ni 'bri ba ma yin gyi sku gzugs dngos su bzhag par bya ba yin la/ gzhi* [sic; read *bzhi*] *ni phyag rgyar bris pa yin pas na de rnams las dkyil 'khor gyi ming btags pa yin no/*, (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 271.4.7-271.4.8).

<sup>176</sup> *rdo rje'i dngos grub gyi phyag rgya bzhi pa'i dkyil 'khor* ( *Compendium of Principles* , P112, vol. 4, 238.5.3), *vajrasiddhicaturmudrāmaṇḍala* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 147).

<sup>177</sup> *rdo rje'i dngos grub gyi phyag rgya bzhi pa'i dkyil 'khor ji lta ba bzhin du mi g.yo ba'i dkyil 'khor la sogs pa dkyil 'khor thams cad phyag rgya bzhi pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi tshul du rang rang gyi phyag rgya rnams su bris* ( *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 238.5.3-238.5.4), *yathā vajrasiddhicaturmudrāmaṇḍalam evam Akṣobhyādini sarvamaṇḍalāni caturmudrāmaṇḍalayogena likhet/ svābhiḥ svābhir mudrābhiḥ* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 147).

<sup>178</sup> *bcom ldan 'das rnam par snang mdzad kyi phyag rgya bzhi pa'i dkyil 'khor ji lta ba de bzhin du/ mi bskyod pa la sogs pa'i phyag rgya bzhi pa'i dkyil 'khor yang bri bar bya'o zhes bsgre ba yin no/ sogs pa smos pas ni rin chen 'byung ldan dang tshe dpag med pa dang gdon mi za bar gyub pa rnams bsdu'o/* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 273.5.2-273.5.3).

maṇḍala [that is, the Vajra-Feat Four-Mudrā Maṇḍala]. Ratnasambhava, Amitāyus, and Amoghasiddhi are included in the statement “and so forth.”

Slightly later, in discussing the respective mudrās, he explains that the four mudrās to be drawn in Akṣobhya’s four-mudrā maṇḍala are a vajra, hook, arrow, and *mgu ba*.<sup>179</sup>

Thus, each of the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles* has five individual four-mudrā maṇḍalas.<sup>180</sup> The ninth-century Indian exegete Ānandagarbha explicitly indicates this when he states that the Vajradhātu section—the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*—has ten maṇḍalas.<sup>181</sup> Since there is only a single great maṇḍala, retention maṇḍala, doctrine maṇḍala, action maṇḍala, and single-mudrā maṇḍala in the first section, there must be five four-mudrā maṇḍalas to bring the total number of maṇḍalas to ten. This is Butön’s position, as he describes the four-mudrā maṇḍalas of the first section in this way:<sup>182</sup>

Concerning the four-mudrā maṇḍala: the [Buddhas of the] five families, through meditative stabilization and essence-mantras, emanate their respective four-mudrā maṇḍalas.

---

<sup>179</sup> *mi bskyod pa’i dkyil ’khor du rdo rje dang lcags kyu dang mda’ dang mgu ba rnam bri bar bya’o/* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 273.5.5-273.5.6). Both the Peking (273.5.6) and dGa’ ldan gser bris (516.1) editions of the text read *mgu ba*. As I have not found this word in any lexicographical sources, I will leave it untranslated here, although it most likely is a hand implement of some type.

<sup>180</sup> Snellgrove seems to have missed the fact that there are five four-mudrā maṇḍalas in each section of the *Compendium of Principles*, and also that the four Buddhas surrounding the central figure appear as mudrās (here meaning instruments) such as vajras, hooks, lotuses, and so forth (Snellgrove, *Facsimile Reproduction*, p. 38).

<sup>181</sup> *rdo rje dbyings kyi dum bu la/ de bzhin gshegs pa’i rigs kyi dkyil ’khor ni bcu’o/* (Ānandagarbha, *Illumination of the Principles*, P3333, vol. 71, 146.5.7-146.5.8).

<sup>182</sup> *phyag rgya bzhi’i dkyil ’khor ni/ rigs lngas ting nge ’dzin dang/ snying pos rang rang gi phyag rgya bzhi’i dkyil ’khor sprul* (Butön, *Ship*, 13a.4).

For the four-mudrā maṇḍalas of the third and fourth sections of the *Compendium of Principles*, Butön explicitly states that there are five four-mudrā maṇḍalas.<sup>183</sup>

The four-mudrā maṇḍalas, employed in the middle-length rites of the *Compendium of Principles*, each consists of a central Buddha figure (represented at least theoretically by a statue) surrounded by the four female Bodhisattvas in the form of a mudrā such as a vajra, lotus, hook, and so forth. Each of the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles* has five four-mudrā maṇḍalas. While these maṇḍalas are emanated by the five Buddhas, it is not clear whether each Buddha emanates his own four-mudrā maṇḍala or whether all five Buddhas together emanate each of the five maṇḍalas.

The single-mudrā maṇḍala and its rites represent the most abbreviated procedure set forth in the *Compendium of Principles*. From its description in the tantra and Śākyamitra's explanation,<sup>184</sup> this maṇḍala appears to consist solely of a single figure (and thus the “single-mudrā” nomenclature).<sup>185</sup> In the first section Vairocana emanates the single-mudrā maṇḍala in which the single deity is Vajrasattva (who likely represents Vairocana), and then Vajrapāṇi—the Universal Monarch of the first section whom Butön refers to as Vajrasattva—teaches the maṇḍala rite. In the second section Vajrahūmkara appears to be the deity in the maṇḍala, and it is he who emanates and teaches the maṇḍala

---

<sup>183</sup> *phyag rgya bzhi'i pa'i dkyil 'khor lnga sprul* (Butön, *Ship*, 21a.6).

<sup>184</sup> Butön does not describe the composition of the single-mudrā maṇḍala. The eighth-century Indian exegete Amoghavajra indicates a multiple-deity maṇḍala in this way:

If one recites the *mantra* of Vairocana or [the *mantra* of] the Bodhisattva Vajrasattva, it comprises seventeen deities; in all other cases it comprises thirteen [deities] (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” p. 139).

However, as Giebel indicates, East Asian traditions have been vexed by this statement (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” n. 47, p. 140). Perhaps Amoghavajra is referring to seventeen or thirteen individual single-mudrā maṇḍalas, each with a different deity.

<sup>185</sup> Snellgrove has apparently missed the existence of the single-mudrā maṇḍala completely, as he never once mentions it in his summary of each of the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*.

as well. In the third section the identification of the solitary figure is unclear, but it might be Viśvarūpa; the maṇḍala is emanated and taught by Avalokiteśvara, the Universal Monarch of the third section. In the fourth section the presentation of the single-mudrā maṇḍala is so abbreviated that it is not described; however, according to Butön, Ākāśagarbha emanates and teaches this maṇḍala.<sup>186</sup>

At the end of each of the four sections that comprise the root tantra of the *Compendium of Principles* there is a short epilogue with which the section concludes. All Tathāgatas gather and, in order to certify the procedure set forth by the Universal Monarch (that is, the teaching of the maṇḍalas and their attendant rites) as an authentic Buddha-voiced teaching (*sangs rgyas kyi bka'*, *buddha-vacana*), they say, “Bravo for you, Vajrasattva!”<sup>187</sup> and so forth, and otherwise extol the teaching as supreme.

### **The Appended Fifth Section**<sup>188</sup>

The fifth section of the *Compendium of Principles* begins with the Supplement, also known as the Supplementary Tantra (*rgyud phyi ma, uttara-tantra*). Butön explains that while the teaching of the root tantra (that is, the first four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*) consists of the principles of all supramundane and worldly *doctrines* and is common for all beings (understood as all who would practice Yoga Tantra), the

---

<sup>186</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 22b.3.

<sup>187</sup> Tib: *rDo rje sems dpa' khyod legs so*; Tib: *sādhu te vajrasatvāya*.

<sup>188</sup> According to Japanese scholars, the eighth-century Indian tantric exegete Buddhaguhya quotes from all five sections of the *Compendium of Principles* (Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 29; drawn from Takeo Kitamura, “*Tantrārthāvatāra* o Chūshin to shita *Kongōchōkyō* no Kenkyū, I,” *Mikkyōgaku*, No. 7, 1970, pp. 6, 14-15; *ibid.*, II, *Mikkyōgaku*, No. 8, 1971, pp. 3, 6, 11, 19, and so forth.).

Amoghavajra, another Indian author of the eighth century, does not explicitly identify a fifth section in his Chinese summary of the *Compendium of Principles*. However, at the end of his discussion of the tantra—after he has finished describing the fourth section—he mentions additional material which seems to correspond to the fifth section (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” pp. 163-165).

Supplementary Tantra teaches the practice of supramundane *feats* and is for the benefit of the sharpest and most able Yoga Tantra trainees.<sup>189</sup>

The structure of the fifth section of the *Compendium of Principles* is different from that of its first four sections. Vajrapāṇi resumes his role as the lead Bodhisattva, and he teaches the cultivation of the four mudrās that are taught in the four great maṇḍalas of the first four sections of the tantra.<sup>190</sup> Rather than being labeled “extensive rites” as is done in the first four sections, the divisions in the Supplementary Tantra are into tantras—“the tantra of the extensive rite of the pledge-mudrā feat of all families” and so forth. Each “tantra of the extensive rite” is subdivided into four individual “tantras,” with one for each of the four Buddha families.<sup>191</sup> At the conclusion of the Supplement all Tathāgatas assemble, praise Vajrapāṇi, and thereby confirm what he has taught as authentic, just as they do at the end of the first four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*.

Although the divisions of the Supplement are called “tantras of the extensive rite,” their description is brief—far more so even than the terse descriptions of rites in the first four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*. In spite of their brevity, it is clear that the function of the rites that comprise the Supplementary Tantra is to elaborate on practices from the first four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*. The title of this section from the tantra itself—“the tantra of the extensive rites of the feats of the methods of all procedures from the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas*”<sup>192</sup>—reflects this,

---

<sup>189</sup> 'jig rten las 'das pa'i dngos grub sgrub pa gong ma'i yang gong ma'i sems can rjes su gzung ba'i don du rgyud phyi ma (Butön, *Ship*, 22b.5-22b.6).

<sup>190</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 22b.6.

<sup>191</sup> In some cases there is a fifth “tantra” at the beginning of the “tantra of the extensive rite”—a “tantra of the Tathāgatas” precedes the “tantra of the Tathāgata family.”

<sup>192</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsdu pa las brtag pa thams cad kyi thabs kyi cho ga rgyas pa'i rgyud* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 271.1.3); *Sarvatathāgatatatvasaṃgrahāt Sarvakalpopāya-siddhi-vidhivistara-tantram* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 475).

as does Butön's description of this section: rites of achieving feats related to the root maṇḍalas.<sup>193</sup>

The Second Supplement (*rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma, uttarottara-tantra*), which I also translate as Second Supplementary Tantra, structurally resembles the Supplement that precedes it. The teacher again is Vajrapāṇi, and the teaching consists of a series of tantras of extensive rites. However, the intended audience of the Second Supplement is different from that of the Supplement. According to Butön, the Second Supplement is taught for those trainees who are frightened by meditation and are strongly attached to activities.<sup>194</sup> These rites involve external activities such as making offerings to painted representations of deities and so forth. At the end of this subsection of the *Compendium of Principles* all Tathāgatas assemble and praise Vajrapāṇi, and thereby confirm the content of the Second Supplement as authentic Buddha-voiced doctrine.

In order to examine further the relationship between the Supplementary Tantra (and the Second Supplementary Tantra) and the four sections that comprise the body of the *Compendium of Principles* we must look at the case of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*, which precedes the *Compendium of Principles* both chronologically and doctrinally. Stephen Hodge has suggested that the Supplementary Tantra of this text in fact represents a summary of the rituals for the convenience of those employing them—a kind of ritual handbook—and that over time this extra-textual appendix came to be regarded as part of the tantra itself.<sup>195</sup>

It seems likely that this is also the case for the *Compendium of Principles*. Unlike the first four sections of the tantra, there are no maṇḍalas explicitly generated in the Supplement and Second Supplement. Rather, the rites described in these two subsections

---

<sup>193</sup> *rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor dang 'brel ba'i dngos grub sgrub pa'i cho ga* (Butön, *Ship*, 23b.1).

<sup>194</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 24a.3.

<sup>195</sup> Hodge, "Considerations," p. 71.



are clearly derived from the maṇḍalas and rites laid out in the four sections that constitute the body of the tantra. Additionally, the traditional account is that these two subsections are for the most capable and the least capable practitioners, respectively.

All these pieces of evidence support the contention that the Supplement and Second Supplement originated as extra-textual notes appended to the end of the tantra by those employing the text, and that over time these were absorbed into the text proper. However, it is not clear when the incorporation of the supplements into the text proper occurred. Buddhaguhya, who flourished in the middle of the eighth century, refers to the Supplement and Second Supplement, and Amoghavajra also refers to material from them—although he presents the tantra as consisting of only four sections—in a work written on the basis of Indian materials he gathered before 746 CE. Thus, it seems likely that the process of incorporation was occurring already at the beginning of the eighth century, and that by the middle of the century the Supplement and Second Supplement were considered to be part of the tantra proper.

## **Important Aspects of the First and Second Sections**

### **The Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala**

After the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi has become enlightened as Vajradhātu through the process of the five manifest enlightenments and this supreme enlightenment is then further stabilized and blessed, he travels to Mt. Meru. In the narrative, he is now referred to as Vairocana rather than as Vajradhātu. Butön specifies that this is the Emanation Body (*sprul sku, nirmāṇakāya*) Vairocana, and that he went to the tiered palace (*khang brtsegs, kuṭāgāra*) made of vajra-jewels on the peak of Mt. Meru, where he seats himself on the lion-seat (*seng ge gdan, \*siṃhāsana*).<sup>196</sup>

---

<sup>196</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 12a.4-12a.5.

There, he is joined by the Buddhas who head the other four Buddha families: Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Lokeśvararāja (aka Amitāyus or Amitābha), and Amoghasiddhi. After further blessing themselves as all Tathāgatas, Vairocana enters meditative stabilization and emits the essence-mantra “vajrasattva” from his heart, through which Vajrasattva, the first of the sixteen Bodhisattva residents of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala, is emanated. Following this are various activities such as emitting and drawing back light-rays that pervade all worlds with their beneficial presence, deities entering into and emerging from each other’s hearts, and so forth.

The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra is an integral part of this process, although it is not clear whether Samantabhadra is the embodiment of the minds of all Tathāgatas or is in fact another manifestation of and name for Vairocana; further investigation is required. It does appear that Samantabhadra is consecrated as the Universal Monarch (Tib: *'khor los sgyur pa*; Skt: *cakravartin*) of all Tathāgatas through the jeweled crown of all Tathāgatas consecration, and that he is then consecrated by all Tathāgatas as Vajrapāṇi through the “Vajrapāṇi” vajra-name consecration.<sup>197</sup> While Butön explains that the Universal Monarch of the first section is Vajrasattva,<sup>198</sup> in the tantra itself the names Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, Vajrapāṇi, and Vajradhara seem to be used indiscriminately and interchangeably. When all Tathāgatas gather and request the Universal Monarch to teach the maṇḍala by praising him with 108 names, the Universal Monarch is identified consecutively as “Lord of all Tathāgatas,” “Self-Vajrasattva,” “beginningless and endless,” and “Mahāvajradhara.”<sup>199</sup> To further cloud the waters, the beginning of the

---

<sup>197</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 221.1.1-221.1.3.

<sup>198</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs kyi 'khor los bsgyur ba po/ rdo rje sems dpas* (Butön, *Ship*, 13a.6-13a.7).

<sup>199</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi bdag po rang gi rdo rje sems dpa' thog ma dang tha ma med pa rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 229.1.2-229.1.3); *sarvatathāgatādhipatiṃ svavajrasatvam anādinidhanaṃ mahāvajradharam* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 60).

praise refers to the Universal Monarch with the names “Vajrasattva-Mahāsattva,” “Vajrasarvatathāgata,” “Samantabhadra,” “Vajrādya,” and “Vajrapāṇi.”<sup>200</sup>

In any event, Butön states that Vairocana emanates the sixteen Bodhisattvas, beginning with Vajrasattva<sup>201</sup> (I will elucidate all the deities of the maṇḍala below).

Then the four Buddhas of the four directions—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Lokeśvararāja (aka Amitāyus), and Amoghasiddhi—emanate their respective female Bodhisattvas Sattvavajrī and so forth (the Perfection Goddesses). Following this, Vairocana emanates the four inner offering goddesses beginning with Vajralāsyā. Then Akṣobhya and the other three Buddhas emanate the four outer offering goddesses beginning with Vajradhūpā. Finally, Vairocana emanates Vajrāṅkuśa and the other three gatekeepers.

Following this, there is further interplay between all Tathāgatas and Vairocana—praising, blessing through all Tathāgatas and their retinues of Bodhisattvas entering into and again issuing forth from Vairocana’s heart, and so forth. Then, in order to bless the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala, all Tathāgatas praise the lead Bodhisattva Vajradhara (aka Vajrasattva, aka Vajrapāṇi, aka Samantabhadra, and so forth, as discussed above) with 108 names and request that he teach the rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala.<sup>202</sup>

Vajradhara then enters into meditative stabilization and teaches the structure and arrangement of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala (which I will describe in some detail below) as well as its attendant rite in extensive form. Butön summarizes the rite thus: “from the vajra-master’s activities, the rite of entering all maṇḍalas, the siddhi-wisdom, mudrā-wisdom, and so forth through to undoing [that is, releasing or unbinding]

---

<sup>200</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 229.1. 3; Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 60.

<sup>201</sup> This discussion follows Butön’s description in *Ship*, 12a.3-12b.1.

<sup>202</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 228.4.8-229.2.6.

mudrās.”<sup>203</sup> These rites include initiation into the maṇḍala and its practices as well as other activities. Furthermore, certain rites are devoted to the development of special abilities or feats (Tib: *dngos grub*; Skt: *siddhi*) of both the mundane and supramundane type, such as the ability to discover the location of treasure, to walk on water, and so forth (mundane feats) and progress on the Buddhist path, culminating in the attainment of enlightenment (supramundane feats).

I will now describe the layout of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala (*rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor*), the first maṇḍala that appears in the *Compendium of Principles*. From among the four types of maṇḍalas, it is of the “great maṇḍala” type. It consists of thirty-seven deities. The central figure is Vairocana, who is the Buddha at the head of the Tathāgata family (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs, tathāgata-kula*). He resides in a circle at the center of the maṇḍala. He is surrounded by the Buddhas at the heads of the other four families, each residing in a circle and arranged in the four cardinal directions: Akṣobhya of the vajra family in the east, Ratnasambhava of the jewel family in the south, Lokeśvararāja (aka Amitāyus or, in later traditions, Amitābha) of the lotus (or doctrine) family in the west, and Amoghasiddhi of the action family in the north.

A set of sixteen great Bodhisattvas are also present in the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. Around each of the four Buddhas surrounding Vairocana are arrayed the four Bodhisattvas of their respective Buddha family: Vajrasattva, Vajrarāja, Vajrarāga, and Vajrasādhu around Akṣobhya; Vajraratna, Vajratejas, Vajraketu, and Vajrahāsa around Ratnasambhava; Vajradharma, Vajratikṣṇa, Vajrahetu, and Vajrabhāṣa around Lokeśvararāja; and Vajrakarma, Vajrarakṣa, Vajrayakṣa, and Vajrasandhi around Amoghasiddhi.

---

<sup>203</sup> *slob dpon gyi las dang/ dkyil 'khor thams cad du 'jug pa'i cho ga dang/ dngos grub kyi ye shes dang phyag rgya'i ye shes la sogs pa nas phyag rgya dgrol pa'i bar gyi rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rgyas par gsungs so/* (Butön, *Ship*, 12b.3-12b.4).

Additionally, there are four female deities, known as Perfection goddesses, and each is paired with the Buddha of her respective family. Sattvavajrī accompanies Akṣobhya, Ratnavajrī accompanies Ratnasambhava, Dharmavajrī accompanies Lokeśvararāja, and Karmavajrī accompanies Amoghasiddhi.

These twenty-five deities are arrayed in the center of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, with Vairocana the central figure. The four inner offering goddesses Vajralāsyā, Vajramālā, Vajragīti, and Vajranṛtyā take their places in the four corners of the inner precinct of the maṇḍala. Vajradhūpā, Vajrapuṣpā, Vajrālokā, and Vajragandhā—the four outer offering goddesses—are positioned in the corners of the outer precinct of the maṇḍala. Finally, the four gate-keepers Vajrāṅkuśa, Vajrapāśa, Vajrasphoṭa, and Vajrāveśa (aka Vajraghaṇṭa) guard the four gates, with Vajrāṅkuśa at the eastern entrance, Vajrapāśa in the south, Vajrasphoṭa in the west, and Vajrāveśa at the north gate.

The Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala comes at the beginning of the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*. It is the first maṇḍala described in the tantra, and its rites are also the first rites described. As such, it is the primary maṇḍala of the *Compendium of Principles*. It serves as the template for almost all subsequent maṇḍalas that appear in the *Compendium of Principles*. With the exception of the first cycle of maṇḍalas in the second section, about which I will say more later, all maṇḍalas of the four main types consist of the same thirty-seven deities as those that comprise the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala. These thirty-seven deities appear in different forms, and under variant names, in the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles*, but there is no doubt that they are the same deities, arranged in the same configuration, as we find in the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala. In fact, the explanation of maṇḍalas in the text of the *Compendium of*

*Principles* itself often includes the description “in the manner of the arrangement of the Vajradhātu great maṇḍala.”<sup>204</sup>

The Vajradhātu Maṇḍala appears in several other texts included in the Yoga Tantra corpus (as well as in several tantras of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism classified as Mahāyoga and even one Anuyoga tantra). Thus, the importance of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala cannot be overestimated. It is the primary maṇḍala of the *Compendium of Principles* and the prototype for the other maṇḍalas of this tantra. With its five Buddha-family structure, it serves as the primary maṇḍala of the Yoga Tantra class as a whole, and its influence persists in subsequent developments such as tantras of the Mahāyoga system.

### **The Structurally Anomalous Second Section**

The structure of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* differs from that of the other three sections. In the first section of the tantra, after the emanation of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala, all Tathāgatas assemble, praise the Universal Monarch (*'khor los bsgyur pa, cakravartin*) Vajrapāṇi (aka Vajrasattva) with a litany of 108 names, and request that he explain the maṇḍala and its rites. The second, third, and fourth sections also begin with all Tathāgatas assembling and requesting Vajrasattva, aka Vajrapāṇi—who has taken the form of the Universal Monarch of the Buddha family predominant in that section—to generate the deities of his Buddha family.<sup>205</sup> In the third and fourth sections the generation of the respective great maṇḍalas then ensues.

In the second section, however, the Universal Monarch Vajrapāṇi, initially identified as the Supramundane Victor who turns the great wheel of all Tathāgatas (*bhagavantam*

---

<sup>204</sup> Tib: *rdo rje'i dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po bkod pa'i tshul du* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 233.4.6); Skt: *vajradhātumahāmaṇḍale sanniveśayogena* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 100). In fact, the description of the next maṇḍala after the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala includes such an explanation.

<sup>205</sup> In the second section, they also request that he teach the maṇḍala rite as well.

*sarvatathāgatamahācakravartinam*) in the Sanskrit text<sup>206</sup> and the Supramundane Victor lord of all Tathāgatas who turns the great wheel (*bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi bdag po 'khor lo chen po bskor ba*) in the Tibetan,<sup>207</sup> refuses to accede to the request of all Tathāgatas to generate his family of deities.<sup>208</sup> The assembled Tathāgatas ask why, and Vajrapāṇi responds to their question with a question of his own: there are pernicious beings such as Maheśvara who are not subjugated through peaceful methods even by the Tathāgatas; how should he deal with them? There follows the narrative of Vajrapāṇi's battle with and subjugation of Maheśvara (aka Śiva), which I will discuss in some detail in chapter three (see p. 189 ff) and revisit in the context of Mahāyoga in chapter four (see p. 248 ff).

Briefly, Vajrapāṇi outduels Maheśvara and slays him, brings him back to life (at Vairocana's behest), and finally bestows initiation on him through the sole of his foot as he stands on the supine and defeated Maheśvara's body. Maheśvara instantly attains enlightenment and travels to his own world-system. His retinue of worldly gods are also subjugated, and Vajrapāṇi admits them into the maṇḍala and bestows the various initiations on them (including the name initiation, through which each worldly god or goddess receives a new—and specifically Buddhist—name and identity).

While I will discuss various aspects of this episode and its significance in chapters three and four, what is of import in the context of the structure of the *Compendium of Principles* is the creation of the maṇḍala. Whereas in the first, third, and fourth sections of the tantra various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas emanate the maṇḍalas, there is no mention of the emanation of the first maṇḍala of the second section. All Tathāgatas

---

<sup>206</sup> Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 154.

<sup>207</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 239.2.8.

<sup>208</sup> *bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad ma 'tshal lo/* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 239.4.8); *bhagavantaḥ sarvatathāgatā na pratipadyāmi* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 157).

gather and request Vajrapāṇi to generate the deities of his Buddha family, but he refuses. He then defeats Maheśvara and his retinue, admits them into the maṇḍala and initiates them. However, it is not clear into which maṇḍala the worldly deities are admitted and initiated. Unlike the other sections of the *Compendium of Principles*, there has been no description of a maṇḍala being emanated, and therefore no logical assumption can be made about the maṇḍala into which Maheśvara and the pantheon of Hindu deities are admitted and initiated. Perhaps it is assumed that they are admitted into the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, but there is nothing that indicates this. After the worldly gods and goddesses have been admitted into and initiated in the maṇḍala, Vajrapāṇi explains the maṇḍala and its rites. At this point, the maṇḍala is identified as the “Conquest over the Three Worlds Great Maṇḍala.”<sup>209</sup> The teaching of the maṇḍala follows the standard format seen in the previous maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles*.

This then raises the question of the emanation of the Conquest over the Three Worlds Great Maṇḍala into which Vajrapāṇi admits and initiates the retinue of worldly deities. One possibility, as I have mentioned, is that it is the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala, and that after the worldly gods and goddesses have been transformed into their Buddhist alter egos through initiation they then replace the deities of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. Another possibility is that the maṇḍala into which the worldly deities are admitted and initiated is only the physical structure (the residence) and that they then constitute its residents.

Whatever the case, the creation of the first maṇḍala of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* is clearly and significantly different from the other maṇḍalas presented in the body of the tantra, which Vairocana either emanates himself or directs the lead Bodhisattva of that section to emanate. This likely indicates that the narrative of

---

<sup>209</sup> Tibetan: 'jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya ba'i dkyil 'khor chen po (P112, vol. 4, 243.5.2); Sanskrit: *trilokavijayan nāma mahāmaṇḍala* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 186).



Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara existed as an independent text that was incorporated into the *Compendium of Principles*. Ronald Davidson has suggested that the Maheśvara subjugation myth as we find it in the *Compendium of Principles* contains elements, such as the snappy repartee of the dialogue, characteristic of itinerant Indian oral storytellers.<sup>210</sup> Thus, it seems probable that the Maheśvara subjugation episode existed as an oral text first set in writing when it was included in the composition of the *Compendium of Principles*. This also raises the possibility that other parts of the tantra—particularly those that include snappy dialogue such as the narrative of the five manifest enlightenments with which the first section opens—indicate the inclusion of material from oral traditions in the written text of the *Compendium of Principles*. Where these oral traditions might have originated and spread, and how they came to be appropriated into written tantric texts, are questions that require further investigation.<sup>211</sup>

Although the second section begins with its irregular first maṇḍala, the remainder of the section returns to the standard pattern of the emanation of the maṇḍala and the teaching of its respective rites for the Conquest over the Three Worlds retention, doctrine, and action maṇḍalas, as well as for the four-mudrā and single-mudrā maṇḍalas. These maṇḍalas feature wrathful forms of the thirty-seven deities of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala. Also, at the end of the cycle of maṇḍalas there is an epilogue in which all Tathāgatas gather and certify what has been taught as authentic Buddha-speech, just as occurs at the end of the first, third, and fourth sections of the tantra.

Although the cycle of three maṇḍalas that follows the Conquest over the Three Worlds Great Maṇḍala adheres to the pattern found in the other three sections of the tantra, the second section is unusual in another way. Unlike the other first, third, and fourth sections

---

<sup>210</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 151.

<sup>211</sup> See Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, especially chapters five and six.

of the *Compendium of Principles*, which each have only a single cycle of maṇḍalas, the second section has an additional cycle. Following the Conquest over the Three Worlds cycle of maṇḍalas, the second section continues with another maṇḍala cycle, that of the Wheel of the Three Worlds (*'jig rten gsum gyi 'khor lo, triloka-cakra*).

This sub-section begins with a continuation of the Maheśvara narrative. All the Tathāgatas gather and command Vajrapāṇi to release Maheśvara's body. I will discuss this dialogue, the reanimation of Maheśvara's corpse, and related events below. Following this narrative, the tantra returns to the usual procedure for emanating the maṇḍalas and teaching their respective rites. However, this maṇḍala cycle consists solely of the four main maṇḍalas. Unlike the first section, the first maṇḍala cycle of the second section, and the third and fourth sections, the Wheel of the Three Worlds cycle does not include the four-mudrā maṇḍala or the single-mudrā maṇḍala. It does, however, conclude with a confirmation of what has been taught, just as the other maṇḍala cycles do.

Thus, we see that the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* differs from the other three sections of the tantra in several ways. First, the section opens with Vajrapāṇi refusing the request of all Tathāgatas to generate the deities of his Buddha family. This is the only instance in the tantra I have seen in which a Bodhisattva refuses to follow the command of the Tathāgatas. Also, the second section has two sets of maṇḍalas—the Conquest over the Three Worlds cycle and the Wheel of the Three Worlds cycle—whereas the other three sections of the tantra consist of only one cycle apiece. As a result, the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* presents fourteen maṇḍalas, whereas the other three sections each contain only ten maṇḍalas. Furthermore, the emanation of the first maṇḍala in the section—the Conquest over the Three Worlds Great Maṇḍala—is not clearly set forth, so there is uncertainty as to whether the maṇḍala was emanated or whether the subdued worldly deities are arranged in a previously-emanated

maṇḍala. In addition, the second maṇḍala cycle of the second section—the Wheel of the Three Worlds cycle—lacks the four-mudrā and single-mudrā maṇḍalas found in all the other maṇḍala cycles in the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*.

The maṇḍalas of the second section consist of wrathful deities, and thus reflect the vajra family (*rdo rje rigs; vajra-kula*) predominant in this section of the tantra. However, the two maṇḍala cycles present an additional difficulty: are they both of the same Buddha family? The tantra itself identifies the second cycle as the *external* vajra family (*phyi rol gyi rdo rje'i rigs, bāhya-vajra-kula*).<sup>212</sup> Butön follows this classification, but he adds that the first cycle of maṇḍalas in the second section—the Conquest over the Three Worlds cycle—is the great vajra family (*rdo rje chen po'i rigs, \*mahā-vajra-kula*).<sup>213</sup>

The unique structure of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* did not escape the notice of Indian tantric exegetes such as the prolific ninth-century author Ānandagarbha. In the *Illumination of the Principles*, his mammoth commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*, he enumerates the maṇḍalas in each section of the *Compendium of Principles*, stating that the first, third, and fourth sections each have the same number of maṇḍalas—ten. The second section, however, contains fourteen maṇḍalas.<sup>214</sup> Thus, Ānandagarbha explicitly comments on the anomalous nature of the

---

<sup>212</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 250.3.4; Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 257.

<sup>213</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 19a.2. According to Giebel's translation from the Chinese, the eighth-century Indian exegete Amoghavajra described *both* maṇḍala cycles of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* as belonging to the external vajra family (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” pp. 143 and 150). For a discussion of this term—which Giebel translates as “outside the Vajra Division” rather than as “external vajra family”—and its interpretation from several sources, see Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” n. 92, pp. 150-151.

<sup>214</sup> *de la dkyil 'khor gyi grangs brjod par bya ste/ rdo rje dbyings kyi dum bu la/ de bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs kyi dkyil 'khor ni bcu'o/ khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i dum bu la/ rdo rje'i rigs kyi dkyil 'khor ni bcu bzhì'o/ /padma'i rigs dang nor bu'i rigs gnyis la yang grangs de bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs dang 'dra'o/* (Ānandagarbha, *Illumination of the Principles*, P3333, vol. 71, 146.5.7-147.1.1).

second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, at least in terms of the number of maṇḍalas it presents.

The atypical structure of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* likely indicates its composition from multiple sources. Several facets of the Maheśvara subjugation episode, such as the elements characteristic of oral traditions and the fact that the emanation of the first maṇḍala that leads out of the narrative is not clearly indicated, point to its existence as an independent text that was incorporated into the *Compendium of Principles*. The story of Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara is one of the defining myths of Indian Buddhist tantra, and, as I will discuss in chapter three (see p. 189 ff), its inclusion in the *Compendium of Principles* is significant for several reasons.

## Indian Commentarial Traditions

The three principal Indian exegetes of Yoga Tantra, from the Tibetan perspective, are Buddhaguhya, Śākyamitra, and Ānandarābha. Buddhaguhya was from central India (perhaps Varāṇasi) and resided at the great monastic university of Nālandā. He was perhaps *the* most prominent and prolific of the early Indian monastic tantric exegetes. A student of Buddhajñānapāda, he wrote commentaries and practical instructions on the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* (later classified as Performance or Dual Tantra), the *Questions of Subāhu Tantra* (later classified as Action Tantra),<sup>215</sup> and the *Concentration Continuation Tantra* (later classified as Action Tantra).<sup>216</sup>

Buddhaguhya flourished during the eighth century, an assessment based on two pieces of evidence. The first is his correspondence with the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen (*Khri srong lde btsan*, 742-797).<sup>217</sup> The second piece of evidence is the inclusion of several of

---

<sup>215</sup> *dPung bzang gis zhus pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*, *Subāhupariṣcchānāmatantra*, P428, vol. 9.

<sup>216</sup> *bSam gtan gyi phyi ma rim par phye ba*, *Dhyānottaraṭālakrama*, P430, vol. 9.

<sup>217</sup> Samten G. Karmay, *The Great Perfection (rdzogs chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching in Tibetan Buddhism* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1988), p. 1.

Buddhaguhya's commentaries in the Denkar Palace Catalogue (*dKar chag ldan dkar ma*), which lists the titles and, for commentarial literature, authors of texts translated during the first propagation of Buddhism in Tibet. This catalogue for the most part records officially sanctioned translations and is the earliest extant catalogue of Tibetan translations. Although it was completed during the early part of the ninth century by the translators Peltsek (*dPal brtsegs*), Namke Nyingpo (*Nam mkha'i snying po*), and Lu'i Wangpo (*kLu'i dbang po*),<sup>218</sup> the Denkar Palace Catalogue likely was begun towards the end of the eighth century,<sup>219</sup> and the inclusion of Buddhaguhya's works in it, together with his interaction with Trisong Detsen, dates his interaction with the Tibetan court to the latter half of the eighth century.

The Denkar Palace Catalogue identifies the author of texts such as the *Commentary on the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* as "Buddhagupta" rather than as "Buddhaguhya." This has caused some confusion about the identity of the author. However, there is no doubt that the important Indian tantric exegete Buddhaguhya who corresponded with King Trisong Detsen is the same person as the "Buddhagupta" identified as the author of tantric texts such as the *Commentary on the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* recorded in the Denkar Palace Catalogue.

---

<sup>218</sup> Adelheid Herrmann-Pfandt dates the Denkar Palace Catalogue to 812 CE, but states that additions were made until at least 830 ("The *Lhan kar ma* as a Source for the History of Tantric Buddhism," in *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism: Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, eds. Helmut Eimer & David Germano [Leiden-Boston-Köln: EJ Brill, 2002], p. 135).

<sup>219</sup> Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 2, pp. 440-441; Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 62-63.

In terms of the Yoga Tantra corpus, Buddhaguhya wrote the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*<sup>220</sup>—an important commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*. He is also the author of one of the earliest exegetical works on another important tantra, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. This work, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Maṇḍala Rite*,<sup>221</sup> is a commentary on the tantra as well as a maṇḍala rite for it.

The earliest of the “three people expert in Yoga Tantra” (*yo ga la mi mkhas pa gsum*), as Tibetan traditions refer to them, Buddhaguhya was an influential figure in the early propagation of Buddhism in Tibet during the height of its dynastic period. While in western Tibet in the environs of Mt. Kailash, he was invited to central Tibet by Trisong Detsen and, although he declined the invitation, sent several of his commentaries (reportedly composed for this purpose). In addition, he is also an important figure in the Mahāyoga tradition preserved by the Nyingma School in Tibet (I will discuss this in more detail in chapter four).

The dates for Śākyamitra and Ānandagarbha are less certain. Śākyamitra probably lived during the latter half of the eighth century (and perhaps into the first half of the ninth century).<sup>222</sup> Of the three, he authored the fewest extant texts.<sup>223</sup> However, his

---

<sup>220</sup> Buddhaguhya, *rGyud kyi don la 'jug pa, Tantrārthāvatāra*, P3324 (Toh. 2501), vol. 70, 33.1.1-73.4.7. Snellgrove discusses this letter, and translates a portion of it, in *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 2, pp. 446-450. For an introduction to and complete translation of the letter in German, see Siglinde Dietz, “Bhoṭasvāmidāsalekha,” in *Die Buddhistische Briefliteratur Indiens: Nach dem tibetischen Tanjur herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert*, Asiatische Forschungen Band 84 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), pp. 79-84 and 359-399. I am grateful to Professor Bill McDonald of the German Department, University of Virginia, for translating Dietz’s German into English.

<sup>221</sup> Buddhaguhya, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga'i rim pa zhes bya ba*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamaṇḍalavidhikramaṇāma*, translated by Mañjuśrivarman and Bran ka mu ti (and, according to some catalogues, Buddhaguhya), P3461 (Toh. 2636).

<sup>222</sup> My thanks to Stephen Hodge for sharing with me his calculation of Śākyamitra’s dates. He arrives at this date by extrapolating from the list of gurus Śākyamitra mentions at the beginning of his *Kosala*

exegesis of the *Compendium of Principles*—the *Kosala Ornament: Extensive Explanation of the Compendium of Principles*<sup>224</sup>—is a seminal work. While Buddhaguhya’s *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra* is earlier, it is an explanation of important doctrines and practices of the *Compendium of Principles* (it is sometimes referred to in Tibetan traditions as esoteric instructions [*man ngag*] for the tantra). Śākyamitra’s *Kosala Ornament*, although written after Buddhaguhya’s work, represents the first word-by-word commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*, and as such is a seminal exegesis.

Ānandagarbha, the latest of “three people expert in Yoga Tantra,” can tentatively be dated to the latter part of the ninth or early part of the tenth century. A Tibetan source that dates him to an earlier period is Tāranātha’s early seventeenth-century work *History of Buddhism in India*, which states that Ānandagarbha lived during the reign of King

---

*Ornament*, which includes King Indrabhūti of Oḍḍiyāna. One of the pivotal figures in the legendary histories of the origin of tantric texts and lineages in India, King Indrabhūti (actually, three generations of Indrabhūtis) is mentioned in Jñānamitra’s commentary on the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*. Since Jñānamitra’s text was included in the Denkar Palace Catalogue, we know that Indrabhūti predates this. Based on several pieces of evidence, Hodge dates the Indrabhūti with whom Śākyamitra trained to the middle of the eighth century. Thus, Śākyamitra must have been alive at this time. Since he would have reached intellectual maturity and written his *Kosala Ornament* sometime after this, we arrive at the latter part of the eighth century as an approximate date for Śākyamitra’s commentary (Stephen Hodge, personal communication, 14 April 2002).

Ronald Davidson also places Śākyamitra in the late eighth or early ninth century (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 159). This assessment relies in part on a dedicatory verse at the end of the *Bhadracaryāprañidhānarājaṭikā* (Toh. 4013, 234a.3, as cited in Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 379, n. 141) that identifies the author as Śākyamitra. This commentary is listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 379, n. 141), and therefore must date to the late eighth or early ninth century, if not before. Yukei Matsunaga dates Śākyamitra to the same period, although without any explanation, in “A History of Tantric Buddhism,” p. 179.

<sup>223</sup> Only five texts in the *Tengyur*—the Tibetan canon of Indian commentarial literature—are attributed to him, while Buddhaguhya and Ānandagarbha each wrote over twenty texts.

<sup>224</sup> Śā kyamitra, *De kho na nyid bsduṣ pa’i rgya cher bshad pa ko sa la’i rgyan*, *Kosala-alamkārayatattvasaṃgrahaṭikā*, P3326 (Toh. 2503), vol. 70, 189.1.1–vol. 71, 94.2.6.

Mahipāla, who died at roughly the same time as the Tibetan King Relpacen (d. 838 or 841).<sup>225</sup> This would put Ānandagarbha sometime during the late eighth or early ninth century.

However, I think this account is in error. Butön says that Ānandagarbha and Mañjuśrikīrti were “spiritual brothers” (*mched grogs*),<sup>226</sup> which means they would have been contemporaries, and Ronald Davidson dates Mañjuśrikīrti to the tenth century.<sup>227</sup> Thus, if Mañjuśrikīrti and Ānandagarbha were indeed contemporaries, then Ānandagarbha must have been alive during the tenth century. This assessment seems probable, given the range of tantras on which Ānandagarbha composed commentaries, some of which represented later developments of Indian Buddhist tantra. He is taken in Tibetan traditions to be the authoritative Indian Yoga Tantra author, and this is due at least in part to the fact that he represents later developments of the tradition—certainly later than Buddhaghya and Śākyamitra. Thus, I locate Ānandagarbha toward the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century.

There is some biographical information on Ānandagarbha preserved in Tibetan sources. He was a native of Magadha and a resident of Vikramaśīla monastery.<sup>228</sup> A prolific tantric exegete, his corpus of works includes commentaries and liturgical texts on a range of tantras. He wrote an enormous commentary on the *Compendium of Principles* known by its abbreviated title *Illumination of the Principles*.<sup>229</sup> He also composed a

---

<sup>225</sup> Tāranātha, *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, tr. by Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya; ed. by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), p. 284.

<sup>226</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 65a.6.

<sup>227</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 12.

<sup>228</sup> Tāranātha, *Tāranātha's History*, p. 285.

<sup>229</sup> Ānandagarbha, *Illumination of the Principles, Explanation of the “Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas: Manifest Realization of the Great Vehicle” Tantra*, *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsduṣ pa theg pa chen po mngon par rtogs pa shes bya ba'i rgyud kyi bshad pa de kho na nyid snang bar byed pa shes bya ba,*



maṇḍala rite for the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala—the central maṇḍala of the *Compendium of Principles* and of the Yoga Tantra class as a whole.<sup>230</sup> In addition, he composed a maṇḍala rite for the Conquest over the Three Worlds Maṇḍala, the first maṇḍala of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>231</sup>

Ānandagarbha also authored a number of texts on other Yoga Tantras. He wrote a commentary on and a maṇḍala rite for the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*.<sup>232</sup> In addition, he wrote commentaries and ritual texts for the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* as well as consecration rites and texts for the practice of deities such as Vajrasattva. He also authored exegetical works on the *Secret Assembly (Guhyasamāja) Tantra* and the *Magical Emanation Net (Māyājāla) Tantra*.

In addition to the texts just discussed, there are a number of other Indian exegetical works related to the *Compendium of Principles* by various authors. Although Butön provides biographical sketches of many of these figures, I will simply list the texts here:<sup>233</sup>

---

*Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgrahamahāyānābhisamayanāmavyākhyātattvālokarināma*, tr. by (1) Rin chen bzang po and (2) Thugs rje chen po (Mahākaruṇa). P3333 (Toh. 2510), vol. 71, 134.1.1–vol. 72, 152.4.8. This text consists of 18,000 stanzas.

<sup>230</sup> Ānandagarbha, *Rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala: Source of All Vajras*, P3339 (Toh. 2516), vol. 74.

<sup>231</sup> Ānandagarbha, *Rite of the Glorious Conquest over the Three Worlds Drawn from the Compendium of Principles Tantra*, *dPal khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga 'phags pa de kho na nyid bsdu pa'i rgyud las btus pa*, *Śrītrailokyavijayamaṇḍalavidhi āryatattvasaṃgrahatantroddhṛtā*, tr. by Rin chen bzang po, P3342 (Toh. 2519). This text, which consists of 1,225 stanzas, is almost certainly the text of the same length Butön refers to as the “*Source of Trailokyavijaya*, Rite of the Great Maṇḍala of the Second Section” (*dum bu gnyis pa'i dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga 'jig rten gsum rgyal 'byung ba zhes bya ba shu lo ga stong nyis brgya nyi shu rtsa lnga pa mdzad*; Butön, *Ship*, 62b.2–62b.3).

<sup>232</sup> Ānandagarbha, *Extensive Commentary on the Śrī Paramādyā*, *dPal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad pa*, *Śrīparamādīṭikā*, tr. by (1) Śraddhākaravarman, Kamalagupta, and Rin chen bzang po; (2) Mantrakalaśa and Zhi ba 'od, P3335 (Toh. 2512), vol. 72, 177.2.3–vol. 73, 213.1.2.

<sup>233</sup> This section draws heavily on the Yoga Tantra section of the *Tengyur* in the *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, pp. 283–313.

- Padmavajra, *rGyud kyi don la 'jug pa'i 'grel bshad*, *Tantrārthāvatārvyākhyāna*, P3325 (Toh. 2502). This is a sub-commentary on Buddhaguhya's *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*. Butön mentions Padmavajra in the context of Buddhaguhya's lineage of disciples (*slob brgyud*),<sup>234</sup> and thereby indicates that he was not a direct disciple of Buddhaguhya.
- Muditākoṣa, *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i lha rnam kyi rnam par gzhaq pa zhes bya ba*, *Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalasarvadevavyavasthānanāma*, translated by Padmākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3327 (Toh. 2504). This is a description of the arrangement of deities of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala.
- Munindrabhadra, *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rdo rje thams cad 'byung ba zhes bya ba'i don bsdus pa*, *Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalavidhisarvavajrodayanāmapiṇḍārtha*, translated by Munindrabhadra and Chos kyi shes rab (probably the eleventh-century figure known also as the “Translator from Shekar” [*She dkar lo tsā ba*]),<sup>235</sup> P3352 (Toh. 2529). This is a summary of Ānandagarbha's *Rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala: Source of All Vajras*. Butön identifies the author and translator as the paṇḍita Munitaṃbhadra. More importantly, Butön casts doubt on the interpretive value of this text, stating, “it appears that the paṇḍita provisionally wrote a commentary without having the quintessential instructions of the master Ānandagarbha.”<sup>236</sup>
- *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor gyi don bsgom pa'i don bsdus pa*, *Vajradhātumaṇḍalārthabhāvanāpiṇḍārtha*, translated by Kumārakalaśa, P3353 (Toh. 2530).
- Jñānavajra, *Thugs rje 'byung ba zhes bya ba bsgom pa dang bzlas pa'i cho ga*, *Karuṇodayanāmahāvanāḥapavidhi*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3346 (Toh. 2524). Butön, in a passage prefaced by “it is said,” relates that this text is a means of achievement (*sgrub thabs*, *sādhana*) for the Vajradhātu

---

<sup>234</sup> *slob dpon de'i slob brgyud/ slob dpon rdo rje zhes bya bas rgyud kyi don la 'jug pa la rgya cher 'grel pa byas so/* (Butön, *Ship*, 70a.3).

<sup>235</sup> P3890, Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org).

<sup>236</sup> *paṇḍi ta la slob dpon kun snying gi man ngag med par 'grel pa btsan thabs su byas par snang ngo/* (Butön, *Ship*, 74a.3-74a.4).

Maṇḍala (or for the deity Vajradhātu),<sup>237</sup> and hence I have included it as a commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*.

- *rDo rje chos kyi sgrub thabs, Vajradharmasādhana*, translated by Lo chung Legs pa'i shes rab, P3484 (Toh. 2660). Butön discusses two texts with this name: a longer one that presents the great yoga practice and a shorter one that presents the single yoga practice.<sup>238</sup>
- Ānandagarbha, *rDo rje sems dpa' 'byung ba zhes bya ba'i sgrub pa'i thabs, Vajrasattvodayanāmasādhana*, translated by Subuddhaśrīśānti and rMa dGe ba'i blo gros, P3340 (Toh. 2517). According to Butön, this text consists of 250 stanzas;<sup>239</sup> other editions of the *Tengyur* put its length at 200 stanzas.<sup>240</sup> This and the next text were once known, respectively, as the *Great Source of Vajrasattva* and the *Shorter Source of Vajrasattva*.<sup>241</sup> It is possible that this and the next text are related to the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra* rather than to the *Compendium of Principles*.
- Ānandagarbha, *rDo rje sems dpa'i sgrub thabs, Vajrasattvasādhana*, translated by Subuddhaśrīśānti and rMa dGe ba'i blo gros, P3341 (Toh. 2518).

## Conclusion

The *Compendium of Principles* stands as perhaps the most significant development in the history of Indian Buddhist tantra. It combines a variety of elements—some of which developed out of earlier non-tantric Mahāyāna traditions, some of which are found in earlier tantra texts later classified under the rubrics of Action Tantra and Performance Tantra, and some of which occur for the first time in the *Compendium of Principles*. Among the latter are the structuring of its maṇḍalas around five Buddha families rather

---

<sup>237</sup> *ye shes rdo rjes rdo rje dbyings kyi sgrub thabs thugs rje 'byung ba'i sgom bzlas zhes bya ba mdzad do/* (Butön, *Ship*, 61a.6).

<sup>238</sup> *rdo rje chos kyi gzhi lus byas pa'i rnal 'byor chen po dang/ rnal 'byor gcig ldan yin la/ ming yang de ltar btags* (Butön, *Ship*, 74b.4-74b.5). According to the Cordier, Suzuki, and Mongolian editions, the title of the text is: *Āryavajradharmaika-yogasādhana* (*Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition* vol.4, p. 391), which should refer to the *Means of Achievement of the Single Yoga* Butön mentions.

<sup>239</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 62b.4.

<sup>240</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 307.

<sup>241</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 76a.6-76a.7.

than three and the identity of the central Buddha figure as Vairocana (prefigured in the earlier *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*). In addition, the *Compendium of Principles* contains central and detailed narrative structures into which ritual processes are interwoven, and which reflect the earliest emergence of a self-conscious tantric identity.

While the *Compendium of Principles* itself represents a signal event in the history of Indian Buddhist tantra that dates to the last quarter of the eighth century, the earliest attestation we have of the formation of exegetical traditions around it are the works of Vajrabodhi, preserved in Chinese, from the second quarter of the eighth century (but said to reflect teachings he received around 700 CE), and Buddhaguhya's mid-eighth century works, preserved in Tibetan. Buddhaguhya is also the first Indian exegete to treat the *Compendium of Principles* as the central fixture of a corpus of texts that he identifies as Yoga Tantra, and it is to this that I now turn.

## *Chapter 2: The Yoga Tantra Corpus*

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I discussed the provenance and structure of the *Compendium of Principles*, as well as its pivotal place in the development of Indian Buddhist tantra and its emergence as a distinct entity. In this chapter I will examine the direct literary progeny of the *Compendium of Principles*—the web of texts that spun out of it and built its declaration of tantra’s independence into a coherent tradition.

This nexus of tantras is complex and confusing. It marks both the immediate growth of a tradition in the century following the *Compendium of Principles*’ production, and the long-term development and consolidation of a tradition called “Yoga Tantra” in India and Tibet even after other tantric traditions had evolved and displaced the *Compendium of Principles* and its associated texts from the cutting edge of tantric Buddhism. These texts represent a significant development in Indian Buddhist tantra because they constitute for the first time an organic corpus, albeit with some texts more closely associated with the *Compendium of Principles* and others less so. Issues that I will address in this chapter include the following: What are these individual texts? What are their inter-textual relationships? What are their developmental histories?

While the *Compendium of Principles* is among the most influential developments of Indian Buddhist tantra, several other texts later classified as Yoga Tantra also achieved prominence in India and exerted considerable influence in Tibet. Butön discusses these

in several sections of his *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra*.<sup>242</sup> Drawing on Indian tantras and commentaries (including extant Sanskrit manuscripts) as well as Tibetan materials and his own familiarity with tantric traditions in Tibet, Butön presents the range of Yoga Tantra texts in a lengthy section on how Śākyamuni, having become enlightened as Vairocana, turned the wheel of Yoga Tantra doctrine. For each tantra, Butön describes the circumstances surrounding its initial teaching (who taught it to whom, where, when, what was taught), and includes a rather detailed summary for each of the tantra's sub-sections.

Butön employs a sixfold typology of tantras, but in his presentation of the particulars of the individual texts he condenses this into three categories: root tantras (Tib: *rtsa rgyud*, Skt: *mūla-tantra*), explanatory tantras (*bshad rgyud*, *ākhyāna-tantra*), and concordant tantras (*cha mthun pa'i rgyud*, *\*bhāgiya-tantra*).

The first tantra Butön discusses is the *Compendium of Principles*, the fundamental text of the corpus later known as Yoga Tantra. His treatment of this, the root tantra and central text of the entire Yoga Tantra corpus, is by far the most extensive of any of the Yoga Tantras. I have included material from this presentation in the previous chapter, in the description of the various maṇḍalas and rites of each section of the *Compendium of Principles*. Before discussing the individual Yoga Tantras, for convenience I will list them here under their respective rubrics (according to Butön's condensed presentation).

## **Root Tantra**

- *Compendium of Principles Tantra*

## **Explanatory Tantras**

- *Vajraśekhara Tantra*

---

<sup>242</sup> This discussion draws extensively on the section of Butön's *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra* entitled "How the Wheel of Yoga Tantra Doctrine Was Turned" (12a.3-42b.6).

- *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures (Trailokyavijayamahākālpārāja)*
- *All Secret Tantra (Sarvarahasya Tantra)*

### **Concordant Tantras**

- *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*
- *Twenty-Five Doors of the Perfection of Wisdom*
- *Śrī Paramādya Tantra*
- *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra (Vajramaṇḍa-alaṃkāra Tantra)*
- *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra (Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra)*
- *Array of the Secret Ornament of Exalted Body, Speech, and Mind of All Tathāgatas King of Tantra*
- *Secret Jewel Drop Sūtra*
- *Abbreviated Consecration Tantra*

Two other tantras that Butön discusses, albeit without categorizing them, are:

- *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgiti)*
- *Magical Emanation Net Tantra (Māyājālatantra)*

### **Explanatory Tantras**

The second type of Yoga Tantra Butön presents is the explanatory tantra. These tantras are so named because they comment directly on, and expand upon, a root tantra in one or several of six ways (clarifying what is unclear, filling out what is incomplete, and so forth—I will discuss these in more detail below, p. 167 ff).

#### **The Vajraśekhara Tantra**

The primary explanatory tantra of the corpus later known as Yoga Tantra is the *Vajraśekhara Secret Great Yoga Tantra*, which expounds upon the *Compendium of*

*Principles* in its entirety and exists only in Tibetan translation.<sup>243</sup> In terms of the historical development of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, although there are no known extant Sanskrit manuscripts or commentaries, Chinese and Tibetan materials strongly suggest that it is a compilation of two independent texts. While there are no Chinese translations of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* that correspond to the Tibetan translation (or any other text bearing that title), the term “vajraśekhara” is extremely important in East Asian tantric Buddhism. The title “vajraśekhara” itself (Chi: *chin kang ting*; Jap: *kongōchō*) is employed in China during the first half of the eighth century as the name of a collection of eighteen tantras, of which at least some were translated into Chinese. The Indian tantric master Vajrabodhi (671-741 CE),<sup>244</sup> who along with his disciple Amoghavajra (705-774 CE)<sup>245</sup> are the two most important figures in the translation and transmission of the *Compendium of Principles* to China, employs the term “vajraśekhara.” At the beginning of his explanation of the central practices of the *Compendium of Principles*, he explains that the *Compendium of Principles* was taken from the “100,000 verse *Vajraśekharamahāyogatantrarāja*.”<sup>246</sup> Here we find the term “vajraśekhara” employed in the title of the larger textual collection. Furthermore, we also find that the title itself corresponds in large part to the title of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* as it is preserved in its Tibetan translation, the Sanskrit of which is “*Vajraśikharamahāguhyayogatantra*.”<sup>247</sup> With the exception of “*guhya*” (“secret”) and the term “*rāja*” (“king”)—an ornamental appendage commonly found at the end of tantra titles—Vajrabodhi’s title for the

---

<sup>243</sup> *gSang ba rnal ’byor chen po’i rgyud rdo rje rtse mo, Vajraśikharamahāguhyayogatantra* , P113 (Toh. 480), vol. 5, 1.1.2-56.4.8.

<sup>244</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 110.

<sup>245</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 107.

<sup>246</sup> Eastman, “The Eighteen Tantras,” p. 2, n. 4.

<sup>247</sup> *gSang ba rnal ’byor chen po’i rgyud rdo rje rtse mo zhes bya ba*.



eighteen-text tantric corpus and the title of the Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* are the same.

The corpus of eighteen tantras that Vajrabodhi mentions was later described in some detail by his student Amoghavajra in his Chinese text outlining this tantric system, *Indications of the Goals of the Eighteen Assemblies of the Yoga of the Vajraśekhara Sūtra*.<sup>248</sup> In this text Amoghavajra uses the term “Vajraśekhara-yoga” (sometimes abbreviated to “Vajra-yoga”) to refer to the system of tantric practice and doctrine related to the eighteen tantras. To confuse the issue further, the title “Vajraśekhara Sūtra” (Chi: *Chin kang ting ching*; Jap: *Kongōchōkyō*) is also used in East Asia to refer to the first and central member of the eighteen-text tantric corpus, the *Compendium of Principles*. Thus, in addition to the employment of the term “Vajraśekhara-yoga” to refer to the eighteen-text tantric cycle, “Vajraśekhara Sūtra” is the common title by which the *Compendium of Principles* is known in East Asia (including Japan to the present).

Amoghavajra’s digest of the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara cycle provides crucial evidence concerning the formation and content of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*. For the second text in the list, the Sanskrit reconstruction of Amoghavajra’s Chinese title is *Sarva-tathāgata-guhyā-rāja-yoga* (or *Sarva-tathāgata-guhyendra-yoga*).<sup>249</sup> We find this title (or some variation of it) at the end of each of the four chapters of the second half of the Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*.<sup>250</sup> Additionally, the similarity of Amoghavajra’s description of the second of the eighteen texts and the contents of the second half of the Tibetan *Vajraśekhara Tantra* led the Japanese scholar Sakai Shinten

---

<sup>248</sup> *Chin kang ting ching yü ch’ieh shih pa hue chih kuei* , T. Vol. 18, No. 869 (Giebel, “ *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 107).

<sup>249</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 165, n. 159.

<sup>250</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 166, n. 159.

(Shiro) to identify tentatively Amoghavajra's second text with the second half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* (or an early stage of its development).<sup>251</sup>

Sakai also tentatively identifies Amoghavajra's third text, the reconstructed Sanskrit of which is *Sarva-kalpa-samuccaya-yoga* (*Yoga of the Collectionn of All Procedures*), with the first half of the Tibetan *Vajraśekhara Tantra*.<sup>252</sup> Again, Amoghavajra's title occurs in the titles at the end of each of the chapters of the first half of the Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, all of which contain *rtog pa thams cad bsdus pa*, the Tibetan translation of *sarva-kalpa-samuccaya*. Sakai makes the identification of Amoghavajra's third text and the first part of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* based on the common titles as well as the similarity between Amoghavajra's description of the text and the contents of the first half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*.<sup>253</sup> There also appears to be a relationship between the text Amoghavajra describes, the first part of the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, and the second supplement to the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* (*Buddhasamayoga*) *Tantra*, which is titled *Sarva-kalpa-samuccaya*. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter four (see p. 262 ff).

Internal evidence from the two parts of the Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* further supports the argument that the text is a compilation. The titles of the text at the end of each chapter differ markedly for the first and second parts of the text and, as discussed above, correspond to the titles of Amoghavajra's third and second texts, respectively. Moreover, at the end of the first part of the text there is a closing section, a common structural component marking a text's conclusion that is found at the end of

---

<sup>251</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 166, n. 159.

<sup>252</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 168, n. 164.

<sup>253</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 168, nn. 164 and 166. The Chinese texts T. Vol. 18, Nos. 908 and 909 are related to the second of the eighteen texts (and thus also to the second half of the Tibetan *Vajraśekhara Tantra*).

most tantras. This is then followed by the second part of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, which opens with an homage, a standard element found at the beginning of almost all tantras. While it is customary for the text title (often given in both Tibetan transliteration of the Sanskrit and in Tibetan translation) to precede the homage, there are many cases where the title is missing and the text begins with the homage. In addition to the presence of back material at the end of the first half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* followed by front material at the beginning of the second half, the chapter numbering of the second half begins with one rather than continuing the chapter numbering sequentially from the last chapter of the first half of the text, as is common for Buddhist texts. This indicates that the second half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was originally a separate text that maintains its own chapter numbering.

Thus, the Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* contains several pieces of persuasive evidence indicating that the text resulted from the combination of two previously independent texts. The existence of material indicative of the end and beginning of a text at the conclusion of the first half and opening of the second half, respectively, of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, as well as the difference in the title of the text given at the end of the chapters of the first and second half of the text and the chapter numbering, strongly suggest that the two parts of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* originally existed as two independent texts. In this regard it appears that the term “Vajraśekhara Tantra” (Tib: *rdo rje rtse mo'i rgyud*) found at the end of the titles in both parts of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was added, perhaps gratuitously for at least one of the two parts, when the compilation into a single text occurred.

There is an additional piece of evidence in Butön’s Yoga Tantra history relating to the formation of the *Vajraśekhara*. In discussing the Indian tantric figure Buddhagupta, Butön relates an unidentified scholar’s opinion that Buddhagupta directly received initiation and instruction from Mañjuśrī in five tantras: the *Compendium of Principles*,

the *Vajraśekhara*, the *Śrī Paramādyā*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, and the *Collection of All Procedures* (Tib: *rTog pa thams cad bsdus pa*; Skt: *\*Sarva-kalpa-samuccaya*).<sup>254</sup> While the source of this opinion is not known (it could be either an Indian or a Tibetan scholar), the fact that the *Vajraśekhara* and the *Collection of All Procedures* are listed as separate texts is significant. I will provisionally assume that the *Collection of All Procedures* mentioned here is the same as the text Amoghavajra identifies by that title (and which is connected with the first part of the extant *Vajraśekhara* in Tibetan)—which seems likely since all five texts mentioned are described by Amoghavajra in his summary of the eighteen-text tantric collection (with the possible exception of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*). The position Butön relates then perhaps indicates that the title “*Vajraśekhara*” originally referred only to the second part of the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, and that the *Collection of All Procedures* existed as an independent text that was later joined to it to form the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* as we find it today in Tibetan translation.

Amoghavajra describes the *Collection of All Procedures* as consisting of four parts, which presumably correspond to the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>255</sup> The second half of the Tibetan *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, however, only covers the first two sections of the *Compendium of Principles* and then abruptly ends.<sup>256</sup> After the conclusion of chapter four, the text continues with what appears to be the beginning of a new section,<sup>257</sup> as Vairocana and all the Tathāgatas praise Vajrasattva with a litany of 108 names and supplicate him to generate the great mode in order to subjugate poisonous

---

<sup>254</sup> *des de nyid bsdus pa dang/ rdo rje rtse mo dang/ dpal mchog dang po dang/ ngan song sbyong ba'i rgyud dang/ rtog pa thams cad bsdus pa dang lnga'i dbang dang gdams pa rnams 'jam dpal la dngos su thob bo/* (Butön, *Ship*, 63a.6).

<sup>255</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” p. 165 and n. 161, pp. 166-167.

<sup>256</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” pp. 166-167, n. 161.

<sup>257</sup> *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, P113, vol. 5, 56.3.5-56.4.7.

ones and effect the welfare of sentient beings.<sup>258</sup> Rather than the text continuing with Vajrasattva giving a teaching in response to the request of all the Buddhas, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* surprisingly ends with a closing section consisting of a title that demarcates the boundary of the text as a whole.

Thus, part of the original text is missing in the extant version. Butön notes this, stating that the text is incomplete and that following the supplication five-and-a-half collections of procedures (or of chapters) appear to be missing.<sup>259</sup> He further elaborates the missing content as the external vajra family section, the taming transmigrators [section], the accomplishment of all aims [section], and the action and supreme first Buddha.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the second half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* represents an incomplete version of the text Amoghavajra identifies as the *Yoga of the King of Secrets of All Tathāgatas*.

