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**The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves
All Secrets**

Śrīguhyasarvacchindatantrarāja

གསང་བ་ཐམས་ཅད་གཅོད་པའི་རྒྱུད།

gsang ba thams cad gcod pa'i rgyud

The Tantra That Resolves All Secrets

Guhyasarovacchindatantra

· Toh 384 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 79 (rgyud 'bum, ga), folios 187.a–195.b

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SUMMARY

s.1

As its title suggests, this tantra is specifically concerned with the proper interpretation, or “resolution,” of the highly esoteric or “secret” imagery and practices associated with deity yoga in both its development and completion stages as described in the Yoginītantra class of tantras. The work is organized according to a dialogue between the Buddha and Vajragarbha—the lead interlocutor throughout many of the Yoginītantras—and the Buddha’s responses give particular attention to the specifications of the subtle body completion-stage yoga involving manipulations of the body’s subtle energy channels, winds, and fluids in conjunction with either a real or imagined consort. The tantra sets its interpretation of these common Yoginītantra themes and imagery within the wider context of the four initiations prevalent in this class of tantras. In resolving the secrets connected with each initiation, the text elaborates the different levels of meaning connected with each initiation’s contemplative practices.

ac.

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INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 This translation is based on seven Tibetan-language textual witnesses of a translation from Sanskrit into Tibetan ostensibly executed by the eleventh century translation team of the Indian paṇḍita Gayādhara and the Tibetan translator Drokmi Śākya Yeshé. The Sanskrit manuscript(s) upon which tradition claims Gayādhara and Drokmi based their translation has since vanished from the purview of Buddhists and Buddhist scholars.¹ In reliance, then, on the two conjectured dates of Drokmi's death, this tantra's *terminus ante quem* can only be roughly estimated to be either 1043 or 1072.² Tibetan historical records claim that Gayādhara continued to be active after Drokmi's death.³

i.2 Judging from its bibliographic location within the relevant Kangyur collections, as well as from the distinctive themes it advances, this tantra belongs to the Yoginī class of tantras. Post-tenth-century Tibetan classification schemes⁴ that were formalized by the fourteenth century in the structure of the Tibetan Kangyurs typically catalog the translated texts of the Yoginītantra class, which Tibetans called "Mother tantras," alongside what they called "Father tantras"⁵ and "Nondual tantras,"⁶ to make up the more inclusive category of "Unexcelled Yoga Tantra" (*yoganiruttara / anuttarayoga tantra*).⁷ The Unexcelled Yoga tantras, believed by most Tibetan exegetes to be the ultimate revelation of the Buddha of our eon, therefore occupy the first major bibliographic category in the Tantra collection⁸ of most Kangyur collections. Unexcelled Yoga tantras are in turn followed by the tantra classes of "Yoga," "Conduct," and finally "Action," an order thought to represent along a descending gradient the relative soteriological power of the yogic techniques emphasized in each textual class.

i.3 The same hierarchical logic is also reflected in the Kangyur's internal subdivisions of Unexcelled Yoga tantra itself, where the highest of the high, Nondual tantras, are followed by Mother tantras and then by Father tantras, once again reflecting in descending order Tibetan conceptions of the relative

profundity and power of each subclass's methodological emphasis. In relating the rationale for this tripartite hierarchy in his commentary on the *Guhyagarbhatantra*, Longchenpa (*klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer*, 1308–64) echoes the following popular tantric dictum:

Father tantra primarily teaches generation stage, mother tantra primarily teaches completion stage, and nondual tantra primarily teaches their integration.⁹

