

A CRISIS OF DOXOGRAPHY:
HOW TIBETANS ORGANIZED TANTRA DURING
THE 8TH-12TH CENTURIES

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The four hundred years spanning the eighth to the eleventh centuries witnessed the dramatic rise of a new genre of Indian literature. The tantras brought with them a bewildering array of new myths, doctrines, and in particular new ritual techniques. This was an extraordinarily creative time for Indian religions, and Buddhism was deeply affected by the new esoteric teachings. Thousands of new texts emerged, rewriting Buddhism's history and reconfiguring its role in Indian society as well as its cosmological place in the universe.

Coincidentally, these same years — from the eighth through the eleventh centuries — also marked the arrival of Buddhism into Tibet. Thus Tibetans first encountered Buddhism at an exciting time, just as the tantric developments in India were at their peak. Given the rapidly changing face of Buddhism, the Tibetans must have experienced considerable difficulties identifying a stable and authoritative Buddhist religion. Toward this end, one of the primary strategies they resorted to was doxography, arranging the tantras into a series of hierarchically ordered classes.

Tibetans were certainly not the first to develop Buddhist doxographical schemes. Classification systems were popular in China too and had been for centuries, perhaps even before they were in India¹. Recent scholars have made much of these Chinese *panjiao* systems, and how they reflected cultural interests and anxieties that were uniquely Chinese². The *panjiao* often tell us less about the Indian Buddhist teachings that they organize than about the Chinese concerns that were at stake in the Sino-Indian

¹ One of the earliest *panjiao* was the five-part system of Huiguan (d.453). This would predate both Bhartṛhari and Bhāvaivēka.

² On the early development of *panjiao* in China, see Gregory (1991) and Ju Mun (2002).

encounters. Unlike in India, the early Chinese schemes were usually arranged around narratives of the Buddha's life, often with the aim of promoting a particular text over all others. The basic premise of these schemes was that the sūtras taught by the Buddha earlier in life were less definitive than those he taught later in life³. The early Tibetan classification systems may have been influenced by the Chinese *panjiao* systems⁴, but they did not tie their classes to periods in the Buddha's life, nor did they adopt the Chinese promotion of specific texts. The Tibetans' overwhelming interest in the tantras made the Chinese organizational strategies unworkable. Where the Mahāyāna sūtras were placed in the mouth of Buddha Śākyamuni and emphasized a "cult of the book," the tantras were attributed to cosmic buddhas and spawned all sorts of ritual manuals. We might also speculate that the Chinese use of historical narrative was a reflection of their wider interest in historical documentation, an interest not shared by Tibetans to the same degree, particularly by Tibetans of the ninth and tenth centuries from which so little historical documentation survived⁵.

Given the wealth of scholarship on the Chinese doxographic tradition, remarkably little work has been done on tantric doxography. This is probably

³ The major exception to this rule is of course Huayen's *Avataṃsaka* period. Recognizing that the *Mahāpariṇirvāṇa-sūtra*, known to have been taught from the Buddha's death-bed, must have been taught last in the Buddha's life, Huayen apologists created the "Avataṃsaka period," claiming that the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* had been preached by the Buddha under the bodhi tree during the three weeks immediately following his attainment of enlightenment. These teachings were thus a direct expression of the Buddha's enlightenment experience. However upon finishing these three weeks of teachings, the Buddha saw that his audience of *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* were completely unable to understand what he had said. Seeing this, the Buddha was moved to teach the *sūtrapīṭaka* of the Hīnayāna canon in order to prepare his disciples for the later, more advanced teachings.

⁴ One possible example is may be the four classes of Gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes' *Bsam gtan mig sgron*, which are remarkably similar to the "four methods of conversion" (*hua-i*) outlined by the tenth century Korean scholar Chegwan (d. 971): gradual (*chien*), sudden (*tun*), secret (*pi mi*), and indeterminate (*pu-ting*). See Chappell (1983), pp. 60-61. For more on Gnubs chen's doxographical writings, see below.

⁵ In his survey of these systems, Ju Mun has observed that later, during the Sui, the Chinese classification systems did shift somewhat away from the diachronic tendency toward more doctrinal concerns (see Ju Mun 2002, 146). Ju Mun speculates on a link between this shift and the rise of sectarianism witnessed during the same historical period, a link that may warrant further investigation. However clear this turn towards doctrine was, however, the diachronic element continued to be strong enough to warrant an appearance in most, if not all, of the *panjiao* of the Tang.

in large part due to a perceived lack of evidence. Observing this deficit, Helmut Eimer recently wrote that, “Of other classifications of the Buddhist Tantras [that is, apart from the standard four-fold scheme] only a few references in literary sources have survived.”⁶ This is simply not true, even more so given the recent discovery of two more doxographic systems among the manuscripts found at the famous “library cave” of Dunhuang.

The only Dunhuang system of this sort to be studied so far has been the one found in PT849. This important text was translated and published in 1924 by Joseph Hackin, and since then it has been cited regularly by many scholars⁷. Two more systems have now come to light. Neither has been studied to date and both deserve attention. Transcriptions and translations of both items are appended to the present article. By combining this new evidence with the classification systems present in the Tibetan canon, we can now begin to identify some important differences between the Tibetan and Indian approaches to the Buddhist tantras.

The abundance of early Tibetan doxographical systems presents a challenge to the singular authority of our received and much-cited scheme — the famous four classes of Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, and *Anuttarayoga. For over a century when scholars have written on Buddhist tantra from India to Japan, they have followed this scheme. These four categories have gone almost entirely unquestioned; they have been applied with little mind to their historical context, across space and time, to give a sense of order to the chaotic mass of esoteric teachings known as tantric Buddhism⁸. Some scholars have even constructed distinct schools around the

⁶ Eimer (1993), 224 [my addition].

⁷ Two of the most useful recent studies on early Tibetan classification schemes have been Karmay (1988), 137-174, and Kapstein (2000), 10-17. Both rely heavily on PT849.

⁸ In the appendix to his recent book *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*, Robert Sharf has called attention to scholars’ often indiscriminate use of the very term “tantra.” Sharf argues that tantra as a distinct class of teachings never existed in China, and that it is better understood as a product of Japanese and western imaginations. Sharf’s arguments should at least be considered by all scholars of Buddhist tantra. We must keep in mind, for example, the ubiquity of ritual practice, from healing rites and divination to oral recitation and visualization techniques, throughout “non-tantric” Buddhism. That said however, it is clear that in India anyway, by the mid-eighth century at least, Buddhists were distinguishing the new tantric literary themes and ritual trends from those of the earlier sūtras. The absence of such distinctions in China may be related to the fact that China, as has been noted by many other scholars, did not receive the Mahāyoga tantras until well after they

four categories, complete with historically traceable lineages⁹. Others regularly date the fourfold scheme to the eighth century C.E., apparently only because by the eighth century certain tantric titles were attested that would eventually — some four centuries later — come to be classed under the rubric of *Anuttarayoga¹⁰. Such an ahistorical conflation of mere titles with an entire doxographical system inevitably obscures much about the early history of tantric Buddhism.

This article argues that these four classes that have gained such favor in modern scholarship are in fact a late (maybe twelfth century) and uniquely Tibetan innovation. They are part of a long tradition of tantric doxography that was distinctly Tibetan and therefore they obscure much about the early development of the tantras in India. In India, the classification of tantras was a concern in some (though notably not all) tantric circles, but the Tibetan treatment of the subject was systematic in unprecedented ways. Only in Tibet do we start to see entire texts devoted to the topic. Only in Tibet do fixed sets of classificatory criteria begin to be applied. The Tibetan tradition of tantric doxography was a very different creature from the Indian one, probably with much more at stake, and we should be careful when we apply these uniquely Tibetan doxographical categories to the history of tantric Buddhism in India. Fourfold schemes vaguely resembling the now classic system appear in a couple of Indian texts (along with a wide variety of alternative schemes), but the system as we know it was formalized in Tibet and for Tibetan interests.

In order to understand these Tibetan interests more precisely, we should perhaps first review our use of the term ‘doxography.’ In the west, ‘doxography’ was originally used to refer to the collected summaries of the different views asserted by the Greek philosophers¹¹. Doxography was

emerged in India and Tibet, nor did they receive the crucial classificatory terms of Kriyā and Yoga that developed around the same time as the Mahāyoga tantras (i.e. the second half of the eighth century). Thus Chinese Buddhists seem to have experienced a break in their transmission of Indian tantric Buddhism around the early eighth century, just at the moment when tantric Buddhism was developing its own distinct identity in India.

⁹ See for example, Yamasaki (1988), 13-14.

¹⁰ For a recent example, see the introduction to the edited volume *Tantra in Practice* (White 2000, 22-23).

¹¹ Thus the entry for “doxography” in the O.E.D. reads: “1892 J. BURNET *Early Greek Philos.* 371 By the term *doxographers* we understand all those writers who relate the opinions

therefore concerned with categories of philosophical views. As we use the apply in a Buddhist context, we should be mindful of this origin and hold open the question of whether Indian thought was ever “philosophical” in a western sense. That said, many recent Buddhologists have recognized something useful in the term and have adopted it, labelling certain genres of Buddhist literature “doxographical.” Some scholars have even gone so far as to explore the roots of Indian doxographical thinking, and with illuminating results¹².

The Indian doxographic tendency had been traced back to the late fifth century Grammarian scholar, Bhartṛhari¹³. While Bhartṛhari’s own writings were not overtly doxographical, they made regular use of the term *darśana* (“view”) to refer to different philosophical perspectives, and this concept of *darśana* came to play a central role in the various doxographies that emerged over the following centuries. Within the Buddhist traditions, the doxographic method was soon adopted by Bhāvaviveka (500-570 C.E.), whose writings exerted a strong influence on later Buddhism. At first the doxographic paradigm was resisted by many within Buddhism, but it was part of a deep and irresistible trend that was sweeping through Indian thought; by the seventh century Candrakīrti could argue against doxography, but only on its own terms¹⁴.

The application of the term “doxography” within a Buddhist context may be useful, but it can also obscure a crucial difference between western doxographies and the Indian tantric classification systems: Whereas the former are generally philosophical works and restrict themselves to the *views* held by each school, the tantric classification systems of India (as we shall see) are largely concerned with differences in *ritual practice*¹⁵.

of the Greek philosophers. *Ibid.* 374 The doxography [of the *Lucullus*] has come through the hands of Kleitomachus. *Ibid.* 375 Short doxographical summaries are to be found in Eusebios [etc.].”

¹² For an example of such an exploration, see Halbfass (1988), 263-286 and 349-368.

¹³ Halbfass (1988), 268.

¹⁴ On the history of this dramatic shift within Buddhist thought, see Huntington (2002).

¹⁵ A distinction may be in order here. The Indian term that corresponds most closely with “doxography” is probably the Sanskrit *siddhānta* (Tib. *grub mtha*). The later Tibetan tradition often used this term to refer to a genre of literature that concentrates primarily on the non-tantric philosophical schools. The present study is restricted to the *tantric* classification systems; whether these should be considered *siddhānta* is a question left unanswered for now.

This is particularly true of the systems that circulated in India during the eighth to tenth centuries, precisely the period when developments in the tantras were at their most creative¹⁶. Thus to label these tantric classificatory systems “doxographical” might obscure the crucial role of ritual in the development of Buddhist tantra.

Once the ritual focus of the Indian classification schemes has been recognized, a further point of interest emerges. Unlike their Indian contemporaries, the Tibetans preferred a more properly “doxographic” approach, organizing the tantras around differences in doctrine. This is perhaps the most striking difference between the Indian and the Tibetan schemes¹⁷. Following the trend established in the earlier Indian Mahāyāna sūtras, early Tibetans divided Buddhism into different approaches, or “vehicles” (Skt. *yāna*; Tib. *theg pa*) by which the Buddhist practitioner can travel the path to enlightenment. In order to evaluate and distinguish between these vehicles, Tibetans employed a variety of criteria. Within a given doxographical system the criteria often remained fixed, that they might function as standards against which each vehicle could be measured and compared. Among these sets of criteria, the philosophical views (Tib. *lta ba*) were invariably foremost, and when differences of ritual technique were considered, they were usually framed doctrinally, as “sudden” vs. “gradual” and so on. Thus one of the objectives of the present study is to distinguish more clearly the criteria used in the early Tibetan classification systems of tantric Buddhism.

The criteria Tibetans used can tell us much about their concerns as they worked to assimilate Buddhism into their own cultural milieu. The Tibetan interest in doctrine should be understood within the wider historical

¹⁶ As we shall see in the survey that follows, it was particularly true of the *earlier* Indian systems. An increased interest in doctrinal criteria begins to be seen in the eleventh century Indian classification systems. See for example the *Dākinīsarvacittādvayācintya-jñāna-vajravārāhi Tantra* (Q.60, 88a.5-6; also discussed below, n.100), which treats the higher classes according to the mental states they teach.

¹⁷ These characterizations of Indian and Tibetan classificatory concerns are of course a generalization. As we shall see, parts of the Dunhuang manuscript PT656 represent an exception to the Tibetan concern with doctrine, and certainly Indian treatises on doctrinal aspects of the different tantric classes can be found, particular after the tenth century. However, my characterization of these two traditions holds true in a remarkable number of cases, and it is clear that we are dealing with two distinct sets of classificatory concerns — one Indian and the other Tibetan.

context of Tibetans trying to comprehend the complexities of Buddhism. That so many classification schemes flourished in Tibet during the ninth and tenth centuries in particular reflects the significance of this period in the Tibetan adaptation of Buddhism. The definition and classification of Buddhist vehicles into hierarchical systems was one of the principle strategies used by Tibetans in their assimilation of Buddhism, and the ninth and tenth centuries produced a bewildering array of classification systems. Eventually, two principal schemes emerged — one of nine vehicles advocated by the followers of the Rnying ma (“Ancient”) school, and one of four vehicles promoted by all the other Tibetan schools. But behind these clearly organized systems lay two centuries of contention and confusion, as Tibetans struggled to make sense of the foreign Buddhist religion and their own place within it. Today these early classification schemes offer a window onto the history of the Tibetan assimilation process.

What follows is a survey of the classification schemes that circulated in India and Tibet during these tumultuous years. The survey is arranged into a roughly chronological order following a hypothetical historical narrative. With research on the early development of tantric Buddhism still in its infancy, such a narrative is necessarily fraught with shaky conjectures. Nevertheless, I have attempted to arrange the different classification schemes so as to reflect the general developmental order of the tantras from the late eighth to the eleventh centuries. Having completed the survey, the final part of this article turns to the origins of the much-cited four classes scheme and how it came to dominate our own understanding of tantric Buddhism in India.

I. Early Indian Classification Systems

I.a. *Buddhaguhya*

The first system discussed should be the one by Buddhaguhya, the mid-eighth century Indian commentator on the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra* (MVT). The MVT played an influential role in the development of tantric Buddhism, and has been the subject of a recent study and complete translation¹⁸. Buddhaguhya composed at least two works on

¹⁸ Hodge (2003) also includes translations of Buddhaguhya’s two commentaries.

the MVT, a summary (*piṇḍārtha*) and a more extensive commentary (*vr̥tti* or *bhāṣya*). Both works open with brief introductions to the different classes of teachings given by the Buddha. Buddhaguhya first distinguished the teachings of the Mahāyāna sūtras which advocate the cultivation of the perfections (*pāramitā*) from those of the tantras which emphasize mantra recitation. He then divided the latter into two types:

There are two kinds of disciples who engage and practice by means of mantra: those who principally aspire toward objective supports and those who principally aspire toward the profound and vast. For the sake of those who principally aspire toward objective supports, the Kriyā tantras such as the *Ārya-Susiddhikāra Tantra*, the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* and so on, are taught¹⁹. Similarly, for the sake of those who principally aspire toward the profound and vast, the *Ārya-tattvasaṃgraha Tantra* and so forth, are taught.

It is not that those who are said to use principally “objective supports” do not aspire toward and practice the profound and vast, but that they *mostly* aspire toward practicing with objective supports. Nor is it the case that those who principally aspire toward the profound and vast are completely without practices that rely on objective supports, but that they *mostly* practice the profound and vast. Clearly in this sense the *Ārya-tattvasaṃgraha* and so

¹⁹ The first of these titles, the *Susiddhikāra*, can probably be identified as Q.431. The contents of *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*, which may not have been a single work but a collection of early tantric materials, are more difficult to ascertain. Lalou (1955) has identified some of them. Bhavaviveka (c.500-570) cites a passage from the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* of the Siddhārthas, whom he classifies in this case under the Mahāsāṃghikas (*Tarkajvālā*, Q.5256, 190a6). On this, see Skilling (1992), 114. The late seventh century Chinese scholar Yi jing purports to have studied a 100,000 verse *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* (see Hodge 2003, 10, where he translates the relevant passage from the *Record of Eminent Monks who Sought the Dharma in the West* (*Xī-yu-qiū-fa-gao-seng-zhuan*, T.2066)). In this regard, the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* was a precursor to the later 100,000 verse tantric collections such as the *Vajrasāekhara* and the *Māyājāla*. On the latter two collections and their relationships, see Eastman (1981) and Giebel (1995); see too n.32 below. There are also a number of short Mañjuśrī sādhanas contained in the Peking *bstan* ‘gyur that contain *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* in their title, much as certain later titles claim to be extractions from, or based upon, the *Māyājāla* collection.

Other titles that Buddhaguhya classified as Kriyā tantras can be culled from his other works. In his *Dhyānottarapaṭala*, 11b.1-3, Buddhaguhya distinguishes two subclasses of Kriyā tantras: general tantras that are compilations of ritual manuals (*spyi’i cho ga bsdus pa’i rgyud*) and specific tantras (*bye brag gi rgyud*). Under the former type he lists again the *Susiddhikāra*, to which he adds the *Subāhupariṣcchā* (Q.428) and the *Kalpa-laghu* (Q.319). Under “specific tantras” he lists again the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi* and the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*, plus the *Vajrapānyabhiṣeka* (Q.130) and the *Bodhimāṇḍa* (Q.139). In his *Piṇḍārtha*, 4a.6, he further adds the *Trisamayarāja* (Q.134), and the *Trikāya-uṣṇīṣa* (unidentified).

forth²⁰ are principally for the practice of the inward yogas, but this does not mean they do not include some outward practices as well. Similarly, the Kriyā tantras are principally for the outward practices, but this does not mean they do not also include some inward practices.

One should understand that the [tantric] *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* and so forth still are said to be directed towards the three gates of liberation and the like, just like those who engage and practice by means of the [sūtra-based] perfections. Similarly, this *Vairocana-abhisambodhi-vikurvati-adhiṣṭhāna-tantra* is a Yoga tantra, principally for means and wisdom, but in order to help those disciples who aspire towards activities, it also teaches some practices which accord with the Kriyā tantras. Therefore it can be analysed and is renowned in both ways, as a Kriyā tantra or as a tantra of both (Tib. *gnýis ka*; Skt. *ubhayā*)²¹.