Determining the date of the compilation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* is a difficult task. Giebel relates Tanaka Kimiaki's argument that Amoghavajra's ordering of the first three texts reflects their historical development. The *Compendium of Principles* was the earliest composition, followed by its two explanatory tantras, in this order: the *Yoga of the King of Secrets of All Tathāgatas*, which is the second half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* (or an earlier version of it); and then the *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures*, which is the first half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* (or an earlier version of it).<sup>261</sup> These two texts still circulated as individual texts and had not yet been combined to form the

---

<sup>258</sup> *gdug pa rnam ni 'dul ba dang/de bzhin sems can don bya'i phyir/tshul chen skyed par mdzad du gsol* (*Vajraśekhara Tantra*, P113, vol. 5, 56.4.7).

<sup>259</sup> *gsol ba btab pa'i 'phro la lus nas mjug ma rdzogs te/ 'di'i 'phro phyi rol rdo rje'i rigs kyi dum bu dang/ 'gro 'dul dang/ don grub dang las dang mchog gi dang po'i sangs rgyas te/ rtog pa bsdu pa phyed dang lnga ma tshang bar snang ngo/* (Butön, *Ship*, 28b.3-28b.4).

<sup>260</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>261</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 169, n. 167.

*Vajraśekhara Tantra* in the middle of the eighth century, as evidenced by Amoghavajra's treatment of them as separate texts in his summary of the eighteen texts of the *Vajraśekhara* cycle.

While the evidence from Amoghavajra's Chinese text points to the second half of the eighth century at the earliest as the date of compilation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, references in the works of the prominent eighth-century Indian tantric exegete Buddhaguhya support an earlier date. In his *Commentary on the Concentration Continuation Chapter*, Buddhaguhya refers to the *Compendium of Principles* and immediately thereafter mentions the *Vajraśekhara*, describing it as the "elucidation of the thought of Yoga Tantra."<sup>262</sup> Additionally, there is a citation from the *Vajraśekhara* near the beginning of Buddhaguhya's *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*, a commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>263</sup> A thorough search of this text for other quotes from the *Vajraśekhara*, and locating such quotes in the text of the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, is necessary to determine whether Buddhaguhya uses the title *Vajraśekhara* to refer to the extant Tibetan translation in its entirety, to either of its two parts, or even perhaps to some other text.<sup>264</sup>

---

<sup>262</sup> *rnal 'byor gyi rgyud kyi dgongs pa 'grel pa rdo rje rtse mo* (reading 'grel for 'brel). *bSam gtan phyi ma rim par phyed ba rgya cher bshad pa, Dhyānottaraṭaṭāṭikā*, P3495 (Toh. 2670), vol. 78, 79.5.6; reference in Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 378, n. 137.

<sup>263</sup> Buddhaguhya, *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*, P3324, vol. 70, 39.4.7. I discovered this reference because it immediately follows a passage from the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra* cited in Max Nihom, *Studies in Indian and Indo-Indonesian Tantra: The Kuṅṅjarakarṇadharmakathana and the Yogatantra* (Vienna: Sammlung de Nobili Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1994), p. 63, n. 158.

<sup>264</sup> It is interesting to note in this context the existence of two texts from the Collected Tantras of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism with titles suggesting a possible relationship to the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*: the *Condensed Vajraśekhara Tantra* (*rDo rje rtse mo 'dus pa'i rgyud*) and the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* (*rDo rje rtse mo'i rgyud*). A cursory examination reveals that the content of both texts appears to be different than that of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*. Also, the former text has a different Sanskrit title (*Vajra-agraviru-tantra*) and different chapter titles than the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, and the latter text has

The appearance of a quote from a text identified as the *Vajraśekhara* in Buddhaguhya's commentary raises several possibilities. The first is that the text Buddhaguhya refers to with the title *Vajraśekhara* is not the same as the extant Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, or that it corresponds to only one of the two independent texts Amoghavajra mentions that were combined to form the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* as we find it today in Tibetan. Another possibility is that the compilation occurred after Amoghavajra left south India in 746 CE and before Buddhaguhya composed the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*. Buddhaguhya's fame as a tantric master reached central Tibet during the reign of King Trisong Detsen (r. 755/756-797),<sup>265</sup> who invited Buddhaguhya to Tibet. According to the letter he wrote in response, Buddhaguhya sent a copy of his commentary on the *Compendium of Principles* to Tibet,<sup>266</sup> and therefore could have composed it anytime during the second half of the eighth century. Thus, it is possible that the formation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* from the two independent texts mentioned by Amoghavajra occurred after 746 CE and before Buddhaguhya wrote his commentary.

Another possible explanation is that this compilation occurred in northeastern India (Buddhaguhya was a resident of Nālandā Monastery) but not in south India, where Amoghavajra obtained his texts and teachings. This might explain the somewhat curious situation that the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was never translated into Chinese—not even during the late tenth and eleventh centuries when the Indian monk Dānapāla (Chi: Shih-

---

different chapter titles and lacks a Sanskrit title (*rDo rje rtse mo 'dus pa'i rgyud*, *Nyingma rgyud 'bum*, *mTshams brag Edition*, text Tb.408, vol. 18, 717.7-752.3; *rDo rje rtse mo'i rgyud*, text Tb.581, vol. 32, 2.1-17.1. Both texts are found in *The mtshams-brag Manuscript of the rñying ma rgyud 'bum* [Thimpu, Bhutan: National Library, Royal Government of Bhutan, 1982]. For an online catalogue and digital edition of these texts, see <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed>).

<sup>265</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. xvii.

<sup>266</sup> *bdag la dbang med khri lan skyes lan du/ /man ngag yo ga a ba ta ra brdzangs/* (Butön, *Ship*, 69a.4).

hu) and others translated the fully-developed versions of tantras such as the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Hevajra Tantra* into Chinese. We must remember, however, that the mere fact that there is no Chinese translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* is not conclusive proof that the text did not exist in India at that time, as numerous Indian tantras translated into Tibetan were never translated into Chinese.

The evidence pertaining to the Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* supports the argument for the relative lateness of its compilation in India from the two independent texts the *King of Secrets of All Tathāgatas* and the *Collection of All Procedures*. Although the *Compendium of Principles* was translated into Tibetan during the early period of translation activity (eighth century),<sup>267</sup> there is no reference to any translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* (or parts thereof) at that time. The translators of the *Vajraśekhara* preserved in the *Kangyur* are identified as the Indian scholar and vajra-master Karmavajra and the Tibetan translator-monk Zhönu Tsultrim (*gZhon nu tshul khrims*),<sup>268</sup> who was born at the end of the eleventh century.<sup>269</sup> Thus, the Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* dates to the twelfth century and is a product of the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet.

Butön provides further information about the Tibetan translation. He relates the position of Rongpa Chögön (*Rong pa chos mgon*)<sup>270</sup> that although the Great Translator

---

<sup>267</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.5.

<sup>268</sup> *rgya gar gyi mkhan po rdo rje slob dpon chen po karma badzra'i zhal snga nas dang/ lo tstsha ba dge slong gzhon nu tshul khrims kyis sgyur cing zhus ba'o/ (Vajraśekhara Tantra, P113, volume 5, 56.4.8).*

<sup>269</sup> *gzhon nu tshul khrims/ khong ni spyi lo'i dus rabs bcu gcig pa'i dus mjug tsam du sku 'khrungs pa'i snyan grags can gyi lo tsA ba zhig yin/ (Ko zhul Grags pa 'byung gnas and rGyal ba bLo bzang mkhas grub, Gangs can mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzod {Treasury of Names of the Successive Scholars and Adepts of Tibet} [Mtsho-sngon, PRC: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1992; hereafter abbreviated as *Treasury of Names*], p. 1505).*

<sup>270</sup> This might be the tenth/ eleventh century figure also known by the name *g.Yung chos mgon* and the title *dGe bshes g.yung* (Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), P2560).



Rinchen Zangpo did not make a translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, he and others requested its initiation instructions and explanatory instructions from the Indian Paṇḍita Śraddhākaravarman.<sup>271</sup> However, this assertion seems to have been disputed in Tibet, as Butön also relates an unidentified scholar's opinion that the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was not even known at the time of Rinchen Zangpo.<sup>272</sup> Butön refutes this assertion by saying it is not true. He presents as evidence for his position that the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was known in Rinchen Zangpo's time the fact that the *Vajraśekhara* is cited in many passages as a refutation of wrong mantra and so forth.<sup>273</sup> However, the fact that this was contested creates some doubt.

Thus, according to the account Butön relates and his own opinion concerning the existence of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* in Tibet at the time of Rinchen Zangpo, the two independent texts must have been combined in India (or at least in Kashmir, where Rinchen Zangpo spent several years) to form the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* at the latest by the late tenth or early eleventh century. Since Amoghavajra treats what would become the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* as two separate texts, we can conclude that the compilation of the *Vajraśekhara* in India (or at least in south India) occurred sometime after 746 CE<sup>274</sup> (when Amoghavajra last was in south India) and before the twelfth century, when it was translated into Tibetan. The claim that the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was known in Tibet at the time of Rinchen Zangpo, if accurate, would move the date of compilation earlier (at least in Kashmir, where Rinchen Zangpo studied and gathered Sanskrit texts), to the late

---

<sup>271</sup> *bshad pa'i rgyud rdo rje rtse mo lo chen gyis bsgyur ba ni med/ paṇḍi ta shraddhā la dbang bka' dang bshad bka' rnams zhus/ de nas lo chung dang/ sum ston nas brgyud pa'i dbang bka' bshad bka' yod ces rong pa chos mgon zer la/* (Butön, *Ship*, 77b.3-77b.4).

<sup>272</sup> *kha cig na re/ lo chen gyi dus su rdo rje rtse mo ma 'gyur bas/ dbang bka' bshad bka' lta ci smos kyil/ rgyud gzig pa'ang med do/ zhes zer ro/* (Butön, *Ship*, 77b.4-77b.5).

<sup>273</sup> *rgyud ma gzig pa mi bden te/ sngags logs sun 'byin la sogs par lung mang por drangs pa'i phyir/* (Butön, *Ship*, 77b.5).

<sup>274</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 109.

tenth or early eleventh century. Finally, Buddhaguhya's citation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, if in fact it refers to the same text as we find in Tibetan translation, would move the date of compilation still earlier, to the latter half of the eighth century (it is also possible that this reference is to one of the component parts later combined to form the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* as we have it in its Tibetan translation).

In terms of the standard identifications made at the beginning of a Buddha-voiced text, the opening of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* is lacking. The customary set of five excellences is missing not only from the beginning of the first half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* but also from the beginning of the second half. To address this deficiency, Butön relates several differing opinions about the location of the *Vajraśekhara's* initial teaching. His own opinion seems to be that the teacher, location, and audience of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* are similar to those of the *Compendium of Principles*<sup>275</sup>—Vairocana taught the tantra in Akaniṣṭha and so forth. Amoghavajra identifies the location of the teaching of the second text in the eighteen-text collection, which corresponds to the second half of the Tibetan *Vajraśekhara Tantra* in some form, as Akaniṣṭha.<sup>276</sup> He identifies the location of the teaching of his third text, which corresponds to the first half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, as the Dharma Realm Palace.<sup>277</sup>

As for the number of maṇḍalas, Butön indicates that several sections of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* appear to be incomplete. There are eight maṇḍalas explicitly set forth, or nine if the Conquest over the Three Realms Retention Maṇḍala is divided into two. There do, however, appear to be more maṇḍalas connected with this tantra; Butön goes on to relate the assertion of Tibetan lamas that, through the reasoning of the

---

<sup>275</sup> *ston pa dang gnas dang 'khor rnams kyang rtsa rgyud dang mtshungs so/* (Butön, *Ship*, 26a.5).

<sup>276</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 165.

<sup>277</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 167.

progression of the main deities of the retention maṇḍalas of the root tantra, there are 129 maṇḍalas.<sup>278</sup>

### **The Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures**<sup>279</sup>

As with the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* is an explanatory Yoga Tantra of the *Compendium of Principles*, expounding upon its similarly titled second section. As preserved in Tibetan translation, the *Conquest over the Three Worlds* consists of a root tantra (*rtsa rgyud, mūla-tantra*) and a supplement (*rgyud phyi ma, uttara-tantra*).<sup>280</sup> In the Peking edition of the *Kangyur*, the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* spans some 102 folio sides. As such, it is approximately one-third longer than the “Conquest over the Three Worlds” section of the *Compendium of Principles* on which it expounds, which spans roughly seventy-five folio sides.

In terms of Chinese translations, Amoghavajra describes a similar text, in terms of both title and content, as the fourth of the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara Yoga tantric corpus.<sup>281</sup> Two chapters of the root tantra exist in Chinese translation: T. vol. 20, No. 1040, an Avalokiteśvara ritual translated by Amoghavajra, corresponds to chapter four with some additional passages from the supplement; and the first part of T. vol. 20, No.

---

<sup>278</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 28b.4-28b.5.

<sup>279</sup> 'Jig rten gsum las nam par rgyal ba rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po, *Trailokyavijayamahākalparājā*, P115 (Toh. 482), vol. 5, 61.1.1-83.1.8. Although the text has no translator colophon, Butön relates two opinions on the matter: one states that the Great Translator (that is, Rin chen bzang po) translated the text, and the other wonders if it was done by dGe blo (most likely rMa dGe ba'i blo gros, 1044-1089) (Butön, *Ship*, 74a.5; Grags pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub, *Treasury of Names*, p. 1316).

<sup>280</sup> For a discussion of the semantic range of the terms “root tantra,” “explanatory tantra,” “supplement,” and so forth, see below.

<sup>281</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” pp. 171-172. Buddhaguhya also mentions the *Conquest over the Three Worlds* in his *Summary of the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 378, n. 137), so we have another reference in an Indian work that dates to the middle of the eighth century.

1171, a Mañjuśrī ritual also translated by Amoghavajra, corresponds to chapter seven.<sup>282</sup> Two other Chinese translations also are related to chapter seven: T. vol. 20, No. 1172, translated by Amoghavajra, and T. vol. 20, No. 1173, translated by Vajrabodhi.<sup>283</sup> Since Vajrabodhi brought the texts he used from India to China in 720 CE, we can trace at least some parts of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds* to that date at the latest. Furthermore, since Amoghavajra returned to China from south India with texts in 746, we can date at least the fourth and seventh chapters of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds* to the middle of the eighth century at the latest.

This explanatory tantra was taught by Vairocana, in the inestimable mansion—the tiered structure ornamented with vajras and jewels and so forth—on the peak of Mt. Meru, to an audience of many tens of millions of Bodhisattvas, as well as gods, nāgas, yakṣas, and so forth who have faith in the teachings.<sup>284</sup> The body of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* begins with the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi asking Vairocana how to subjugate Mahādeva (aka Maheśvara, aka Śiva) and other pernicious beings. This mirrors the beginning of the “Conquest over the Three Worlds” section of the *Compendium of Principles*—of which the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* is an explanatory tantra—although there is one difference. In the *Compendium of Principles* there is a brief preamble in which Vairocana requests that Vajrapāṇi generate the deities of his Buddha family. Vajrapāṇi refuses, asking instead how to subjugate Maheśvara and his ilk. This opening request follows the structure of

---

<sup>282</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 171, n. 171.

<sup>283</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 171, n. 171.

<sup>284</sup> *bcom ldan ’das ri rab ri’i rtse mo na rdo rje dang nor bu rin po che rtse mo’i khang pa brtsegs pa na/ byang chub sems dpa’ bye ba phrag du ma dang/ lha dang klu dang gnod sbyin dang dri za dang mi’am ci dang ’byung po dang sha za dang brjid byed dang ma mo rnams dang bltar rung ba dang bltar mi rung ba du ma sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la mngon par dad pa rnams dang thab gcig tu bzhugs te/ (Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures, P115, vol. 5, 61.1.3-61.1.6).*

the other three sections of the *Compendium of Principles*. However, it is absent from the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures*, which begins—after the introductory scene-setting—with Vajrapāṇi simply dropping in from the sphere of space and asking Vairocana for instructions on how to subjugate pernicious beings such as Maheśvara. Ronald Davidson has pointed out that the snappy dialogue we find in the Maheśvara subjugation myth in both the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* is indicative of oral traditions of wandering storytellers.<sup>285</sup> Thus, the narrative of Vajrapāṇi’s defeat of Maheśvara in both the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* represents the codification in written form of a previously independent oral text.

The relationship between the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* is more difficult to determine. One possibility is that an independent textual tradition existed for the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures*, and that this was incorporated into the *Compendium of Principles* as its second section, with Vairocana’s request to Vajrapāṇi added to the beginning to bring it into uniformity with the other three sections of the *Compendium of Principles*. We must note here that a cursory examination reveals that the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* is longer than the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* by about one-third. This would seem to challenge the claim that the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* was incorporated into the *Compendium of Principles*, since the usual course is for later versions of a text to be expansions of earlier versions. A close comparative reading of the two texts is necessary to make more substantial arguments concerning the relationship between the

---

<sup>285</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 151.

*Compendium of Principles* and the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures*.

The teaching of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* begins with the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's subjugation—under the instruction of Vairocana—of Maheśvara (here more frequently identified as Mahādeva) and his entourage of pernicious, worldly gods, who are then brought into the Buddhist fold and established in a maṇḍala. Other harmful beings are also subdued and caused to enter maṇḍalas. There follows the setting forth and teaching of various maṇḍalas and their respective rites. Butön indicates that the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* has forty-six maṇḍalas.<sup>286</sup> There is a single Indian commentary on this tantra preserved in the *Tengyur: Muditākoṣa's Commentary on the Superior Conquest over the Three Worlds*.<sup>287</sup> In addition, there is a ritual text connected with the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, of which the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* is an explanatory tantra: Ānandagarbha's *Rite of the Conquest over the Three Worlds*.<sup>288</sup>

### **The All Secret King of Tantra**<sup>289</sup>

The third explanatory tantra of the *Compendium of Principles* is the *All Secret Tantra*, which expounds upon the root Yoga Tantra's first section. The *All Secret Tantra* lacks an introduction, so the teacher, audience, locale, and so forth are not identified.

---

<sup>286</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 32a.5.

<sup>287</sup> Muditākoṣa, *'Phags pa 'jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya ba'i 'grel pa, Āryatrailokyavijayanāmaṅgali*, P3332 (Toh. 2509), vol. 71, 100.4.7-132.4.8. Although the text has no translator colophon, Butön relates two opinions on the matter: one states that the Great Translator (that is, Rin chen bzang po, 958-1055) translated the text, and the other wonders if it was done by dGe blo (most likely rMa dge ba'i blo gros, 1044-1089; Butön, *Ship*, 74a.5).

<sup>288</sup> Ānandagarbha, *Khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga, Śrītrailokyavijayamaṇḍalavidhi*, P3342.

<sup>289</sup> *Thams cad gsang ba rgyud kyi rgyal po, Sarvarahasyo nāmatantrarāja*, P114 (Toh. 481), vol. 5, 56.4.8-60.3.5. There is an English translation of this tantra: Alex Wayman, "The Sarvarahasyatantra," in *Acta Indologica VI: Mysticism* (1984), pp. 521-569.

Rather, the *All Secret Tantra* opens by teaching the mental qualities of greatness, and then continues with instructions for cultivating such qualities, the yoga of cause and effect and the yoga abbreviated as the central deity, recollection of the Buddha and recollection of doctrine, the meaning of the five manifest enlightenments, non-dual wisdom, and so on.<sup>290</sup> This tantra has one maṅḍala.

Butön classifies the *All Secret Tantra* as an explanatory tantra of the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*—the Vajradhātu section. This identification is likely made at least in part on the basis of the presence of an explanation of the meaning of the five manifest enlightenments in the *All Secret Tantra*, since the *locus classicus* of the five manifest enlightenments—one of the central practices of the Yoga Tantra system as a whole—is the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*. The inclusion of the *All Secret Tantra* within the Yoga Tantra corpus is contested, however, as it is classified as Highest Yoga Tantra in some systems. There is one Indian commentary on this tantra, preserved in Tibetan translation: Ratnākaraśānti’s *Connected Explanation of the Glorious All Secret (Tantra): A Secret Lamp*.<sup>291</sup> Ratnākaraśānti was a teacher of Abhayākara Gupta,<sup>292</sup> who lived during the latter half of the eleventh century,<sup>293</sup> and thus we can roughly date Ratnākaraśānti’s commentary to the middle of the eleventh century.

## Concordant Tantras

The third category of Yoga Tantra Butön presents in the section “How the Wheel of Yoga Tantra Doctrine Was Turned” is that of the concordant tantras (Tib: *cha mthun pa’i rgyud*). The first tantra that he treats under this rubric is the *Śrī Paramādyā*, but I will

---

<sup>290</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 28b.5-29a.

<sup>291</sup> *dPal thams cad gsang ba’i bshad sbyar gsang ba’i sgron ma*, *Śrīsarvarahasyanibandharahasyapradīpanāma*, P3450 (Toh. 2623), vol. 76.. Butön also mentions this text and refers to its author by the abbreviated name “Śāntipa” (*Ship*, 74a.1).

<sup>292</sup> van der Kuijp, “Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet,” p. 123, n. 16.

<sup>293</sup> Roerich, *Blue Annals*, p. 219.

deviate from the order of Butön’s presentation and discuss three related texts together: the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, the *Śrī Paramādyā*, and the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*.

Because a Sanskrit manuscript survives only for the first of these three texts, the evidence found in Chinese and Tibetan translations is critical for this discussion. In China the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* texts along with their associated practices constituted an important tantric cycle and served as the basis for an entire ritual and philosophical system. This system is still employed by the Shingon sect in Japan, where it and the texts on which it is based are referred to by the general term *Rishukyō*.<sup>294</sup> As a consequence of the importance of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* tradition in East Asia, recent scholarship focusing on the Japanese *Rishukyō* tradition has examined the various related Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan texts, and has drawn conclusions concerning their intertextual relationships and historical development. Ian Astley-Kristensen has summarized much of this research in the introduction to his translation and analysis of the central *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* text employed in Japan,<sup>295</sup> and Rolf Giebel has further distilled and clarified these findings in discussing related texts described by Amoghavajra in his Chinese digest of the Vajraśekhara cycle.<sup>296</sup> I will draw heavily on these works in my discussion.

---

<sup>294</sup> In Japan the general term *Rishukyō* is used to refer to this tradition. The term itself corresponds to the Chinese *li-ch’ü ching* and the reconstructed Sanskrit [*prajñāpāramitā*]-*naya-sūtra* (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 174, n. 182). While Astley-Kristensen translates *li-ch’ü rishu* as “guiding principle” in accordance with explanations of the term in East Asian traditions, I will refer to it as “mode of the perfection of wisdom” in accordance with my reading of the Sanskrit *prajñāpāramitā-naya* and the corresponding Tibetan *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i tshul*.

<sup>295</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*.

<sup>296</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” pp. 173-179.



**Short Versions: The *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas***

In East Asian scholarship the various texts of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* system are divided into shorter and longer versions.<sup>297</sup> Seven extant versions of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* comprise the shorter category. The first of these is the *Ardhyardhaśatikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*, a mixture of Sanskrit and Khotanese passages.<sup>298</sup> The Indian Mādhyamaka exegete Candrakīrti (c. 600-650) quotes verbatim a passage from the seventh chapter of this Sanskrit text in his *Prasannapadā*,<sup>299</sup> so we can conclude that at least an early (non-tantric) version of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* existed in India by the middle of the seventh century.<sup>300</sup>

The five Chinese translations of the short *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* provide further evidence concerning the provenance of the text. The first of these is Hsüan-tsang's translation, made between 660 and 663 CE.<sup>301</sup> Bodhiruci's translation, which dates to 693 CE,<sup>302</sup> is significant because it includes mantras.<sup>303</sup> The third Chinese translation is attributed to the tantric master Vajrabodhi (although some question this) and dates to c. 741 CE.<sup>304</sup> Amoghavajra, Vajrabodhi's student, made the authoritative Chinese translation of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom*. This text, which dates to c.

---

<sup>297</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 12.

<sup>298</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 10. Edward Conze has published an English translation based on the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts in *The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts* (London: Luzac & Company, 1973), pp. 184-195.

<sup>299</sup> Conze, *The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*, p. vi, n. 2; Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 11.

<sup>300</sup> Astley-Kristensen suggests that the text was composed in India by the middle of the sixth century (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 14). Conze indicates that it was probably written before the beginning of the seventh century (Conze, *The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*, p. vi).

<sup>301</sup> T. vol. 7, No. 220 [part 10] (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 14, n. 47).

<sup>302</sup> T. vol. 8, No. 240 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 14, n. 51).

<sup>303</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>304</sup> T. vol. 8, No. 241 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 15, n. 53).

771,<sup>305</sup> is significant because it has a “co-ordinated ritual intent” and is the foundation for a complete tantric ritual system still employed in Japan under the title *Rishukyō*.<sup>306</sup> Since Amoghavajra returned to China from south India in 746 CE, the text of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* he translated (as well as oral exegetical traditions he obtained) must date to that time or earlier in India, so we can date a tantric version of the text to the middle of the eighth century at the latest.

The Indian commentary on the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* by Jñānamitra, which is preserved only Tibetan translation<sup>307</sup> but likely dates to the middle of the eighth century,<sup>308</sup> supports such an assertion. In conveying the history of the tantra, Jñānamitra relates a now-famous narrative (which I will discuss in chapter four) in which he discusses maṇḍalas and their practice, so we can conclude that a tantric version of the text (or its deployment within a tantric system) existed in India by the middle of the eighth century if not before.

Additionally, there is a Tibetan translation of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*<sup>309</sup> that dates to the last quarter of the eighth century.<sup>310</sup> This translation is

---

<sup>305</sup> T. vol. 8, No. 243 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 15, n. 56).

<sup>306</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 15.

<sup>307</sup> Jñānamitra, *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa'i 'grel pa Āryaprajñāpāramitānayaśatapañcāśatkaṭikā*, P3471 (Toh. 2647), vol. 77, 44.2.1-54.3.8.

<sup>308</sup> Stephen Hodge, based on evidence such as dating the King Indrabhūti whom Jñānamitra mentions in the account of the origin of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* found in his commentary on that tantra, concludes that Jñānamitra was active by the middle of the eighth century. As further support for his argument Hodge cites a reference, in a Chinese biography of the monk Prajñā, to a Jñānamitra active at Nālandā in 758 CE, who might be the same Jñānamitra as the author of the commentary on the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* (Stephen Hodge, personal communication, 14-15 April 2002). I am grateful to Stephen Hodge for generously sharing his unpublished research with me and allowing me to cite his findings. Ronald Davidson assigns a date of c. 800 for Jñānamitra (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 204).

<sup>309</sup> *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul brgya lnga bcu pa Āryaprajñāpāramitānayaśatapañcāśatikā*, P121 (Toh. 489). The sTog Palace edition of the Tibetan *Kangyur* apparently has two versions of this text (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 11).

included in the Tantra section of the *Kangyur* as well as in the Perfection of Wisdom section, so we know the editors of this collection of Buddha-voiced texts viewed it as a tantric text, and Butön treats it as a Yoga Tantra in his *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra*. The Tibetan classification of the eighth-century translation of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* also supports the argument that a tantric version of the text existed in India by the middle of the eighth century.

The Indian monk Dānapāla (Shih-hu) made the last Chinese translation of the short version of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom*, c. 990.<sup>311</sup> Dānapāla's translation seems to have exerted little lasting influence in either China or Japan, probably because the influence of tantra *qua* tantra in China declined in the hundred or so years following Amoghavajra's death in 774 CE, and because the tantric systems employed in Japan stem primarily from traditions brought to China during the late eighth and early ninth century.

We see in the Chinese translations of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* its development from a standard Perfection of Wisdom text that does not even contain mantras (Hsüan-tsang's translation) to a text that includes mantras (Bodhiruci's translation) and finally to a text employed within a fully tantric system (Amoghavajra's translation). This demonstrates the importance of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* as a bridge between Perfection of Wisdom literature and non-tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism on the one hand and Buddhist tantra on the other.

In addition to Jñānamitra's commentary, the following Indian ritual texts, preserved in Tibetan translation, may be related to the tantric *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*:

---

<sup>310</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70b.4-70b.5.

<sup>311</sup> T. vol. 8, No. 242 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 18).

- Ānandagarbha, *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga, Prajñāpāramitāmaṇḍalavidhi (maṇḍalopāyikā)*, translated by Mahāpāṇa, P3468 (Toh. 2644).<sup>312</sup>
- Ratnakīrti, *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga zhes bya ba, Prajñāpāramitāmaṇḍalavidhināma*, translated by Mahāpāṇa, P3469 (Toh. 2645).<sup>313</sup>
- Yi ge brgya pa'i cho ga, *Śatākṣaravidhi*, translated by Parahita and Shes rab rgyal mtshan, P3473 (Toh. 2649).<sup>314</sup>
- Śraddhākaravarman, *Rab gnas kyi cho ga mdor bsdus pa zhes bya ba, Pratiṣṭhāvidhisamkṣepanāma*, translated by Kanakavarman and Pa tshab Nyi ma grags, P3470 (Toh. 2646).<sup>315</sup>

I will now briefly discuss the contents of the Tibetan translation of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* in terms of the traditional categories of the five excellences. The teacher of the tantra is Vairocana. The locale is the inestimable mansion of the land of controlling others' emanations.<sup>316</sup> Vairocana preached the tantra when he was residing with an audience consisting of 80,000,000 Bodhisattvas, of which eight are identified by name:<sup>317</sup> Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Ākāśagarbha, Vajramuṣṭi, Mañjuśrī, Sahacittotpādadharmacakrapravartin, Gaganagañja, and Sarvamārabalapramardin.<sup>318</sup>

The teaching of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* is the mode of the perfection of wisdom—the door of the purity of the essence of all phenomena, which

---

<sup>312</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 382.

<sup>313</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, pp. 382-383.

<sup>314</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 385.

<sup>315</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, pp. 382-383.

<sup>316</sup> This is the location of the teaching given at the beginning of all the shorter versions of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* with the exception of the Sanskrit text, of which the first section is corrupt (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” p. 175, n. 183).

<sup>317</sup> Incidentally, these are the same eight Bodhisattvas identified at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles*.

<sup>318</sup> *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, P121 (Toh. 489), vol. 5, 173.2.8-173.3.1.

is to say the emptiness of the essence of all phenomena. This begins with Vairocana enumerating the seventeen pure states (Tib: *rnam par dag pa'i gnas*; Skt: *viśuddhi-pada*) that are states of a Bodhisattva, along with the benefits of listening to them and so forth.<sup>319</sup> Then Vajrapāṇi, brandishing a vajra at his heart, says *hūṃ* and thereby displays the vajra family maṇḍala. The text then continues with Vairocana teaching various methods of the perfection of wisdom (which come in sets of four) together with their benefits. After teaching the first set of four, Vairocana displays the Tathāgata Maṇḍala through constructing the mudrā of supreme enlightenment and saying “a.” For each subsequent mode of the perfection of wisdom that Vairocana teaches, a Bodhisattva displays the corresponding maṇḍala by constructing a particular mudrā and repeating a single-syllable mantra. For instance, Vajrapāṇi displays the wrathful maṇḍala by constructing the mudrā of conquest over the three worlds and reciting “*hūṃ*,” Avalokiteśvara displays the Taming Transmigrators Maṇḍala by constructing the lotus-opening mudrā and reciting “*hriḥ*,” and so forth.

Finally, Vairocana teaches the twenty-five doors of the perfection of wisdom. This also stands as a short independent text,<sup>320</sup> preserved in Tibetan translation, that Butön briefly discusses.<sup>321</sup> Butön states that the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150*

---

<sup>319</sup> This summary of the contents of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 41a.5-42a.6.

<sup>320</sup> *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i sgo nyi shu rtsa lnga pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* , *Āryapañcaviṃśatikāprajñāpāramitāmukhanāmamahāyānasūtra*, P124 (Toh. 491).

<sup>321</sup> In briefly discussing the *Twenty-Five Doors of the Perfection of Wisdom* as an individual Yoga Tantra, Butön remarks on its relationship not with the *Compendium of Principles* but rather with the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*. He says:

Because this (tantra, the *Twenty-Five Doors of the Perfection of Wisdom*) is similar to the twenty-five doors (of the perfection of wisdom) that are in the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, it was drawn from the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* or it is a tantra concordant with the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* (*'di rdo rje snying po rgyan gyi rgyud na yod*

*Stanzas* has fifteen maṇḍalas, but that the commentary by Jñānamitra explains that these become twenty.<sup>322</sup>

### **Long Versions: The Śrī Paramādyā and the Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra**

There are no extant Sanskrit manuscripts of the long versions of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom*. There are, however, two Tibetan and two Chinese translations of expanded tantric versions of the text. The two Tibetan texts are translations of the Śrī Paramādyā and the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*. The two Chinese extended versions are the translations by the Indian monks Shih-hu (Dānapāla)<sup>323</sup> and Fa-hsien.<sup>324</sup>

#### **The Śrī Paramādyā**

The provenance of the Śrī Paramādyā is complex. In the *Kangyur* the Śrī Paramādyā appears as two separate translations.<sup>325</sup> The first Śrī Paramādyā text, the *Śrī Paramādyā Great Vehicle King of Procedures*,<sup>326</sup> was translated by the Tibetan Rinchen Zangpo

---

*pa'i sgo nyi shu rtsa lnga pa dang 'dra bar 'dug pas/ de nas phyung ba'am de dang cha mthun pa'i rgyud do/*. Butön, *Ship*, 42b.1-42b.2).

<sup>322</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 42a.5-42a.6.

<sup>323</sup> T. vol. 18, No. 886 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 13).

<sup>324</sup> T. vol. 8, No. 244 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, pp. 18-19, n. 72).

<sup>325</sup> I will refer to these as *Śrī Paramādyā I* and *Śrī Paramādyā II*. The *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra* is also included in the Tsamdrak (*mTshams brag*) and Tingkyc (*gTing skyes*) editions of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma*, although as a single text. However, the text itself appears to be the same as that found in the *Kangyur* and consists of two discrete parts—each translated by a different translation team—that correspond to the two Śrī Paramādyā texts of the *Kangyur*. Thus, it is clear that in the *Kangyur* and *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma* editorial decisions were made to represent the Śrī Paramādyā as two separate texts and as a single text, respectively.

<sup>326</sup> *dPal mchog dang po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i rtoḡ pa'i rgyal po*, *Śrīparamadyānāmamahāyānakalparāja*, P119 (Toh. 487), vol. 5, 123.4.7-133.3.6. In the Karmapa Derge Edition the Sanskrit title varies slightly: *Śrīparamādināmamahāyānakalparājā* (Toh. 487, vol. 85, 300.1).

(958-1055 CE) with the Kashmiri scholar Śraddhākaravarman,<sup>327</sup> and so dates to the end of the tenth century at the earliest. There is, however, evidence that suggests an earlier translation existed. The *Śrī Paramādyā* in the Tingkye edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma* has a colophon after chapter twelve (which corresponds to *Śrī Paramādyā I*) that lists the translators as Buddhaguhya and Ma Rinchenchok and then continues by saying that later Śraddhākaravarman and Rinchen Zangpo translated it<sup>328</sup> Buddhaguhya and Rinchenchok were active during the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, so it is possible that the first section of the *Śrī Paramādyā* was translated during the latter part of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century.<sup>329</sup> The second *Śrī Paramādyā* text, the *Mantra Procedure Section of the Śrī Paramādyā*,<sup>330</sup> was translated by the Tibetan Zhiwa Ö (*Zhi ba 'od*, b. eleventh century)<sup>331</sup> and his Indian counterpart Mantrakalaśa,<sup>332</sup> and so dates to the eleventh century.

Despite the fact that the *Śrī Paramādyā* was rendered into Tibetan as two distinct texts, it is clear that at the time of its translation (late tenth/ early eleventh century) the *Śrī Paramādyā* represented a single textual tradition in India. A brief review of the Indian commentarial literature, preserved in Tibetan translation, on the *Śrī Paramādyā* bears this

---

<sup>327</sup> *rgya gar gyi mkhan po ā tsarya shrad dhā ka ra bar ma dang/ zhu chen gyi lotstsha ba dge slong rin chen bzang pos bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa'o// (Śrī Paramādyā I, P119, vol. 5, 133.3.5).*

<sup>328</sup> *rgya gar gyi mkhan po sangs rgyas gsang ba dang lo tsa ba rma rin chen mchog gi bsgyur ba'o// slad kyi a tsarya shrad dha ka ra war ma dang/ zhu chen gyi lo tstsha ba dge slong rin chen bzang pos bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa/ (gTing skyes edition of *The Collected Tantras of the Ancients* [Thimbu, Bhutan: Dingo Chentse Rinpoche, 1972], vol. 17 [tsa], 236.2-236.3; online: <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=TK.243>).*

<sup>329</sup> I will discuss the difficulties encountered in translating the *Śrī Paramādyā* and how they reflect larger issues involved in the translation process in chapter five.

<sup>330</sup> *dPal mchog dang po'i sngags kyi rtog pa'i dum bu zhes bya ba* , *Śrīparamādyāmantrakalpakhaṇḍanama*, P120 (Toh. 488), vol. 5, 133.3.6-173.2.1.

<sup>331</sup> Grags pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub, *Treasury of Names*, p. 1864.

<sup>332</sup> *Śrī Paramādyā II*, P120, vol. 5, 173.1.6-173.1.7.

out. The two extant commentaries on the tantra<sup>333</sup>—one long, the other shorter—are both attributed to the prolific Indian tantric exegete Ānandagarbha (late ninth or early tenth century).

Ānandagarbha’s long commentary<sup>334</sup> treats the *Śrī Paramādyā* as a single text, dividing it into four sections. The Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā I*, which consists of twelve chapters and a closing section, comprises the first section—called the “Perfection of Wisdom Section”—of the larger work<sup>335</sup> *Śrī Paramādyā II* covers forty-four chapters (by my count) along with a closing section, and comprises the second, third, and fourth sections of the larger work. The first part of Fa-hsien’s Chinese translation<sup>336</sup> corresponds to *Śrī Paramādyā I*, while the second part of his translation corresponds to the second part of *Śrī Paramādyā II*<sup>337</sup> (the first part of *Śrī Paramādyā II* has no corresponding Chinese translation; I will discuss these three parts of the *Śrī Paramādyā* below).

A preliminary investigation of the shorter commentary<sup>338</sup> reveals that it is an exposition of the first of the four sections of the *Śrī Paramādyā*. The title in the

---

<sup>333</sup> Butön identifies another text that he says relies on the *Śrī Paramādyā*: Pad ma’i rdo rje lcags kyu (Padmavajrāṅkuśa), *Yi ge brgya pa’i cho ga, Śatākṣaravidhi*, translated by Padmakaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3472 (Toh. 2648) (Butön, *Ship*, 73b.6).

<sup>334</sup> Ānandagarbha, *dPal mchog dang po’i rgya cher bshad pa*, *Śrīparamādītikā*, translated by (1) Śraddhākaravarman, Kamalagupta, and Rin chen bzang po; (2) Mantrakalaśa and Zhi ba ’od, P3335 (Toh. 2512), vol. 72, 177.2.3–vol. 73, 213.1.2. This text, which consists of 24,000 stanzas, is also called the *Source of the Perfection of Wisdom* (Butön, *Ship*, 62b.6).

<sup>335</sup> *shes rab kyī pha rol tu phyin pa’i dum bu*, \**prajñāpāramitā-khaṇḍa* (Ānandagarbha, *Commentary on the Śrī Paramādyā*, P3334, vol. 72, 177.1.5). Butön also identifies the first section as the “Perfection of Wisdom Section” (*Ship*, 33a.6).

<sup>336</sup> T. vol. 8, No. 244 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, n. 72, pp. 18-19).

<sup>337</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” n. 182, pp. 174-175.

<sup>338</sup> *dPal mchog dang po’i ’grel pa*, *Śrīparamādivivaraṇa* att. to Ānandagarbha, tr. by Padmakaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3334 (Toh. 2511), vol. 72, 154.2.1-177.2.3. The title line (154.2.1) actually reads “*śrīparamāryavīranāma*,” but this is an obvious corruption.



commentary's closing section supports this argument, as it refers to the text as a commentary on the first section: "The commentary on the Perfection of Wisdom Section from the *Śrī Paramādyā*, composed by the master Ānandarārbha, is completed."<sup>339</sup> While this commentary deals primarily with the first section of the *Śrī Paramādyā*, it does refer to the other three sections of the tantra as well. Therefore, the entire tantra was known to the author when he wrote this commentary on its first section.

Who this author was is the subject of debate in Tibetan traditions. Butön disputes the ascription of authorship of the shorter commentary to Ānandarārbha, citing the fact that it does not agree with his system or outlook (*grub mtha'*, *siddhānta*).<sup>340</sup> Rather, Butön suggests that the author of the shorter *Śrī Paramādyā* commentary is actually Padmavajrāṅkuśa (fl. latter half of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century) because it accords with his outlook.<sup>341</sup>

There is no dispute about Ānandarārbha's authorship of the long commentary,<sup>342</sup> however, and since this monastic tantric exegete lived during the latter part of the ninth or

---

<sup>339</sup> *dpal mchog dang po las shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i dum bu'i 'grel pa/ slob dpon kun dga' snying pos mdzad pa rdzogs so/* (Commentary on the *Śrī Paramādyā*, P3334, vol. 72, 177.1.5-177.1.6). Butön also identifies the first section as the "Perfection of Wisdom Section" (*Ship*, 33a.6).

<sup>340</sup> *dpal mchog 'grel pa chung ba slob dpon kun snying gis mdzad pa ma yin te/ de dang grub mtha' mi mthun pa'i phyir/* (Butön, *Ship*, 63a.3-63a.4).

<sup>341</sup> *'di ni slob dpon padma rdo rje lcags kyus mdzad par sems te/ de dang grub mtha' mthun par snang ngo/* (Butön, *Ship*, 63a.4). In addition to the long and short commentaries, there is one other Indian exegetical work on the *Śrī Paramādyā* extant in Tibetan translation: Ānandarārbha's *dPal mchog dang po'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga zhes bya ba, Śrīparamādimaṅḍalavidhināma*, tr. by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3343 (Toh. 2520).

<sup>342</sup> Ānandarārbha, *dPal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad pa, Śrīparamādīṭikā*, tr. by (1) Śraddhākaravarman, Kamalagupta, and Rin chen bzang po and (2) Mantrakalaśa and Zhi ba 'od, P3335. This text, which consists of 24,000 stanzas, is also known as the *Source of the Perfection of Wisdom* or by the slightly longer title *Source of the Perfection of Wisdom: Commentary on the Mudrā of the First Section [of the Śrī Paramādyā]* (*Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'byung ba dum bu dang po'i phyag rgya bcad pa, Prajñāpāramitodayādikhaṅḍamudrāṭikā*) (Butön, *Ship*, 62b.6; *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 303).

beginning of the tenth century, we can date to that time in India the existence of the *Śrī Paramādya* as a single textual tradition closely resembling the extant versions of the tantra. If, as Butön suggests, Padmavajra wrote the short commentary on the *Śrī Paramādya*, then we can date at least the first section of the tantra to the latter part of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century. This moves our dating of the *Śrī Paramādya* as a unified work in India to the first part of the tenth century, as opposed to the late tenth-century date deduced from the translations of the tantra itself (Fa-hsien's Chinese translation, like the Tibetan *Śrī Paramādya I*, dates to the end of the tenth century [c. 999]).<sup>343</sup>

Following Butön and the tantra itself, I will briefly describe the tantra's introduction and contents. The teacher of the *Śrī Paramādya I* is Vairocana. The introduction describing his attributes is the same as that found in the *Compendium of Principles*, with many passages shared verbatim.<sup>344</sup> The setting, however, is not the Akaniṣṭha heaven we find in the *Compendium of Principles*. Rather, the teaching takes place in the same location as does the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*: the desire realm inestimable mansion of the abode of the king of the gods who control others' emanations. Of the audience of eight million Bodhisattvas, the eight who are identified by name are the same eight identified in both the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*: Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Ākāśagarbha, Vajramuṣṭi, Mañjuśrī, Sahacittotpādadharmacakrapravartin, Gaganagañja, and Sarvamārabalapramardin.<sup>345</sup>

The text then continues with Vairocana teaching seventeen pure states (Tib: *rnam par dag pa'i gnas*; Skt: *viśuddhi-pada*) that are the pure states of a Bodhisattva, as well as the

---

<sup>343</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 18.

<sup>344</sup> *Śrī Paramādya I*, P119, Vol. 5, 123.4.8-123.5.5.

<sup>345</sup> *Śrī Paramādya I*, P119, Vol. 5, 123.5.6-123.5.8.

benefits of listening to them and so forth (this is how the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* begins). Butön supplies the following frame-story for the *Śrī Paramādyā*, although he gives no indication of its source:<sup>346</sup> Vairocana teaches Īśvara (that is, the Lord) of the desire realm by first emanating as a body of great joy who is surrounded by a retinue of beautiful women. This gets Īśvara’s attention, since when he sees the beauty of Vairocana’s retinue his own wife and her retinue look ugly in comparison. Īśvara then asks Vairocana how he obtained such a bevy of beauties. It is in response to this that Vairocana teaches Īśvara the seventeen pure states of the mode of the perfection of wisdom. Because Īśvara would be afraid of attaining liberation through the process of taking refuge, generating the mind of enlightenment, and then giving up his domain, Vairocana taught (or displayed) the seventeen pure states in the manner of goddesses, and thus he taught them as the source of very joyful great bliss.<sup>347</sup> He then set forth the benefits of listening to and contemplating the mode of the perfection of wisdom (that is, the seventeen purities or pure states).

Following the presentation of the seventeen pure states, the *Śrī Paramādyā I* then continues with Vairocana emanating various maṇḍalas and a cast of Bodhisattvas teaching the respective maṇḍalas as well as the rites and practices associated with them. These are divided into twelve chapters (Tib: *rtog pa*; Skt: *kalpa*). There follows a closing section extolling the benefits of involvement with the rites and practices just set forth (reading, copying, teaching, reciting, contemplating, and so forth). *Śrī Paramādyā I* then

---

<sup>346</sup> This summary is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 32b.2-32b.5.

<sup>347</sup> *rab tu dga’ ba’i bde ba chen po* . This possibly refers to the great bliss of the first Bodhisattva ground, which is called “the Very Joyful” (Tib: *rab tu dga’ ba*; Skt: *pramuditā*).

concludes with the following line: “The Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom from the *Great King of Procedures of the Great Bliss Fruitful Vajra Pledge* is completed.”<sup>348</sup>

“The Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom” is the title of the first of the four sections of the *Śrī Paramādyā* (as delineated in commentarial traditions), and we find it here presented as the title of the *Śrī Paramādyā I* text. We also see that this is in the context of a larger text, the *Great King of Procedures of the Great Bliss Fruitful Vajra Pledge*. This title is also used at the end of eleven of the twelve chapters of the *Śrī Paramādyā I* to indicate the larger text of which the chapter is a part, as I have discussed above.

The second Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā* text’s title line reflects the fact that it is actually the beginning of the second section of the larger work. Thus, the title line reads “*Mantra Procedure Section of the Śrī Paramādyā*,”<sup>349</sup> and the second section is called the Mantra Section. Following the title line and homage, the text of the *Śrī Paramādyā II* begins rather unusually. However, we must bear in mind the above discussion that, although the two parts of the *Śrī Paramādyā* were translated at different times, they represented a single textual tradition in India by the tenth century.

The standard opening found in the Yoga Tantras consists of the familiar line “Thus have I heard at one time” found at the beginning of nearly all Buddhist sūtras and tantras. Following this is an introduction that sets the scene by describing the teacher, the audience, the time, the location, and the teaching. The second *Śrī Paramādyā* text, however, lacks the opening line “Thus have I heard at one time.” Rather, after the title line and homage, it begins, “Then the Supramundane Victor Vairocana...”. The use of the word “then” (Tib: *de nas*; Skt: *atha*) indicates that this is the continuation of

---

<sup>348</sup> *bde ba chen po rdo rje don yod pa'i dam tshig gi rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po las shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul rdzogs sho//* (*Śrī Paramādyā I*, P119, vol. 5, 133.3.5).

<sup>349</sup> *dPal mchol* [sic] *dang po'i sngags kyi rtog pa'i dum bu zhes bya ba*, *Śrīparamādyāmantrakalpakhaṇḍanama*, P120 vol. 5, 133.3.6.

something else, and in fact “then” is used throughout texts of the Yoga Tantra corpus (including both *Śrī Paramādyā* texts as well as the *Compendium of Principles*) to begin a new section (whether an individual rite, a chapter, a larger section of the text, or whatever). The brevity of the description of Vairocana that follows is also in sharp contrast to the lengthy litany of attributes and epithets found in the first *Śrī Paramādyā* text and also in other texts later classified as Yoga Tantra such as the *Compendium of Principles*. Furthermore, the introduction of the *Śrī Paramādyā II* completely lacks a description of the audience, location, and time of the teaching. Thus, this text lacks three of the five excellences (Tib: *phun sum tshogs pa*) that serve as the criteria of authenticity for a text of Buddha-speech within Buddhist tradition.

I will translate the opening passage of the tantra, since it is important in establishing the relationship between the *Śrī Paramādyā I* and the *Śrī Paramādyā II*.

Then the Supramundane Victor Vairocana, who has attained the secret reality of all Tathāgatas and who is without the elaboration of all phenomena, again taught this excellent *Śrī Paramādyā* that is without beginning, middle, or end—vajra-reality, the door of the mode of the perfection of wisdom, called “Great Bliss Fruitful Vajra Pledge.”<sup>350</sup>

Here we find again reference to the text as the “mode of the perfection of wisdom,” which as we saw from the closing section of *Śrī Paramādyā I* is the title for the first section of the larger tantra. Additionally, the use of the title “Great Bliss Fruitful Vajra Pledge” to refer to the text mirrors the usage of the same title in *Śrī Paramādyā I* (in both the text titles at the end of each chapter and the closing section text title).

---

<sup>350</sup> *de nas bcom ldan ’das rnam par snang mdzad de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi gsang ba’i chos nyid brnyes pa/ chos thams cad spros pa med pa/ yang bde ba chen po rdo rje don yod pa’i dam tshig ces bya ba/ rdo rje chos nyid shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i sgo dpal mchog dang po thog ma dang tha ma dang dbus med pa’i dam pa ’di gsungs so/ (Śrī Paramādyā II, P120, vol. 5, 133.3.7-133.3.8).*

*Śrī Paramādya II* then continues with a litany of the benefits that accrue from involvement with the door of the vajra-secret perfection of wisdom—the great bliss of all Tathāgatas. The title for the larger text found at the end of this textual division is “Great Bliss Fruitful Vajra Pledge, Śrī Paramādya.”<sup>351</sup> Here in the title of the larger text we see continuity with the text title found at the end of the chapters of the first *Śrī Paramādya* text: *Great Bliss Fruitful Vajra Pledge*. We also find in the second *Śrī Paramādya* text an addition to the larger text’s title: *Śrī Paramādya*. I will discuss this and other variations on the text title found in *Śrī Paramādya II* in more detail below, in discussing the three cycles that comprise the *Śrī Paramādya* (see p. 130 ff).

Following the rehearsal of its benefits, the *Śrī Paramādya II* continues with Vajrasattva taking center stage. Vairocana enters meditative absorption and entreats Vajrasattva, who then emanates the various maṇḍalas of this text and sets forth their attendant extensive rites.<sup>352</sup> In terms of the number of maṇḍalas presented in the *Śrī Paramādya* as a whole (both parts of the Tibetan translation) there are two positions held by Indian exegetes. According to Butön, Ānandagarbha asserts that the first section of the *Śrī Paramādya* (which constitutes *Śrī Paramādya I*) has fifteen maṇḍalas; and that the second, third, and fourth sections (which constitute *Śrī Paramādya II*) have twenty-seven, twenty-one, and twenty-one maṇḍalas, respectively, making a total of eighty-four maṇḍalas.<sup>353</sup> Butön relates that the master Padmavajrāṅkuśa holds that there are seventy-eight maṇḍalas, and explains the discrepancy by the fact that Padmavajra does not have

---

<sup>351</sup> *bde ba chen po rdo rje don yod pa'i dam tshig dpal mchog dang po* (*Śrī Paramādya II*, P120, vol. 5, 133.5.3).

<sup>352</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 33a.7-33b.4.

<sup>353</sup> *slob dpon kun sying gis dum bu dang po la dkyil 'khor bco lnga/ gnyis pa la nyi shu rtsa bdun/ gsum pa dang bzhi ba la nyi shu rtsa re re ste/ brgyad cu rtsa bzhir bzhed* (Butön, *Ship*, 34b.7).

the five maṇḍalas of the secret goddesses or their condensed maṇḍala.<sup>354</sup> Butön also states that the *Shorter Commentary on the Śrī Paramādyā* reckons the number of maṇḍalas to be seventy eight, which agrees with Padmavajra's calculation.<sup>355</sup>

Although there are no extant Sanskrit manuscripts of the expanded versions of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* to guide us in reconstructing the tradition's historical development, there are three references to the *Śrī Paramādyā* in early Indian tantric commentarial literature. Two of these references are found in Tibetan translations and one reference is preserved in a Chinese text. The prolific tantric exegete Buddhaguhya mentions the *Śrī Paramādyā* as an example of a Yoga Tantra at the beginning of his commentary, preserved in Tibetan, on the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*.<sup>356</sup> The monastic scholar Jñānamitra also mentions the *Śrī Paramādyā* in his commentary on the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*.<sup>357</sup> In addition, the Indian tantric master Amoghavajra, in his Chinese summary of the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara tantric system, lists as the eighth text the *Supreme First Yoga*, for which Rolf Giebel reconstructs the Sanskrit as *Paramādyā-yoga*.<sup>358</sup> The similarity between this title and that of the *Śrī Paramādyā* is striking (“śrī” means “glorious” and is sometimes added ornamentally at the beginning of a text's title, although whether this is the case here requires further investigation) and is almost certainly not coincidental. The location of the tantra's teaching that Amoghavajra sets forth is the same as that of the first Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā* text—the palace of the king of the gods who control others'

---

<sup>354</sup> *slob dpon padma'i rdo rje lcags kyus/ ... dum bu bzhi pa la gsang ba'i lha mo'i dkyil 'khor lnga de'i rigs bsdus dang drug med pas bdun cu rtsa bryad du bshad cing/* (Butön, *Ship*, 35a.1-35a.2).

<sup>355</sup> *dpal mchog 'grel chung nas kyang de ltar bshad do/* (Butön, *Ship*, 35a.2).

<sup>356</sup> Hodge, “Considerations,” p. 58. Buddhaguhya also mentions the *Śrī Paramādyā* at the beginning of his *Summary of the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 378, n. 137).

<sup>357</sup> Jñānamitra, *Commentary on the Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, P3471, vol. 77.

<sup>358</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” pp. 178-179, n. 193.

emanations—and the contents of the text as he briefly describes them resemble the teachings of the *Śrī Paramādyā I*.<sup>359</sup>

Both Buddhaguhya and Jñānamitra were active during the middle of the eighth century.<sup>360</sup> Amoghavajra composed his digest of the Vajraśekhara cycle based on texts and teachings he received in south India before he returned to China in 746 CE, so he must have had knowledge of the *Śrī Paramādyā* by that time. These three mid-eighth century Indian scholars all refer to a tantric text entitled “*Paramādyā*,” “*Śrī Paramādyā*,” or “*Śrī Paramādyā Garland*.” In light of these references to the *Śrī Paramādyā* in Indian commentarial literature of the mid-eighth century, we can conclude that the production of the *Śrī Paramādyā* in India had likely occurred by that time. However, such a text almost certainly represents an early stage in the development of the *Śrī Paramādyā*; thus, we cannot conclude that the *Śrī Paramādyā* existed in eighth-century India in the form we find it today in Tibetan and Chinese translations.<sup>361</sup>

This then begs the question of the shape and content at this point in their development of the texts Buddhaguhya and Jñānamitra refer to by title and which Amoghavajra briefly describes. Unfortunately, because there are no known Sanskrit manuscripts, and because translation activity in both Tibet and China slowed during the ninth and tenth centuries, the stages in this final phase of development of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* remain unclear, awaiting further research to disclose them.

One possible piece of evidence related to the development of the *Śrī Paramādyā* rests in Butön’s presentation of the tantra. According to him, Ānandagarbha says that the *Śrī Paramādyā* contains eighty-four maṇḍalas, while Padmavajrāṅkuśa holds that there are seventy-eight maṇḍalas. Butön explains that Padmavajrāṅkuśa’s account of the *Śrī*

---

<sup>359</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” pp. 172-173; *Śrī Paramādyā*, P119, vol. 5.

<sup>360</sup> Stephen Hodge, personal communication, 14-15 April 2002.

<sup>361</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 176, n. 185; pp. 178-179, n. 193.



*Paramādyā* does not include the five maṇḍalas of the secret goddesses or their condensed maṇḍala.<sup>362</sup> Since Padmavajra lived at an earlier time than Ānandagarbha (late eighth or early ninth century versus late ninth or early tenth century), the fact that he discusses six fewer maṇḍalas probably indicates that these maṇḍalas of the secret goddesses, along with their attendant practices, were among the later additions to the *Śrī Paramādyā* in the development of the tantra.

Furthermore, it is possible that in the unattributed frame-story of the *Śrī Paramādyā* that Butön relates we see traces of the process by which the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* developed from a non-tantric Mahāyāna text into a tantra. Īśvara here perhaps represents those who are not trained by the short mode of the perfection of wisdom text. As a skillful means Vairocana makes the text and its practices sexy. He first transforms himself into a body of great bliss surrounded by beautiful women. Then he teaches the method of great bliss by displaying the seventeen pure states (roughly speaking, emptinesses) in the form of goddesses. This method thus presents a path to the state of great bliss that does not involve the renunciation of one's family, sexuality, and so forth. While this likely appealed to the average lay patron in India, it would have been particularly alluring to the rulers of petty kingdoms that sprang up all over India (and hence the reference to a practice that does not involve giving up one's domain) after the disintegration of the Gupta dynasty. Thus, this might reflect the development of certain strands of Buddhist tantra in India in response to depleted treasuries and increased competition for patronage.<sup>363</sup>

---

<sup>362</sup> *slob dpon padma'i rdo rje lcags kyas/ ... dum bu bzhi pa la gsang ba'i lha mo'i dkyil 'khor lnga de'i rigs bsdus dang drug med pas bdun cu rtsa brgyad du bshad cing/* (Butön, *Ship*, 35a.1-35a.2).

<sup>363</sup> Ronald Davidson has advanced such theories on the development of Indian Buddhist Tantra in *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, and particularly chapters three-five. I will discuss his theories in the context of violence in Yoga Tantra, and in particular in the narrative of Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara.

Another avenue for uncovering the process of development of the long versions of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* is the relationship that obtains between the various *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* texts. Taking the Tibetan version of the *Śrī Paramādyā* as the tantra in its final form, the Japanese scholar Fukuda Ryōsei has identified three distinct parts or cycles of the *Śrī Paramādyā* that originally circulated as independent texts in India.<sup>364</sup> The first of the three parts represents the expansion of the short tantric texts of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* through the addition of instructions for constructing maṇḍalas and performing various rituals.<sup>365</sup> The first Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā* text (P119) represents this part of the larger work.<sup>366</sup>

Interestingly, this assessment mirrors the opinion of the fourteenth-century Tibetan scholar Butön, who states that the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* appears to be for the most part similar to the first section of the *Śrī Paramādyā*,<sup>367</sup> the “Perfection of Wisdom Section” (that is, the *Śrī Paramādyā I*). The first part of Fa-hsien’s Chinese translation (T. vol. 8, No. 244)—from the beginning of the text through the beginning of section fourteen—also represents this cycle.<sup>368</sup>

On the basis of the text titles given at the end of each chapter and in the closing section of *Śrī Paramādyā I* (*bDe ba chen po rdo rje don yod pa’i dam tshig*), the Sanskrit title of this cycle is reconstructed as *\*Mahā-sukha-vajrāmogha-samaya*<sup>369</sup>—*Great Bliss Fruitful Vajra Pledge*. Additionally, the Sanskrit title reconstructed from Amoghavajra’s Chinese

---

<sup>364</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” pp. 174-175, n. 182; Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, pp. 19-23.

<sup>365</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>366</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” pp. 174-175, n. 182.

<sup>367</sup> *’di dpal mchog dum bu dang po dang phal cher ’dra bar snang ngo/* (Butön, *Ship*, 42a.6).

<sup>368</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>369</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 20.

translation of the title of the sixth of the eighteen Vajraśekhara-cycle texts<sup>370</sup> is \**Mahā-sukhāmogha-samaya-tattva-yoga*.<sup>371</sup> The close similarity of these titles has led Japanese scholars to correlate Amoghavajra's sixth text with the Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā I* and the first part of Fa-hsien's translation.<sup>372</sup> Further evidence supporting the argument that these texts (or parts thereof) represent a single, previously independent textual tradition is the fact that the location and brief description of the teachings Amoghavajra gives for his sixth text are consistent with those of *Śrī Paramādyā I*.<sup>373</sup>

The second cycle is found only in the first part of the Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā II*.<sup>374</sup> Based on the end-of-chapter text titles (*bDe ba chen po rdo rje gsang*), the Sanskrit title is reconstructed as \**Mahā-sukha-vajra-guhya*<sup>375</sup>—*Great Bliss Secret Vajra*. Japanese scholarship has linked this cycle with Amoghavajra's seventh text, the reconstructed Sanskrit title of which is \**Samantabhadra-yoga*.<sup>376</sup> Further evidence supporting the argument that this was originally an independent text is the fact that the first part of *Śrī Paramādyā II* itself contains a root tantra and a supplementary tantra; the structure of a root tantra delineated in the middle of a single text, after a preceding section, is very unusual (I am aware of no other similar cases).

The third of the three cycles into which Japanese scholarship divides the *Śrī Paramādyā* is correlated with the second part of *Śrī Paramādyā II* and the second part of

---

<sup>370</sup> In this discussion of the *Śrī Paramādyā* we must bear in mind one important point: the sixth, seventh, and eighth texts summarized by Amoghavajra in his digest of the eighteen-text Vajraśekhara cycle in all likelihood represent *early* versions of the three parts of the *Śrī Paramādyā*. We cannot therefore equate these early versions with the *Śrī Paramādyā* as we find it today in Tibetan and Chinese translations, but must view them as the nascent stage from which the mature tantra would develop.

<sup>371</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 174, n. 182.

<sup>372</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 174-175, n. 182.

<sup>373</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 173-176.

<sup>374</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 20.

<sup>375</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 20.

<sup>376</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 177, n. 187.

Fa-hsien's Chinese translation.<sup>377</sup> The Sanskrit of this cycle is reconstructed as \**Śrī Paramādyā*<sup>378</sup>—*Glorious Supreme First* (or *Glorious First of the Supreme*). In terms of Amoghavajra's summary of the Vajraśekhara cycle, this is associated with the eighth of the eighteen texts he describes, the reconstructed Sanskrit title of which is \**Paramādyā-yoga*.<sup>379</sup> This cycle opens with the five secrets (Tib: \**gsang ba lnga*; Skt: \**pañca-guhyā*; Jap: *go-himitsu*) and related maṇḍala practices focusing on Vajrasattva as the central deity, around whom are situated his four consorts and twelve other deities.<sup>380</sup>

There is additional evidence, found in an Indonesian text, supporting the position that the three parts of the *Śrī Paramādyā* originally existed as independent textual traditions in India. The *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya* is a Javanese text consisting of forty-two Sanskrit verses and commentary on them in Old Javanese.<sup>381</sup> Scholars have identified the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* as the source of the first twenty-two verses.<sup>382</sup> The last seventeen verses are found, albeit in a different order, in the second Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā* text (P120) and Fa-hsien's Chinese translation (T.244).<sup>383</sup> Scholars have dated the *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya* to as early as the tenth century and as late as the fourteenth or fifteenth century.<sup>384</sup> While this text is rather late, it does suggest that a section of Sanskrit verses from the third cycle of the *Śrī Paramādyā* may have circulated independently.

---

<sup>377</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 174-175, n. 182.

<sup>378</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 21.

<sup>379</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 178-179, n. 193.

<sup>380</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 20.

<sup>381</sup> J. W. de Jong, "Notes on the Sources and the Text of the Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya," in *Buddhist Studies by J. W. de Jong*, ed. Gregory Schopen (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1979), p. 619.

<sup>382</sup> de Jong, "Notes on the Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya," pp. 620-621.

<sup>383</sup> de Jong, "Notes on the Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya," pp. 621 and 623.

<sup>384</sup> de Jong, "Notes on the Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya," pp. 631.