- i.4 In terms of content, then, Yoginītantras emphasize the apex of those Buddhist tantric methodologies developed on the Indian subcontinent from the ninth through the twelfth centuries CE,¹⁰ which later Tibetan exegetes collectively refer to as completion stage practices. Such practices are distinguished by Tibetans from those of the Father tantras, where the emphasis is on male deities, images, and symbols, and the associated practices of development stage, or deity yoga, in which one imaginatively recreates self and environment in the form of a central male deity and his celestial domain.
- i.5 In contrast, the Yoginī or “female practitioner” tantras are said to emphasize more the special efficacy of female deities, principles, and symbols. These tantras likewise promote yogic techniques—the completion phase practices of Tibetan parlance—involving highly choreographed manipulations of the energy channels, winds, and seminal fluids that constitute the human body's subtle physiology. Such practices center on the controlled arousal and movement of winds and fluids throughout the subtle body by means of sexual union with a real or imagined female practitioner or deity. Other salient features of the Yoginītantras include imagery related to Indian charnel grounds and the profusion of fierce male (*heruka*) and female (*yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs*) divinities believed to cavort there; the ritual preparation, exchange, and consumption of “polluting” substances such as bodily fluids and flesh; an emphasis on the intimate connection and correlation between language, cosmos, and subtle physiology; and a considerable degree of language and imagery shared with Hindu Śaiva tantric traditions, particularly the Kāpālikas.¹¹ For Indian and Tibetan commentators of Yoginītantras the term *yoginī* not only denotes the overtly sexual nature of the practices these texts prescribe, it also connotes the power and efficacy of contact with the feminine in all its human and divine forms.
- i.6 Yet, alongside the profusion of elements that might reflect a nonmonastic origin or audience, the Yoginītantras also often assume knowledge of traditional Buddhist topics of learning like the dharmas of the Abhidharma, the ordination status of the various lay and monastic vow holders as stipulated in the Vinaya, and understandings of self, mind, and world drawn

from Middle Way and Mind Only formulations. The *Hevajratantra* and the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra*, the two most well-known and widely practiced Yoginītantras, exhibit well this hybrid combination of characteristics.

i.7 Due to the social, political, and economic fragmentation that followed the collapse of the Tibetan empire in 840–42 CE, Tibetans were unable to begin translating the Yoginītantras until over a century later, toward the end of the tenth century, when Tibetans once again resumed their large-scale importation of Indian Buddhist texts and traditions. This renewed interest in Indian Buddhism among Tibetans, a movement that has recently come to be called the “Tibetan Buddhist renaissance,”¹² was characterized foremost by the rise of an elite class of Tibetan scholars specially trained in the daunting task of translating and interpreting the developments in Indian Buddhist theory and practice that had transpired in the intervening century. From the inception of this period the new class of translator-scholars was thrust into the limelight and enjoyed the status of aristocracy.

i.8 Drokmi the translator appears to have been an especially important figure within this new ecclesiastical network. Ronald Davidson’s 2005 study entitled *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture*, which explores the major socioreligious figures and themes of this important period in Tibetan history, devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 5: “Drokmi: The Doyen of Central Tibetan Translators:” 161–209) to the life and career of Drokmi, including his relationship with the Indian scholar Gayādhara. We refer the reader to this chapter for a detailed discussion and analysis of Drokmi’s and Gayādhara’s lives and influence.

i.9 Here it suffices to note that Tibetan historical records depict Drokmi as having been especially steeped in Yoginītantra traditions. Drokmi receives credit, along with Gayādhara, for having produced authoritative translations of some of the most influential Yoginītantras to circulate in Tibet, most notably the seminal texts of the *Hevajratantra* system of practice and exegesis.¹³ Drokmi is also described as having produced, again together with Gayādhara, a translation of the famous *Root Text of Mārgaphala (Path and Fruit)*, which would later become a core feature of the institutional identity of the Tibetan Sakya tradition. The process by which the first few generations of Sakya hierarchs integrated the laconic *Root Text of Mārgaphala* with the *Hevajratantra* ritual system to craft a powerfully influential sectarian identity forms the subject matter of much of Davidson’s 2005 study. Further readings on the rubric and contents of Buddhist Yoginītantras include Gray (2007), Isaacson (1998), Sanderson (1995a, 1995b and 2001), and Snellgrove (1959 and 1987).