Thus Buddhaguhya distinguished two main categories, the outward Kriyā tantras and the inward Yoga tantras. This distinction reflected a major shift that was taking place in Indian ritual technology at the time of Buddhaguhya's writing. Earlier Buddhist rituals were typically directed outward toward what Buddhaguhya called an "objective support," an external focus for one's worship, whether an actual shrine or a visualized

²⁰ In his *Pinḍārtha*, 4a.4, Buddhaguhya adds the *Śrī-paramādyā* (Q.119) as another example of a Yoga tantra.

²¹ *Mahāvairocana-tantra-vṛtti*, 2b.1-3a.1. *de bzhin du sngags kyi sgo nas 'jug cing spyod pa'i gdul ba'i 'gro ba rnams la yang rnam pa gnyis tel dmigs pa dang bcas pa la mos pa gtso bor gyur pa dang/ zab cing rgya che ba la mos pa gtso bor gyur pa stel/ de la dmigs pa dang bcas pa la mos pa gtso bor gyur pa rnams kyi don tel 'phags pa lags par grub pa'i rgyud dang/ rigs 'dzin gyi sde snod la sogs pa bya ba'i rgyud rnams bstan tol/ de bzhin du zab cing rgya che bas 'dul ba'i 'gro ba rnams kyi don du 'phags pa de kho na nyid bsdu pa'i rgyud la sogs pa bstan tel dmigs pa dang bcas pa la gtso bor gyur pa zhes pa yang/ zab cing rgya che ba la ma mos sing my spyod pa ma yin mod kyil/ dmigs pa dang bcas pa la spyod par mos pa'i shas che ba la bya'ol/ zab cing rgya che ba la mos pa gtso bor gyur pa rnams la yang dmigs pa dang bcas pa'i spyod pa med pa ma yin mod kyil/ zab cing rgya che ba la spyod pa'i shas che ba stel/ de lta bu yin par ni gsal por 'phags pa de nyid bsdu pa la sogs pa nang gi rnal 'byor gtso bor gyur pa yin mod kyil/ phyi'i spyod pa rnams kyang med pa ma yin no/ de bzhin du bya ba'i rgyud rnams kyang phyi'i spyod pa gtso bor gyur pa yin mod kyil/ nang gi spyod pa yang med pa ma yin tel rig 'dzin gyi sde snod la sogs par rnam par thar pa'i sgo rnam pa gsum la gzhol ba la sogs pa gsungs ba dang/ de bzhin du pha rol tu phyin pa'i sgo nas 'jug cing spyod pa rnams la yang ji ltar rigs par shyar shes par bya'ol/ de bzhin rnam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sbrul ba byin gyis rlob pa'i rgyud 'di yang thabs dang shes rab gtso bor gyur pa rnal 'byor gyi rgyud yin mod kyil/ 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 dang kyang bstan pas/ bya ba'i rgyud dam/ gnyis ka'i rgyud lta bur so sor brtags shing grags so.*

image. But by the early eighth century ritual worship was beginning to be directed “inward” toward the practitioner’s own body. Thus in the Yoga tantras one visualized oneself as the central deity and offered oblations towards oneself²².

Following Buddhaguhya, Tibetan exegetes of the ninth and tenth centuries seem to have disagreed on whether a distinct third category should be recognized. Though Buddhaguhya emphasized the two tantric classes of Kriyā and Yoga, some believed the above-cited passage proposed a third intermediate class, that of the Ubhayā tantras. Other Tibetans, however, apparently refused such an interpretation²³. Buddhaguhya’s passage itself is admittedly unclear on whether a distinct category was intended, but it is important to recognize that the primary distinction made by Buddhaguhya, as in other early materials, was twofold, while the third intermediate class gained acceptance only gradually²⁴.

I.b. *Vilāsavajra*

The confusion surrounding the intermediate class may in part explain the variety of names applied to it. In addition to Ubhayā, we see Upāya

²² In a recent article (Dalton 2004a) I argue that this inward trend was extended through the ninth century, as Buddhist ritual technologies focused increasingly on the body’s interior. Thus in the rituals of Mahāyoga, many of the same ritual structures at work in the Kriyā and Yoga tantras were mapped onto the practitioner’s sexual anatomy. This third step in ritual development may be reflected in Dunhuang references to three kinds of vehicles — the outward, the inward, and the secret (see PT283 and ITJ576).

²³ The question of how Buddhaguhya should be interpreted on this point has been well addressed by Shinichi Tsuda (1965).

²⁴ After the MVT, the next major step in the development of tantra is often said to be the Yoga tantra, *Sarvathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha* (STTS). It is notable that the early STTS ritual traditions continued to adhere to the twofold Kriyā-Yoga scheme. This is indicated in the *Sarvathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha-sādhyanopayika*, a popular Dunhuang ritual manual based on the STTS. The STTS’s absence in the 812 C.E. *Ldan kar ma* catalogue of translated works has led some scholars to conclude that the tantra was not translated during the early diffusion (*snga dar*) of Buddhism into Tibet. But the above-mentioned *sādhyanopayika* manual, which contains a number of passages drawn from the STTS, disproves this theory. In fact this manual seems to have enjoyed some popularity in Tibet, as at least two versions appear in the Dunhuang collections (ITJ448/PT270 and ITJ417/PT300), in addition to a detailed commentary (ITJ447). I am currently preparing a translation and study of these manuscripts for publication. A passage discussing the differences between Kriyā and Yoga can be found at ITJ447, r19.2-r20.4.

and Upa- being used, as well as Caryā²⁵. This latter term was eventually adopted by the later Tibetan *Gsar ma* schools in their fourfold classification system. Perhaps the earliest instance of Caryā being used appears in the writings of another late eighth century Indian tantric scholar, Vilāsavajra. Like Buddhaguhya, the perhaps only slightly later Vilāsavajra often opened his works with discussions of the classes of tantras²⁶. In his influential commentary to the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* he named three classes of tantras: Kriyā, Caryā, and Yoga²⁷.

Elsewhere, however, Vilāsavajra seems to have felt no need for the intermediate category. At the beginning of his other major work, his so-called *Spar khab* commentary to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, Vilāsavajra set forth another classification system²⁸:

In essence there are three [classes of tantras]: the Kriyā tantras such as the *Vajrapāṇyabhiṣekha*, the “Conqueror” [i.e. Yoga] tantras such as the [*Sarvathāgata*-] *Tattvasaṃgraha*, and the tantras of the Upāya vehicle. Within this [latter class] are three further subcategories: the [male] method tantras such as the *Śrī Guhyasamāja*, the [female] wisdom tantras such as *Śrī Saṃvara*, and the neuter tantras such as the *Śrī Buddhotpāda*. The present *Śrī Guhyagarbha* completes and joins the aims of all the tantras, their causes and their effects, and for this reason it is said to be common to all tantras²⁹.

²⁵ Snellgrove (1988, 1357) suggests that Upayoga was the original term for this class of tantras which “approximate” (hence the prefix, *upa*-) the Yoga tantras, and that the other terms are best understood as later “mistaken corrections.” Personally, however, I have seen no reason for making such a judgement and find Ubhayā a far more convincing original.

²⁶ For a discussion of Vilāsavajra (also referred to as Lalitavajra) and his dates, see Davidson (1981), 6-7.

²⁷ *Nāmasaṃgītiṭīkā*, 31b.2. *rnal 'byor spyod dang bya ba'i rgyud*. See also 33a.5 (*rnal 'byor dang/ bya ba'i rgyud dang spyod pa'i rgyud*).

²⁸ It should be noted that the reliability of this *Spar khab* attribution has not been established. I have seen nothing substantial to contradict the claim that Vilāsavajra was the author, and for this reason I have included it in the present survey. However, this question requires closer attention than I have given it, and much of what appears in the following section should for this reason be taken as provisional.

²⁹ *Spar khab*, 131a.4-6. *ngo bo la gsum stel phyag na rdo rjes dbang bskur ba la sogs pa bya ba'i rgyud/ de kho na nyid thub pa la sogs pa thub pa'i rgyud dang/ thabs kyi theg pa'i rgyud dol/ de la yang gsum stel dpal gsang ba 'dus pa la sogs pa thabs kyi rgyud dang/ dpal bde mchog la sogs pa shes rab kyi rgyud dang/ dpal 'bu ta 'byung ba la sogs pa ma ning gi rgyud dol/ de la dpal gsang ba'i snying po 'di ni thams cad kyi don dang rgyu 'bras tshang zhing 'brel pa'i phyir/ rgyud thams cad kyi spyi yin par gsungs so*. As for the titles mentioned in this passage, the neuter tantra mentioned here, the *Śrī Buddhotpāda*, remains unidentified. The *Śrī Saṃvara* almost certainly refers to the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga*, and

In this passage, the class of “Upāya” tantras should not be identified with Buddhaguhya’s Ubhayā class, nor with Vilāsavajra’s own Caryā class. Rather, it represented a new third class that was added *above* the standard twofold division into Kriyā and Yoga tantras³⁰. The *Spar khab*’s new third class, its so-called “Upāya vehicle” was elsewhere known as Mahāyoga (literally “greater yoga”)³¹.

During the second half of the eighth century, a new class of radically transgressive tantras was spreading through India. Like Buddhaguhya’s earlier Yoga tantra, the new Mahāyoga was deemed an “inward” class of tantric teachings. The subject of the above-cited *Spar khab* commentary, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, was itself a well known Mahāyoga work, though the most influential of the new Mahāyoga tantras was certainly the famous *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, which shared much in common with the slightly later *Guhyagarbha*³². The early Mahāyoga tantras offered a range

not to the *Cakrasaṃvara*. The *Cakrasaṃvara* system, like the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga*, developed gradually with multiple recensions and explanatory tantras, making it a difficult system to date. Whatever its dates may have been in India, within Tibet the *Cakrasaṃvara* system and the *Hevajra* did not appear on the scene until the late tenth century; no mention of either system appears in any Dunhuang manuscript.

³⁰ It is interesting to consider that the *Spar khab*’s name for Yoga tantra — “Conqueror” tantra — may have been a reference to the themes and imagery of sovereignty which pervade the rituals of this class. It is perhaps in the same vein that the Dunhuang manuscript ITJ423, 4v.6 refers to “the four vehicles of royalty” (*rgyal theg bzhi*). On the connections between Yoga tantra ritual, Indian coronation rites, and other royal themes, see Snellgrove (1987), 234 and Davidson (2002), 113-168.

³¹ This reading is confirmed by other early sources that identify Mahāyoga with the tantras of Upāya. See for example the Dunhuang manuscript ITJ508, r1 (*rnal sbyor chen po nang pa thabs kyi rgyud kyi tan tra*) and the *Man ngag lta ba’i phreng ba* (Karmay 1988, 165: *rnal ‘byor nang pa thabs kyi rgyud*).

³² Both tantras appeared in the lists of the eighteen *Māyājāla* tantras. All of the works included in the *Māyājāla* corpus were understood to have emerged from a single source, an original *Māyājāla* tantra which in its complete form was purported to be so lengthy that it probably only existed as a purely mythical kind of *ur-text*. It may be, however, that many of the eighteen *Māyājāla* tantras did indeed emerge from a common social and literary “matrix.” They do share a number of traits, such as an emphasis on the five buddha-families, the use of the three *samādhis* to describe the generation of the visualized maṇḍala (not be confused with another system of three *samādhis* found in the Yoga tantra STTS, on which see Cozort 1986, 51), and the centrality of sacramental sexual rites). In this sense they may represent a certain period in the development of Buddhist tantra, when Mahāyoga was still closely associated with the Yoga tantras. Future work will hopefully tell us more on this point. As discussed by Eastman (1981), the eighteen *Māyājāla* tantras as a group mirrored the earlier corpus of eighteen *Vajrasāekhara* tantras, which were

of new ritual technologies. Particularly innovative were their sexual practices. The Yoga tantra ritualist visualized himself as the deity at the maṇḍala's center and made offerings, real or imagined, to himself. Now the Mahāyoga practitioner visualized the maṇḍala at the point of sexual union between himself and a ritual consort. But most crucial to these early Mahāyoga rituals was the culminating moment when the practitioner would receive a drop of the resulting male and female sexual fluids on his tongue as a "supreme sacrament."³³

also meant to have been extracted from a massive and probably ultimately mythological *ur*-tantra. Both the *Māyājāla* and the *Vajraśekhara* textual groups may also relate to still other eighteen-fold collections. Of particular interest may be the eighteen *mahāpurāṇas* and *upapurāṇas*. According to Hazra, the formation of the latter grouping dates to the mid-ninth century at the latest and was in formation between 650-800 (Hazra 1958, I, 14-15). We have already observed (see n.19) the possible existence of still earlier canonical models such as the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*, which was classified by Buddhaguhya under Kriyā tantra.

³³ Elsewhere (Dalton 2004a) I have argued that this ritual moment was a definitive characteristic of early Mahāyoga in India from roughly the mid-eighth century through at least the mid-ninth century. The importance of this sacramental ritual form was still greater in Tibet, where the influence of later developments in sexual practice, particularly of the complex "channels and winds" (*rtsa rlung*) systems, seems not to have arrived until Buddhism's "later diffusion" (*phyi dar*) in late tenth century.

In the same article, as I laid out the evidence for my argument, I considered the possible meanings of the term "*padma ban da*" that appears in a number of Dunhuang descriptions of the sacramental rite. In my considerations, I neglected to mention the common use of the term (Skt. *bāṇḍa*) to refer to a tantric skull-cup. The term *ban da* is used in this way in other Dunhuang manuscripts describing the iconography of wrathful deities (see for example ITJ306, v13.2-4 or ITJ484, 1v.1), and perhaps also related are references such as one seen in the diaries of Yijing, in which the Chinese pilgrim describes his worshipping a "padma skull" relic of Śākyamuni while visiting Chia-pi-shih (see Lahiri 1986, 69). A conch shell could also be used according to chapter seven of Candrakīrti's *Caryāmelāpaka-pradīpa* of the Ārya tradition of Guhyasamāja exegesis (see Wedemeyer (forthcoming)), and a link between skulls and conches is well attested. All this said, however, none of it contradicts the idea that the term *padma ban da* referred to the consort's vagina. Other passages make it quite clear that the supreme sacrament was gathered from the vagina. Such is certainly the case in both chapter eight of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (109a.8) and the (somewhat later) eighteenth chapter (163a.8), two references that are particularly significant, since ITJ331 which uses the term *padma ban da* is based on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (as are the vast majority of Mahāyoga ritual manuals from Dunhuang). In fact, the *bāṇḍa* often symbolizes the vagina in tantric literature. For a Dunhuang passage confirming this, we may look to ITJ585, which describes the goddess Ghasmari: "With a vajra of means she stirs the *ban da* and drinks from it" (1v.2: *thabs kyi rdo rjes dan da dkrug cing gsol*). Here the "vajra of means" alludes to the male penis "stirring" in the female skull-cup/vagina. This literary allusion may well have resulted in two ritual methods for gathering the supreme

In the passage cited above, the *Spar khab* distinguished three further subdivisions within Mahāyoga — the male tantras that focused primarily on method, the female tantras focusing on wisdom, and the neuter tantras. This strategy of assigning genders to tantras was widely adopted after the tenth century, and the *Spar khab*'s use of it may be the earliest instance we have. Finally, according to the *Spar khab*'s classification system, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* incorporates and thereby transcends all three of these Mahāyoga classes. As already noted, the *Guhyagarbha* was widely held to be a Mahāyoga tantra, but the *Spar khab* seems to have been toying with another idea — that the *Guhyagarbha* should be placed in a still higher class.

The *Spar khab*'s hesitation to classify the *Guhyagarbha* as Mahāyoga is explained later in the same commentary, in its discussion of the *Guhyagarbha*'s crucial thirteenth chapter. For there we find the root tantra's own internal classification scheme. This is one of the earliest classification systems to appear within an actual tantra. The vital passage appears at the beginning of chapter thirteen, where we read:

Using words which rely on letters, linguistic conventions, and nominal designations, [the teachings] are well represented in terms of no realization and wrong realization, partial realization, misrealization of the genuine, discipline, the intention, the secret, the natural secret meaning³⁴.

A number of late-eighth century commentators worked to unpack this obscure passage, and the *Spar khab*, if it were indeed written by Vilāsavajra, would be one of the earliest³⁵. It begins by explaining that the first

sacrament, that is, from the consort's vagina or from an actual skull-cup. In either case, the sacrament remains the culmination of early Mahāyoga ritual practice.

³⁴ *Guhyagarbha*, 192.1-3. *ma rtogs pa dang log par rtogs/ phyogs rtogs yang dag nyid ma rtogs/ 'dul ba dgongs pa gsang ba dang/ rang bzhin gsang ba'i don rnam nil yi ge sgra btags ming tshogs la/ brten pa'i tshig gis rab mtshon te.*

³⁵ The relevant passage can be found at *Spar khab*, 186a.8-186b.6. Apart from the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* (discussed below), the only other *Guhyagarbha* commentary attributed to an Indian author is the *Dpal gsang ba'i snying po'i rgya cher bshad pa'i 'grel pa* (Q.4719) by Sūryaprabhāṣiṃha (Nyi ma'i seng ge'i 'od). After an admittedly cursory look, however, this attribution seems even more suspicious than the *Spar khab*. Compared to the *Spar khab*, it makes far greater use of Rdzogs chen. In its discussion of the thirteenth chapter's doxographical system (339b.5-340a.6), it includes the class of Anuyoga, a term that was rarely if ever used before the early-to-mid ninth century. But even more telling, the work cites a wide range of Mahāyoga tantras and commentaries including Vilāsavajra's

two terms, “no realization” and “wrong realization,” refer to the two kinds of worldly views, that is, the apathetic (*phyal ba*) who are uninterested in reflection of any kind, and the nihilists and eternalists who hold the non-Buddhist philosophical views³⁶. The next two terms, “partial realization” and “misrealization of the genuine,” refer to the exoteric Buddhist paths. In this way “partial realization” describes the Śrāvakas, the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Cittamātrins, while the more subtle “misrealization of the genuine” is the error of the Madhyāmika.

The remaining four divisions refer to the tantric vehicles, and the *Spar khab* explained them in these words:

Regarding, “discipline, the intention, the secret, the natural secret meaning,” while certainly a correct teaching, the practice of disciplining the three doors [of body, speech, and mind] is Kriyā. The practitioner who primarily performs the inward yogas belongs to Yoga. To abide in the unusual views and practices is the “secret.” To abide in the natural result of those two inward [practices] and of all things is Atiyoga, which is taught as nothing apart from the obscurations of the various stages in which one craves after imputations³⁷.

Thus the practice of ritual “discipline” is taught in the Kriyā tantras, while the inward “intention” is Yoga tantra. The “secret” remains unnamed, but we can safely assume the *Spar khab* intended the new class of Mahāyoga. And finally the “natural secret meaning” refers to the new and even higher class of Atiyoga. In short, according to the *Spar khab*, the *Guhyagarbha*’s classification system can be summarized as follows:

writings (see, for example, 351b.5). This makes unlikely, though perhaps not impossible, the claim made by the later tradition (Dudjom 1991, 688) that the work was translated by the late eighth century Tibetan Vairocana. A closer study is required, but it seems unlikely that the work dates from before the tenth century. Because of the work’s unreliability and because it adds little to the picture provided by other texts, I have excluded it from the present survey.