Drawing on Matsunaga Yūkei's work, Astley-Kristensen concludes that the practice of the five secrets with which the third cycle of the *Śrī Paramādya* tradition opens originated during the seventh or eighth century.<sup>385</sup> We know that a text called the *Śrī Paramādya* existed in India by the end of the seventh century—Jñānamitra mentions it in his commentary on the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*—and Matsunaga adds that such a text focused on the practice of the five secrets.<sup>386</sup> While the steps in the process remain unclear, we know that the three independent textual traditions developed over time into their final form around the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century, as we find in Fa-hsien's Chinese translation and the texts translated into Tibetan as the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra*. This is the earliest date we can confidently assign for the compilation of the three textual traditions into a single *Śrī Paramādya Tantra* that closely resembles the tantra as we find it today in Tibetan and Chinese translation.

### **The Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra**

The second Tibetan long version of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* is the *Glorious Vajra Essence Ornament Great King Tantra*.<sup>387</sup> According to Astley-Kristensen, this represents a second strand of development of the mode of the perfection of wisdom (the first being that found in the *Śrī Paramādya*).<sup>388</sup> The first of the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*'s sixteen sections<sup>389</sup> corresponds to the first chapter of the

---

<sup>385</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 21.

<sup>386</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 21.

<sup>387</sup> *dPal rdo rje snying po rgyan ces bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po* , *Śrīvajraṃḍa-alamkāranāmamahātantrarāja*, P123 (Toh. 490), vol. 5, 193.1.1-226.1.8.

<sup>388</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 13.

<sup>389</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō* , p. 13. A brief examination of the text does not reveal clearly delineated chapters, as some sections end with the chapter designation “*le'u*,” some with “*rim par phyé ba*,” and other sections have no chapter designation. Thus, it is not clear to me how the assessment was made that the *Vajra Essence Ornament* is divided into sixteen sections.

shorter versions of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom*.<sup>390</sup> The final chapter of the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* is also found in the Indian monk Shih-hu's (Dānapāla) Chinese translation,<sup>391</sup> one of the two extended Chinese versions of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom*. Shih-hu arrived in China in 980 CE,<sup>392</sup> so we can conclude that the Sanskrit text he translated dates to that time at the latest. Thus, the final chapter of the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* must have existed by the end of the tenth century. However, the sole intact version of the text—the Tibetan translation—was first made by the Tibetan Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyeltsen (1182-1251 CE) and the Kashmiri scholar Sugataśrī,<sup>393</sup> and thus we cannot verify the existence of the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* as a whole prior to the thirteenth century.

---

<sup>390</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 13.

<sup>391</sup> T. vol. 18, No. 886 (Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 13).

<sup>392</sup> J. W. de Jong, "A New History of Tantric Literature in India," in *Acta Indologica VI*, p. 101.

<sup>393</sup> The text has two translator colophons. The second translator colophon is found in the standard location, at the end of the text. The first translator colophon, however, falls in a rather unusual place, some twelve folio sides before the end of the text. It states that Sakya Paṇḍita translated the text, and later Butön proofread it—consulting an Indian edition of the text and in accordance with the Master Praśāntamitra's commentary—and in accordance with the commentary fixed the few instances that needed to be fixed ('di chos rje sa skya pa'i sgyur 'phro lags/ //rgya dpe la gtugs shing slob dpon rab zhi bshes gnyen gyi 'grel pa dang yang bstun nas/ zhus dag byas shing/ mi bcos su mi rung ba re re tsam 'grel pa dang bstun nas bcos shing zhu thug g.yar khral du blangs nas/ bu ston gyis bgyis pa'o/, *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, P123, vol. 5, 223.4.8-223.5.1.).

While the Kashmiri scholar Sugataśrī is not mentioned as a member of the translation team, he is identified as such in the table of contents entry for the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* at the beginning of volume 86 of the Karmape Derge Edition of the *Kangyur* and in the *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition* (vol. 2, pp. 113-114). The table of contents entry at the beginning of volume 5 of the Peking Edition (p. 3) does not take into account the first translator colophon and thus does not mention Sakya Paṇḍita or Sugataśrī.

The second translator colophon states that the tantra was translated (although not completely) by dPal ldan chos rje and then completed by dPal ldan blo gros brtan pa (*rigs gzugs skal bzangs mang thos blo 'byor sogz/ /phun tshogs ldan pa dpal ldan chos rje yis/ /rgyud 'di bsgyur las cung zad ma rdzogs pa/ /dpal ldan blo gros brtan pas rdzogs par bsgyur/*, P123, vol. 5, 226.1.7-226.2.8). While I have been unable to identify dPal ldan chos rje, I have taken the latter translator to be dPang lotsāwa dPal ldan blo

Before discussing the particulars of this tantra, there is a point concerning its Sanskrit title that must be addressed. Every mention of this text that I have seen in western scholarship (including the *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition of the Kangyur*) refers to it as the “*Vajra-maṇḍala-alamkāra*.” However, in the Sanskrit title at the beginning of both the Peking<sup>394</sup> and Derge<sup>395</sup> editions of the text we find “*Vajra-maṇḍa-alamkāra*” rather than “*Vajra-maṇḍala-alamkāra*.” Thus, there seems to be confusion over the correct Sanskrit title of the text.

The Tibetan translation “*snying po*” supports the case for the Sanskrit “*maṇḍa*” rather than for “*maṇḍala*.” “*Maṇḍa*” means pith or essence, and this is one of the primary denotations of the Tibetan word “*snying po*.” Furthermore, the Tibetan “*snying po*” renders the Sanskrit “*maṇḍa*” in other cases, including the translation of “*bodhimaṇḍa*” (the seat or platform of enlightenment on which all Buddhas are said to sit when they attain enlightenment, and also the essence of enlightenment), which is translated into Tibetan as “*byang chub kyi snying po*.” I know of no cases in which “*snying po*” translates “*maṇḍala*”; for this important word the standard Tibetan translation “*dkyil ’khor*” is nearly always employed.

Additionally, the Sanskrit title given at the beginning of Praśāntamitra’s commentary on the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*—the only known Indian exegesis of the tantra,

---

gros brtan pa, 1276-1342 (P2085, Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org); George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949; rpt. 1988], pp. 786-787).

The situation of two translator colophons appearing at two different places in the tantra raises important questions. Does the material on the approximately twelve folio sides (in the Peking edition) between the two translator colophons represent a later addition to the text, made after Sakya Paṇḍita’s thirteenth-century translation? If so, does this reflect late developments in the tantra in India? Further research is necessary to address these questions.

<sup>394</sup> *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, P123, vol. 5, 194.2.1.

<sup>395</sup> *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, Karmapa Derge Edition, Toh. 490, vol. 86, 2.1.

which is preserved in Tibetan translation<sup>396</sup>—reads “*vajramañḍālamkāra*” and not “*vajramañḍalālamkāra*.”<sup>397</sup> Furthermore, Praśāntamitra’s explanation of the title refers to “*vajra-mañḍa*” rather than “*vajra-mañḍala*.” He glosses “vajra essence” (*rdo rje snying po*) as “essence of enlightenment” (*byang chub kyi snying po*), which he further explains to mean the state or locus of all Buddhas.<sup>398</sup> This is one of the standard senses in which “*mañḍa*”/ “*snying po*” is used.

Therefore, on the basis of the representations of the Sanskrit title from the Tibetan translations of the tantra itself and the sole extant Indian commentary on it, the use of the Tibetan translation equivalent “*snying po*,” and Praśāntamitra’s explanation of the term in the title, I feel that “*mañḍa*” rather than “*mañḍala*” is the correct reading.<sup>399</sup> Given the rules of *sandhi* and the prevalence and importance of the word “*mañḍala*” in tantric materials, it is likely that the title “*vajramañḍālamkāra*” was misread as

<sup>396</sup> Praśāntamitra, *dPal rdo rje snying po’i rgyan gyi rgyud* *chen po’i dka’ ’grel*, *Śrīvajramañḍālamkāramahātāntrapañcikā*, translated by (Bu ston) Rin chen grub, P3338 (Toh. 2515), vol. 73, 266.5.1-291.5.8.

<sup>397</sup> Praśāntamitra, *rDo rje snying po’i rgyan gyi dka’ ’grel*, P3338, vol. 73, 266.5.1.

<sup>398</sup> *rdo rje snying po’i rgyan zhes bya ba’i don gyi ming can ’di ni rgyud do/ /’di ltar rdo rje snying po ni byang chub kyi snying po ste sangs rgyas thams cad kyi gnas so/* (Praśāntamitra, *rDo rje snying po’i rgyan gyi dka’ ’grel*, P3338, vol. 73, 266.5.4-266.5).

The entire passage explaining the title reads:

*rdo rje snying po’i rgyan zhes bya ba’i don gyi ming can ’di ni rgyud do/ /’di ltar rdo rje snying po ni byang chub kyi snying po ste sangs rgyas thams cad kyi gnas so/ /de’i rgyan ni bla na med pa’i khang ba brtsegs pa gang yin pa de de bzhin du brjod par bya’o/ /yang na rdo rje ni chos kyi sku’i bdag nyid can te/ dbye bar byar med pa nyid kyi phyir ro/ /snying po ni long spyod rdzogs pa’i sku’i rang bzhin te thams cad kyi snying por gyur pa nyid kyi phyir dang/ sems can gyi don rdzogs pa’i snying rje’i phyir yang ngo/ /sna tshogs pa’i sprul pa ni rgyan te bcom ldan ’das rnam par snang mdzad do/ yang na rdo rje ni dbye bar byar med pa ste khang pa brtsegs pa’o/ /de’i snying po ni ’dzin pa’i phyir rdo rje ste byang chub kyi gdan no/ /’di lhag par gnas par rgyas par byed pa’i phyir ro/ (266.5.4-266.5.7).*

<sup>399</sup> There is a connection between the Sanskrit terms “*mañḍa*” (essence) and “*mañḍala*”: “*mañḍala*” is often creatively etymologized to “*mañḍa-labha*,” that is, “that which contains or holds the essence.”



“*vajramaṇḍalālaṅkāra*,” with the extra “-al-” mistakenly inserted, and that this error has then been systematically compounded in scholarship on the text.

Aside from the correct Sanskrit title of the text, there is disagreement about the classification of the tantra itself. While the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* is usually included in the Yoga Tantra class, some scholars have put it in the Highest Yoga Tantra class on the basis of its content. Perhaps introducing further confusion is the existence of another tantra with an almost identical title. This text, the *Glorious Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*,<sup>400</sup> is part of the *Secret Assembly (Guhyasamāja)* cycle of Highest Yoga Tantra. Additionally, although the same Tibetan translation term “*snying po*” is used in both the title of this text and in the *Yoga Tantra Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, the Sanskrit original is different. In the *Secret Assembly-cycle Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* the Sanskrit original is “*hṛdaya*” rather than “*maṇḍa*.” It is thus possible that scholars classifying the *Yoga Tantra Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* as Highest Yoga Tantra did so at least in part on the basis of confounding it with the nearly identically titled tantra of the *Secret Assembly* cycle, even though the *Yoga Tantra Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* is a much longer text.

The first part of the introductory scene-setting of the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*<sup>401</sup> is similar to that of the *Compendium of Principles* and other texts later classified as Yoga Tantra. The teacher is Vairocana. The audience consists of Bodhisattvas equal in number to the number of subtle particles of all Buddha-fields. Somewhat uncharacteristically for a text of the Yoga Tantra corpus, individual Bodhisattvas are not identified by name. The latter part of the introduction demonstrates

---

<sup>400</sup> *dPal rdo rje snying po rgyan gyi rgyud ces bya ba* , Śrīvajrahṛdayālaṅkāraṅgāna, P86 (Toh. 451).

Translated by Kamalagupta and IHa Ye shes rgyal mtshan (*Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 78).

<sup>401</sup> *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, P123, vol. 5, 194.2.3-195.1.3.

similarities with the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* and the *Śrī Paramādyā*; I will discuss these relationships in some detail below. The locale is the inestimable mansion of clear light—the essence of Vairocana—and thus differs from that of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* and the *Śrī Paramādyā*. Butön describes the teaching itself as “the door of the pure mode of phenomena.”<sup>402</sup>

The body of the text then begins with Vairocana, lord of vajra-yoga, instructing Mañjuśrī to invite all Buddhas and vajra-holders (Tib: *rdo rje 'dzin pa*; Skt: *\*vajradhara*), which he does. The prominence of Mañjuśrī in this tantra is unusual for a Yoga Tantra, since Vajrapāṇi or Vajrasattva is usually the main Buddhist actor who plays opposite Vairocana. As we saw in the *Compendium of Principles*, we often find manifestations of Vajrapāṇi/ Vajrasattva appearing in the sections dealing with their respective Buddha family. For instance, Avalokiteśvara emanates the deities of the maṇḍalas in the third section of the *Compendium of Principles*, since this section of the tantra is associated with the lotus (or doctrine) family. Mañjuśrī does teach one of the chapters in the first section of the *Śrī Paramādyā* and he displays the Mañjuśrī maṇḍala in the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, but apart from these two cases, I have not seen Mañjuśrī play a central role in any text included in the Yoga Tantra class (even when he is identified by name as a member of the audience of Bodhisattvas listed at the beginning of a text).

Vairocana then caused all the assembled Buddhas and vajra-holders to enter his heart by saying “*bhruṃ*.” Due to this Vairocana transforms into four-faced Vairocana and then teaches the twenty pure states that are the states of a Bodhisattva. There follows further teachings related to the perfection of wisdom: the enumeration of phenomena of the door of the mode of the perfection of wisdom together with its benefits, the twenty-five doors

---

<sup>402</sup> *chos kyi tshul dag pa'i sgo* (Butön, *Ship*, 35a.4).

of the perfection of wisdom together with its benefits, and so forth. After this, Vairocana establishes the great maṇḍala and instructs Mañjuśrī to explain a master's activities, and Vairocana teaches various other practices and doctrines related to the great maṇḍala.

Following this, various other maṇḍalas and their attendant rites and practices are set forth. Among these are a section which includes a narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment. In this account the already enlightened Vairocana displays the method of birth as Śuddhodana's son (that is, as Siddhārtha), attaining complete enlightenment, and conquering the four demons. Then he resides on the platform of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi snying po, bodhimaṇḍa*), enters the 84,000,000,000 meditative stabilizations, actualizes enlightenment through the five manifest enlightenments, and so forth.<sup>403</sup>

Butön states that the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* has thirty-seven maṇḍalas that are explicitly and clearly set forth.<sup>404</sup> He further indicates that in the commentary<sup>405</sup> (which he translated) the final maṇḍala is divided by way of the progression of the principal deity and therefore there are forty-one maṇḍalas.<sup>406</sup>

While the non-tantric versions of the short *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* date to the seventh century and the tantric versions date at the latest to the middle of the eighth century (with the exception of Shih-hu's Chinese translation, T.242, made at the end of the tenth century), the four long versions of the tantra are later works. We can date the two parts of the Tibetan translation of the *Śrī Paramādya* at the earliest to the end of the tenth century, and the same holds for Fa-hsien's Chinese translation. While the final

---

<sup>403</sup> This account is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 35b.3-35b.7. The corresponding passage in the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* itself is found in P123, vol. 5, 205.5.2-206.2.5.

<sup>404</sup> 'di la dkyil 'khor dngos su gsal bar gsungs pa sum cu so bdun snang/ (Butön, *Ship*, 37a.7).

<sup>405</sup> This must refer to the sole extant exegetical work on the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, Praśāntamitra's *dPal rdo rje snying po'i rgyan gyi rgyud chen po'i dka' 'grel, Śrivajramaṇḍālamkāramahātantrapañcikā*, P3338.

<sup>406</sup> 'grel par 'di'i dkyil 'khor tha ma la gtso bor 'pho ba'i dbye bas bzhi bcu zhe gcig tu byas so/ (Butön, *Ship*, 37a.7-37b.1).

chapter of the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* as found in Shih-hu's Chinese translation dates to the end of the tenth century, the text as a whole, based on the provenance of the Tibetan translation (the only extant version), is not attested until the thirteenth century.

Thus, we see that by the middle of the eighth century in India the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* had developed from a short perfection of wisdom text into a tantric perfection of wisdom text of roughly similar length. The references in Indian commentarial literature to the three parts of the *Śrī Paramādyā* identified by Japanese scholars suggests the likely scenario that by the eighth century in India three independent textual traditions had emerged (at least in early stages of their development), and that at some point before the end of the tenth century these were combined to form the *Śrī Paramādyā* as we find it in Tibetan translation (and partially in Chinese). Additionally, the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra* represents a separate strand of development of the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom* tradition.<sup>407</sup>

### **The Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra**

Aside from the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* (Tib: *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i rgyud*; Skt: *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*) is one of the most important of the texts later classified as Yoga Tantra. There are two versions of this tantra: an earlier version, of which there are no known extant Sanskrit manuscripts although there is a Tibetan translation; and a later version of the text, for which we have late Sanskrit manuscripts and a Tibetan translation. Tadeusz Skorupski has published an edition of the two versions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* that includes a translation of the later version.<sup>408</sup> While Skorupski's work includes a Sanskrit text of the later version, the

---

<sup>407</sup> Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishukyō*, p. 13.

<sup>408</sup> Tadeusz Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts with Introduction, English Translation and Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983).

Sanskrit manuscripts he uses date only to the seventeenth century.<sup>409</sup> Furthermore, the extensive Indian commentarial literature related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* exists only in Tibetan translation. Thus, the corpus of Tibetan translations contains essential evidence for determining the provenance of the two versions of the tantra in India.

According to Butön, the earlier of the two versions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*<sup>410</sup> was translated into Tibetan by the end of the eighth century by the Indian Śāntigarbha (who performed the consecration of Samye,<sup>411</sup> Tibet's first monastery, c. 779 CE) and the Tibetan Peltsek (*dPal brtsegs*) Rakṣita,<sup>412</sup> and was later revised with standardized terminology sometime before the middle of the ninth century by Ma

---

Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp has published a short review of Skorupski's book, "Notes Apropos of the Transmission of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," in *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 16 (1992), pp. 109-125. This article highlights problematic issues concerning the provenance of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* and its corpus of Indian exegetical literature as well as Skorupski's edition of the text, presenting much original research in the process.

<sup>409</sup> See Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, pp. xiii-xiv for a list of seven Sanskrit manuscripts and one modern Sanskrit condensation of the later version of the tantra, all from Nepal.

<sup>410</sup> *De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa zhes bya ba, Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājasya tathāgatasya arhataḥ samyaksambuddhasya kalpanāma*, P116 (Toh. 483), vol. 5.

<sup>411</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.5-70a.6 and 70b.2.

<sup>412</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.6. The colophons of the Peking and Narthang *Kangyur* editions of the text identify the Tibetan translator as \*Jayarakṣita (*rGyal ba 'tsho*) rather than as Peltsek Rakṣita (van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 109). However, as van der Kuijp points out, there is a great deal of uncertainty in Tibet regarding the identification of the translators, which he documents: 1) the twelfth-century Tibetan author Jetsün Drakpa Gyeltsen (*rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan*, 1147-1216) states that it was translated by the first group of seven translator-monks in Tibet such as dBas Mañjuśrī, and does not mention any Indian scholar; 2) Butön only mentions \*Jayarakṣita and Rinchenchok in the catalogue to his history of Buddhism; and 3) Gorampa Sönam Senge (Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge, 1425-1469) says that it was translated at the time of Śāntigarbha and the seven translator-monks and was later revised by Ma Rinchenchok (van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 110).

Rinchenchok (*rMa Rin chen mchog*).<sup>413</sup> In addition, the important eighth-century Indian tantric exegete Buddhaguhya sent both a commentary on and a ritual text related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* to the Tibetan court<sup>414</sup> during the reign of King Trisong Detsen (r. 755/756-797).<sup>415</sup> Thus, we know that the tantra existed in India at least by the middle of the eighth century. It is possible that the tantra developed earlier than that, perhaps at roughly the same time as the *Compendium of Principles*, which would put its production during the last quarter of the seventh century.

In terms of Chinese materials, Rolf Giebel relates that the Japanese scholar Sakai Shinten identifies the fifth text Amoghavajra describes in his summary of the eighteen-text Vajraśekhara corpus with the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.<sup>416</sup> However, Amoghavajra's title for the text, *Vajra Yoga of the Worldly and the Supramundane* (\**Laukikalokottaravajrayoga*), bears no resemblance to the title of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, and the identification of these two texts apparently is made without compelling evidence.<sup>417</sup> Giebel tentatively associates Amoghavajra's fifth text with the similarly titled *Laukikalokottaravajratātra*, a text quoted in the *Tattvasiddhi* attributed to the eighth-century figure Śāntarakṣita,<sup>418</sup> one of the most influential Indian masters active in Tibet during the initial dissemination of Buddhism there. Because so little is known about these two similarly titled *Laukikalokottara* texts, theories concerning their possible relationship with the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* are mere speculation.

---

<sup>413</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiv. The entire text of the earlier version, with some minor variations, is cited in the commentary attributed to Vajravarmaṇ (Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xvii), which thus provides another edition of this version of the tantra.

<sup>414</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.2.

<sup>415</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. xvii.

<sup>416</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 173, n. 179.

<sup>417</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 173, n. 179.

<sup>418</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 173, n. 179.

Several *dhāraṇī* texts preserved in both Tibetan and Chinese translation might also contain important evidence concerning the development of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* in India. The Tibetan texts, all of which have “Purification of All Bad Transmigrations” in their titles, are:

- *Superior Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Uṣṇīṣa-Vijaya Dhāraṇī*

*'Phags pa ngan 'gro thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya ba'i gzungs, Āryasarvadurgatipariśodhani-uṣṇīṣavijayānāmadhāraṇī*, translated by Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, and Ye shes sde (b. mid-eighth century),<sup>419</sup> P198 and P609 (Toh. 597). This text is listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue (348), so it must have been translated by the early part of the ninth century if not before.<sup>420</sup>

- *Superior Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Uṣṇīṣa-Vijaya Dhāraṇī*

*'Phags pa ngan 'gro thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya ba'i gzungs, Āryasarvadurgatipariśodhani-uṣṇīṣavijayānāmadhāraṇī*, translated by Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, and Ye shes sde,<sup>421</sup> Toh. 984 (text not included in Peking Edition).

- *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Dhāraṇī*

*Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba zhes bya ba'i gzungs, \*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanadhāraṇī*, P246 (Toh. 782). This text is listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue (406),<sup>422</sup> so it must have been translated by the early part of the ninth century if not earlier.

- *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Dhāraṇī*

*Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba zhes bya ba'i gzungs, \*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanadhāraṇī*, P638 (Toh. 1013).

There are two additional *dhāraṇī* texts that are probably also related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*:

- *Superior Stainless Dhāraṇī*

---

<sup>419</sup> Grags pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub, *Treasury of Names*, pp. 1455-1456.

<sup>420</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, pp. 219-220.

<sup>421</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 473.

<sup>422</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 351.

'Phags pa dri ma med pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs, *Āryavimalanāmadhāraṇi*, translated by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Ye shes sde (b. mid-eighth century),<sup>423</sup> P156 (Toh. 517). This text is listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue (355),<sup>424</sup> so it must have been translated by the early part of the ninth century if not before.

• *Superior Stainless Dhāraṇi*

'Phags pa dri ma med pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs, *Āryavimalanāmadhāraṇi*, translated by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Ye shes sde (b. mid-eighth century), Toh. 871 (text is not included in the Peking edition).<sup>425</sup>

A cursory examination of these short *dhāraṇi* texts reveals that, when the text opens with a narrative, it mirrors the frame-story of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*: the death of a god in the Heaven of the Thirty Three, his rebirth in a hell, and the purification of bad karma together with its resultant rebirth in one of the three unfortunate states of existence (I will discuss this frame-story in some detail below). On the basis of the texts' translators and/ or the fact that they were included in the Denkar Palace Catalogue of translations, we can date the first three texts in this list to the latter half of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth century at the latest.

In addition, the first two Tibetan *dhāraṇi* texts listed above have "*Uṣṇiṣavijaya Dhāraṇi*" as part of their title. We find this also as the main part of the title of a series of three related *dhāraṇi* texts in Chinese translation.<sup>426</sup> The first of these texts, T.969, was translated by Ti po he li in 683 CE.<sup>427</sup> The frame-story for these texts is similar to that of

---

<sup>423</sup> Grags pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub, *Treasury of Names*, pp. 1455-1456.

<sup>424</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 139.

<sup>425</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 415.

<sup>426</sup> *Fo ting tsun sheng t'o lo ni ching*, T. vol. 19, Nos. 967-969. T.970-973 are also related texts, as are the six versions of T.974 translated by Fa-t'ien (*Bussho Kaisetsu Daijiten*, vol. 9 [Tokyo: Daitoshupansha, 1979], pp. 322-324). My thanks to Hun Lye of the University of Virginia for locating and translating into English the information on all the Chinese texts in this section. Without his help I would not have had access to this material.

<sup>427</sup> *Bussho Kaisetsu Daijiten*, vol. 9, pp. 322-324.



the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* and the Tibetan dhāraṇī texts discussed above. In T.969, a god named San ts'u (\*Puṇyākara), who lives in the Heaven of the Thirty Three, hears a voice that tells him he will die in seven days and be reborn as an animal, then in hell, then as a blind human. He goes to Śakra and asks what this means. Śakra does not know, so he goes to ask the Buddha. The Buddha gives him a dhāraṇī to teach to Puṇyākara. This dhāraṇī, the full title of which is “The Buddha’s Uṣṇīśa, the Honored and Victorious Dhāraṇī to Purify and Eradicate All Bad Transmigrations,” has the capacity to eliminate all negative karma and obstacles, break all sufferings of bad transmigrations, and in addition can extend the lifespan.<sup>428</sup>

While further research into these Tibetan and Chinese *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* dhāraṇī texts is necessary to assess their possible role in the generation of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, I will make a few speculative comments based on the above preliminary data. As early as 683 CE we find a Chinese translation of the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya Dhāraṇī* that contains a dhāraṇī for purifying and eliminating bad transmigrations and the negative karma that create them. We also find similar texts in Tibetan translation dating to the latter part of the eighth century. Thus, we can conclude that such dhāraṇī texts must have existed in India by the last quarter of the seventh century and perhaps earlier.

In these dhāraṇī texts and the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* we find similar frame-stories as well as a shared stated intended purpose of purifying all unfortunate states of existence and the negative karma that create them. While the actual string of mantra syllables to be recited in the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya Dhāraṇī* texts (in both Tibetan and Chinese) differs markedly from the main mantra of the *Purification of All Bad*

---

<sup>428</sup> My thanks to Hun Lye of the University of Virginia for translating and summarizing this narrative for me.

*Transmigrations Tantra*, such is not the case with the Tibetan translation of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Dhāraṇī* (P246). In this short text of less than one folio side, the dhāraṇī is the same (with a few minor exceptions) as the main mantra of the earlier version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra: om śodhane śodhane sarvapāpaṃ viśodhane śuddhe viśuddhe sarvakarma-avaraṇa-viśuddhe svāhā*.<sup>429</sup> The dhāraṇī text, which does not contain a frame-story, has no colophon or information concerning its translation. However, it is listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue,<sup>430</sup> and thus must have been translated into Tibetan during the latter half of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century.

On the basis of the similarities in both frame-story and intended purpose, it is possible that the short *Uṣṇīṣavijaya Dhāraṇī* texts represent proto-versions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* that date to the last quarter of the seventh century. It is also possible that, if the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Dhāraṇī* indeed predates the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, the dhāraṇī text represents the germinal form of the tantra, and that by the latter half of the eighth century these roots, in combination with many other influences, fully flowered into the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* as we find it in the earlier of the two Tibetan translations.

The later version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*<sup>431</sup> was translated into Tibetan during the thirteenth century, some four-plus centuries after the tantra was first translated. The Tibetan translator Chak lotsawa Chöjepel (*Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal*,

---

<sup>429</sup> *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Dhāraṇī* , P246, vol. 7, 198.4.2; Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. 308.

<sup>430</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 351.

<sup>431</sup> *De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyī rgyal po'i brtag pa phyogs gcig pa zhes bya ba, Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājasya tathāgatasya arhataḥ samyaksambuddhasya kalpaikadeśanāma*, P117 (Toh. 485), vol. 5.

1197-1264)<sup>432</sup> is responsible for this translation, which dates to either 1248 or 1260 CE, although he had studied the text with the Indian scholars Devendradeva and Māṇika Śrijñāna.<sup>433</sup>

The Sanskrit and Tibetan titles given at the beginning of the Tibetan translations of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* vary slightly for the two versions of the text, although identical titles are given in the colophons. However, Butön states that the later version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is known by an alternate title, the *Nine Crown Protuberances Tantra* (Tib: *gTsug [tor] dgu'i rgyud*; Skt: \**Navoṣṇiṣa Tantra*).<sup>434</sup> It is by this title that the later version of the tantra is commonly referred to in Tibetan traditions—in both literary and contemporary oral traditions. There is a great deal of discussion in Tibet concerning the provenance of the later *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* and its authenticity, which Butön expresses in his final remark on this tantra: “Investigate whether or not this [text] was produced by Indian paṇḍitas.”<sup>435</sup>

In terms of the structure of the texts, both versions of the tantra consist of three chapters, the contents of which are, as Butön indicates, largely similar and primarily involve the emanation of maṇḍalas and the teaching of their respective rites.<sup>436</sup> According to Butön, the earlier version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* sets forth twelve maṇḍalas,<sup>437</sup> while the later version presents eleven.<sup>438</sup>

---

<sup>432</sup> Grags pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub, *Treasury of Names*, p. 543.

<sup>433</sup> van der Kuijp, “Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet,” pp. 113-114. According to the Peking edition of the text, Chak Lotsawa—who had studied the text with Māṇika Śrijñāna—and Devendradeva translated the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* (Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiv).

<sup>434</sup> *gtsug dgu'i rgyud du grags pa* (Butön, *Ship*, 40b.3).

<sup>435</sup> *'di rgya gar gyi paṇḍi ta dag gis byas pa yin min brtag go/* (Butön, *Ship*, 41a.5). For a detailed discussion of the controversy concerning the later version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, see van der Kuijp, “Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet,” pp. 113-117.

<sup>436</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 40b.3-41a.5.

<sup>437</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 40b.3.

In addition to minor differences in details and the number of maṇḍalas, there are some important differences between the two versions of the tantra, which I will discuss in briefly describing the contents of their three chapters. Chapter one of both versions begins with the same introduction. The scene is set with the description of the teacher (who Butön identifies as Vairocana), the locale (a divine palace in a pleasure-grove of the Heaven of the Thirty Three), the audience (the worldly gods Śakra and so forth, and several million Bodhisattvas), and so on. The text then continues as Indra (aka Śakra), the king of the gods, inquires about the rebirth of the god Vimalamañiprabha, his former cohort in the Heaven of the Thirty Three who had died seven days earlier. The Buddha (viz., Vairocana) answers that the god Vimalamañiprabha has been reborn in the Most Tortuous Hell (*mñar med, avīci*), where he is experiencing the most extreme suffering. The gods are terror-stricken at the thought of their former companion’s suffering and the fear that they themselves might also experience similar torment and misery in the future. They then request a method for purifying bad transmigrations—both for beings currently suffering in such circumstances and for beings who might experience such suffering in the future.<sup>439</sup>

It is at this point that we find the most significant difference between the two versions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. The earlier version of the tantra continues with what is identified in the commentarial literature as the root tantra (*rtsa rgyud, mūla-tantra*), composed of the teaching of the root maṇḍala and the rites pertaining thereto.<sup>440</sup> This, the central maṇḍala of the text, is the Sarvavid Vairocana Maṇḍala<sup>441</sup> (“All-Knowing Vairocana”; Tib: *kun rig rnam par snang mdzad* ). The

---

<sup>438</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 41a.5.

<sup>439</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 39a.1-39a.5; Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>440</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiii.

<sup>441</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 39b.3.

practices related to this maṇḍala are specifically directed at purifying negative karma that results in rebirth in one of the three bad transmigrations (those of hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals), and these techniques are described as being for the benefit of both the performer of the rites and for other beings (including the deceased). In the narrative of the tantra Śakra performs the rite for the benefit of the fallen-god-turned-hell-being Vimalamañiprabha, who as a result is liberated from hell and is reborn in the Tuṣita Pure Land. After all the assembled gods express their amazement and joy at the efficacy of the practices, a discussion of the benefits of performing the rites ensues, after which the first chapter of the earlier version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* closes.<sup>442</sup>

In the later version of the tantra the root tantra has been replaced by a completely different text. Skorupski identifies this text as the *Maṇḍalavidhi* or *Ādiyogasamādhī*, and relates that there are several extant Sanskrit manuscripts from Nepal that share these titles and have “very similar or almost identical content.”<sup>443</sup> While the earlier version of the tantra has as its central maṇḍala the Sarvavid Vairocana maṇḍala, the later version replaces this with the Nine Crown Protuberances (Tib: *gtsug [tor] dgu*; Skt: *navoṣṇiṣa*) Maṇḍala, also known as the “Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Maṇḍala” (Tib: *ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba’i dkyil ’khor*; Skt: *sarva-durgati-pariśodhana-maṇḍala*).<sup>444</sup> Despite the fact that the central maṇḍala is different in the two versions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, it is important to note that the central deity in both of these maṇḍalas is the same: the Sarvavid (“All-Knowing”) form of Vairocana. Also, the two maṇḍalas serve the same function: the purification of all bad transmigrations and the negative karma that create them. Furthermore, the first maṇḍala is identified in

---

<sup>442</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 39a.5-39b.3.

<sup>443</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiii.

<sup>444</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiii.

the tantra itself (both the earlier and later version) as being of the great maṇḍala (*dkyil 'khor chen po, mahā-maṇḍala*)<sup>445</sup> variety, which is also the first (and central) of the four types of maṇḍalas found in the maṇḍala cycles of the *Compendium of Principles*.

The second chapter of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is similar in both versions of the tantra, and is referred to in the tanta-texts themselves as the “Subsequent” or “Later Chapter” (*brtag pa phyi ma, uttarakalpa*).<sup>446</sup> In this chapter the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi takes center stage, replacing Vairocana as the central figure that emanates and teaches the rites of the nine maṇḍalas found in this chapter. Vajrapāṇi first emanates and teaches the Śākyamuni Maṇḍala, the practice of which purifies all defilements and includes rites for the dead.<sup>447</sup>

One significant difference between the second chapter of the two texts occurs at this point. In the earlier version of the tantra the gods, led by Brahmā, ask Vajrapāṇi what actions the former god Vimalamaṇiprabha performed in a previous lifetime that resulted in his rebirth in the Most Tortuous Hell. In response, Vajrapāṇi describes the events of one of Vimalamaṇiprabha’s past lives in which he was a prince. In order to accede to the throne, the prince killed his father the king, and his mother died soon thereafter of the anguish resulting from his patricide.<sup>448</sup> Thus, in a previous life Vimalamaṇiprabha caused the death of both his parents, and this is the karmic event that has impelled his existence in hell, enduring the most excruciating suffering. While this account forms an important part of the frame-story of the earlier version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, it is completely absent from the later version of the tantra.

---

<sup>445</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, pp. 133 and 311 (although the parallel Sanskrit to the later version, p. 132, reads *maṇḍala* without the *mahā-* adjectival prefix).

<sup>446</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiii.

<sup>447</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 39b.3-39b.5.

<sup>448</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, n. 22, pp. 42-44.

Following the Śākyamuni Maṇḍala and the narrative of Vimalamañiprabha's past karmic actions is a series of seven maṇḍalas in which Vajrapāṇi himself is the central deity: the Vajrapāṇi Maṇḍala, the Maṇḍala of the Four Great Kings, the Maṇḍala of the Protectors of the Ten Directions, the Maṇḍala of the Eight Planets together with the Constellations, the Maṇḍala of the Eight Great Nāgas, the Maṇḍala of the Eight Bhairavas ("Terrifying Ones"), and the Maṇḍala of the Eight Great Gods.<sup>449</sup> The second chapter ends with the Amitāyus Maṇḍala, which is followed by a description of the benefits of performing such practices and rites as well as the burnt-offering rites (*sbyin sreg, homa*) for the four aims of pacification, increase, control/subjugation, and ferocity/destruction.<sup>450</sup>

The last chapter of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, entitled "The Third and Final Chapter" in the earlier version but not named in the later version, begins with Vajrapāṇi emanating and teaching the rites of the Cakravartin ("Universal Monarch") Maṇḍala.<sup>451</sup> The descriptions of the maṇḍalas in the two versions of the tantra differ. The remainder of the chapter is, as Skorupski describes it, "a miscellaneous collection of materials."<sup>452</sup> In the earlier version this includes sections on the four rites, mudrā, mantras, a twelfth and final maṇḍala consisting of wrathful deities (Butön identifies this as the Blazing-Like-Fire Maṇḍala),<sup>453</sup> the four rites (again), and final praises.<sup>454</sup> In the later version the final chapter includes initiation rites and teachings, burnt-offering rites

---

<sup>449</sup> This list of maṇḍalas is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 39b.5-40a.4. The maṇḍalas are also listed in Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, pp. xx-xxi.

<sup>450</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 40a.4-40a.6.

<sup>451</sup> In both versions of the tantra this maṇḍala is similar to the root maṇḍala taught in the first chapter, with the exception that the central figure of Sarvavid Vairocana is replaced by either a vajra/Vajrapāṇi, Vajrasattva, or Samantabhadra (Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, n. 2, p. 74 and p. 358).

<sup>452</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiii.

<sup>453</sup> *me ltar 'bar ba'i dkyil 'khor*; Skt: \**analārka-maṇḍala* (Butön, *Ship*, 40b.2).

<sup>454</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

(Tib: *sbyin sreg*; Skt: *homa*) for the deceased (these correspond for the most part with sections of Chapter One in the earlier version of the text), a set of deities related to the root maṇḍala and attendant rites, mantras, mudrās, another section on *homa* rites, initiation of students, and final praises.<sup>455</sup>

There is a large body of Indian commentaries and ritual texts related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. It is important to note that Tibetan traditions question the Indian authorship of several of these commentaries, however.<sup>456</sup> These seventeen texts, all of which are preserved only in their Tibetan translations, are:

- Buddhaguhya, *Ngan song sbyong ba'i don gyi 'bru 'grel*, *Durgatipariśodhanārthavārttikānāma* (some editions have *-arthavyaṅjanavṛtti*), P3450 (Toh. 2623). The Denkar Palace Catalogue identifies the author as Buddhagupta.<sup>457</sup>
- Kāmadhenu, *'Phags pa ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po zhes bya ba cho ga zhib mo'i rgyal po chen po'i rgya cher 'grel pa*, *Āryasarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājanāmakalparājaṭikā*, translated by Vinayacandra and Chos kyi shes rab (probably the eleventh-century figure known also as the “Translator from Shekar” [*She dkar lo tsā ba*]),<sup>458</sup> P3452 (Toh. 2625).
- Vajravarman, *bCom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po'i rnam par bshad pa mdzes pa'i rgyan zhes bya ba*, *Bhagavat sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājatathāgatārhasamyaksambuddhamahātantrarājavyā khyāsundarālaṅkāranāma*, translated by Suvidyākaravarman and dBang phyug rgyal mtshan (b. latter part of the thirteenth century),<sup>459</sup> P3453 (Toh. 2626).

<sup>455</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiv.

<sup>456</sup> van der Kuijp, “Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet,” pp. 110-111.

<sup>457</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 369. Unless otherwise noted, this list of commentaries is drawn from the *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, pp. 369-379.

<sup>458</sup> P3890, Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, www.tbrc.org.

<sup>459</sup> *Grag pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub*, *Treasury of Names*, pp. 1174-1175.



According to the Narthang and Peking editions of the *Kangyur*, Vajravarman is the author; the Derge and Cone editions attribute this text to Ānandagarbha, whom they identify as a disciple of Vajravarman.<sup>460</sup> However, Tibetan traditions question the Indian authorship of this text, ascribing it to a Tibetan.<sup>461</sup>

- *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po brtag pa snang ba'i rgyan zhes bya ba*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājakalpālokālāmkāranāma*, translated by Suvidyākaravarman and dBang phyug rgyal mtshan (b. latter part of the thirteenth century),<sup>462</sup> P3454 (Toh. 2627). There is some question whether this was written by a Tibetan, perhaps sGrags li chung, or by Ānandagarbha.<sup>463</sup>
- Ānandagarbha (Skorupski identifies him as Buddhānandagarbha),<sup>464</sup> *De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po zhes bya ba'i brtag pa'i bshad pa*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājatathāgatārhasamyaksambuddhasya nāmakalpaṭikā*, translated by Kumārakalaśa and Khyung po Chos brtson 'grus, P3455 (Toh. 2628). This commentary is also known by the title *Illuminating Lamp* (*gSal ba'i sgron ma*).
- Surabhadra, *dKyi 'khor spyi'i rim pa*, *Sādhāraṇamaṇḍalaparipāṭi*, translated by Dharmaśrībhadrā and Rig pa gzhon nu, P3456 (Toh. 2629).
- Ānandagarbha, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor chen po'i sgrub thabs*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamahāmaṇḍalasādhana*, translated by Smṛtijñānakīrti (c. late tenth or early eleventh century),<sup>465</sup> P3457 (Toh. 2630).
- Ānandagarbha, *dPal ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga thugs rje phren ba zhes bya ba*, *Śrisarvadurgatipariśodhanamaṇḍalavidhikṛpāvalināma*, translated by Kiraṇākaravarman and Khyung grags, P3458 (Toh. 2631).

<sup>460</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 371.

<sup>461</sup> van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 111.

<sup>462</sup> Grags pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub, *Treasury of Names*, pp. 1174-1175.

<sup>463</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxvi.

<sup>464</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xiv.

<sup>465</sup> Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, vol. 1, tr. and ed. by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991), p. 11.

- Ānandagarbha, *dPal ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i ro'i sbyin sreg gi cho ga*, *Śrisarvadurgatipariśodhanapretahomavidhi*, translated by Kanakavarman and Rin chen bzang po (958-1055 CE), P3459 (Toh. 2632).
- Ānandagarbha, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i shi ba'i sbyin sreg gi cho ga'i las kyi rim pa*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamarahomavidhikarmakrama*, translated by Śraddhākavarman and Rin chen bzang po (958-1055), Toh. 2633 (text not included in the Peking edition).
- \*Subhaganandana (sKal bzang dga' ba), *Ngan song thams cad sbyong ba'i thabs zhes bya ba*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanopāyanāma*, translated by Ninaśrī and g.Yung drung 'od, Toh. 2634 (text not included in the Peking edition).
- Ānandagarbha, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga zhes bya ba*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamaṅḍalavidhināma*, translated by Buddhaśrīśānti and Rin chen bzang po, P3460 (Toh. 2635).
- Buddhaguhya, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga'i rim pa zhes bya ba*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamaṅḍalavidhikramanāma*, translated by Mañjuśrīvarman and Bran ka mu ti (and, according to some catalogues, Buddhaguhya), P3461 (Toh. 2636).
- Buddhaguhya, *dKyil 'khor gyi chos mdor bsdus pa*, *Dharmamaṅḍalasūtra*, translated by Buddhaguhya, dBas Mañjuśrī, Bran ka Mutita, and dPal brtsegs rakṣita, P4528 (Toh. 3705). Butön seems to indicate that this text is related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*,<sup>466</sup> although there is nothing in the title that indicates this relationship and Skorupski has not included this text in his list of commentarial literature. Erberto Lo Bue has published an introduction to and translation of this text.<sup>467</sup>
- Dharmakīrti, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i ro'i sbyin sreg gi dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamarahomamaṅḍalavidhi*, translated by Dharmapāla and dGe ba'i blo gros (1044-1089),<sup>468</sup> P3462 (Toh. 2637).

---

<sup>466</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.2.

<sup>467</sup> Erberto Lo Bue, "The Dharmamaṅḍala-sūtra by Buddhaguhya," in *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, vol. 2, eds. G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1987), pp. 787-818.

<sup>468</sup> Grags pa 'byung gnas and bLo bzang mkhas grub, *Treasury of Names*, p. 1316.

- Ānandagarbha, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi sgrub thabs kyi 'grel pa, Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamaṇḍalasādhanavṛtti*, translators not identified, Toh. 2638 (text not included in the Peking edition).
- Anantaparahita, *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba zhes bya ba'i cho ga mdor bsdus pa, Sarvadurgatipariśodhanasamkṣepanāma*, translators not identified, P3463 (Toh. 2639).
- dPal stong nyid ting nge 'dzin rdo rje'i zhabs (\*Śrī Śūnyatāsamādhivajrapāda), *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i rgyud las phyung ba spyan ma'i ngan song s b y o n g p a ' i c h o g a , Śrisarvadurgatipariśodhanatanroddhṛtalocanādurgatiśodhanavidhi*, translated by Avadhūtivairocana vajra and Chos kyi grags pa, P2771 (Toh. 1907).
- Śraddhākaravarman, *dKyil 'khor gyi thig gdab pa mdor bsdus pa, Samkṣiptamaṇḍalasūtranāma*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3328 (Toh. 2505).
- Śraddhākaravarman, *dKyil 'khor gyi thig gdab pa'i mdor bsdus pa'i 'grel pa, Samkṣiptamaṇḍalasūtranāmavṛtti*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3329 (Toh. 2506). This is an auto-commentary on the previous text.
- Śuddhiprabha (or Buddhiprabha), *Thig gdab pa'i cho ga dka' ba spyod pa, Sūtrapātanakaṣṭakaraṇanāmavidhi*, P3330 (Toh. 2507).
- Dharmakīrti, *dKyil 'khor gyi thig gi cho ga, \*Sūtravidhi*, translators not identified, P3331 (Toh. 2508).
- Śāntigarbha, *mChod rten sgrub pa'i cho ga, Caityasādhanavidhi*, translators not identified, P3476 (Toh. 2652). Butön mentions two texts by Śāntigarbha that deal with constructing or accomplishing a stūpa: the *Rite of Making a Stūpa*, which relies on the *Stainless Dhāraṇī*;<sup>469</sup> and the *Rite—Concordant with Yoga Tantra—of Accomplishing a Stūpa* in dependence upon the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*.<sup>470</sup>

---

<sup>469</sup> [gtsug tor] dri med gzungs la brten pa'i mchod rten bya ba'i cho ga (Butön, *Ship*, 70b.1).

<sup>470</sup> sbyong rgyud la brten nas mchod rten rnal 'byor rgyud dang mthun par sgrub pa'i cho ga (Butön, *Ship*, 70b.2-70b.3).

- Śāntigarbha, *mChod rten gyi cha rnam par dbye ba*, \**Caityavibhāga*, translators not identified, P3902 (Toh. 4517).

The earliest of these Indian exegetical works is by Buddhaguhya, who flourished around the middle of the eighth century. While dates for all the texts have not been established, most of them appear to belong to the tenth or eleventh century.

In addition to the seven Sanskrit manuscripts of all or part of the later version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* that Skorupski identifies, there are also four other Sanskrit texts, all from Nepal, related to this version of the tantra:<sup>471</sup>

- *Durgatipariśodhana*, a manuscript of thirteen palm-leaves in Newari script
- *Ādiyogasamādhī*, a manuscript of eighty-two folios in Newari script
- *Durgatipariśodhani Abhisamayāsādhana*, a manuscript of thirty-one folios in Newari script
- *Durgatipariśodhanasamādhī*, a manuscript of sixty-two folios in Newari script

It is likely, as Skorupski suggests, that these independent texts (or parts thereof) were incorporated into the later version of the tantra.<sup>472</sup>

In terms of the exegetical literature and its relation to the two versions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, Skorupski states that *all* the Indian commentaries refer to the earlier version of the text.<sup>473</sup> However, there is some preliminary evidence that suggests that at least one of the Indian commentaries listed above is based on the later version, which is known as the *Nine Crown Protuberances Tantra* (Tib: *gTsug [tor] dgu'i rgyud*; Skt: *Navoṣṇīṣa Tantra*).<sup>474</sup> Butön indicates that one of the practices of the central maṇḍala of the later version of the *Purification of All*

---

<sup>471</sup> This list is drawn from Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xv.

<sup>472</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxiii.

<sup>473</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xviii.

<sup>474</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 40b.3.

*Bad Transmigrations* accords with a text he identifies as Ānandagarbha's *Rite of the Nine Crown Protuberances* (*gTsug dgu'i cho ga*).<sup>475</sup> Judging by the title, this likely refers to Ānandagarbha's *Maṇḍala Rite of the Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.<sup>476</sup> Additional evidence supports this identification: the indices to several editions of the *Kangyur*<sup>477</sup> indicate that this text is based on the *Nine Crown Protuberances Tantra*.<sup>478</sup> Since both Butön and the indices to the *Kangyur* associate this text with the *Nine Crown Protuberances Tantra*, and since this title is used exclusively to refer to the later version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, it seems quite possible that Ānandagarbha's *Maṇḍala Rite of the Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is related to the later version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* rather than to the earlier version.<sup>479</sup> Further analysis of the texts is necessary to determine the precise intertextual relationships that obtain between the commentarial texts and the two versions of the tantra.

---

<sup>475</sup> *slob dpon kun snying gi gtsug dgu'i cho ga bzhin* (Butön, *Ship*, 40b.6).

<sup>476</sup> *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga zhes bya ba*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamaṇḍalavidhināma*, P3460 (Toh. 2635)..

<sup>477</sup> The canon of the New Schools ( *gsar ma pa* ) of Tibetan Buddhism, which derive from the translation and transmission activity of the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet that began towards the end of the tenth century, consists of a two-part collection of translations of Indian texts: the *Kangyur* (*bka' gyur*) or translations of Buddha-voiced texts and the *Tengyur* (*bstan 'gyur*) or translations of Indian commentaries.

The Old School of Tibetan Buddhism (*rnying ma pa*)—traditions that trace their origins to the first propagation of Buddhism in Tibet (c. eighth-ninth centuries)—has its own canon. This includes a tantric canon, the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma* (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*).

<sup>478</sup> *gtsug tor dgu'i rgyud la brten pa* (*Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 377).

<sup>479</sup> It is interesting to note here another maṇḍala practice text by Ānandagarbha that seems to be related to the later version of the tantra rather than to the earlier version: *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor chen po'i sgrub thabs*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamahāmaṇḍalasādhana*, P3457 (Toh. 2630), translated by Smṛtijñānakīrti (late tenth or early eleventh century). The indices to the various editions of the *Tengyur* indicate that the text is similar in parts to the *Nine Crown Protuberances* (*Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 374).

There are several other texts that Butön briefly describes under the rubric of Concordant Yoga Tantras. As a thorough investigation of these texts is beyond the scope of the present study, I will simply list these with an abbreviated version of Butön's presentation of each tantra.

• **The Array of the Secret Ornament of Exalted Body, Speech, and Mind of All Tathāgatas King of Tantra**<sup>480</sup>

The teacher: Vairocana.<sup>481</sup> The locale: in the matrix of the array of the great ornament of wisdom of enlightened body, speech, and mind. The audience: an assembly of goddesses equal in number to the number of particles in the realm of space. The teaching: the maṇḍalas and practices of the mother deities, of the father deities, and of the mother-father deities.<sup>482</sup> This tantra has seven maṇḍalas.<sup>483</sup> There are no known extant Indian commentaries.

• **The Secret Jewel Drop Sūtra**<sup>484</sup>

The teacher: Vairocana.<sup>485</sup> The locale: in the palace of the king of the gods of Akaniṣṭha. The audience: 990,000,000 Bodhisattvas. Vairocana, supplicated by Vajrapāṇi, teaches the individual knowledge of the mind by way of the prior approximation of the Secret Drop Maṇḍala together with self-entry into a maṇḍala at one's heart; the extensive rite of the tantra of the goddess; and the Conquest over the Three Worlds Maṇḍala. Then Vajrasattva and Vajrapāṇi subjugate Īśvara and Śakra,

---

<sup>480</sup> *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi gsang ba rgyan gyi bkod pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po, Sarvathāgatakāyavākcittaguhyālaṅkāravayūhatantrarājanāma*, P122 (Toh. 492), vol. 5.

<sup>481</sup> This summary is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 37b.1-38a.4.

<sup>482</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 37b.1-38a.4.

<sup>483</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 38a.4.

<sup>484</sup> *'Phags pa gsang ba nor bu thig le zhes bya ba'i mdo*, *Āryaguhyamaṇḍilakanāmasūtra*, P125 (Toh. 493), vol. 5.

<sup>485</sup> This summary is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 38a.4-39a.1.

respectively. Vairocana also teaches deity generation through the five manifest enlightenments and various other activities. One maṇḍala explicitly appears in this text. There are no known extant Indian commentaries.

• **The Abbreviated Consecration Tantra**<sup>486</sup>

Butön states that this text is included in the Yoga Tantra cycle because it is qualified by the external ten principles<sup>487</sup> (the referent of “principles” being the same as that of the term “principles” in the *Compendium of Principles*). Butön describes the content of the *Abbreviated Consecration Tantra* thus:<sup>488</sup>

The teacher, Vairocana, entered meditative stabilization and set forth the basis which is to be consecrated; the master who is the consecrator; the place where it is to be performed; the faults of not performing consecration; the benefits of performing it; the necessity of consecration conventionally, even though ultimately it does not exist; and the rite of the consecration’s three [sections]—preparatory, actual, and concluding—along with when to perform [them].

Although there is no Indian exegesis of this tantra, there are several commentarial works included in the Yoga Tantra section of the *Tengyur* on consecration. I will simply list them here:

- Ānandagarbha, *sPyan dbye ba’i cho ga, Pratiṣṭhāvidhi*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3344 (Toh. 2521).

<sup>486</sup> *Rab tu gnas pa mdor bsdu pa’i rgyud, Supratiṣṭhātantrasaṅgraha*, P118 (Toh. 486), vol. 5.

<sup>487</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 42b.3.

<sup>488</sup> *ston pa nram snang ting nge ’dzin la zhugs nas rab tu gnas bya’i rten/ gnas byed kyi slob dpon/ gang du bya ba’i gnas/ rab gnas ma byas pa’i nyes dmigs/ byas pa’i phan yon/ don dam par rab gnas med kyang kun rdzob tu dgos pa/ rab gnas kyi sbyor dngos rjes gsum gyi cho ga/ dus nam gyi tshe bya ba dang bcas pa gsungs so/ (Butön, *Ship*, 42b.2-42b.3).*

- Ānandagarbha, *Rab tu gnas pa'i cho ga, Pratiṣṭhāvidhi*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3345 (Toh. 2523).
- Prajñāpālita, *sPyan dbye ba'i cho ga, Pratiṣṭhāvidhi*, translated by Dharmasribhadra and Rin chen bzang po, P3347 (Toh. 2522).
- *Rab tu gnas pa'i cho ga rab gnas kyi rgyal po, Pratiṣṭhāvidhipratiṣṭhārāja*, translators not identified, P3351 (Toh. 2528).
- **The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī**<sup>489</sup>

Another text that must be mentioned here is the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*. Although Butön does not discuss this seminal Buddhist tantra under the rubric of “How the Wheel of Yoga Tantra Doctrine Was Turned” in his *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra*, he does discuss it in the lengthy section “How Yoga Tantra Arose in India.” The early development of this tantra dates roughly to the same period as that of the *Compendium of Principles*—the latter part of the seventh century.<sup>490</sup> The *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* spawned an enormous corpus of commentarial literature in India interpreting the tantra within several different tantric systems. There are more than 125

---

<sup>489</sup> 'Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa'i don dam pa'i mtshan yang dag par brjod pa, *Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya paramārthanāmasaṅgīti*, translated by Kamalagupta and Rin chen bzang po (958-1055), revised by Shong bLo gros brtan pa, P2 (Toh. 360).

The text was translated earlier, during the latter half of the eighth century, and is included in the Denkar Palace Catalogue of officially sanctioned translations. The version of the tantra included in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma* may in fact represent the early translation (Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 13) and appears to correspond to three versions of the text found among the Tun-huang documents (Dan Martin, “Illusion Web—Locating the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in Buddhist Intellectual History,” in *Silver on Lapis: Tibetan Literary Culture and History*, ed. Christopher I. Beckwith [Bloomington, IN: The Tibet Society, 1987], p. 184).

Ronald M. Davidson has published English translations of the entire text in two articles. The first, “The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī: Text and Translation of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*” (hereafter abbreviated as “Names of Mañjuśrī”), includes a lengthy and informative introduction. The second, “The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī” (hereafter abbreviated as “Litany”), is a revised version of the first translation and has only a brief introduction.

<sup>490</sup> Davidson, “Litany,” p. 104.



commentaries on and ritual texts related to the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* in the *Tengyur*, making it one of the most-commented on Buddhist tantras (at least in terms of extant Tibetan translations of Indian exegetical works). These commentaries in the Sarma canon are classified under several different tantric rubrics, including the *Kālacakra* cycle of Highest Yoga Tantra,<sup>491</sup> the Yoginī Tantra subdivision of Highest Yoga Tantra,<sup>492</sup> and Yoga Tantra.<sup>493</sup> Within the nine-vehicle doxographies organizing the Nyingma canon, the tantra is classified as Mahāyoga. I will discuss this further in chapter four (see p. 273 ff).

Yoga Tantra was the first tantric system in which the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* was interpreted. Three Indian commentaries form the core of this exegetical corpus. Mañjuśrimitra (fl. mid-eighth c.) wrote the earliest of the Yoga Tantra commentaries on the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*;<sup>494</sup> this text<sup>495</sup> is known as the “Short Commentary.” Vilāsavajra<sup>496</sup> composed an extensive commentary that also presents instructions for performing the rituals;<sup>497</sup> this text<sup>498</sup> is known as the “Medium-length Commentary.” Mañjuśrikīrti (early 10th c.)<sup>499</sup> authored the last of the seminal works interpreting the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* within a Yoga Tantra system;<sup>500</sup> this exegesis is known as

---

<sup>491</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 12.

<sup>492</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” pp. 12-13.

<sup>493</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, pp. 2-3.

<sup>494</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 5.

<sup>495</sup> Mañjuśrimitra, *mTshan yang dag par brjod pa'i 'grel pa, Nāmasaṅgītivṛtti*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3355 (Toh. 2532).

<sup>496</sup> The Sanskrit of this important Indian tantric author is sometimes reconstructed as Lilāvajra.

<sup>497</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 7.

<sup>498</sup> Vilāsavajra, *'Phags pa mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa mtshan gsang sngags kyi don du rnam par lta ba zhes bya ba, Āryanāmasaṅgīṭīkānāmamantrārthāvalokinināma*, translated by Smṛtījñānakīrti and revised by Vajrapāṇi and kLog snya Shes rab brtsegs, P3356 (Toh. 2533).

<sup>499</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 12.

<sup>500</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 12.

the “Great Commentary.”<sup>501</sup> These three figures also composed ritual texts for the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*, but I will not list these or the many other exegetical works included in the *Tengyur* here.

• **The Magical Emanation Net Tantra**<sup>502</sup>

One final text that must be mentioned is the *Magical Emanation Net Tantra*. Although Butön does not discuss the mytho-history of this tantra’s initial promulgation, he does mention the text in other contexts, and it is included in the Yoga Tantra section of the Derge edition of the *Kangyur*. The cycle of *Magical Emanation Net* tantras are central to Nyingma Mahāyoga traditions, as I will discuss in chapter four. There is only one *Magical Emanation Net Tantra* included in the *Kangyur*. The two Indian commentaries on this tantra preserved in the *Tengyur* are by Praśāntamitra<sup>503</sup> and Ānandagarbha.<sup>504</sup>

There are several other texts included in the Yoga Tantra section of the *Tengyur* that Butön either does not discuss or does not tie to a specific tantra. Since their relationship to specific Yoga Tantras is not readily identifiable, I will simply list them here.<sup>505</sup>

- Subhūtipālita, *sByin sreg gi cho ga, Homavidhi*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po, P3348 (Toh. 2525).

---

<sup>501</sup> *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i rgya cher bshad pa, Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīṭikā*, translated by Śraddhākaravarman, Kamalagupta, and Rin chen bzang po, P3357 (Toh. 2534).

<sup>502</sup> *rGyud kyi rgyal po chen po sgyu 'phrul dra ba zhes bya ba, Māyājālamahātantrarājanāma*, P102 (Toh. 466).

<sup>503</sup> Praśāntamitra, *rGyud kyi rgyal po sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i dka' 'grel, Māyājālatantrarājapañjikā*, P3337 (Toh. 2514).

<sup>504</sup> Ānandagarbha, *rGyud kyi rgyal po sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rgya cher bshad pa, Māyājālatantrarājapañjikāvyākhyā*, P3336 (Toh. 2513).

<sup>505</sup> These are drawn largely from the Yoga Tantra section of the *Tengyur* in the *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, pp. 292-391.

- *dPal ldan rgya che ba zhes bya ba'i dkyil chog*, *Śrīmadudāranāmaṇḍalavidhi*, translators not identified, P3349 (Toh. 2526). Butön, in a passage prefaced by “it is said,” relates that Prajñāsiddhi is the author of this text.<sup>506</sup>
- *Kun tu bzang po zhes bya ba'i sbyin sreg gi cho ga*, *Samantabhadranāmahomavidhi*, translators not identified, P3350 (Toh. 2527). Butön, in a passage prefaced by “it is said,” relates that Prajñāsiddhi is the author of this text.<sup>507</sup>
- Kuladatta, *Bya ba bsdu pa zhes bya ba*, *Kriyāsaṃgrahanāma*, translated by 1) Kirticandra and 2) Yar lungs pa Grags pa rgyal mtshan, P3354 (Toh. 2531).
- Dharmakīrti, *dKyil 'khor gyi thig gi cho ga*, *\*Sūtravidhi*, translators not identified, P3331 (Toh. 252508).
- *bZlas pa'i phreng ba'i mtshan nyid*, *Akṣasūtralakṣaṇa*, translated by Parahita and Shes rab rgyal mtshan, P3474 (Toh. 2650).
- *sKu khru kyi cho ga*, *Snānavidhi*, translated by Parahita and Shes rab rgyal mtshan, P3475 (Toh. 2651).
- Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna, *Mi 'khrugs pa'i sgrub thabs zhes bya ba*, *Akṣobhyasādhananāma*, translated by Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna and Tshul khriims rgyal ba, P3477 (Toh. 2653).
- Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna, *Mi 'khrugs pa'i sgrub thabs*, *Akṣobhyasādhana*, translated by Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna and Tshul khriims rgyal ba, P3478 (Toh. 2654).
- Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna, *Las kyi sgrub pa thams cad rnam par 'joms pa zhes bya ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga*, *Sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśodhanamaṇḍalavidhi*, translated by Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna and Rin chen bzang po, P3479 (Toh. 2655).
- Viravajra, *Mi 'khrugs pa'i sgrub thabs*, *Akṣobhyasādhana*, translated by gNyan Dar ma grags, P3480 (Toh. 2656).
- Jetāri, *Mi 'khrugs pa'i sgrub thabs*, *Akṣobhyasādhana*, translated by gNyan Dar ma grags, P3481 (Toh. 2657).
- *Mi 'khrugs pa'i sgrub thabs*, *Akṣobhyasādhana*, translators not identified, P3482 (Toh. 2658).

---

<sup>506</sup> *pra dznyā siddhis...dpal ldan rgya che zhes bya ba'i dkyil chog...mdzad do/ zhes brag go/* (Butön, *Ship*, 61a.6-61a.7).

<sup>507</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 61a.6-61a.7.

- Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna, *sByin sreg gi cho ga, Homavidhi*, translators not identified, P3483 (Toh. 2659).
- Sthiramati, *rGyan dam pa sna tshogs pa rim par phye ba bkod pa, Paramālaṅkāraśvapaṭalavyūhanāma*, translated by Cog ro kLu'i rgyal mtshan, P3485 (Toh. 2661).

## Butön's Sixfold Typology of Tantras

After presenting the circumstances surrounding the initial teaching of the individual Yoga Tantras and a maṅḍala-by-maṅḍala summary of their emanation and content, Butön discusses the inter-textual relationships that obtain within the Yoga Tantra corpus.<sup>508</sup> This discussion is structured within the framework of a sixfold typology of tantras: root tantras (*rtsa rgyud, mūla-tantra*), explanatory tantras (*bshad rgyud, ākhyāna-tantra*), supplementary or continuation tantras (*rgyud phyi ma, uttara-tantra*), second supplementary or continuation of continuation tantras (*rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma; uttarottara-tantra*), concordant tantras (*cha mthun pa'i rgyud, \*bhāgiya-tantra*), and elaborating (*'phros pa'i rgyud, \*prapañja-tantra[?]*) or branch tantras (*yan lag gi rgyud, aṅga-tantra*).<sup>509</sup>

## Root Tantras, Supplementary Tantras, and Second Supplementary Tantras

The first type of tantra Butön discusses is the root tantra (*rtsa ba'i rgyud, mūla-tantra*). A root tantra is considered such only in relation to other tantras in constellation around it. For example, a root tantra is deemed such in relation to a supplementary or continuation tantra (Tib: *rgyud phyi ma*; Skt: *uttara-tantra*). Two types of relationships

---

<sup>508</sup> This discussion of Yoga Tantra texts is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 29a.4-29a.5 and 55b.4-57b.2.