- i.10 In most Kangyurs, *The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves All Secrets* is found within a corpus of thirty-two works known as the Rali (*ra li*) tantras (Toh 383–414). The corpus is divided into four groups—mind, speech, body, and miscellaneous—each comprising eight tantras. All are works translated by Drokmi, and all but eight with Gayādhara.¹⁴ *The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves All Secrets* is the second of the first group, the eight mind tantras. It is not clear whether the texts belonging to the Rali corpus were so identified by Drokmi himself or later, but Butön, in his 1323 *History of the Dharma*, includes them in his classified list of canonical texts with the mention that they are “well known as the thirty-two Rali [tantras].”¹⁵ He places them as belonging to the Cakrasaṃvara cycle, and editors of the Kangyur have generally followed this classification.
- i.11 A brief review of the structure and content of *The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves All Secrets* reveals the presence of several Yoginītantra traits. The tantra is organized according to a dialogue between the Buddha and Vajragarbha, who is the lead interlocutor of the Buddha’s entourage throughout many of the Yoginītantras, such as the *Hevajratantra*, and others. After a brief opening narrative frame common to the Yoginītantras, Vajragarbha poses a series of four questions about each of the four major terms of the tantra’s title: secret, resolution, tantra, and king. The Buddha offers responses, which in turn elicit further questions. Vajragarbha’s opening four questions structure the body of the text as a whole, while his follow-up questions tend to open subtopics for further discussion. The following outline, which we have extracted in accordance with Vajragarbha’s questions, reveals the tantra’s thematic flow. Folio numbers correspond to the Degé witness.
- i.12 Opening narrative frame (187a.2–4)
- I. What is “secret”? (187a.4–195a.5)
1. The first secret, the practice of the development stage related to the vase initiation (187a.5–190b.5)
 - A. The support (187a.6–188a.5)
 - B. The supported (188a.5–190b.5)
 - i. What is the completion of the thirty-seven features? (188b.6–189a.2)
 - ii. How are they “developed”? (189a.2)
 - iii. What are their stages like? (189a.2)
 - iv. What are the maṇḍala that is the support, its sessions, and its breaks like? (189a.2–189a.5)
 - v. How are view and conduct brought into coalescence? (189a.5–189b.1)
 - a. What is “ambrosia” like? (189b.2–190a.1)

- a1. Outer ambrosia (189b.2–7)
- a2. Inner ambrosia (189b.7–190a.1)
- a3. Secret ambrosia (190a.1)
- b. What is the conduct associated with it like? (190a.1–2)
 - b1. Beginners (190a.2)
 - b2. Superior persons (190a.2–4)
- c. How do its qualities emerge?
- d. What are all the meanings of the adornments?
 - d1. What is the “sixth” like? (190a.6–190b.3)
 - d2. What is a superior person like? (190b.3–4)
 - d3. How is desire fully purified? (190b.4–190b.5)
- 2. The second secret, the subtle physiology related the secret initiation (190b.5–193a.5)
 - A. Chakras, their locations and natures (190b.5–191b.7)
 - B. Subtle energy channels (191b.7–192a.3)
 - C. “Camphor” (subtle seminal fluid) abiding in those channels (192a.3–4)
 - D. Practices based on this subtle physiology (192a.4–193a.5)
- 3. The third secret, sexual yoga related to the wisdom-gnosis initiation (193a.5–195a.2)
 - A. What is a cluster of stars like?
 - B. What is coalescence like?
 - C. What is nonduality like?
 - D. The actual practice of sexual yoga and the status of its practitioners (194a.1–195a.2)
 - i. What is a three-initiation fully ordained monk like? (194b.2–4)
 - ii. What are his activities like? (194b.4–195a.2)
- 4. The fourth secret, related to the fourth initiation (195a.2–195a.5)
 - II. What is its “resolution” like? (195a.5–195b.3)
 - III. What is the meaning of tantra? (195b.3–5)
 - IV. And what is its king like? (193b.5–6)
- Closing narrative frame (193b.6–7)

i.13 This text is present in at least seven of the currently extant Kangyurs—the Choné, Degé, Lithang, Kangxi Peking, Stok Palace, Urga, and Yongle Peking versions¹⁶ (referenced in the notes, following Harrison and Eimer’s suggested *sigla*,¹⁷ as C, D, J, K, S, U, and Y)—where it occupies 18, 18, 14, 18, 21, 18, and 18 folios, respectively. While the tantra is located in each of these Kangyurs within the second bibliographic subdivision of the Collected Tantras section, among the penultimate Yoginītantras, the location of the

Collected Tantras section varies somewhat between collections. The present translation is based primarily on the Degé edition, in consultation also with the six other available witnesses.