³⁶ For more indepth discussions of all these views, see *Mun pa’i go cha*, vol. 51, 406.1ff, and *Mkhas pa lde’u*, 113-114.

³⁷ *Spar khab* 186b.3-5. ‘dul ba dgongs pa gsang ba dang/ rang bzhin gsang ba’i don rnamz ni/ zhes bya ba ni/ yang dag par bstan mod kyi spyod pas sgo gsum ‘dul ba kri ya dang/ spyod pa bas nang gi rnal ‘byor gtsor byed pa yo ga dang/ phal la med pa’i lta spyod la gnas pas gsang ba ste/ nang pa gnyis po dang/ dngos po thams cad kyi rang bzhin ‘bras bur gnas kyang/ brtags pa la zhen pa’i rim pa sna tshogs kyi bsgrub pa tsam du ston pa’i a ti yo ga’o.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>ma rtogs: phyal ba</i> | 1. no realization: apathetic |
| 2. <i>log par rtogs: rtag chad gnyis</i> | 2. wrong realization: nihilists & eternalists |
| 3. <i>phyogs rtogs:</i> | 3. partial realization: |
| – <i>nyan thos pa</i> | – Śrāvakas |
| – <i>rang sangs rgyas</i> | – Pratyekabuddhas |
| – <i>rnam par rig pa</i> | – Vijñānavādins |
| 4. <i>yang dag nyid ma rtogs: dbu ma</i> | 4. misrealization of the genuine: Madhyāmika |
| 5. <i>'dul ba: kri ya</i> | 5. discipline: Kriyā |
| 6. <i>dgongs pa: rnal 'byor</i> | 6. intention: Yoga |
| 7. <i>gsang ba: [rnal 'byor chen po]</i> | 7. secret: Mahāyoga |
| 8. <i>rang bzhin gsang ba'i don: a ti yo ga</i> | 8. natural secret meaning: Atiyoga |

The *Spar khab* describes the final class of Atiyoga as “nothing apart from the obscurations,” in other words, as ordinary uncontrived reality. The realization of Atiyoga, he explains, is the result of the “two inward” practices, probably meaning the two preceding classes of Yoga and Mahāyoga, though this could alternatively be a reference to the two stages of development and perfection.

We have noted above how the *Spar khab*’s commentary placed the *Guhyagarbha* above Mahāyoga. This move was likely caused by the *Guhyagarbha*’s strong ties to the still-emerging class of Atiyoga, otherwise known as Rdzogs chen (“Great Perfection”). The precise relationship between the categories of Atiyoga and Mahāyoga remained unclear throughout the late eighth and ninth centuries³⁸, which may explain why the *Spar khab* seems hesitant about the relationship between the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* — the principal canonical source for Atiyoga/Rdzogs chen — and Mahāyoga. As seen above, the *Spar khab* describes Atiyoga as the culmination of Mahāyoga practice, and in this way it presents Atiyoga as distinct from Mahāyoga yet in practical terms still dependent on it.

³⁸ This lack of clarity is exemplified by a number of Dunhuang manuscripts. Perhaps best known is the *Rdo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan* by the early ninth century Tibetan scholar Dnyan dpal dbyangs. In its poetic tone and its rejection of any need for ritual practice, this work resembles the *Rdzogs chen* texts of its day, as recognized by the interlinear notes to the Dunhuang manuscripts (see ITJ470 and PT837). Yet the author himself labels it a work on Mahāyoga.

Given the discrepancies between the two major commentaries ascribed to Vilāsavajra — on the *Nāmasaṃgīti* in which he named only the classes of Kriyā, Caryā, and Yoga tantra, and on the *Guhyagarbha* in which he excluded Caryā and included Mahāyoga and Atiyoga — it is tempting to see the two works as representing distinct chronological periods in Vilāsavajra's thought. One might believe that the *Nāmasaṃgīti* commentary stems from an earlier period in Vilāsavajra's intellectual development, before he had encountered the *Guhyagarbha* tradition and its higher tantric classes. Such conclusions are dangerous however, and the discrepancy is probably better explained by assuming that a looser sense of doxography was at work. Indeed, if both works are by Vilāsavajra (and this remains a serious question), it is quite likely that he understood the different classification systems as specific to their respective tantric traditions; in fact Vilāsavajra seems to have been well aware of the category of Mahāyoga when he composed his *Nāmasaṃgīti* work, even as he excluded it from his discussion of the tantric classes³⁹. Whatever the chronological order of his two purported works, Vilāsavajra does not seem to have followed a rigid classification system into which all tantras must be neatly arranged. Davidson has observed that the *Nāmasaṃgīti* has been classified under almost every category possible⁴⁰, and it is important to recognize the arbitrary nature of these classifications, even in today's modern Tibetan tradition.

I do not believe, however, that the general flexibility of these systems makes the present endeavour to arrange them into a chronological narrative a pointless one. Doing so can not only force us to define more clearly the gaps in our knowledge, but also help to emphasize precisely the fluctuations in terminologies that are so often portrayed by modern scholars as clearly defined or unchanging. Certainly the most dramatic discontinuity in the history of tantric classification literature was the break between the systems of India and those of Tibet. The brief passages we have seen in the works of early Indian tantric scholars became entire treatises in Tibet, and their numbers too continued to proliferate; Tibetans took their classifications far more seriously than the Indians.

³⁹ See *Nāmasaṃgītiṭīkā*, 32a.3, where he uses the term Mahāyoga in describing the scriptural source for the *Nāmasaṃgīti*.

⁴⁰ Davidson (1981), 15.

II. Tibetan Classification Systems

II.a. *Padmasambhava's Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*

The next commentary we have on the same passage from chapter thirteen of the *Guhyagarbha* is the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* (henceforth MTP) attributed to Padmasambhava. This text provides a useful transition from the Indian classification systems to the Tibetan ones, as it was purportedly composed by an Indian teacher while visiting Tibet⁴¹. We can therefore assume that Padmasambhava would have tailored the MTP for his Tibetan audience. Padmasambhava was central in bringing Mahāyoga to Tibet⁴², and it is significant that he did so through doxography. His MTP represents our earliest extant text entirely devoted to setting forth a tantric classification system. In his transplantation of tantra into Tibetan soil, Padmasambhava apparently recognized an unprecedented need for doxography, and his seminal text bore many fruits in the form of later Tibetan doxographical treatises.

It is certainly relevant in this regard that the two best known non-tantric Buddhist doxographical treatises produced by Indians are Śāntarakṣita's *Ornament for the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakālaṃkāra*; Q. 5284) and Kamalaśīla's *Illumination of the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakāloka*; Q. 5287). Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla both visited Tibet for extended periods to assist the king, Khri srong lde'u brtsan, in establishing Buddhism as Tibet's state religion. In addition to these crucial works, we must also consider the *Distinctions among the Views* (*Lta ba'i khyad par*; Q. 5847) by another important figure of the late eighth century Tibetan court — the Tibetan

⁴¹ All indications point to the reliability of the attribution of the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* to Padmasambhava: The text clearly predates Gnuks chen sangs rgyas ye shes (late ninth/early tenth century) who quotes it (*Bsam gtan mig sgron*, 207.3-6), and it reflects a stage of tantric development we would expect to see in the late eighth century. The eleventh century Rong zom chos kyi bzang po wrote a commentary on it attributing it to Padmasambhava, and the *Sba bzhed* claims Padmasambhava wrote it while visiting central Tibet. Moreover, it seems that Padmasambhava composed at least one other Mahāyoga commentary while in Tibet. The Dunhuang manuscript ITJ321 is a complete and lengthy commentary to the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* (Q.416) that is clearly attributed to the master. It also includes a description of Śāntigarbha, another Indian monk in Tibet at the same time, "checking [the text] and, finding no errors, praising [Padma]sambhava" (ITJ321, 84a.5. *slobs dpon shan ti gar bas brtags nas ma nor nas /sam ba bha la stod pa'o*).

⁴² On early evidence of Padmasambhava's Mahāyoga involvement, see Germano (2002), 232-237 and Dalton (2004b).

scholar Ye shes sde. Taken together, these three treatises provide an important background against which Padmasambhava's own contribution should be viewed.

The MTP has been translated elsewhere by Samten Karmay⁴³. In short, the work sets forth a system of seven distinct vehicles. The first three are those of the sūtras, i.e. those of Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas, and the next three follow Buddhaguhya's lead — Kriyā, Ubhayā, and Yoga. Unlike Buddhaguhya, however, Padmasambhava labels Yoga an "outward" vehicle, thus demoting the Yoga tantras and lumping them in with the lower classes of Kriyā and Ubhayā. Apparently by the end of the eighth century when Padmasambhava was writing, in the light of the more recent Mahāyoga ritual developments, the Yoga tantras no longer looked as "inward" as they once had.

The seventh and final vehicle in Padmasambhava's system is that of the inward yogas, referring, one can assume, to Mahāyoga. The language of Vilāsavajra's *Spar khab* may also be seen in the MTP, as the outward Yoga is termed the "Conqueror vehicle" and the inward Yoga the "Upāya vehicle." Also like the *Spar khab*, the latter vehicle is further subdivided into three, but where the *Spar khab* distinguished the male, female, and neuter tantras, Padmasambhava has three "techniques" (Tib. *tshul*) of development, perfection, and great perfection (*bskyed rdzogs rdzogs chen*). Thus with some interpolation of terms, we have a system that looks like this:

Sūtra Vehicles:

1. Śrāvaka
2. Pratyekabuddha
3. Bodhisattva

Outward Tantra Vehicles:

4. Kriyā
5. Ubhayā
6. Yoga/Conqueror

Inward Tantra Vehicle:

7. Mahāyoga/Upāya
 - a. development techniques
 - b. perfection techniques
 - c. great perfection techniques

⁴³ Karmay (1988), 152-163.

The last three techniques refer to three stages in the rituals of Mahāyoga. In the development stage, a visualized maṇḍala would gradually be constructed with oneself at the center, followed by an exchange of offerings and blessings. In the perfection stage, the maṇḍala was generated suddenly in the context of a ritualized sexual practice. And the great perfection refers to the culminating moment of the entire ritual sequence, when the visualization is dissolved back into emptiness through the ingestion of a sacramental drop.

Taken as a whole, Padmasambhava's MTP can be understood as a systematization of much that had come before. The system skillfully wove together the earlier writings of Buddhaguhya and Vilāsavajra. By distinguishing between the various ritual techniques described in the tantras, Padmasambhava provided Tibetans with an interpretive framework for comprehending the mass of materials arriving from India at the end of the eighth century.

II.b. *Dpal dbyangs'* Lamp for the Mind

Some twenty years after Padmasambhava's visit to Tibet, the first Tibetan classification systems began to appear. Perhaps inspired by the MTP, the early ninth century Tibetan scholar Dpal dbyangs wrote an even more extensive work dedicated to the coded scheme found in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*'s thirteenth chapter. Dpal dbyangs has received some attention in recent scholarship for his influential work, the *Questions and Answers of Vajrasattva* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*), of which there are several copies in the Dunhuang collections⁴⁴. Another work however, the *Lamp for the Mind* (*Thugs kyi sgron ma*), is his longest⁴⁵. Its significance as a doxographical work has been so far overlooked, probably because it is extremely difficult to read and corrupt in many places.

The work opens with a justification of classification systems in general. The point is made that ultimately such hierarchical distinctions are irrelevant. "The Mahāyoga system," Dpal dbyangs writes, "does not reject

⁴⁴ Two full copies are found in ITJ470 and PT837, and a partial copy in PT819.

⁴⁵ In the Peking edition (Q.5918) it fills twenty-one folio sides, while his *Zhus lan* (Q.5082) fills eleven sides.

the twenty-one ways of clinging; nondual, it neither accepts nor rejects them. It actualizes them [all] without resorting to methods.” That said however, “this supreme system of thusness does have three stages of yoga and of tantras.”⁴⁶ Here Dpal dbyangs is likely referring to the three Mahāyoga stages already distinguished by Padmasambhava⁴⁷. The correct path, he continues,

is not like the practices of the unclean clans or like mistaking a mottled rope for a snake⁴⁸. [In such cases,] an untrue consciousness appears, so they are false. [In the correct path, such mistakes] may not be rejected, but this does not mean they are true. The self-arising wisdom is without edges or center. It is unwavering, self-illuminating, and devoid of grasping. [Yet] the four immeasurables and the four *dhyānas* are reified into distinct stages, all forms are conceptualized as selves, and for these reasons, the three truths of the secret should not be seen as the same⁴⁹.

Even though such classifications can be misleading, we are told, they are a fact of life. Enlightenment may be undifferentiated, but our addiction to reification makes classification systems inevitable.

Dpal dbyangs goes on to explain how the different vehicles appear when, straying from the knowledge of all into a view of non-discrimination (Tib. *‘du shes med*; Skt. *asaṃjñā*), one takes this view to be the enlightened ground. From this subtle error the concept of time arises, and “by resting in the abyss of higher and lower paths, the totality becomes

⁴⁶ *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, 275a, 5-6. *de bas rnal ‘byor chen po’i lugs/ bcu gnyis gcig gi zhen pa dag/ mi spong gnyis med blang dor med/ thabs kyi rang bzhi bral mgon byed/ de bzhi pa yi lugs mchog ‘di/ rgyud dang rnal ‘byor gsum rim pa.*

⁴⁷ Note that the “three stages of Mahāyoga” (*ma ha yo ga’i rnam gsum rims*) are also mentioned in ITJ436, 3v.7. There, the passage introduces the ritual that then immediately turns to the first stage of development. That these are the same three stages as those referred to by Dpal dbyangs may be supported by the fact that both texts purport to be based on the *Māyājāla* traditions (see *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, 274b.8 and ITJ436, 5v.4).

⁴⁸ Note this same image is used in MTP at the beginning of the Śrāvaka discussion.

⁴⁹ *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, 275b, 1-2. *de phyir mi gtsang rus spyod dang/ sab rda thag sbrul mtho mi ltar/ mi bden shes snang phyir rdzun pa’ang/ mi spong mod kyang bden pa min/ rang byung ye shes mtha’ dbus med/ mi g.yo rang gsal ‘dzin bral la/ tshad med bzhi dang bsam gtan bzhi/ rim par so sos bdag cing/ gzugs rnam kun la bdag rtog pas/ gsang ba’i bden gsum mnyam ma mthong.* (My translation corrects several points on the basis of comparison with other versions of the text found in the Narthang *Bstan ‘gyur* and the 110 volume *Bka’ ma shin tu rgyas pa* (vol.86, ff.283-325). Copies of the latter are now held by the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center in New York and by the British Library.)

experienced as happiness or suffering. Thus it is that three stages are distinguished.”⁵⁰ In this way Dpal dbyangs warns the reader against taking such classifications too dogmatically.

Dpal dbyangs’ philosophical approach reduces all vehicles to mere grades of delusion. Such an approach allows for the non-Buddhist religions to be considered also, and when Dpal dbyangs turns to his classification system proper, he begins with the mundane vehicle of Gods and Humans:⁵¹

Five distinct differences are taught because of varying beliefs. Their differences will be explained just briefly: The first vehicle defends the sixteen [laws]⁵². The second guards the views and practices of the four [truths]. The third teaches the twelve [links] to be definitive; the fourth, the two truths. The secret fifth includes the outward ones, of which the first is the total purity of reflexive awareness; the second follows the former and the following [i.e. follows both Kriyā and Yoga]; the third arranges in stages the seven levels of the clear light of space itself. However, the path for reaching the Secret Nucleus (*guhyagarbha*) is for those who, through renouncing the [other] four vehicles, abide in the fruition of the single vehicle. This final one is the ultimate resting place. This final one is the main one explained here⁵³.

⁵⁰ *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, 275b, 4-5. *g.yang sa mtho dman lam zhugs pas/ zad par bde sdug myong bar ‘gyur/ ‘dod pa’i ‘bras bu ga la yin/ de phyir gsum la khyad par mod.*

⁵¹ Matthew Kapstein has noted the existence of a similar description of the origin of the non-Buddhist views in the doxographical writings of the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi. Kapstein points out that this description allowed for an eclecticism in Karma Pakshi’s classification system, and he argues that this eclecticism is best understood within the context of the Karmapa’s close ties with the Mongol emperor Möngke Khan. By taking such a philosophical view of non-Buddhist religions, Kapstein argues, Karma Pakshi made allowances for the Mongolians’ own religious heritage. (See Kapstein 2003 and also his early study of the same materials in Kapstein 2000, 97-106.) While this all may be true, it is important to recognize that Karma Pakshi’s theories were not all that unique within the wider history of Tibetan exegetical writings on the *Guhyagarbha*’s classification system. Much of what Karma Pakshi wrote was prefigured by Dpal dbyangs as early as the ninth century. It is therefore worth considering whether the eclecticism inherent in this philosophical presentation of the *Guhyagarbha* classification system might have been motivated by early Tibetans’ wish to place their *own* pre-Buddhist religious traditions in a more sympathetic light *vis-à-vis* Buddhism. Such a reading would seem to be encouraged by Dpal dbyangs’ inclusion of a vehicle of Gods and Humans (*lha mi’i theg pa*).

⁵² See Dudjom (1991), 59-60, for an enumeration of the sixteen pure laws of humans (*mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*) which confirm this first vehicle is that of Gods and Humans.

⁵³ *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, 276a.6-276b.1. *lnga yi bye brag mi mthun pa/ mos pa tha dad phyir gsungs pa/ bye brag mdo tsam bshad par bya/ theg pa dang po bcu drug mgon/ gnyis pa gzhi yi lta spyod bsrung/ gsum pa bcu gnyis nges par bstan/ bzhi pa bden pa rnam pa gnyis/ lnga pa gsang ba ‘ang phyi pa ‘ang/ dang po rang rig rnam par dag/ gnyis pa*

The remainder of the text goes on to explain each vehicle in greater detail. In short, five vehicles are distinguished⁵⁴:

1. Gods and Humans
2. Śrāvakas
3. Pratyekabuddhas
4. Bodhisattvas
5. Tantras:
 - i. Kriyā
 - ii. Ubhayā
 - iii. Yoga
 - iv. Mahāyoga

At first glance, this system resembles that of Padmasambhava's MTP. Both authors list Kriyā, Ubhayā, Yoga, and Mahāyoga and then subdivided the latter into three. Yet Dpal dbyangs' system differs on two significant points: First, it adds the vehicle of Gods and Humans (*lha mi'i theg pa*) at the beginning. Second, it describes the vehicles in terms far more doctrinal than those used in the MTP, or in any of the Indian presentations we have examined so far.