<sup>509</sup> Butön was not the first scholar to discuss related tantras within a sixfold structure. See for example the presentation of the eleventh-century Tibetan scholar Sonam Tsemo (bSod nams rtse mo, 1142-1182) in Malati J. Shendge, "The Literary Forms of Tantras," in *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan* 9 (1966), p. 39.

can obtain between a supplementary tantra and a root tantra: one in which the root tantra and the supplementary tantra are different texts and one in which they are both part of the same text.

The first type, in which the root tantra and the supplementary tantra are *different* tantras, refers to the temporal relation that obtains between the texts. Within the Yoga Tantra system, for instance, in a chronological sense the *Compendium of Principles* is a root tantra in relation to any other tantra because the initial promulgation of the *Compendium of Principles* preceded that of the other Yoga Tantras.<sup>510</sup> In this case, the Sanskrit term *uttara-tantra* and its Tibetan translation equivalent *rgyud phyi ma*, which I translate in other contexts as “supplementary tantra” or “continuation tantra,” are more accurately rendered as “later tantra” or “subsequent tantra” to reflect the temporal aspect of the relationship between the texts.

In the second type of relationship that can obtain between a root tantra and a supplementary tantra, both are part of a single text. Butön presents two instances of such a relationship: in the context of a tantra that consists of two parts and in the context of a tantra that consists of three parts. The first Yoga Tantra example is the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures*.<sup>511</sup> This text as we find it in the *Kangyur* consists of only two parts—a root tantra and a supplementary tantra. Thus, the supplementary (or continuation) tantra portion of this text is an example of a

---

<sup>510</sup> 'dir dang po'i dbang du byas pa ste/ de kho na nyid bsdus pa lta bu'o / (Butön, *Ship*, 55b.6). Butön explained above, in the lengthy section entitled, “How Vairocana, Having Become Buddhified, Turned the Wheel of Yoga Tantra Doctrine,” that the *Compendium of Principles* was the *first* Yoga Tantra spoken, and thus all other Yoga Tantras were taught subsequent to it.

<sup>511</sup> 'Jig rten gsum nam rgyal gyi rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po, *Trailokyavijayamahākalparāja*, P115.

supplementary tantra in the treatment of a root tantra and a supplementary tantra within a single text.<sup>512</sup>

An example of a root tantra in relation to a supplementary tantra within the context of a single text that has three parts is the *Compendium of Principles*, which consists of a root tantra, a supplementary tantra, and a second supplementary tantra (*rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma, uttarottara-tantra*).<sup>513</sup> Here, the three parts of the text—the root tantra, supplementary tantra, and second supplementary tantra—are distinguished by what they teach and for whom they teach it. The root tantra teaches the entity of the principles of mundane and supramundane doctrines, and this teaching is common to all Yoga Tantra trainees. In contrast, the supplementary tantra is intended for the best Yoga Tantra trainees; it teaches the practice of mundane and supramundane feats and the principle of the beginningless and endless great pledge, which is the cause of attaining the state of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. Finally, the second supplementary tantra was promulgated for less adept Yoga Tantra trainees—those who are frightened of internal meditation and are strongly attached to external activities, and who are incapable of engaging in the practices of special and supreme feats. For these trainees, the second supplementary tantra teaches methods having external objects of observation.<sup>514</sup>

In the context of the relationship between a root tantra and an explanatory tantra, all three parts of the *Compendium of Principles* just discussed—the root tantra comprised by the four sections, the supplementary tantra, and the second supplementary tantra—are included in the root tantra. In relation to an explanatory tantra such as the *Vajraśekhara*

---

<sup>512</sup> *rgyud gcig gi nang na rtsa ba'i rgyud/ rgyud phyi ma gnyis su byas pa/ 'jig rten gsum rgyal gyi rtog pa'i rgyud lta bu'am* (Butön, *Ship*, 55b.6-55b.7).

<sup>513</sup> *rtsa ba'i rgyud/ rgyud phyi ma/ phyi ma'i phyi ma dang gsum byas pa ni/ de nyid bsdus pa'i rgyud la rtsa ba'i rgyud dang/ rgyud phyi ma dang/ phyi ma'i phyi ma gsum du byas pa'i rtsa ba'i rgyud lta bu ste/* (Butön, *Ship*, 55b.7).

<sup>514</sup> This discussion is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 55b.7-56a.4.

*Tantra*, all three parts of the *Compendium of Principles* form an organic whole and are considered to be the root tantra.

The final type of root tantra that Butön presents is within the framework of a root tantra and a condensed tantra (*bsdus pa'i rgyud, \*laghu-tantra* [?]).<sup>515</sup> In this context, the root tantra refers to the tantra extensively taught by Vairocana in the Akaniṣṭha Pure Land for the very best trainees—the initial teaching of the tantra. Then, for the benefit of future generations of Yoga Tantra trainees, this extensive tantra was condensed and taught; this constitutes the condensed tantra. An example of such a root tantra is the *Compendium of Principles in 100,000 Stanzas* spoken by Vairocana in the Akaniṣṭha Pure Land, while the received text of the *Compendium of Principles*—consisting of what above was described as the root tantra, supplement, and second supplement—represents a condensed tantra. This situation of an extensive version initially taught to an audience of Bodhisattvas and others in a heavenly realm, and a briefer version of the tantra that is condensed and then taught for the benefit of future practitioners, obtains also for the other five types of tantras.

This presentation of a root and condensed version of every tantra has important ramifications. It is only the initial teaching of a tantra, usually in a Pure Land to an assembly of Bodhisattvas, that is the full form of the teaching. The tantra that humans receive is the condensed version of the tantra. Thus, the received tantra-texts are necessarily condensed—and therefore edited—versions of the original teaching. Perhaps this reflects an awareness of the role of human agency in the production of the received text, even as it is believed to come through divine inspiration. This implies an understanding that the production of the tantras involves a hermeneutical and editorial

---

<sup>515</sup> Malati J. Shendge, “The Literary Forms of Tantras,” in *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan* 9 (1966), p. 37.

process, and that something is always lost in a received text vis-à-vis the original teaching from which it derives.

Butön's discussion of root tantras covers the semantic range of the terms "root tantra," "subsequent/ supplementary tantra," and so forth. What is striking about his presentation is the relational nature of these terms. For instance, in terms of two discrete texts, a root tantra is a root tantra *in relation to* another tantra that was initially taught chronologically later; this is the usage of the term *rgyud phyi ma/uttara-tantra* that employs the connotation "subsequent" or "later tantra." However, within a single text, a root tantra is a root tantra *in relation to* a supplementary section that follows it; this is the usage of the term *rgyud phyi ma/uttara-tantra* that employs the connotation "supplement." Furthermore, what is considered a root tantra in relation to an explanatory tantra can also be considered a condensed tantra in relation to the original teaching of the tantra, which in this context is then referred to as the root tantra. Thus, the designation and classification "root tantra" and so forth is largely relational, particularly within a corpus of associated texts as we find with the Yoga Tantras.

### **Explanatory Tantras**

The second category of tantra Butön delineates is the explanatory tantra (*bshad rgyud, ākhyāna-tantra*). He elucidates six ways in which an explanatory tantra expounds upon a root tantra: clarifying what is unclear, filling out what is incomplete, explaining other presentations of different systems, summarizing vast meanings, generating ascertainment through concordance, and differentiating words and meanings.<sup>516</sup>

---

<sup>516</sup> *mi gsal ba gsal bar byed pa/ ma tshang ba kha skong ba/ tshul mi 'dra ba rnam gzahag gzhan 'chad pa/ rgya chen po'i don bsdu pa cha mthun pas nges shes bskyed pa/ tshig dang don rnam par 'byed pa* (Butön, *Ship*, 56b.6-56b.7).



Butön then illustrates how the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* functions as an explanatory tantra of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>517</sup> For example, it clarifies practices that are unclear in the root tantra—the yoga of bathing, meditating a wheel of protection, blessing, and so forth—in the context of explanations of the rite for future practitioners. In the context of ritual preparation of the ground where the rite will be held (Tib: *sa chog*) and preparatory enhancement (*sta gon*), the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* fills out what is incomplete in the *Compendium of Principles*, such as the declaration of vows and so forth. In terms of teaching various systems, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* expounds upon the *Compendium of Principles* by taking the four Perfection Goddesses as the deities of the maṇḍala, taking the hand-symbols of the retention maṇḍala as goddesses, and so forth.

Also, for each deity for which there is not a specific delineation, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* summarizes its meaning and then teaches it. In this way it summarizes vast meanings in the *Compendium of Principles*. Additionally, procedures in the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* concordant with the four extensive maṇḍalas, the four-mudrā maṇḍalas, the single-mudrā maṇḍalas, and so forth in the *Compendium of Principles* generate ascertainment (or certainty) through concordance. Finally, Butön provides an example of how the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* differentiates words and meanings in the *Compendium of Principles*. He uses as an example a line in the *Compendium of Principles* that reads, “The stable sign self-occurring.”<sup>518</sup> The *Vajraśekhara Tantra* explains the line thus: “Signs are called ‘stūpas’. Stability is meditative stabilization

---

<sup>517</sup> This discussion is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 56b.7-57a.4.

<sup>518</sup> *mtshan ma bstan pa rang 'gyur nas* (Butön, *Ship*, 57a.2-57a.3). The line appears in the tantra in a slightly different form: *mtshan ma bstan par rang gyur nas* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 238.4.8). The Sanskrit text, which corresponds to the reading in the Tibetan translation of the tantra rather than to Butön’s citation of it, reads: *stabdhaliṅgaḥ svayaṃbhūtvā* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 147).

itself.”<sup>519</sup> In this way Butön illustrates the six ways an explanatory tantra expounds upon a root tantra by using as an example the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*’s explication of the *Compendium of Principles*.

### Concordant Tantras and Elaborating or Branch Tantras

The final two of the six types of tantras Butön enumerates are concordant tantras (*chamthun pa’i rgyud*, \*bhāgiya-tantra[?]) and elaborating or branch tantras (*spros pa’i rgyud* or *yan lag gi rgyud*,: \*prapañca-tantra or \*aṅga-tantra). The *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra* is classified as a concordant Yoga Tantra because it accords with the teaching of the four mudrās in the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>520</sup> Another concordant tantra is the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, since its Vairocana maṇḍala accords with the arrangement of deities in the *Compendium of Principles*.

The *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra* is also classified as a branch tantra because its rites of generating the five manifest enlightenments and so forth are in relation to, and rely upon, the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>521</sup> The *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is called an elaborating Yoga Tantra because it elaborates on the process of purifying beings in bad transmigrations that was set forth in the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>522</sup> Or, since most of its main deities are similar to the deities of the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is also called a branch tantra.<sup>523</sup>

Another text that needs to be mentioned here is the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*. Although this is a Perfection of Wisdom text, it is also considered to be a

---

<sup>519</sup> *mtshan ma mchod rten zhes bshad de/ /bstan pa ting ’dzin gyur pa nyid/* (Butön, *Ship*, 57a.3).

<sup>520</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 57a.4-57a.5.

<sup>521</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 56a.5-56a.6.

<sup>522</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 57a.6. I will discuss this further in chapter three.

<sup>523</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 57a.6-57a.7.

tantra because it elucidates mantra. It is specifically classified as a Yoga Tantra because of its relationship with the *Śrī Paramādya*: it is considered to be an explanatory tantra of the *Śrī Paramādya*'s first section.<sup>524</sup> I have discussed this relationship in some detail earlier in this chapter.

The most striking feature of Butön's discussion of six types of tantras is the centrality of the *relation* between texts. His presentation of the individual tantra-texts emphasizes the fact that after the production of the *Compendium of Principles* and the subsequent emergence of the body of texts associated with it, these traditions were consolidated into a *system*, a *corpus* of related tantras, an organic whole. Furthermore, the discussion of the inter-textual relationships of the various instances of the six types of tantras reflects the pivotal position the *Compendium of Principles* holds in the Yoga Tantra system. It is in relation to the *Compendium of Principles*—the root or fundamental or basic Yoga Tantra—that every other tantra of the Yoga Tantra system *is* a Yoga Tantra. Thus, the central criterion for a text's inclusion in the Yoga Tantra system as it was constructed by Indian exegetes appears to be its relationship to the *Compendium of Principles*. For example, the explanatory Yoga Tantra the *Vajraśekhara* elucidates and expands on the *Compendium of Principles* in the six ways an explanatory tantra explicates a root tantra, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* expands upon a practice taught in the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* and thus is an elaborating Yoga Tantra, and so forth.

---

<sup>524</sup> The first section of the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra* is the "Perfection of Wisdom" section (Tib: *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i dum bu*, abbreviated to *sher dum*; the corresponding Sanskrit would be *prajñāpāramitā-khaṇḍa*).

The *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* is classified as a Yoga Tantra even though it is *not* explicitly related to the *Compendium of Principles*; it is considered a Yoga Tantra because of its relation to the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra*. However, the Indian Jñānamitra's commentary on the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* indicates a relationship with the *Compendium of Principles*, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter four (p. 253).

It is important to remember that the Yoga Tantra system, like the individual tantras themselves, developed over time. Thus, Butön's fourteenth-century presentation is of a more systematized and mature Yoga Tantra corpus than likely existed during the seventy-five or one-hundred years after the *Compendium of Principles* was produced around the last quarter of the seventh century. By the middle of the eighth century north Indian exegetical traditions began to associate these texts as a corpus, which they referred to as Yoga Tantra.

We find a somewhat different case in south India. Amoghavajra's eighth-century presentation of the *Vajraśekhara* cycle of eighteen tantras consists of a loose configuration of texts in constellation around the *Compendium of Principles*. However, he does not refer to this corpus as Yoga Tantra (although all but the first text's titles end in "yoga"). In fact, Amoghavajra does not mention any doxographical distinctions whatsoever, and texts he describes correspond to those later included in several doxographical categories (Yoga Tantra, Mahāyoga, Yoginī Tantra, and Highest Yoga Tantra).

## Conclusion

The textual traditions that grew out of the *Compendium of Principles* exhibit affinities (to greater or lesser degrees) with the tantra that spawned them. As these traditions were consolidated, they came to be called "Yoga Tantra" (at least in north India), and this represents the first true corpus in Indian Buddhist tantra. The relationships between the *Compendium of Principles* and the texts in constellation around it were enumerated and solidified, and the tantras were divided into categories.

Texts later classified under the rubric of "explanatory tantra," such as the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure*, demonstrate the closest relationship to the *Compendium of Principles*, as they directly comment and elaborate on it. Other texts take practices mentioned in the *Compendium of Principles*

and expand on them. For example, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, as its name indicates, has as its central practice the purification of bad states of existence as well as of the karma that creates these unfortunate circumstances, and we find an embryonic form of this practice in the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*.

# *Chapter 3: Import and Innovations*

## **Introduction**

Ronald Davidson explains the innovations of mature Buddhist tantra exclusively within the framework of the adoption of the metaphor of royal coronation and the deployment of power drawn from the socio-political environment of early medieval India. While his argument is compelling, it discounts the important continuities some of these innovations display with earlier Buddhist traditions. In addition, it obscures some of the nuance and detail—and therefore the importance—of these innovations that, even though some cases demonstrate continuity with earlier Buddhist traditions, represent a revolution in Buddhist theory and praxis. In this chapter I will examine the importance of several aspects of the *Compendium of Principles*, such as narrative structures, new practices (including the integration of earlier doctrinal positions), and the relationship between narrative and ritual. I will also examine innovative and important aspects of tantras associated with the *Compendium of Principles* such as the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure*, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, and the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.

## **The *Compendium of Principles*: Import and Innovations**

The *Compendium of Principles* represents the crucial moment in the emergence of Buddhist tantra as a self-conscious entity because it presents for the first time a mythological underpinning for tantra. I will discuss this mythological underpinning in three categories: 1) the recasting of Śākyamuni's enlightenment in tantric terms and the presentation of a more highly developed and specifically tantric contemplative system; 2)

the use of violence; and 3) mortuary practices involving interaction with beings in bad transmigrations and the deceased. I will also discuss briefly a fourth topic: sexo-yogic practices in the context of Buddhist tantra.

*Śākyamuni's Enlightenment Narrative and the Process of the Five Manifest Enlightenment*

The *Compendium of Principles* opens with an introductory section extolling the qualities of the Buddha Vairocana and setting the scene with myriad Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. It then continues with an account of Śākyamuni's enlightenment which, for the first time in Indian Buddhist literature, details a *tantric* process by which Siddhārtha (here identified by a variation on this appellation, "Sarvārthasiddhi") became enlightened.<sup>525</sup>

In this narrative, the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi, having resolved to attain enlightenment, sits on the *bodhimaṇḍa* (the seat or platform of enlightenment that in biographies of Śākyamuni is located under the bodhi tree in Bodh Gayā) and enters an unfluctuating meditative stabilization (Tib: *mi g.yo ba'i ting nge 'dzin*; Skt: *āsphānaka-samādhi*). All the Tathāgatas gather, display their Complete Enjoyment Bodies (*rdzogs par longs spyod pa'i sku, sām̄bhogika-kāya*)<sup>526</sup> for Sarvārthasiddhi's benefit, and rouse him from his meditative state, saying:<sup>527</sup>

---

<sup>525</sup> Any doubts that the name "Sarvārthasiddhi" refers to Siddhārtha (the Bodhisattva who became enlightened as the historical Buddha Śākyamuni) are resolved in the *Compendium of Principles Tantra* itself. At the end of the narrative of Sarvārthasiddhi's enlightenment, the tantra reads, "the Supramundane Victor Śākyamuni, in order to realize thoroughly the equality of all Tathāgatas..." (*bcom ldan 'das shākya thub pa de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad mnyam pa nyid du rab tu rtogs pa'i phyir, Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 220.3.2).

<sup>526</sup> This is the term used in the *Compendium of Principles*; the more standard form is *longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku/ sambhogakāya*.

<sup>527</sup> *rigs kyi bu khyod kyis gang gi phyir de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid mngon par ma rtogs par dka' ba spyod pa thams cad la spro ba bskyed cing/ ji ltar bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub mngon par rdzogs par bya snyam (Compendium of Principles, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.5-*

Son of [good] lineage, how will you complete the unsurpassed complete and perfect enlightenment, you who act with energy for all austerities without the knowledge of the principles of all Ones Gone Thus?

Sarvārthasiddhi, shaken from his meditative trance by the penetrating query of all Buddhas who have assembled before him, then asks the Tathāgatas what their principles (or truths) are like and how he should practice them.

In response to Sarvārthasiddhi's request for instruction, the assembled Buddhas disclose to him the process of the five manifest enlightenments (*mngon byang lnga, pañcābhisambodhi*). They begin by directing him to investigate—and set in equipoise on—his own mind, and to repeat the mantra *oṃ citta-prativedhaṅ karomi* (“oṃ I perform mind-penetration”).<sup>528</sup> Sarvārthasiddhi does this and reports back to the assembled Buddhas that he sees what he has realized as a moon-disc at his heart.<sup>529</sup> The Tathāgatas explain that, because the mind is naturally luminous, as it is trained, so does it become.<sup>530</sup> This combination of meditating on the nature of one's mind while repeating a specific mantra and the vision that appears subsequent to the realization of the mind's nature is

---

219.4.6); *kathaṃ kulaputrānuttarāṃ samyaksaṃbodhim abhisambhotsyase yas tvam sarvatathāgatatatvānabhijñatayā sarvaduḥkarāṇy utsahasiti* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7).

<sup>528</sup> *rigs kyi bu rang gi sems la rtog cing mnyam par zhog la/ rang bzhin gyis grub pa'i sngags 'di ci dgar zlos shing/ bsgrub par gyis shig/ oṃ citta prativedhaṃ karomi/* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.5.1-219.5.2); *pratipadyasva kulaputra svacittapratyavekṣaṇasamādhānena prakṛtisiddhena rucijāptena mantreneti// oṃ citta-prativedhaṅ karomi* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7).

<sup>529</sup> *de nas byang chub sems dpa' don thams cad grub pas de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad la 'di skad ces gsol to/ /bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa rnam rang gi snying ka na zla ba'i dkyil 'khor lta bur gda' ba bdag gis rtogs so/* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.5.2-219.5.3); *atha bodhisatvaḥ sarvatathāgatān evam āha/ ājñātaṃ me bhagavantas tathāgatāḥ svahr̥di candramaṇḍalākāraṃ paśyāmi/* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 8)

<sup>530</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi bka' stsal pa/ rigs kyi bu sems de ni rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal bas na de ni ji ltar sbyangs pa de ltar gyur te/* (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.5.3-219.5.4); *sarvatathāgatāḥ procuḥ/ prakṛtiprabhāsvaram idaṃ kulaputra cittaṃ tad yathā parikarṣyate tat tathaiva bhavati/* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 8).



the first in the series of five manifest enlightenments. This pattern of a contemplative practice (and its attendant mantra) paired with the ensuing appearance of its realization in a visualized form then continues, as the Tathāgatas instruct Sarvārthasiddhi in successive practices to increase, deepen, and stabilize the realization of the preceding manifest enlightenment. The Bodhisattva implements their instructions and reports back the respective visualization or subsequent appearance that results from each manifest enlightenment (a second moon-disc, a vajra standing on that, that vajra having the nature of the body of all Tathāgatas, and finally appearing in the fully enlightened form of Vairocana).<sup>531</sup> After the fourth manifest enlightenment the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi is consecrated through the name consecration “Vajradhātu.”

Following the fifth and final manifest enlightenment, the now fully enlightened Tathāgata Vajradhātu requests the Tathāgatas to further bless and stabilize his enlightenment, and this they do in a series of four rites Butön identifies as the four miracles (*cho 'phrul, \*pratihārya*). These include further rites of blessing, consecration, meditative stabilization, and the performance of enlightened activities. The remainder of the *Compendium of Principles* (roughly ninety-eight percent of the text) involves the newly enlightened Vajradhātu, now called Vairocana, engaging in the post-enlightenment activities of emanating and teaching the rites of the various maṇḍalas of each of the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles* (either directly or by delegating the responsibility to the universal monarch [*'khor los bsgyur pa, cakravartin*] of each section, who are in fact transformations of Vajrasattva).

### ***Tantric Contemplation: The Process of the Five Manifest Enlightenments***

The process of meditation set forth in the section on the five manifest enlightenments (*mngon byang lnga, pañcābhisambodhi*) illustrates the shift toward inner contemplation

---

<sup>531</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.5.4-220.1.2; Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, pp. 8-9.

traditionally said to characterize texts of the Yoga Tantra corpus. This process, together with the additional meditative techniques, consecrations, and other activities set forth in the section on the four miracles, represents a breadth and detail of tantric techniques previously unseen in a Buddhist tantra. The narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment and the process of the five manifest enlightenments with which the *Compendium of Principles* begins presents in a far more detailed way than in any previous tantric Buddhist literature the paradigmatic tantric practice of deity yoga, in which practitioners create themselves as enlightened Buddha figures through a series of contemplations and visualizations, each accompanied by repetition of a specific mantra.

First, in the initial manifest enlightenment, there is the breaking down of physical as well as mental identity by meditating on the nature of the mind: its emptiness and natural luminosity. This realization then appears in the form of a moon-disc. There follows the regeneration of oneself, in stages, into the ideal form of a Buddha through the four subsequent manifest enlightenments. This culminates in one's empty and naturally luminous mind, and the realization thereof, appearing in the fully enlightened form of Vairocana, a form composed of the subtle physical, verbal, and mental particles of all Tathāgatas.

As Matsunaga has pointed out, in this presentation of deity yoga we find the ritualization of several central Mahāyāna concepts such as emptiness, the natural luminosity of the mind, and the symbolism of the vajra.<sup>532</sup> While ritual existed in Mahāyāna Buddhism from its inception, it was not a central fixture of the path to enlightenment. In the *Compendium of Principles* the prescribed series of mental, physical, and verbal activities takes center stage, thus shifting ritual from the periphery of earlier Mahāyāna practices to the center of tantric practice.

---

<sup>532</sup> de Jong, "A New History of Tantric Literature," p. 98.

We also see a clear formulation of the fundamental soteriological practice that runs through all subsequent Buddhist tantra—deconstructing one’s identity through meditating on emptiness and then reconstructing one’s identity in the ideal form of a Buddha—and a level of detail not seen in earlier tantras. The enlightenment narrative in the *Compendium of Principles* also signals a paradigm shift in the Buddhist path to enlightenment. The Buddhist path in earlier Buddhism—beginning with that preserved in Pāli literature and running through pre-tantric Mahāyāna traditions—presents a path consisting of ethics, accomplishment in meditative concentration, and liberative insight, with the narrative of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment embodying this paradigm. This event is a solitary one, as the Bodhisattva Siddhārtha attains the final goal by himself, sitting under the Bodhi tree. In the tantric narrative, however, the Bodhisattva’s enlightenment results from his interaction with the assembled Buddhas and, more specifically, through the consecrations they bestow on him—along with the requisite instructions—into a series of practices. Thus, enlightenment is no longer a solitary event; it is now a consecratory event. This adds a distinctly communal and *interpersonal* aspect to what was previously an *intrapersonal* paradigm.

The importance of the nature of the mind in the five manifest enlightenments continues the philosophical focus (and the influence of the Yogic Practice School) found in the first chapter of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*<sup>533</sup>—the most important development in Buddhist tantra prior to the *Compendium of Principles*—in which the mind is presented as being naturally completely pure.<sup>534</sup> There is the added feature, however, that the nature of the mind is luminous, which also traces back to the doctrines of the Yogic Practice School. In the *Compendium of Principles*, this

---

<sup>533</sup> Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana*, p. 30 ff.

<sup>534</sup> de Jong, “A New History of Tantric Literature,” p. 98. The text reads: *sems de ni rang bzhin gyis yongs su dag pa yin* (*Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, P126, vol. 5, 241.2.5).

ontological focus is further developed and explicitly incorporated for the first time into the practice of deity yoga, one of the distinguishing features of tantric practice. Thus, in this regard also the *Compendium of Principles* represents a landmark in the development of Indian tantric Buddhism.

***Deity Yoga: A Distinguishing Feature of Tantra***

The earliest reference to deity yoga in a work classified as a Buddha-voiced text occurs in a Chinese text, the *Consecration Sūtra (Kuan-ting ching)*.<sup>535</sup> While traditionally this text has been presented as an Indian sūtra translated by Śrimitra, Michel Strickmann and others consider it a Chinese product of the mid-fifth century.<sup>536</sup> This syncretic work of Indian and Taoist elements is a compilation of twelve individual texts. It is in the seventh of these sections—*Devil-Subduing Seals and Great Spirit-Spells of Consecration, as Spoken by the Buddha*<sup>537</sup>—that we find a brief description of deity yoga. Here, in the context of rites to exorcise wraiths or evil demons, the Buddha instructs Śakra thus:<sup>538</sup>

[O]ne should first visualize his own body as my image, with the thirty-two primary and eighty secondary marks, the color of purple gold. The body should be sixteen feet tall, with a solar radiance at the back of the neck.

The text continues with instructions to visualize an assembly of monks and Bodhisattvas and then to visualize the spirits of the five directions and their retinues, as it is these

---

<sup>535</sup> T. Vol. 21, No. 1331 (Michel Strickmann, “The *Consecration Sūtra*: A Buddhist Book of Spells,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Buswell, Jr. [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990], p. 77). My thanks to Jann Ronis of the University of Virginia for bringing this text to my attention, and to Hun Lye for checking the Chinese text itself.

<sup>536</sup> Strickmann, “The *Consecration Sūtra*,” p. 79

<sup>537</sup> Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 132.

<sup>538</sup> Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 133.

spirits who protect humans from ghosts and demons.<sup>539</sup> There is no further discussion of deity yoga, and in fact the bulk of the text details the exorcism rites.

While this does not involve any instruction to first meditate on emptiness and is but a brief mention, it is the earliest known account of deity yoga in a Buddhist text. There are important aspects of this account that we must bear in mind. The *Consecration Sūtra* in which this passage appears is of Chinese provenance. More specifically, it occurs in the seventh section, within an exorcism ritual that Strickmann identifies as a Taoist practice adopted by Buddhists.<sup>540</sup> This Taoist exorcism rite begins with the visualization of a giant spirit-official in front of oneself,<sup>541</sup> and the dimensions of the Buddha's body are taken from the Taoist rite. However, the addition of the instruction to visualize oneself *as* the Buddha is distinctly Buddhist; moreover, as Strickmann mentions, it is distinctly tantric.<sup>542</sup>

Although he identifies the important element of deity yoga as a feature that distinguishes the Buddhist exorcistic rite from its Taoist cousin (and identifies it as the earliest mention of deity yoga in a Buddhist text), Strickmann does not discuss it any further. The brief mention of deity yoga in this fifth-century Chinese text is an unusual occurrence; we do not find references to it in Indian materials (preserved in Tibetan translation) for another two centuries. Further research into this Chinese text and related topics such as when the next mention of deity yoga occurs in a Chinese text might shed more light on the issue, but this is beyond both my textual abilities and the scope of this study. In any event, the mention of the practice of deity yoga, albeit brief, in a mid-fifth

---

<sup>539</sup> Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>540</sup> Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 136. Strickmann writes: "...there can be little doubt that the practice described here is of an earlier Chinese origin."

<sup>541</sup> Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 137.

<sup>542</sup> Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 138.

century Chinese text represents the earliest known reference to deity yoga in a Buddhist work, and as such is significant in and of itself.

When we turn to descriptions of deity yoga—the practice of visualizing oneself as an enlightened being—in Indian traditions, we find such practices ascribed to texts later classified under the rubric of Action Tantra.<sup>543</sup> An example is the *Concentration Continuation Tantra*, and specifically a passage which reads, “Having set oneself thus, / Meditate with the mantra minds.”<sup>544</sup> These terse two lines are anything but clear and require interpretation; the eighth-century Indian tantric exegete Buddhaghya explains that they refer to deity yoga in terms of a six-step process, termed “the six deities.” In brief, these are:<sup>545</sup> 1) ultimate deity: meditating on emptiness; 2) sound deity: the realization of emptiness taking the form of the sounds of the deity’s mantra (or as a moon disc above which the mantra resounds); 3) letter deity: the mind appears as a moon disc on which are set the letters of the deity’s mantra; 4) form deity: light radiates from the moon and mantra, and forms of the deity emerge from the points of light, perform various enlightened activities, and gather back into the moon; 5) seal deity: constructing the seals (*phyag rgya; mudrā*) appropriate to the deity and touching them to various places on the body while reciting the appropriate mantras; and 6) sign deity: appearing as the deity. Such a description, however, does not occur in the tantra itself, and it is not clear to me that the tantra actually presents deity yoga.

---

<sup>543</sup> This discussion is drawn largely from an exposition on deity yoga by the fourteenth-fifteenth century Tibetan polymath Tsongkapa Lozang Drakpa, (*Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, 1357-1419), as translated by Jeffrey Hopkins in H.H. the Dalai Lama, Tsong-ka-pa, and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Deity Yoga in Action and Performance Tantra*, tr. and ed. Jeffrey Hopkins; assoc. eds. Lati Rinbochay and Denma Locho Rinbochay; asst. ed. Elizabeth Napper (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987).

<sup>544</sup> Hopkins, *Deity Yoga*, p. 109.

<sup>545</sup> Hopkins, *Deity Yoga*, pp. 104-109. Tsongkapa draws this from the works of the eighth-century Indian scholars Buddhaghya and Varabodhi.

Buddhaghya cites a passage from the *Extensive Vidāraṇa Tantra* (which was never translated into Tibetan) that identifies this practice more explicitly.<sup>546</sup>

Having first bathed, a yogi  
Sits on the vajra cushion  
And having offered and made petition  
Cultivates the six deities.  
Emptiness, sound, letter, form,  
Seal, and sign are the six.

Here we find an explicit mention in a tantra (albeit not an extant one) of the six deities that comprise the process of deity yoga. While this passage from the *Extensive Vidāraṇa Tantra* communicates more than the two cryptic lines in the *Concentration Continuation Tantra*, “Having set oneself thus,/ Meditate with the mantra minds,” it does not approach a clear presentation of deity yoga. While early Indian scholars such as Buddhaghya interpreted these passages as presentations of deity yoga, we do not find anything like the detailed presentation of the process of generating oneself as a deity that we find in the process of the five manifest enlightenments set forth at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles*.

The *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*, later classified as a Performance Tantra in fourfold doxographies, presents deity yoga less cryptically. For instance, a passage from chapter twenty three of the tantra reads:<sup>547</sup>

---

<sup>546</sup> ,Buddhaghya, *Commentary on the Vajravidāraṇa Tantra*, *rDo rje rnam par 'joms pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs kyi rgya cher 'grel pa rin po che gsal ba zhes bya ba, Vajravidāraṇi[ā]nāmadhāraṇīkārātnābhāsvarā*, P3504 (Toh. 2680), vol. 78, 140.3.6, as translated in Hopkins, *Deity Yoga*, p. 109.

<sup>547</sup> The translation is Hopkins' ( *Deity Yoga*, p. 190). Cf. Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana*, pp. 359-360, for another translation of this passage. The Tibetan reads *byang chub sems dpa' gsang sngags kyi sgo nas byang chub sems dpa'i spyad pa spyod pas/ 'di ltar lus la lus kyi gzugs bskyed par bya'o/ /yang dag par*

A Bodhisattva practicing the Bodhisattva deeds by way of Secret Mantra should generate his body as a [divine] physical body in the following way: there are none greater than the completely perfect Buddhas. The Tathāgatas completely and perfectly realize that one's eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind and so forth are included in the four great elements and that even those [elements] are empty of their own entityness, included within mere nominalities, similar and akin to space, unapprehendable [as inherently existent], arisen from causes and actions, like reflections. Even those [elements] are continuously related as interdependent arisings. Whatever is dependently produced arises like a reflection. Thus, because of being interdependently arisen, that which the deity is, I am; that which I am, the deity is. This is how you should physically generate your physical form as a divine body.

In this passage we find an explicit description of a process in which one meditates on emptiness and then appears in divine form—perhaps for the first time in a Buddhist tantra (other than the Chinese *Consecration Sūtra*). Additionally, in chapter fifteen, we find the term “deity yoga” used for what is likely the first time in a Buddhist tantra. The context

---

*rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas las lhag pa ni gang yang med de/ ci ltar bdag gi mig dang/ rna ba dang/ sna dang/ lce dang/ lus dang/ yid la sogs pa 'byung ba chen po bzhi'i nang du gtogs pa yin la/ de dag kyang ngo bo nyid kyis stong pa/ ming tsam gyis bsdus pa/ nam mkha' dang mtshungs shing 'dra ba/ gzung du med pa/ rgyu dang las las byung ba ste/ gzugs brnyan dang 'dra ba de bzhin du de bzhin gshegs pa rnams kyis mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas so/ /de dag kyang phan tshun rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i rgyun ma chad par 'brel ba ste/ gang la brten nas skyes pa de ni gzugs brnyan 'dra bar 'byung ngo/ /de lta bas na phan tshun rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i phyir/ lha gang yin pa de bdag yin bdag gang yin pa de ni lha yin no zhes de ltar lus kyis lus kyi gzugs lha'i skur bskyed par bya'o/ (Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana, P126, vol. 5, 269.2.6-269.3.1).*



in which this occurs is Vairocana giving instructions to the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi concerning eight secret mudrās and their corresponding mantras.<sup>548</sup>

Earlier in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* we find a lengthy presentation of the nature of the mind that comprises the entire first chapter of the text (after the introduction). While this presentation includes statements like “the mind is naturally completely pure,”<sup>549</sup> I have not seen any reference in the tantra to the natural luminosity of the mind. The mid-eighth century Indian exegete Buddhaguhya, in commentary on the above line, writes:<sup>550</sup>

If one’s mind itself has become free from the habitual tendencies which cause the proliferation of selective concepts which have the nature of a perceiving subject and perceived objects and has become utterly pure, it will be Enlightenment in nature, characterized by natural radiance, immediate experience, immutability and luminosity of Awareness.

Hence, while commentarial traditions as early as the middle of the eighth century interpret the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*’s presentation of mind to include descriptions of its natural luminosity, as far as I know such does not occur in the tantra itself. Thus, the first step in the process of deity yoga presented in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*—meditation on emptiness—does not involve contemplating the luminous nature of one’s own mind and taking that as the object of further meditative cultivation. As far as I know, the presentation of the nature of the mind as naturally luminous is an innovation employed for the first time in a Buddhist

---

<sup>548</sup> *rang gi lha’i rnal ’byor du bya ba yod de* (*Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, P126, vol. 5, 265.3.6).

<sup>549</sup> *sems de ni rang bzhin gyis yongs su dag pa yin* (*Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, P126, vol. 5, 241.2.5). For the context of this line and a slightly different translation, see Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana*, p. 56.

<sup>550</sup> The translation is Hodge’s (*Mahā-Vairocana*, pp. 56-57).

tantra in the five manifest enlightenments at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles*.

Additionally, I have not found in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* instructions stating that the realization of emptiness (or the mind's nature) should then be made to appear in physical form. Again, to my knowledge this occurs for the first time at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles*: the realization of the natural luminosity of the mind appears as a moon disc and then as a vajra and so on, with the process culminating in the meditator's visualized appearance in the physical form of the deity.

Furthermore, the presentation of deity yoga at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles* is the first detailed and complete presentation found in a Buddhist tantra. While texts such as the Chinese *Consecration Sūtra* and the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* mention appearing as a deity, they lack a coherent presentation of deity yoga that includes meditating on emptiness, appearance in form, and the recitation of mantras. However, the process of the five manifest enlightenments found in the *Compendium of Principles* begins with meditating on emptiness and the luminous nature of the mind, continues with the appearance of this realization in form, and proceeds through a series of stages to appearance in the physical form of the deity, and each step includes the recitation of a specific mantra. Thus, the *Compendium of Principles* presents the first complete description of deity yoga found in a Buddhist tantra.

### ***The Enlightenment Narrative***

In addition to an unprecedented level of detail in describing contemplative practices and the first textual presentation of the central tantric practice of deity yoga, we find in the account with which the *Compendium of Principles* opens the first recasting of Śākyamuni's enlightenment in tantric terms. The significance of this cannot be understated: it establishes the *Compendium of Principles* as an authentic Buddhist text

originating from Śākyamuni, and by extension it supports the claim of the rapidly-proliferating body of Buddhist tantras to canonicity as legitimate Buddha-voiced texts.

The tantric account of Śākyamuni's enlightenment with which the *Compendium of Principles* opens establishes tantra not merely as an *authentic* Buddhist doctrine and system of practice; it establishes tantra as an *indispensable* Buddhist doctrine and system of practice, since it is through tantric practice that Śākyamuni in fact attained enlightenment. The narrative establishes the relationship between the historical Buddha and all the Buddhas who preceded him, since it is they who instruct him in the method of becoming enlightened through the five manifest enlightenments. It is not just one or another Buddha teaching the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi; it is *all* the Buddhas, and they are teaching him their principles, that is to say, the components of their own enlightened state.

Additionally, the principles of enlightenment they teach are so rare and profound that even over three periods of innumerable eons of practice the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi had never met with them. This represents a *de facto* declaration by the newly emerging tantric movement of the absolute necessity of its innovative techniques. Without the process of the five manifest enlightenments—deity yoga, in which one meditates on the natural luminosity that is the nature of the mind and then develops this into appearance in enlightened form—there simply *is* no enlightenment.

The Buddhas explicitly state this to Sarvārthasiddhi in the narrative. As the Bodhisattva engages in the unfluctuating meditative stabilization with the resolve to become enlightened, all the Buddhas gather in front of him and say,<sup>551</sup>

---

<sup>551</sup> *rigs kyi bu khyod kyis gang gi phyir de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid mngon par ma rtogs par dka' ba spyod pa thams cad la spro ba bskyed cing/ ji ltar bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub mngon par rdzogs par bya snyam* (P112, vol. 4, 219.4.5-219.4.6); *kathaṃ*

Son of [good] lineage, how will you complete the unsurpassed complete and perfect enlightenment, you who act with energy for all austerities without the knowledge of the principles of all Ones Gone Thus?

Without the realization of these principles—gained through the process of the five manifest enlightenments—there is no enlightenment. This is the message the Buddhas deliver.

Thus, the narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment found in the *Compendium of Principles* not only includes the most complete and detailed presentation of deity yoga found in any Indian Buddhist tantra at that time, it also portrays innovative tantric techniques such as deity yoga as the *sine qua non* of practices for attaining enlightenment. By extension, it also declares tantric practice as the *sine qua non* of Buddhist practice as a whole: it is through the five manifest enlightenments and related practices that Śākyamuni in fact attained enlightenment, and therefore without such practices the attainment of enlightenment is not possible. Thus, the narrative not only acts as a legitimizing agent for the newly emerging Buddhist tantric traditions, it also serves as a vehicle for presenting and describing these rituals.

Following the series of the five manifest enlightenments Śākyamuni, in his enlightened form as the Buddha Vairocana, then generated the various maṇḍalas and taught their attendant rites as methods for others to employ in their quest for enlightenment.<sup>552</sup> By invoking Śākyamuni's enlightenment, this narrative allows the promulgators of the *Compendium of Principles* to claim it as an authentic Buddha-voiced text, thereby offering a new but central soteriological means to achieve liberation.

---

*kulaputrānuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambhotsyase yas tvaṃ sarvatathāgatataṭvānabhijñatayā sarvaduḥkarāṇy utsahasīti* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7).

<sup>552</sup> Although Vairocana does not execute all these activities himself, the other performers are either emanations of Vairocana or figures acting under his orders.

This claim to canonicity is found in the narrative itself. As the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi sits in the unfluctuating meditative state endeavoring to achieve highest enlightenment, all the Buddhas assemble in front of him and rouse him by asking how he expects to attain complete enlightenment without first realizing the principles (*de kho na nyid, tattva*) of all Ones Gone Thus. Sarvārthasiddhi then asks what these principles are and how he should cultivate them, and the Buddhas respond by pronouncing to him the practice of the five manifest enlightenments.

In this narrative we see the Buddhas declaring not only the orthodoxy of tantric practice but also its necessity. They explain to the Bodhisattva that without the tantric practice of deity yoga—contemplating and realizing the nature of the mind and then generating this realization in the ideal form of a Buddha—there *is* no enlightenment. Additionally, they prescribe the principles of all Buddhas—the process by which all the Buddhas of the past attained enlightenment. Thus, this new tantric technology is presented not only as *legitimate* Buddhist praxis but also as indispensable Buddhist praxis.

The *Compendium of Principles'* account of Śākyamuni's enlightenment in tantric terms is, to my knowledge, the earliest occurrence of such a reformulation in Buddhist tantric literature (we do not find anything like it in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*, for instance). As such, this enlightenment narrative represents a paradigm shift in the soteriological path of Indian tantra. The importance of this development was not lost on Indian Buddhists themselves. According to Butön, the early and influential eighth-century tantric exegete Buddhaghya acknowledged the innovation of the *Compendium of Principles'* enlightenment account, stating that the Action Tantras

did not develop an enlightenment narrative different from that of the Perfection Vehicle traditions (that is, earlier Mahāyāna traditions).<sup>553</sup>

This narrative is of paramount importance in the development of Indian Buddhist tantra. It is, to my knowledge, the first self-conscious announcement of tantra as a new and legitimate mode of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It represents tantra's coming out party, its "declaration of independence" as its own tradition, distinct from earlier Buddhist traditions..

*Tantric Violence: The Maheśvara Subjugation Myth, Murder, and Death-Related Practices*

In addition to the narrative of Śākyamuni's tantric enlightenment through the five manifest enlightenments, the *Compendium of Principles* is also the *locus classicus* of another seminal tantric narrative: Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara (aka Śiva). Just as Śākyamuni's enlightenment account in tantric terms as found at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles* is unprecedented in Buddhist tantric literature, the Maheśvara subjugation account represents the first mythological validation of violence and murder in Indian Buddhist tantric literature. Ronald M. Davidson, in two articles devoted to this topic and a recent monograph on the rise of Buddhist tantra in its medieval Indian cultural context entitled *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*, makes a compelling presentation of the social influences involved in the generation of the Maheśvara subjugation myth. While Davidson enumerates several factors involved in the development of institutional Buddhist tantra, I will limit my comments to those most germane to the discussion of violence.

---

<sup>553</sup> *bya ba'i rgyud kyi gsungs tshul la sogs pa ni phyi mtshan nyid dang mthun* (Butön, *Ship* 4a.4-4a.5).  
Butön presents this as Buddhaguhya's position.

In brief, the post-Gupta period in India saw the development of military adventurism by various local rulers who, in their quest for legitimacy, often turned to Śaiva traditions employing a rhetoric of violence such as the Lakuliśa Pāśupata for validation of their warring conduct. At the same time, as large urban centers lost population and smaller, regional centers became increasingly important in trade, one of Buddhism's chief sources of support—long-distance trade guilds—began to diminish. Thus, Davidson argues, Buddhist institutions, under the pressure of declining patronage, adopted various elements from medieval Indian society, many of which are reflected in the specific forms of tantric Buddhism that developed during this period.<sup>554</sup> The Buddhist appropriation of a discourse of legitimate violence can be understood against this cultural backdrop as an attempt to garner patronage from bellicose rulers by adopting a method through which Śaiva traditions were enjoying increasing success.

In the Maheśvara subjugation myth, which comes at the beginning of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, we find the earliest mythological expression of the tantric Buddhist appropriation of the discourse of violence. We also find a second layer in this movement toward deities in their wrathful reflexes and their characteristic fierce activities: while adopting the rhetoric of violence of Śaiva traditions, the Buddhists stake their claim to superiority over these same Śaiva traditions. Vajrapāṇi, under Vairocana's orders, employs violent methods to defeat Maheśvara (aka Śiva), forcing him to submit to the superiority of the Buddhadharma, renounce his criminal ways, and, in the end, enter the Buddhist fold. In this struggle, Vajrapāṇi must resort to the extreme measure of killing the recalcitrant and unrepentant Maheśvara, reviving him only at

---

<sup>554</sup> For instance, according to Davidson the consecration rituals (Tib: *dbang bskur ba* ; Skt: *abhiṣeka*) of Buddhist tantras derive from the royal coronation rites of the Purāṇas. Davidson goes further, arguing that royal coronation and the exercise of dominion is *the* dominant tantric metaphor, and that tantric Buddhism *is* politicized Buddhism (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 2).

Vairocana's behest. In this episode we see not only the Buddhist appropriation of Śaiva violence but also the tantric Buddhist claim to superiority over these very Śaiva traditions. In terms of power, Vajrapāṇi's magical prowess surpasses that of Maheśvara and the pantheon of worldly, Hindu deities. At the same time, in terms of soteriology, tantric Buddhism is capable of liberating even the most repulsive and pernicious of beings such as Maheśvara and his ilk—even if they would rather die first.<sup>555</sup>

While there are mentions of sanctioned violence in other early tantric materials, the *Compendium of Principles'* account of Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara represents the foundational myth for tantric Buddhist violence in India. This myth would appear, expanded, in later Indian tantric literature such as the *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Secret Nucleus* tantras, serving as a source of authenticity and authoritativeness.<sup>556</sup> It is interesting to note that, just as the narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment through the five manifest enlightenments found at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles* presents tantric techniques as the highest stratum of doctrine and practice *within Buddhism*, so too does the Maheśvara subjugation myth present tantric Buddhism as superior to other forms of religion *within India as a whole* (here represented by Maheśvara and his retinue of Hindu deities). Additionally, the enlightenment narrative represents a paradigm shift in terms of the liberative path from a solitary activity based on ethics, accomplishment in meditative concentration, and wisdom to the tantric project that requires a series of consecrations from others into a prescribed series of ritual practices. The narrative of Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara contributes an important element to this new paradigm.

---

<sup>555</sup> For a lengthier discussion of this aspect of the myth, see Ronald M. Davidson, "Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka," in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1991), pp. 215-217; and Ronald M. Davidson, "The Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's Subjugation of Śiva," in *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 549.

<sup>556</sup> Davidson, "Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth," p. 198.



Whereas the soteriological project of earlier Buddhist traditions was based on ethics, of which a keystone was the doctrine of non-violence, the new tantric paradigm includes justified violence (and presents rituals for that purpose) as a tool for dealing with one's enemies in an increasingly competitive and hostile world.

While Davidson argues convincingly that the violence central to this narrative represents a Buddhist assimilation of the violence that dominated the socio-political landscape of early medieval India, he does not take into account the possible influence of earlier presentations in Buddhist traditions of justified violence. One example of this is found in the *Skill in Means Sūtra*, an early Mahāyāna text that, according to Mark Tatz, might date to as early as the first century BCE.<sup>557</sup> This text includes a story of five hundred merchants engaged in a trading mission who are traveling by ship.<sup>558</sup> The captain of the ship has a dream in which he understands that one of the merchants plans to kill all the others and steal their wealth. He also understands that all the merchants are Bodhisattvas progressing towards enlightenment, and thus extremely heavy karmic non-virtue would accrue to the murderer and he would burn in hell for the cumulative length of time it took all the merchant-Bodhisattvas to achieve enlightenment. Seeing no other way to prevent such an unfortunate occurrence, the captain out of compassion kills the would-be murderer even while understanding that he will experience a long period in hell the result of his action. However, the account concludes by saying that this action, because it was performed out of a compassionate motivation, actually propelled the captain toward enlightenment rather than landing him in hell.

Thus, we see in this story a precedent in earlier Mahāyāna Buddhism for the tantric justification of violence found in the Maheśvara subjugation narrative in the

---

<sup>557</sup> Mark Tatz, *The Skill in Means (Upāyakauśalya) Sūtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>558</sup> This is drawn from Tatz, *Skill in Means*, pp. 73-74. I am grateful to Professor Karen Lang for identifying the source of this story.

*Compendium of Principles*. We also see another aspect of one of the central aspects of mature tantra, which Davidson identifies as the metaphor of coronation as a king and the exercise of this royal dominion. Additionally, we see another function of tantric narrative: rearticulating the place of Buddhism in a changed socio-political world.

***“Liberation through Slaying” Practices***

The Maheśvara subjugation account provides a mythological underpinning for practices involving violence, which would proliferate in subsequent tantric developments. In addition to this seminal tantric Buddhist myth, we find other instances of fierce activities in the *Compendium of Principles*. In the second section of the tantra, following the account of Maheśvara’s subjugation, we find a passage in which, at the direction of Vairocana, Vajrapāṇi (in the form of Vajrahūṃkara) draws up all beings in the three lower transmigrations (that is, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals) and summons them to the outside of the maṇḍala. He then instructs them to take refuge in the three jewels and to take the pledges and vows, which they do. Then Vajrapāṇi sets forth the mantra and mudrā of destroying misdeeds. Through merely seeing this mudrā, all beings in bad transmigrations (Tib: *ngan song*; Skt: *durgati*) die, are reborn at the feet of Vairocana, and their old bodies are cast into the great ocean.

At first glance this episode would seem to have little in common with Vajrapāṇi’s subjugation of Maheśvara. However, upon closer inspection, we find the element of murder in the liberation of beings in bad transmigrations: immediately upon seeing the mudrā of destroying misdeeds displayed by Vajrapāṇi (while he simultaneously intones the appropriate mantra), these beings die. That is, the mudrā kills them: it causes them to die when they see it. It also causes them to be reborn at the feet of Vairocana in what we can only assume is a Pure Land, whence they will speedily attain enlightenment. Thus, in this brief episode we find another example from the second section of the *Compendium of*

*Principles* of violence (and the extreme of murder) as a compassion-driven liberating activity.

This is significant in that it reinforces the validation of certain kinds of violence in certain contexts as expressed in Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara. The import of this brief passage goes beyond that, however, as violence proliferates in later Indian tantric literature such as the yoginī tantras. Additionally, in Tibet such "liberation through slaying" practices (Tib: *sgrol ba*) would come to be at the center of the controversy surrounding the interpretation and implementation of tantric practices during the ninth and tenth centuries (I will discuss this in chapter five; see pp. 309-312). To my knowledge, this passage in the *Compendium of Principles* represents the earliest articulation of such "liberation through slaying" practices in Indian tantric Buddhist literature. As such, we find here the germinal stage of "liberation through slaying" practices around which would later swirl one of the central controversies in the history of Tibetan Buddhism (and which we find mentions of in India in the context of the *siddha* figures).

### ***Death Practices***

The practice of drawing up beings in bad states, purifying their karmic misdeeds through a mantra and mudrā pair, and dispatching them to rebirth in a Pure Land at the feet of Vairocana—along with one element of Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara—represents the germinal stage of another important sphere of tantric Buddhist doctrinal and ritual life: practices concerned with the dead. In the passage dealing with beings in bad transmigrations, Vajrapāṇi guides the consciousnesses of these beings to Vairocana's Pure Land. We know that it is their consciousnesses that he guides: the text says their old bodies were discarded in the great ocean, and since it also says they were born at Vairocana's feet, this must refer to their consciousnesses passing to a new lifetime. This then is among the first instances in Indian tantric Buddhist

literature—if not *the* earliest instance—of the practice of the transference of consciousness<sup>559</sup> (Tib: *'pho ba*) associated with *siddha* traditions that would later figure so prominently in Tibet from the time of the translator Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros, 1002 or 1012-1097)<sup>560</sup> to the present.

In conjunction with this we must consider the final incident of the Maheśvara subjugation myth. After Maheśvara has finally submitted, he becomes a Tathāgata when initiation is conferred on him through the sole of Vajrapāṇi's foot (as he stands on Maheśvara). Maheśvara is then born as the Tathāgata Bhasmeśvara-nirghoṣa in Bhasmacchatrā (a world-system far, far away). The narrative then continues with the deities of Maheśvara's retinue (Nārāyaṇa and so forth) being admitted into and initiated in the Conquest over the Three Worlds (*Trilokavijaya*) Great Maṇḍala. Vajrapāṇi subsequently subdues various other pernicious beings (*grahas*, *dākiṇis*, and the like) who then are brought into the Buddhist fold and take their places in the maṇḍala. After the emanation of the three remaining Conquest over the Three Worlds maṇḍalas (the retention, doctrine, and action maṇḍalas) and the two abbreviated maṇḍalas (the four-mudrā and single-mudrā maṇḍalas), the Wheel of the Three Worlds (*Trilokacakra*) maṇḍalas—a second set of vajra-family maṇḍalas—are emanated.

The scene for the emanation of the cycle of the Wheel of the Three Worlds maṇḍalas finds Vajrapāṇi still standing on the subjugated Maheśvara's corpse (although Maheśvara's consciousness has already become buddhified and gone to the Bhasmacchatrā world-system). All the Tathāgatas gather and command Vajrapāṇi to

---

<sup>559</sup> In pre-tantric Pure Land Mahāyāna texts we find this theme of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas guiding devotees to the Pure Land when they die. However, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not *kill* the devotees first in order to liberate them; rather, they guide devotees to the Pure Lands only *after* they have died.

<sup>560</sup> Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), P2636.

release Maheśvara's body. Vajrapāṇi replies that he, having been consecrated the wrathful subduer of pernicious beings by the *bhagavatas* (blessed ones, viz., the assembled Tathāgatas), has slain Maheśvara, so how can he release the body? All the Tathāgatas then issue forth from their hearts the mantra for summoning the consciousness of the deceased in order to revivify Maheśvara's body, and they also set forth a corresponding mudrā. The consciousness of the Buddha Bhasmeśvara-nirghoṣa (Maheśvara in his post-enlightenment form) re-enters Maheśvara's body and asks why his dead body has been reanimated. Vajrapāṇi then frees Maheśvara's body from underfoot and the narrative continues, with the emanation of the Wheel of the Three Worlds maṇḍalas ensuing.

What is of interest here is the summoning of the consciousness of the deceased. This practice would come to have great importance in Tibet, particularly in the context of the indigenous "Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State" (*bar do thos grol*) genre of literature (the so-called "Tibetan Book of the Dead" literature) that would develop in Tibet from the fourteenth century onward. It may be that we find in the revivification of Maheśvara's corpse the earliest instance in Indian tantric Buddhist literature of the practice of summoning the consciousness of the deceased. This practice would seem to be a natural (and perhaps necessary) complement to the practice found in the *Compendium of Principles*, discussed above, of guiding the consciousnesses of beings to a Pure Land rebirth, since for this to take place the consciousness must first be summoned before it can be guided. These two practices from the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* quite possibly represent Indian sources of the Tibetan "Book of the Dead" system of doctrines and practices. Furthermore, they might well be the foundational practices for later mortuary developments in Indian Buddhist tantra (in conjunction with the various *homa* rites for the deceased).

***Sexual Yoga***

One final topic that must be mentioned in this discussion of the *Compendium of Principles*' innovative features is sexo-yogic practice. Tibetan traditions hold that only the highest stratum of tantra includes practices involving sexual intercourse and the subtle body.<sup>561</sup> While desire may be used in the path of the lower tantras, practices involving sexual union are said to be exclusive to Highest Yoga Tantra (in traditions employing the fourfold tantric doxography) or the vehicles of the three Inner Tantras of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga (in traditions employing a nine-vehicle doxography in which tantra is divided into the six upper vehicles). None of these traditions ascribe practices involving sexual union to the *Compendium of Principles* or texts they classify as Yoga Tantra.

However, I have found in the *Compendium of Principles* the kernel of such practices involving sexual intercourse. The specific phrase to which I refer here (Tib: *dbang po gnyis sbyor* and *dbang po gnyis sprad byed*; Skt: *dvayendriya-samāpattyā*) literally translates as “joining the two organs,” which can denote sexual intercourse.<sup>562</sup> This term occurs in all four sections of the *Compendium of Principles*, usually in the context of “secret” activities (Tib: *gsang ba'i phyag rgya*, *gsang ba'i dngos grub*, and so on; Skt: *guhya-* or *rahasya-mudrā*, *guhya-siddhi*, and so on) and often in the presentation of the single-mudrā maṇḍala.<sup>563</sup> The term sometimes occurs in conjunction with rites for

---

<sup>561</sup> Such practices generally include manipulation of the energies or winds (Skt: *prāṇa*; Tib: *rlung*), the channels (Skt: *nāḍī*; Tib: *rtsa*), and the drops (Skt: *bindu*; Tib: *thig le*).

<sup>562</sup> Also, in contemporary traditions of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism, this term— *dbang po gnyis sbyor*—is used specifically to refer to sexual intercourse in the context of tantra.

<sup>563</sup> Snellgrove briefly mentions the existence of sexual practices in the *Compendium of Principles* in his introduction to the tantra (Snellgrove, *Facsimile Reproduction*, pp. 37-38).

attracting females (that is, in the context of love spells and the like).<sup>564</sup> Dānapāla’s (Shih-hu) Chinese translation of the entire *Compendium of Principles*, which is a rather late work (1015 CE),<sup>565</sup> translates this term literally as “vajra and lotus, the two having been conjoined.”<sup>566</sup> What is interesting here is the usage of the term “vajra and lotus.” While this is not found in the *Compendium of Principles*, tantras which date to the latter part of the eighth century onward, such as the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, employ “vajra and lotus” for penis and vagina in the context of practices involving sexual intercourse. Dānapāla uses the term at the beginning of the eleventh century, by which time the sexual connotation (or even denotation) of “vajra and lotus” was firmly established in Indian tantra. In addition, he chose to use “joining vajra and lotus” rather than “joining the two organs” which, based on the Tibetan translation and extant Sanskrit manuscripts, is how the Sanskrit text read. Dānapāla appears to have selected a translation term with the most explicit sexual connotation. Therefore, it seems clear from the Sanskrit as well as the Tibetan and Chinese translations that this phrase in the *Compendium of Principles* refers to sexual intercourse.

The Indian tantric exegete Śākyamitra explains the term “joining the two organs” basically as the tantric practice of deity yoga. He identifies the two organs as the practitioner’s organ and the deity’s organ—“organ” is used here in the sense of “mind”—which are joined “as one taste.” That is, the practitioner mixes her or his mind

---

<sup>564</sup> Ronald Davidson has noted the existence of such rites for attracting females (albeit non-human ones) for sexual purposes as a means to attain feats (*siddhi*) already in the early *Questions of Subāhu Tantra* (Toh. 805, 138b.6-139a.4; cited in Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 198 & 385, n. 90).

<sup>565</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” n. 13, p. 127.

<sup>566</sup> *chin-kang lien-hua erh hsiang ko* (T. vol. 18, No. 882, 365c.16-23). I am grateful to Dominick Scarangelo of the University of Virginia for locating this term and supplying the reference.

with that of the deity so thoroughly that they become inseparable and undifferentiable.<sup>567</sup> On the basis of this, the practitioner then identifies herself with—and considers herself to be—the deity itself.

Śākyamitra's explanation of "joining the two organs" as deity yoga indicates either that this late eighth/ early ninth century monastic commentator was explaining away an uncomfortable term or that in his exegetical tradition the term "joining the two organs" carried no sexual valence in its several instances of use in the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>568</sup> The former explanation seems the more likely. Davidson cites tantric sexual rites in texts such as the *Secret Assembly* and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*.<sup>569</sup> I believe that the *Compendium of Principles* represents one of the earliest explicit descriptions of such rites involving sacramental sex.<sup>570</sup> We must not overlook the significance of these practices in the *Compendium of Principles*. Traditional delineations of the categories of Mahāyoga and Highest Yoga Tantra as involving sexo-yogic practices employing sexual intercourse while all lower classes of tantra do not must be reevaluated. Moreover, the sharp distinction between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga in particular must then be reassessed and their relationship examined anew. I will undertake such a reexamination and its implications for the historical development of tantra in India in chapter four.

---

<sup>567</sup> *dbang po gnyis ni sbyar bar byas bya ba la dbang po gnyis te/ /bdag gi dbang po dang/ lha'i dbang po gnyis ro gcig par sbyar la dkyil 'khor du/ spyen ras gzigs dbang phyug nyid ni bdag yin no/* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*).

<sup>568</sup> Butön's brief description of another text of the Yoga Tantra corpus, the *Array of the Secret Ornament of Exalted Body, Speech, and Mind of All Tathāgatas King of Tantra* (P122), suggests that this tantra might also include sexual practices. Research into the contents of the tantra itself is necessary.

<sup>569</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 198.

<sup>570</sup> Davidson cites as an early example of a sexual ritual a passage in the *Questions of Subāhu Tantra* that describes rites for attracting non-human females to a secluded place for the purpose of gaining magical feats through copulation (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 198).



It is not until later tantric developments, however, that sexual rites are combined with practices involving the yogic body, such as the manipulation of subtle energies through the channels in which they flow, psychophysical yogic centers (*cakras*) visualized in the body's interior, and so forth.<sup>571</sup> I have found no evidence of practices involve the subtle body in the *Compendium of Principles*. However, we do find practices involving visualization within the body. The five manifest enlightenments, for instance, begin with a moon disc visualized at the practitioner's heart, and continue with a series of internal visualizations. While similar visualization practices may occur in other early tantras such as the *Concentration Continuation Tantra*, I believe that the *Compendium of Principles* is the first text that contains both inner visualization and sexual rites. Although these will not be united into a single practice until later tantras, their occurrence in the *Compendium of Principles* suggests a possible source for such practices.

#### *The Compendium of Principles' Transitional Status*

As Stephen Hodge, David Snellgrove, and others have noted, the *Compendium of Principles* succeeds the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra* and precedes the *Secret Assembly Tantra*, *Hevajra Tantra*, and so forth in the development from three Buddha-family (Tib: *rigs*; Skt: *kula*) systems to five Buddha-family systems. While the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* present deities arranged in terms of five Buddha families, it is important to note that divisions in the *Compendium of Principles* primarily come in sets of four. As I discussed above in the section on the structure of the tantra, we find four types of maṇḍalas, four types of mudrās, four Buddha families associated with the four sections of the tantra, and so forth. Thus, in the fourfold system employed in the *Compendium of Principles* we see a development beyond the three-

---

<sup>571</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 197-199.

family scheme dominant in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* and other early tantric systems.

There are also structural elements of the *Compendium of Principles* that indicate its affinity with five Buddha-family systems found in later tantras. The narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment (discussed above), whence comes the basic practice of the *Compendium of Principles*, consists of five manifest enlightenments. This five-step procedure is the paradigmatic contemplative process by which Śākyamuni attained enlightenment, and it constitutes the fundamental practice of the *Compendium of Principles*. In the commentarial literature the five manifest enlightenments are also correlated with the five aspects of a Buddha's enlightened wisdom, namely, the mirror-like wisdom, wisdom of equality, wisdom of individual analysis, wisdom of achieving activities, and the wisdom of the element of qualities; each of these correspond to one of the five Buddha families.