The Translation

**The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves All
Secrets**

p.

Prologue

p.1 [F.187.a] I pay homage to Glorious Vajrasattva!

p.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One dwelt in equanimity in the womb of the Vajra Lady, which is the enlightened body, speech, and mind of all tathāgatas.

Then, the entourage, including the bodhisattva Vajragarbha and others, performed three circumambulations counterclockwise, made outer, inner, and secret offerings, and asked the following:

p.3 “O Blessed Vajra Holder!
What is ‘secret’?
How is it resolved?
What is the meaning of ‘tantra’?
And what is its king?”

1. THE FIRST SECRET

1.1 The Blessed One said:

“ ‘Secret’ is fourfold.

First is the practice of the development stage

Related to the vase initiation.

I taught meditation on the support and the supported

So that practitioners might relinquish

Dualistic concepts of a universe and its inhabitants.

1.2 “Its individual features all have an intended meaning.

Initially, in other tantras,

I taught about emptiness and so forth.

Among the particulars of the support and supported,

The first concerns the intention behind the support.

1.3 “Imagine that, like one candle lighting another,

The syllable *hūm* at the heart

Projects a black-hued *e*,

Which forms a vast, deep triangle.

1.4 “The three corners are enlightened body, speech, and mind.

This signifies the destruction of the three poisons.

The sides are the three liberations.

This signifies the destruction of the ten nonvirtues

That emerge from ordinary body, speech, and mind.

1.5 “The dharma body is immaculate,

And therefore [F.187.b] naturally all-pervading.

This is the significance of *vast*.

1.6 “Since even the noble listeners, solitary realizers,

- And bodhisattvas as well
Do not realize the dharma body,
It is explained with intention as *deep*.
- 1.7 “Then, again, the *hūm* at the heart
Projects a *hūm* syllable that forms into a vajra,
Which forms into a vajra tent.
- 1.8 “There are two obstacles: first, to life,
And second, to liberation.
These are the two obstructing forces,
The outer and the inner.
- 1.9 “The outer creates obstacles to life;
The inner creates obstacles to liberation.
The significance of the vajra tent
Is that it protects from these twofold obstructions.
- 1.10 “Then *yam*, just as before,
Projects a shape like a half-moon.
It provides control over the abandonment of conceptuality
And the dawn of nonconceptuality.
This is the meaning of *domination*.
- 1.11 “Concerning the significance of the four flags,
I have taught that they signify all things
Present throughout the three times.
- 1.12 “The triangular fire maṇḍala from *ram*
Signifies wrathful ritual.
The three-pronged vajra signifies the three buddha bodies.
- 1.13 “The round water disk from *ban*
Is said to be the cessation of mental activity.
The vase is the four aspects of the dharma body.
- 1.14 “The square golden earth from *lan*
Has the nature of prosperity.
The five-pronged vajra is the five gnoses.
The eight peaks of Mount Meru above that
Signify the eight liberations.
- 1.15 “Symbolizing the absence of conceptuality about an ordinary universe and
inhabitants,

- The eight charnel grounds
Should be arranged to the left and right in order.
- 1.16 “The concepts related to each feature, moreover,
Should be learned from a master’s oral instructions.
- 1.17 “Symbolizing the power of the antidote fully developed,
Trees are continuously arranged in sequence.
The directional protectors are arranged as symbols
For the overcoming of concepts oriented toward the ten nonvirtues.
- 1.18 “The eight nāgas are stationed
To destroy the wicked ones
Of attachment, hatred, and ignorance.
- 1.19 “Rain clouds are arrayed
So that body and speech¹⁸ may act for the welfare of¹⁹ beings,
With divine pride in the two form buddha bodies
Endowed with great compassion. [F.188.a]
- 1.20 “Inner and secret are the same.
Likewise, as for the ultimate, the fourth,
One should learn the oral tradition.
- 1.21 “Then, inside, the celestial palace appears.
Bhruṃ creates an eight-spoked wheel.
The eight spokes stand for the eight consciousnesses.
- 1.22 “The wheel transforms into the body of Vairocana.
Viewed from the outside, he is luminous inside.
Likewise, from inside out,
Meaning that all appears as one.
- 1.23 “The five kinds of gems²⁰ symbolize the five buddha bodies.
The five colors indicate the five families.
The four corners are said to be the four pure abodes.
- 1.24 “The four sides are the four means of magnetizing.
The four gates are the four foundations of mindfulness.
The eight pillars are the eight liberations.
The four beams symbolize the four gnoses.
All the gate adornments, and so forth,
Are said to be the powers and the like.
- 1.25 “Then, as for the seats inside the palace,