The first point, that Dpal dbyangs inserts the vehicle of Gods and Humans, may well betray the influence of Chinese doxographical systems. In his 1983 article, Peter Gregory suggests this worldly non-Buddhist vehicle originated in China. Gregory traces the earliest reference to the vehicle to the writings of Liu Ch'iu (438-495), a lay Buddhist recluse from southern China. In this Chinese context, the teaching of Gods and Humans focused on the workings of karma, with the ultimate goal being a higher rebirth within the cycle of *saṃsāra*. This class of teachings, writes Gregory, "seems to have been invented by Chinese Buddhists during the second half of the fifth century in an effort to accommodate Buddhism to the needs of its growing number of lay adherents by adapting it to the more socially oriented concerns of Confucianism."⁵⁵ Following this early instance,

snga phyi rjes su 'brang/ gsum pa dbyings nyid 'od gsal ba'i/ sa bdun rim par bkod pa yang/ gsang ba'i snying por 'gro ba'i lam/ theg pa bzhi yis nges 'byung la/ theg pa gcig gi 'bras bur gnas/ tha ma'ang bsti gnas mthar thug ste/ tha ma'ang gtso mchog 'dir bshad do.

⁵⁴ A possibly similar five vehicle tantric system is referred to in at least one Dunhuang manuscript (see ITJ384, r6.1). Unfortunately, it is unclear if the vehicles intended were the same as those described by Dpal dbyangs.

⁵⁵ Gregory (1983), 256.

however, the class fell into some disuse; during the seventh and early eighth centuries, the teaching of Gods and Humans was missing from both the influential classification schemes of Fa-tsang (643-712) and Hui-yuan (ca. 673-743). Then in the early ninth century, the great Chinese scholar Tsung-mi (780-841) broke with his recent predecessors and included the teaching, “as the first and most elementary level of Buddhist teaching”⁵⁶ in his new *Yüan-jen lun* system. Gregory concludes that Tsung-mi’s inclusion of the teaching helped, “to reconcile the Confucian moral values that he had learned in his youth with the teachings of the religion that he had adopted as an adult.”⁵⁷ It also, “reflected the growing importance of lay Buddhist societies throughout different strata of Chinese society during the latter part of the T’ang dynasty.”⁵⁸

Tsung-mi’s dates make him roughly contemporary with Dpal dbyangs, and Dpal dbyangs’ addition of the vehicle of Gods and Humans is best understood in similar terms. Buddhism was spreading and growing in importance throughout Tibetan society in the early ninth century, and Dpal dbyangs’ treatise may be seen in part as an attempt to bring the non-Buddhist Tibetan religions into the Buddhist fold.

The vehicle of Gods and Humans continued to be used throughout the crucial years of the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism in the ninth and tenth centuries. The Tibetan manuscripts discovered near Dunhuang contain a number of references to the term⁵⁹. Perhaps the most well known example appears in ITJ370, studied by Hugh Richardson. The passage supports our reading of Dpal dbyangs:

They [the two Tibetan kings Srong brtsan gam po and Khri strong lde brtsan] received that [Buddhist] doctrine and devoted themselves to it and caused

⁵⁶ Gregory (1983), 253.

⁵⁷ Gregory (1983), 279.

⁵⁸ Gregory (1983), 296.

⁵⁹ One instance of particular interest comes in the letters of introduction for a traveling monk that are found in ITJ754. The fourth of these letters is written by a military official (Dmog ‘bu cang), who ends the request for good treatment of the pilgrim with, “On the part of gods and men also, like consideration is requested” (*lha myi phyogs kyang de bzhin du dgongs par gsol*). This line would seem to suggest that the term “gods and men” had entered common parlance as a reference to the lay community within which a military commander such as our author might wield power. For a transliteration and translation of the letter in question, see Thomas (1927), 555.

it to spread among all creatures... The bounds of the dominion increased and the land of Tibet was happy. Harvests were good, diseases of men and cattle rare. The sound qualities and right behaviour of the people increased; and, far from shunning *the rites of gods and men*, they revered them and, clinging even more strongly to those principles, they did not fail in proper respect and affection towards teachers and parents, brothers, sisters and kinsmen, and to those who through age are in a position of honour⁶⁰.

As in China, the teaching of Gods and Humans is associated with the religious practices and the cultural values of non-Buddhist Tibet. The passage indicates that Tibetans worried about the new foreign religion jeopardizing their native ways of life, and one can imagine that the rituals and the rhetoric of the Buddhist tantras must have posed a particularly direct threat.

After the tenth century, when Tibetan Buddhism was cleansed of many of the non-Indian elements that had accumulated during the so-called “dark period,” the popularity of the vehicle of Gods and Humans faded. In later centuries it was maintained in only a few pockets of the Bon and Rnying ma traditions⁶¹. By the end of the tenth century, it seems, the vehicle of Gods and Humans had fulfilled its transitional purpose and was no longer needed.

The second (and more crucial) point of difference between the two systems of Dpal dbyangs and Padmasambhava is the more doctrinal focus of Dpal dbyangs’. Padmasambhava’s MTP, like the works of Buddhaguhya and Vilāsavajra before him, describes the classes of tantras almost entirely in ritual terms. Dpal dbyangs’ discussion stands in stark contrast to these earlier Indian systems. Rather than distinguishing Kriyā and Yoga by their outward vs. inward approaches to ritual, Dpal dbyangs portrays Kriyā as concerned with “the total purity of intrinsic awareness” and Yoga as focused on “the seven levels of the clear light of space itself.” This doctrinal approach to classification fits with what we have already

⁶⁰ Richardson (1998), 76. My italics.

⁶¹ Karmay (1988), 148, claims there are no references to the vehicle of Gods and Humans in Rnying ma sources. In fact references abound, not only here in the *Thugs kyi sgron ma* but in other Rnying ma writings such as those on the *Dgongs pa ‘dus pa’i mdo* (for a late seventeenth century example, see Dharmaśīr’s *Mdo dbang gi spyi don*, 136.3). The Bon po classifications systems, which also make use of nine vehicles, are beyond the scope of the present study; on these, see Mimaki (1994), 126-132.

seen of Dpal dbyangs' couching the entire classification enterprise (and the three ritual stages of Mahāyoga in particular) in philosophical terms. The various classes are emphasized as reflections of one's mental state rather than types of ritual practice. This is the first Tibetan classification system we have examined, and we shall see that this doctrinal emphasis continued in later Tibetan writings.

II.c. *Gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes*

After Dpal dbyangs in the early ninth century, our next classification system appears in the influential tantra titled the *Compendium of Intentions Sūtra* (*Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*; henceforth GDD). This work was probably composed in Tibetan around the mid-ninth century⁶². A sprawling work of over six hundred folio sides, it represents an early Tibetan attempt to organize all of Buddhist tantra into a single, comprehensive system. Its success made it the *locus classicus* for the nine vehicle classification scheme used in later centuries by the Rnying ma school⁶³.

We have seen both Padmasambhava and Dpal dbyangs divide their highest class of Mahāyoga into the three "techniques" (*tshul*) or "stages" (*rim*) of development, perfection, and great perfection. In the writings of Gnubs chen, these three stages are enshrined as three separate classes. The resulting system reads as follows:

1. Śrāvaka
2. Pratyekabuddha
3. Bodhisattva
4. Kriyā
5. Ubhayā
6. Yoga

⁶² According to its colophon, the GDD was translated from the obscure central Asian language of Brusha (a kingdom near modern-day Gilgit). While this may have been true of certain sections, the vast majority of the work appears to have been written in Tibetan. Regarding the work's date, and for more on this tantra, see Dalton (2002).

⁶³ It is interesting to note that the GDD may postdate its own ritual system as represented in certain early ritual manuals. The classification system used in these early ritual manuals begins with a vehicle of Gods and Humans, while excluding the vehicle of the Ubhayā tantras (see, for example, the *Mdo dbang gi lag len zab mo* attributed to the Indian master Bde ba gsal mdzad).

7. Mahāyoga
8. Anuyoga
9. Atiyoga

Here we may suggest a further possible trend unfolding in these early classification systems. In Padmasambhava's MTP, the three Mahāyoga techniques of development, perfection, and great perfection grew directly out of the ritual sphere. Then in Dpal dbyangs' *Lamp for the Mind*, Dpal dbyangs made it clear that he saw the same three subdivisions of Mahāyoga as both "three stages of yoga and of tantras." Some seventy-five years later, we reach given Gnubs chen, who was deeply involved in the codification of the tantras around the turn of the tenth century, and we may detect a still greater concern with bibliographic taxonomy. These two classificatory purposes — for distinguishing the phases of a ritual vs. for categorizing tantric scriptures — may have led to the different terminology used by Gnubs chen. That is, the three "techniques" or "stages" may have emerged initially as a result of new ritual practices developing, while the distinct "vehicles" of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga may have come later to facilitate the classification of tantric scripture⁶⁴.

The question of whether these three categories should be mere stages or full-fledged vehicles continued to be debated for centuries in Tibet. After the tenth century, the "new" (*gsar ma*) schools followed a more conservative reading, interpreting the three only as stages⁶⁵, while the Rnying ma pa maintained the early Tibetan systems we are seeing here, in which the three constituted entire vehicles. This was a significant difference, for doxographic recognition carried with it authority. Samten Karmay has pointed to the polemical writings of the thirteenth century scholar Sa paṅ kun dga' rgyal mtshan, in which the Rnying ma pa are criticised for precisely their imprudent naming of vehicles⁶⁶. "The view of Atiyoga is

⁶⁴ We have seen a similar shift from ritual innovations to bibliographic concerns in the case of the Yoga vehicle. The earliest known distinction between Kriyā and Yoga was made in the commentarial writings by the Indian Buddhaguhya for the purpose of classifying tantric scriptures; this despite the fact that the ritual innovations seen in the STTS predated Buddhaguhya's categorization by some seventy-five years.

⁶⁵ Tsong kha pa was careful to explain that the classes of tantras should be understood as "doors of entry" and not as vehicles in their own right. Thus, according to him, there is only one tantric vehicle, namely the Vajrayāna. See Tsong-ka-pa (1977), 151.

⁶⁶ Karmay (1988), 147.

wisdom; it is not a vehicle. To make the inexpressible an object of discussion was not the intention of the learned ones.”⁶⁷ Thus many followers of the new schools, like Sa paṇ, rejected the Atiyoga tantras as spurious for reasons rooted in part in doxography⁶⁸.

Early Tibetans’ more liberal attitude towards multiple vehicles may also have been related to their interest in doctrine. Their creation of distinct vehicles and distinct doctrines for each class of tantras may have served to justify one another, that is, a distinct doctrine justified another vehicle and a separate vehicle required a distinct doctrine.

The GDD presents its nine vehicles system in chapter forty-four. It sets the system within a doctrinal discussion of three larger Buddhist vehicles that function together as an entire cosmology. The first of these three is the vehicle of the “continuous wheel” (*’khor lo rgyun*), intended for those beings who are attached to the desire realm (*’dod la zhen pa*). It uses

⁶⁷ *Dom gsum rab dbye*, as cited in Karmay (1988), 147. *a ti yo ga’i lta ba ni/ ye shes yin gyi theg pa min/ brjod bral brjod byar byas pa ni/ mkhas pa’i dgongs pa min zhes bya.*

⁶⁸ It is important to recognize that Tibetans were not alone in making Atiyoga “an object of discussion.” There is some evidence that some Indians of the early ninth century were also toying with the idea of making the three stages of tantric ritual into three distinct vehicles. Curiously, however, the Indian texts that use the terms do so in a different order. The alternative order observed in these works is: Yoga, Anuyoga, Atiyoga and Mahāyoga. This order can be observed in both the *Kṛṣṇayāmāri Tantra* (p.123) and less clearly in the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga* (166a.7-8). One might dismiss this as a mere esotericization of the “normal” Mahā-Anu-Ati order seen in Tibetan works of the ninth century, except that the Indian works are in such close agreement. It seems, rather, that a separate line of development is represented by the Indian works in question.

That the four classes in this system referred to four stages of ritual practice is clear from both the *Kṛṣṇayāmāri* and the *Buddhasamayoga* themselves and their numerous extant Indian commentaries. All of these sources agree on how the four classes should be understood. In brief, Yoga tantra refers to the development stage; Anuyoga refers to entering into union with a consort; Atiyoga is the spread and stabilization of the bliss of that union; Mahāyoga is the ingestion of the sacrament and the resulting experience of enlightenment. One can see that this system reflects a similar period in the development of Buddhist tantric ritual as that reflected in the roughly contemporary works of Padmasambhava and Dpal brtsegs, but here the perfection stage is divided into two parts — the initial union with the consort (Anuyoga) and the subsequent stabilization of sexual bliss (Atiyoga). For some of the relevant commentarial passages, see: (1) Kumāracandra’s *Ratnāvalīpañjikā*, found in the *Kṛṣṇayāmāri Tantra*, 250-266, (2) Śāntimitra’s *Sarvabuddhasamayogapañjikā*, 74b.2-76a.1, (3) *Indranāla/Brgya byin sdong po’s *Śrīsarvabuddhasamayogaḍākinī-jālaśaṃbaratantrārthaṭīkā*, 303b.6-304a.3. The latter source is particularly clear in its presentation.

natural forces (*rang bzhin shugs*) to tame their desires for momentary pleasure. Thus, the tantra explains, nature provides the disciple with three things that satisfy his/her needs so that he/she can progress towards enlightenment: birth, sustenance, and support (*skye, 'tsho, rten*)⁶⁹.

The second of the three general vehicles is that of the “magical display arising obviously” (*cho 'phrul mngon par 'byung ba*), which manifests for those disciples who are extremely difficult to tame (*gdul dka' drag po*). This vehicle is designed to sever the karmic continuum of those intensely engrossed in the three poisons of desire, ignorance and anger. This is accomplished by means of the apocalyptic aeons leading up to the final conflagration at the end of the universe. The crescendo of suffering experienced in these apocalyptic aeons cause many of these benighted beings to reflect upon, and feel regret for, their earlier misdeeds. In this sense, these aeons are the buddhas' final effort to help those who are so stubborn that they have not been liberated before this late date⁷⁰.

The last of the three general vehicles discussed is the “vehicle for ascertaining the ultimate” (*don dam nges pa'i theg pa*). This is where we find our system of nine vehicles. The GDD's presentation arranges them into three groups of three. Thus the “vehicle that extracts the source [of suffering]” (*kun 'byung 'dren pa'i theg pa*) contains the Śrāvaka, Pratyeka-buddha, and Bodhisattva vehicles. The “vehicle of awareness through

⁶⁹ For the discussion of this “natural” vehicle, see *Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*, 349.1-350.7. Mkhan po nus ldan (*Dgongs 'dus 'grel pa*, vol. 54, 464.6-476.5) explains that this vehicle functions simultaneously on five levels, listed in order of increasing subtlety. First, because all things come from the five physical elements, the buddhas are arising all the time as whatever is wanted. Second, space provides the opening for everything else; earth gives a firm ground for beings and plants; water is pliant, clear, constantly flowing and quenching; fire is warm, bright, and rising upwards; wind is unobstructed, unabiding, formless, powerful and scattering. Third, each element brings beings to enlightenment: Space is the all-pervading opening for appearance and emptiness; earth is everywhere in the sphere of Mahāyāna; water is pure calm abiding; fire is insight; wind scatters the objects of consciousness. Fourth, these five elements can also be experienced as the five primordial buddhas. And fifth, the discussion ends with the final characteristic that is most useful in all five elements: nothing is really happening, so everything is already enlightened.

⁷⁰ Mkhan po nus ldan (*Dgongs 'dus 'grel pa*, vol. 54, 497.2-519.2) explains there first come a series of three aeons: one of famine, one of plague, and one of war (*mu ge bskal pa, nad bskal pa, mtshon cha'i bskal pa*). These last respectively for three years, three months, and three days, as time speeds up to the vanishing point and the closing aeons of fire, water, wind and space.

asceticism” (*dka’ thub rig byed theg pa*) contains the outward yogas of Kriyā, Ubhayā, and Yoga. And the “vehicle with the powerful methods” (*dbang bsgyur thabs kyi theg pa*) has the three inward yogas of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga⁷¹. In this way the GDD sets the nine vehicles within a Buddhist cosmology, embedding its entire scheme in doctrinal terms, and it is significant that the GDD is a Tibetan composition, for it exhibits very different concerns from the much briefer ritual-focused presentations of classification systems seen in India.

In fact, the actual names of the nine classes are not used in the tantra itself, nor are each of the nine actually termed “vehicles.” Their descriptions makes it clear what was intended, but their labels are made explicit only in the early commentary by the Tibetan scholar Gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes (b.844?)⁷². It seems clear, however, that the authors of the GDD had in mind the same system of nine vehicles — Gnubs chen studied directly under the GDD’s “translators,” who we suspect were also the work’s authors, so his commentary probably did not introduce many significant innovations.

Gnubs chen is renowned for his support of Buddhism through the so-called “dark period” of political chaos that stretched from the collapse of the Tibetan empire around 842 to the late tenth century. He was particularly focused, as were many Tibetan exegetes during these dark years, on the codification of the tantric teachings in Tibet. Under the Tibetan empire, the translation and dissemination of the tantras had been carefully controlled, but with the empire’s collapse, those restrictions were lifted and Tibetans eagerly adopted and adapted the tantric myths and rituals. Compared to the court-driven Buddhism of the imperial period, this tantric conversion of Tibet seems to have taken place at the local level. Gnubs chen was the one great exception to this rule, a Tibetan scholar working on a large scale, translating new tantras and composing not only shorter works but long, systematic treatises on tantra such as his two-volume commentary on the GDD, *An Armor Against Darkness* (*Mun pa’i go cha*), and his famous *Lamp for the Eye in Meditation* (*Bsam gtan mig sgron*)⁷³.

⁷¹ For the relevant passage, see *Dgongs pa ’dus pa’i mdo*, 351.1-352.6.

⁷² On Gnubs chen’s dates, see Vitali (1996), 546-7.

⁷³ The standard source for Gnubs chen’s life appears in the seventeenth century collection of biographies for the lineage of the GDD (*’Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa’i rnam thar*, 160-177).

Gnubs chen's other major work, the *Lamp for the Eyes in Meditation* was probably written shortly after the turn of the tenth century. In this work, Gnubs chen makes no mention of the nine vehicle system, despite citing the GDD more than any other source. The nine vehicle system may be inferred, however, from his regular use of its terms, including the highest three vehicles of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga, and it is clear that Gnubs chen did not see his new fourfold system as contradicting the more well known nine vehicles system. The *Lamp for the Eyes* sets forth a new fourfold hierarchical classification system. Gnubs chen refers to a number of similar fourfold systems that were circulating in Tibet at the time. His includes the following four divisions (1) gradual sūtra-based teachings, (2) immediate sūtra-based teachings, (3) Mahāyoga, and (4) Atiyoga.

Gnubs chen wrote the *Lamp for the Eyes* for two main purposes: to resolve Tibetans' confusion around the Chinese Chan and around the relationship between Mahāyoga and Atiyoga. In both regards then, his work addressed uniquely Tibetan concerns. In addressing these concerns, Gnubs chen again focuses overwhelmingly on issues of doctrine and distinguishes his four classes according to their philosophical take on non-conceptuality⁷⁴.