Additionally, the various maṇḍalas of each of the four sections of the *Compendium of Principles* are structured around five Buddha figures—the central figure surrounded by Buddhas in each of the four cardinal directions—and around each of these Buddhas are arranged the deities of their respective Buddha family. Thus, in the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* we find a five Buddha family-system—the four Buddha families listed above joined by the action (*karma*) Buddha family. We also find a shift in the central figure of the maṇḍala. In earlier tantras Śākyamuni occupies the central position, but the pivot of the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* is Vairocana, completing the shift initiated in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*.<sup>572</sup>

---

<sup>572</sup> In later tantras such as the *Cakrasaṃvara*, deities of the wrathful vajra family, in union with their female consorts, assume the central position of the maṇḍala. This movement is perhaps prefigured in the five four-mudrā maṇḍalas of each section of the *Compendium of Principles*. The Buddha at the head of each of the five Buddha families has his own four-mudrā maṇḍala. One of these maṇḍalas features Akṣobhya

This transitional status of the *Compendium of Principles* creates an internal tension. The tantra is divided into four sections, and things come in sets of four (Buddha families, types of mudrās, mantras, maṇḍalas, and so forth). The individual maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles*, however, are structured around five Buddha families, at the head of each of which is a Buddha (Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava, and Amoghasiddhi). Indian commentarial traditions were aware of this tension between the pervasive fourfold structure of the tantra and the fivefold organization of the individual maṇḍalas. As Butön relates, they addressed this tension by interpreting the fourth section of the tantra in two ways: taken as enlightened action from the viewpoint of agent, it is the jewel Buddha family, at the head of which is the Buddha Ratnasambhava; taken as enlightened action from the viewpoint of activity, it is the action Buddha family, at the head of which is the Buddha Amoghasiddhi.<sup>573</sup> Thus, according to this exegetical tradition, all five Buddha families are present not only in each of the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* but also in the body of the tantra itself—the *four* sections of the tantra. Although one Buddha family predominates in each of the four sections, this allows the fifth family—the action family—to be present in the fourth section. In this interpretation, the five Buddha families are therefore present in the four sections that comprise the body of the *Compendium of Principles* even though the action family is not explicitly described or mentioned.

Butön does not state where this exegetical tradition originates; rather, he says this can be understood from another Yoga Tantra, the *Śrī Paramādyā*.<sup>574</sup> The Tibetan savant

---

of the vajra family at its center, and thus could have been a forerunner of the shift to maṇḍalas arrayed around a vajra-family deity. Another Yoga Tantra, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, also represents a possible step in the shift to the vajra family. Of the twelve maṇḍalas found in this tantra, seven have at their center Vajrapāṇi, the lead Bodhisattva of the vajra family.

<sup>573</sup> Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 43a.7 -43b.1.

<sup>574</sup> Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 43a.7 -43b.1.

Tsongkapa (1357-1419), a scholar of the generation succeeding Butön and founder of the Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, attributes this interpretation to Buddhaguhya.<sup>575</sup> Tsongkapa likely had in mind the following passage from this eighth-century Indian master's commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*:<sup>576</sup>

When condensed and taught they are taught as the four families. The action family is not differentiated separately in the *Compendium of Principles*; it is included within the [jewel] family. How? The character of the precious aggregation of unsurpassed marks and signs—the nature of the enlightened body of all conquerors—is Vajraratna. Therefore, by way of the reasoning that agent and action are non-different, the intention is that the character of the activities of all Sugatas and the variety of actions are non-different.

Although somewhat cryptic, this passage represents the earliest Indian commentary addressing the issue of the coexistence of fourfold and fivefold structures in the *Compendium of Principles*. It resolves this tension by explaining that the fifth Buddha family is implicitly found in the fourth section of the tantra.

---

<sup>575</sup> Tsongkhapa, *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra, Part IV: Yoga Tantra*, tr. and ed. by P. Jeffrey Hopkins (unpublished manuscript, 1988), p. 4..

<sup>576</sup> *bsdus te bshad na ni rigs bzhir bshad de las kyi rigs ni de nyid bsdus pa'i rgyud 'dir logs shig tu ma phye ste/ de ni rigs kyi nang du bsdus pa'i phyir ro/ ji ltar zhe na/ bla na med pa'i mtshan dang/ dpe byad rin po che'i tshogs pa'i mtshan nyid rgyal ba ma lus pa'i sku'i rang bzhin ni/ rdo rje rin chen zhes bya ste/ de bas na byed pa po dang las tha mi dad par rigs pas na bde bar gshegs pa thams cad kyi spyod pa'i mtshan nyid las sna tshogs dang/ tha mi dad par dgongs pa'i phyir ro/* (Buddhaguhya, *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*, P3324, vol. 70, 39.4.5-39.4.7).

## Innovations and Importance of Other Yoga Tantras

*Explanatory Tantras: The Vajraśekhara, Conquest over the Three Worlds, and the All Secret Tantra*

The *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* represents a major development in Indian tantric Buddhist literature. Together with the two independent texts described by Amoghavajra that correspond to the two parts of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, the *Conquest over the Three Worlds* is likely the earliest explanatory tantra. The production of explanatory tantras is a major development in Indian Buddhist tantra, as they create the earliest cycles of closely and explicitly related tantra texts. In terms of dating these explanatory tantras, the Indian tantric master and translator Amoghavajra, in his mid-eighth century Chinese text, discusses the *Conquest over the Three Worlds* and the two component parts of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* among the eighteen tantras of the Vajraśekhara cycle,<sup>577</sup> so we can conclude with some confidence that these explanatory tantras were in existence by this time at the latest (although perhaps not yet in their final form).

Furthermore, the eighth-century Tibetan text *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions*, attributed to the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava, quotes a four-line stanza from a text identified by the eleventh-century Tibetan scholar Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (*Rongzom Chos kyi bzang po*)<sup>578</sup> as the *Conquest over the Three Realms*. I did not find the stanza in the “Conquest over the Three Worlds” section of the *Compendium of Principles* of which the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* is an explanatory tantra. However, I did locate the stanza in the Tibetan translation of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures*, albeit in slightly expanded form. This

---

<sup>577</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 171.

<sup>578</sup> Gyurme Dorje, *The Guhyagarbhatantra and its XIVth Century Commentary*, phyogs bcu mun sel (Ph.D. dissertation: London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987), p. 9.

indicates that the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* was already in existence (at least in an early stage of development) during the mid to late eighth century when Padmasambhava composed his *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions* (in India or Tibet) and Amoghavajra composed his digest of the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara cycle in China.<sup>579</sup>

In addition to being an early explanatory tantra, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* represents a significant landmark in the development of Indian Buddhist tantra because it contains an extensive presentation of tantric vows and pledges. This lengthy exposition expands upon a brief description of the proper mode of conduct for tantric practitioners found in at least one place in the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>580</sup> The *Vajraśekhara Tantra*'s presentation is significant not only for its depth but also because its elucidation of the required and prohibited activities for each of the Buddha families individually is likely the first of its kind found in a Buddhist tantra itself.

A third explanatory tantra of the *Compendium of Principles*, the *All Secret Tantra*, is probably a somewhat later composition. The *All Secret Tantra* has a section on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, and thus is associated with the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*. However, one of the distinctive features of the *All Secret Tantra* is its employment of the Sanskrit terms *bhaga* and *liṅga*, which in the Tibetan translation are rendered as transliterations rather than as translations. In later tantras involving sexoyogic practices the terms *bhaga* and *liṅga* are used for vagina and penis, respectively, and

---

<sup>579</sup> The translation of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* in the various editions of the Tibetan canon unfortunately does not have a colophon. Thus, it does not identify the translators of the text, a key piece of evidence for establishing the date of a translation.

<sup>580</sup> Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1, pp. 175-176. In note 107 he identifies the passage in the *Compendium of Principles*: p. 311 ff in Yamada's edition of the Sanskrit text. Snellgrove also notes the existence of brief passages on tantric conduct in another Yoga Tantra, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.

indeed these denotations are found in Sanskrit lexicons. However, *bhaga* and *liṅga* likely were not employed with these meanings in Buddhist tantra until some time after the development of the doctrines and practices of the *Compendium of Principles*. Their usage in the *All Secret Tantra*—in the line “Having inserted the *liṅga* into the *bhaga*”—suggests that this text belongs to the later stratum of Buddhist tantra. This argument is supported by the fact that there is controversy within Buddhist traditions over whether the *All Secret Tantra* is a Yoga Tantra or a Highest Yoga Tantra.

The explanatory Yoga Tantras represent important developments in Indian Buddhist tantra. The *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* and the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* are likely the earliest explanatory tantras to develop in Indian Buddhism, and the latter is likely the earliest explanatory tantra commenting on an entire tantra. This is a significant development, as with it the sense of an interrelated corpus of tantras emerges. The *Vajraśekhara Tantra* explicitly and self-consciously comments on the *Compendium of Principles*. The tradition states that this is its very function: the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was taught subsequent to the *Compendium of Principles* for the purpose of explaining and clarifying it. This establishes Yoga Tantra as a *cycle* of related texts in constellation around the central Yoga Tantra the *Compendium of Principles*, rather than being merely a collection of individual tantras that might have some common elements but the inter-textual relationships of which are neither explicitly stated nor clearly discernible. Significantly, this establishes within the field of Indian Buddhist tantra a true *corpus* of tantras. The presence of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures*, a second explanatory tantra that clearly and self-consciously explicates the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* and probably predates the *Vajraśekhara*, and also the presence of the *All Secret Tantra* further solidify the sense of Yoga Tantra as an integrated cycle of related texts, doctrines, and practices.

The genre of explanatory tantras becomes a mainstay in Indian Buddhist tantra subsequent to its development in the Yoga Tantra corpus. We find the proliferation of explanatory tantras in the Māyājāla cycle of Mahāyoga Tantra, with the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* (*rGyud gsang ba'i snying po*, *Guhyagarbha Tantra*) serving as the central tantra around which are arrayed several explanatory tantras. This is also the case with the *Secret Assembly* (*Guhyagarbha*) *Tantra* and the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, and later with the *Kālacakra Tantra*.

### **Concordant Tantras**

#### ***The Śrī Paramādyā Tantra, Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas, and Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra***

Beyond their relationship with the *Compendium of Principles*, these three related texts are significant as they reflect an important stage in the development of Indian tantric Buddhism. It is likely that these texts represent a bridge between non-tantric Mahāyana systems (such as is found in Perfection of Wisdom literature) and Buddhist tantra. Identifying the specific influences, and tracing their development from Perfection of Wisdom doctrines and practices into tantric ones, requires further research.

#### ***The Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra***

Several aspects of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* have particular significance for the development of Indian Buddhist tantra, and most of these can be subsumed under the rubric of Buddhist tantric ritual technologies employed for *practical* purposes. In fact, the eighth-century Indian tantric exegete Buddhaguhya divides the body of the text thematically into maṇḍalas and homa rites (that is, rites involving fire offerings). He further divides the former into worldly maṇḍalas and supramundane



maṇḍalas,<sup>581</sup> with the majority of the maṇḍalas in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* deployed for various worldly purposes.

First and foremost among the practical techniques set forth in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* are the death rites that constitute the beginning of the tantra. The frame-story of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, which sets the tone and the context for the entire text, revolves around funerary rites. The god Vimalamañiprabha dies from the Heaven of the Thirty Three, and Śakra (aka Indra, the king of the gods) and his other heavenly compatriots, concerned about their friend's fate, ask the Buddha Vairocana where he has taken rebirth. Vairocana informs them that Vimalamañiprabha has been reborn in the Most Tortuous Hell (Tib: *mnar med*; Skt: *avīci*). Then, in response to Śakra's request for assistance, Vairocana emanates the Sarvavid Vairocana Maṇḍala<sup>582</sup> and teaches Śakra its rituals in order to aid Vimalamañiprabha. Śakra then performs these rites, through which Vimalamañiprabha is liberated from hell and is reborn in Tuṣita Heaven.

It is significant that the purpose of the first and central of the twelve maṇḍalas of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*<sup>583</sup> is the purification of sins and bad transmigrations specifically in the context of a funerary rite. Further importance is given to this maṇḍala as it is the only one of the twelve maṇḍalas in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* for which Vairocana himself serves as the creator of the maṇḍala and the teacher of its attendant rites (the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi emanates and teaches the other eleven maṇḍalas set forth in the tantra).

---

<sup>581</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxvii.

<sup>582</sup> In the later version of the tantra the maṇḍala is the Nine Crown Protuberances Maṇḍala, also known as the Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Maṇḍala.

<sup>583</sup> This refers to the earlier version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, P116. The later version of the tantra (P117) has eleven maṇḍalas.

While Buddhist funerary rites in India certainly predate the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, this tantra represents a major innovation because it contains death rites that employ cutting-edge tantric technologies. We find such rites for the deceased in inchoate form in the *Compendium of Principles*: in the second section there is a brief mention of a rite for summoning all beings in bad transmigrations, purifying their negative karma, and dispatching them to a rebirth in a Pure Land. These practices, however, come to full tantric flower in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, in which Śakra performs the practices of the Sarvavid Vairocana Maṇḍala expressly as a funerary rite to benefit the deceased god Vimalamaṇiprabha,<sup>584</sup> and the general purpose of the rite is explained as purifying past karma that will result in rebirth in one of the three bad transmigrations. Moreover, such death rites occur in the body of the tantra itself<sup>585</sup> and are not relegated to supplementary sections of the text (as we find with the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*) or to extra-textual liturgical literature (as we find with the *Compendium of Principles*). Hence, for what is likely the first time, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* presents rites for the deceased within the context of the latest in Buddhist tantric procedures—deity yoga and maṇḍala practice. Additionally, in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* funerary rites are emphasized further still. Not only do we find rites for the dead in the first chapter of the

---

<sup>584</sup> Butön further elaborates on these rites—stating that Vairocana teaches to Śakra the purification of sins and so forth—and describes them as “the methods—which are activities when there is a corpse and when there is not a corpse—for purifying bad transmigrations” (*de nas brgya byin gyis ngan song sbyong ba’i thabs zhus pa/ dbang bskur te sdig pa sbyong ba la sogs pa ro yod pa dang med pa la bya ba’i ngan song sbyong thabs rnams gsungs pa*, Butön, *Ship*, 39a.7-39b.1).

<sup>585</sup> We also find death rites, along with an explanation of the benefits that accrue to the deceased through performing various rites, in other parts of the tantra, such as the teaching of the Śākyamuni Maṇḍala and its attendant rites (Butön, *Ship*, 39b.4), the teaching of the Amitāyus Maṇḍala and its attendant rites (Butön, *Ship*, 40a.6), and so forth.

tantra; we find them also in the practices of the first maṇḍala—the central and most important maṇḍala of the entire tantra.

One way to interpret the inclusion of and emphasis on death rites in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is as an attempt to establish tantric Buddhism in the death-ritual space: funerary rites explicitly formulated and identified as such. The frame-story of the tantra, however, suggests that a greater claim is being made: the superiority of these new Buddhist tantric funerary technologies over the death rites of brahmanical traditions. In the narrative Indra, the king of the Vedic pantheon, and his fellow residents in the Heaven of the Thirty Three are powerless to help their deceased colleague Vimalamaṇiprabha (and in fact do not even know into which realm he has been reborn). They must seek the aid of the tantric Buddha Vairocana, who first locates their fallen friend in the Most Tortuous Hell and then sets forth a maṇḍala and prescribes rites to perform for his benefit. Indra performs these specifically Buddhist tantric rites, through which Vimalamaṇiprabha is liberated from hell and is reborn in a heaven.

We see in this frame-story an implicit claim to the superiority of Buddhist tantric techniques in the field of funeral rites. This claim parallels the claim to the superiority of Buddhist tantra in general over that of Hindu traditions, and particularly over Śaivite sects, made in the Maheśvara subjugation narrative found in the *Compendium of Principles*. When we consider this in light of the social context in which Buddhism developed in India, discussed above (declining patronage and so forth), the claim to superiority in the field of death rites takes on even more significance. There can be little doubt about the cultural cash value of such rites since the demand for death rites is one of the few societal constants, particularly in Indian civilization. A religion struggling economically that could increase its share of the lucrative funeral market stood to gain enormously. This is not to say that a conscious decision was made by Buddhist

monastics to increase their presence in the field of death rites, but we cannot ignore the possible economic ramifications of such rites for the viability of Buddhist institutions.

In addition to funerary rites, many practices taught in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* are for practical purposes. While we also find rites for worldly purposes scattered throughout the *Compendium of Principles*, the situation in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is rather different. Six of the nine maṇḍalas that comprise the second chapter (the Maṇḍala of the Four Great Kings, the Maṇḍala of the Guardians of the Ten Directions, the Maṇḍala of the Eight Planets together with the Constellations, the Maṇḍala of the Eight Great Nāgas, the Maṇḍala of the Eight Bhairavas, and the Maṇḍala of the Eight Great Gods) are considered to be worldly maṇḍalas, according to the fourteenth/fifteenth-century Tibetan scholar Tsongkapa.<sup>586</sup> Rites for worldly purposes, including the well-known tetrad of pacification of illness, increasing resources, controlling others, and violently subduing others, are also found in several maṇḍalas of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.

One interpretation of the preponderance of such rites is as a parallel to the importance death rites play in the tantra: a proliferation of rites for practical purposes desired by a lay public could boost the revenue-generating capacity of Buddhist institutions finding it increasingly difficult to replenish their contracting coffers. Again, I am not claiming that this was the intention behind the formulation of such rites and the production of texts such as the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, but we cannot ignore the potential economic impact of such rites on Buddhist monastic communities.

In this vein, there is another aspect of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* that is significant. In the six maṇḍalas of the tantra's second chapter enumerated above—from the Maṇḍala of the Four Great Kings through the Maṇḍala of the Eight

---

<sup>586</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. 49, n. 34.

Great Gods—the residents of the maṇḍala are not Buddhist deities. Rather, they are divine and semi-divine agents such as nāgas, the guardians of the ten directions, the planets and constellations, and so forth considered in Indian culture to be responsible for various maladies that afflict individuals. The manipulation of such forces dates to the Vedic period in India and so there was nothing novel about it in seventh- or eighth-century India. Additionally, Buddhist dhāraṇīs whose purpose was to counteract and control such forces had been around for centuries. However, what is innovative about practices found in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* and other texts is their employment of emerging Buddhist tantric technologies for such purposes.

Furthermore, the six maṇḍalas from the second chapter of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, mentioned above, are perhaps unique in another way. As the Tibetan scholiast Tsongkapa says, these six are mundane maṇḍalas,<sup>587</sup> which means they are employed for worldly ends rather than for soteriological ones. Whereas other maṇḍalas of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*—such as the maṇḍalas of Sarvavid Vairocana and Vajrapāṇi—demonstrate a five Buddha-family structure such as is found in the *Compendium of Principles*, the six maṇḍalas described above do not. Rather, the structure of each of these maṇḍalas is idiosyncratic (four great kings, eight planets, ten guardians of the directions, and so forth).

There is nothing in these six maṇḍalas that qualifies them as specifically Buddhist, save one important feature: Vajrapāṇi is at the center of each of the six maṇḍalas. Thus, it is possible that the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* represents an attempt to incorporate rites for controlling various forces believed in Indian culture to impinge on the everyday life of individuals into a Buddhist context by including them in a text under the auspices of the nascent Buddhist cult of Vairocana. This assimilation is further

---

<sup>587</sup> Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. 49, n. 34.

strengthened by inserting the important Buddhist tantric deity Vajrapāṇi into the center of each of these maṇḍalas of pan-Indian forces that affect/ afflict individuals. This not only puts a Buddhist stamp on practices related to otherwise pan-Indian (and not specifically Buddhist) divine and semi-divine figures, it also creates the semblance of a Buddhist world-order with the tantric figure Vajrapāṇi at the center of, and reigning over, these forces. The fact that these maṇḍalas are included in a text the frame-story of which presents the new tantric Buddhist death-rites as superior to those of the brahmanical traditions and deities such as Indra is a further claim to a re-ordered Indian ritual world dominated by tantric Buddhist procedures.

In addition to the above practices, we also find at points in the first and third chapters of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* the prescription of fire offering rites (*sbyin sreg, homa*). Buddhaguhya describes these rites, common also to Hindu Śākta and Tantra traditions, as being of two types: those for saving the deceased from rebirth in bad transmigrations and those associated with the four rites of pacification of illness and so forth (*zhi ba, śānti*), increase of resources (*rgyas pa, pauṣṭika*), control of others (*dbang, vaśīkaraṇa*), and violent subjugation (*drag po or mngon spyod, abhicāraka*),<sup>588</sup> which often means killing. These four rites are directed toward specific worldly aims and are part of the larger Indian ritual repertoire.

In the maṇḍalas and practices of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* we find the articulation of Buddhist tantric technologies in the field of funeral rites, and such practices occupy a prominent and privileged position in the tantra. We also find the deployment of maṇḍalas consisting of Vajrapāṇi surrounded by an assortment of divine and semi-divine figures believed to affect (and afflict) a variety of aspects of the daily life

---

<sup>588</sup> This discussion of Buddhaguhya's thematic exegesis is drawn from Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, p. xxvii.

of individuals. Additionally, we find the deployment of a set of four rites, also found in other Indian religious traditions, for the benefit of the deceased as well as for various worldly ends for the living.

While the factors influencing the development the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* are multifarious and complex, and while we must be careful not to drift into an overly (or exclusively) functionalist interpretation, the economic implications of such rituals cannot be ignored. If the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations'* employment of tantric practices in death rites increased the Buddhist presence in the lucrative funerary field, this certainly would have positively affected the monastic bottom line and the viability of Buddhist institutions suffering from a decline in patronage. Additionally, the maṇḍalas and related practices of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* cover a range of ritual needs beyond funerary rites; this too was a potential source of increased revenue, as the inclusion of such rituals thereby addressed more widely the ritual needs of a population whose patronage of Buddhism was declining.<sup>589</sup>

More generally, it is also possible that the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* represents a tantric Buddhist attempt (self-conscious or not) to become a player in the broader Indian ritual sphere. With the activities of Buddhist logicians such as Dignāga and especially Dharmakīrti (c. 650 CE), Buddhism engaged the pan-Indian epistemological discourse and employed its vocabulary and nomenclature.<sup>590</sup> This same period produced the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, with its adoption of pan-

---

<sup>589</sup> Elements of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* appear also in Indonesia (Max Nihom, *Studies in Indian and Indo-Indonesian Tantra: The Kuñjarakarmadharmakathana and the Yogatantra* [Vienna: Sammlung de Nobili Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1994], chapter 2), perhaps again due to their utility in death rites and other worldly rituals.

<sup>590</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 102-104.

Indian rituals including fire offerings, rites to supplicate forces such as nāgas, the eight planets, and so forth. This perhaps represents a parallel in the ritual sphere to the Buddhist entry into the broader Indian philosophical discourse, as many of the practices set forth in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* appear to employ pan-Indian “vocabulary and nomenclature” at the ritual level.

It is interesting to note here the existence of a commentarial tradition that treated the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* as a Performance Tantra. Leonard van der Kuijp points out that this stream of interpretation, recorded in the twelfth- or early thirteenth-century Tibetan commentary on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* by the Sakya hierarch Jetsün Drakpa Gyeltsen (*rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan*, 1147-1216), is not seen after Drakpa Gyeltsen’s time<sup>591</sup> (although Butön does refer to it).<sup>592</sup> Perhaps this tantra represents a transition between the earlier stratum of tantra concerned mainly with practical, worldly objectives and the *Compendium of Principles* and its shift to inner contemplation and soteriological goals.

In this context a view expressed in the *Ornament of Illumination* (*sNang ba’i rgyan*, *Ālokālamkāra*, P3454), an Indian commentary on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, is perhaps significant. The unidentified author of this exegesis expounds upon the tantra in terms of a threefold division, correlating the sections of the text with the three Buddha families, three mudrās, and the triad body-speech-mind (Skorupski, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, pp. xxvii-xxviii). This association of a Yoga Tantra with a three-family system, which predominates in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* and other early tantras later classified under the rubric of Performance Tantra, raises interesting questions. Perhaps it indicates not only the early date of the production

---

<sup>591</sup> van der Kuijp, “Sarvadurgatipariśodhana in Tibet,” pp. 117-118.

<sup>592</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 76b.7.



of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* but also its transitional status as a tantra that, while related to the *Compendium of Principles* in terms of its central maṇḍala (both are of the great maṇḍala type, and the central deity of both is a form of Vairocana) and its practices (it expands on the practice, found in inchoate form in the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, of purifying the negative karma of beings in bad transmigrations and liberating them from their suffering circumstances), still contains strands of earlier strata of tantra.

In this context we must also keep in mind a threefold structure found in the *Compendium of Principles* itself. One way of categorizing the practices presented in each of the four sections of the tantra is into three meditative stabilizations (Tib: *ting nge 'dzin*; Skt: *samādhi*), which perhaps is a vestige of earlier three Buddha-family systems. The rubric of three meditative stabilizations persisted in Buddhist tantric developments subsequent to the Yoga Tantras, as it is found in texts of the Highest Yoga Tantra class as well.

Before leaving this discussion of the innovations and importance of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, one final remark is in order. The number of commentaries and ritual texts related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* (as preserved in Tibetan translation) exceeds the number of exegetical works related to the *Compendium of Principles*, which is the root tantra of the Yoga Tantra class. While I do not want to attribute too much importance to a quantitative measure of the exegetical corpus of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, I do think it is significant in this regard: it appears that the text and its system of practices became quite popular in India, as evidenced by the large body of commentarial literature it engendered.<sup>593</sup> I conclude,

---

<sup>593</sup> The tantra appears to have achieved at least a degree of prominence relatively early, as the eighth-century Indian scholiast Buddhaguhya sent his commentary on the *Purification of All Bad*

although somewhat tentatively, that at least one factor in the popularity of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* was its utility in a wide range of rituals. The most important of these functions was likely as a death rite, but its ritual versatility was also significant, addressing a multiplicity of needs—from curing disease to securing resources to overcoming enemies to avoiding untimely death and extending the lifespan. This ability to address a broad spectrum of the lay population’s ritual needs likely contributed to the popularity of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, particularly since this extensive ritual repertoire carried with it the potential for increasing the income of Buddhist institutions facing economic difficulties due to a decline in patronage and other factors.

## Conclusion

The *Compendium of Principles* represents the announcement of the revolution that is Buddhist tantra. It combines a number of innovative practices and doctrines in a complex blend of narratives and rituals. While, as Davidson argues, several of these aspects reflect the fractious socio-political Indian landscape in which Buddhist tantra developed, the roots of some of these innovations can be traced to earlier Mahāyāna traditions. In addition, several of these innovations represent in embryonic form important aspects—such as practices involving violence and sexual intercourse—that would develop in later Buddhist tantras. Moreover, the body of texts that grew out of the *Compendium of Principles*—later designated as Yoga Tantra—represents the first true corpus in Indian Buddhist tantra. Among these tantras (and particularly in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*), we find the inclusion of a variety of practical rites, including those for the benefit of the deceased, to control various forces that affect

---

*Transmigrations* to the Tibetan court at the same time he sent his commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*.

human health and prosperity, and so forth. Demand for such rites undoubtedly had a positive effect on the coffers of large Buddhist institutions, whose patronage was, for a variety of reasons, on the wane.

# Chapter 4: Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga

## Introduction

In chapter two I discussed a body of tantras that grew out of and are closely associated with the *Compendium of Principles*. These texts were classified by later traditions in north India under the rubric of Yoga Tantra, and this categorization persists in Tibet. However, this is not the only Indian formulation of these traditions. The evidence we have from south Indian traditions, as preserved in Chinese materials of the eighth century, reflects another organizational logic: that of an eighteen-text corpus that partially overlaps with the texts identified as Yoga Tantra. We also find a partially overlapping eighteen-tantra corpus of texts later classified as Mahāyoga—the next major development in Indian tantric Buddhism after the *Compendium of Principles* and its associated texts.

In this chapter I will examine the relationships that obtain between the *Compendium of Principles* and texts classified as Yoga Tantra on the one hand and Mahāyoga texts on the other. In this discussion I will pay particular attention to the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*,<sup>594</sup> the root tantra of the Mahāyoga corpus according to Indian traditions as preserved in Tibetan translation and the Tibetan traditions that developed them further.

In Mahāyoga systems we see the further development of many aspects of the *Compendium of Principles* and its associated texts. Traditional doxographies delineate a sharp demarcation between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga. I will examine this

---

<sup>594</sup> gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa , in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 20 (w a), 152.6-218.7; online Tb.417, [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic\\_\\_BookTextView/213773;hf=0;pt=212055#X](http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic__BookTextView/213773;hf=0;pt=212055#X).

demarcation, focusing on both the continuities and discontinuities that exist between the *Compendium of Principles* (and the corpus of texts later classified as Yoga Tantra) and the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* (and the corpus of texts later classified as Mahāyoga). The context of this discussion will be the development of Indian tantric Buddhism during the eighth century and how the relationship between the Yoga Tantras and the Mahāyoga Tantras illuminates this.

In framing this discussion I will first examine the use of the term “mahāyoga” in early tantric literature and its employment as a doxographical category. Next, I will introduce the Mahāyoga corpus and its central text, the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*. I will then discuss the relationship between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga in terms of several topics, the first of which revolves around the structure of maṇḍalas and the deities that inhabit them, as well as the central Buddha figures in the tantras themselves.

I will then discuss two foundational narratives found in the traditions of Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga. The treatment of the first of these, the Maheśvara subjugation myth, will include an examination of practices involving violence and sex. The second narrative is a myth concerning the origin of a body of eighteen tantras, which I will discuss in terms of its instantiations in Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan tantric materials. This will lead into a study of the structure and composition of the Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga corpora. Following this I will discuss several individual tantras common to both Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga traditions as well as Indian tantric exegetes active in both systems. I will then conclude the chapter with a discussion of the history of Buddhist tantra in eighth-century India.

### **The Term “Mahāyoga”**

Before discussing the Mahāyoga tantric system, I will briefly review the use of the term “mahāyoga” (“great yoga”; Tib: *mal ’byor chen po*) in early tantric materials. The term occurs once in the Tibetan translation of the *Manifest Enlightenment of*

*Vairocana*,<sup>595</sup> which dates to the period 630-640 CE.<sup>596</sup> In chapter fifteen of this tantra, there is a section on eight secret mudrās and their corresponding mantras, and one of these mantras contains the term “mahāyoga.”<sup>597</sup> In this instance, it appears that “mahāyoga” is used as a superlative with the sense of “great yoga.”

The term “mahāyoga”, or a term closely related to it, is also found in the *Compendium of Principles*. In the introductory section of the tantra there is a litany of the attributes and epithets of Vairocana. Among these is the term “mahāyogīśvara” (“lord of great yogīs” or “great lord of yogīs”).<sup>598</sup> The Tibetan translation of the term is *rnal ’byor chen po’i dbang phyug*,<sup>599</sup> which should render the Sanskrit “mahāyogeśvara” (“lord of great yoga” or “great lord of yoga”) but could also translate “mahāyogīśvara” (“lord of great yogīs”/ “great lord of yogīs”). Since the meaning of “yogī” is “one who has yoga,” the meaning of “mahāyogīśvara” (“lord of those who have great yoga”) comes very close to the meaning of “mahāyogeśvara” (“lord of great yoga”), and the bivalent Tibetan translation bears this out.

Additional support for this interpretation is found in Śākyamitra’s *Kosala Ornament*, the word-by-word commentary on the *Compendium of Principles* preserved only in its Tibetan translation. Nowhere in his commentary on the passage does Śākyamitra mention “great yogī”; rather, he refers to “great yoga.”<sup>600</sup> He explains that the omniscient

---

<sup>595</sup> I am grateful to the Asian Classics Input Project for providing me with an electronic version of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, KL0494m, which made an exhaustive search for the term “mahāyoga” in this text possible.

<sup>596</sup> Stephen Hodge, personal communication, 13 March 2002.

<sup>597</sup> *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, P126, vol. 5, 265.4.8-265.5.1. The mantra reads: *namaḥ samantabuddhānān mahāyoga yogeni yogeśvari/ /khanadarike svāhā*.

<sup>598</sup> Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 3.

<sup>599</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 218.2.6-218.2.7. I am grateful to the Asian Classics Input Project for providing me with an electronic version of the *Compendium of Principles*, KD0479e, which made an exhaustive search for the term “mahāyoga” in this text possible.

<sup>600</sup> Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 191.5.2-192.1.2.

wisdom of all Tathāgatas itself is great yoga.<sup>601</sup> He then goes on to present a classic Buddhist explanation of yoga as the union of two types of meditation, calm abiding (*zhi gnas, śamatha*) and special insight (*lhag mthong, vipaśyanā*).<sup>602</sup> He concludes his gloss by stating that since Vairocana is the lord, he is the lord of great yoga.<sup>603</sup> Śākyamitra's exclusive use of “great yoga” rather than “great yogi” supports the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit term “mahāyogīśvara” in the *Compendium of Principles*.

There is one other occurrence of the term “mahāyoga” in the *Compendium of Principles*. At the beginning of the third section of the tantra, all the Tathāgatas assemble and supplicate Avalokiteśvara with a litany of 108 names. Among these appellations is “great yoga” (*rnal 'byor chen po*,<sup>604</sup> *mahāyoga*),<sup>605</sup> which Śākyamitra explains thus:<sup>606</sup>

Because that mind is focused on emptiness or is focused on all phenomena, it is thoroughly undistracted. This is “great yoga.”

This explanation refers to standard Buddhist presentations of yoga and as such is consistent with his earlier explanation of the term as found in the epithet “lord of great yoga.”

The two occurrences of the term “mahāyoga” in the *Compendium of Principles* and its single occurrence in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* are all used with the sense of the superlative qualifier “great yoga.” This appears to be the general meaning of the term in early Buddhist tantra. Moreover, the term “great yoga” is used with a similar

---

<sup>601</sup> *thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes de nyid ni rnal 'byor chen po'o/* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 191.5.3-191.5.4).

<sup>602</sup> Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 191.5.4-192.1.1.

<sup>603</sup> Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 70, 192.1.2-192.1.3.

<sup>604</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 254.4.6.

<sup>605</sup> Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 315.

<sup>606</sup> *sems de nyid stong pa nyid la dmigs pa'am/ chos thams cad la dmigs pas na rnam par mi g.yeng ba ni rnal 'byor chen po zhes bshad do/* (Śākyamitra, *Kosala Ornament*, P3326, vol. 71, 15.2.7-15.2.8).

meaning in contemporary Yoga Tantra systems, in which we find a pair of practices known as “single yoga” (*rnal ’byor gcig* or *rnal ’byor gcig ldan*, \**ekayoga*)—the practice of meditatively generating oneself as a single deity—and “great yoga” (*rnal ’byor chen po*, \**mahāyoga*)—the practice of generating oneself as all the deities of a maṇḍala.<sup>607</sup> I suspect that this usage of the term “mahāyoga” in the sense of a more complicated and advanced meditative technique is found in Indian Yoga Tantra commentaries such as Buddhaguhya’s *Entry into the Meaning of Tantra* and Śākyamitra’s *Kosala Ornament* in places other than that mentioned above, but an exhaustive search for the term is necessary to determine this. A search for “mahāyoga” in other early tantric literature such as the *Susiddhikara*, *Questions of Subāhu* (*Subāhu-paripṛcchā*), *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* and Jñānamitra’s commentary on it would likely yield results in further delimiting the semantic range of the term in early Indian tantra.

Another source that reflects the usage of the term “great yoga” (\**mahāyoga*) in early Indian tantric materials is the Chinese esoteric Buddhist corpus. The title of a text by the eighth-century Indian tantric master Amoghavajra, the *Instructions on the Gate to the Teaching of the Secret Heart of Great Yoga of the Vajraśekhara Sūtra* (*Chin kang ting ching ta yü ch’ieh pi mi hsia ti fa men i chüeh*), includes the term “great yoga” (Chi: *ta yü-ch’ieh*; Skt: \**mahāyoga*).<sup>608</sup> Amoghavajra’s teacher Vajrabodhi also uses the term in his introduction to the central practices of the *Compendium of Principles* (classified as a translation in the Taishō canon because it contains many passages that accord verbatim

---

<sup>607</sup> Dalai Lama, H.H. the, *The Greatness of Yoga Tantra*, tr. and ed. by P. Jeffrey Hopkins (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>608</sup> T. Vol. 39, No. 1798, pp. 808a19-b28, as cited in Charles Orzech, “The Legend of the Iron Stūpa,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. D.S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 314. Dale Todaro says that this text “is supposedly Vajrabodhi’s oral commentary...as recorded by Amoghavajra” (Todaro, “Annotated Translation,” p. 16).



with passages from the tantra itself),<sup>609</sup> referring to a text titled *Vajraśekhara-mahāyoga-kalpa-rāja*.<sup>610</sup>

As with its usage in the early Indian tantric materials discussed above, Amoghavajra appears to use the term “great yoga” as a superlative to describe the texts and practices of the tantric Vajraśekhara cycle. Vajrabodhi may also use the term in a similar way. Thus, early- to mid-eighth-century tantric traditions from south India, as preserved in Chinese texts, appear to employ the term “mahāyoga” with an adjectival meaning. A thorough search for the term in early Chinese tantric materials, which is beyond both my linguistic abilities and the scope of this work, remains a desideratum.

#### *The Term “Mahāyoga” in Dynastic Period Tibet*

Before we look at the more specific usage of the term “mahāyoga” I will briefly review the usage of “yoga.” It seems reasonable to think that, when the *Compendium of Principles* and other Yoga Tantras emerged on the cutting edge of tantric technologies in late seventh and early eighth-century India, the name “yoga” would have been used as a general term for tantra. Evidence from Chinese materials supports such a supposition. Of the eighteen texts that comprise the Vajraśekhara tantric cycle described by Amoghavajra, all but the first (the *Compendium of Principles*) are titled “yoga” (Chi: *yü-ch’ieh*), which is used in place of “sūtra/scripture” (Chi: *ching*) or, in later parlance, tantra. Rolf Giebel suggests that the texts to which Amoghavajra refers were Indian ritual manuals and therefore their titles end in “yoga.”<sup>611</sup> Be that as it may, it is not difficult to imagine extending “yoga” from a name for Yoga Tantra texts to a general term for tantra, since at that time Yoga Tantra represented the latest in tantric procedures.

---

<sup>609</sup> *Ching-kang-ting yü-ch’ieh chung lüeh-ch’u nien-sung ching* (T. Vol. 18, No. 866), 223c12; cited in Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 110.

<sup>610</sup> Eastman, “The Eighteen Tantras,” p. 2, n. 4.

<sup>611</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 113.

If this is the case—if “yoga” did indeed connote tantra in general—it also seems reasonable to suppose that, for the phase of tantric development that grew out of and immediately followed Yoga Tantra in India, the term “mahāyoga” (“great yoga”) would be employed in a similar way. When we examine the use of the term “mahāyoga” in Tibetan texts dating to the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet (roughly spanning the period from the beginning of the eighth century until the middle of the ninth century), we find a semantic range that, while including the meanings employed in early Indian tantric materials discussed above, also goes beyond them. Drawing mainly on Tun-huang manuscripts, Kenneth Eastman states that in imperial Tibet “mahāyoga” was sometimes used as a general term for tantric Buddhism—and indeed that in some contexts “yoga” was used in the same way.<sup>612</sup>

In addition, Eastman also discusses texts from Tun-huang in which “mahāyoga” appears as a category term. He notes that the *Questions and Answers of Vajrasattva*<sup>613</sup> in its first sentence refers to itself as “an exposition of Mahāyoga.”<sup>614</sup> The text then addresses fundamental aspects of Mahāyoga, and in the colophon again employs the term “mahāyoga” in the sense of a system (rather than just as a particular advanced meditative technique as we saw in earlier Indian materials), referring to itself as “a compendium of the extensive Mahāyoga.”<sup>615</sup> While the author of this text is the Tibetan Pelyang ( *dPal dbyangs*),<sup>616</sup> it is thought to represent Indian Mahāyoga traditions transmitted to Tibet during the imperial period of the eighth or early ninth centuries.

---

<sup>612</sup> Kenneth W. Eastman, “Mahāyoga Texts at Tun-huang,” in *Bulletin of Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies, Ryukoku University* no. 22 (Kyoto: Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies, Ryukoku University, 1983), p. 44.

<sup>613</sup> *rDo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*, S.tib.837 (Eastman, “Mahāyoga Texts,” p. 45).

<sup>614</sup> Eastman, “Mahāyoga Texts,” p. 45.

<sup>615</sup> Eastman, “Mahāyoga Texts,” p. 46.

<sup>616</sup> Eastman, “Mahāyoga Texts,” p. 45.

The term “mahāyoga” occurs in Tibetan texts that date to the eighth and ninth centuries and represent the next phase of tantric development after the *Compendium of Principles* and its corpus of Yoga Tantra texts. It seems likely that those responsible for the composition and promulgation of such texts employed the term “mahāyoga” in an attempt not only to differentiate them from previous texts and practices but also to claim superiority as the latest tantric modality, superseding Yoga Tantra systems. David Germano has suggested that the development of tantric doctrine and practice beyond that of the Yoga Tantras was termed “mahāyoga” (“great yoga”) in the sense of “super” or “super-charged Yoga [Tantra].”<sup>617</sup> Additionally, as was the case with the term “yoga” (or “Yoga Tantra”), “mahāyoga” was also used to refer to tantra in general.

#### *Mahāyoga as a Doxographical Category*

I have just discussed the use of the term “mahāyoga” as a system of Buddhist tantra in Tun-huang texts that date to the eighth or ninth century. I will now examine “mahāyoga” as a doxographical category. The earliest usage of the term in a tantra occurs in the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*. This important early tantra dates to the late seventh or early eighth century and is included in several different tantric categories, including Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga (where it is known as the *Mañjuśrī Magical Emanation Net*). The colophon to this text identifies it as part of a larger text, the *Superior Magical Emanation Net* in 16,000 stanzas, which it identifies as a *mahāyogatantra*.<sup>618</sup> It is not clear here whether this term has the sense of “super Yoga Tantra” or Mahāyoga as a category of tantra. However, its occurrence within a discussion of a *Magical Emanation Net* text—a

---

<sup>617</sup> David Germano, “The Seven Descents and the Early History of Rnying ma Transmissions,” in *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism: Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, eds. Helmut Eimer & David Germano (Leiden-Boston-Köln: EJ Brill, 2002), p. 231; and personal communication, 2 May 2002.

<sup>618</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 45.

Mahāyoga tantra—suggests that its meaning was tending toward Mahāyoga as a type of tantra.

As intriguing as the presence of the term “mahāyoga tantra” in the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* is, it does not occur within a doxographical discussion. The Indian tantric exegete Amoghavajra, whose eighteen-text Vajraśekhara Yoga cycle includes texts that would later be classified as Yoga Tantra as well as texts that would be classified as Mahāyoga, did not distinguish between types of tantras. Amoghavajra’s text does not discuss doxographical categories at all, and in fact he does not even use the term “Yoga Tantra.”<sup>619</sup> Similarly, Jñānamitra does not make category distinctions in his discussion of an eighteen-tantra cycle (which I will discuss later in this chapter). Thus, we can conclude that in India (or at least in certain regions) during the first half of the eighth century there was a body of tantras that was not divided into hierarchical categories.

The first record of such a structuring of Indian tantra dates to the middle of the eighth century, when Buddhaguhya employed a three-tiered tantric doxography with Yoga Tantra at its summit. In the latter half of the eighth century, in a text preserved in Tibetan attributed to the Indian tantric adept Padmasambhava (said to be a student of Buddhaguhya), we find a proto-nine vehicle doxographical presentation in which Yoga Tantra is expanded to incorporate new tantric developments. Scholars have raised questions concerning the Indian provenance of this important text, the *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions*, so the following discussion and conclusions should be taken with qualification.

In the *Garland of Views*, Yoga Tantra is considered the highest class (as is the case with Buddhaguhya’s threefold doxography), although it is subdivided into Outer Yoga

---

<sup>619</sup> None of the titles of the eighteen texts include the word “tantra”; all of them end in “-yoga” (with the exception of the first, which ends in “-kalpa”), and the entire cycle is called the “Vajraśekhara Yoga.”

and Inner Yoga.<sup>620</sup> The former, described as the vehicle of the tantra of asceticism,<sup>621</sup> bears a close resemblance to Yoga Tantra as understood in fourfold doxographical systems: an emphasis on inner meditation without external activities, employment of four mudrās, and so on.<sup>622</sup> Inner Yoga, described as the vehicle of the tantra of method,<sup>623</sup> is further subdivided into three types: the Mode of Generation (Tib: *bskyed pa'i tshul*), the Mode of Completion (*rdzogs pa'i tshul*), and the Mode of Great Completion (*rdzogs pa chen po'i tshul*). It is the first of these three—the mode of generation—that is identified in Tibetan traditions with Mahāyoga, while the second and third divisions represent Anuyoga and Atiyoga, respectively.

We find the term “Mahāyoga” used explicitly as a type of tantra in Sūryasimhaprabha’s (*Nyi ma'i seng ge 'od* or *Nyi ma'i 'od seng ge*) commentary on the *Secret Nucleus* in a discussion of the five excellences (*phun sum tshogs pa lnga*) that characterize a Buddha-voiced text as they apply to the various vehicles.<sup>624</sup> In this context he treats Kriyā, Yoga, and Mahāyoga Tantra individually after first discussing the Lesser Vehicle and the Perfection Vehicle.<sup>625</sup> He uses “Mahāyoga” as a category term again in a

---

<sup>620</sup> Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views*, P4726, vol. 83, 84.1.1.

<sup>621</sup> *rnal 'byor phyi pa thub pa rgyud kyi theg pa* (Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views*, P4726, vol. 83, 84.1.1).

<sup>622</sup> Butön characterizes Yoga Tantra thus: “Because the cultivation of internal yoga of wisdom and method is central, it is Yoga Tantra” (*nang thabs shes rab kyi rnal 'byor sgom pa gtso bor gyur pas rnal 'byor rgyud*; Butön, *Ship*, 3a.6).

<sup>623</sup> *rnal 'byor nang pa thabs kyi rgyud kyi theg pa* (Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views*, P4726, vol. 83, 84.1.1-84.1.2).

<sup>624</sup> Sūryasimhaprabha, *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa rgya cher bshad pa'i 'grel pa*, P4719, vol. 83, 2.1.8-2.2.1, as per Martin, “Illusion Web,” p. 196.

<sup>625</sup> Sūryasimhaprabha, *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa rgya cher bshad pa'i 'grel pa*, P4719, vol. 83, 2.1.6-2.2.1, as per Martin, “Illusion Web,” p. 196.

discussion of the meaning of “tathāgata” and “bhagavān” in the following doxographical classes: Mahāyāna, Dual Tantra (*gnyi ga rgyud*), and Mahāyoga.<sup>626</sup>

While Sūryasimhaprabha clearly employs “Mahāyoga” as a type of tantra, little is known about him. Tibetan traditions present him as an Indian tantric master of the late eighth or early ninth century, but modern scholarship has raised questions not only about his dates (perhaps late ninth or even early tenth century) but also his nationality (Tibetan? Indian? Chinese?).<sup>627</sup> Thus, his use of the term “mahāyoga” does not aid in establishing with any certainty a firm date for such usage in India.

While Sūryasimhaprabha employs “Mahāyoga” as a category of tantra, unlike the *Garland of Views* he does not enumerate it as a subdivision of Yoga Tantra. However, a Tun-huang text does reflect such a formulation. Likely dating to the late tenth century (according to Snellgrove ),<sup>628</sup> this text divides Yoga Tantra into four types: Yoga, Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga.<sup>629</sup>

The significance of the ninefold doxographical scheme presented in the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava’s *Garland of Views* is that, while Yoga Tantra is still the highest doxographical category, it has hierarchical subdivisions, with the three “Inner Yogas” (of which the first is identified by Tibetan traditions as Mahāyoga) placed in a position above Yoga Tantra. Thus, it appears that already during the late eighth century in India there was the conception of three higher classes of tantra that, while characterized by a continuity and connectedness with Yoga Tantra, were at the same time understood to represent a development beyond Yoga Tantra. Sūryasimhaprabha’s text, while of

---

<sup>626</sup> Sūryasimhaprabha, *dPal gsang ba’i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa rgya cher bshad pa’i ’grel pa* , P4719, vol. 83, 5.3.4-5.3.6, as per Martin, “Illusion Web,” p. 194.

<sup>627</sup> David Germano, personal communication, 23 February 2003.

<sup>628</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1355.

<sup>629</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1355.

uncertain provenance, explicitly employs the term “Mahāyoga” as a category of tantra. The tenth-century Tun-huang text demonstrates the solidification of both the further division of Yoga Tantra and the emergence of Mahāyoga as one of these subdivisions, but we must remember that Tun-huang was part of the sphere of influence of Buddhism streaming in from Tibet, and thus the waters concerning Mahāyoga in eighth-century India remain frustratingly clouded.

The situation is clearer later, as we find explicit mentions of Mahāyoga as a doxographical category in Indian materials, circa eleventh century, that serve as sources for later Tibetan traditions. The Bengali master Atiśa (982-1054 CE)<sup>630</sup> was one of the most influential Indian figures active in Tibet at the beginning of the second dissemination of Buddhism (he arrived in Tibet in 1042).<sup>631</sup> In his commentary on the difficult points of his own *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, he presents a sevenfold tantric doxography in which the penultimate category is Mahāyoga Tantra.<sup>632</sup> Additionally, the Kashmiri scholar Śraddhākaravarman, who was involved in translating numerous texts at the beginning of the second dissemination (including many he himself had written), presents a fourfold doxography of Action Tantra (*bya ba'i rgyud, kriyā-tantra*), Performance Tantra (*spyod pa'i rgyud, caryā-tantra*), Yoga Tantra (*rnal 'byor gyi rgyud, yoga-tantra*), and Great Yoga Tantra (*rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud, mahāyoga-tantra*).<sup>633</sup>

---

<sup>630</sup> Ronald M. Davidson, “Atiśa’s *A Lamp for the Path to Awakening*,” in *Buddhism in Practice* ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 292.

<sup>631</sup> Davidson, “Atiśa’s *A Lamp for the Path*,” p. 292.

<sup>632</sup> Atiśa, *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma'i dka' 'grel shes bya ba, Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikānāma*, P5344 (Toh. 3941), vol. 103, 43.4.4; I am indebted to Giacomella Orofino, whose unpublished article “Notes on the Early Phases of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism” brought this reference to my attention.

<sup>633</sup> *gsang sngags 'bras bu rdo rje theg pa la ni 'jug pa'i sgo rnam pa bzhi ste/ bya ba'i rgyud dang/ spyod pa'i rgyud dang/ rnal 'byor gyi rgyud dang/ rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud ces spyir grags pa yin no/ (Śraddhākaravarman, rNal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud kyi don la 'jug pa bsdus pa shes bya ba,*

Thus, the term “Mahāyoga” as a type of Indian Buddhist tantra—which, based on the *Garland of Views* and evidence from the Tun-huang materials, had its apparent genesis in the late eighth and ninth centuries—is firmly established by the eleventh century in India. In the presentations of both Atiśa and Śraddhākaravarman we find Mahāyoga as a distinct category of Buddhist tantra that is considered to be superior to Yoga Tantra. Moreover, in Śraddhākaravarman’s presentation we see the fourfold doxography that would come to dominate later Indian tantric systems and Tibetan traditions stemming from the second dissemination of Buddhism—although with Mahāyoga (“Great Yoga”) at the summit rather than the category Anuttarayoga (“Unsurpassed” or “Highest Yoga”), as is found in most fourfold systems.

### **The Mahāyoga Corpus and the *Secret Nucleus Tantra***

The following summary is drawn mainly from presentations in the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, the traditions of which largely trace their origins to the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet (c. eighth and ninth centuries). In some instances, I am extrapolating from Nyingma Mahāyoga back to Indian Mahāyoga. Such an approach has its obvious drawbacks. A systematic study of early Indian commentarial works on Mahāyoga (preserved in Tibetan translation) by such authors as Buddhaguhya, Vilāsavajra, Sūryasimhaprabha, Vimalamitra, and others would likely clarify many aspects of the state of affairs of Mahāyoga in India during the eighth and ninth centuries; this remains a desideratum.

Mahāyoga texts are divided into the tantra class (Tib: *rgyud sde*, \**tantra-varga*) and the sādhana class (*sgrub sde*, \**sādhana-varga*).<sup>634</sup> While the latter consists of texts

---

*Yogānuttaratāntrārthāvatārasaṅgrahanāma*, P4536, vol. 81, 155.1.6). I am indebted to Giacomella Orofino, whose unpublished article “Notes on the Early Phases of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism” brought this reference to my attention.

<sup>634</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 32.



concerning the practice of particular deities such as wrathful forms of Mañjuśrī, Vajrakīlaya, and Hayagrīva, the tantra class is comprised by the “Eighteen Great Tantras of Mahāyoga” (*ma hā yo ga sde chen bco brgyad*). This cycle of texts is said to have been subdivided from a larger work, the 100,000 stanza *Magical Emanation Net* (*sGyu 'phrul dra ba, Māyājāla*).<sup>635</sup>

Although there are several enumerations of the eighteen texts, standard Nyingma presentations employ a sixfold rubric under which the texts are classified: the well-known Buddhist quintet of enlightened body (Tib: *sku*; Skt: *kāya*), speech (*gsung*; *vāc*), mind (*thugs*; *citta*), qualities (*yon tan*; *guṇa*), and activity (*'phrin las*; *karma*), to which is added a sixth, general (*spyi*; *\*sāmānya*), category. The first five divisions are exemplified, respectively, by the following tantra-texts: the *Yoga of the Equality of the Buddhas* (*Buddhasamāyoga*), the *Secret Drop of the Moon* (*Candraguhyatilaka*), the *Secret Assembly* (*Guhyasamāja*), the *Śrī Paramādyā*, and the *Karmamāle Tantra*.<sup>636</sup>

The sixth division contains the *Secret Nucleus* (*Guhyagarbha*) *Tantra*—foremost of all the eighteen Mahāyoga texts—along with several other tantras. The *Secret Nucleus Tantra* is referred to as the general tantra or the tantra that summarizes all the others and, together with its *Magical Emanation Net* cycle of texts, comprises the general category of Mahāyoga.<sup>637</sup> It consists of twenty-two chapters divided into two sections: a peaceful section (chapters one through fourteen) that revolves around benign deities, and a wrathful section (chapters fifteen through twenty two) that revolves around deities in their wrathful reflexes. It is important to remember that the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* has

---

<sup>635</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 33. Both Chinese and Tibetan traditions also speak of a larger text of 100,000 stanzas from which the *Compendium of Principles* and associated tantric cycles were said to be drawn.

<sup>636</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, pp. 33-36.

<sup>637</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, pp. 34-36.

been one of the most controversial texts in Tibet, with disputes about its Indian provenance and authenticity punctuating its history.<sup>638</sup>

In terms of the content of the Mahāyoga tantras, generally speaking, they share many aspects with the Yoga Tantra texts, but also exhibit further developments beyond these tantras—particularly practices involving violence and sexual yoga, which I will discuss in more detail presently. Each of the six divisions of the tantra class of Mahāyoga includes other tantras in addition to the exemplars I have just identified. The sixth, general category is subdivided in various ways, with a division into eight component texts and four exegetical tantras coming to be standard in Nyingma presentations.<sup>639</sup> While most of the eight *Magical Emanation Net* tantras are closely related to the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, differing mainly in length,<sup>640</sup> the *Mañjuśrī Magical Emanation Net* is significant in its own right. I have discussed this text, also known as the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*, as a Yoga Tantra in chapter three (see p. 159 ff). I will return to this text below.

The importance of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* in Nyingma traditions cannot be overstated: it is the central text of the *Magical Emanation Net* cycle of texts (which together comprise the general category) and is the tantra that summarizes all the other Mahāyoga tantras. Moreover, in addition to being the primary Mahāyoga tantra-text, it is also one of the central Nyingma tantras. Indeed, the *Secret Nucleus* is the tantra that came to be understood in Nyingma traditions as the very embodiment of a tantra per se, of what a tantra is.<sup>641</sup>

---

<sup>638</sup> Butön himself is one of the central figures in this controversy as he excluded the *Secret Nucleus* from his influential redaction of the *Kangyur*.

<sup>639</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>640</sup> Dan Martin refers to them as “variations on a theme” (Martin, “Illusion Web,” p. 188).

<sup>641</sup> Gyurme Dorje states that the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* is the fundamental tantra of the Nyingma School (Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 58).

Moreover, the exegetical literature on the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* came to be seen as the defining hermeneutical exercise for talking about tantra, and in this regard the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* plays the central role in Nyingma in much the same way that the *Secret Assembly Tantra* does in the Geluk School of Tibetan Buddhism, the *Hevajra Tantra* does in the Sakya School, and the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* does in the Kagyu School (Geluk, Sakya, and Kagyu being schools that stem from the second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet). While we cannot simply read the situation of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* as it developed in Tibet back into India, it is informative, and together with other sources such as Amoghavajra's summary of the eighteen-text Vajraśekhara Yoga corpus, provides enough evidence to draw tentative conclusions.

Unlike the *Compendium of Principles*, there are no extant Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*. Moreover, whereas the *Compendium of Principles* was a central focus of the transmission of tantric Buddhism to China (and from there to Japan), the *Secret Nucleus* was never translated into Chinese. Consequently, while Amoghavajra's lengthy description of the *Compendium of Principles* and brief summaries of the other seventeen texts of the Vajraśekhara tantric cycle represent a treasure-trove of information about early Indian tantric Buddhism, there are no such Chinese sources concerning the *Secret Nucleus*.

While Amoghavajra mentions texts that are probably early versions of (or are at least closely related to) Mahāyoga tantras such as the *Secret Assembly Tantra*<sup>642</sup> and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*,<sup>643</sup> he does not refer to anything identifiable as the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* or any of the *Magical Emanation Net* texts related to it. In Tibet, the *Secret Nucleus* does not appear in the Denkar Palace Catalogue of translations made

---

<sup>642</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 193-194.

<sup>643</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 179-180.

during the eighth and ninth centuries, but we must remember that this mainly catalogues officially-sanctioned translations and other translation activity was undoubtedly taking place.

The body of evidence concerning the early history of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* is, thus, rather slim. We do know that many of the commentaries on the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* (preserved only in Tibetan translation) are attributed to Indian authors of the late eighth century, such as Vilāsavajra, Buddhaguhya, and Padmasambhava. Additionally, the characterization of the *Secret Nucleus* as the single text that summarizes all the other Mahāyoga texts, and its placement in the general category, likely indicates that it was produced after the seminal Mahāyoga tantras such as the *Secret Assembly* and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* (which makes it possible for the *Secret Nucleus* to summarize them). Setting aside the later Tibetan polemics refuting its Indian provenance, the *Secret Nucleus* was most likely composed/ compiled in India during the latter half of the eighth century (although it is possible that the first section, which concerns peaceful deities, existed during the middle decades of the eighth century).<sup>644</sup> Beyond this, however, there is little known about its provenance, and indeed the history of Mahāyoga before its arrival in Tibet during the latter part of the eighth century remains largely a mystery.

Throughout this discussion it is important to remember that there are historical stratifications within the Mahāyoga class of tantras. The earliest Mahāyoga texts are the *Secret Assembly Tantra* and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*; as I mentioned above, both are attested in Amoghavajra's presentation of the Vajraśekhara cycle, which places them (or early versions of them) in the first half of the eighth century. Moreover,

---

<sup>644</sup> I am grateful to Nathaniel Garson of the University of Virginia for sharing with me this theory, formulated from his own research on the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*.

Buddhaguhya refers to the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* in his *Summary of the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*,<sup>645</sup> and Jñānamitra identifies both texts by title in describing the mythological origin of an eighteen-text tantric corpus, which I will return to below.

Thus, the *Secret Assembly Tantra* and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* are the earliest Mahāyoga tantras. However, the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, likely a product of the latter half of the eighth century, represents the full development of the distinctive characteristics of Mahāyoga (in addition to being the central tantra in Nyingma Mahāyoga traditions), and it is for this reason that I will focus on it.

There is one other important point to make about tantric categories: the production of tantras related to earlier phases did not cease when new developments arose. Therefore, it is possible that influences from later stages affected texts associated with earlier developments. However, in the case of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, there is no evidence that the later stratum of tantras such as the *Hevajra* and the *Cakrasaṃvara*, which would come to be classified as Yoginī Tantras, existed at the end of the eighth century. Therefore, it is reasonably certain that the *Secret Nucleus* is not a hybridization of Mahāyoga and later tantric forms.

## **Maṇḍalas and Iconography**

As I discussed above, the *Compendium of Principles* represents a significant milestone in Buddhist tantra in many respects. Among these is maṇḍala structure, with the resident deities grouped into five Buddha families rather than the three-family arrangements found in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* and other earlier tantras. In Mahāyoga tantras, the influence of the five-family structure persists. The maṇḍala of peaceful deities (called simply the Peaceful Maṇḍala) described in the first chapter of the *Secret*

---

<sup>645</sup> Toh. 2662, 20b.7, as cited in Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 378, n. 137.

*Nucleus* presents five central Buddha figures,<sup>646</sup> which accords with the central structure of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala of the *Compendium of Principles*. The *Secret Assembly Tantra*, a Mahāyoga text predating the *Secret Nucleus*, also exhibits a five-family maṇḍala structure.<sup>647</sup>

When we look at the number and identities of the deities who constitute the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Secret Nucleus*, we find both similarities and differences. In the first, third, and fourth sections of the *Compendium of Principles* we find maṇḍalas populated by peaceful deities, while those of the second section consist of deities in their wrathful reflexes. The Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, which consists of thirty-seven deities, serves as the model for all the other maṇḍalas of the tantra (with the exception of the condensed four-mudrā and single mudrā maṇḍalas that appear at the end of each section of the tantra). In the *Secret Nucleus*, the Peaceful Maṇḍala consists of forty-two deities, and the Wrathful Maṇḍala consists of fifty-eight deities. Thus, compared to the maṇḍalas of the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Secret Nucleus* exhibits a slight expansion in the deity population of the Peaceful Maṇḍala and a significant expansion of the Wrathful Maṇḍala.

There are, however, indications of a more direct relationship between the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala of the *Compendium of Principles* and the Peaceful Maṇḍala of the *Secret Nucleus*. Nyingma traditions frequently refer to the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala as the *Peaceful Vajradhātu Maṇḍala*.<sup>648</sup> For example, the important fourteenth-century Nyingma figure Longchenpa's *Religious History* includes an account of Buddhaghya manifesting the

---

<sup>646</sup> Martin, "Illusion Web," p. 189. The text refers to this as the "natural maṇḍala." In the emanation of the maṇḍala in chapter six, a sixth figure, Samantabhadra, is added; I will discuss Samantabhadra below.

<sup>647</sup> de Jong, "A New History of Tantric Literature in India," p. 105.

<sup>648</sup> The influence of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala persists in Mahāyoga, as several tantras of this class contain chapters on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. We also find in texts of the Mahāyoga corpus other maṇḍalas related to the *Compendium of Principles* and other Yoga Tantras.

Peaceful Vajradhātu Maṇḍala over Lake Manosarovar in order to initiate the Tibetan emissaries sent by King Trisong Detsen.<sup>649</sup> This account alters many of the details found in Butön's slightly earlier version of Buddhaguhya's biography, so its reliability as a reflection of Indian views is somewhat suspect.

However, the central temple of Samye (*bSam yas*, consecrated c. 779), the first Tibetan monastery, offers intriguing architectural evidence concerning the relationship between Yoga Tantra maṇḍalas and the Peaceful Maṇḍala of the *Secret Nucleus*. Although the temple has been rebuilt, Matthew Kapstein relates that the earliest historical account of the period identifies the shrine in the third storey of the central temple as a Sarvavid Vairocana maṇḍala consisting of *forty-two* deities, with the eight great Bodhisattvas in the circle immediately surrounding the central figure.<sup>650</sup> There are also forty-two deities in the Peaceful Maṇḍala of the *Secret Nucleus*, which has a ring of eight great Bodhisattva male-female pairs encircling the central assembly of the five Buddhas. This raises the intriguing possibility that the Sarvavid Vairocana Maṇḍala from the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, later classified as a Yoga Tantra, influenced the development of the Peaceful Maṇḍala of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* of the Mahāyoga class. Further research on these maṇḍalas is necessary.