- They are lotuses born from vowels as seed-syllables.
The lotus seat indicates not being stained
By the afflictions such as passion, and so forth.
- 1.26 “The sun and moon atop the lotuses
Symbolize skillful means and wisdom.
The corpse is taught first
For the destruction of the self, or conceptuality.
- 1.27 “The four-featured seat of the central deity
Is given as a seat to each member of the retinue,
Since they each are an aspect of the central deity.
- 1.28 “That completes the supportive maṇḍala
Conjoined with its intended meaning.
- 1.29 “Next, the deities are generated
According to the four types of birth.
- 1.30 “The miraculous manner is to arise instantaneously,
Like a fish jumping out of water.
- 1.31 “Birth from heat and moisture is to arise from conditions,
Like a lotus nurtured by the sun.
- 1.32 “Birth from an egg happens through projection and absorption,
Like copper produced from stone.
- 1.33 “Birth from a womb occurs from union,
Burned from above and formed from below,
Like a statue created from wax.²¹
- 1.34 “Vairocana is completed with the palace.
Later, the Heruka is generated.
Conferring initiation is the Blessed One Akṣobhya.
Praise is Ratnasambhava.
- 1.35 “Offering is Amoghasiddhi.
Tasting ambrosia is Amitābha. [F.188.b]
The accomplishments that emerge
From these six aspects are extraordinary.
- 1.36 “Then, concerning the recitation, or meditation,
There are those of superior, mediocre, and inferior faculties.
It is said that superior ones

- Are to meditate, or recite in full.
- 1.37 “The mediocre should focus on the central deity in father-mother union.
The inferior are to apply themselves to the eyes of the central figure.
Having reached stability on the eyes of the central figure,
They are to meditate on the thirty-seven features in full.
The mediocre are to do likewise.
- 1.38 “Located in the body are channels; circulating within them are winds;
Mounted on these is the mind—the inferior practice involves shape;
The more profound involve mantra and seminal drops;
And the ultimate involves dharma and the seven parts.
Teaching this way is exceedingly profound.
- 1.39 “Everything taught above
Should also be understood as fourfold.
Each one, moreover, is fourfold;
The manifold manner is exceedingly profound.
- 1.40 “Outer and inner is the meaning of mantra.
The maṇḍala image is the outer meaning.
Regarding the outer is the inner.
The secrecy of just that is the secret meaning.
Proficiency is the meaning of perfection.
- 1.41 “The maṇḍala image is the outer meaning.
Inwardly, concerning the characteristics of the maṇḍala,
The aggregates, elements, and sense media
Are each transformed into a deity, either five, six, or thirty-seven;
Left, right, above, below, the gates, and so forth—
These should be understood from a master’s oral instructions.”
- 1.42 Then Vajragarbha asked:

“What is the completion
Of the ‘thirty-seven’?
How are they ‘developed’?
What are their stages?
What is the supportive maṇḍala like?
And how are the sessions and breaks?
How are view and conduct united?
Tell me, O Spiritual Hero!”
- 1.43 The Blessed One said:

- “The *thirty-seven*, the pristine cause,
Give rise to nondual gnosis, the effect.
Therefore, the cause, which precedes the effect,
Is to become the principal deity.
- 1.44 “Even in just becoming the Heruka
All causes are complete;
The twenty-four locations and so forth
Should be learned from a master’s oral instructions.
- 1.45 “The effect does not come from a mistaken cause—
Barley does not sprout from a grain of wheat. [F.189.a]
Nor does it come from an incomplete cause—
There is no sprout from damaged grain—
Nor without a cause,
Like fragrance from a space flower.
The cause is not a cause without conditions,
Like a forest fire without wind.
The beginner thus endowed with these four parts
Will abandon concepts.
- 1.46 “*Development* is said to be done
By one who adheres to deity practice.
Multiple aspects, external and internal,
Are explained as its *stages*.
- 1.47 “The particular *supportive maṇḍala*
Is said to be of three types—
Without courtyard, without canopy, and with canopy—
According to inclination.
- 1.48 “Due to the divisions of the four chakras,
Daily *sessions* are taught as four.²²
Breaks should also be understood to be four.
- 1.49 “It is taught that a practitioner who switches
To twenty-two and a half minute hours and meditates in eight sessions
Equalizes sessions and breaks.
- 1.50 “During breaks, practitioners
Of mediocre and inferior faculties
Should project the deities in full
And properly perform offerings, and so forth,
Like one candle igniting another.

- 1.51 “View refers to equipoise;
Subsequent attainment is explained as *conduct*.”
- 1.52 “When practicing the development stage,
One is permitted to observe the conduct of wearing the six adornments.
In connection with the secret initiation,
One is allowed to observe the conduct of adornments and ambrosia.
I have said that those of the vajra family, the ratna family,
The padma family, and the karma family are permitted to observe the
conduct.”
- 1.53 “Those connected with the wisdom-gnosis initiation
Have in common what was taught above, and
In particular, are permitted to observe the conduct of the seal.
- 1.54 “With either conduct devoid of view,
Or view devoid of conduct,
One transgresses the pledges of secret mantra
And takes birth as a hell-being in Endless Torment.
- 1.55 “Therefore, conduct devoid of view should be abandoned;
It is the conduct of a hostile demon.
Likewise, view devoid of conduct is also to be abandoned;
Tormenting the body through austerities [F.189.b]
And despising the aggregates that are Vairocana and so forth
Is simply the work of a dry intellectual.
- 1.56 “Consequently, view and conduct are to be unified—
When an elephant rises, it rises all together,
And when an elephant sits, it sits all together.”
- 1.57 Vajragarbha then asked:

“What is meant by ‘ambrosia’?
What conduct is associated with it?
How do its qualities emerge?
Tell me, O Central Deity,
All the meanings of the adornments and the rest!”
- 1.58 The Blessed One replied:

“*Ambrosia* is taught as threefold.
Firstly, one enjoys the outer ambrosia.
Arrange the five hooks
In the five ambrosias and the five meats.

- This should begin on the eighth and fourteenth days of the month.
- 1.59 “One should then gather *silha* wood, Akṣobhya, and dry manure.
This should begin on the twelfth and sixteenth days of the month.
- 1.60 “One should then take Heruka, Vairocana, and essence of dry manure.
The eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days
Of the waxing and waning lunar periods
Are taught as auspicious times for everything.
- 1.61 “The appearance of the lion should be white and excellent,
Its body and speech gentle and without any fault—
This is the basis for the formation of flesh.
As for ox, or elephant,
This should be the flesh of one from which musk and the like emerges
Based on the single material cause of it eating a *ketaka* flower.
Beef should be flesh that contains bile.
Horse meat should come from the king among horses,
Whose complexion is neither white nor red,
With flesh that neither changes shape nor color.
Human meat must be the flesh of a seventh-birth.
An adept should investigate his body, speech, and mind.
The food container should be a skull-cup in a single piece.
The ambrosia should be accomplished with the ingredients inside it.
- 1.62 “Superior, mediocre, and inferior signs—
Blazing, wafting, and bubbling—
Are explained as pertaining to the external signs.
- 1.63 “Furthermore, the point of signs having arisen is that old age is eradicated.
If sounds have not been heard there will be no accomplishment.
When sounds have issued forth one will become pure.
- 1.64 “Inner ambrosia is self-arisen.
Having interrupted the flow of ambrosia dripping
From the nine orifices of the one with the bell,
It fills the body like sesame seeds.
Then, as the breath enters the *avadhūtī*
The circulation of the upper sixth is elicited.
- 1.65 “When *silha* and camphor abide in the center, [F.190.a]
The lower sixth circulates.
This is the secret ambrosia,
Which vanquishes gray hair, wrinkles, and death.