The *Lamp for the Eyes*' doctrinal focus was certainly related to Gnubs chen's role as the great Tibetan codifier of the dark age. During the early development of tantric Buddhism, many of the most significant innovations came out of the ritual sphere. Thus, for example, the class of Yoga tantras grew out of a new emphasis on the practitioner's own body as the site for the divinity; Mahāyoga grew out of the new ritual emphases on the sexual yogas (*sbyor ba*) and the violent liberation rite (*sgrol ba*); Anuyoga grew out of the increasing interest in the ritual techniques of the sexual yoga/the perfection stage; and Atiyoga grew out of the taste of the mind of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) obtained at the culmination of the sexual yoga. As the new ritual techniques and their corresponding textual categories were codified for a Tibetan audience, new doctrines were developed to help distinguish them more clearly from one another. Gnubs chen's *Lamp for the Eyes* presents a particularly clear example of this trend towards doctrine.

⁷⁴ For detailed discussions of Gnubs chen's fourfold system, see Dalton and van Schaik (2003) and Meinert (2004).

II.d. *The Explanation of the Order of Views*

By the eleventh century the Tibetan followers of the early Rnying ma school looked to Gnubs chen as the principle upholder of Buddhism during the so-called “dark period.” The early Zur-s in particular made Gnubs chen a central figure in their early lineage, and as the Zur clan’s influence spread, so did the nine vehicle system that was first seen in the *Compendium of Intentions Sūtra* and Gnubs chen’s commentary. Before long, the nine vehicles had become the accepted doxographic scheme within the Rnying ma school.

For a final example of a Tibetan classification system, we turn now to a Tibetan work of unclear provenance. The *Explanation of the Order of Views* (*Lta ba’i rim pa bshad pa*) is traditionally attributed to the early ninth century Tibetan scholar, Ska ba dpal brtsegs. However, some doubt was cast on the authenticity of this attribution by the fourteenth century scholar Bu ston⁷⁵. The work contains an alternative presentation of the same nine vehicles seen in Gnubs chen’s writings, and it may better be seen as a result of the eleventh or twelfth century spread of the scheme within early Rnying ma circles⁷⁶.

In any case, the work is clearly of Tibetan origin, and the presentation of its classification system is similar to both Dpal dbyangs’ and Gubs chen’s in that it too focuses on doctrine. Thus on the classes of tantras we read,

Kriyā views the ultimate as the *dharmatā* and views the conventional as the good qualities of reflexive awareness. They view three families in their emanated maṇḍala. They assert that errors which [lead to] sadness do not

⁷⁵ On Bu ston’s doubts, see Karmay 1988, 149. At this point in our survey, we might also be tempted to insert a discussion of the nine vehicle classification system found in the *G.yu’i thang ma khras dgu* (Q.4729). Judging from the work’s use of certain technical terms, I suspect it too dates from after the tenth century. The unlikely colophon attributes it to Vimalamitra, further evidence of the work’s dubious origin. Its classification system is mentioned by Karmay (1988), 149 and 172. I have excluded the work only because it would add little to the central argument being offered here.

⁷⁶ The central discussion of this system appears at *Lta ba’i rim pa bshad pa*, 424b.4-425a.5. Note that the work refers to the second tantric vehicle as both *u pa ya* and *gnyis ka* (Skt. *ubhayā*), indicating that when Tibetans wrote “u pa ya,” they may have intended “ubhayā.” This would seem to be further evidence that Ubhayā was the original term used in India (see note 25 above).

exist. The assertions of the Ubhayā tantras are in agreement with the views and the practices of the [classes] above and below. According to Yoga, the ultimate is completely pure. The deities emanate through the blessings of realizing the wisdom of the *dharmadhātu*. Ordinary beings are those who are erroneous with regards to seeing in that way. According to Mahāyoga, ultimately nondual reflexive awareness is thusness. There is no *saṃsāra* within the state in which the deities, which are the six manifestations of realization and so forth, manifest. According to Anuyoga, ultimately the dynamism of knowing, which is the realization of the great bliss, emanates as the maṇḍala of conventional deities. For that reason, error comes from ordinary beings [trying to] analyze that. Atiyoga is devoid of the two truths⁷⁷.

Here the six tantric vehicles are distinguished by their descriptions of the maṇḍala emanation process in terms of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the two truths. Once again, we see a strong Tibetan interest in doctrine, and more specifically in the process by which the Buddhist teachings emanate out of emptiness.

III. Evidence from Dunhuang

III.a. *New Evidence: Pelliot tibétain 656 and IOL Tib J 644*

Having gained some idea of the Tibetan tradition of tantric doxography, we can now turn to the evidence that survives from the “library cave” of Dunhuang. Until now only one classification system from Dunhuang has been brought to light. PT849 was first presented in the 1924 study by Joseph Hackin and has been cited regularly ever since. In recent months, however, two new manuscripts have surfaced, each containing an extensive discussion of a classification system. Transliterations and translations of both manuscripts are appended to the present article.

⁷⁷ *Lta ba'i rim pa bshad pa*, 425a.1. *kri ya don dam chos nyid lta/ kun rdzob rang rig yon tan lta/ rigs gsum dkyil 'khor snang bar lta/ skyo ba'i 'khrul pa med par 'dod/ gnyis ka rgyud kyi 'dod pa nil lta spyod gong 'og rjes su 'thun/ yo gas don dam rnam dag pa'o/ chos kyi dbying kyi ye shes sul rtogs pa'i byin brlabs lha snang ba/ skye bos de lta mthong par 'khrul/ ma hA yo gas don dam du/ rang rig gnyis med de bzhin nyid/ rtogs pa'i cho 'phrul drug sogs pa'il lhar snang ngang la 'khor ba med/ a nu yo gas don dam du/ bde chen rtogs pa'i rig pa'i rtsal/ kun rdzob lha yi dkyil 'khor snang/ de phyir skye bos rtags pas 'khrul/ a ti yo ga bden gnyis bral.*

The first piece, PT656, is a scroll from the Pelliot collection held at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Its date remains uncertain, but it is likely from the tenth century, as are most of the Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts relating to tantra. The system it describes consists of seven classes, called “the seven great general scriptural systems” (*spyi'i lung chen po bdun*). As the name of the system implies, its principal purpose was to classify scripture. The term “vehicle” is only used once in the manuscript, in the context of a Yoga tantra vow not to drink water from the same valley as people of a lower vehicle. The “seven scriptural systems” consist of the two sūtric vehicles of Śrāvaka and Bodhisattva, the two outward tantras of Kriyā and Yoga, and the three inward tantras of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga. Thus in comparison to Gnubs chen's nine vehicles scheme, the ever-obscure classes of the Pratyekabuddhas and the Ubhayā tantras are excluded to make seven. The manuscript's discussions of the tantric classes are far more extensive than those of the sūtric ones, and we find several passages appended to the end of the text dealing with the practices of union and liberation as interpreted by Mahā-, Anu-, and Atiyoga. In this way the content reflects a strong interest in the tantras.

The work evaluates each vehicle using a fixed set of four criteria: views held, meditations achieved, practices performed, and vows followed. These criteria reveal a mix of concerns. “Views” are given pride of place as the first criterion so that doctrine is given a clearly dominant role. However, the next two criteria of “meditations achieved” and “practices performed” introduce considerations of ritual that are really quite unique among the early Tibetan classification systems. The ritual concerns weaken as the text proceeds to the higher tantric vehicles, so that Anuyoga and Atiyoga are discussed in entirely doctrinal terms, but for Kriyā, Yoga, and Mahāyoga, significant attention is given to ritual practice. In this way, PT656 provides a rare glimpse of how Tibetans of the tenth century organized the different kinds of tantric ritual.

Our second new manuscript from Dunhuang is a three-folio *poṭhi* found in the Stein collection held at the British Library. This manuscript more certainly dates from the tenth century⁷⁸ and contains two short items. The

⁷⁸ The manuscript was found by Stein in the bundle he numbered 73.iii., which has been identified by Tsuguhito Takeuchi (2003) as containing particularly late materials, many of which date from the late tenth century.

first item is titled, “A Teaching on Classifying the Deity Systems and the Measures of Accomplishment” (*Lha rgyud dang grub tshad nye ring bstan pa*) and is the principal work on the vehicles. The second is titled, “Classifications of the *Vidyādhara*s” (*Rigs ‘dzin dbye ba*) and fills out the picture with a discussion of the levels of realization associated with each tantric vehicle⁷⁹.

The classification systems described in these two manuscripts bear a number of resemblances to one another. At the end of the British manuscript’s second item on the *vidyādhara*s, we even find a reference to the same scheme of “seven scriptural systems” (*spyi lung bdun*) seen in PT656, even though ITJ644 itself follows a fuller nine vehicle system. It seems the seven scriptural systems may have enjoyed some popularity during the tenth century, at least around Dunhuang, even as the nine vehicles scheme was becoming the generally accepted standard for followers of the later Rnying ma school. Unfortunately, the source for this sevenfold system remains to be identified.

Also like PT656, ITJ644 employs a fixed set of criteria for evaluating the different classes (it does not use the word “vehicle” even once). This is where the similarities end however, for ITJ644 is entirely concerned with issues of doctrine over ritual. The set of criteria used includes: (1) the deity system, (2) the difference between teacher and disciple, and (3) the measures of accomplishment. As the language of the text makes clear, all three of these criteria are aspects of the “views” (*lta ba*) held by each class. According to our analysis of the other Tibetan classification systems, then, ITJ644 is typical of the Tibetan tradition of tantric classification and categorizes the tantras according to their respective doctrinal views.

The use of fixed sets of criteria seems to have been a Tibetan development; to my knowledge such a strategy does not appear in the Indian sources on the classes of Buddhist tantras⁸⁰. The efficacy of this almost scientific classification technique seems to have been grounded in its apparent objectivity, in its application of seemingly impartial criteria to

⁷⁹ For more on this item and its possible links to the Padmasambhava legends, see Dalton (2004b).

⁸⁰ The strategy of applying a fixed set of criteria to the various vehicles continued to be employed by Tibetans in much later works. The Tibetan scholar Kaṅ thog dam pa bde

all vehicles equally, for the purpose of comparison. This kind of technical concern with classification systems was a new phenomenon in tantric Buddhism, one unique to the early Tibetan exegetes; Indian commentaries from the same period simply do not exhibit such elaborate and systematic analyses of tantric Buddhism.

III.b. *Pelliot tibétain 849*

Apart from the two manuscripts just discussed, the only other classification system from Dunhuang seems to be the one found in PT849. This is one of the latest dateable manuscripts found in the famous library cave, dating from around the turn of the eleventh century⁸¹. The system presented has nine vehicles, but it is quite unlike the standard set we have seen in other Tibetan works. It provides separate worldly vehicles for the humans and the gods⁸², and again separate vehicles for the Sūtra Adherents (*mdo sde pa*) and the Bodhisattvas, which are also usually equivalents. It then mixes up the order of the classes of “outward” tantras to read Yoga, Kriyā, and Ubhayā. The inward classes of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga are then dropped, though they do appear as subclasses of the Yoga vehicle, while Kriyā and Ubhayā are also subdivided. The result is a system that looks like this:

gshegs (1122-1192), for example, used a set of seven criteria in his influential *Theg pa spyi bcings*, 15: (1) door of entry, (2) view, (3) *samādhi*, (4) practices, (5) conduct, (6) duration of the path, (7) result.

⁸¹ A list of the Tibetan kings found in the manuscript traces the royal line through the Stod mgon gsum and then continues with Btsan po bkra shis stsags pa dpal, Dpal lde, ‘Od lde, ‘Khri lde, Btsan po bkra shis mgon po, Tsan po a tsa ra, ‘Khri lde mgon, and Lha cig cag she (Hackin 1924, 18). Btsan po acārya is probably Ye shes’od (see Karmay 1998, 4). The penultimate name appears in later discussions of the “men of Gtsang” who restored the monastic *vinaya* lineage in central Tibet (see *Mkhas pa lde’u*, 391-394). Tibetan sources vary on how to date this event. Many follow the 978 date suggested by ‘Brom ston pa (Vitali 1990, 62 n.1), while *Mkhas pa lde’u* seems to suggest 988 (*Mkhas pa lde’u*, 394). How to identify the final name in the list, Lha cig cag she is still unclear, but it may be the son of ‘Khri lde mgon, named Lha chen drag pa in *Mkhas pa lde’u*, 388. Given these identifications, PT849 would have to be dated to the very end of the tenth century.

⁸² Though another example of them as separate vehicles, here in the context of a fivefold sūtrīc classification, can be seen in ITJ526, 2r.2-3: *theg pa lnga zhes kyang bya ste/ myi’i theg pa dang/ lha’i theg pa dang/ gong ma gsum dang lnga*.

1. Vehicle of Humans
2. Vehicle of Gods
3. Śrāvaka-yāna
4. Pratyekabuddha-yāna
5. Vehicle of Sūtra Adherents
6. Bodhisattva-yāna
7. Yoga
 - a. Yoga
 - b. Mahāyoga
 - c. Anuyoga
 - d. Atiyoga
8. Kriyā
 - a. Śrāvaka Kriyā
 - b. Pratyekabuddha Kriyā
 - c. Sūtra Adherent Kriyā
 - d. Bodhisattva Kriyā
9. Ubhayā
 - a. Śrāvaka Ubhayā
 - b. Pratyekabuddha Ubhayā
 - c. Sūtra Adherent Ubhayā
 - d. Bodhisattva Ubhayā

Unfortunately, no explanations are given for how these classes are being distinguished. Rather than try to make sense of this system, it is probably better to see it as the result of the doxographic confusion that had spread through Tibet by the late tenth century. The essential three-fold hierarchy of Mahā-Anu-Ati is clearly represented in the subclasses of Yoga, but it is probably unwise to attach too much significance to the shuffled order of the three principal tantric vehicles. The distinction between the Bodhisattvas and the Sūtra Adherents is not seen anywhere else in the Dunhuang manuscripts, which all agree that the two terms should be equivalents. Clearly the author of PT849 was either confused, working out his own idiosyncratic system, scrambling the order for reasons of secrecy, or some combination of all three.

IV. Later Indian Systems

Indian writings from around the same period as PT849 exhibit a similarly loose approach to tantric classification systems. This is well attested

in the writings of the famous eleventh century Bengali scholar Atiśa, who arrived in Tibet in 1042. Upon arriving at the royal court in western Tibet, Atiśa perceived a need for an orderly discussion of the entire Buddhist path, and he composed his influential *Bodhipathapradīpa* with its auto-commentary. Within this context we find a presentation of the classes of tantras⁸³.

But perhaps the most important aspect of Atiśa's teachings on the classes of tantras is simply the fact of their existence. When Padmasambhava visited the Tibetan imperial court in the eighth century, he composed his *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* to show the Tibetans how to classify the Buddhist tantras. Three centuries later Atiśa arrived, and once again the visiting Indian scholar answered the Tibetans' wish for a discussion of the classes of tantras. The Tibetan need for classification systems had survived the intervening "dark period" fully intact.

Atiśa presented a range of alternative contemporary classification systems with four or five classes of tantras, but in his own commentary he chose to follow a sevenfold scheme:

1. Kriyā
2. Caryā
3. *Kalpa
4. Ubhayā
5. Yoga
6. Mahāyoga
7. *Niruttarayoga⁸⁴

This scheme introduced an unusual distinction between Caryā and Ubhayā, which were interchangeable in most of the earlier schemes⁸⁵.

⁸³ See *Bodhimārgadīpapañjikā*, 332a.3-333a.2

⁸⁴ For the past century, the standard Sanskrit reconstruction for the Tibetan *Rnal 'byor bla na med pa* has been *Anuttarayoga. This is a time-honoured mistake that needs to be abandoned. An inspection of the available Sanskrit manuscripts reveals that the Tibetan more often translates Yoganiruttara. (This observation was confirmed for me by Harunaga Isaacson, to whom my thanks are due.) Thus from this point forward, I will be using *Niruttarayoga where one might expect *Anuttarayoga. As will be argued below, this misreading has been complicit in allowing the Tibetan origin of the famous fourfold classification system to remain obscured.

⁸⁵ The one other source that distinguished these two classes is the *Caryāmelāyana-pradīpa-nāma-ṭīkā* (Q.2703, 324a.3), which argued for a fourfold system of Kriyā, Caryā,

It also added the new class of *Kalpatantra (*rtog pa'i rgyud*)⁸⁶, and tops Mahāyoga with *Niruttarayoga.

Our confusion is made still worse when we turn to the canonical source Atiśa cites for his system. The *Jñānavajrasamuccaya* is a title that appears in two canonical versions, a shorter one found in all *bka'* 'gyur editions and a longer one found only in the *Li thang bka'* 'gyur and its descendents⁸⁷. Both versions include discussions of tantric classes that are unusually detailed for Indian Buddhism. The shorter version presents the following scheme:

Ubhayā, and *Niruttarayoga. The traditional attribution of this work to the ninth century Indian Śākyamitra has recently been shown to be false (see Christian Wedemeyer's paper, "On the authenticity of the *Caryāmelāyanapradīpa*, commentary attributed to Śākyamitra," presented at the fourteenth conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in London, August 2nd, 2005). Wedemeyer's analysis suggests the work is rather a Tibetan composition probably dating from the eleventh century at least.

The scriptural source Atiśa cites for his own system, the *Jñānavajrasamuccaya*, provides the following explanation for why these two classes of Caryā and Ubhayā are distinguished: "One who accomplishes a thorough analysis of the ten aspects of suchness — that which is arrayed as the maṇḍala wheel that is coemergent with the knowledge-goddesses, as well as the practices, activities, and accomplishments and so forth that arise from that — such a person is engaged in the Ubhayā tantras. The one who accomplishes, together with that which is accomplished, through a detailed analysis of perceptible characteristics, such as the mudrās from the Kriyā tantras which are for extensively performing the various activities, is engaged in the Caryā tantras" (*Jñānavajrasamuccaya*, 293b.4-6). This passage seems to indicate that the Ubhayā tantras are higher than the Caryā because they focus more on the maṇḍala as a manifestation of suchness than on external forms. This would seem to agree with the order seen in Śākyamitra's system. In both cases it seems that Ubhayā was playing the role normally played by Yoga.

This latter point is confirmed by another tantra under a similar title, the *Śrījñānavajrasamuccaya* (missing from the Peking *Bka'* 'gyur, but in the Derge at D.450). According to Mimaki Katsumi, this is a "slightly later version" (Mimaki 1994, 122 n.17), and here we see a fivefold scheme for which the fourth class appears both ways: (1) *Kalpa, (2) Kriyā, (3) Caryā, (4) Ubhayā/Yoga, (5) *Niruttarayoga (see D.450, 10b.4-5).

⁸⁶ Eimer's study of this class (Eimer 1993) concludes that *Kalpa tantra teaches mundane rituals for healing and gaining magical powers, and that in this sense, "it does not direct the performing adept to any spiritual level" (Eimer 1993, 228). The mid-twelfth century Sa skya scholar, Bsod nams rtse mo, is in general agreement when he writes, "Given that the *Kalpa tantras principally teach outward activities, the class of *Kalpa tantras essentially are gathered within the Kriyā tantras" (*Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa*, 33b.5: *rtog pa'i rgyud kyang phyi'i bya ba gtsor ston pa tsam la dgongs nas rtog pa'i rgyud du phyed ba ste ngo bo bya ba'i rgyud du 'du'o*). Why Atiśa places the *Kalpa tantras above Kriyā and Caryā remains unexplained.