In terms of the individual inhabitants of the maṇḍalas, the *Compendium of Principles* identifies the five central Buddha figures by name as Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Lokeśvararāja (aka Amitāyus), and Amoghasiddhi. The *Secret Nucleus* identifies the figures at the center of the Peaceful Maṇḍala as the Tathāgatas who are the kings of the five aggregates: King of Consciousness (*rnam par shes pa'i rgyal po*), King of Form (*gzugs kyi rgyal po*), King of Feelings (*tshor ba'i rgyal po*), King of

---

<sup>649</sup> Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 157.

<sup>650</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. 61.

Discriminations (*'du shes kyi rgyal po*), and King of Compositional Factors (*'du byed kyi rgyal po*).<sup>651</sup> In the *Compendium of Principles*, Vairocana is the axial figure. However, although the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* does not use the standard nomenclature for the five central Buddha figures, most commentarial traditions identify Akṣobhya as the Buddha occupying the central position.<sup>652</sup>

Akṣobhya is the Buddha at the head of the vajra family, home of deities in their wrathful reflexes. Here, in the shift from Vairocana to Akṣobhya, we see a Mahāyoga continuation of the movement toward wrathful deities (and the practices involving violence associated with them) begun in texts of the Yoga Tantra class. This trend is most prominent in the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, which opens with Vajrapāṇi's violent slaying of Maheśvara and continues with the emanation and teaching of maṇḍalas populated by wrathful deities. The *Secret Assembly Tantra* provides an even earlier Mahāyoga example of this development, as Akṣobhya occupies the central position in its main maṇḍala.<sup>653</sup>

In terms of the speaker of the tantra, we also find differences between the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Secret Nucleus*. In the former, as with most of the Yoga Tantras, Vairocana is the speaker (although portions are taught by other figures, it is always under the direction of Vairocana) as well as the center of the maṇḍala. In the *Secret Nucleus*, however, Samantabhadra is the speaker and the driving force of the tantra. Although he is not identified when the five central figures of the natural maṇḍala are presented in the first chapter of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, he and his female partner

---

<sup>651</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 183.

<sup>652</sup> With the exception of Longchen Rabjam ( *kLong chen rab 'byams pa* , 1308-1363), almost all Tibetan exegetes place Akṣobhya in the center of the maṇḍala; Longchenpa places Vairocana there.

<sup>653</sup> de Jong, "A New History of Tantric Literature in India," p. 106.



Samantabhadri<sup>654</sup> are introduced in the second chapter. In the sixth chapter, when the emanation of the maṇḍala is presented, they are depicted at the front and back of the central assembly of the five Buddhas and their partners.<sup>655</sup> Here, they are referred to not by name but by “agent and object” (*byed pa dang bya ba*).<sup>656</sup> However, at the beginning of the second chapter Samantabhadra is described as the “male agent” or “producer” (*byed pa po*) who engages or penetrates his partner Samantabhadri—the “female object” or “products” (*bya ba mo*)—with his vajra,<sup>657</sup> and thus the referent of “agent and object” in chapter six is clear.

The reference in the layout of the maṇḍala to the pair Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri introduces a characteristic of later Indian Buddhist tantra: a six Buddha-family structure. Indeed, Tibetan traditions present a six-family Peaceful Maṇḍala, with the pair Samantabhadra-Samantabhadri *above* the central figure (in plastic representations they are usually placed in front of the five pairs of Buddha figures at the center of the maṇḍala). The six Buddha family configuration is a characteristic of later tantric texts classified first under the rubric of Yogini Tantra and later as Highest Yoga Tantra, in which the sixth Buddha is identical with the central Buddha<sup>658</sup> but also a

---

<sup>654</sup> Samantabhadra’s female partner appears in the *Compendium of Principles* once, under the variant name Samantabhadrā (the Tibetan is the same for both: *kun tu bzang mo*), at the beginning of chapter two, as one of the thirty-seven goddesses involved in the process of emanating the retention maṇḍala of the first section of the tantra (*Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 233.5.7; Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 102). The full title of this maṇḍala is the Vajra Great Maṇḍala Called “Secret Vajra” (*rdo rje gsang ba zhes bya ba rdo rje’i dkyil ’khor chen po*, vol. 4, 234.1.8; *vajraguhyan nāma mahāvajramaṇḍalam*, Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 105).

<sup>655</sup> *gSang ba’i snying po*, mTshams brag edition, vol. 20 ( ), 169.6; online Tb.417, <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.417.b6>.

<sup>656</sup> *gSang ba’i snying po*, mTshams brag edition, vol. 20 ( ), 169.6; online Tb.417, <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.417.b6>.

<sup>657</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, text, p. 185; translation, p. 437.

<sup>658</sup> Snellgrove, “Categories of Buddhist Tantras,” p. 1366.

transcendent Buddha in whom the five Buddhas coalesce. The *Secret Nucleus Tantra* appears to represent a transition from five- to six-family systems, as the natural maṇḍala presented in chapter one has only a five family structure while chapter six presents an emanated maṇḍala arranged around six families.

The ascendancy of Samantabhadra as the central figure in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*—replacing Vairocana in that role in the *Compendium of Principles* and other Yoga Tantras—is prefigured in the *Compendium of Principles*. The term “samantabhadra” (“all-good”; Tib: *kun tu bzang po, kun bzang*) occurs for the first of many times in the *Compendium of Principles* in the introductory litany of Vairocana’s attributes.<sup>659</sup> At the end of this versified litany—and just before the beginning of the narrative of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment through the five manifest enlightenments—the Bodhisattva<sup>660</sup> Samantabhadra makes his debut in the tantra.<sup>661</sup>

The qualities that Samantabhadra embodies at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles* presage his status and function in the *Secret Nucleus* and other tantras of the Mahāyoga class. Samantabhadra is introduced in the *Compendium of Principles* thus:<sup>662</sup>

The Supramundane Victor great mind of enlightenment great Bodhisattva  
Samantabhadra abides at the hearts of all Tathāgatas.

---

<sup>659</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.3.3; Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 5.

<sup>660</sup> At other points in the tantra he is referred to as the Supramundane Victor ( *bcom ldan ’das, bhagavān* ) Samantabhadra.

<sup>661</sup> *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.4; Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7.

<sup>662</sup> *bcom ldan byang chub chen po’i thugs/ byang chub sems dpa’ chen po kun tu bzang po ni de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs la gnas so/ (Compendium of Principles, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.2-219.4.3); bhagavān mahābodhicittaḥ samantabhadro mahābodhisatvaḥ sarvatathāgahṛdayeṣu vijahāra (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7.1-7.2). In the Tibetan translation “the Supramundane Victor great mind of enlightenment” is taken as the last half-stanza of the lengthy verse section that precedes it, whereas in the Sanskrit text it is the beginning of the prose section.*

The characterization of Samantabhadra as “the great mind of enlightenment” is further developed slightly later in the text, in the second of the five manifest enlightenments. All the Tathāgatas gather and instruct the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi to penetrate and realize the luminous nature of his mind, which then appears to him as a moon-disc at his heart. They then direct him to expand this realization by generating the mind of enlightenment. He follows their instructions and experiences the appearance of a second moon-disc at his heart (or, in some interpretations, the previously partial moon-disc now appears as a full moon). The Tathāgatas then tell him:<sup>663</sup>

Actualize and accomplish well the essence (or nucleus) of all Tathāgatas, the all-good (*samantabhadra*) generation of the mind [of enlightenment]. In order to stabilize this all-good (*samantabhadra*) generation of the mind [of enlightenment] of all Tathāgatas...

In the third manifest enlightenment the Tathāgatas instruct Sarvārthasiddhi to generate a vajra on the moon-disc at his heart, which they refer to as “this vajra, the all-good (*samantabhadra*) mind of all Tathāgatas.”<sup>664</sup>

In these instances we find a range in the semantic field of “samantabhadra” from the name of a Bodhisattva to the quality “all-good” used to describe the mind of enlightenment of all Tathāgatas (or the mind of all Tathāgatas). It is difficult to tell whether “samantabhadra” refers to a quality, a Bodhisattva figure, or both. This usage as

---

<sup>663</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi snying po sems bskyed pa kun tu bzang po khyod kyis mngon sum du gyur gyis/ de legs par bsgrubs shig/ de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sems bskyed pa kun tu bzang po de brtan par bya ba'i phyir (Compendium of Principles, P112, vol. 4, 219.5.6-219.5.8); sarvatathāgatahṛdayan te samantabhadraś cittotpādaḥ sāmīcibhūtaḥ tat sādhu pratipadyatām sarvatathāgatasamantabhadracittotpādasya dṛḍhikaraṇahetoḥ (Yamada, Sarva-tathāgata, p. 8.12-8.15).*

<sup>664</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi kun tu bzang po'i sems rdo rje 'di (Compendium of Principles, P112, vol. 4, 220.1.1); idaṃ sarvatathāgatasamantabhadracittavajram (Yamada, Sarva-tathāgata, p. 9.2-9.3).*

the mind of enlightenment or the mind of all Buddhas is developed further in Mahāyoga (and even Atiyoga) systems, in which Samantabhadra is the central figure and represents the mind of enlightenment. In these systems a sixth Buddha family is added with Samantabhadra at its head, and he becomes a transcendent figure in whom the Buddhas at the heads of the other five families coalesce. While dating the development of Samantabhadra is difficult, we know that by the middle of the eighth century he had emerged as a deity in Indian tantric Buddhism, as Amoghavajra's seventh text, the *Yoga of Samantabhadra*, attests.<sup>665</sup>

We find the roots of the doctrine of Samantabhadra as the supreme Buddha figure who leads the sixth family in the passages from the *Compendium of Principles* I have just discussed. Additionally, the *Compendium of Principles* on one occasion refers to “Mahāvairocana” (“Great Vairocana”; Tib: *rNam par snang mdzad chen po*).<sup>666</sup> This occurs in the introductory section of the tantra and is followed by a long prose description of Mahāvairocana's qualities. This passage appears to be inserted into the text rather haphazardly. There is no transition from the section on Vairocana that precedes it, and it is followed by the lengthy verse description of attributes that starts with “samantabhadra” and then the prose section that begins, “The Supramundane Victor great mind of enlightenment great Bodhisattva Samantabhadra abides at the hearts of all Tathāgatas.”<sup>667</sup> Following this is the enlightenment narrative of the five manifest enlightenments.

---

<sup>665</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” pp. 176-178.

<sup>666</sup> *de nas bcom ldan 'das rnam par snang mdzad chen po* ( *Compendium of Principles* , P112, vol. 4, 219.1.7); *atha bhagavān mahāvairocanaḥ* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 4.7).

<sup>667</sup> *bcom ldan byang chub chen po'i thugs/ byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu bzang po ni de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs la gnas so/* ( *Compendium of Principles*, P112, vol. 4, 219.4.2-219.4.3); *bhagavān mahābodhicittaḥ samantabhadro mahābodhisatvaḥ sarvatathāgahṛdayeṣu vijahāra* (Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata*, p. 7.1-7.2). In the Tibetan translation “the Supramundane Victor great mind of enlightenment” is taken as the last half-stanza of the lengthy verse section that precedes it, whereas in the Sanskrit text it is the beginning of the prose section.

While nothing in the tantra links the section on Mahāvairocana to the text that comes before or after it, its proximity to the section on Samantabhadra would seem to suggest a relationship, as do the similarities between the attributes of Mahāvairocana and Samantabhadra. The Indian tantric exegete Śākyamitra, in his *Kosala Ornament* commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*, characterizes Mahāvairocana in this way:<sup>668</sup>

Mahāvairocana is the nature of enlightened wisdom—liberation from the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience—that which causes the thorough display of the individually appearing natures of all things.

In contrast, he states, “Vairocana is a Form Body.” Thus, Mahāvairocana is enlightened wisdom itself, while Vairocana is one particular Buddha-form in which such wisdom manifests.<sup>669</sup> In the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* and other Mahāyoga texts, Samantabhadra is described in terms similar to Mahāvairocana. For instance, chapter two of the *Secret Nucleus* begins thus:<sup>670</sup>

Then the Supramundane Victor Samantabhadra—male agent, vajra mind—penetrated [his] queen Samantabhadri, the female object, phenomena, with his vajra, which is the mode of the nature of everything without exception.

---

<sup>668</sup> *rnam par snang mdzad chen po ni/ ye shes kyi rang bzhin te/ nyon mongs pa dang/ shes bya'i sgrib pa las rnam par grol ba/ dngos po thams cad kyi rang bzhin so sor snang ba yang dag par ston par spyod pa'o/* (Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 10b.6-10b.7).

<sup>669</sup> There is a similar conception of Mahāvairocana in the writings of Kūkai and the Shingon School of Japanese Buddhism he founded, in which the *Compendium of Principles* plays a central role.

<sup>670</sup> *de nas bcom ldan 'das byed pa po rdo rje yid kun tu bzang po thams cad ma lus pa'i rang bzhin gyi tshul rdo rjes btsun mo bya ba mo chos kun tu bzang mo la 'jug par gyur to/* (gSang ba'i snying po, mTshams brag edition, vol. 20 (wa), 156.4-156.5). For another translation of this passage, cf. Dorje, *Guhya garbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 437.

Here we find a further development of Mahāvairocana as explained by Śākyamitra near the end of the eighth century. Mahāvairocana represents enlightened wisdom, from which the appearances of all things emerge. Samantabhadra also represents vajra mind and, together with Samantabhadri, is the ground from which things emerge.<sup>671</sup> We see in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* the added factor of the couple in union, and a bifurcation into the paired aspects of agent and object, male and female, and mind and phenomena. Thus, this extends the notion of Mahāvairocana as the mind of enlightenment from which appearances arise, adding the objective sphere to the subjective aspect. The ground from which all things emerge now consists of enlightened mind penetrating phenomena.

It is interesting to note in this context the presence of Mahāvairocana also in the *Secret Assembly Tantra*, which predates the *Secret Nucleus*. In the *Secret Assembly* the sixth Buddha is identified as Mahāvairocana.<sup>672</sup> Early versions of this tantra date to the first half of the eighth century, and the presence of Mahāvairocana as the sixth Buddha therefore appears to be a transitional stage in the development from Mahāvairocana as an abstract entity (the enlightened mind of all Buddhas) found in the *Compendium of Principles* to Samantabhadra as the sixth Buddha who, with Samantabhadri, embodies both the subjective and objective aspects of enlightened wisdom penetrating phenomena.<sup>673</sup>

---

<sup>671</sup> The first homage Śākyamitra makes at the beginning of the *Kosala Ornament* is to Samantabhadra (*byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po dpal kun tu bzang po la phyag 'tshal lo!*, P3326, vol. 70, 190.2.2-190.2.3).

<sup>672</sup> Snellgrove, "Categories of Buddhist Tantras," p. 1366.

<sup>673</sup> The figure of Vairocana continues to appear in several tantras included in the Mahāyoga section of the tantric collection of the Nyingmas (*rnying ma rgyud 'bum*). Homage is made to him at the beginning of several Mahāyoga tantras including a tantra from the *Magical Emanation Net* cycle, the *Vajrasattva Magical Emanation Net, Mirror of All Secrets Tantra* (*rDo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba gsang ba thams cad kyi me long zhes bya ba'i rgyud*, in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum* [Thimpu, Bhutan: National Library of Bhutan, 1982], vol. 22 [za], 480.7-481.1; for online scans of this text, see the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library, Tibetan and Himalayan Literature

Although such a view is not found in Śākyamitra's late eighth-century explanation, something similar appears in Ānandagarbha's exegesis dating to the late ninth or tenth century. He explains the distinction between Vairocana and Mahāvairocana this way:<sup>674</sup>

The one who became manifested and completely buddhified in Akaniṣṭha—the essence of the bodies of the five Tathāgatas—is Vairocana. Mahāvairocana is Vairocana's non-dualistic mind and the sphere of reality having the character of beginninglessness and endlessness which serves as the cause of generation in the mode of Vairocana and Vajrasattva and so forth who are arisen from [that non-dual] mind.

We therefore see a development in the concept of Mahāvairocana from Śākyamitra's late eighth-century explanation of enlightened mind (from which appearances emerge) to Ānandagarbha's ninth or tenth-century explanation of Mahāvairocana as the non-dual

---

Collections, Collected Tantras of the Ancients, mTshams brag Edition, Tb.441  
<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed;hf=0>).

We also find the Buddha Sarvavid Vairocana, who is the central figure in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* of the Yoga Tantra class, as the object of homage of several Mahāyoga tantras. In fact, he is the speaker of at least two Mahāyoga tantras: the *System of Accomplishment of the Vajra Family: Wrathful White Lotus Tantra* (*rDo rje rigs kyi bsgrub lugs/ khro bo pun da ri ka'i tantra*, in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 23 [*'a*], 197.6; online: Tb.446, [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic\\_\\_BookTextView/229558;hf=0;nh=1;pt=228248/\\*?DwebQuery=thabs+kyi+zhags+pa#X](http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic__BookTextView/229558;hf=0;nh=1;pt=228248/*?DwebQuery=thabs+kyi+zhags+pa#X)); and the *Lasso of Means* (*'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa padmo 'phreng gi don bsdus pa*, in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 20 [*wa*], 123.6-152.6; [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic\\_\\_BookTextView/212724;nh=1;hf=0;pt=212055?DwebQuery=thabs+kyi+zhags+pa#X](http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic__BookTextView/212724;nh=1;hf=0;pt=212055?DwebQuery=thabs+kyi+zhags+pa#X)) [Eastman, "Mahāyoga Texts," p. 51].

<sup>674</sup> *'og min gyi gnas su mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa de/ de bzhin gshegs pa lnga'i sku'i ngo bo nyid ni/ rnam par snang mdzad yin la/ de nyid kyi gnyis su med pa'i sems dang sems las byung ba'i rnam par snang mdzad dang/ rdo rje sems dpa' la sogs pa'i tshul du bskyed pa'i rgyur gyur pa chos kyi dbyings/ thog ma dang tha ma med pa'i mtshan nyid can ni/ rnam par snang mdzad chen po yin no/. I have not yet located this passage in Ānandagarbha's work; Butön quotes it in his *Extensive Explanation*, 10b.4-10b.6).*

enlightened wisdom and sphere of reality, from which the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who appear in form arise. The *Secret Nucleus* represents the next stage in this development, with the bifurcation of the subjective and objective aspects into the male-female pair Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri (who are in sexual union, representing their indivisible nature; I will return below to the topic of sexual yoga in Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga) and an emphasis on Samantabhadra-Samantabhadri as the ground from which everything arises. Additionally, the embryonic conception of Mahāvairocana in Indian exegetical traditions of the *Compendium of Principles* as enlightened wisdom itself and the essence of all Buddhas becomes embodied in the *Secret Nucleus* not only in the pair Samantabhadra-Samantabhadri but also in the creation of a sixth Buddha family, which they lead.

## Mythological Narratives

Another sphere in which Mahāyoga adopts certain aspects of Yoga Tantra and alters other aspects is the realm of mythological narratives. In chapters one and three I discussed two important Indian Buddhist tantric myths whose *locus classicus* is the *Compendium of Principles*: the tantric narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment and the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara. These, along with an origin narrative in which a collection of eighteen tantric texts descends onto King Indrabhūti's roof, are the three most important and enduring myths in Buddhist tantra.

In general, in Mahāyoga traditions Śākyamuni's enlightenment, which includes the process of the five manifest enlightenments, is much the same as the narrative from the *Compendium of Principles* I discussed in chapter three (see p. 174 ff). I will discuss the other two foundational and defining Buddhist tantric narratives in terms of how they illuminate the relationship between the Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga corpora.



*The Maheśvara Subjugation Narrative, Violence, and Sex*

The Maheśvara subjugation myth undergoes important changes in its Mahāyoga incarnations. This narrative appears in chapter fifteen of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, the first chapter of the wrathful section of the tantra. While the basic plotline is the same as that in the *Compendium of Principles* (a Buddhist deity subdues Maheśvara and his malicious minions), the narrative is expanded in the *Secret Nucleus*, and several key elements are added and/ or transformed.<sup>675</sup>

The first difference is the frame-story with which the episode opens. In the *Compendium of Principles* the standard procedure for emanating maṇḍalas is interrupted when the Buddhas request Vajrapāṇi to generate the deities of his Buddha family but he refuses on the grounds that there are pernicious beings like Maheśvara who are not trained by peaceful methods, and the subjugation of Maheśvara ensues. In the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, however, it simply says that the central figure of the tantra (here identified not by name but rather as the lord of all Tathāgatas and the essence of all Buddhas) manifests as the maṇḍala of wrathful deities, and then the text asks, “Why?” It is in this context—the rationale for the Wrathful Maṇḍala, and by extension for wrathful deities in general—that the Maheśvara subjugation myth unfolds.

This begins with a lengthy section in which the various types of suffering that arise from ignorance, such as the hot and cold hells and so forth, are detailed. The text then discusses various monstrous beings who have taken such forms due to their past actions. The narrative then states that the omniscient one—the protagonist Buddha of the

---

<sup>675</sup> This summary is drawn from the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, chapter fifteen ( *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud ’bum*, vol. 20 [wa], 195.6-206.2; <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.417.b15> ff), with reference to Gyurme Dorje’s English translation (Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, pp. 1064-1074). Davidson also summarizes the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*’s version of the myth (Davidson, “Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth,” p. 203).

story—subdues these beings out of compassion. In order to do this, however, he must emanate in wrathful forms; this then is presented as the rationale for the emanation of the maṇḍala of wrathful deities.

After this lengthy prologue to the action, which we do not find in the *Compendium of Principles*, the central Buddha figure enters into meditative stabilization and emanates a wrathful form. He then rounds up Maheśvara and all the other poisonous beings. The central figure now transforms into Heruka (Tib: *khrag 'thung*: “blood-drinker”).<sup>676</sup>

It is at this point that the trajectory of the narrative diverges sharply from that of the *Compendium of Principles*. While the basic story is the same—the evil Maheśvara and his retinue are subjugated and brought into the Buddhist fold—the emphasis shifts. In the *Compendium of Principles*, there is much verbal jousting between Vajrapāṇi and Maheśvara as a war of words is waged along with the physical (and supernatural) battle for supremacy. To be sure, there is violence: Vajrapāṇi eventually slays Maheśvara, brings him back to life, and, as he is standing on Maheśvara’s supine body, uses his miraculous powers to make Maheśvara beat all his heads with all his arms (and for Indian gods there are a lot of heads and arms) until finally Vairocana utters a mantra of love, through which the soles of Vajrapāṇi’s feet bestow initiation on Maheśvara and he becomes enlightened.

In the *Secret Nucleus*, the narrative takes a decided turn to the visceral. Heruka subjugates Maheśvara and his cohorts by first ripping out their hearts and vital organs. He then disembowels and dismembers them, and proceeds to eat their flesh, drink their

---

<sup>676</sup> Adelheid Hermann-Pfandt suggests that the deity Heruka first appears in the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, one of the earliest Mahāyoga tantras (“The *Lhan kar ma* as a Source for the History of Tantric Buddhism,” p. 146). Ronald Davidson identifies an earlier reference in the 726 CE translation of the *Questions of Subāhu* to Heruka as a local, ghost-like demon (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 213).

blood, and wear their bones as ornaments. Heruka now manifests as wrathful deities of the five Buddha families and has his way with the wives of the ferocious beings he has just eviscerated and consumed (having apparently spared the females this fate). After multiple wrathful deities have emanated from all these copulating deity couples, the male deities—the many wrathful forms of the five families in which Heruka has manifested—expel as excrement from their bowels Maheśvara and his male minions into an ocean of filth. One of Heruka’s henchmen then drinks up the muck and revivifies Maheśvara and his retinue. Thoroughly defeated (no doubt through the sheer horror of the experience), they beg to be Heruka’s subjects, imploring him to take their wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters. The Supramundane Victor then bestows initiation on them and they take their places in the maṇḍala.

The difference between the narratives is striking. In the *Secret Nucleus* version, the violence is more pronounced and more graphic—and the details more visceral and gory—than they are in the *Compendium of Principles*. Evisceration, cannibalism, digestion, and excretion take center stage. There is almost no dialogue between the Buddhist subduers and their Hindu foes. While in the *Compendium of Principles* the verbal fight about who will submit to whose command is a central part of the encounter, this is completely absent from the narrative in the *Secret Nucleus*, in which the disemboweling begins without a request to Maheśvara and his cohorts to submit to Buddhist doctrine ever being made.

This reflects the increasing importance given to violent rites in Mahāyoga tantras. Additionally, the violence is of a different type. In the *Compendium of Principles* the violence Vajrapāṇi visits on Maheśvara and his retinue is in the service of Buddhist institutions. The episode is precipitated by the existence of Maheśvara and other malignant beings who must be defeated to make the world safe for Buddhism (and even to make it a Buddhist-dominated world). The Indian world at that time was fraught with

violence and aggression, and this narrative represents a Buddhist tantric attempt to counter violence with violence and thereby secure Buddhism's place in that world. The struggle in the narrative is over who will accede to whose will, who will obey whose command—in short, whose world order it is. Thus, it represents the deployment of violence by Buddhist institutions (the foremost of which were large monastery complexes) to establish Buddhist doctrine, authority, and—perhaps most importantly for large bodies of monastics—Buddhist rules.

In the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* these aspects of the narrative are lost. In their place we find an emphasis on violence itself, and this violence has a decidedly transgressive cast. The dialogue between the Buddhist protagonist and Maheśvara has vanished; gone too is the focus on establishing and maintaining Buddhist law. In their place springs the subversion of societal mores: cannibalism and a nauseating tale of digestion, excretion, and reconsumption of the excreted filth. Finally, this leads to the revivification of Maheśvara et al and, in what seems almost an afterthought, their conversion to Buddhism through tantric initiation. This reflects not only the increased importance of violence in Mahāyoga but also a trend toward violence of an antinomian nature, no longer directed toward serving the interests of Buddhist institutions.

The other significant addition to the episode in the *Secret Nucleus* is the presence and importance of sexual union between male and female deities. The first instance of this occurs toward the beginning of the narrative, when the central Buddha figure enters a meditative state and emanates a wrathful female deity, Wrathful Lordess (*khro mo dbang phyug mo*, \**Krodheśvari*). The jewel (penis) and lotus (vagina) then become engorged and these two engage in a non-dual embrace (coitus).<sup>677</sup> Out of this divine intercourse

---

<sup>677</sup> *khro mo dbang phyug chen mo mngon du phyung ste/ /hi hi zhes dgyes pa'i gzi mdangs kyis/ rin chen padma rgyas par mdzad nas/ gnyis su med par 'khril ba'i dgyes pas thim* (*Secret Nucleus Tantra*, in *The*

comes a host of wrathful deities who are then involved in the subjugation of Maheśvara and his entourage.

Here we see the importance of sexual yoga in performing the rites set forth in the tantra: deities are emanated out of the bliss that results from copulation. While sexual union is mentioned in several places in the *Compendium of Principles*, it is not clear how it relates to the rituals in which it occurs. What is clear, however, is that it is never presented as part of the process of emanating deities from within a meditative state, which we find in the *Secret Nucleus*.

Sexual congress is an integral part of another section of the Maheśvara subjugation narrative as it occurs in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*. After Heruka has dismembered and consumed Maheśvara and the fierce male deities of his retinue, he engages in sex with all of these deities' wives (after first manifesting as five Herukas). Again, these Herukas enter a meditative state before embracing the female deities, and from these unions emerge various wrathful deities who then take their places in the maṇḍala. We also find explicit presentations of sexual yoga as an essential part of the meditative practice presented in chapter eleven of the *Secret Nucleus*. Thus, compared to its occurrences in the *Compendium of Principles*, sexual union plays a much more central and important role in the *Secret Nucleus*, in which it is integral to the meditative process of the tantra.

While we see the roots of the practices involving violence and sex in the *Compendium of Principles*, the Maheśvara subjugation myth as it appears in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* reflects several trends characteristic of Mahāyoga. There is a greater emphasis on violence, which now tends toward the antinomian and is no longer in the service of Buddhist institutions. Moreover, sexual practices have become a vital part of the

---

mTshams brag *Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 20 [wa], 198.1-198.2). For an English translation of this section see Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 1066.

meditation and ritual system being presented. These trends prefigure the later stratum of tantric development categorized under the rubric “Yoginī Tantra.” Here, in tantras such as the *Hevajra* and *Cakrasaṃvara*, blood-drinking deities who haunt cremation grounds and other locales beyond the pale of civilization are the central figures, and sexual yoga has been integrated into the very core of the practices. In the Yoginī Tantras the emphasis on violence and sex seen in the *Secret Nucleus* and other Mahāyoga tantras comes to full flower while continuities with Yoga Tantras (such as the five Buddha-family configuration) are lost. Finally, the erotic comes to equal, or even surpass, the violent. This is reflected in the central structure of the maṇḍala: where in the *Compendium of Principles* there were five Buddhas and in the *Secret Nucleus* six families, the center now consists of a single deity pair in sexual union, representing the sixth family which itself symbolizes the essence of the five families.

*The Origin Myth: Eighteen Tantras, King Indrabhūti, and the Dog King*

The myth explaining how the tantras arose in the human realm is, along with the narratives of Śākyamuni’s tantric enlightenment and Maheśvara’s subjugation (both of which appear for the first time in the *Compendium of Principles*), one of the central and enduring mythological narratives of Buddhist tantric literature. Its earliest known occurrence is in Jñānamitra’s *Commentary on the Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*. As I discussed in chapter two (see p. 85, note 222), Jñānamitra’s exegesis of this tantric Perfection of Wisdom text (categorized as a tantra and, more specifically, as a Yoga Tantra) likely dates to the middle of the eighth century, but certainly existed in India by the end of that century. Jñānamitra’s text opens with an account of how this text and other tantras arose in the human realm; I will now summarize this narrative.<sup>678</sup>

---

<sup>678</sup> This is drawn from Jñānamitra, *Commentary on the Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, P3471, vol. 77, 44.2.2-44.4.3.

At the time the Buddha lived, there were no humans who were trainees and suitable vessels of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* (*Sarvabuddhasamāyoga*), the *Secret Assembly* (*Guhyasamāja*, here transliterated into Tibetan as *Guhyasamañca*), and so forth. Therefore, these texts were kept in other realms such as the Heaven of the Four Great Kings and the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. Later, after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa, the King of Zahor and his retinue developed great faith in the dharma and became suitable vessels of the vehicles of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, the *Secret Assembly*, and so forth—of which there had previously been no suitable human trainees. These eighteen great texts descended to the land of Zahor through the blessings of Vajrapāṇi.

Indrabhūti, the king of Zahor, looked at the texts but could not understand them. Through clairvoyance resulting from previous karma, he saw that in the Malava region of the land of Magadha there was a Master (*ācārya*) Kukkuru (“Dog Master”; in other contexts called Kukkurāja, a contraction of Kukkurarāja, “Dog King”). Indrabhūti understands that this Master of Dogs, who explained doctrine to one thousand dogs by day and enjoyed the pledges with them by night, was a suitable vessel and fortunate trainee of those vehicles. Indrabhūti dispatches a messenger to invite Kukkurāja to Zahor.

Kukkurāja, through his own clairvoyance resulting from previous karma, understood that both he and the king were suitable trainees for these texts and that he could dispel the king’s doubts. However, he has not seen the texts before, and, realizing that it would be very bad if he fails in clearing up the king’s doubts, asks the messenger to bring the texts.

The texts arrive and Kukkurāja cannot understand them. He falls on the ground, wailing, “I have no protector! I have no refuge!” Vajrasattva then

appears and asks Kukkurāja what he wants. Kukkurāja replies that he wants to understand the texts by merely looking at them, and Vajrasattva grants such.

Then, without opening the volumes of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* and so forth, Kukkurāja realizes their meaning. Equipped with such knowledge, he travels to Zahor and teaches the king and his retinue. In accordance with Vajrasattva's instructions, he bids the king and his retinue to meditate as the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, with the king in the center, his four ministers as the four surrounding Buddhas, his four queens as their partners, and so on. They achieve the station of *vidyādhara*. Then the king has Kukkurāja instruct Prince Śakrapuṭi,<sup>679</sup> who takes his turn at the center of the maṇḍala and achieves *vidyādhara*-hood along with his retinue. Because Śakrapuṭi's son is young, he sets out and arranges the *Mode [of the Perfection of Wisdom] in 150 Stanzas* from within the *Śrī Paramādyā Garland* (Tib: *dPal dam pa 'phreng ba*) for Princess Govadevī, who along with her retinue also achieves the status of *vidyādhara*. Later, she transmits the instructions to the prince who was previously too young to receive them, and the lineage comes down to Jñānamitra's time.

After relating this account, Jñānamitra then comments that the mother which is the source of all Tathāgatas is the Perfection of Wisdom *Śrī Paramādyā Garland*,<sup>680</sup> and the

---

<sup>679</sup> As Stephen Hodge suggests, this name is probably Śakrabhūti, since he is Indrabhūti's son and Indra and Śakra are both names for the same deity (Stephen Hodge, personal communication, April, 2002).

<sup>680</sup> The Tibetan translation of the title in Jñānamitra's text ( *dPal dam pa 'phreng ba* ) differs from that in the title of the *Śrī Paramādyā* itself ( *dPal mchog dang po* ) and all other references I have seen to it. It is likely that this is simply a variant translation. It is also possible that the title in Jñānamitra's text represents an early version of the *Śrī Paramādyā* and thus has a slightly different title.



father of the Tathāgatas is the tantra the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>681</sup> This, along with the fact that the meditation and instruction centers on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, clearly links the narrative and the eighteen text-cycle with Yoga Tantra, and with the *Compendium of Principles* in particular.

Sūryasimhaprabha's commentary on the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* contains a version of this narrative that differs in several details. One significant difference is that the texts he identifies by name are the *Śrī Paramādyā*, the *Secret Assembly*, and the *Secret Nucleus*.<sup>682</sup> Thus, he has eliminated the reference to the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, the first of the two tantras that Jñānamitra enumerates when he refers to the corpus of eighteen texts, and he has replaced it with the *Śrī Paramādyā*, which Jñānamitra mentions (although not as one of the eighteen texts). The second text Sūryasimhaprabha identifies—the *Secret Assembly*—accords with Jñānamitra's account. Sūryasimhaprabha also adds a third text: the *Secret Nucleus*. This is not surprising: Sūryasimhaprabha is, after all, writing a commentary on this tantra. However, given the uncertainty over Sūryasimhaprabha's dates, it is possible that this indicates a later stratum of Mahāyoga development that arose after the production of the *Secret Nucleus*.

The fact that the same narrative, with some variant details, serves as the origin myth for both Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga traditions is significant. Like the shared narratives of the Buddha's tantric enlightenment and the subjugation of Maheśvara, the origin myth indicates the continuity between texts classified as Yoga Tantra and those classified as

---

<sup>681</sup> *de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad 'byung ba'i yum shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa dpal dam pa phreng ba zhes bya ba 'di yin no/ ... yab ni tan tra tat twa sang gra ha zhes sngags kyi mdo sde zab mo yin par bstan to/* (Jñānamitra, *Commentary on the Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom*, P3471, vol. 77, 44.4.4-44.4.6).

<sup>682</sup> Sūryasimhaprabha, *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa rgya cher bshad pa'i 'grel pa*, P4719, vol. 83, 1.5.6-1.5.7, as per Martin, "Illusion Web," p. 194.

Mahāyoga, with the latter representing further development of the former into “Super Yoga.”

## **Eighteen-Text Cycles**

Jñānamitra only identifies two of the eighteen great texts (the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* and the *Secret Assembly*) and mentions two others (the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Śrī Paramādyā*); Sūryasimhaprabha identifies only three of the eighteen texts by name (the *Śrī Paramādyā*, the *Secret Assembly*, and the *Secret Nucleus*). There are, however, complete enumerations of the eighteen texts in both Chinese tantric materials and in Tibetan Mahāyoga materials, and it is to these that I now turn.

The Indian tantric master Amoghavajra wrote his Chinese summary of the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara cycle sometime between his return to China in 746 CE and his death in 774,<sup>683</sup> although his teacher Vajrabodhi (671-741)<sup>684</sup> had earlier alluded to such a collection. While this represents a view of an early Indian eighteen-text tantric cycle, the Tibetan presentations of the eighteen great Mahāyoga texts date only to the fourteenth century, although several of the individual texts appear among the Tun-huang manuscripts dating to the late eighth or early ninth century and also are mentioned by Nup Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes*),<sup>685</sup> active during the ninth and early tenth centuries.<sup>686</sup>

In 1981 Kenneth Eastman opened the field of scholarship in English on these two eighteen-text cycles and their implications for the early stages of the development of

---

<sup>683</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 3.

<sup>684</sup> Todaro, *Annotated Translation*, p. 11.

<sup>685</sup> Eastman, “The Eighteen Tantras,” pp. 17-18.

<sup>686</sup> Germano, “The Seven Descents,” p. 252.

Indian Buddhist tantra.<sup>687</sup> Eastman drew on both Chinese and Tibetan primary sources as well as on Japanese scholarship. Rolf Giebel also drew on Japanese scholarship in his heavily annotated translation of Amoghavajra's summary of the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara cycle.<sup>688</sup> This extended Eastman's work, providing much information about correspondences between the texts Amoghavajra describes and extant tantras in both the Chinese and Tibetan tantric corpora.

As Eastman points out, the central text in the Vajraśekhara cycle is the *Compendium of Principles*, while the *Secret Nucleus* occupies the corresponding position in the Mahāyoga eighteen-text cycle.<sup>689</sup> However, among Amoghavajra's eighteen texts are several that are classified as Yoga Tantra in fourfold doxographies and several that are classified as Mahāyoga in Tibetan ninefold doxographies, although in most cases these are early versions of the texts as they now exist. Many of these I have already discussed in presenting the texts of the Yoga Tantra corpus in chapter two, so I will but list them here.<sup>690</sup>

Amoghavajra's second and third texts correspond, respectively, to the second and first part of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* as preserved in Tibetan translation. The fourth text Amoghavajra summarizes corresponds to another extant explanatory Yoga Tantra, the *Conquest over the Three Worlds*. The sixth, seventh, and eighth texts correspond to the three cycles that comprise the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra* (including the *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*), with the sixth text being closely associated with the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*. Texts Amoghavajra describes that correspond to

---

<sup>687</sup> Eastman, "The Eighteen Tantras of the Vajraśekhara/Māyājāla," paper delivered to the 26th International Conference of Orientalists in Japan.

<sup>688</sup> I am grateful to Stephen Hodge for calling Giebel's article to my attention.

<sup>689</sup> Eastman, "The Eighteen Tantras," p. 21.

<sup>690</sup> This list is drawn from a table in Giebel " *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*," p. 112, although throughout the article there is detailed information in the notes concerning the individual texts.

extant texts of the Mahāyoga eighteen-text cycle (besides the *Śrī Paramādyā*) are the ninth text, which corresponds to the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*; the fifteenth text, which corresponds to the *Secret Assembly Tantra*; and the sixteenth text, which corresponds to the *Yoga of Non-Dual Equality*.<sup>691</sup>

The *Compendium of Principles* and the *Secret Nucleus* are the central texts of their respective eighteen-text cycles. However, there are further inter-textual relationships that obtain within each cycle. Drawing on the work of the Japanese scholar Tanaka Kimiaka, Giebel suggests that the order in which Amoghavajra discusses the eighteen texts of the Vajraśekhara cycle is not random.<sup>692</sup> The *Compendium of Principles* is followed by texts that correspond to its explanatory tantras—the two parts of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the *Conquest over the Three Worlds*—and perhaps also a fourth text, the *Mundane and Supramundane Vajra Yoga*.<sup>693</sup>

Next we find several sub-cycles, each consisting of a root tantra followed by its explanatory tantras. Texts six through eight are the three cycles of the *Śrī Paramādyā* system (which also includes the extant *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* and *Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*); the ninth text, the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, might represent the culmination of the development of this cycle. The *Secret Assembly*, the fifteenth text in Amoghavajra's list, is followed by one of its explanatory

---

<sup>691</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*”, p. 113. The reconstructed Sanskrit of this title is *Advaya-sa-ma-tā-yoga*, and the text has been associated with the extant *Advayasamatāvijayākhyāvikalpamahārāja* (Tibetan translation P87 [Toh. 452]; Chinese translation T. vol. 18, No. 887), and also perhaps with a Sanskrit manuscript, *Advayasamatā-kalparāja* (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*”, p.196, n. 238).

<sup>692</sup> This discussion is drawn from Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*”, p. 113.

<sup>693</sup> \**Laukikalokottara-vajra-yoga* (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*”, p. 173, n. 179). Buddhaguhya mentions a similarly titled text in his *Summary of the Questions of Subāhu* (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 378, n. 137).

tantras, the *Yoga of Non-Dual Equality*,<sup>694</sup> the seventeenth text, the *Yoga of Space*,<sup>695</sup> might also be related to this cycle. The tenth through fourteenth texts, four of which have the term “pledge” (\**samaya*) in their title, might form another sub-cycle.

The eighteen great tantras of Mahāyoga are also divided into six sub-cycles: the five commonly found divisions of enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity, as well as a sixth, general category.<sup>696</sup> Thus, these two important cycles of tantric texts have similar structures: eighteen-text cycles consisting of a number of sub-cycles.

In order to explore in more detail the relationship between systems identified as Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga, I will now examine the individual texts that are common to both traditions. The first text I will discuss is the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra*. This is a significant tantra because it is the only text represented in the eighteen-text cycles of both Amoghavajra and Nyingma Mahāyoga that is also a member of the Yoga Tantra corpus. In chapter two I unraveled the rather tangled provenance of the tantra, dating its earliest version to roughly the beginning of the eighth century. This makes it one of the earliest of the Yoga Tantras, and the fact that Jñānamitra mentions it in his origin narrative gives it even greater significance.

#### *The Śrī Paramādya Tantra*

In addition to being one of the prominent tantras of the Yoga Tantra class and reflecting elements found in the *Compendium of Principles* (the employment of four types of mudrā, the division of the tantra into four sections, deity generation through the five manifest enlightenments, and so forth), the *Śrī Paramādya* is also included under the rubric of Mahāyoga in the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. From among the eighteen great tantras, it is the exemplar of the enlightened qualities (*yon tan, guṇa*)

---

<sup>694</sup> \**Advaya-samatā-yoga* (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p.196, n. 238).

<sup>695</sup> \**Khasama-yoga* (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*”, p. 197, n. 243).

<sup>696</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, pp. 35-36.

division.<sup>697</sup> A preliminary investigation of the *Śrī Paramādyā* (both parts of its Tibetan translation) does not reveal content frequently associated with Mahāyoga, such as practices involving sexual union and violence. It does, however, reveal the preeminence of Samantabhadra, who would come to be the pivotal figure in Mahāyoga traditions (as discussed above in the context of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*).

Additionally, Amoghavajra describes the seventh of the eighteen Vajraśekhara texts, which corresponds to the second part of the extant Tibetan *Śrī Paramādyā*, as explaining that<sup>698</sup>

[T]he practitioner is without time and without direction (or transcends time and space), does not adhere to mundane prohibitory precepts, gives priority to the *bodhi* mind, and regards the unconditioned precepts as fundamental.

These are all aspects of Mahāyoga philosophy and practice as we find it in Tibetan Nyingma Mahāyoga traditions, and Amoghavajra's description of them indicates they were part of early *Śrī Paramādyā* traditions.

The frame-story of the *Śrī Paramādyā* also suggests its identity as a Mahāyoga tantra. While this is not included in the tantra itself, Butön opens his summary of the *Śrī Paramādyā* with it. This story involves great bliss (*bDe ba chen po, mahā-sukha*) and great desire. These are invoked throughout the *Śrī Paramādyā* ("great bliss" occurs in the text title at the end of most of the chapters of the extant Tibetan text), and it is perhaps this emphasis that secured its place firmly within the Mahāyoga system. I have not, however, found any explicit references to sexual yoga in the *Śrī Paramādyā*, which we find throughout the tantras of the Mahāyoga class such as the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*; this requires a thorough search to draw concrete conclusions, however.

---

<sup>697</sup> Martin, "Illusion Web," p. 180.

<sup>698</sup> Giebel, "*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*," p. 177 & p. 178, n. 191.

Butön mentions the *Śrī Paramādyā* in the context of the Indian tantric figure Buddhagupta who, according to an unidentified scholar, directly received initiation and instruction from Mañjuśrī in five tantras: the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Vajraśekhara*, the *Śrī Paramādyā*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, and the *Collection of All Procedures*.<sup>699</sup> What is of interest here is that Mahāyoga traditions also speak of five great tantras—the exemplars of the categories of enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity—and the *Śrī Paramādyā* is the representative of the qualities division.<sup>700</sup>

Here we see a parallel structuring of Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga systems. While this connection needs to be examined further, it is important to bear in mind two things: Butön merely presents the tradition of the five-text Yoga Tantra cycle without commenting on its authenticity, and Nyingma presentations of the Five Great Tantras of Mahāyoga might be a rather late development.

*The Collection of All Procedures, the Vajraśekhara Tantra, and the Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*

The inclusion of the *Collection of All Procedures* (Tib: *rTog pa thams cad bsdus pa*; Skt: *Sarva-kalpa-samuccaya*) in the five-tantra cycle Butön mentions raises an interesting possible connection between the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* (classified as an explanatory Yoga Tantra) and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, a member of both Amoghavajra's eighteen-text Vajraśekhara cycle and the eighteen Mahāyoga tantras that Jñānamitra also identified as one of the eighteen great tantras in his origin narrative.

---

<sup>699</sup> *des de nyid bsdus pa dang/ rdo rje rtse mo dang/ dpal mchog dang po dang/ ngan song sbyong ba'i rgyud dang/ rtog pa thams cad bsdus pa dang lnga'i dbang dang gdams pa rnams 'jam dpal la dngos su thob bo/* (Butön, *Ship*, 63a.6).

<sup>700</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 35.

Amoghavajra's third text is the *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures* (\**Sarva-kalpa-samuccaya-yoga*), which likely corresponds to the first half of the extant Tibetan translation of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*<sup>701</sup> (as I discussed in chapter two, this is in all probability a compilation of two previously independent texts). While the fact that the five-tantra cycle Butön mentions includes both the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures* would seem to militate against the latter being the first part of the former, this is not necessarily the case. It is possible that at this stage in their development the second part of the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was called by that name while the first part—the *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures*—was still considered to be a separate text. It is this possibility that I will now investigate in looking at the relationship between Amoghavajra's description of the *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures*, the first part of the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, and the extant Tibetan translations of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*.

While there are no extant Chinese translations of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, there are several texts in Tibetan translation that comprise the tantra. In the *Kangyur* of the Sarma schools, the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* exists as two discrete texts, a supplement (Tib: *rgyud phyi ma*; Skt: *uttara-tantra*)<sup>702</sup> and a second supplement (*rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma, uttarottara-tantra*) called the *Collection of All Procedures*.<sup>703</sup> Giebel relates the opinion of the Japanese scholar Tanaka that the root

---

<sup>701</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 168, n. 164.

<sup>702</sup> *Glorious Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas Net of Ḍākinī Precepts [ or Supreme Bliss] Supplementary Tantra*, *dPal sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog ches bya ba'i rgyud phyi ma, Śrisarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinījālasaṃvaranāma-uttaratantra*, P8 (Toh. 366), vol. 1, 183.5.5-201.5.2.

<sup>703</sup> "Collection of All Procedures": *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas Net of Ḍākinī Precepts [ or Supreme Bliss] Second Supplementary Tantra*, *rTog pa thams cad bsdus pa zhes bya ba sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog gi rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma,*



tantra of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* no longer exists.<sup>704</sup> The Tibetan *Kangyur* of the Sarma schools indeed contains two texts whose titles identify them as the supplement and second supplement of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* but no texts that are the root tantra.

However, in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma School* (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*) we find three *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* texts rather than two, and at least one of these appears to be the root tantra. The titles of the three *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* texts in the Derge (*sDe dge*) edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* indicate that the first text is a root tantra, followed by a supplement and second supplement.<sup>705</sup>

However, the situation is not so clear-cut, as an examination of the three texts in the Tsamdrak (*mTshams brag*) edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* reveals. Here, the first of the three texts has the same title as its counterpart in the Derge.<sup>706</sup> However, the Tsamdrak text with the same title as the Derge second supplement<sup>707</sup>

*Sarvakaḥpaśamuccayanāma sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinijālasaṃvara-uttarottaratantra*, P9 (Toh. 367), vol. 1, 201.5.2-210.2.3.

<sup>704</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh*,” p. 180, n. 197.

<sup>705</sup> *Sangs rgyas thams cad mnyam par sbyor ba zhes bya ba rgyud kyi rgyal po/* , in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* , sDe dge edition, vol. 11 (da), 297b.5-313a.7; *dPal sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog ces bya ba'i rgyud phyi ma/*, in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, sDe dge edition, vol. 11 (da), 313a.7-354a.6; and *rTog pa thams cad 'dus pa zhes bya ba sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog gi rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma/*, in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, sDe dge edition, vol. 12 (na), 1.1-21b.7. For an online catalogue of these texts see the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library, <http://iris.lib.virginia.edu/tibet/collections/literature/index.html>, texts Dg.207, Dg.208, and Dg.209.

<sup>706</sup> *Sangs rgyas thams cad mnyam par sbyor ba zhes bya ba rgyud kyi rgyal po/* , in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 18 [*tsha*], 2.1-51.7 (online: Tb.402 [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.402]).

<sup>707</sup> *rTog pa thams cad bsdus pa zhes bya ba/ sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog gi rgyud phyi ma'i yang phyi ma/*, in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the*

precedes the text corresponding to the Derge supplement, which in the Tsamdrak does not have “supplement” in its title.<sup>708</sup> Thus, the Derge titles appear to represent a later editorial decision.

This is corroborated by a closing section at the end of the third Tsamdrak text, which discusses the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* cycle thus:<sup>709</sup>

This tantra [that is, the third Tsamdrak text] in ten stages [that is, chapters] is the procedure [or section] that summarizes the *Yoga of the Equality of [All] Buddhas* said to exist as a tantra in twenty-two chapters. There is [also] a supplementary tantra of seven chapters and the second supplement *Tantra of the Collection of Procedures*; its concordant tantra is the *Four Vajra Seats Tantra*.

The three extant texts consist of eleven, six, and ten chapters, respectively. It is possible (although, for reasons I will detail next, not likely) that the first text, which consists of eleven chapters, and the third text, which consists of ten chapters, represent the twenty-two chapter tantra mentioned in the colophon (with one chapter having been lost at some point). These two texts have different chapter titles, and a brief examination of their contents also indicates that they are different. However, in-depth research into the

---

rNying ma rgyud 'bum, vol. 18 [*tsha*], 51.7-114.2 (online: Tb.403 [<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.403>]).

<sup>708</sup> *dPal sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po/* , in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 18 [*tsha*], 114.2-250.3 (Tb.404 [<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.404>]).

<sup>709</sup> *sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor la rtog pa nyi shu rtsa gnyis pa'i rgyud yod ces pa phyogs gcig tu bsdus pa rtog/sa bcu pa'i rgyud 'di yin/\_rgyud phyi ma rtog pa bdun pa yod/\_phyi ma'i phyi ma rtog pa bsdus pa'i rgyud yod pa dang \_/cha mthun gyi rgyud rdo rje gdan bzhi'i rgyud yin no/ (dPal sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po/*, in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 18 [*tsha*], 250.2-250.3).

eleven-chapter and ten-chapter *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* texts is necessary to determine their relationship and to tease out further the composition of the larger work.

There is a more plausible explanation of the relationship between the three texts. The chapter numbering of the second supplement, which begins with chapter eighteen and concludes with chapter twenty three, indicates that it is a continuation of another text. Additionally, between chapters twenty two and twenty three there is a closing section, an unusual feature since closing sections rarely fall anywhere except at the end of a text, following its final chapter. This closing section concludes by stating, “the *Excellent Great Secret Tantra Second Supplement* is completed.”<sup>710</sup>

Since this falls after chapter twenty two, it likely marks the end of the twenty-two chapter text referred to in the colophon of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* mentioned above. If this is the case, then the twenty-third chapter of the second supplement is either a later addition or material originally comprising the closing section that was subsequently made into a chapter of its own. The contents of this chapter are similar to that found in closing sections, and it is not unusual among the texts of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* for concluding material to appear in the final chapter rather than in a closing section proper, as a quick search of the number of texts whose final chapter is titled “transmission of the tantra” (*rgyud yongs su gtad pa*) bears out. Additionally, the closing section that follows chapter twenty three of the second supplement of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* merely says that the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas Tantra* is completed and contains no other concluding

---

<sup>710</sup> *dga' ba rjes su 'grub pa'i rang bzhin kho nas so so rjes su grub pa bde ba las/\_dam pa'i gsang chen rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma yongs su rdzogs sho/* (“*Collection of All Procedures*”: *Second Supplement of the Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, mTshams brag vol. 18, 111.6-111.7; online: mTsham brag edition, Tb.403, <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.403.b6>).

information, which supports the argument that at some point what was originally closing section material was incorporated into a twenty-third chapter.

To summarize, it now appears that, of the three *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* texts that appear in the Tsamdrak edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas*, at least two of them, identified in their own titles as the tantra and the second supplement, represent seventeen chapters (or perhaps only sixteen chapters and a closing section) of a twenty-two chapter tantra. It is also possible that the third text, identified as a tantra in its title and consisting of ten chapters, represents the first ten chapters of the larger text of twenty-two chapters. In the Derge edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* and in the *Kangyur* the ten-chapter text is identified in its title as the supplement, which would seem to rule it out as the tantra itself. However, in the Tsamdrak and Tingye editions of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* the ten-chapter text is titled “tantra” and not “supplement,” and the colophon indicated that it was a summary of the twenty-two chapter tantra.

Additionally, according to the *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition* of the *Kangyur*, Butön’s fourteenth-century *Kangyur* catalogue describes the three parts of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* as a text having ten chapters, a seven-chapter supplement already missing at that time, and also a text of five chapters, all of which totaled 18,000 stanzas.<sup>711</sup> This evidence points to a *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* that had a ten-chapter tantra, a seven-chapter supplement, and a second supplement in five chapters. The chapter numbering of the extant texts supports such a claim: the tantra ends with chapter ten and the second supplement begins with chapter eighteen, and thus there is a missing supplement of seven chapters (as both Butön and the colophon in the Tsamdrak

---

<sup>711</sup> *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 9. The second supplement in the Peking edition of the *Kangyur* also indicates that it is part of a larger *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* in 18,000 stanzas (*Collection of All Procedures*, P9, vol. 1, 210.2.2).

edition of the extant text indicate). Also, Butön’s description of a third text having five chapters suggests that the second supplement originally had only five chapters, numbered from eighteen to twenty two (as the closing section after chapter twenty two of the extant second supplement bears out), and that the twenty-third chapter was a later addition.

I will return in a moment to the lost seven-chapter supplement of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, but now I will discuss the second supplement of this tantra, the *Collection of All Procedures*.<sup>712</sup> Amoghavajra’s third text has a similar title, and in describing the contents of the *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures* he states that all the Tathāgatas pose 108 questions to the Bodhisattva Vajrasattva, who then answers each question.<sup>713</sup> Japanese scholars have linked this text to the first half of the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, which also begins with a series of questions, posed by all the Buddhas, which Vajrasattva (aka Vajradhara) then answers. Furthermore, we find the phrase “Collection of All Procedures” in the titles of the first three chapters of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, and I will now explore the relationship between the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the second supplement to the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* (that is, the *Collection of All Procedures*).

While this is a potentially rich field of inquiry and deserves in-depth textual analyses and comparison, I will limit my discussion to some preliminary remarks based on the beginning of the two texts. Both texts open in verse of the same meter, as all the

---

<sup>712</sup> I am translating the Sanskrit word *kalpa* (and the corresponding Tibetan *rtog pa*) as “procedure” in the sense of a prescribed ritual procedure. This word is also frequently used in tantras as the designation for chapters, presumably since each chapter contains a discrete ritual procedure. In some instances the translation “chapter” might be more meaningful.

<sup>713</sup> Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 167. Giebel relates that Sakai’s scholarship (in Japanese) puts the number of questions asked of Vajrasattva in the first half of the Tibetan *Vajraśekhara Tantra* at about 300, of which 115 are followed immediately by an answer (Giebel, “*Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh*,” p. 168, n. 166).

Buddhas query Vajrasattva/ Vajradhara with a series of questions.<sup>714</sup> In both texts, the interlocutors (all the Buddhas) are identified as “protectors”: the *Vajraśekhara* reads “all the great protector Buddhas”<sup>715</sup> and the *Collection of All Procedures* reads “Sugata supreme protectors.”<sup>716</sup>

Both texts then continue with the Buddhas reciting a litany of epithets praising Vajrasattva/ Vajradhara before they request that he answer their questions. While the litany differs, the first question is the same in both texts. The *Vajraśekhara* reads:<sup>717</sup>

How is this meaning of phenomena  
Which are non-conceptual phenomena expressed?  
Here, what is conceptuality like?

while the *Collection of All Procedures* reads:<sup>718</sup>

From among non-conceptual phenomena,  
As what is the meaning of conceptuality taught?

In both texts we find the same basic question, concerning the meaning of “conceptuality,” with similar structure and even wording.

The *Vajraśekhara* then continues with a one-line question about the meaning of accomplishment, which does not appear in the *Collection of All Procedures*. Both texts

---

<sup>714</sup> Butön divides the questions into three categories: those concerning the defining characteristics of Yoga Tantra, those concerning the mode of practice, and those concerning words spoken with a thought behind them (that is, with an intention that is not obvious; Butön, *Ship*, 26a.7-26b.1). It appears that in the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra* each of the first three chapters (which comprise the first half of the text) are devoted to answering one of these three groups of questions.

<sup>715</sup> *mgon pa [sic] chen pa [sic] sangs rgyas kun* (*Vajraśekhara Tantra*, P113, vol. 5, 1.1.4).

<sup>716</sup> *bde gshegs mgon mchog rnams* (*Collection of All Procedures*, mTshams brag vol. 18, 52.4-52.5).

<sup>717</sup> *rtogs pa med pa'i chos rnams kyī /chos kyī don 'di ci yin brjod/ 'dir ni rtog pa ji lta bu/ 'dir ni rtog pa ji lta bu/* (*Vajraśekhara Tantra*, P113, vol. 5, 1.1.7).

<sup>718</sup> *mam par mi rtog chos dag las/rtog pa'i don ni gang la gsungs* (*Collection of All Procedures*, mTshams brag vol. 18, 52.6).

then ask the question, “Why is this a supplementary tantra?,” with the same syntax and slightly different wording.<sup>719</sup> Slightly later, both texts also contain questions about the meaning of “vajra,” “Vajradhara,” and “fierce vajra.”<sup>720</sup>

The similarities in style and content of the two texts are striking. Thus, the first half of the Yoga Tantra the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the second supplement of the Mahāyoga Tantra the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas* appear to be related, along with the third text in Amoghavajra’s Vajraśekhara cycle, the *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures*. It is possible that this early *Yoga of the Collection of All Procedures* developed in two strands, one of which became the first part of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* while the other became the second supplement of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*.

There is another possible relationship that obtains between these two texts, a discussion of which I will preface with a brief description of the beginning of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*. After the title and homage (the first of which is to Samantabhadra, which perhaps belies the text’s connection with Mahāyoga), the body of the *Vajraśekhara* begins abruptly. Whereas other Yoga Tantras such as the *Compendium of Principles* begin with the standard opening line for a Buddha-voiced text “Thus have I heard at one time,” this does not appear in the *Vajraśekhara*. Additionally, several of the standard opening elements of a tantra, such as a description of the location and time of the teaching as well as its audience, are missing from the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*. Instead, the text begins *in medias res* with “Then King Vajradhara...”.

---

<sup>719</sup> *ci phyir 'di ni rgyud phyi ma* (*Vajraśekhara Tantra*, P113, vol. 5, 1.1.8); *ci yi slad du rgyud phyi ma* (*Collection of All Procedures*, mTshams brag vol. 18, 52.6).

<sup>720</sup> *rdo rje gtum po'ang ci zhig lags/ /ci yi phyir na gtum por brjod/ /rdo rje rdo rje zhes gsungs pa/ /ci phyir rdo rjer brjod par bgyi/ /rdo rje 'chang zhes gsung 'di ci/ /de yi rdo rje ji lta bu/* (*Vajraśekhara Tantra*, P113, vol. 5, 1.2.1-1.2.2); *de bzhin rdo rje rdo rje 'dzin/ /rdo rje 'dzin nyid chen po yang/ ... rdo rje gtum po gar 'bar byed/* (*Collection of All Procedures*, mTshams brag vol. 18, 53.1-53.2).

The fact that standard prefatory material is missing and that the text begins with “then,” which usually designates a continuation of something previous, indicates the likelihood that the first half of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* (the “Collection of All Procedures” half) originally had something else preceding it. It is possible that the first half of the *Vajraśekhara* (consisting of three chapters)—given its similarity (in both title and content) to the second supplement of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*—represents or is related to the missing supplement to the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*, which is described as having seven chapters. Of possible significance here is the fact that one of the questions that appears at the beginning of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* is, “Why is this a supplementary tantra?”<sup>721</sup> (bearing in mind the fact that a similar question also appears in the second supplement to the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*). This could indicate that the first part of the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* was originally the supplement to another tantra—perhaps to the first text of the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas*.

In the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the *Collection of All Procedures* we see a definite connection between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga systems. Further research into the content of these texts—the individual questions asked, as well as the answers given, in each tantra—as well as into their histories and lineages is necessary to flesh out the details of this relationship. The results of such a study would likely shed new light on the development of tantra in India during the eighth and ninth century, and particularly on the unilateral or mutual influence of one tantra on another in the formation of individual tantras.

I will now briefly discuss the *Secret Assembly Tantra* and the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*, which reveal important links between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga traditions

---

<sup>721</sup> *ci phyir 'di ni rgyud phyi ma* (*Vajraśekhara Tantra*, P113, vol. 5, 1.1.8).



(there are several other texts that are illuminating in this context, but which I will not discuss). The *Secret Assembly* is one of the earliest examples of the stratum of tantric development that grew out of the *Compendium of Principles*. It is a member both of Amoghavajra's eighteen-text cycle and of the Mahāyoga eighteen-text cycle, and it is one of the two texts Jñānamitra identified by name as exemplars of the eighteen-text cycle in his origin narrative.

The *Secret Assembly Tantra* exhibits many features that indicate the influence of the *Compendium of Principles*, such as the presence of the five manifest enlightenments and a five Buddha family structure at the center of its main maṇḍala. Additionally, Amoghavajra's summary of the *Secret Assembly's* teachings includes the four kinds of maṇḍalas and four kinds of mudrās,<sup>722</sup> just as are found in the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>723</sup> He also explains that the text was expounded in the vagina,<sup>724</sup> which is the location given at the beginning of the extant Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. Thus, we find in the *Secret Assembly Tantra* an indication of a trend toward sexual intercourse as an important feature of the text's meditation and ritual system—a distinctive feature of Mahāyoga.

However, the roots of the *Secret Assembly* grow from the *Compendium of Principles*, perhaps more strongly and evidently than those of any other tantra of this stratum, as evidenced by the elements the *Secret Assembly* shares with the *Compendium of Principles*. In addition, there are numerous references in both Indian and Tibetan

---

<sup>722</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 193.

<sup>723</sup> Vilāsavajra, another eighth-century Indian tantric exegete, explains the opening words of the *Secret Assembly Tantra*—*evaṃ mayā śrūtam*—in terms of the four mudrās: *e* means the pledge-mudrā (*samaya-mudrā*); *vaṃ*, the great mudrā (*mahā-mudrā*); *ma*, the doctrine-mudrā (*dharma-mudrā*); and *yā*, the action-mudrā (*karma-mudrā*) (Vilāsavajra, *Śrīguhyasamājatantranidānagurūpadeśanavyākhyāna*, Toh. 1910, 90b.6-91a.1, as translated in Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 236).

<sup>724</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 193.

commentarial literature to the *Secret Assembly* as a Yoga Tantra. This close association of the two tantras persists to the present in the Gelukpa School of Tibetan Buddhism. This school holds closely to a fourfold tantric doxography in which the *Secret Assembly*, one of the two central tantras of this school, is included in the Highest Yoga Tantra category and the *Compendium of Principles* is classified as a Yoga Tantra. However, the *Compendium of Principles* is considered to be the root tantra of the *Secret Assembly*. Although contemporary Gelukpa scholars explain that the *Compendium of Principles* is the root tantra of the *Secret Assembly* in terms of being taught first chronologically,<sup>725</sup> this is also true for many other tantras; however, the point is not made that the *Compendium of Principles* is also the root tantra of these texts. This belies the close historical connection between the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Secret Assembly Tantra*.