- 1.66 “The practice of *conduct* is twofold:
For superior and beginner persons.
The ambrosia of the outer sixth is bestowed
In order for them to adhere well to the development stage
And abandon fixation to caste.
- 1.67 “Beginners have both outer and inner ambrosias,
Whose potencies are also manifold—
It renders them devoid of gray hair and destroys conceptuality.
It consecrates the four maṇḍalas.
- 1.68 “It is taught that one will seize the sixth,
Which is situated at the center,
Four finger-widths above the upper tip of the relative,
Through gaining familiarity with the fifth.
- 1.69 “Settling the breath at the location of the navel,
The upper sixth is seized.
Its potencies are also manifold.
One will be devoid of craving and feel buoyant.
Just like an eagle,
One will soar in the sky without plummeting.
- 1.70 “It is said that the lower sixth is situated
At the center of the superior and disconnected ones.
It is taught to superior persons
And its potencies are also manifold.
It blocks the orifice of the one with the bell.
It destroys anger, the first of the adornments.
- 1.71 “The stage of subjugating Rudra
In the great charnel ground of Śītavana
Is that conceptuality is destroyed with ambrosia.
The four enlightened activities are in common.
Through the seal, desire is purified.”
- 1.72 Vajragarbha then asked:

“What is meant by ‘the sixth’?
What is a superior person like?
How is desire purified?
Tell me, O Spiritual Hero!”
- 1.73 The Blessed One replied:

- “From the four of right, left, above, and below
Emerges space, the fifth.
The fifth’s absence of nature
Is taught to be *the sixth*.”
- 1.74 “Preceded by joy, supreme joy,
Innate joy, and the freedom from joy,
Great bliss, the fifth, emerges.
Great bliss being pure, devoid of nature,
Is the sixth, pertaining to the lower door.
Therefore, even those who aspire for the sixth [F.190.b]
Meditate on the complete fifth,
Preceded by the fourth.
- 1.75 “For example, when the power of alchemy
Is applied to a copper object,
The copper itself becomes gold,
And the gold itself comes from just copper.
Likewise, the Buddha does not teach
That the sixth appears from anything but the fifth.
- 1.76 “Throughout a year, month, fortnight,
Day, night, and hour,
The sixth emerges for only a moment.
It is not the purview of beginners.
- 1.77 “In the same way, a drop of ambrosia
Placed in a vessel of water
Is only experienced as water;
The ambrosia is not experienced.
- 1.78 “Still, based on water,
The ambrosia is also caused to be experienced.
Likewise, based on the elaborate fifth,
The simple sixth emerges.
I have taught this in other tantras.
- 1.79 “A person who has traversed the five signs, the eight flavors,
Or the eight levels, and has thus become clairvoyant,
Has fully relinquished the action seal.
- 1.80 “One who engages in the great seal,
Adhering to a gnosis seal,
Is a *superior person*.”

It is explained that he has seized the sixth.

1.81 “*Desire* is cyclic existence;
Its purification is taught to be nirvana.”

2. THE SECOND SECRET

- 2.1 “Next is the second secret.
It is the profound meaning of dependent origination
In connection with the secret initiation.
- 2.2 “First, give rise to the divine pride.
Know that the *ḍākinīs* are the channels.
Know that the *ḍākas* are the spirit of enlightenment.
Know the locations of the chakras, the chakras themselves,
And their related practices.
- 2.3 “The distance from the chakra of great bliss
To the confluence of Brahma
Is forty-eight finger-widths.
Each chakra is three finger-widths,
And thus the nature of enlightened body, speech, and mind.
- 2.4 “The locations of the initiations and the chakras
Should be learned from a master’s oral instructions.
An adept must determine whether the wind of the anus
Is three or four finger-widths from the fire of the Brahma confluence.
- 2.5 “Three spaces is the secret location.
Likewise, three spaces marks the chakra of awareness.
Four finger-widths is the location of Hayagrīva. [F.191.a]
Eight finger-widths is the location of Secret Guardian of Bliss.
- 2.6 “Based on the particularities of the bodily supports
Of male and female practitioners,
Forty-eight finger-widths can be divided.
In this way, at eight finger-widths is located the secret chakra.
The other chakras, located within forty finger-widths,