⁸⁷ See Eimer (1993), 226.

1. *Kalpa⁸⁸
2. Kriyā
3. Caryā
4. Ubhayā
5. Mahāyoga

The system found in the tantra's longer version is identical to the shorter except that it gives *Niruttarayoga in place of Mahāyoga. When these two canonical systems are compared with the one taught by Atiśa, we see that Atiśa added Yogatantra and included *both* Mahāyoga and *Niruttarayoga.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from all this: First, it seems clear that tantric classification systems remained highly flexible in India through the eleventh century. The famous fourfold scheme was by no means common to all Indian Buddhists. Second, we may suggest that Atiśa's system included *Niruttarayoga *in addition* to Mahāyoga in order to bring the *Jñānavajrasamuccaya* into line with the latest terminological developments. In this sense, Atiśa's scheme reflects the gradual eleventh century rise of *Niruttarayoga as a class apart from Mahāyoga.

By the eleventh century a need for a new distinct category was starting to be felt. We have observed that during the eighth and ninth centuries, new tantric classes arose in large part to distinguish new developments in *ritual practice*. Now the new class of *Niruttarayoga was surfacing for similar reasons of ritual technique. In Atiśa's discussion of Mahāyoga and *Niruttarayoga, he lists which tantras belong to each class, and it is certainly relevant that many of his *Niruttarayoga tantras did not enter Tibet until the later diffusion (*phyi dar*) period⁸⁹. Generally speaking, these appear to be later works. What distinguished these later works from the slightly earlier Mahāyoga tantras? Atiśa's *Niruttarayoga tantras tend to incorporate more complex subtle body (*rtsa rlung*) systems than his

⁸⁸ *Jñānavajrasamuccaya*, 293a.6-293b.8. Note that in the scripture itself the hierarchy of classes is presented in reverse order, starting with the highest class and ending with the lowest.

⁸⁹ As Mahāyoga tantras he names the *Guhyasamāja*, the *Candraguhyatilaka*, the *Kṛṣṇayāmāri*, the *Paramādyā*, the *Vairocana Māyājāla*, and so forth, while under *Niruttarayoga tantras he includes the *Khasama*, the *Cakrasaṃvara*, the *Vajradāka*, the *Hevajra*, and so forth (*Bodhimārgadīpapañjikā*, 332b.4-8).

generally earlier Mahāyoga tantras. It seems that the new class of *Niruttarayoga was needed to recognize this recent elaboration of the subtle body ritual systems⁹⁰.

The beginnings of this new class can already be seen in Indian writings of the late tenth century. The earliest dateable example may be the late tenth century writings of Śraddhākaravarma, the Indian scholar who worked with the famous Tibetan translator Rin chen bzang po. In that scheme, however, the highest division was still Mahāyoga:

There are four doors for entering into the Secret Mantra, the fruition that is the Vajrayāna. These are generally known as Kriyātantra, Caryātantra, Yogatantra, and Mahāyogatantra⁹¹.

Though Mahāyoga still held the highest place, Śraddhākaravarma goes on to subdivide the class, and here the term *Niruttarayoga appears as the final and highest subdivision. The purpose of the new term seems to be to identify the generally later tantras represented elsewhere as Yoginī tantras, that is, those more focused on female deities:

Mahāyoga consists of two types, the natural tantras and the tantras for examination... The tantras for examination consist of a further two types, the

⁹⁰ The two classes of Mahāyoga and *Anuttarayoga may *also* reflect another, non-chronological distinction in the development of Buddhist tantra. In addition to *Niruttarayoga reflecting a generally later stage of ritual development, the two classes may also represent two lines of development that developed alongside each other. While this theory remains highly impressionistic, it seems to me that from the original matrix of STTS and other *Vajra-śekhara* tantras, we may be able to distinguish two lines of development. The first would have passed through the *Guhyasamāja*, to *Guhyagarbha* and *Māyājāla*, while the other passed through the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga*, to *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Hevajra*. The latter were known as *yoginī* tantras, apparently because their maṇḍalas consisted of female deities surrounding the central figure. The *Kṛṣṇayāmārī Tantra*, though not usually termed a Yoginī tantra, may also fit into the latter line of development, as it has female deities. This line may also be marked by its early reliance on the Yoga-Anu-Ati-Mahā system discussed above (see n. 68). Certainly there would be significant cross-pollination between these two lines of development, and further research is required to confirm such a theory, but it may also provide a starting point for understanding the historical roots of the distinction between the so-called father and mother tantras.

⁹¹ *Yogānuttaratāntrārthāvatārasaṃgraha*, 117a.6. *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*. Note this title should probably be reconstructed as *Yoganiruttaratāntrārthāvatārasaṃgraha*.

tantras for the yogas of means and the tantras for the yogas of wisdom. These are also asserted as the tantras of the supreme yoga and the tantras of *Niruttarayoga⁹².

Śraddhākaravarma describes the latter *Niruttarayoga tantras as those with maṇḍalas populated by female deities. The equivalence of *Niruttarayoga and Yoginī is confirmed elsewhere by Abhayākara Gupta in his own discussion of a fivefold system, where he explains that, “the *Niruttarayoga tantras are the Yoginī tantras.”⁹³

In the writings of Śraddhākaravarma, one can see *Niruttarayoga just beginning to emerge, though still as a subclass of Mahāyoga. Soon after, *Niruttarayoga detached completely to become its own independent category above Mahāyoga. Thus in the writings of Ratnākaraśānti, who lived around the turn of the eleventh century, we see a fivefold system containing Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, Mahāyoga, *Niruttarayoga⁹⁴. In including both Mahāyoga and *Niruttarayoga, this scheme resembles the one Atiśa taught during his mid-eleventh century visit to Tibet, and in fact similar fivefold systems appear in a variety of sources from around this period. Some of these schemes replace the fourth element, Mahāyoga, with Yogottara (Tib. *rnal 'byor bla ma*), but these were generally considered equivalents. Thus in another work by Ratnākaraśānti, we see Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, Yogottara, *Niruttarayoga⁹⁵. We can conclude that, taken together, these eleventh century systems represent a period in Indian tantric development when the new class of Yoginī/*Niruttarayoga tantras was being added as the top class, above and distinct from the earlier Mahāyoga/Yogottara tantras such as *Guhyasamāja*.

⁹² *Yogānuttaratāntrārthāvatārasaṃgraha*, 118a.5-118b.1. *rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud ni nram pa gnyis te/ rang bzhin gyi rgyud dang btags pa'i rgyud dol... btags pa'i rgyud kyang nram pa gnyis te/ rnal 'byor thabs kyi rgyud dang/ rnal 'byor shes rab kyi rgyud dol de dag kyang nram pa gnyis su 'dod de/ rnal 'byor mchog gi rgyud dang/ rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud ces bya ste.*

⁹³ *Āmnāyamañjarī*, 121a.5. Abhayākara Gupta's own classification system in this work reads as follows: Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, Yogottara, *Niruttarayoga. As discussed below, this system was common among eleventh century Indian *Hevajra* commentators such as Ratnākaraśānti and Kaṇha.

⁹⁴ *Triyānavyavasthāna*, 115a.3-4.

⁹⁵ *Muktāvalī*, 332b.3-5 and 347a.6-7. For the Sanskrit see Tripathi (2001), 169 and 223. Note that on page 223 the editors mistakenly give “Yogāntara” as the fourth vehicle, despite the fact that the manuscripts clearly read “Yogottara” (my thanks to Harunaga Isaacson

The same state of affairs is observed in the writings of Kaṇha/Kṛṣṇa-cārin. Kaṇha probably dates to the early eleventh century, making him roughly contemporary with (or perhaps slightly later than) Ratnākara-śānti⁹⁶. In Kaṇha's *Guhyatattvaparakāśa*, we see what at first looks like the later Tibetan fourfold system, only with the Yoginī tantras in the fourth and highest spot⁹⁷. The trouble is that here Yoga corresponds to the so-called "father tantras" such as *Guhasamāja* and not to the Yoga tantras such as the STTS and so on⁹⁸. For this reason it is not a very clear example of the standard fourfold system, which typically classifies *Guhyasamāja* and so forth under *Niruttarayoga.

In Kaṇha's other major work, his *Yogaratnamālā* commentary on the *Hevajra*, we find another passage in which the fourfold system again seems to be present. According to the Tibetan translation, the scheme should read: Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, *Niruttarayoga (*rnal 'byor bla na med pa*). "This *Hevajra Tantra*," we are told, "is a *Niruttarayoga tantra."⁹⁹ Yet when the Sanskrit is consulted, a very different picture emerges. The fourth class, for which the Tibetan reads "*rnal 'byor bla na med pa*," in the Sanskrit reads "Yogottara."¹⁰⁰ And this is quite apart from a *fifth* class

for bringing this to my attention). Another example of Mahāyoga in the fourth position is found in the *Śrīvajramālāmahāyogatantraṭīkā*, 4b.1, which lists the five classes of Kriyā-Caryā-Yoga-Mahāyoga-Yoginī.

⁹⁶ The person of Kaṇha, let alone his dates, is difficult to pin down. There are at least two Kaṇhas, one associated with the Cakrasaṃvara system and the other with Hevajra. The latter Hevajra Kaṇha appears in the early Sa skya lineage lists as the teacher of Gayādhara, who in turn worked with 'Brog mi lo tsa ba in the mid-eleventh century (*Rgyud sde spyi-i'i rnam par gzhaḡ pa*, 72b.5-73a.1). Later sources push Kaṇha further into the past, as is common for such *siddha* characters, but for precisely this reason we should probably follow the later date, that is, early eleventh century. This allows for the possibility that Kaṇha may, after all, have been the same Kṛṣṇa Paṇḍita who "co-operated in the task of translating the *Yogaratnamālā* into Tibetan" (Snellgrove 1959, 13-14 n.4).

⁹⁷ *Guhyatattvaparakāśa*, 282a.4-5. *rgyud ni rnam pa bzhi 'gyur tel bgad pa dang ni bltas pa dang/ de bzhin bzhan ni lag bcangs dang/ gnyis gnyis sbros pa bzhi pa stel de dag rgyu ni rnam bzhi/ 'dus pa 'ang rnam pa gnyis gsungs tel/ bskyed dang rdzogs byung rim pa'ol rnal 'byor bskyed par bstan pa stel/ rdzogs pa rnal 'byor ma du brjod.*

⁹⁸ Kaṇha's Yoga-Yoginī distinction here is similar to the one made in chapter three of the *Dākinīvajrapañjara Tantra* (289b.4-5), itself an explanatory tantra to the *Hevajra*. In fact, this is the most common fourfold classification system in Indian texts, especially around the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

⁹⁹ *Yogaratnamālā*, 49b.8-50a.5.

¹⁰⁰ In Snellgrove's edition of the *Yogaratnamālā* (Snellgrove 1959, vol. 2, 142 n. 6), he notes that the actual manuscript reads "*kvacid yottarādau*." Snellgrove speculates that

of Niruttarayoga. Why the Tibetan translator, Mgos khug pa lhas btsas, conflated Yogottara and Niruttarayoga by translating both with the same *rnal 'byor bla na med pa* remains a mystery, particularly given that he translated them differently later in the very same work as *rnal 'byor bla na med pa* and *rnal 'byor gong na med pa* respectively¹⁰¹.

V. Sectarian Closure and the Tibetan Formation of the Four Classes

In Tibet, the Hevajra exegetical tradition of which Kaṇha was a crucial member went on to become the preserve of the early Sa skya writers. We have seen that a variety of classification systems with four, five, or seven classes continued to be taught by Indians through the eleventh century, and it seems the four classes of tantras that are so well known today began to dominate Tibetan Buddhism only with the early Sa skya pa. A brief discussion of the fourfold scheme appears, for example, in the twelfth century introduction to the tantras by Sa chen kun dga' snying po (1092-1158), the first Sa skya patriarch¹⁰². Thus the rise of the standard classification system seems to have been tied to the rise of the Sa skya school.

The formation of the classic fourfold scheme should therefore be understood against the historical backdrop of twelfth century Tibet. This was a time of intense competition between Tibetan clans, and the tantras were central to these contests, able to bestow wealth, power, and prestige upon

this should read “*kvacid anuttarādaṃ*,” but the fivefold system followed in the *Yogaratanamālā* is clearly Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, Yogottara, and Yoganiruttara, as is made explicit on Snellgrove (1959), vol. 2, 156. The Tibetan for the latter reference is for once clear (*Yogaratanamālā*, 70a.1-2: *sngags kyi theg pa kun zhes bya ba ni bya ba dang/ spyod pa dang/ rnal 'byor dang/ rnal 'byor bla na med pa dang/ rnal 'byor gong na med pa'i dbyed bas rnam pa lnga'o*). For an English translation of the two passages, see Farrow (1992), 183-4 and 274.

¹⁰¹ It is unclear just how extensive the confusion was, but Mgos khug pa's was not an isolated case. The *Ḍākinīśarvacittādvayācintyajāñāna-vajravārāhi Tantra*, which was translated by Gayādhara and Jo zla ba'i 'od zer, provides the same fivefold system, and here again the fourth term (almost certainly *Uttaratantra) was translated as *bla na med pa'i rgyud* (see 88a.5-6: *kri ma'i rgyud sde rnam lnga bstan/ spyod pa gtso bor byed pa la/ gnyis pa'i rgyud sde rnam lnga bstan/ sems nyid gtso bor byed pa la/ rnal 'byor rgyud sde rnam lnga bstan/ bde stong gtso bor byed pa la/ bla na med pa'i rgyud lnga bstan/ yid la byed pa med rnam la gong na med pa'i rgyud lnga bstan/ de'i phyir rgyud sde rnam pa lnga/ gsang sngags rgyud ces bya bar grags*).

¹⁰² *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam bzhaḡ chung ngu*, 8b.5.

whomever controlled their teachings. Under these socio-political pressures, Tibetan Buddhism was forced into ever more defined forms, and the array of classification systems seen during the ninth and tenth centuries became unworkable. Polemics levelled against the Rnying ma pa were particularly fierce (and the above-mentioned translator Mgos khug pa was notably renowned in this regard), and the nine vehicles system from the *Compendium of Intentions Sūtra* quickly became ubiquitous among followers of the Rnying ma school.

Meanwhile the followers of the new (*gsar ma*) schools, such as the Sa skya pa, required a legitimate system that reflected the latest Indian developments. From this period, a particularly influential Tibetan discussion on the classification of tantras appeared in the *General Presentation of the Tantras* (*Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam bzhaḡ pa*) by the second Sa skya hierarch, Bsod nams rtse mo (1142-1182)¹⁰³. There the author surveys the various Indian schemes circulating at the time and argues that they all boil down to the same fourfold system: Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, and *Niruttarayoga. He then subdivides his highest class of *Niruttarayoga into father tantras, mother tantras, and nondual tantras.

This marks the end of the process that had begun in the second half of the tenth century in works like those of Śraddhākaravarma. There, Mahāyoga was initially subdivided with *Niruttarayoga as the highest subdivision. Next, *Niruttarayoga split off completely to form its own class alongside Mahāyoga, as seen in the early eleventh century writings of Ratnākaraśānti and Kaṇha. Now in the twelfth century, we see that the rise of *Niruttarayoga was complete, that the earlier category of Mahāyoga had been subsumed under the class it had itself spawned.

It is significant, however, that Bsod nams rtse mo does not cite any Indian sources for his own system. Rather, he bases his argument on the existence of other parallel groups of four, specifically the four tantric initiations and the four *varṇas* of Brahmanical Indian society¹⁰⁴. To see how later Tibetans traced their fourfold system to Indian sources, we turn to perhaps the singlemost influential presentation of Buddhist tantra in

¹⁰³ See *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam bzhaḡ pa*, 30b.4-40b.1. The main section on the four classes appears on 33a.4-36a.4

¹⁰⁴ See *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam bzhaḡ pa*, 34b.2-4.

Tibetan history: the *Sngags rim chen mo* by Tsong kha pa (1357-1419), the founder of the Dge lugs pa school. Here the standard four classes are identified in a series of Indian scriptures¹⁰⁵. Upon closer examination, however, none of the sources given by Tsong kha pa prove definitive. His strongest pieces of evidence are in fact those we have already examined — the Indian commentaries of Śraddhākaravarma, Abhayākara Gupta, and Ratnākaraśānti — and as we have seen, none of these authors employed the system we know so well.

Tsong kha pa repeatedly refers to the passages from the eleventh century *Hevajra* exegetical writings that align the first four classes with the four metaphors of laughing, looking, embracing, and sexual union. Yet he neglects to mention the existence of a fifth higher class that appears in each of his sources and transcends all of the other four¹⁰⁶. Tsong kha pa's conflation of the fourth and fifth classes of Yogottara and *Niruttarayoga is not entirely surprising, since, as we have seen, the translations he was working from sometimes made the same mistake¹⁰⁷. Whether these misreadings were deliberate or not, the result was the same: later generations of scholars, Tibetan and western alike, came to believe that the four-fold system originated in India.

The obscuration of the four classes' Tibetan origin has been allowed to continue by a further inaccuracy that has been common among western scholars for the past century. We have noted above (n. 83) that western scholars have long reconstructed the Tibetan term *rnal 'byor bla na med pa* as *Anuttarayoga. In fact the corresponding Sanskrit term seen in the available manuscripts is Niruttarayoga. Now we can see how this mistake has been complicit in concealing the Tibetan origin of the famous classification system. Once Niruttarayoga (*rnal 'byor gong na med pa*) had been mistaken for *Anuttarayoga, just one small step was required

¹⁰⁵ For an English translation of the relevant section, see Tsong-ka-pa (1977), 151-164.

¹⁰⁶ For the relevant passages see Abhayākara Gupta's *Āmnāyamañjarī*, 253b.8-254a.3 (cited on Tsong-ka-pa 1977, 158), and Ratnākaraśānti's *Muktāvalī*, 332b.3-5 (cited on Tsong-ka-pa 1977, 159).

¹⁰⁷ Again, examples would be Kaṇha's *Yogaratanmālā*, 50a.3-4 (compare the Sanskrit at Snellgrove 1959, 142 l. 35 – 143 l. 1), and probably the *Ḍākinīsarvacittādvayācintya-jñāna-vajravārāhi Tantra*, 88a.5-6. In both cases, the Sanskrit *yogottara* is translated with *rnal 'byor bla na med* instead of *rnal 'byor bla ma*.

for scholars to overlook the comparatively minor, though crucial, morphological difference between the fourth and fifth classes of *rnal 'byor bla ma'i rgyud* and *rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud*, precisely the same difference obscured by earlier Tibetan writers in their own justifications of the fourfold system¹⁰⁸. In this way the western inaccuracies have compounded the earlier Tibetan ones.