Another tantra that should be mentioned here is the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*). While it is a member of the Mahāyoga cycle of eighteen texts (where it is known as the *Mañjuśrī Magical Emanation Net*), it is not mentioned by Amoghavajra in his discussion of the Vajraśekhara cycle. However, it has a distinguished Yoga Tantra pedigree. In chapter two I detailed the provenance of the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*, the early development of which dates to the latter part of the seventh century or early eighth century.<sup>726</sup> While it was classified in several different categories of tantra, early Indian exegetes such as Mañjuśrimitra and Vilāsavajra wrote commentaries on it from a Yoga Tantra perspective.<sup>727</sup> The earliest core of the text includes a section on what the commentaries identify as the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala.<sup>728</sup>

---

<sup>725</sup> Kīrti Tshanshap Rinpoche, personal communication, March, 1995.

<sup>726</sup> Davidson, "Litany," p. 104.

<sup>727</sup> Davidson, "Names of Mañjuśrī," pp. 5, 7, & 12.

<sup>728</sup> Davidson, "Names of Mañjuśrī," p. 22.

These are some of the connections between the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* and Yoga Tantra (and particularly the *Compendium of Principles*).

The tantra as it appears in the Mahāyoga corpus is immediately striking for its title. The versions of the text in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* are titled *Mañjuśrī Magical Emanation Net Tantra*, which explicitly associates them with the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* sub-cycle of texts. Additionally, the extant Sanskrit text (as well as the version of the Tibetan translation in the *Kangyur*) identifies itself as the “stages of manifest enlightenment of the *Magical Emanation Net*” (v.7) and later states that it was “extracted from the meditative stabilization (*samādhi*) chapter of the great *Magical Emanation Net*, a Mahāyoga Tantra” (v. 13 and colophon).<sup>729</sup> Furthermore, there is a structural similarity between the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* and the meditative stabilization chapters of the *Secret Assembly* and another tantra in the *Magical Emanation Net* cycle, the source of all of which appears to be the process of the five manifest enlightenments found at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles*.<sup>730</sup>

The *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* is a particularly interesting tantra, as it was interpreted within several different tantric classifications, ranging from Yoga Tantra to Mahāyoga to Highest Yoga Tantra (and within that, several different cycles). Both the *Secret Assembly* and the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* represent early instances of tantras later included under the rubric of Mahāyoga that clearly demonstrate aspects that have developed out of the *Compendium of Principles*.

Additionally, there are several texts that are members of both the Chinese Vajraśekhara Yoga eighteen text cycle and the Tibetan Mahāyoga eighteen text cycle, such as the *Secret Assembly* and the *Śrī Paramādyā*. Moreover, I have outlined the

---

<sup>729</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” p. 2. I have adapted Davidson’s translation slightly.

<sup>730</sup> Davidson, “Names of Mañjuśrī,” pp. 2-3.

probable relationship between the *Yoga of the Assembly of All Buddhas*, the *Collection of All Procedures*, and the first half of the extant *Vajraśekhara Tantra*. Eastman concluded that the two eighteen-text cycles share a common source, a “parent collection.”<sup>731</sup> Further research into the individual texts that are extant (along the lines of the work I presented on the *Vajraśekhara* and the *Yoga of the Assembly of All Buddhas*, but in greater depth) is necessary to determine more precisely the nature of this relationship and its implications for the historical development of tantric Buddhism in India during the eighth and ninth centuries.

### **Indian Tantric Exegetes of Both Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga**

In addition to many shared elements found in the tantra-texts of Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga, there are also several early Indian commentators who were involved with both traditions. I have mentioned the late eighth-century exegete Vilāsavajra, who wrote important early commentaries on both the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (interpreting it from a Yoga Tantra perspective) and the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*.<sup>732</sup> Here, I will focus on two eighth-century Indian authors, Buddhaguhya (aka Buddhagupta) and Padmasambhava. While Buddhaguhya was deeply involved in both Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga traditions (although recent scholarship has called the latter assertion into question), Padmasambhava was apparently involved only in Mahāyoga (although I will argue that he was also involved with Yoga Tantra). I will discuss the work and lives of these two Indian tantric exegetes in the context of the relationship between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga and the development of Buddhist tantra in India during the eighth century.

---

<sup>731</sup> Eastman, “The Eighteen Tantras,” p. 29.

<sup>732</sup> Vilāsavajra also wrote commentaries on other early tantras such as the *Susiddhi Tantra* under the name Varabodhi.

*Buddhaguhya*

The mid eighth-century author Buddhaguhya is an important Indian Yoga Tantra figure, as I discussed in chapter one. In fact, he represents the early monastic tantric commentator par excellence, authoring works on such tantras as the *Questions of Subāhu*, *Concentration Continuation*, and *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, in addition to the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*, his seminal work on the *Compendium of Principles*. Moreover, the Nyingma School also considers Buddhaguhya to be an important exegete and transmitter of Mahāyoga traditions. Several commentaries on texts of the *Magical Emanation Net* cycle are attributed to him, including the *Stages of Vajra-Activity of the Magical Emanation Net*,<sup>733</sup> the *Sequence of the Path*,<sup>734</sup> and a commentary on the *Vajrasattva Magical Emanation Net Tantra*.<sup>735</sup>

There is, however, some doubt as to whether Buddhaguhya the Mahāyoga exegete is the same person as Buddhaguhya the Action/ Performance/ Yoga Tantra exegete. The timeframe for Buddhaguhya's activities in Tibetan Mahāyoga accounts fits that of the Buddhaguhya in contact with central Tibet during the eighth century, who is clearly the author of the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra* and other works. However, it is possible that the Mahāyoga figure was conflated with the Action/ Performance/ Yoga Tantra exegete<sup>736</sup> in an attempt to establish the authenticity of Mahāyoga systems, which came under heavy attack in Tibet during the later propagation of Buddhism.

---

<sup>733</sup> *sGyu 'phrul dra ba rdo rje las kyi rim pa zhes bya ba, Māyājālavajrakarmakramanāma*, P4720.

<sup>734</sup> *Lam rnam par bkod pa, Mārgavyūha*, P4736.

<sup>735</sup> *Vajrasattvamāyājālatantraśrīguhyagarbhanāmacakṣuṣṭikā*, P4756.

<sup>736</sup> Leonard van der Kuijp has raised the possibility that there were two different Buddhaguhyas, both of whom were involved with Yoga Tantra (van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," pp. 124-125, n. 25). The earlier Buddhaguhya is the first human in a *Purification of All Transmigrations* lineage he received directly from Mañjuśrī, and perhaps correlates with the Buddhagupta mentioned by Butön. There are then two other people in the transmission before the second Buddhaguhya, who follows Śākyamitra.

A close study of Buddhaguhya’s several Mahāyoga commentaries in comparison with his works on earlier tantras such as the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* and the *Compendium of Principles* might yield significant results concerning the relationship between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga. In particular, there is one text that perhaps represents a bridge between the two bodies of tantric commentaries attributed to Buddhaguhya. This text is the *Dharma Maṇḍala Sūtra*, which contains references to the union of vajra (penis) and lotus (vagina) in “secret” maṇḍalas, as well as to male-female deity pairs (*yab-yum*).<sup>737</sup> This text, which Butön discusses as a Yoga Tantra text and appears to indicate is related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*,<sup>738</sup> is of particular interest because it is one of the earliest exegetical works that explicitly refers to practices involving sexual union. As such, the *Dharma Maṇḍala Sūtra* and its relationship to Buddhaguhya’s other commentaries might hold important data concerning the development of such practices from their brief mentions in the *Compendium of Principles* to their integration into meditation and ritual as we find in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*.

#### *Padmasambhava*

While Buddhaguhya is an important figure in Nyingma Mahāyoga, his putative student Padmasambhava has come to be *the* central figure in the dissemination of Buddhism from India to Tibet for the Nyingma School. Padmasambhava is a vital figure in Mahāyoga traditions as well as Atiyoga traditions, and he is the progenitor of a vast corpus of visionary material “rediscovered” later in Tibet, the so-called “treasure” (*gter ma*) traditions.<sup>739</sup>

---

<sup>737</sup> Lo Bue, “The Dharmamaṇḍala-sūtra by Buddhaguhya,” p. 789.

<sup>738</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.2.

<sup>739</sup> Padmasambhava is believed to have hidden a large corpus of texts as treasures ( *gTer ma* ) to be discovered at a future time when their spiritual impact would be of greatest benefit. Prominent examples

Sifting out the historical accounts of Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet from the enormous body of later accretions to his legend is a difficult task that I will not attempt here. However, the earliest surviving Tibetan account of the eighth century, the *Testament of Wa (dBa' bzhed)*, is helpful in illuminating certain aspects of Padmasambhava's activity and involvement. While the provenance of this text is complex, the earliest extant version of the *Testament of Wa* is a revised version of a text that dates to around the eleventh century.<sup>740</sup> This account portrays Padmasambhava's sojourn in Tibet as a brief one, focused on subduing—through violent practices—local deities antagonistic to the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet and performing some miracles involving water for irrigation purposes.<sup>741</sup>

As David Germano points out, in more specifically religious terms Padmasambhava's activities revolved around Mahāyoga, and in particular the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* and violent, exorcistic rites based on the cult of the wrathful Vajra-Dagger deity (*rdo rje phur pa, vajrakīlaya*).<sup>742</sup> Germano concludes his brief historical sketch of Padmasambhava by saying, "Unlike Buddhaghosya, he seems to have been focused on the new movement [that is, Mahāyoga], and not so interested in earlier tantric cycles."<sup>743</sup> While I do not dispute this assertion, I will examine the influences of Yoga Tantra texts that we find in

---

of such treasure-texts are the various texts of the "Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State" cycles (the so-called *Tibetan Book of the Dead*), the first of which was discovered by Karma gLing pa in the fourteenth/fifteenth century. Padmasambhava is thus the source of a multitude of texts, although scarce few are attributed to his actual authorship.

<sup>740</sup> Per K. Sorensen, preface to Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet: Translation and Facsimile Edition of the Tibetan Text* (Wien [Vienna]: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), p. xiv.

<sup>741</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 13. For a summary of the account of Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet, see Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>742</sup> Germano, "The Seven Descents," p. 233.

<sup>743</sup> Germano, "The Seven Descents," p. 233.

various pieces of evidence relating to Padmasambhava—some widely known and others of which have escaped scholarly attention until now. In particular, I will discuss this material concerning Padmasambhava in the context of the development of Mahāyoga as an outgrowth of Yoga Tantra and the history of Indian tantric Buddhism of the eighth century.

Later Nyingma biographical accounts of Padmasambhava explain that early in his religious career he received Yoga Tantra teachings eighteen times.<sup>744</sup> There is, however, no evidence that he produced any works related to the *Compendium of Principles* or other texts of the Yoga Tantra class and, while he is said to have been the student of Buddhaguhya, it is not certain that this is the same person as one of the Indian Yoga Tantra exegete.

As I mentioned above, there are scant few texts whose authorship can be ascribed to Padmasambhava (although he is considered to be the inspiration or source for an enormous body of revealed texts). However, one of the few texts that may in fact have been written by the historical Padmasambhava is the *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions*,<sup>745</sup> one of the most important of the early Mahāyoga commentaries. This is a short nine-folio commentary on the thirteenth chapter of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, and dates to the eighth century.<sup>746</sup> I have discussed in chapter one its nine-vehicle doxographical presentation, and earlier in the current chapter I referred to it in the context of “Mahāyoga” as a doxographical category term.

---

<sup>744</sup> Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, tr. and ed. by Gyurme Dorje with Matthew Kapstein, vol. I (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991), p. 469.

<sup>745</sup> Germano, “The Seven Descents,” p. 233. There is, however, some doubt among modern scholars as to the authorship of this text.

<sup>746</sup> Dorje, *Guhyagarbhatantra and Commentary*, p. 69.



There are only a handful of quotes from other texts in the *Garland of Views*, and I will focus on two of these. The first is one stanza of verse, introduced by “as it is said,” which reads:<sup>747</sup>

Penetration of one’s mind:  
 Buddha’s enlightenment is that itself;  
 The three worlds are that itself;  
 The great elements are that itself.

The influential eleventh-century Tibetan Nyingma exegete Rongzom Paṇḍita Chökyi Zangpo (*Rong zom chos kyi bzang po*) identifies the source of this quote as the *Conquest over the Three Realms Procedure* (*Khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba’i rtog pa*, \**Traidhātuvijayakalpa*) in his commentary on the *Garland of Views*.<sup>748</sup> I have located the stanza in the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure*,<sup>749</sup> the explanatory tantra of the *Compendium of Principles*’ second section, called the “Conquest over the Three Worlds Section.” However, neither a visual scan nor a search of an electronic version of

---

<sup>747</sup> *rang sems so sor rtogs pa ni/ sangs rgyas byang chub de nyid do/ ’jig rten gsum pa de nyid do/ ’byung ba che rnam de nyid do/* (Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions, Man ngag lta ba’i phreng ba*, in *Selected Writings [gsun’thor bu] of Roñ-zom Chos-kyi-bzañ-po*, Smarntsis Shesrig Spenzod vol. 73 [Leh, Ladakh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1974], 9.1-9.2. The text also appears in the Peking Tripitaka: P4726, vol. 83, 83.3.7-85.3.5).

<sup>748</sup> Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po, *sLob dpon sangs rgyas gnyis pa’i gsung dngos/ Man ngag lta ba’i phreng ba zhes bya ba’i ’grel pa*, in *Selected Writings (gsun’thor bu) of Roñ-zom Chos-kyi-bzañ-po*, Smarntsis Shesrig Spenzod vol. 73 (Leh, Ladakh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1974), 98.3.

Rongzom cites the four-line stanza just as it appears in the *Garland of Views* with one minor orthographical exception: the third line reads *’jig rten gsum po’ang de nyid do*, just as it does in the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure*, rather than *’jig rten gsum pa de nyid do*, which appears in the *Garland of Views*.

<sup>749</sup> *’Jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba rtog pa’i rgyal po chen po*, *Trailokyavijayamahākāparāja*, P115, vol. 5, 77.5.7-78.1.2.

the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* itself, upon which the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure* expounds, located the stanza.

There are some minor differences between the stanza in the *Garland of Views* and in the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure*. Between the first two lines and the third line of the *Garland of Views* the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure* has nine intervening lines, and between the third and fourth lines it has three intervening lines.<sup>750</sup> The dislocation of the lines (and three minor orthographical variations) notwithstanding, the stanzas are the same. The fact that the stanza as Padmasambhava quotes it is found in an expanded form in the extant *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure* is somewhat unusual in that expansion generally takes place in later versions of a text. Thus, it is possible that the extant version of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure* has undergone further development since the eighth century. It is also possible that the text from which Padmasambhava quotes represents an early version of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* itself and that this stanza has been lost in the tantra as we find it today.

The implications of this four-line stanza appearing in the *Garland of Views*, which is attributed to Padmasambhava, are, I think, far-reaching. First, it provides evidence from the exegetical tradition of the relationship between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga in the eighth century. Nyingma histories relate that Padmasambhava received Yoga Tantra teachings multiple times during the early part of his career, but he does not appear to have produced any Yoga Tantra works. However, his citation—in a Mahāyoga

---

<sup>750</sup> *rang sems so sor brtags pa ni/ sangs rgyas byang chub de nyid yin/ /de nyid phyag na rdo rje ste/ /rdo rje 'dzin pa'i tshul gyis so/ /'jig rten dbang po nam mkha' snying/ /de ltar gzhan yang de nyid do/ /sangs rgyas rigs kyang de nyid de/ /de ni rdo rje 'chang ba'i rigs/ /de nyid spyang ras gzigs kyi rigs/ /de nyid nor bu'i rigs yin te/ /khams gsum de nyid yin zhes gsungs/ /'jig rten gsum po'ang de nyid do/ /de nyid byed dang 'byin pa'ol/ /sems can kun gyi mes po ste/ /de nyid sems can gnas yin te/ /'byung ba che rnams de nyid do/ (Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure, P115, vol. 5, 77.5.7-78.1.1).*

commentary on the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*—of a passage from an explanatory tantra of the *Compendium of Principles*' second section directly links him with Yoga Tantra traditions. Padmasambhava was at the least familiar with a Yoga Tantra text closely related to the *Compendium of Principles*, and he was quite possibly conversant in the *Compendium of Principles* itself.

That Padmasambhava quoted from an explanatory tantra of the *second* section of the *Compendium of Principles* is also significant. Although it is difficult to strip away later accretions to his legend, his most basic biography is this: the exorcist Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet to subdue indigenous Tibetan demons impeding the establishment of Buddhism there (for a discussion of Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet, see p. 301 ff). Through wrathful practices, Padmasambhava subdued these forces and bound them into the service of the dharma. He then left Tibet.

In the *Compendium of Principles*, the second section—the Conquest over the Three Worlds section—is the locus of maṇḍalas of wrathful deities and their attendant violent rites focused on subjugation. Exegetical traditions in both India and Tibet have been aware of, and have explicitly commented on, the nature of the Conquest over the Three Worlds section and the wrathful deities that comprise its vajra Buddha family.<sup>751</sup>

Additionally, the second section opens with the narrative of Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara, which, as I discussed in chapter three, is the foundational myth for violence in Indian Buddhist tantra. Moreover, the violence Vajrapāṇi perpetrates is violence in the service of Buddhist institutions, forcing acquiescence to Buddhist doctrine and pledges to obey the commands (that is, rules) of Buddhist authority. We see this reflected in

---

<sup>751</sup> See for example Butön, *Extensive Explanation*, 43a.2-43a.3, , where he describes the deities of the second section and also cites a similar passage from Ānandagarbha's *Commentary on the Latter Part of the Compendium of Principles*.

Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet, where he subdues Tibetan demonic forces preventing the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet and binds them under Buddhist law.

The content of the stanza from the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure* that Padmasambhava quotes in his *Garland of Views* also represents important evidence concerning the relationship between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga. The stanza expounds on the penetration of one's mind (*sems so sor rtog/ brtags pa, citta-prativedha*), the first of the five manifest enlightenments in the narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment presented at the beginning of the first section of the *Compendium of Principles*. As discussed above, the five manifest enlightenments are crucial elements of Yoga Tantra systems: they comprise both the series of contemplations by which Śākyamuni realized enlightenment and the fundamental practice set forth for Yoga Tantra trainees, and they also correlate with the five wisdoms that comprise enlightened mind.<sup>752</sup>

That Padmasambhava quotes a passage on the first of the five manifest enlightenments is, I think significant: it establishes that he was familiar with this fundamental practice (or at least with the first of its five members) of the *Compendium of Principles* and several other texts classified as Yoga Tantra, and likely also with the narrative of Śākyamuni's enlightenment recast in tantric terms. The first stage in this process corresponds to the mirror-like wisdom, which Butön explains is the entity of Akṣobhya<sup>753</sup>—the Buddha at the head of the vajra Buddha family. This family consists of wrathful deities and predominates in the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, which further solidifies the link between Padmasambhava and this tantra (or at least this section of the tantra).

---

<sup>752</sup> Butön explains the five manifest enlightenments at length in *Ship*. While I am confident that the correlation of the five manifest enlightenments with the five enlightened wisdoms reaches back to Indian exegetical traditions, I have not yet searched the Indian commentaries for such an exposition.

<sup>753</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 7b.4-7b.5.

I would like to make a few additional comments on the doctrinal import of Padmasambhava's citation. Nyingma traditions hold that, in addition to his exorcistic activities in Tibet, Padmasambhava was a major figure in transmitting Mahāyoga systems to Tibetans, and in particular he is closely associated with the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*. This tantra includes much philosophical development beyond that found in the *Compendium of Principles*. One particular philosophical focus in the *Secret Nucleus* is the nature of the mind. We find a brief presentation of the nature of the mind as naturally luminous at the beginning of the enlightenment narrative in the *Compendium of Principles*, which continues with the process of realizing this nature and developing this realization in stages. It seems more than coincidence that Padmasambhava quotes a stanza referring to this very stage—the first stage in the process of the five manifest enlightenments—when such philosophical speculation is further developed in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* with which he is associated.

I will briefly discuss one other text quoted in the *Garland of Views*, the *Great Pledge Sūtra* (*Dam tshig chen po'i mdo*, \**Mahā-Samaya Sūtra*). The citation of a four-line stanza from this text falls nears the end of the *Garland of Views*, in a discussion of the ethics of the highest tantric vehicles.<sup>754</sup>

I have located this stanza, with a different third line and a few other minor variations, in the nineteenth chapter of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*. This chapter, simply titled “The Pledge Chapter,” opens with the Supramundane Victor Great Joy expressing the great pledge, beginning with the stanza from the *Garland of Views*.<sup>755</sup> The fact that

---

<sup>754</sup> *sangs rgyas theg par rab nges na/nyon mongs 'dod lnga kun spyad kyang/ padma la ni 'dams bzhin te/ de la tshul khrims phun sum tshogs/* (Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views*, 17.5).

<sup>755</sup> *bla med theg par rab nges na/nyon mongs las rnam kun spyad kyang/ byas la mi sogs tshogs 'gyur te/ tshul khrims sdom pa phun sum tshogs/* (*Secret Nucleus Tantra*, in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 20 [wa], 210.3; online: Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library, Tb.417 [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=Tb.417.b19]). In the gTing skyes

Padmasambhava quotes from the *Great Pledge Sūtra* as a text distinct from the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* suggests that there was at that time an independent text known as the *Great Pledge Sūtra*. It also raises the possibility that chapter nineteen of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* either was extracted from this *Great Pledge* text or that, at the time Padmasambhava wrote the *Garland of Views* in the eighth century, the *Secret Nucleus* was shorter than it is now, and its nineteenth chapter (and perhaps chapters twenty through twenty two as well) had not yet been incorporated into the tantra. Further research into this topic is necessary, including searching for the stanza quoted by Padmasambhava in texts such as the *King of the Great Pledge: Array of Pledges Tantra*.<sup>756</sup> This tantra is included in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* and, if the quote is located there, would likely shed light on Padmasambhava's body of knowledge as well as on the provenance of the nineteenth chapter of the *Secret Nucleus* and the process by which the tantra was produced.

Setting aside the issue of the composition of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*, I will now discuss Padmasambhava's citation of the *Great Pledge Sūtra* as it relates to Yoga Tantra traditions and the development of Mahāyoga. What is of interest in this context is not the content of the stanza quoted<sup>757</sup> but the text that is its source. Butön mentions a *Great Pledge Tantra* several times in his discussion of Yoga Tantra. He introduces the text at

---

edition of the text the third line reads *byas la mi rtsog tshogs 'gyur tel* (gTing skyes edition of *The Collected Tantras of the Ancients* [Thimbu, Bhutan: Dingo Chentse Rinpoche, 1972] vol. 14, 54.7; online: Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library, Tk.218 [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=TK.218].).

<sup>756</sup> *Dam tshig chen po'i rgyal po dam tshig bkod pa'i rgyud'*, in *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 13 (*pa*), 371.5-465.5.

<sup>757</sup> Rongzom explains the meaning in this way: when one has a mind of deep profundity of method and wisdom, even if one engages in the five afflictions or the five desires one has perfect ethics, just as a lotus is not sullied by the mud from which it springs (Rongzom, *Commentary on the Garland of Views*, 119.3-119.6).

the end of his presentation of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure*, where he cites the following passage from Ānandagarbha's *Commentary on the Vairocana Magical Emanation Net* concerning the varieties of tantra:<sup>758</sup>

Concerning all [types of] tantras: the *Superior Compendium of Principles* and so forth are [root tantras]. Tantras subsequent to<sup>759</sup> those [root tantras] are the *Principle of the Great Pledge* and so forth. Because this *King of Tantras* [viz., the *Vairocana Magical Emanation Net Tantra*] also is subsequent to<sup>760</sup> that [viz., the *Principle of the Great Pledge*], it is called such [that is, it is called a subsequent subsequent tantra].

Butön then adds that, in terms of the subsequent tantra cited in this passage, other translations do not appear in Tibet.<sup>761</sup> He continues by speculating on its identity, however. He quotes a passage from the end of the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure* (the tantra he has just laid out section-by-section) that refers to the *Principle of the Great Pledge*:<sup>762</sup>

The Supramundane Victor said this to Vajrapāṇi: “The *Principle of the Great Pledge*—exalted body, speech, and mind—subdues all who are not subdued. You have taught this thus.”

---

<sup>758</sup> *rgyud thams cad ni/ 'phags pa de kho na nyid bsdus pa la sogs pa'i rgyud rnams so/ /de'i phyi ma ni/ dam tshig chen po'i de kho na nyid la sogs pa'i rgyud do/ /de las kyang rgyud kyi rgyal po 'di phyi ma yin pas de skad ces bya'o/* (Butön, *Ship*, 32a.5-32a.6).

<sup>759</sup> *Phyi ma* (\**uttara*), the precise meaning of which is not clear. An alternative reading is “Tantras that are continuations of those [root tantras].”

<sup>760</sup> An alternative reading here is “Because this *King of Tantras* also is a continuation from that.”

<sup>761</sup> *zhes gsungs pa'i rgyud phyi ma ni/ gzhan bod du 'gyur ba mi snang la/* (Butön, *Ship*, 32a.6).

<sup>762</sup> *rgyud 'di 'i mjug na/ bcom ldan 'das kyis phyag na rdo rje la 'di skad ces gsungs so/ /dam tshig chen po'i de kho na nyid sku dang gsung dang thugs thams cad pa ma thul ba 'dul ba/ 'di khyod kyis de bzhin du bshad pa/* (Butön, *Ship*, 32a.6-32a.7).

Butön concludes this discussion by leaving open the question of whether the *Principle of the Great Pledge* is the same as the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Procedure*.<sup>763</sup>

While Butön raises the possibility of a Yoga Tantra called the *Principle of the Great Pledge*, Amoghavajra's presentation of the Vajraśekhara Yoga cycle confirms the existence of an independent *Principle of the Great Pledge* text in India during the first half of the eighth century. In fact, four of Amoghavajra's eighteen texts have "Pledge" or "Great Pledge" in their titles. Texts ten, twelve, and fourteen are titled *Great Pledge Yoga* (\*Mahā-samaya-yoga),<sup>764</sup> *Supreme Pledge Yoga* (\*Samaya-parama-yoga),<sup>765</sup> and *Principle of the Tathāgata Pledge Yoga* (\*Tathāgata-samaya-tattva-yoga),<sup>766</sup> respectively; no extant texts that correspond to these have been identified.

The thirteenth text in the Vajraśekhara Yoga corpus is the *Principle of the Great Pledge Yoga* (\*Mahā-samaya-tattva-yoga),<sup>767</sup> a title identical to the one mentioned by Ānandagarbha (with the exception of "yoga," with which the title of all but the first of Amoghavajra's eighteen texts ends). Scholars have linked this to an extant Chinese text, the *Pi-mi san-mei ta-chiao-wang ching*.<sup>768</sup> While this text is a late tenth or early eleventh-century translation by the Indian monk Dānapāla (Shih-hu),<sup>769</sup> some of its verses parallel those of a text called the *Principle of the Collected Pledges* ('Dus pa'i dam tshig gi de kho na nyid, \*Samaya-samāja-tattva or \*Samaya-samuccaya-tattva) quoted in the

---

<sup>763</sup> ces gsungs pas/ 'di nyid dam tshig chen po'i de kho na nyid yin nam/ blo ldan rnams kyis brtag par bya'o/ (Butön, *Ship*, 32a.7-32b.1).

<sup>764</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 183, n. 203.

<sup>765</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 185, n. 206.

<sup>766</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 191, n. 226.

<sup>767</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 186, n. 211.

<sup>768</sup> T. vol. 18, No. 883 (Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 186-187, n. 211).

<sup>769</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," pp. 186-187, n. 211.



*Jñānasiddhi* (in Tibetan translation), which likely dates to the end of the eighth century.<sup>770</sup>

Padmasambhava quoted from the *Great Pledge Sūtra*, and we find in Amoghavajra's four *Pledge* texts confirmation of the existence in eighth-century India of independent tantras having "Great Pledge" or "Principle of the Great Pledge" as part of their title. Additionally, Butön also discusses a *Principle of the Great Pledge* text, and suggests that it might be the same as the *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures*, an explanatory tantra of the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*. Here we find another possible link between Padmasambhava, who propagated Mahāyoga in Tibet and subjugated its demons through violent practices, and the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, home to wrathful deities and their violent practices.

This also represents a possible link between the *Compendium of Principles* (and the tantras most closely associated with it) and the nineteenth chapter of the *Secret Nucleus*. By extension, this might also reveal important stages in the development of Mahāyoga texts from their roots in texts included in the Yoga Tantra corpus, as well as the process by which tantras were produced—through a combination of composition and compilation—in eighth-century India. Further research into texts that have "Great Pledge" in their overall titles, section titles, or chapter titles is necessary. A few such texts are the *King of the Great Pledge* mentioned above; the extant *Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures* and the second section of the *Compendium of Principles* on which it expounds; the first chapter of the first part of the *Śrī Paramādyā*, the title of which is *Principle of the Great Pledge Called Vajra, Great King of*

---

<sup>770</sup> Giebel, "Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh," p. 187, n. 211.

*Procedures (Dam tshig chen po'i de kho na nyid rdo rje zhes bya ba rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po)*; and the *Glorious Great Pledge King of Tantra*.<sup>771</sup>

## Conclusion

The term “mahāyoga” in Indian tantric literature of the eighth century originally was employed as a superlative to describe particular tantric techniques. By the middle or end of the eighth century the term still carried its superlative connotation, but it was beginning to be used in a narrower sense to reflect the continued development of doctrines and practices found in the *Compendium of Principles* and texts later classified as Yoga Tantras. Thus, “mahāyoga” came to have the meaning “Super Yoga [Tantra]” and referred initially to a newly emerging sub-canon of Yoga Tantra. However, the sense of Mahāyoga as a distinct stratum of tantra did not arise immediately: the mid-eighth century eighteen-text cycles discussed by Jñānamitra and Amoghavajra include tantras that would later be classified as Yoga Tantra and well as tantras that would later be classified as Mahāyoga, and neither Indian exegete makes any doxographical distinctions among the canon of texts.

The corpus of tantras that would come to be classified as Mahāyoga—and particularly its earliest members, such as the *Secret Assembly Tantra*—clearly shows its affinity with the *Compendium of Principles* and texts classified as Yoga Tantra in terms of maṇḍala structure, types of mudrās, enlightenment narrative, and so forth. The philosophical innovation of Mahāvairocana as an abstract entity—the mind of enlightenment or the essence of the five Buddhas—found in the *Compendium of Principles* and texts closely associated with it undergoes further development in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra* and texts classified under the rubric of Mahāyoga. In these texts Mahāvairocana is replaced by

---

<sup>771</sup> dPal dam tshig chen po'i rgyud kyi rgyal po zhes bya ba , *Śrī Mahāsamaya-tantrarāja-nāma*, P35 (Toh. 390). I quickly checked this short text but did not find the quote from the *Garland of Views* in it.

Samantabhadra (already prefigured in the introduction to the *Compendium of Principles*) who, as the embodiment of the five Buddha families, heads a new, sixth Buddha family. The *Secret Assembly Tantra*, one of the earliest Mahāyoga tantras, represents a transitional phase in this process: the Buddha at the head of the sixth family is Mahāvairocana, who has not yet been replaced by Samantabhadra.

The Mahāyoga tantras also represent a more mature stage of development of practices involving violence and sex, found in germinal form in the *Compendium of Principles* and other texts classified as Yoga Tantra. These become more emphasized and central in the Mahāyoga tantras, as we see with the *Secret Nucleus* and particularly as encapsulated in its version of the Maheśvara subjugation myth.

While the narrative in the *Compendium of Principles* involves violence, it is violence in the service of the needs of Buddhist institutions, and the establishment of Buddhist law and order is paramount. In the *Secret Nucleus* narrative, however, the violence is more pronounced and visceral (dismemberment, disemboweling, and so forth), and has a more central role. We find echoes of this in the person of Padmasambhava and his *Garland of Views* commentary on the thirteenth chapter of the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*. The texts this eighth-century Indian tantric master cites and his activities subjugating the demons of Tibet demonstrate not only the close relationship between texts classified under the rubrics of Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga but also the distinctive emphasis of the latter on wrathful deities and violent practices. Additionally, the violence portrayed in the *Secret Nucleus* subjugation narrative also demonstrates an antinomian character, with cannibalism, the consumption of excrement, and the like, and the establishment of Buddhist rule—central to the original version of the myth as it appears in the *Compendium of Principles* and related texts—fades to the background (if not altogether).

Moreover, practices involving sex are now an integral part of the meditative process in the *Secret Nucleus Tantra*'s subjugation narrative. Copulating deity couples,

simultaneously engaged in deep meditation and each other, emanate the maṇḍala of wrathful deities out of the great bliss of their union. There is also a transgressive aspect to sexual practices, as evidenced by the fact that the Herukas—the Buddhist subduers of Maheśvara and his retinue—contravene accepted moral standards by sleeping with their conquered foes' wives.

The trends toward violence and sex as important and even central aspects of ritual praxis, characteristic of mature Mahāyoga, comes to full flower in the final stage of development of Indian Buddhist tantra. In tantras such as the *Hevajra* and *Cakrasaṃvara*, classified as Yoginī Tantras, violence and sex take center stage. Practices involving the subtle body are introduced, the erotic becomes a central focus, and the tantras take on a decidedly antinomian bent, beyond that found in Mahāyoga.

# *Chapter 5: Yoga Tantra in Tibet*

## **Introduction**

The *Compendium of Principles* and the tantric traditions it directly spawned formed in Tibet the substance of mainstream tantric traditions—under the rubric of the “Yoga Tantra” tradition—for the period beginning with the first dissemination of Buddhism in the eighth century and running through the early phases of the second dissemination of Buddhism during the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Even after later Indian traditions displaced them from the central position of importance in Tibet, these Yoga Tantra systems continued to be transmitted as a coherent tantric tradition. I will examine the translation and transmission in Tibet of the *Compendium of Principles* and texts classified as Yoga Tantra during these two periods against the backdrop of broader issues such as officially-sanctioned translation activity, the royal Vairocana cult, the period following the collapse of the Tibetan empire, the beginning of the second dissemination and the peak of Yoga Tantra’s influence, Yoga Tantra during the twelfth through sixteenth centuries, and the persistent influence of Yoga Tantra to the present.

## **Yoga Tantra during the First Dissemination of Buddhism**

As I detailed in chapters one and two, there are only four Yoga Tantras that we can say with any certainty were translated during the early period of the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet: the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, and the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*. Butön cites imperial-period translations of the *Compendium of Principles* but does not

mention the translators' names.<sup>772</sup> Although the *Compendium of Principles* does not appear in the Denkar Palace Catalogue of officially authorized translations of the imperial period, there is textual evidence that supports Butön's assertion. The extant translation in the Peking edition of the *Kangyur* states that, although the tantra has no translation colophon, it is known as a translation by [the Indian] Paṇḍita Śraddhākaravarman and the Tibetan translator Rinchen Zangpo (*Rin chen bzang po*, 958-1055 CE, active at the beginning of the later period of translation activity), and that it was revised in accordance with three different translations of the tantra *from the earlier period of translation*.<sup>773</sup>

In addition, there is the case of Buddhaguhya's *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra* (*Tantrārthāvatāra*), written during the second half of the eighth century while this Indian master was in retreat in the western Himalayas (near Mt. Kailash, according to Tibetan accounts).<sup>774</sup> The Tibetan ruler Trisong Detsen sent emissaries to invite Buddhaguhya to central Tibet; he declined the invitation but composed the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra* and other tantric commentaries and sent them to central Tibet.<sup>775</sup> This exposition on the *Compendium of Principles* includes esoteric instructions (Tib: *man ngag*; Skt: *upadeśa*) on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, its central practice. It therefore seems quite likely that the *Compendium of Principles*—the text on which the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra* expounds—was not only available to the Tibetans (Buddhaguhya himself might well have been in possession of a Sanskrit manuscript while in retreat in the Himalayas) but also that there was a Tibetan translation at that time, since sending the Tibetan king a

---

<sup>772</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.5.

<sup>773</sup> *rgyud 'di la 'gyur byang mi snang na'ang/ paṇḍā* [sic] *ta shraddhā la* [sic] *ra warmma dang/ bod kyi lotstsha ba rin chen bzang pos bsgyur bar grags shing rgya dpe rnying 'gyur mi 'dra ba gsum bstun te zhus dag bsgrubs so/ (Compendium of Principles, P112, vol. 4, 283.2.1-283.2.2).*

<sup>774</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 68a.7.

<sup>775</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 68b.2-68b.3.

text of instructions for the *Compendium of Principles* and its central practice without the tantra itself being available makes little sense.

Butön also discusses a translation of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* made during the first dissemination by the Indian master Śāntigarbha and the Tibetan translator Peltsek Rakṣita (*dpal brtsegs rakṣi ta*),<sup>776</sup> which Ma Rinchenchok<sup>777</sup> revised with standardized terminology by the early part of the ninth century. This assertion is indisputable: the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* is one of only a handful of tantras listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue, and its commentary by Buddhaguhya also appears there. The original translation can be located more precisely to the latter part of the eighth century, since Śāntigarbha performed the consecration of Samye, Tibet's first monastery, around 779 CE and thus must have been in Tibet by that date, and also because Buddhaguhya was in contact with the Tibetan court at about the same time.

Like the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* and Jñānamitra's commentary on it both appear in the Denkar Palace Catalogue, so we can date them to the early period of translation. Butön indicates that the tantra was first translated into Tibetan when Śāntigarbha was active in Tibet,<sup>778</sup> which places it toward the end of the eighth century.

The fourth text related to the Yoga Tantra corpus translated during the first dissemination of Buddhism is the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*. This appears in the

---

<sup>776</sup> The colophon of the translation in the Peking and Narthang editions of the *Kangyur* identifies the Tibetan translator as rGyal ba 'tsho, that is, \*Jayarakṣita (van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 109). However, as van der Kuijp details, Tibetan scholars as early as the twelfth century questioned the identity of the translators (van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," pp. 109-110).

<sup>777</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70a.5-70a.6.

<sup>778</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70b.4-70b.5.

Denkar Palace Catalogue, and early translations among the Tun-huang manuscripts confirm the tantra's translation during the first dissemination. Additionally, there are translations preserved in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma* that accord with the Tun-huang manuscripts and thereby provide corroboration for the early date of translation.<sup>779</sup>

*The Tibetan Attitude toward Tantra*

As the four Yoga Tantras just discussed illustrate, the translation and transmission in Tibet of the latest in Indian Buddhist tantric technologies proceeded during the latter part of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth century. The inclusion of three of the four texts in the Denkar Palace Catalogue of officially sanctioned translations demonstrates the interest of the Tibetan court in such forms of Buddhism.

However, the situation is not so cut-and-dried. The *Compendium of Principles*, for instance, is not listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue even though it almost certainly had been translated when the catalogue was compiled. Additionally, if even a fraction of the translations in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas* that are ascribed to the first dissemination of Buddhism belong to that period, there was a huge amount of translation activity taking place outside of officially supported or sanctioned situations, and much of this was concerned with tantric literature. The Tibetan ruling elite appears to have been ambivalent toward at least certain forms of tantric Buddhism and therefore did not sanction many translations of tantras or their commentarial literature.

Accounts of the translation of the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* illuminate central aspects of this imperial circumspection concerning tantra. In this regard, Butön's comments on the early translation of the

---

<sup>779</sup> Davidson, "Names of Mañjuśrī," p. 13 and Martin, "Illusion Web," pp. 184-185.



*Compendium of Principles* are notable for this passage on the editing involved in its initial translation:<sup>780</sup>

At that time, the parts of the root tantra the *Compendium of Principles* that set forth the collection of violent [or black magic] activities (Tib: *mngon spyod kyi las*; Skt: *\*abhicāra-karma*)<sup>781</sup> were left as is without being translated. The others [that is, the other parts of the *Compendium of Principles*] were thoroughly and completely translated.<sup>782</sup>

Here we have an example—in the context of Yoga Tantra during the early period of Tibet’s conversion to Buddhism—of a frequently commented upon aversion towards certain types of tantric practices.<sup>783</sup> As scholars such as Matthew Kapstein have pointed out, the wide dissemination of such practices would have been antithetical to the interests of the burgeoning Tibetan empire, which was at that time the dominant power in central

---

<sup>780</sup> *de'i tshes rtsa ba'i rgyud de nyid bsdu pa/ mngon spyod kyi las tshogs ston pa rnams ma bsgyur bar skad sor bzhaḡ tu bzhaḡ/ gḡhan rnams yongs su rdzogs par bsgyur ro/* (Butön, *Ship*, 70a.5).

<sup>781</sup> This term is difficult to translate. It connotes violence or even death wrought through ritual means, and therefore perhaps “black magic” renders it more accurately (albeit more freely).

<sup>782</sup> There is a brief text titled *Violent [ or Black Magic ] Activities* (Tib: *mNgon spyod kyi las* ; Skt: *\*Abhicāra-karma*) in the Derge, Cone, and Lhasa editions of the *Kangyur*. The text consists of a scant five lines of verse and has no title line or introduction. The body of the text appears to be instructions for performing violent/black magic activities. There is a brief closing section indicating the text title and identifying the translator team as the Indian scholar Śāntigarbha and the translator-monk Jayarakṣita (*rgya gar gyi mkhan po shāntiḡ garbha dang/ lotstsha ba bande dza ya rakṣitas bsgyur ba'o/*; Toh. 484, Karmapa Derge vol. 85, 191.7).

Śāntigarbha and Jayarakṣita were active in Tibet during the eighth century (Śāntigarbha performed the consecration of Samye Monastery in 779) when, according to Butön, the *Compendium of Principles* was first translated. It is possible that this brief text *Violent Activities* represents the parts of the *Compendium of Principles* involving black magic that Butön says were not translated during the eighth century, although, as I will discuss below, it is more likely that it represents a similar section from the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.

<sup>783</sup> For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. II, part V.

Asia, since law and order was necessary to maintain such a sprawling domain.<sup>784</sup> Thus, the ruling elite authorized and supported the translation of texts and practices promoting good moral behavior while proscribing practices associated with violence, destruction, and even death. While they might well have desired the deployment of such practices for their own purposes, they certainly wanted to control and limit access to such ritual technologies. What is particularly remarkable is that this censure was applied not only to the more antinomian tantric traditions that came to be known as Mahāyoga, but also to the classic tantra of institutional Buddhism such as the *Compendium of Principles* (as well as the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*).

There is further evidence regarding the bowdlerization of Yoga Tantra translations during the early period. Surprisingly, although the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* is one of the few tantras translated under official sponsorship—as its inclusion in the Denkar Palace Catalogue indicates—this text also underwent some sanitization in the translation process. Butön presents in succession three opinions concerning the editing of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, the source of which appears to be a text on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* by the Sakya hierarch Jetsün Drakpa Gyeltsen (*rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan*, 1147-1216):<sup>785</sup> 1) the king and his ministers objected to rites involving violent activities such as fierce burnt-offerings (*drag po'i sbyin sreg*, \**raudra-homa* or *abhicāra-homa*) and prohibited the translation of passages in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* presenting such rites; 2) such passages did not exist in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, since the reviser Ma Rinchenchok later restored passages that had been cut for other tantras but did not do so for the *Purification*

---

<sup>784</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, pp. 56-58.

<sup>785</sup> van der Kuijp, “Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet,” pp. 109 & 115-116.

of *All Bad Transmigrations*; and 3) the Khotanese version of the text contains such passages.<sup>786</sup>

Butön offers no comment on the relative merits of these positions, although according to van der Kuijp Drakpa Gyeltsen's opinion is that the passages in question were indeed translated by the reviser but were not included in the official translation, and instead circulated as "inserts" used when the practices were performed.<sup>787</sup> There is support for this position in the Derge edition of the *Kangyur*, which includes a brief text of less than one folio side sandwiched between the two recensions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*. While there is no title line or homage at the beginning of the text, the title "Violent Activities" (*mNgon spyod kyi las*) is given at the end of the text. Furthermore, van der Kuijp reports that in the Lithang edition of the *Kangyur* part of the passage has been inserted into the colophon between the names of the translators and that of the reviser.<sup>788</sup>

Therefore, it seems likely that a passage concerning ritual activities directed toward violent ends was left out of the original translation of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. There is evidence from early Tibetan exegetical traditions of this tantra to support this assertion. Butön mentions a text by Ma Rinchenchok, who revised the translation of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, called *Answering the Objections to the Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* (*sbyong rgyud kyi brgal lan*)—a text concerned with dispelling the contradictions of very difficult points of the

---

<sup>786</sup> 'di la 'khor los bsgyur ba dang me ltar 'bar ba'i skabs kyi drag po'i sbyin sreg med pa ni/ rgyal blon gyis sngags pa rnams kyis mngon spyod kyi las byed du dogs nas bkag pas ma bsgyur ro/ /zhes kha cig zer la/ kha cig na re/ physis kyi lotstshas gzhan la 'gyur chad bsabs kyang/ 'di la ma bsabs pas rgya dpe rang la med pa yin zer/ kha cig li yul gyi dpe la drag po'i sbyin sreg yod zer ro/ (Butön, *Ship*, 70a.6-70b.1).

<sup>787</sup> van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 116.

<sup>788</sup> van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 116. A comparison of the passages in the Lithang and Derge *Kangyurs* is necessary to determine their relationship.

tantra.<sup>789</sup> While to my knowledge this text is no longer extant, the fact that there were objections to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, and the fact that Rinchenchok, an influential figure in the early dissemination of Buddhism, felt it necessary to refute these objections, indicates first of all that at least certain aspects of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* met with opposition in imperial Tibet, and secondly that it was a tantra of enough importance to merit a response.

Whatever the case may be concerning the passages that were or were not left out of the translation of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* (and the evidence strongly suggests that passages were cut), what is significant for our discussion is the fact that these opinions concern official censorship in the translation of a Yoga Tantra. This indicates first of all that censorship of tantric texts and practices was an issue in Tibet during the eighth and early ninth centuries, and in particular that it was applied to Yoga Tantras as well as to the more radical and recently developed Mahāyoga tantras such as the *Secret Nucleus*.

Thus, while in later periods the *Compendium of Principles* was seen as a conservative text in comparison with the standards of violence and sex in tantras such as the *Secret Nucleus*, it appears that within its original historical context in Tibet Yoga Tantra itself was considered sufficiently dangerous and objectionable (at least in parts) to elicit government concerns and censure (I will revisit the issue of censorship in discussing Yoga Tantra's role during the early part of the second dissemination of Buddhism). Butön's discussion of imperial-period censorship also indicates that this was still an issue in Butön's milieu of fourteenth-century Tibet; it would continue to be so at least for another hundred years, as the Sakya scholar Gorampa Sönam Senge (*Go rams pa bSod*

---

<sup>789</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 70b.3-70b.4.

*nams seng ge*, 1425-1469) also discusses it in his commentary on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.<sup>790</sup>

The ambivalence of the Tibetan court toward Buddhism, and especially toward tantra, can be seen in the *Testament of Wa*, the earliest extant chronicle of the first dissemination of Buddhism. Throughout the narrative there are references to ministers opposed to Buddhism, so we must bear in mind the important socio-political aspects of the introduction of Buddhism. In addition, the Tibetan world (then as now) was a world populated by unseen agents. Therefore, ritual efficacy in controlling these forces was of paramount importance, as was the corresponding threat of black magic.

We see the concern with black magic in the accounts concerning Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava, the two most important Indian Buddhist masters active in Tibet during the early part of the first dissemination. Although he had an interest in Buddhism, for some time the Tibetan ruler Trisong Detsen hesitated in extending an invitation to the monastic preceptor Śāntarakṣita for fear of opposition among his ministers. Then, even after Śāntarakṣita arrived in Lhasa, the king was suspicious of black magic and evil spirits and so dispatched three ministers, who interrogated the monk *for two months* before the king himself would meet with the Indian master.<sup>791</sup> Śāntarakṣita then expounded Buddhist doctrine to the king and others, but several natural disasters occurred: a royal palace flooded, a castle was struck by lightning and burned down, famine and epidemics affecting people and animals descended on Tibet, and so forth. Buddhism was blamed and, under mounting pressure from his ministers (and in all likelihood his own suspicions), Trisong Detsen sent Śāntarakṣita back to Nepal whence he came.<sup>792</sup>

---

<sup>790</sup> van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 110.

<sup>791</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 40-45.

<sup>792</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 46-47.

Some time later, the king decided to issue a second invitation to Śāntarakṣita, who suggested that Padmasambhava also be invited. Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava, along with a Nepalese architect-geomancer, traveled to central Tibet. Along the way Padmasambhava performed various demon subjugations and water-related feats such as calming boiling springs through ritual. When they reached central Tibet and met Trisong Detsen, Śāntarakṣita introduced Padmasambhava as a master of mantra capable of subduing all the local deities obstructing the establishment of Buddhism and pacifying the land of Tibet.<sup>793</sup>

Padmasambhava performed a mirror-divination to identify the obstructing deities, and then performed a ritual to subdue them and bind them by oath into the service of Buddhism. After completing the ritual he informed the court that it must be performed twice more to complete the subjugation. The narrative then continues with Padmasambhava suggesting several water-technology and irrigation projects such as transforming sandy regions into meadows by causing springs to appear, and he performs one such water-related miracle. Trisong Detsen became suspicious and suspended further performance of these rituals, and the ruler requested Padmasambhava to leave Tibet. Padmasambhava angrily decried the king's narrow-mindedness, jealousy, and fear that he would usurp Trisong Detsen's political power, and then set out on his journey back to India. In the meantime, a meeting of the king and his counselors was convened, at which they decided that Padmasambhava must be killed to prevent him from bringing harm to Tibet. To accomplish this objective, the court dispatched a gang of assassins. However, Padmasambhava intuited the plan and performed some mudrā that froze the twenty assassins, and then continued his journey west.<sup>794</sup>

---

<sup>793</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 52-56.

<sup>794</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 57-59.

In this, the earliest account of the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, we see on the part of the Tibetan ruling elite both an interest in and great suspicion of Buddhism, and in particular a fear of tantric ritual technologies employed to control various forces (and especially black magic). Śāntarakṣita is invited and sent away, only to be invited again. Bearing in mind the discussion from chapter four concerning Padmasambhava's literary involvement in wrathful practices and the account in the *Testament of Wa*, it is clear that he specialized in violent practices of subjugation and the like. Thus, Padmasambhava is invited to Tibet to subdue local deities and other forces opposing Buddhism, but his activities meet with such suspicion that he too is sent packing—and, as a preemptive strike against the possibility that he would unleash his black magic against Tibet, an attempt is made on his life.<sup>795</sup>

It is important to remember that the king involved here is Trisong Detsen, who adopted Buddhism as the religion of the court and was the first Tibetan ruler to import Buddhism on a large scale. We are therefore dealing with a pro-Buddhist king, which makes these events all the more striking and illuminative of the Tibetan social landscape during the last half of the eighth and first half of the ninth century. Given the accounts of government proscription of passages involving violent or black-magic type rituals in the translation of the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*—as well as the *Testament of Wa*'s portrayal of the socio-political climate of eighth-century Tibet—it is clear that the Tibetan ruling aristocracy was at once both interested in and highly suspicious of certain aspects of tantric Buddhism.

---

<sup>795</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger remark that Padmasambhava engages in feats related to water and irrigation and also suggests the employment of further irrigation technologies; since the control of water resources was of utmost political importance, it is perhaps not surprising that the Tibetan government felt threatened by Padmasambhava's activities (Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 14).

*The Royal Vairocana Cult*

While I have detailed several factors that curbed the enthusiasm of the ruling elite in dynastic Tibet for tantric Buddhism, there were also compelling reasons *for* such enthusiasm. Perhaps the central manifestation of the interest of the king and the aristocracy in tantra was the development of a royal Vairocana cult, of which there is a substantial body of architectural and art-historical evidence.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence in this regard is Samye, Tibet's first monastery, constructed and consecrated (c. 779) during the reign of Trisong Detsen—the same king who both invited and dismissed Padmasambhava. Samye occupies an important place in the Tibetan psyche, as its consecration is taken as the defining event in the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism.<sup>796</sup>

Samye is a sprawling complex that consists of many buildings arranged as a maṇḍala, at the center of which is the three-storey main temple. The iconography of this central temple—the focal point of the Samye maṇḍala—reflects the importance of Vairocana. According to various versions of the *Testament of Wa*, the third storey housed a maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana, the central maṇḍala of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. Moreover, Vairocana was the central deity on the second floor, while on the ground floor Śākyamuni, who might have represented the emanation-body form of Vairocana, occupied the central position.<sup>797</sup>

---

<sup>796</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. 60.

<sup>797</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. 61. We find the continued presence of Sarvavid Vairocana in the Nyingma School, which traces its roots to the traditions of the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet. I learned from Khenpo Dorje Tashi, a prominent scholar from the Nyingma Śrī Simha Institute of Dzokchen Monastery in Kham, eastern Tibet, that the Nyingma school still has a Sarvavid Vairocana ritual tradition. They refer to it as the “Purification of Bad Transmigrations Rite” (*ngan song sbyong chog*; \**durgati-pariśodhana-vidhi*), rather than as the “Sarvavid Rite” (*kun rig gi cho ga*; \**sarvavid-vidhi*), the convention employed in the Sarma schools. Khenpo Dorje stated that,



As Kapstein points out, Vairocana is the pivotal tantric figure at Samye (although other deities not related to Vairocana are also represented throughout the complex), a pattern repeated at other temples in central Tibet dating to the latter part of the empire or early post-dynastic period.<sup>798</sup> Amy Heller has also demonstrated the existence of several stone relief images of Vairocana in eastern Tibet dating to the early ninth century.<sup>799</sup> Kapstein also cites Vairocana images from Buddhist cave-temples in Anxi Yulin and Tun-huang to illustrate his conclusion that the Vairocana cult “was widely promulgated with imperial support.”<sup>800</sup> This Vairocana cult undoubtedly drew on the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, and other texts later classified as Yoga Tantra, in addition to the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, in which Vairocana is also the central deity.

Kapstein presents a convincing formulation of the impetus behind the installment and support of this royal Vairocana cult in late imperial Tibet.<sup>801</sup> During the late eighth and early ninth centuries, Buddhism was the one cultural form that tied together the disparate regions of Asia. As tantric Buddhism continued to develop in India, it quickly spread to China, Khotan, Nepal, and many other locales in central Asia. Thus, the Tibetan

---

since contemporary Nyingma traditions have the ritual, historically they must also have had a tantra whence the ritual came.

Hugh Richardson discusses Vairocana images in the earliest temples in Tibet, which are attributed to the seventh-century rule of Songtsen Gampo (*Srong btsan sgam po*), as well as in temples constructed during the eighth century (Hugh Richardson, “The Cult of Vairocana in Early Tibet,” in Hugh Richardson, *High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*, ed. and intro. by Michael Aris [London: Serindia Publications, 1998], pp. 177-179).

<sup>798</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. 61.

<sup>799</sup> Amy Heller, “Eighth- and Ninth-Century Temples & Rock Carvings of Eastern Tibet,” in *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*, ed. by Jane Casey Singer and Philip Denwood (London: Lawrence King Publishing, 1997), pp. 96-103.

<sup>800</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. 63.

<sup>801</sup> This discussion is drawn from Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, pp. 59-60.

adoption of the Vairocana cult provided a common language to express imperial Tibetan power to its neighbors in China, India, and central Asia. Moreover, by making the Tibetan king and his empire homologous to Vairocana and his maṇḍala, royal authority could be further asserted on the basis of this relationship—an important consideration for an administration governing an empire spread across central Asia.

We can now formulate a clearer picture of the opposing forces at once driving and inhibiting the translation of tantras during the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet. One of the great concerns of the king and his court was maintaining order throughout the large Tibetan empire; thus, they attempted to restrict the translation and promulgation of tantric texts and practices involving violence, coercion, and the control of various forces, since such practices have the potential to undermine social and political stability. At the same time, the adoption of the Vairocana cult provided the rulers with a means of communicating imperial power across the linguistic and cultural borders of south, east, and central Asia. Thus, imperial authorization was given to translate the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* with its central practice of Sarvavid Vairocana (even while certain passages were proscribed) as well as an exegetical work on it by Buddhaguhya. The importance of the royal Vairocana cult can be seen also in its persistence among some of the petty kingdoms that arose after the disintegration of the Tibetan empire, as I will discuss below in the context of the second dissemination of Buddhism.

#### *Funerary Cults*

Another important aspect of the Yoga Tantras that made them attractive to the pro-Buddhist faction of the ruling elite during the first period of transmission of Buddhism to Tibet was undoubtedly its utility in death rites. As Kapstein and others have shown, mortuary rites were an important part of pre-Buddhist Tibetan culture. The rites for deceased monarchs were of particular importance and required a specialized clergy to perform them. These rites, which reflect a well-developed system of beliefs concerning

death and the deceased,<sup>802</sup> were referred to as Bön, a complex term frequently used to refer to pre-Buddhist religion as a whole as well as to a contemporary Tibetan religious form that claims descent from such (although historically it can only be dated to around the tenth or eleventh century). One of the few things we know with any certainty about the pre-Buddhist Bön was that it was responsible for performing the mortuary rites for deceased Tibetan kings.

While the *Compendium of Principles* has a brief passage on drawing beings in bad transmigrations out of their unfortunate circumstances and sending them to a happy rebirth, death and practices related to it are of central importance in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. As I discussed in chapters two and three, the frame-story of this tantra revolves around the death of a long-life god named Vimalamañiprabha and his rebirth in a hell, and funerary rites that the Buddha teaches to Vimalamañiprabha's cohort Indra to extract the fallen god from hell. Many of the rites in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* are geared toward purifying bad karma and the bad rebirths in which they result.

Because of its focus on death and rituals pertaining thereto, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* was particularly well suited to the cultural environment of eighth- and ninth-century Tibet, and especially that of the imperial court. We find evidence indicating its actual adoption in an early Tibetan Tun-huang text concerning death, in which a god modeled on Vimalamañiprabha and having a similar name appears.<sup>803</sup>

Moreover, the last section of the *Testament of Wa* concerns the adoption of Buddhist funerary rites as a replacement for Bön rites, with the catalyzing event being the funeral of Trisong Detsen.<sup>804</sup> This certainly marked a watershed in the conversion of Tibet to

---

<sup>802</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. 5.

<sup>803</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>804</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, introduction, pp. 10-11; translation, pp. 92-105.

Buddhism, as the funeral of a deceased king (and by extension those of other aristocrats) was of utmost importance in Tibet. The *Testament of Wa*'s account of Trisong Detsen's funeral mentions that the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala was constructed as part of the funeral proceedings,<sup>805</sup> which explicitly links the *Compendium of Principles* with royal mortuary rites.

The account specifies that Buddhist monks performed the actual funeral in dependence upon the *lHa'i bu dri ma med pa'i mdo* (\*Devaputra Vimāla Sūtra).<sup>806</sup> This title likely refers to the god (*devaputra*) Vimalamañiprabha, whose death provides the impetus for the teaching of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. Therefore, it seems highly likely that the funeral of Trisong Detsen was based on death rites from the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* or on a text closely related to it.

The *Testament of Wa* manuscript (31a) has a supralinear note in the margin above the title *lHa'i bu dri ma med pa'i mdo* that reads *gTsug tor dri med kyi gzungs* (\*Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇī). While Wangdu and Diemberger take this to be a second text used in the funerary rites,<sup>807</sup> I believe it is more likely an alternate title or further identification of the first text. This title suggests a connection with two dhāraṇī texts I mentioned in chapter two that are possibly related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, both of which are titled *'Phags pa dri ma med pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs* (Ārya-vimāla-nāma-

---

<sup>805</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>806</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 103.

<sup>807</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 103.

*dhāraṇī*).<sup>808</sup> Both of these texts are ascribed to the first period of translation, a claim supported by the inclusion of one of them in the Denkar Palace Catalogue.<sup>809</sup>

Slightly later, the *Testament of Wa* states that subsequently funerals were performed in dependence upon the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* and in dependence upon the Sarvavid Vairocana Maṇḍala and Nine Crown Protuberances Maṇḍala.<sup>810</sup> As I discussed in chapter two, these are the central maṇḍalas, respectively, of the earlier and

---

<sup>808</sup> 'Phags pa dri ma med pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs, *Āryavimalanāmadhāraṇī*, translated by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Ye shes sde (b. mid-eighth century), P156 (Toh. 517), listed in the Denkar Palace Catalogue (*Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 139); and 'Phags pa dri ma med pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs, *Āryavimalanāmadhāraṇī*, same translators, Toh. 871 (text is not included in the Peking edition; *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 2, p. 415).

<sup>809</sup> Butön also mentions a similarly titled dhāraṇī text from the early dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet that is connected with the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*:

The master Shāntigarbha composed the *Differentiation of the Parts of a Stūpa*; the *Rite of Constructing a Stūpa*—which relies on the *Vimala-dhāraṇī*; and the *Rite—Concordant with Yoga Tantra—of Achieving a Stūpa* in dependence upon the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra* (*slob dpon shāntiṃ garbhas/ mchod rten gyi cha rnam par dbye ba dang/ dri med kyi gzungs la brten pa'i mchod rten bya ba'i cho ga dang/ sbyong rgyud la brten nas mchod rten rnal 'byor rgyud dang mthun par sgrub pa'i cho ga mdzad*; Butön, *Ship*, 70b.1-70b.2).

With regard to the third text, the *Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition*, vol. 4, p. 386 lists a text with a slightly variant title, *mChod rten sgrub pa'i cho ga, Caitya-sādhana-vidhi*, P3476 (Toh. 2652), and indicates that the indices of the text in the Buston and Narthang editions relate that this is “from the gTsong-tor dri-ma-med-kyi gzungs. Yogatantra.” This is another possible connection between the *Vimala-dhāraṇī* and the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* that requires further investigation.

There is also a similarly titled text included in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas*, the *gTsong tor dri ma med pa sku gzugs mngon par bstan pa'i rgyud* (*The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 17 [*tsa*], 625.4-710.6). This tantra is included in the Anuyoga section of the Nyingma tantric canon; its translation is ascribed to Rinchenchok, which places it in the first dissemination. Its content concerns various aspects of stūpas, just as Shāntigarbha's text does. Additionally, the homage is to Mahāvairocana, which links it to the Yoga Tantras and/ or perhaps also to the earliest stratum of Mahāyoga. This might in fact be the tantra on which Shāntigarbha drew in formulating his ritual text on stūpas that is related to the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. Further research into this text, and comparison with Shāntigarbha's ritual text, is necessary.

<sup>810</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 105.

later versions of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*. The later version was not translated into Tibetan until the thirteenth century, which raises important questions about the account in the *Testament of Wa*. One possibility is that the mention of the Nine Crown Protuberances Maṇḍala is a later interpolation (Sørensen dates the entire section on funerary rites to the ninth century).<sup>811</sup> Another possibility is that a Nine Crown Protuberances Maṇḍala tradition (and perhaps the later version of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* itself) circulated in Tibet before the extant translation of the tantra was made during the thirteenth century.

Whatever the case, it is clear from evidence such as dynastic-period Tun-huang texts that the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* was closely associated with rites for the deceased in late imperial Tibet. This was of particular importance in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, since the royal funerary cult (and, by extension, funerary cults in general) held a central place in Tibetan social and religious life. Thus, the availability of a specific and well-developed Buddhist ritual funerary apparatus that could replace the indigenous Bön cult undoubtedly was instrumental in the Tibetan conversion to Buddhism. That such a cultus was already an essential part of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* tradition made this text one of the most important tantras of the early translation period.

#### *The Collapse of Imperial Tibet and the So-Called “Dark” Period*

Royal patronage of Buddhism accelerated after the death of Trisong Detsen at the end of the eighth century and reached its height during the reign of Relpacen (*Ral pa can*, aka *Khri gTsug lde btsan*, r. 813-838).<sup>812</sup> Upon his death, his elder brother Lang Darma

---

<sup>811</sup> Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. xv.

<sup>812</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. xvii-xviii.

(*gLang dar ma*, r. 838-842)<sup>813</sup> ascended to the throne and, according to later Buddhist traditions, launched a persecution of Buddhism. Although Lang Darma is vilified in later histories as a rabid anti-Buddhist, it is possible that this was not precisely the case. As Kapstein and others have argued, Lang Darma's policy shift toward Buddhism might have entailed the reduction or withdrawal of royal patronage rather than the full-scale persecution later Buddhist histories present.<sup>814</sup>

In any case, with the assassination in 842 of Lang Darma—purportedly by the Buddhist monk Pelgyi Dorje (*dPal gyi rdo rje*)—the Tibetan empire began to disintegrate. This ushered in a period of political and social turmoil that would last for more than one hundred years. The state of Buddhism during this so-called “dark” period is difficult to ascertain because there are few contemporary accounts concerning it. Later Buddhist histories present a bleak picture in which monastic Buddhism completely disappeared in central Tibet and was preserved only by a small number of monks who fled to the eastern and far northeastern provinces of Kham (*kham*s) and Amdo (*a mdo*), respectively.<sup>815</sup>

These accounts characterize this period as one of wide-scale degenerate religious behavior. Tales abound of lay tantric practitioners (some of whom were apparently supposed to be monks) taking literally the injunctions in the tantras to murder, fornicate, cannibalize, and so forth. For instance, Butön describes the situation this way:<sup>816</sup>

---

<sup>813</sup> R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, tr. J.E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 69.

<sup>814</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>815</sup> Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 71.

<sup>816</sup> *ar tsho'i ban de bco brgyad la sogs pas sngar chos khrims ma nyams pa'i dus su bsgyur ba'i gsang sngags kyi gzhung la 'dre bslad mang po byas te/ sbyor sgrol dang tshogs la sogs pa'i lag len phyin ci log la spyod pa* (Butön, *Ship*, 71a.7-71b.1).

The eighteen robber-monks<sup>817</sup> and so forth did much mixing and polluting of the systems of secret mantra translated previously at a time when religious law had not degenerated, and performed the perverted practices of [sexual] union and liberation [through slaying] (*sbyor sgrol*), tantric ritual orgies (*tshogs*), and so forth.

However, these accounts are written from the perspective of traditions originating in the second dissemination of Buddhism, which claims to be a corrective to the degeneration of the “dark” period and therefore has a clear agenda in portraying it as such. While it is difficult to piece together the actual state of affairs, we know that the official translation committees, which had operated under royal support, ceased to function after the collapse of the empire. However, as Kapstein points out, there was still some government patronage. At least some of the petty rulers who controlled various parts of the former empire maintained an interest in Buddhism, as activities such as temple construction indicate.<sup>818</sup>

What is clear about the post-dynastic period is that, in the absence of a strong central government—and with the monastic presence and influence severely reduced (if indeed it persisted at all, particularly in central Tibet)—lay tantric movements and their questionable behavior seem to have exploded. The translation and transmission of tantric texts and practices outside of officially sanctioned channels had certainly occurred during

---

<sup>817</sup> *ar tsho'i ban de*. Stein describes them thus:

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, married Tantrists had taken the instructions of certain Tantras literally. These ‘robber-monks’ (*ar-tsho bande, a-ra-mo ban-dhe*) kidnapped and killed men and women, ate them, drank alcohol and indulged in sexual intercourse (Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 71).

<sup>818</sup> Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, p. 12.



the first propagation of Buddhism in Tibet even while the government attempted to constrain it, as the translation of the *Compendium of Principles* demonstrates.

With the collapse of the empire, the previously unauthorized strands of Buddhism seem to have gained much fuller expression. In addition, it is likely that tantric texts and traditions of practice continued to enter Tibet during this “dark” period, although it is difficult to determine the extent to which this occurred. Although the official translation bureaus disbanded with the collapse of the empire, in all probability at least some translation activity continued during the “dark” period. Identifying with any certainty these new texts and traditions is problematic, but they likely represented the latest developments in Indian tantric Buddhism. These would have included the burgeoning corpus of Mahāyoga texts and the Yoginī Tantras, in which the tendency toward extreme and antinomian practices involving sex, violence, and the like was becoming more pronounced. The disorder and anti-institutional flavor of these traditions (which I discussed in chapter four) was no doubt well suited to the chaotic cultural context of Tibet between the middle of the ninth and middle of the tenth centuries. Just as with the development of tantric Buddhism in politically decentralized medieval India, the ethos and ideology of tantric Buddhism in Tibet mirrored the violent and divisive social and political landscape of the chaotic period following the collapse of the Tibetan empire.

### **Yoga Tantra during the Second Dissemination of Buddhism**

The accounts of Tibet during the period from the middle of the eighth century until the latter part of the ninth century appear to justify the dynastic-period fears of King Trisong Detsen and his ministers concerning certain aspects of tantra, as the practice of antinomian tantric activities proliferated and social chaos ensued (or vice versa). Royal concerns about tantra reemerged towards the end of the tenth century and, according to later accounts, this provided the impetus for the second period of the translation and transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. In chapters one and two I discussed or referenced the

translations of Yoga Tantra texts and commentaries made during this period. Rather than repeating those lists here, I will focus on a few texts that illuminate the translation process and reflect broader issues involved in the second dissemination of Buddhism.

Around the middle of the tenth century Yeshe Ö (*Ye shes 'od*), a king of western Tibet who was descended from the dynastic-period ruling family, became a devout Buddhist.<sup>819</sup> Holding the opinion that all tantric systems had become degenerate since the fall of the empire, Yeshe Ö assembled a contingent of the most able and intelligent young men from the aristocracy of western Tibet and dispatched them to Kashmir for the purpose of returning with authentic and “orthodox” tantric texts and lineages.

This marks the beginning of the second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet.<sup>820</sup> We find many of the same issues influencing the translation and transmission of tantric material as shaped the earlier period, such as the concern about practices involving violence and sex, and particularly their effect on social stability and order. The tantric traditions that were now palatable to royal tastes provide an important indicator of both the state of tantra and the status of Yoga Tantra at this time. According to Butön, Yeshe Ö specifically instructed the delegation to study and bring back the systems of the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Secret Assembly (Guhyasamāja)*, and the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*.<sup>821</sup>

---

<sup>819</sup> According to Butön, this king’s name was Khore ( *Khor re*) before he took monastic ordination as Yeshe Ö (Butön, *Ship*, 71a.5).

<sup>820</sup> Buddhism—or at least Buddhist monasticism—must already have been reestablished in western Tibet at this time, since according to the biography of Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) he was ordained at age thirteen (Guisepe Tucci, *Rin-chen-bzan-po and the Renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet around the Millenium*, tr. Nancy K. Smith, *Indo-Tibetica II* [New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1988], p. 28). Thus, around the year 973 there must have been several monks in western Tibet, since the ordination ceremony requires the presence of a number of fully-ordained monks.

<sup>821</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 71b.6-71b.7. This account also has Yeshe Ö identifying the brahmin Ratnavajra as an expert paṇḍita.

Thus, we see that the kings of western Tibet, as they attempted to reassert royal control at the end of the chaotic period that followed upon the collapse of the empire, denigrated the tantric traditions that survived this “dark period” as well as the new developments of Indian tantra that likely continued to find their way to Tibet. The *Compendium of Principles*, which had previously been considered controversial and dangerous because of its practices involving violence, was now perceived as a means of reestablishing authentic (and therefore “safe”) tantric traditions. Despite the concern during the imperial period over its ideology, the *Compendium of Principles* now appeared conservative in light of the more radical standards of violence and sex found in later tantric developments included under the rubrics of Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantra.

Additionally, the benefits of a royal Vairocana cult continued to attract the ruling elite to the *Compendium of Principles* and other Yoga Tantras. We find Vairocana temples at the center—the preeminent location—of monastic complexes built under royal patronage in western Tibet, including important art-historical sites such as the monasteries of Tabo and Alchi.<sup>822</sup> Moreover, the utility of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* as a funeral rite no doubt contributed to its popularity.

It is largely for these reasons that Yoga Tantra ascended to prominence during the initial phase of the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet. This period was dominated by Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055)—one of the youths sent by Yeshe Ö to Kashmir—whose translation activities were so prolific that he is known simply as “The Great Translator” (*Lo tstsha ba chen po*; abbr. *Lo chen*).

Butön chronicles the texts Rinchen Zangpo and Lekpe Sherap (*Legs pa'i shes rab*, aka *Lo chung*, “the Junior Translator”) studied, translated, and were initiated into over the

---

<sup>822</sup> Tabo monastery is located in the present-day Spiti region of Himachal Pradesh, India; Alchi is located in Ladakh, west of Leh.

course of their careers, which included three trips to India as well as collaborations with Kashmiri scholars invited to Tibet.<sup>823</sup> During their first trip to Kashmir they entered the Illumination of the World (*'jig rten snang byed, \*loka-āloka-kari*)<sup>824</sup> Maṇḍala with the Kashmiri preceptor Candrahari. They also received initiation and teachings from Paṇḍita Śraddhākaravarman in the two main systems of the *Secret Assembly Tantra*—the Jñānapāda system and the Superior system. In the Amṛtodaya—the main temple of the Kashmir region—they requested and received initiation in the Dharmadhātu Spoken Initiation Maṇḍala from Paṇḍita Padmākaravarman.

Butön then details their involvement with the *Compendium of Principles*, stating that they obtained texts of the tantra, the commentary on its difficult points (which I have not been able to identify), Ānandagarbha's Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala ritual text known by the abbreviated title *Source of Vajras*,<sup>825</sup> and so forth. Butön also states that Rinchen Zangpo and Lekpe Sherap requested and received initiation in the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala from Paṇḍita Śraddhākaravarman, and that subsequently they completely entered the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala thirty-five times. Thus, it is clear from Butön's account that the *Compendium of Principles* was a central part of the training Rinchen Zangpo and Lekpe Sherap undertook, beginning with their first trip to Kashmir.

---

<sup>823</sup> This section is drawn from Butön, *Ship*, 72a.4-74b.7. Tucci, drawing on biographies of Rinchen Zangpo, states that the first stay in Kashmir lasted about seven years (Tucci, *Rin-chen-bzan-po*, p. 61).

<sup>824</sup> There is a text with this title in the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingmas : rGyud kyi rgyal po chen po dpal 'jig rten snang byed (The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol.36 [*chi*], 852.6-933.2). This text is in the Vajrakilaya cycle and therefore is probably not related to the maṇḍala, but further research is needed.

<sup>825</sup> *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rdo rje thams cad 'byung ba zhes bya ba, Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyikasarvavajrodayanāma*, P3339, vol. 74. The abbreviated Sanskrit title of this text is *Sarvavajrodaya (Source of All Vajras)* or just *Vajrodaya (Source of Vajras)*; the abbreviated Tibetan is *rDo rje thams cad 'byung ba* or just *rDo rje 'byung ba*.

In terms of exegetical literature on the *Compendium of Principles*, although they searched for a text of Ānandagarbha's commentary the *Illumination of the Principles*, they did not find one (I will discuss the difficulties encountered in locating a Sanskrit manuscript of this text below). Rinchen Zangpo and Lekpe Sherap did, however, train in Śākyamitra's commentary, the *Kosala Ornament*. Interestingly, there is no mention of Buddhaguhya's commentary on the *Compendium of Principles*—the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra*—which was so important during the first dissemination of Buddhism. One possible reason is that a translation already existed in Tibet and so there was no need to translate it again, but this does not explain why the two translators did not train in this text. Another possibility is that the *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra* was not important in Kashmir, perhaps because it did not gain a circulation outside central India. This suggests variations in regional Indian traditions, which I will discuss below.

According to Butön's account, Rinchen Zangpo and Lekpe Sherap did not translate any texts during their first trip to Kashmir. They did, however, invite several of their Kashmiri teachers to western Tibet, of which Butön identifies the following by name: the paṇḍitas Śraddhākaravarman, Padmākaravarman, and Prajñākaravarman (the three Karas); Kamalagupta; Dharmāśribhadra; and Kanakavarman. With these and other Indian scholars Rinchen Zangpo and Lekpe Sherap would translate a multitude of texts.

Śraddhākaravarman and Rinchen Zangpo translated texts of both cycles of the *Secret Assembly Tantra* at Toling in western Tibet. At this time they also translated the *Compendium of Principles Tantra*, although as I mentioned earlier it appears that they revised previous translations rather than making a new translation. They also are credited with the translations of Ānandagarbha's *Source of Vajras*, the first part of the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra* and its commentary (I will discuss the translation of this tantra in detail below), and several other texts. In collaboration with Dharmāśribhadra, Rinchen Zangpo translated Śākyamitra's *Kosala Ornament* and Prajñāpāli's *Consecration*

Rite.<sup>826</sup> With Padmākaravarman he translated the shorter *Commentary on the Śrī Paramādyā* by Padmavajrāṅkuśa and another text related to the *Śrī Paramādyā* by the same author; Mutitakośa's *Array of the Deities of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala*,<sup>827</sup> and Ānandagarbha's response to (or refutation of) Śākyamitra's *Kosala Ornament* (which I have not yet identified).

Rinchen Zangpo made a second trip to Kashmir,<sup>828</sup> during which he revised some translations he had made previously. He still could not locate a manuscript of Ānandagarbha's *Illumination of the Principles*. Therefore, he took Śākyamitra's *Kosala Ornament* as the commentary on the *Compendium of Principles* and Ānandagarbha's *Source of Vajras* as the practice text. As a consequence of this, he mixed the language and exegetical system of Śākyamitra's *Kosala Ornament* with that of Ānandagarbha's ritual text. For instance, the main deity Vairocana is asserted to be like four people with their backs joined rather than like one person with four heads.<sup>829</sup>

Rinchen Zangpo obtained a Sanskrit manuscript of Ānandagarbha's *Illumination of the Principles* only when the translator Ngok Rinchen Gyeltsen (*rNgog Rin chen rgyal mtshan*) gave him one as an offering to receive the *Secret Assembly* tradition.<sup>830</sup> Rinchen Gyeltsen had acquired this text in Nepal, along with Sanskrit manuscripts of Ānandagarbha's *Source of Vajras*, *Rite of the Conquest over the Three Realms Maṇḍala*, and *Rite of the Nine Crown-Protuberances*. Butön subsequently indicates that these

---

<sup>826</sup> *sPyan dbye ba'i cho ga, Pratiṣṭhāvidhi*, P3347.

<sup>827</sup> *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i lha rnam kyi rnam par gzhaḡ pa, Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalasarvadevavyavasthāna*, P3327. *The Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition* (vol. 4, p. 295) reads *Muditakośa* for *Mutitakośa*.

<sup>828</sup> Tucci states that the second trip was to eastern India (probably the monastic university Vikramaśīla) and the third trip was a return to Kashmir, and that these totaled ten years (Tucci, *Rin-chen-bzan-po*, p. 61).

<sup>829</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 74a.7-74b.1. This is in fact the form of the central Vairocana statue in the main temple at Tabo monastery in western Tibet.

<sup>830</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 74b.7-75a.1.

manuscripts were connected with the Magadha region of India.<sup>831</sup> This indicates the importance of Nepal as a gateway between India (and particularly the region of present-day Bihar) and Tibet. We recall that during the eighth century Śāntarakṣita was residing in Nepal when he was invited to Tibet. As Butön's account details, Nepal was an important repository for Sanskrit manuscripts from eastern India; this situation continues to the present, as Snellgrove's discovery in Nepal of a ninth or tenth-century Sanskrit manuscript of the *Compendium of Principles* from Bihar illustrates.

Additionally, the manuscript Ngok Rinchen Gyeltsen gave Rinchen Zangpo was only the first part of Ānandagarbha's *Illumination of the Principles*.<sup>832</sup> Thus, another important factor in the translation process was the division of large texts into parts, which apparently were at times separated from each other. This resulted in different parts of a text being translated at different times and, in some cases, by different translators.<sup>833</sup>

Moreover, Butön relates that Rinchen Zangpo made a provisional translation of the first part of Ānandagarbha's commentary by himself, without the collaboration of an Indian scholar. In Tibet a great emphasis was placed on the lineage of instruction passed from teacher to student, and this was particularly important at the beginning of the second period of translation, when reestablishing authentic lineages was of paramount importance.<sup>834</sup> The practice of translating a text without instruction from an Indian

---

<sup>831</sup> *yul dbus kyi dpe bal po nas byung ba* (Butön, *Ship*, 75a.7).

<sup>832</sup> *de nyid snang ba'i stod 'grel* (Butön, *Ship*, 74b.7).

<sup>833</sup> This is the case for Ānandagarbha's commentary on the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*.

<sup>834</sup> This standard was also applied to Indian scholars and their exegeses. Butön casts doubt on the authenticity and interpretive value of Munitaṃbhadrā's (aka Munīndrabhadra) summary of Ānandagarbha's *Source of All Vajras* (P3352), stating,

It appears that the paṇḍita provisionally wrote a commentary without having the esoteric instructions of the master Ānandagarbha (*paṇḍi ta la slob dpon kun snying gi man ngag med par 'grel pa btsan thabs su byas par snang ngo*; Butön, *Ship*, 74a.3-74a.4).

master is little commented on (except for negatively) but must have occurred, which is underscored by the fact that a luminous figure such as Rinchen Zangpo engaged in it.

On his third trip to India, however, Rinchen Zangpo met the Oḍḍiyāna master named Buddhaśānti, from whom he received instruction in Ānandagarbha's texts. On the basis of this, he translated and finalized the texts he had received from Ngok Rinchen Gyeltsen. Butön states that there were significant differences between these translations and those made earlier from Kashmiri texts, and enumerates a detailed list of these differences (the addition or absence of parts of mantras, differences in visualizations, differences in the color of deities, and so forth).

This account reveals important aspects of the translation process. At least some Sanskrit texts circulated in certain regions of India but not in others. Additionally, for a given text there were significant differences in the textual, exegetical, and ritual traditions of different regions. This was undoubtedly a significant factor in the shape Tibetan Buddhism took, particularly during the early part of the second dissemination of Buddhism, as regional traditions in India became normative in Tibet.

#### The *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*

The account of the translation of the *Śrī Paramādyā* and its commentary also reveals important aspects of the translation process in Tibet. First, the tantra appears as two separate translations in the *Kangyur*. As I discussed in chapter two, the first text, consisting of chapters one through twelve, comprises the first of the tantra's four sections. Rinchen Zangpo and Lekpe Sherap trained in this during their first trip to Kashmir, where they received the initiations of the condensed lineage from Śraddhākaravarman. Upon returning to western Tibet, Rinchen Zangpo translated the

---

This introduces another element to the translation process: texts by Indian scholars that represented interpretive strands of dubious quality.



first part of the *Śrī Paramādyā* and its commentary with Śraddhākaravarman.<sup>835</sup> Butön relates that in places in the first section of the *Śrī Paramādyā* the bark on which the text was written had rotted and therefore the translators had to set aside one or two illegible lines while translating the rest of a passage. Consequently, there were gaps in the translation of the first section and the beginning part of the second section, and the text from the latter part of the second section onward (that is, through the third and fourth sections) remained untranslated because the Indian text had not been located.<sup>836</sup>

During his second trip to Kashmir, Rinchen Zangpo proofread the translations of the first section of the *Śrī Paramādyā* as well as the commentary on it. However, because he still could not locate Sanskrit texts of the commentary on the gaps in his translation of the mantra section (that is, the second section of the *Śrī Paramādyā*) or the second, third, and fourth sections of the tantra itself, he was unable to prepare translations of them.<sup>837</sup>

Later, after Rinchen Zangpo had died, Indian texts of the root tantra of the *Śrī Paramādyā* and the commentary on it were obtained from the Kashmir region.<sup>838</sup> Prince Zhiwa Ö (*lHa pho 'brang zhi ba 'od*, a grand-nephew of Yeshe Ö) and the paṇḍita Mantrakalaśa then filled in all the gaps and translated the text from the second section on. They used Rinchen Zangpo's translation of the commentary on the first section and the first part of the second section, and then filled in the gaps in the latter part of the second

---

<sup>835</sup> There is also evidence that an earlier translation of this section existed. The colophon to the text in the Tingkye edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma* identifies the translators as Buddhaguhya and Ma Rinchenchok and then adds that later, Śraddhākaravarman and Rinchen Zangpo translated it (*rgya gar gyi mkhan po sangs rgyas gsang ba dang lo tsa ba rma rin chen mchog gi bsgyur ba'o// slad kyi a tsarya shrad dha ka ra war ma dang/ zhu chen gyi lo tstsha ba dge slong rin chen bzang pos bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa/; gTing skyes edition of The Collected Tantras of the Ancients*, vol. 17 [tsa], 236.2-236.3; online: <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/tibet/pgviewer/pgview.php?id=TK.243>).

<sup>836</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 73a.7-73b.1.

<sup>837</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 74a.2-74a.3.

<sup>838</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 81a.3-81a.5.

section, revised the passages of the previous translation, and translated the previously untranslated sections. In this way they completely translated all four sections of the commentary as well as the tantra itself.<sup>839</sup>

The translation of the *Śrī Paramādyā* and its commentary reveal important aspects of the translation process. Only the first part of the tantra and its commentary were initially obtained. The second part of the text and commentary were not found until sometime later, and therefore the two parts have different translators. Additionally, the text itself was degraded in some places to such an extent as to be illegible, and gaps were left in the translation. This demonstrates the fragility of the text itself in the translation process, and the importance the state of the physical artifact (in this case, birch bark) holds for the form the translation takes.

There is another possible implication of the account of the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra* translation. It is somewhat surprising that Rinchen Zangpo's Kashmiri collaborators were not able to supply the content of the missing lines. Thus, we find here a strong indication that even prominent Tibetan translators did not find it easy to obtain manuscripts of texts or contemporary oral exegeses even for texts of such widespread and important traditions as that of the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*.

## **Yoga Tantra after Rinchen Zangpo**

The several Yoga Tantra temples constructed in western Tibet under royal patronage underline the importance of Yoga Tantra during the initial phases of the second dissemination of Buddhism. Moreover, the dominant figure of this period, Rinchen Zangpo, was renowned as a master of Yoga Tantra. Butön relates that Rinchen Zangpo considered himself such a Yoga Tantra expert that he refused to take Yoga Tantra

---

<sup>839</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 81a.3-81a.7. The colophon of the second *Śrī Paramādyā* text also states that Rinchen Zangpo was unable to find the entire text and that it was later found and translated (*Śrī Paramādyā II*, P120, vol. 5, 173.1.6-173.1.8).

teachings from Atiśa (982-1054 CE),<sup>840</sup> the Indian master of Vikramaśīla monastery who spent the last twelve years of his life in western and central Tibet. The significance of this is underscored by the fact that Atiśa was perhaps the most influential Indian figure active in Tibet at the beginning of the second transmission of Buddhism.

Nevertheless, the influence of Yoga Tantra waned as more and more Tibetans traveled to India and returned with the latest in tantric doctrines and procedures, including practices involving the subtle body. By the eleventh century, these systems were being incorporated into the institutional monastic framework in India, where even the most extreme practices involving sex, violence, cannibalism, and the like were interpreted in such a way as to blunt at least somewhat their antinomian bent and render them palatable for a monastic audience.

These tantras, which would be categorized under the rubric of Highest Yoga Tantra, displaced Yoga Tantra at the top of the tantric food chain. However, the Yoga Tantras continued to be fundamental components of the ritual and scholastic training of prominent Tibetan religious personages. The important eleventh-century Nyingma figure Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo wrote commentaries on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.<sup>841</sup> We also find several texts on Yoga Tantra among the works of the early Sakya hierarchs, including Jetsün Drakpa Gyeltsen's (1147-1216) commentary on Ānandagarbha's *Source of Vajras*<sup>842</sup> and several works on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*.

---

<sup>840</sup> Butön, *Ship*, 76b.6. This account still circulates in contemporary Gelukpa oral traditions and was related to me by the late Ven. Pema Losang Chögyen, Maṇḍala Master of Namgyel Monastery in Dharamsala, India (personal communication, July, 1996).

<sup>841</sup> Among these are the *Ngan song sbyong rgyud kyi 'grel pa* (Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), P3816).

<sup>842</sup> rJe btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan, *rDo rje 'byung ba'i yig sna*, in *The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa Skya Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 4, compiled by bSod nams rgya mtsho (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1968), 112.2.1-147.4.6.

Yoga Tantra undergoes a brief renaissance with the activities of Butön during the first half of the fourteenth century. While the works in his twenty-eight volume corpus cover a wide range of topics, he is considered to be a Yoga Tantra expert above all else. He composed approximately forty Yoga Tantra texts—both exegetical and liturgical works—that span some four volumes of his collected works. Butön’s Yoga Tantra corpus includes his introduction to and history of Yoga Tantra, a summary of Ānandagarbha’s *Illumination of the Principles*, eight texts on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, four texts on the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, ten texts on the *Śrī Paramādyā*, twelve texts on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, a text on the *Conquest over the Three Worlds*, and a consecration rite. In addition, Butön translated Indian texts that had not been translated and revised others, and directed the painting of Yoga Tantra wall murals at Zhalu monastery.

While Butön is Tibet’s most celebrated master of Yoga Tantra, we also find several Yoga Tantra lineages in the list of teachings received (*gsan yig*) of his slightly younger contemporary, the important Nyingma figure Longchenpa (1308-1363). His biography states that he received instruction in the following Yoga Tantra texts: the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, the *Vajraśekhara*, Ānandagarbha’s *Source of Vajras*, the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, the Vajradhātu [Maṇḍala], and Sarvavid [Vairocana practice].<sup>843</sup>

The importance of Yoga Tantra in the religious training of prominent Tibetan scholars was widespread. Tsongkapa (1357-1419), the founder of the Gelukpa school, wrote

---

<sup>843</sup> Kun-bzañ-’gyur-med-mchog-grup-dpal, Thugs-sras Sprul-sku of Lha-luñ V, *Kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po gter chen dri med ’od zer gyi rnam par thar pa cuñ zad spros pa ño mtshar skal bzañ mchog gi dga’ ston: A Brief Biography of Kun-mkhyen Kloñ-chen Rab-’byams-pa Dri-med-’od-zer (1308-1363) with an Account of the Rediscovered Teachings of His Prophesied Reembodiment Gter-chen Padma-gliñ-pa (1450-1521)* (Delhi: Ngawang Chodron, 1984), 16.3 and 17.3-17.4.

several Yoga Tantra works on texts such as the *Compendium of Principles*, the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, the *Śrī Paramādyā*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* and its Sarvavid Maṇḍala rite, and the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, as well as a section on Yoga Tantra in his *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path of Secret Mantra* (*sNgags rim chen mo*). Additionally, the first section of his *Explanation of Ethics of Secret Mantra: Fruit Cluster of Feats* (*gSang sngags kyi tshul khriṃs kyi rnam bshad dngos grub kyi snye ma*), a discussion of the standards of tantric conduct, is structured around the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*'s presentation of tantric pledges.<sup>844</sup> Moreover, according to his biography, Tsongkapa studied Yoga Tantra for a year at Zhalu monastery (Butön's seat) in addition to training with scholars from Zhalu both before and after his residence there.<sup>845</sup> Thus, he attached a great deal of importance to Yoga Tantra, as is clear from the considerable amount of time he devoted to its study.

Roughly contemporary with Tsongkapa was the scholar Bodong Chokle Namgyel (*Bodong Phyogs las rnam rgyal*, 1376-1451). He composed texts on the *Śrī Paramādyā* and the Sarvavid rite as well as a general presentation of Yoga Tantra.<sup>846</sup> Yoga Tantra traditions also continued in the Sakya school; for example, the scholar Gorampa Sönam Senge (1425-1469) wrote three texts on the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, one of which is a commentary on the entire tantra.<sup>847</sup>

During the sixteenth century the prominent Kagyü hierarch Mikyö Dorje (*Mi bskyod rdo rje*, 1507-1554)—the eighth Karmapa—composed works on the *Purification of All*

---

<sup>844</sup> I am grateful to Ven. Gareth Sparham for generously sharing with me his unpublished but completed translation of and introduction to Tsongkapa's *Fruit Cluster of Feats*, before which I was not aware of the text.

<sup>845</sup> Ven. Gareth Sparham, *An Explanation of Ethical Standards in Secret Mantra Called "Fruit Cluster of Accomplishments"* (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>846</sup> Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), P2627.

<sup>847</sup> *gZhan phan kun khyab* (van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tantra in Tibet," p. 110).

*Bad Transmigrations* and the Sarvavid rite<sup>848</sup> in addition to a lengthy exposition on Yoga Tantra, which he wrote in 1547.<sup>849</sup> Slightly later, the Drikung Kagyü hierarch Chökyi Drakpa (*'Bri gung Chos kyi grags pa*, 1595-1659) wrote ritual texts for Sarvavid Vairocana Maṇḍala practice.<sup>850</sup> As late as the end of the nineteenth century Yoga Tantra texts were still being written by the likes of Losel Tenkyong (*bLo gsal bstan skyong*, b. 1804),<sup>851</sup> incarnate lama of the retreat connected with Zhalu monastery; thus, it appears that Yoga Tantra traditions continued with some vigor at Butön's monastic seat into the twentieth century, and most likely until the Chinese occupation.

Yoga Tantra traditions continue in all schools of Tibetan Buddhism to the present. Initiation lineages persist for the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala in the Sakya and Geluk schools, although by all accounts there is only one living master of Yoga Tantra, the octogenarian Sakya lama Cobgye Trichen Rinpoche (*bCo brgyad khri chen rin po che*). In terms of praxis, the only Yoga Tantra system performed with any frequency is the Sarvavid Vairocana Maṇḍala of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations Tantra*, which is employed as a funeral rite in the three schools that emerged from the second dissemination of Buddhism.<sup>852</sup> As was likely also the case in India, the practical application of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* in death rites resulted in its popularity over time and persistence as the lone Yoga Tantra practiced widely today.

---

<sup>848</sup> Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), P385.

<sup>849</sup> van der Kuijp, "Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet," p. 111.

<sup>850</sup> Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), P2666.

<sup>851</sup> Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), P857.

<sup>852</sup> I have heard second-hand that the late Khyunga Rinpoche, former retreat master of the Drikung Kagyü school, employed Sarvavid rituals frequently and for a wide variety of purposes (personal communication, Hun Lye, April, 2002).

## Conclusion

The significant role traditions classified as Yoga Tantra have played in shaping Tibetan Buddhism is evident from the earliest period of translation activity, when the *Compendium of Principles*, the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, and other Yoga Tantras—together with their exegetical and ritual systems—were transmitted to Tibet. Several factors made these tantras attractive to the dynastic-period ruling elite: they represented the latest in Indian tantric technology, were adaptable as a royal Vairocana cult, and, in the case of the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, offered a tantric system of funerary rites to compete with the indigenous Bön systems that were a fundamental part of Tibetan religious life. Certain elements of these tantras—in particular, those involving ritual violence and black magic—concerned imperial officials and elicited their proscription; this concern was borne out as antinomian and extreme tantric behavior appears to have flourished during the period of social disorder and dislocation that followed the collapse of the Tibetan dynasty.

At the beginning of the second dissemination of Buddhism, the *Compendium of Principles* and other texts included under the rubric of Yoga Tantra were seen as conservative in relationship to the violence and sex of later tantric developments and the deployment of such practices during the “dark” period. As such, the tantras of the Yoga class were used to reestablished authentic tantric lineages and “correct” modes of tantric behavior. This, in conjunction with its continued utility as a royal Vairocana cult as well in funerary rites, resulted in Yoga Tantra traditions reaching the zenith of their influence in Tibet during the late tenth and eleventh centuries. This influence waned as subsequent tantric developments entered Tibet from India, but the *Compendium of Principles* and other Yoga Tantra traditions continued to be an integral part of the curriculum for Tibetan scholars as well as an important funerary rite.

## *Chapter 6: Conclusion*

Buddhist tantra emerged in India as an independent, self-consciously distinct tradition during the latter part of the seventh century. Many aspects of tantra have long histories in India, as evidenced by various dhāraṇī texts. Moreover, many texts produced earlier—the development of which culminates in the production of the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana* around 630 or 640 CE—were retroactively classified as tantric. However, these in essence were still fully imbedded within Mahāyāna tradition and lacked their own independent mythical narratives, doxographical identity, and so forth.

This situation changes, however, with the *Compendium of Principles*, the earliest expression of mature Buddhist tantra in India and therefore one of the most significant developments of Buddhist tantra. It is not until the compilation/ composition of the *Compendium of Principles* during the last quarter of the seventh century that mature Indian Buddhist tantra emerges, complete with its own mythology. The *Compendium of Principles* is the *locus classicus* of two of the three foundational narratives of Buddhist tantra. The first of these myths recasts Śākyamuni's enlightenment in tantric terms—the process of the five manifest enlightenments. Not only did Śākyamuni become enlightened through the tantric practice of the five manifest enlightenments, but he was unable to achieve the ultimate spiritual attainment through any means *except* the latest tantric procedure of deity yoga. This establishes a distinct identity for tantra vis-à-vis earlier forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism while also staking its claim to authenticity. We see the importance of this narrative in the *Compendium of Principles*, the first mature



Buddhist tantra: it serves as a self-conscious declaration of tantra as a new and distinct tradition in which ritual is central, while simultaneously acting as a legitimizing agent and presenting the rituals in a colorful and detailed way.

The contemplative process through which Śākyamuni becomes enlightened, discussed in chapters one and three, involves first realizing the luminous nature of one's mind. This realization then appears in the form of a moon disc and is further developed through the rest of the five-stage process, which culminates in Śākyamuni's transformation into a completely enlightened Buddha. This is the earliest presentation, to my knowledge, of the practice of generating oneself as an enlightened Buddha figure—known as deity yoga—in a Buddhist tantra (eighth-century Indian exegetes ascribe deity yoga to earlier tantras, but the passages on which they draw do not clearly identify the practice—and there is nothing even remotely resembling the detailed description we find in the *Compendium of Principles*). Deity yoga is one of the distinctive characteristics of mature tantra, as is another aspect of each of the five stages in this process, the use of mantras (which, however, are also found in much earlier Buddhist texts).

The second foundational tantric myth is the narrative of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara. Here, we find the rationale for ritual violence and even murder that, as I mentioned in chapter one and then discussed again in chapter four, becomes more central in the later tantric developments classified as Mahāyoga and Yoginī tantras. This myth, as I discussed in chapter three, reflects not only internal influences but also external pressures Buddhism faced in seventh- and eighth-century India, such as a decentralized and fragmented socio-political environment dominated by militarism, a decline in patronage for Buddhist monastic institutions, and the rise of Śaivite sects—against which Buddhist monasteries were in direct competition—espousing a rhetoric of violence.

The violence promoted in this narrative is in the service of Buddhist monastic institutions and focuses on the establishment and maintenance of Buddhist systems of conduct and order. This likely reflects the development of large Buddhist monasteries at the time, the competition with Śaivite groups for patronage, and the fractious social situation in India.

The transformations the Maheśvara subjugation narrative undergoes in later tantras such as the *Secret Nucleus* reveal a stronger antinomian and anti-institutional bent, as I discussed in chapter four. This is seen also in the increasing centrality of violence in tantras included under the rubrics of Mahāyoga and Yogini Tantra, as well as the increasing centrality of sexo-yogic practices which, although found in germinal form in the *Compendium of Principles*, are tangential to the main thrust of the tantra. The Indian Mahāyoga figure and exorcist Padmasambhava, in both the *Garland of Views* attributed to his authorship and his activities in Tibet, perhaps discloses the process by which Mahāyoga tantras developed out of the *Compendium of Principles* and the corpus of tantras that grew directly out of it and were later classified as Yoga Tantra. A study of the Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga works of Padmasambhava's teacher Buddhaguhya might provide concrete evidence concerning this development.

The Maheśvara subjugation narrative, together with a brief practice of sending beings in bad transmigrations to a happier rebirth also found in the *Compendium of Principles*, presents a “liberation through slaying” ritual ideology for dealing with one's enemies (or competitors) and others inimical to Buddhism. The latter practice gains full expression in the *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations*, one of the most important texts of the corpus later referred to as Yoga Tantra,. In both India and later in Tibet this tantra gained popularity, at least in part because it provides—and in fact revolves around—a complete system of tantric funerary rites; additionally, it contains six other maṇḍalas designed for the practical aims of controlling forces responsible for various maladies and misfortunes.

The development of practical rites in India likely was fueled at least in part by the increasing economic difficulties Buddhist monastic institutions experienced, since entry into the field of death rites and other worldly rites undoubtedly increased revenue for monasteries.

The third foundational myth of Buddhist tantra, while not presented in the *Compendium of Principles* itself, is closely related to this tantra. It occurs for the first time in Jñānamitra's eighth-century commentary on the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas*, another tantra included in the Yoga class. In this origin narrative a set of eighteen tantras miraculously appear in the world. The practices that the master Kukkurāja sets forth for King Indrabhūti and his entourage from this corpus include meditation on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, which explicitly links the myth with the *Compendium of Principles*.

This narrative is shared with Mahāyoga systems, and the existence of eighteen-text tantric cycles in Indian materials preserved in both Chinese and Tibetan translation reveals deep continuities between Yoga Tantra and Mahāyoga, which I have discussed in chapter four. Further research into the *Mode of the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Stanzas* and another Yoga Tantra closely associated with it, the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*, would perhaps yield more evidence on the historical development of Indian tantra from Yoga Tantra to Mahāyoga and, more broadly, the relationship between non-tantric Mahāyāna and tantra. There is also the case of the *Collection of All Procedures*, the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* of the Yoga Tantra corpus, and the *Yoga of the Equality of All Buddhas Tantra* of the Mahāyoga corpus, which I discussed in chapter four. Further research into these texts and their relationships might reveal important aspects of the historical development of Buddhist tantra in India.

In addition to its pivotal role in establishing a distinctly tantric identity through providing a mythological underpinning, the *Compendium of Principles* is also the source

of several other important aspects of mature Buddhist tantra. The arrangement of maṇḍalas around a five Buddha-family structure rather than the three-family pattern of earlier tantras as well as the fixture of Vairocana and his Tathāgata family in the center of both the maṇḍala and the tantra as a whole were innovations of the *Compendium of Principles* (although Vairocana does appear as the central figure in the *Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana*, and the Tathāgata family was hierarchically superior in three-family systems).

In addition to the foundational role the *Compendium of Principles* played in establishing and defining Buddhist tantra, this tantra also serves as the central text around which are constellated an important corpus of tantras. While some of these are more closely related than others, the *Compendium of Principles* and its associated texts represent the first true corpus of Indian Buddhist tantra. The *Vajraśekhara Tantra* and the *Conquest over the Three Worlds* represent the debut of the explanatory tantra, which amplifies, explains, and supplements the root tantra with which it is associated. We also find several other tantras of this corpus that further develop practices found in the *Compendium of Principles*, categorized under the rubrics of four other types of tantra: supplementary tantras, secondary supplementary tantras, concordant tantras, and elaborating or branch tantras.

Over time, the *Compendium of Principles* and the body of texts that evolved around it were, in some parts of India and Tibet, redacted into and understood as a tradition called “Yoga Tantra” in contrast to new tantric developments, such as those identified as “Mahāyoga” and “Yoginī Tantra,” that would displace them on the cutting edge of tantric technology. In East Asia, however, these later traditions never took hold, and thus the *Compendium of Principles* and its corpus of texts continued to be conceived as tantra rather than being reduced and classified into something called “Yoga Tantra.”

In Tibet, the *Compendium of Principles* was a central tantra during the first transmission of Buddhism despite imperial concerns about practices involving ritualized violence and black magic. At the beginning of the second dissemination it served as a means of reestablishing authentic and “safe” tantric lineages from India, as the antinomian aspects of later tantric developments seem to have exploded after the collapse of the Tibetan empire.

The *Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* was also important in Tibet. As a consequence of its utility as a funerary rite, it is the only Yoga Tantra practiced with any regularity in contemporary Tibetan culture, although training in the *Compendium of Principles* and other Yoga Tantras has been a part of the education of important Tibetan scholars since the eighth century.

# *Bibliography*

## **Abbreviations**

Catalogue of the Nyingma Edition: this refers to the catalogue of the Derge *Kangyur and Tengyur: Tibetan Buddhist Canon, Nyingma Edition*. Oakland: Dharma Press, 1981.

Derge: *The Sde-dge Mtshal-par Bka’-’gyur: A Facsimile Edition of the 18th Century Redaction of Si-tu Chos-kyi-’byuñ-gnas Prepared under the Direction of H.H the 16th Rgyal-dban Karma-pa*. Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1976-1979.

P: *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking Edition*, ed. Daisetz T. Suzuki. Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1955-1962.

T=Chinese Tripitaka: *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, ed. and comp. by Junjirō Takakusu and Kaigyoku Watanabe. Tōkyō: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1927.

Toh.: *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons*, ed. by Prof. Hukuji Ui, and *A Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works on Buddhism*, ed. by Prof. Yensho Kanakura. Sendai, Japan: 1934 and 1953.

Tsamdrak=Tsamdrak edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Nyingma: The mTshams-brag Manuscript of the rñying ma rgyud ’bum*. Thimpu, Bhutan: National Library, Royal Government of Bhutan, 1982.

## **Tibetan References**

### *Sūtras and Tantras*

*Abbreviated Consecration Tantra, Rab tu gnas pa mdor bsdus pa’i rgyud, Supraṭiṣṭhatantrasaṅgraha*. P118 (Toh. 486), vol. 5.

*All Secret King of Tantra, Thams cad gsang ba rgyud kyi rgyal po, Sarvarahasyo nāmatantrarāja.* P114 (Toh. 481), vol. 5, 56.4.8-60.3.5.

*Array of the Secret Ornament of Exalted Body, Speech, and Mind of All Tathāgatas King of Tantra, De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi gsang ba rgyan gyi bkod pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po, Sarvatathāgatakāyavākcittaguhyālamkāravayūhatanrarājanāma.* P122 (Toh. 492), vol. 5.

*Collection of All Procedures, rTog pa thams cad bsdu pa zhes bya ba sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog gi rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma, Sarvakalpasamuccayanāma sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinijālasamvara-uttarottaratantra.* P9 (Toh. 367), vol. 1, 201.5.2-210.2.3; *rTog pa thams cad bsdu pa zhes bya ba/ sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog gi rgyud phyi ma'i yang phyi ma, Sarvakalpasamucchayanāma sarvabuddhasamayogaḍākinijālasambhara-udtarottaratantra.* In *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 18 (tsha), 51.7-114.2

*Concentration Continuation Tantra, bSam gtan gyi phyi ma rim par phye ba, Dhyānottaraṣṭalākrama.* P430, vol. 9.

*Conquest over the Three Worlds Great King of Procedures, 'Jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba rtog pa'i rgyal po chen po, Trailokyavijayamahākālparājā.* P115 (Toh. 482), vol. 5, 61.1.1-83.1.8.

*Compendium of Principles, De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsdu pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, Sarvatathāgatattvasaṅgrahanāmamahāyānasūtra.* P112, vol. 4, 217.1-283.2.2.

*Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī, 'Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa'i don dam pa'i mtshan yang dag par brjod pa, Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya paramārthanāmasaṅgiti.* P2 (Toh. 360).

*Magical Emanation Net Great King of Tantra, rGyud kyi rgyal po chen po sgyu 'phrul dra ba zhes bya ba, Māyājālamahātantrarājanāma.* P102 (Toh. 466), vol. 4, 137.5.4-155.3.4.

*Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra, rNam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa byin gyis rlob pa shin tu rgyas pa mdo sde'i dbang po'i rgyal po zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs, Mahāvairocanābhisambodhivikurvītādhiṣṭhāna-vaipulyasūtrendrarāja-nāma-dharmaparyāya,* tr. by Śilendrabodhi and dPal brtsegs. P126 (Toh. 494), vol. 5, 240.3.2–284.3.1.

*Purification of All Bad Transmigrations, De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa zhes bya ba, Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājasya tathāgatasya arhataḥ samyaksambuddhasya kalpanāma.* P116 (Toh. 483), vol. 5.

*Purification of All Bad Transmigrations, De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa phyogs gcig pa zhes bya ba, Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājasya tathāgatasya arhataḥ samyaksambuddhasya kalpaikadeśanāma.* P117 (Toh. 485), vol. 5.

*Questions of Subāhu Tantra, dPung bzang gis zhus pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud, Subāhupariṣcchānāmatantra.* P428, vol. 9.

*Śrī Paramādyā I, dPal mchog dang po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i rtog pa'i rgyal po, Śrīparamadyanāmamahāyānakalparāja.* P119 (Toh. 487), vol. 5, 123.4.7-133.3.6

*Śrī Paramādyā II, dPal mchog dang po'i sngags kyi rtog pa'i dum bu zhes bya ba, Śrīparamādyamantrakalpakaḥḍanama.* P120 (Toh. 488), vol. 5, 133.3.6-173.2.1.

*Secret Assembly Tantra, dPal gsang ba 'dus pa rgyud kyi rgyal po, Śrīguhyasamajatantrarāja.* In *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud*



'bum, vol. 18 (*tsha*), 752,3-969.7; online: Tb. 409, [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic\\_\\_BookTextView/207655;hf=0;pt=203894#X](http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic__BookTextView/207655;hf=0;pt=203894#X).

*Secret Nucleus Tantra, gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa, Guhyagarbhatattvaviniścaya.* In *The mTshams brag Manuscript of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 20 (*wa*), 152.6-218.7; online Tb.417, [http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic\\_\\_BookTextView/213773;hf=0;pt=212055#X](http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:6060/ntrp/tibet/tb.ed/@Generic__BookTextView/213773;hf=0;pt=212055#X).

*Superior Mode of the Perfection in 150 Stanzas, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul brgya lnga bcu pa, Āryaprajñāpāramitānayaśatapañcaśatikā.* P121 (Toh. 489), vol. 5.

*Superior Secret Jewel Drop Sūtra, 'Phags pa gsang ba nor bu thig le zhes bya ba'i mdo, Āryaguhyamaṇītilakanāmasūtra.* P125 (Toh. 493), vol. 5.

*Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra, dPal rdo rje snying po rgyan ces bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po, Śrīvajraṃḍa-alaṃkāranāmahātāntrarāja,* tr. by Chos rje sa skyapa (aka Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyeltsen), rev. by Bu ston. P123 (Toh. 490), vol. 5, 193.1.1-226.1.8.

*Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra, dPal rdo rje snying po rgyan gyi rgyud ces bya ba, Śrīvajrahṛdayālaṃkāranāma.* P86 (Toh. 451).

*Vajraśekhara Tantra, gSang ba rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud rdo rje rtse mo, Vajraśikharamahāguhyayogatantra.* P113 (Toh. 480), vol. 5, 1.1.2-56.4.8.

### **Commentaries**

Anonymous. *Consecration Rite King of Consecrations, Rab tu gnas pa'i cho ga rab gnas kyi rgyal po, Pratiṣṭhāvidhipratiṣṭhārāja.* P3351 (Toh. 2528), .

Ānandagarbha. *Commentary on the Śrī Paramādya, dPal mchog dang po'i 'grel pa, Śrīparamādivivaraṇa*. P3334 (Toh. 2511), vol. 72, 154.2.1-177.2.3. Butön states that the author is not Ānandagarbha; rather, it is probably Padmavajrāṅkuśa.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Consecration Rite, sPyan dbye ba'i cho ga, Pratiṣṭhāvidhi*. P3344 (Toh. 2521)..

\_\_\_\_\_. *Consecration Rite, sPyan dbye ba'i cho ga, Pratiṣṭhāvidhi*. P3345 (Toh. 2523)..

\_\_\_\_\_. *Extensive Commentary on the Magical Emanation Net King of Tantra, rGyud kyi rgyal po sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rgya cher bshad pa, Māyājālatantrarājaṭikāvyaḥkyā*. P3336 (Toh. 2513)..

\_\_\_\_\_. *Extensive Commentary on the Śrī Paramādya, dPal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad pa, Śrīparamādiṭikā*, tr. by (1) Śraddhākaravarman, Kamalagupta, and Rin chen bzang po; (2) Mantrakalaśa and Zhi ba 'od. P3335 (Toh. 2512), vol. 72, 177.2.3–vol. 73, 213.1.2.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Illumination of the Principles, Explanation of the “Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas: Manifest Realization of the Great Vehicle” Tantra, De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsdus pa theg pa chen po mngon par rtogs pa shes bya ba'i rgyud kyi bshad pa de kho na nyid snang bar byed pa shes bya ba, Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgrahamahāyānābhīsamayanāmavyākhyātattvālokakarīnāma*, tr. by (1) Rin chen bzang po and (2) Thugs rje chen po (Mahākaruṇa). P3333 (Toh. 2510), vol. 71, 134.1.1–vol. 72, 152.4.8.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala: Source of All Vajras, rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rdo rje thams cad 'byung ba zhes bya ba, Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyika-sarvavajrodayanāma*. P3339 (Toh. 2516), vol. 74..

\_\_\_\_\_. *Śrī Paramādya Maṇḍala Rite, dPal mchog dang po'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga zhes bya ba, Śrīparamādimaṇḍalavidhināma*, tr. by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po. P3343 (Toh. 2520).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Rite of the Glorious Conquest over the Three Worlds Drawn from the Compendium of Principles Tantra, dPal khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga 'phags pa de kho na nyid bsdus pa'i rgyud las btus pa, Śrītrailokyavijayamaṇḍalavidhi-āryatattvasaṃgrahatantrōddhṛtā*, tr. by Rin chen bzang po. P3342 (Toh. 2519).

Atiśa. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma'i dka' 'grel shes bya ba, Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikānāma*. P5344 (Toh. 3941), vol. 103, 21.5.6-46.4.2.

Buddhaguhya. *Commentary on the Concentration Continuation Chapter, bSam gtan phyi ma rim par phye ba rgya cher bshad pa, Dhyānottaraṭaṭaṭikā*. P3495 (Toh. 2690), vol. 78, 65.1.1-83.2.7.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on the Manifest Enlightenment of Vairocana Tantra*. P3490 (Toh. 2663A), vol. 77. .

\_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on the Vajravidāraṇa Tantra, rDo rje rnam par 'joms pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs kyi rgya cher 'grel pa rin po che gsal ba zhes bya ba, Vajravidāraṇi[ā]nāmadhāraṇiṭikāratnābhāsvarā*. P3504 (Toh. 2680), vol. 78.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Entry into the Meaning of the Tantra, rGyud kyi don la 'jug pa, Tantrārthāvatāra*, tr. by 'Jam dpal go cha. P3324 (Toh. 2501), vol. 70, 33.1.1-73.4.7.

Bu ston Rin chen grub. *An Extensive Explanation of (Ānandagarbha's) "Source of All Vajras": A Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, rDo rje thams cad 'byung ba'i rgya cher bshad pa yid bzhin nor bu*. In *Collected Works of Bu-ston, Part 11 (da)*. Lhasa: Zhol Printing House, 1990, 1a.1-324b.5; photographic reproduction Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Ship for Launching onto the Ocean of Yoga Tantra, rNal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings*. In *Collected Works of Bu-ston, Part 11 (da)*. Lhasa: Zhol Printing House, 1990, 1a.1-92b.2; photographic reproduction Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968.

- Graggs pa 'byung gnas, Ko zhul and rGyal ba bLo bzang mkhas grub. *Gangs can mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzod (Treasury of Names of the Successive Scholars and Adepts of the Land of Snows)*. Mtsho-sngon, PRC: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1992.
- Jñānamitra. 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa'i 'grel pa, *Āryaprajñāpāramitānayaśatpañcāśatkaṭikā*, tr. by . P3471 (Toh. 2647), vol. 77, 44.2.1-54.3.8.
- rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan. *rDo rje 'byung ba'i yig sna*. In *The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa Skya Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 4, comp. bSod nams rgya mtsho. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1968, 112.2.1-147.4.6.
- Kun-bzañ-'gyur-med-mchog-grup-dpal, Thugs-sras Sprul-sku of Lha-luñ V. *Kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po gter chen dri med 'od zer gyi rnam par thar pa cuñ zad spros pa ño mtshar skal bzañ mchog gi dga' ston: A Brief Biography of Kun-mkhyen Kloñ-chen Rab-'byams-pa Dri-med-'od-zer (1308-1363) with an Account of the Rediscovered Teachings of His Prophesied Reembodiment Gter-chen Padma-gliñ-pa (1450-1521)*. Delhi: Ngawang Chodron, 1984.
- Muditākoṣa, *Commentary on the "Superior Conquest over the Three Worlds," 'Phags pa 'jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya ba'i 'grel pa*, *Āyatrailokyavijayanāmaṃṛti*. P3332 (Toh. 2509), vol. 71, 100.4.7-132.4.8.
- Padmasambhava. *Garland of Views: Esoteric Instructions, Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*. In *Selected Writings (gsuñ thor bu) of Roñ-zom Chos-kyi-bzañ-po*, Smarntsis Shesrig Spendzod vol. 73. Leh, Ladakh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1974, pp. 1-18. The text also appears in the Peking edition of the *Kangyur: Man ngag gi rgyal po lta ba'i phreng ba*. P4726, vol. 83, 83.3.7-85.3.5.
- Prajñāpālita. *Consecration Rite, sPyan dbye ba'i cho ga, Pratiṣṭhāvidhi*. P3347 (Toh. 2522).

Praśāntamitra. *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the Magical Emanation Net King of Tantra*, *rGyud kyi rgyal po sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i dka' 'grel*, *Māyājālatantrarājapañjikā*. P3337 (Toh. 2514).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the Great Vajra Essence Ornament Tantra*, *dPal rdo rje snying po'i rgyan gyi rgyud chen po'i dka' 'grel*, *Śrīvajramaṇḍālāmākāramahātantrapañcikā*, tr. by (Bu ston) Rin chen grub. P3338 (Toh. 2515), vol. 73, 266.5.1-291.5.8.

Ratnākaraśānti. *dPal thams cad gsang ba'i bshad sbyar gsang ba'i sgron ma*, *Śrīsarvarahasyanibandharahasyapradīpanāma*. P3450 (Toh. 2623), vol. 76.

Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po. *sLob dpon sangs rgyas gnyis pa'i gsung dngos/ Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba zhes bya ba'i 'grel pa*. In *Selected Writings (gsuñ thor bu) of Roñ-zom Chos-kyi-bzan-po*, Smarntsis Shesrig Spendzod vol. 73. Leh, Ladakh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1974.

Śākyamitra. *Kosala Ornament: Extensive Explanation of the Compendium of Principles*, *De kho na nyid bsdus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa ko sa la'i rgyan*, *Kosala-lāmākārayatattvasaṃgrahaṭikā*, tr. by Dharmaśrībhadrā and Rin chen bzang po. P3326 (Toh. 2503), vol. 70, 189.1.1–vol. 71, 94.2.6.

Śraddhākaravarman. *rNal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud kyi don la 'jug pa bsdus pa shes bya ba*, *Yogānuttaratantrārthāvatāsaṃgrahanāma*. P4536, vol. 81.

Sūryasimhaprabha. *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa rgya cher bshad pa'i 'grel pa*. P4719, vol. 83, 1.1.3-70.3.7.

## Sanskrit References

Ānandagarbha. *Rite of the Vajradhātu Great Maṇḍala: Source of All Vajras*, “Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyikā-Sarvavajrodayanāma—bonbun tekisuto to wayaku—(I),” *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho*

- University (Taishō Daigaku Sōgō Bukkyō Kunkyūjo nenpō)*, Issue 8 (1986), 258-224 and “Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyikā-Sarvavajrodayanāma—bonbun tekisuto to wayaku—(II),” *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University (Taishō Daigaku Sōgō Bukkyō Kunkyūjo nenpō)*, Issue 9 (1987), 294-222.
- Chandra, Lokesh, ed. *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha: Sanskrit Text with Introduction and Illustrations of Maṇḍalas*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987.
- Chandra, Lokesh and David Snellgrove. *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha: Facsimile Reproduction of a Tenth Century Sanskrit Manuscript from Nepal*. New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1981.
- Horiuchi, Kanjin, ed. *Shoe Kongōchōkyō no Kenkyū, Bonpon Kōteihen Bonzōkan Taishō*, vols. 1 & 2. Kōyasan University: Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1983.
- Yamada, Isshi. *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha nāma mahāyāna-sūtra: A Critical Edition Based on the Sanskrit Manuscript and Chinese and Tibetan Translations*. New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1981.

## Chinese References

- Amoghavajra (Pu-k'ung chin-kang). *Chin kang ting i ch'ieh ju lai chen shih she ta hsien cheng ta chiao wang ching*. T. vol. 18, No. 865, 207a-223b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*. T. vol. 18, No. 869.
- Dānapāla (Shih-hu). *I ch'ieh ju lai shen shih she ta che'ng hsien cheng san mei ta chiao wang ching*. T. vol. 18, No. 882.
- Prajñā (Hannya). T. vol. 18, No. 868.
- Vajrabodhi (Chin-kang chih). *Chin kang ting yü ch'ieh chung lia ch'u pien sung ching*. T. vol. 18, No. 866.

## Western Language References

- Astley-Kristensen, Ian. *The Rishukyō: The Sino-Japanese Tantric Prajñāpāramitā in 150 Verses (Amoghavajra's Version)*. Tring, U.K.: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1991.
- Beyer, Stephan. *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973.
- Conze, Edward. *The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*. London: Luzac & Company, 1973.
- Cozort, Daniel. *Highest Yoga Tantra: An Introduction to the Esoteric Buddhism of Tibet*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1986.
- Dalai Lama, H.H. the, Tsong-ka-pa, and Jeffrey Hopkins. *Deity Yoga in Action and Performance Tantra*, tr. and ed. Jeffrey Hopkins; assoc. eds. Lati Rinbochay and Denma Locho Rinbochay; asst. ed. Elizabeth Napper. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Greatness of Yoga Tantra*, tr. and ed. by P. Jeffrey Hopkins (unpublished manuscript).
- \_\_\_\_\_, Tsong-ka-pa, and Jeffrey Hopkins. *Tantra in Tibet*, tr. and ed. Jeffrey Hopkins; assoc. eds. Lati Rinbochay and Geshe Gendun Lodro; asst. ed. Barbara Frye. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977; rpt. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987.
- Davidson, Ronald M. "Atiśa's *A Lamp for the Path to Awakening*." In *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995, 290-301.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's Subjugation of Śiva." In *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, 547-555.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī: Text and Translation of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*." In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein, Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, Vol. 20, ed. Michel Strickmann. Brussels: Institute Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1981, 1-69.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī." In *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, 104-125.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka." In *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1991), 197-235.
- de Jong, J. W. "A New History of Tantric Literature in India." In *Acta Indologica VI*, 1984, 91-113.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Notes on the Sources and the Text of the Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya." In *Buddhist Studies by J. W. de Jong*, ed. Gregory Schopen. Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1979, 619-636.
- Dietz, Siglinde. "Bhoṭasvāmidāsalekha." In *Die Buddhistische Briefliteratur Indiens: Nach dem tibetischen Tanjur herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert*. Asiatische Forschungen Band 84. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984, 79-84 and 359-399.
- Dorje, Gyurme. *The Guhyagarbhatantra and its XIVth Century Commentary*, phyogs bcu mun sel. Ph.D. dissertation. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987.
- Dudjom Rinpoche. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, vols. 1 & 2, tr. and ed. by Gyurme Dorje with Matthew Kapstein. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991.
- Eastman, Kenneth W. "The Eighteen Tantras of the Vajraśekhara/Māyājāla." Unpublished paper presented to the 26th International Conference of Orientalists in Japan (Tokyo, 8 May, 1981); summary in *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan*, No. XXVI, (1981), 95-96.



- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mahāyoga Texts at Tunhuang." In *Bulletin of Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies, Ryukoku University* no. 22. Kyoto: Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies, Ryukoku University, 1983, 42-60.
- Germano, David. "The Seven Descents and the Early History of Rnying ma Transmissions." In *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism: Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, eds. Helmut Eimer & David Germano. Leiden-Boston-Köln: EJ Brill, 2002, 225-263.
- Giebel, Rolf W. "The *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*: An Annotated Translation." In *Journal of Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies*, No. 18 (1995), 107-201.
- Heller, Amy. "Eighth- and Ninth-Century Temples & Rock Carvings of Eastern Tibet." In *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*, eds. Jane Casey Singer and Philip Denwood. London: Lawrence King Publishing, 1997, 86-103.
- Herrmann-Pfandt, Adelheid. "The *Lhan kar ma* as a Source for the History of Tantric Buddhism." In *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism: Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, eds. Helmut Eimer & David Germano. Leiden-Boston-Köln: EJ Brill, 2002, 129-149.
- Hodge, Stephen. "Considerations on the Dating and Geographical Origins of the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra*." In *The Buddhist Forum*, Vol. 3, eds. Tadeusz Skorupski and Ulrich Pagel. London: School of Oriental and African Studies; rpt. New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1995, 57-83.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra with Buddhaguhya's Commentary*. London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.
- Hopkins, Jeffrey. *The Tantric Distinction: An Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Anne C. Klein. London: Wisdom Publications, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Tantric Techniques in Tibetan Buddhism*. Unpublished manuscript.

- Iyanaga, Nobumi. "Récits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokyavijaya—d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises." In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, ed. Michel Strickmann. Brussels: Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, vol. xxii, 1985, 633-745.
- Jan, Yün-Hua. "Buddhist Relations Between India and Sung China". In *History of Religions*, vol. 6, no. 1 (August 1966), 24-42; vol. 6, no. 2 (November 1966), 135-168.
- Kanaoka, Shuyu. "Kukurāja." In *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*, vol. XV, No. 1 (December 1966), 467-458.
- Kapstein, Matthew T. *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Karmay, Samten G. *The Great Perfection (rdzogs chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching in Tibetan Buddhism*. Leiden: EJ Brill, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "King Tsa/ Dza and Vajrayāna." In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, vol. I. Brussels: Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, vol. xx, 1981, 192-211.
- Lessing, Ferdinand D., and Alex Wayman. *Mkhas grub rje's Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras*. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1968.
- Lo Bue, Erberto. "The Dharmamaṇḍala-sūtra by Buddhaguhya." In *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, vol. 2, eds. G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1987, 787-818.
- Lorenzen, David N. *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972; revised edition, 1991.
- Martin, Dan. "Illusion Web—Locating the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in Buddhist Intellectual History." In *Silver on Lapis: Tibetan Literary Culture and History*, ed. Christopher I. Beckwith. Bloomington, IN: The Tibet Society, 1987, 175-209.
- Matsunaga, Yukei. "A History of Tantric Buddhism in India with Reference to Chinese Translations." In *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization: Essays in Honor of*

- Herbert V. Guenther on His Sixtieth Birthday*, eds. Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott. Emeryville, CA: Dharma Publishing, 1977, 167-181.
- Monier-Williams, Sir Monier. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899; Rpt: New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1994.
- Nadou, Jean. *Buddhists of Kaśmir*. Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1980.
- Nihom, Max. *Studies in Indian and Indo-Indonesian Tantra: The Kuñjarakarṇadharmakathana and the Yogatantra*. Vienna: Sammlung de Nobili Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1994.
- Orzech, Charles. "The Legend of the Iron Stūpa." In *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. D.S. Lopez, Jr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 314-317.
- Ramesan, N. *Temples and Legends of Andhra Pradesh*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962.
- Richardson, Hugh. "The Cult of Vairocana in Early Tibet." In Hugh Richardson, *High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*, ed. and intro. by Michael Aris. London: Serindia Publications, 1998, 177-181.
- Roerich, George N. *The Blue Annals*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949; rpt. 1988.
- Ruegg, D. Seyfort. "Problems in the Transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism in the Western Himalaya about the Year 1000." In *Acta Indologica* VI, (1984), 369-381.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che, with the Tibetan Text of the Bu ston rNam thar*. Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1966.
- Shendge, Malati J. "The Literary Forms of Tantras." In *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan 9* (1966), 37-46.

- Skorupski, Tadeusz. *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts with Introduction, English Translation and Notes*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Śākyamuni’s Enlightenment according to the Yoga Tantra.” *Sambhava* 6, 87-94.
- Smith, E. Gene. Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center Database, [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org), 2003.
- Snellgrove, David. “Categories of Buddhist Tantras.” In *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, vol. 3, eds. G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1988, 1353-1390.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, vols. 1 & 2. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1987.
- Stein, Rolf A. “La soumission de Rudra et autres contes tantriques.” *Journal Asiatique* 283: 1, 121-160.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Tibetan Civilization*, tr. J.E. Stapleton Driver. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972.
- Strickmann, Michel. *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The *Consecration Sūtra*: A Buddhist Book of Spells.” In *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Buswell, Jr. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990.
- Tāranātha. *Tāranātha’s History of Buddhism in India*, tr. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya; ed. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990.
- Tatz, Mark. *The Skill in Means (Upāyakauśalya) Sūtra*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.
- Todaro, Dale. *An Annotated Translation of the “Tattvasamgraha” (Part 1) with an Explanation of the Role of the “Tattvasamgraha” Lineage in the Teachings of Kukai*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1985.

- Tucci, Giuseppe. *Indo-Tibetica*, Reale Accademia d'Italia Studi e Documenti I, vol. 1. Rome: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Rin-chen-bzan-po and the Renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet around the Millenium*, tr. Nancy K. Smith. Indo-Tibetica II. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*. Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949.
- van der Kuijp, Leonard W. J. "Notes Apropos of the Transmission of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra in Tibet." In *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 16 (1992), 109-125.
- Wangdu, Pasang and Hildegard Diemberger. *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet: Translation and Facsimile Edition of the Tibetan Text*, preface by Per K. Sorensen. Wien (Vienna): Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000.
- Wayman, Alex. "The Sarvarahasyatantra." *Acta Indologica* VI: *Mysticism* (1984), 521-569.