VI. Concluding Remarks

By now it should be clear just how Tibetan the four classes of tantras really are. We have seen that the fourfold system that is so well known among modern scholars was by no means the focus of Indian Buddhists of the eleventh century. Rather the decisive system emerged in Tibet, probably during the twelfth century, just as the distinction between the old Rnying ma and the new Gsar ma schools was crystallizing. Of course in India such “old” vs. “new” distinctions were unknown, and the development of tantric Buddhism was more of a continuum, allowing competing classification schemes to coexist in relative peace. In Tibet, however, the supposed decrepitude of the old was losing out to the allure of the modern. The Rnying ma pa clung to the nine vehicles system that was by now well known in Tibet, while the Gsar ma pa constructed a new fourfold scheme consisting of Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, and *Niruttarayoga tantras. This was a fairly simple system compared to the elaborate ones seen in Tibet during the ninth and tenth centuries. In adopting *Niruttarayoga, the new schools gave precedence to the latest tantric ritual systems, but in excluding the classes of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga, they dismissed the last three centuries of ritual development. The gradual shaping of ritual technologies that had occurred from the eighth to tenth centuries was thus obscured, as were the tentative Tibetan attempts to make sense of those shifting sands.

Its Tibetan origin having been identified, the fourfold classification system must be understood as a reflection of inimitably Tibetan concerns,

¹⁰⁸ Thus for example (as noted above), Snellgrove's apparently benign emendation of the corrupt Sanskrit “*yottarādau*” to “*anuttarādau*” rather than “*yogottarādau*” (Snellgrove 1959, vol. 2, 142 l. 35). This error was then repeated in Farrow (1992), 184.

as a result of the uniquely Tibetan doxographic tradition. Despite the wide variety of classification schemes that developed in both India and Tibet between the eighth and twelfth centuries, the fundamental concerns reflected in those systems remained remarkably stable. In India it was about ritual. Buddhaguhya's early writings distinguished the outward rituals of the Kriyā tantras from the inward rituals of the Yoga tantras. Over two centuries later, Śraddhākaravarma and Kaṇha were busy distinguishing the *Niruttarayoga tantras by their focus on the perfection stage subtle body practices and the use of maṇḍalas populated by female deities. The ritual technologies had changed over the intervening two hundred years, but the basic Indian concern with ritual remained largely intact.

This Indian ritual focus stands in marked contrast to the Tibetan classification systems from the same period that show a far stronger interest in differences of doctrine, in the philosophical views and tantric cosmologies. The Tibetan concern with doctrinal classification systems likely resulted from the greater urgency these schemes had for Tibetans. In India tantra developed gradually, as an organic part of society as a whole, but in Tibet the tantric teachings arrived *en masse*, as a foreign intrusion of chaotic texts and rituals. Indians, who stood at the origin of the Buddhist religion, could more easily justify new developments in tantric ritual. Tibetans, who dwelt beyond the edges of this original universe, were confronted by the entirety of Buddhism all at once. This foreign religion demanded justifications and explanations in a way that was simply unnecessary in India, and classification systems provided them. The four classes formed a tidy doctrinal package that could be tied to the four initiations, the four blisses, the four *varṇas*, the four metaphors of laughing, looking, touching, and sexual union, and so forth. In this way Tibetans finally gained doctrinal closure on the chaotic proliferation of Indian tantra. Through doxography, they organized Buddhism into a single totality that could be tamed and converted toward new ends.

APPENDICES

IOL TIB J 644: Translation

In the deity system of the Śrāvakas, only Śākyamuni is seen as a buddha. They regard Vairocana merely as a *mahā-upāsaka*, seeing him as a great virtuous friend. They regard the directional guardians merely as devoted practitioners. They see the difference [between teacher and disciple] as that between the Buddha and sentient beings. The measure of their accomplishment is as follows: With regards to the afflictions of the three realms, the Śrāvakas have ten subtle [contaminants]¹⁰⁹ to be abandoned through meditation (*bhāvanāheya*). In the desire realm there are eighty-eight [contaminants]. If eighty-seven of those are abandoned, one attains entry into liberation. Following that, if one abandons all ninety-eight [contaminants] to be abandoned, one is called an “arhat.” After that, if one lets go of one’s own view, one becomes a transformational Śrāvaka and treads the first bodhisattva level of “the absolute enemy.” And following that, it is asserted, buddhahood will be accomplished after three countless aeons. One who is on this first level of “the absolute enemy” gains foreknowledge of what has yet to come. At that time, there are magical displays including hearing the dharma of a hundred buddhas in a single instant, liberating a hundred sentient beings, absorption in *samādhi*, and sending forth a hundred emanations. From that point onwards, one moves through each of the bodhisattva levels.

The measures of accomplishment for the Pratyekabuddhas are like those of the Śrāvakas.

The deity system of the [Mahāyāna] Sūtra Adherents is regarded as the three bodies. They see the difference [between teacher and disciple] as that between buddhas and sentient beings. They too accomplish buddhahood in three countless aeons.

[1v] The deity system of Kriyā mantra is regarded as the protectors of the three families together with their retinues. The difference [between teacher and disciple] is seen in the manner of slave and master. Their measure of accomplishment asserts accomplishment within one lifetime.

Upāya [tantra] recognizes four families, recognized as the four families of *vajra*, *ratna*, *padma*, and *karma*. The difference [between teacher and disciple] is seen

¹⁰⁹ This is a reference to the ten *anuśaya* (Tib. *bag la nyal ba*). Cox (in Willeman, Dessein, and Cox 1998, 31 n.150), lists the ten and adds that they are, “a Vaibhāṣika view point. This is contrary to the Sautrāntika viewpoint, according to which there are only eight contaminants.” The *anuśaya* were used to refer to the subtle (*anu-*) seeds from which the defilements (*kleśa*) reemerge after a period of interruption. On organizing the ninety-eight contaminants into three realms, see De la Vallée Poussin (1988), vol. 4, 9 n.2, and Van den Broeck (1977), 62-65.

as that between lord and servant. Their measure of accomplishment asserts accomplishment in half a lifetime.

The deity system of Yoga is regarded as the four bodies: the *dharmakāya* Vairocana, Akṣobhya of the *svabhāvikakāya* (lit. “body of resting in the enlightened essence”), Ratnasambhava and Amitābha of the *sambhogakāya*, and Amoghasiddhi of the *nirmāṇakāya*. The difference [between teacher and disciple] is seen merely as that between a brother and a sister. Their measure of accomplishment asserts the appearance of certain signs, followed by accomplishment.

The deity system of Mahāyoga regards the five families as a single means¹¹⁰. There is no difference [between teacher and disciple], that is, they see them as the same. Regarding the measure of their accomplishment, they assert accomplishment through understanding, through the realization of, or “union with,” primordial Being, or “authenticity.”

The view and the deity system of Anuyoga are the same. Nor is there any difference [between teacher and disciple]. Regarding the measure of their accomplishment, they assert a spontaneous accomplishment upon emergence.

The view and the deity system of Atiyoga are also the same, and there is no difference [between teacher and disciple]. Their measure of accomplishment is seen as spontaneous accomplishment. This teaching on classifying the deity systems and the measures of accomplishment is complete.

[2r] Classifications of the *vidyādhara*s: There are three *vidyādhara*s of Kriyā: the *vidyādhara*s of accomplishment, the *vidyādhara*s who dwell on the levels, and the *vidyādhara*s of spontaneous accomplishment.

A *vidyādhara* of accomplishment meditates on [that which is] endowed with the three great reflections¹¹¹. One assembles the necessities, gathering the [requisite] causes and conditions. Spring is the cause and autumn the result. Those two times are then subdivided and the days counted. A *mar kham* dating system is applied, with fifteen days at the beginning [of each month], fifteen days at the end, the new moon, the eighth day of the first half, and the eighth day of the second half. The planets too, Jupiter or “*bung rnyil ba*,” and the king of constellations should be in position. The necessities and the implements of the deities should be in accordance with the textual systems. One’s food and clothing should also be likewise, and having assembled everything, one performs the worship. One is called a *vidyādhara* of accomplishment.

¹¹⁰ This description of Mahāyoga is common in the Dunhuang collections. See for example ITJ436, 1r.1 (*de la ma ha yo ga'i lha/ rigs la tshul gcig du lta ba gang zhe na*). See also PT656, r24 (translated below).

¹¹¹ For a discussion of these three, see PT656, r9-12 (translated below).

Then Vajrapāṇi arrived and granted the *siddhis*. Then he went to the Asura Cave, and upon beholding the visage of an emanation of Vajrapāṇi present there, he struck the rock with his foot. It seemed as if he had stuck it into dough. From that footprint the sacrament (*samaya*) descended, and from within that there came a spring with eight streams. One flowed to the south face of Mt. Meru, so the spring was called Aśvakarṇa. Seven of them fell inside of the Asura Cave. In this [spring] he cleansed himself and gained accomplishment. Thus he was called a *vidyādhara* who dwells on the levels.

A *vidyādhara* of spontaneous accomplishment is equal in status to glorious Vajrapāṇi. Such a one is called a “second buddha,” noble Vajrapāṇi.

A *vidyādhara* of Yoga is called a “beautifully ornamented second buddha.”

A *vidyādhara* of Mahāyoga is called a “*vajradhara* buddha.” Here there are four further kinds: the deity *vidyādhara*, the medicinal *vidyādhara*, the *vidyādhara* of maturation, and the *mahāmudrā vidyādhara*¹¹². Of those, a deity *vidyādhara* gains accomplishment through the deity, a medicinal *vidyādhara* gains accomplishment through extracted nectars and so forth, a *vidyādhara* of maturation gains accomplishment from one who is the highest of experts, and a *mahāmudrā vidyādhara* is endowed with the five kinds of omniscience, the five miraculous powers. [3r] This one too is called a “second buddha,” and should be understood as such in everything he does. There is no difference between a second [buddha and the first]; they are equal. One only says “second” because [they used] different ways to gain accomplishment.

There are no *vidyādharas* (lit. “knowledge holder”) in Anuyoga and Atiyoga; there is not even any knowledge to hold! Whoever might be called a *vidyādhara* gains accomplishment in anything. Such a one should be understood as part of the ultimate truth, a “*vidyādhara* on the levels.”

Thus there are sixteen *vidyādhara* levels in all. Anything said to surpass these contradicts the three kinds of valid cognition and does not appear in the scriptures and the tantras. There are also sixteen between the ten bodhisattva levels and the six buddha levels. These sixteen levels are not different [from the sixteen *vidyādhara* levels], yet it is unsuitable to explain the various pith instructions as all the same. The levels are distinct and completely perfect. They have been explained here in terms of the general levels and Vajrasattva and the seven general scriptural systems (*spyi lung bdun*). Their distinction allows the truth to be ascertained individually. Their complete perfection means they are pervaded or gathered by that [truth].

¹¹² Note these differ from the four levels seen in the later Rnying ma tradition. Compare for example Tsogyal (1993), 294-5: (1) maturation, (2) longevity, (3) *mahāmudrā*, (4) spontaneous perfection.

[3v] The [*Candra-*]*Guhyatilaka*¹¹³ was translated by Jñānamitra and Brang ti Ācārya Jāyagoca¹¹⁴. The *Sarvabuddhasamayoga*¹¹⁵ from the collection of a 100,000 [verses]¹¹⁶ was translated by Ācārya Jñānagarbha and Vimalamitra¹¹⁷.

IOL TIB J 644: Transcription

[1r] de la nyan thos kyi lha rgyud ni shag gya thub pa gci bu sangs rgyas su lta/ nman par snang mdzad ma ha u pa si ga tsam du lta dge bsnyen chen por lta/

phyogs skyong rnams mos pa spyod pa tsam du lta/ khyad par ni sangs rgyas dang sems can du lta/ grub tshad nye ring ni/ nyan tos kyi/ kham s gsum na nyon mongs

pa bsgom pas spang bar bya ba phra mo bcu yod pa la/ 'dod kham pa'i spang bar bya brgyad cu rtsa brgyad yod pa las/ brgyad cu rtsa bdun spong pa na/ thar pa la 'jug pa thob bo/

de nas yang nyon mongs pa dgu bcu tsa brgyad/ ril spong pa na/ dgra bcom pa zhes bya/ de nas yang rang gi lta ba bor na/ 'gyur ba'i nyan tos te/ byang cub

sems pa'i sa dang po rab du dgra ba non nas de nas yang bskal pa grangs myed pa gsum gis sangs rgyas su grub par 'dod do/ sa dang po rab du dgra ba zhes bya ba

sngon cad yong ma myong ba bya/ de'i tshe cho 'phrul ni/ skad cig ma gcig la/ sangs rgyas brgya pa chos nyan/ sems can brgya sgrol/ ting nge 'dzin la snyoms par 'jug/ sprul pa brgya 'gyed/ de yan cad kyang/ byang cub kyi sa re res gyung pa yod do/ rang byang cub kyi grub tshad ni nyan tos dang mthun/

mdo' sde'i lha rgyud ni/ sku gsum du lta/ khyad par ni sangs rgyas dang sems can du lta/ de yang bskul grangs myed pa gsum gis sangs su grub bo/

¹¹³ See Q.111, *Śrī-candra-guhyatilaka-nāma-mahātantrarāja*.

¹¹⁴ Brang ti Jāyagoca is a little-known figure. According to the *Tshig mdzod chen mo*, he was an expert in Tibetan medicine and served under the Tibetan king Khri lde gtsug brtsan, a.k.a. Me ag tshom (704-754/55). The Brang ti clan continued to play an important role in later Tibetan history.

¹¹⁵ See Q.8, *Śrī-sarvabuddhasamayoga*. Note that neither of these translation attributions match those provided in the colophons to the more recent Peking edition of the canon, nor those found in the Mtshams brag edition of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*.

¹¹⁶ Here we see yet another example of how scholars of early tantra explained the existence of multiple recensions of a given tantra by resorting to a mythical *ur*-text from which they are extracted. As noted above (notes 15 and 28), other examples include the *Vidyā-dhara-piṭaka*, the *Vajraśekhara*, the *Māyājāla*, and the *Vajrakīlaya*.

¹¹⁷ These two titles often appear together in the Dunhuang documents. See for example, PT332e, 1r, and PT281, v7.4-r8.1. Apparently they travelled together, at least in Tibet.

[1v] sngags kri ya'i lha rgyud ni/ rigs gsum gi mgon po 'khor dang bcas par lta'o/ khyad par ni bran dang rjo bo'i tshul su lta'o/ grub tshad ni tshe gcig gi grub par 'dod do/ u pa ya rigs bzhir lta/ rdo rje dang rin po che dang/ pad ma dang/ las kyi rigs dang bzhir lta'o/ khyad par ni dpon g.yog du lta'o/ grub tshad ni/ tshe phyed kyis grub par 'dod do/ yo ga'i lha rgyud ni sku bzhir ltar/ chos kyi sku rnam par snang mdzad/ a sho bya snying po byang cub na bzhugs

pa'i sku/ rin cen 'byung ldan dang snang ba mtha yas long spyod rdzogs pa'i sku/ don yod par grub sprul pa'i sku/ khyad par ni spun dang grogs tsam du lta/

grub tshad ni stags byung nas grub par 'dod do/ ma ha yo ga'i lha rgyud ni/ rigs lnga tshul gcig par lta/ khyad par myed de gcig par lta/ grub tshad ni/

ye nas de yin ba ni rnal ma zhes bya/ rtogs pa ni 'byor pa zhes bya ste shes pas grub par 'dod do/ a nu yo ga'i lta ba dang lha rgyud ni gcig ste/

khyad par myed do/ grub tshad ni/ yong nas lhun kyis grub par 'dod do/ a ti yo ga'i lta ba dang lha rgyud gcig ste khyad par myed/ grub tshad ni/

lhun gyis grub par lta'o/ lha rgyud dang grub tshad nye ring bstan pa rdzogs so/

[2r] rigs 'dzin dbye ba/ kri ya'i rigs 'dzin gsum ste grub pa'i rigs 'dzin dang/ sa la gnas pa'i rigs 'dzin dang/ lhun kyis

grub pa'i rigs 'dzin no/ de la grub pa'i rigs 'dzin pa ni/ gzugs brnyan chen po gsum dang ldan bar sgom ba yang/ yo byad dang rgyu

skyen tshogs 'dus te/ dpyid ni rgyu yin/ ston ni 'bras bu yin te/ dus de gnyis te/ tshigs ni tshes grangs te/ yar gyi bco lnga dang/ mar

bco lnga dang/ gnam stong dang/ yar gi tshes brgyad dang/ mar gi tshes brgyad/ mar kham/ tshes grangs de dang sbyar ro/ gza yang bur bu bur rnyil ba zhes

dang/ rgyu skar kyi rgyal po rgyal la bab pa/ yo byad dang lha cha gzhung dang mthun ba/ zas dang gos kyang de dang 'dra zhing ril tshigs nas/ bsgrub

pa byed pa ni/ sgrub pa'i rigs 'dzin pa zhes bya'o/ de nas phyag na rdo rje gshegs nas/ dngos grub sbyin ba dang/ a su ra'i brag phug du phyin

pa dang/ de na phyag na rdo rje'i sprul pa gcig bzhugs pa'i zhal mthong nas brag la rkang pa gcig brgyab pa dang/ zan la brgyab bzhin snang ngo/

rjes de nas dam babs nas/ nang de na chu myig yan lag brgyad dang ldan ba brgyad yod pa la/ gcig ni ri rab kyi lho ngos su rdol te

[2v] chu myig rta rna zhes bya'o/ bdun a su ra'i nang na 'bab pa la khrus byed cing bsgrub pa de/ sa la gnas pa'i rigs 'dzin ces bya'o/

lhun kyis grub pa'i rigs 'dzin ni/ dpal phyag rdo rje dang skal pa mnyam ba ste/ de'i mying ni/ dpal rdo rje 'dzin kyi sangs rgyas gnyis pa zhes bya'o/

yo ga'i rigs 'dzin ni/ sdug pos brgyan pa'i sangs rgyas gnyis pa zhes bya'o/ ma
ha yo ga'i rigs 'dzin ni/ rdo rje 'chang gi

sangs rgyas zhes bya ste de yang bzhi ste/ lha'i rigs 'dzin/ sman kyi rigs 'dzin
dang/ nam par smyin pa'i rigs 'dzin dang/ phyag rgya chen po'i

rigs 'dzin pa'o/ de la lha'i rigs 'dzin ni lha las grub pa'o/ sman ni ra sa ya na la
stsogs pa las grub pa'o/ nam par smin pa'i

rigs 'dzin ni/ mkhas pa'i rab las grub pa ni dpe za myed pa'o/ phyag rgya chen
po'i rigs 'dzin ni/ mngon bar shes pa lnga dang ldan ba ste/

rdo rje rdzu 'phrul dang lnga'o/

[3r] sangs rgyas gnyis pa zhes bya ba ni/ ril 'rna bar 'di ltar chud pa la bya'o/
gnyis la khyad par myed de mnyam/ grub pa'i sgo so so

bas/ gnyis zhes bya'o/ a nu yo ga dang a ti yo ga la ni rigs 'dzin yang myed do/
rigs gang du yang myi 'dzin te/ rigs 'dzin ces

gang la bsgrub pa'o/ don tan gi phyogs de la chud par bya/ sa la rigs 'dzin ces
bya'o/ rigs 'dzin kyi sa yang/ bcu drug du zad de/

de las bzla ces ni/ tshad ma gsum las kyang 'gal/ lung dang rgyud las kyang myi
'phyung ngo/ de yang byang cub sems dpa'i sa bcu dang/

sangs rgyas kyi sa drug te bcu drug go/ sa bcu drug 'di yang tha mi dad/ gcig du
yang so so'i man ngag bshad pa las myi rung ngo/

sa ma 'dres pa dang/ yongs su rdzogs pa'o/ spyi'i sa dang/ rdo rje sems pa dang
spyi lung bdun ka'i 'dir bshad do/ de la ma 'dres pa ni/

don so sor nges pa'o/ yongs su rdzogs pa ni/ des khyab pa 'am bsdu pa la bya'o/

[3v] 'gu hya ti la ka dnya na mi tra dang brang ti a tsa rya dzA ya go tsas bsgyur/
sa rba 'bu ta sa ma yo ga 'bum ste las/

a tsa rya nya na ga rba dang bye ma la mi tras bsgyur cing bstrags so/

IOL TIB J 656: Translation

The topics of the teaching on the views and practices specific to each of the seven great general scriptural systems are grouped into a total of four pith instructions. What are these? They are (i) view, (ii) meditation, (iii) practices, (iv) vows.

Regarding the view of the Śrāvakas: They regard the external body as made of subtle particles without parts. The internal mind consists of six collections of consciousnesses, which they see as ultimately existing permanent continuums of shapeless substantial entities. Their meditation is on the four truths. Their

practices are the twelve purificatory virtues. [5] Their discipline (*vinaya*) consists of 250 rules.

The view of the Sūtra Adherents is the two truths. Their practices are the ten perfections. Their rules are the twenty oaths. Their meditation is to meditate without fixation. The result is a gradual progression through the ten *bodhisattva* levels.

The view of Kriyā mantra is unification with internal purity by depending on external purity. “Reliance on external purity” refers to their gathering the necessities, the causes and conditions, and to their maintaining cleanliness. “Unification with internal purity” refers to their realization of the essential mind of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*). Therefore theirs is a view of a pure reality. Their meditation is to meditate while being endowed with the three great reflections. Regarding those, the reflection of body [10] means that one meditates [gradually,] like piling up bricks. The reflection of speech means that from between the tongue, the teeth, and the roof of the mouth, they recite accurately and quietly, so that only oneself can hear. The image of the mind means that having performed the blessings by means of the five recitations of mantra and *mudrā*, one meditates on reality. Their practices are threefold: not transgressing their vows, not transgressing the ritual forms, and accurate recitations. Their vows are five: (i) not to abandon the three jewels, (ii) to regard and respect the *vajrācārya* as if he were a buddha, (iii) not to generate negative thoughts or criticisms about, and to remain harmonious with, one’s vajra brothers and sisters, [15] (iv) to perform the cleansings three times a day, (v) not to eat or drink meat, garlic, onions, and alcohol.

In the view of Yoga, it is said that one should see everything as arising from the blessings, and regard whatever arises from the blessings as the deity. Their meditation is to cultivate [themselves] as endowed with the four *mahāmudrās*. To meditate on oneself as the *yi dam* deity is called the “deity *mudrā*.” To unite the wisdom being with oneself is called the “*samayamudrā*.” While practicing in that way, to realize without wavering from that which is without birth or cessation is called the “*dharmamudrā*.” Their practice is to take the mind as primary, and transform it by means of a concentration (*samādhi*) that is not dependent on causes and conditions; this is called the “*karmamudrā*.” [20] Their vows are seven: (i) to regard and respect the *vajrācārya* as if he were a buddha, (ii) not to generate negative thoughts or criticisms about, and to remain harmonious with, one’s vajra brothers and sisters, (iii) not to forsake the mind of enlightenment, (iv) until they have been granted initiation as a mantra-holder *vajrācārya*, to maintain a vajra tongue, not saying so much as a word, (v) not to drink water from the same valley as beings of lower vehicles, and (vi) to always hold their bell and vajra.

In the view of the Mahāyoga secret mantra, the five families are seen as a single method. Moreover, the five great elements are the mother, and the forms that come from those [elements] are the father; [25] both abide pervasively in everything.

Thus everything is seen to be without self and other, as *nirvāṇa*. Their meditation involves meditating on the gradual development [of the visualization] using the three kinds [of *samādhis*]¹¹⁸. Their practice is accomplishment, that is, union and liberation. Their vows number twenty-eight grouped into three kinds: the vows of view, the vows of practice, and the vows of accomplishment.

The view of Anuyoga is the view of the father and the mother, together with the son. Moreover, all the phenomena of existence are the means, the father. Unborn thusness is the wisdom (*prajñā*). The *nirvāṇa* of them both is the *bodhicitta*, the son. Their meditation is to cultivate the generation [of the maṇḍala] using the techniques of the perfection [stage]. [30] Their practice is engagement/enjoyment, that is, union and liberation. Their vows are four, the four vows of reality, compassion, equality, and union with the sense-objects, also called “the general vows of those who understand the secret mantra, the vows which are difficult to transgress.” These are the four vows of reality, compassion, equality (*mnyam ba*), and the union of the sense faculties with their objects.

The view of the Atiyoga secret mantra sees the body, speech, and mind as the inexhaustible adornment wheels. Furthermore, regarding [on the one hand] the minds of the Bhagavan Buddha endowed with omniscient wisdom and of sentient beings from the hells on up, [35] and [on the other hand] all that appears as the physical matter of the external world which is an insentient container: regarding these, their appearance as colors and shapes is the body, their unborn thusness is the speech, and the *nirvāṇa* of them both is the mind. That they are called “inexhaustible” means they are unchanging. “Adornments” refers to their being pervaded by that same body, speech, and mind. “Wheels” means they are non-fixating yet apprehending; “non-fixating” meaning *nirvāṇa* and “apprehending” meaning that *nirvāṇa* does not liberate them into some other place. The meditation is not to waver from that view. The practice is the great enjoyment, that is, union and liberation. The vow is singular: it is whatever. Because nothing exists beyond that, it is called “non-existent.” [40] Because there is only one vow in Atiyoga, it is called “singular.” Why “whatever?” Since [the vow] is maintained for the purpose of an accomplishment that is spontaneous, one who is not maintaining that accomplishment cannot be said to be not accomplished. Thus we say, “whatever,” because the infinite supreme blisses of *lhu bu* are automatically not transgressed. “Whatever” means that the question of whether one is maintaining [the vow] or not is immeasurable and boundless. “Vow” means something not to transgress.

The teachings on the practices of the seven general scriptural systems have been briefly referred to above, but the practices of union and liberation [may require

¹¹⁸ The three *samādhis* are commonly used in early Mahāyoga treatises to describe the development stage. They are the thusness *samādhi* (*de bzhin nyid kyi ting nge 'dzin*), the all-illuminating *samādhi* (*kun tu snang ba'i ting nge 'dzin*), and the causal *samādhi* (*rgyu'i ting nge 'dzin*).

some further explanation]. These practices do not exist in Yoga and Kriyā, nor among the Sūtra Adherents and the Śrāvakas.

[45] Union in the Mahāyoga secret mantra is the union of the vajra and the lotus, which can be further divided into three: (i) the union with the sole ornament [i.e. the central deity], (ii) the union of the five families in the single method, (iii) the union with whatever. Regarding those, the sole ornament is avowed to remain as two [i.e. buddha and consort]. The five families in a single method are practiced as the principle deity, the four female deities, and a single location. Whatever [arises] is the supreme path of the three realms. If one is performing union in accordance with the manuals with all the women one can find, it is said that one should [maintain] a vajra-speech and not talk about it. Liberation [in Mahāyoga] involves the liberation of oneself and the liberation of others. Of those, there are two ways to evaluate the liberation of oneself: [50] by one's nearness to the deity and by the lama of the lineage. Nearness to the deity is verified when the practitioner floats four fingers above the ground. The lama of the lineage will simply know. [Regarding the liberation of others,] having gathered a large number of beings who are experts as [verified] in that way, ten fields [i.e. suitable subjects for liberation] may be subdued. Here their ties to a self-conceptualizing mental continuum is [the target of] the liberation of others.

Union in Anuyoga mantra is the union of the senses and their objects. The objects are the mother and the senses the father. Liberation [in Anuyoga] is liberation by means of the four *mahāmudrā*.

Union in Atiyoga mantra is the union of space and wisdom. One's own consciousness is the space present in all the objects distinguished by that wisdom. [55] Liberation [in Atiyoga] is liberation by means of the great equality. Conventionally speaking, this is the equality of the god and the goddess. Ultimately speaking, this is the equality without birth or cessation. The causes are equal in the five major elements. The results are equal in body, speech, and mind. Thus there cannot be even a term for "sentient beings." In actuality, practicing is alright and not practicing is alright.

IOL TIB J 656: Transcription

spyi'i lung chen po bdun so so'i lta ba dang spyod pa bstan pa gsungs pa'i don
man ngag ni bzhi zhig 'du zad de/

de yang gang bzhes na/ lta ba dang bsgom ba dang/ spyod pa dang dam tshig go/
de la nyan thos kyi lta ba ni/ phyi'i lus rnam

ni phyogs cha myed pa'i rdul phra bar kyi rjes su lta/ nang gyi sems rnam par
shes pa'i tshogs drug so/ dngos po gzugs can ma yin

ba'i rgyun gyi rdag pa'i don dam par yod par lta'o/ bsgom ba ni bde ba' bzhi'o/
spyod pa ni sbyangs pa'i yon tan bcu gnyis so/

[5] 'dul ba ni khirms nyis brgya' lnga bcu'o/ mdo sde'i lta ba ni bden ba gnyis
so/ spyod pa ni pha rol 'du phyin pa bcu'o/

khirms ni sdom 'ba nyi shu pa'o/ bsgom ba ni dmyigs su myed par bsgom pa'o/
'bras bu ni byang cub sems pa'i sa bcu rims

kyis dgrod pa'o/ sngags kri ya'i lta ba ni/ phyi'i dag pa la brten nas nang dag pa
la sbyor ste/ phyi dag pa la bltos shes bya ba ni/

yo byad rgyu rgyu rkyen tshogs shing btsang sbras phyed pa'o/ nang dag pa la
sbyor zhes bya ba ni byang cub kyis sems ngo bor rtogs pa'o/

de bas na dag pa'i chos nyid du lta ba'o/ bsgom ba ni/ gzugs brnyan chen po gsum
dang ldan bar sgom ba ste/ de yang sku'i

[10] gzugs brnyan ni/ tshogs pa brtsegs pa ltar bsgom ba'o/ gsung gyi gzugs
brnyan ni/ lc dang/ so dang/ drkan gsum gyi bar

nas/ zur phyin par rang gyi ma ba thos pa tsam 'du zlos pa'o/ thugs gyi gzugs
brnyan ni/ sngags dang phyag rgya bzlas pa lngas

byin gyis brlabs nas chos nyid du bsgom ba'o/ spyod pa ni gsum ste/ dam tshig
ma nyams pa dang/ cho ga ma nyams pa dang/

bzlas pa zur phyin pa'o/ dam tshig ni lnga ste/ dkon mchog gsum myi spang ba
dang/ rdo rje sloba pon sangs rgyas dang

'dra bar blta zhing bkur ba dang/ rdo rje spun la ngan sems dang dpyad sems myi
bskyed cing nang mthun bar bya ba dang/

[15] khruś dus gsum du bya ba dang/ sha chang dang/ sgog tsong la sug myi bza
myi mthung ba'o/ ya ga'i lta ba ni/ thams cad byin kyi

brlabs las 'byung bar lta ste/ byin kyi brlab las lhar blta zhes bya/ bsgom ba ni
phyag rgya chen po bzhi dang ldan bar bsgom ba ste/

bdag yid dam gyi lhar bsgom bas lha'i phyag rgya zhes bya/ ye shes sems dpa'
bdag la bcas pas dam tshig gyi phyag

rgya zhes bya/ de ltar mdzad pa nyid kyi dus na/ skye 'gag myed pa las ma yos
par rtogs pa ni chos kyi phyag rgya zhes

bya/ spyod pa ni sems gtsor spyod pas rgyu rkyen la rag ma las par ti nge 'dzin
gyis dbang bsgyur de mdzad pa ni las kyi

[20] phyag rgya zhes bya/ dam tshig ni bdun ste/ rdo rje sloba pon sangs rgyas
dang 'dra bar blta zhing bkur ba dang/

rdo rje spun la ngan sems dang dpyad sems myi bskyed cing nang mthun bar bya
ba dang/ yi dam kyi lha myi spyad ba dang byang cub

kyi sems ma spang pa dang/ sngag 'chang pa'i slob pon du dbang ma bskur gi
bar du/ rdo rje lce yod kyang tshig 'ag yang myi smras

ba dang theg pa dma' ba'i skyes bo dang/ lung pa gcig kyi chu yang myi btung
ba dang/ rdo rje dril bu rtag du bcad pa dang bdun no/

gsang sngags ma ha yo ga lta ba ni/ rigs lnga tshul gcig du lta/ de yang 'byung
ba chen po lnga ni yum/ de las gzug

[25] su gyur pa ni yab/ thams cad la khyab par gnas pas/ bdag dang bzhan myed
ngan las 'das par lta ba'o/ bsgom ba ni

rnams gsum rims kyis bskyed de bsgom ba'o/ spyod pa ni bsgoms pa ste/ sbyor
sgrol lo/ dam tshigs ni nyi shu rtsa bgyad do/

de yang lta ba'i dam tshig dang/ spyod pa'i dam tshig dang/ bsgrubs pa'i dam
tshig gsum du 'dus so/ a nu yo ga'i lta ba

ni yab yum sras dang bcas par lta ba'o/ de yang snang srid kyi chos thams cad
ni thabs ste yab/ de nyid ma skyes pa

ni shes rab/ gnyis ga mye ngan las 'das pa ni byang cub kyi sems te sras so/
bsgom ba ni bskyed de rdzogs pa'i tshul

[30] du bsgom ba'o/ spyod pa ni spyad pa ste bsbyor sgrol lo/ dam tshig ni bzhi
ste/ chos nyid snying rje dang nyams ba dang dbang po

yul la sbyor ba'i dam tshig bzhi po dag gsang sngags shes pa rnams kyi spyi'i
dam tshig ste/ 'da bar drka ba rnams kyi

dam tshig yin zhes 'byung ba ste/ chos nyis dang/ mying rje dang mnyam ba dang
dbang po dang yul las sbyor ba'i dam tshig

bzhi'o/ gsang sngags a ti yo ga'i lta ba ni/ sku gsung thugs myi zad rgyan gi 'khor
lor lta ba ste/

de yang sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das thams cad khyen pa'i ye shes can dang/
sams can dmyal ba yan cad sems yod

[35] pa dang/ sems myed pa snod/ gyi 'jig rten phyi'i yul bems por snang ba thams
cad/ la/ kho dog dang sbyibs su snang ba ni/

sku/ de nyid ma skyes pa ni gsung/ gnyi ga mye ngan las 'das pa ni thugs so/
myi zad ces bya ba ni 'gyur ba myed la

bya/ rgyan ni sku gsang thugs nyid kyis khyab pa la bya/ 'khor lo ni myi gnas
dang 'dzin pa/ myi gnas pa ni myi ngan

las 'das pa la bya/ 'dzin pa ni mye ngan las 'das pa des gang yang bkrol pa myed
pa la bya/ bsgom ba ni lta ba de nyid

las ma yengs pa'o/ spyod pa ni spyad pa chen po ste sbyor sgrol lo/ dam tshig
ni gcig ste phyal ba'o/ de yi gong

[40] na dam tshig gzhan myed pas myed pa zhes bya/ a ti yo ga'i dam tshig gcig su yin bas/ de'i phyir gcig su zhes bya/

ci'i phyir phyal zhes na/ lhun gis grub pa'i phyir na bsrungs pas/ grub la ma srungs pas myi grubs ces bya ba myed pas/

phyal zhes byas ba de lhu bu'i bde mchog mu 'byam pa las/ rang bzhin kyis myi 'da ba'i phyir ro/ phyal ba ni bsrung ba dang

myi srungs grangs dang mtshams myed pa la bya/ dam tshig ces bya ba ni de las myi 'da ba la bya/ phyi lung bdun kyi spyod pa bstan

pa gong ma'i 'dir 'dus mod kyi spyod pa sbyor sgrol lo/ yo ga dang kri ya dang mdo sde dang nyan thos la myed do/ de la

[45] gsang sngags ma ha yo ga'i sbyor ba ni/ rdo rje dang pad mo sbyor ba ste de yang gsum mo/ rgyan gcig par sbyor ba dang

rigs lnga tshul gcig par sgyor ba dang/ phyal bar sbyor ba'o/ de la rgyan gcig pa ni gnyis su dam bcas pa'o/

rigs lnga tshul gcig pa ni/ gtso bo gcig dang/ gtso mo bzhi dang/ yul gcig sgrub pa'o/ phyal ba ni kham

gsum dag kyi lam mchog/ na/ bud myed ci snyed yod pa rnams/ thams cad cho ga bzhin sbyor na/ rdo rje gsung kyis

myi smad do zhes 'byung ba'o/ sgrol ba ni bdag bsgrol ba dang gzhan bsgrol ba'o/ de la bdag bsgrol ba tshad rnams pa nyis

[50] te/ lha nye ba dang rgyud bla ma'o/ de la lha nye ba ni bsgrub pa po de sor bzhi yan cad 'phags pa'o/ rgyud bla ma ni mkha

pa'o/ de lta bu skyes bu mkhas pa mang zhig 'dus nas/ zhing bcu la bstags te bdag du/ rtog pa'i rgyud

sbyor ba ni gzhan bsgrol ba'o/ sngags a nu yo ga'i sbyor ba ni/ yul dang dbang por sbyor ba'o/ yul ni

yum dbang po ni yab bo/ bsgrol ba ni phyag rgya chen po bzhis bsgrol ba/ sngags a ti yo ga'i sbyor ba ni/ dbyings

dang ye shes su sbyor ba'o/ bdag kyis rnam par shes pa ni/ ye shes des bcad pa'i yul thams cad na dbyings

[55] so/ bsgrol ba ni mnyam ba chen pos bsgrol ba'o/ kun rdzab du lha dang/ lha mor mnyam/ don dam par skye 'gag

myed par mnyam/ rgyud 'byung ba chen po lnga la mnyam/ 'bras bu sku gsung thugs la mnyam bas/ sems

can zhes bya ba'i mying yang myed pa la bya/ drngos su na spyod kyang rung/ ma spyad kyang rung ngo/

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ABBREVIATIONS

GDD	<i>Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo</i> .
D.	Derge edition of the Tibetan canon.
ITJ	IOL Tib J: British Library shelf mark for Tibetan manuscripts recovered by Sir Aurel Stein from Dunhuang.
MTP	<i>Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba</i> .
MVT	<i>Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra</i> .
Q.	Peking edition of the Tibetan canon.
PT	Pelliot tibétain: Bibliothèque Nationale shelf mark for Tibetan manuscripts recovered by Paul Pelliot from Dunhuang.
STTS	<i>Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha Tantra</i> .
T.	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> number in the Chinese canon.