- Should be learned from a master's oral instructions.
- 2.7 "An adept should determine all of them
As being inside or outside of the spinal column.
- 2.8 "There are also two types of chakra.
First are the chakras themselves; second, the channels.
Chakras are also taught as fourfold:
Conditional, secret, natural, and empowered.
There are two conditional, four secret,
Sixteen natural, and two empowered chakras.
Caṇḍālī, twenty-four,
Are hidden in the four chakras.
- 2.9 "If you turn away from the master in a gathering,
Spread his oral instructions or bandy them about,
Receive the concealed stage in order to indulge in desire,
Turn away from, or disparage the hidden points,
Obstruct the secret mantra, or insult other practices,
You will be reborn in the great hell of Endless Torment,
Until the thousand and one buddhas are all gone.
- 2.10 "I have not said to keep concealed
Anything that is concealed in these chakras.
Thus, what in other tantras has been hidden,
In this tantra I explain in detail.
- 2.11 "Thirty-two, divided into left and right parts,
Is concealed in the amount of sixty-four.
Thirty-two, paired,
Is concealed in the amount of sixteen.
- 2.12 "Thirty-two, grouped according to cardinal and intermediate directions,
Is concealed in the amount of eight.
The crown chakra is concealed at the crown.
The Secret Guardian of Bliss is concealed at the navel.
- 2.13 "Sixteen, paired,
Is concealed in the amount of eight.
Sixteen, divided into right and left parts,
Is concealed in the amount of thirty-two.
Sixteen, multiplied by four,
Is concealed in the amount of sixty-four.

- 2.14 “At the throat, in the chakra of enjoyment,
One enjoys the six flavors.
Thus, Rasanā is concealed in the chakra of enjoyment.
The Hayagrīva chakra is concealed at the throat. [F.191.b]
- 2.15 “Eight, divided into right and left parts
Is concealed in the amount of sixteen.
Eight, with right, left, top, and bottom,
Is concealed in the amount of thirty-two.
- 2.16 “Eight divided into eight parts, with right, left, top, bottom,
And the four intermediate directions,
Is concealed in the amount of sixty-four.
The fire at the Brahma confluence is concealed in fire.
- 2.17 “In the dharma chakra at the heart, all phenomena are known.
Therefore, awareness is concealed there.
- 2.18 “Sixty-four, paired,
Is concealed in the amount of thirty-two.
Sixty-four, grouped in fours,
Is concealed in the amount of sixteen.
Sixty-four, grouped in eights,
Is concealed in the amount of eight.
- 2.19 “The wind of the anus is concealed within wind.
The secret inner heat is concealed in the inner heat.
On each chakra there are four chakras
That externally clasp in the form of the life-force.
- 2.20 “Even though waters, streams, and rivers
Are caused to flow in numerous ways,
In the ocean they become one flavor.
- 2.21 “Playing at the navel is the enlightened body of great bliss
Endowed with the liberations and emptinesses,
And likewise the major and minor marks.
- 2.22 “At the heart is the dharma body,
Likewise, with the liberations and so forth.
Similarly, the enjoyment body is at the throat and
The emanation body is at the chakra of great bliss.
- 2.23 “The major marks above and emptiness below
Is the first union of great bliss.

- The liberations above and the minor marks below
Is the second union of great bliss.
The others should be learned orally.
The pristine ten powers are the ten unions.
- 2.24 “Wind is the essence of Tārā, in that
The nature of breath fills the six channels.
Fire is the nature of Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, in that
The three corner channels are filled with warmth.
- 2.25 “Naturally present
Are eight and five characteristics.
The eight are the first eight vowels.
The five are the first five consonants, or
The five suffix endings, the palace of knowledge.
- 2.26 “To the right and left of the vowel letter of Hayagrīva
Are two *a* syllables, at the perimeter of which are nine petals.
- 2.27 “At the chakra of the Secret Guardian of Bliss,
In the center of the four neuter letters and two *a* syllables,
Are the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment.
- 2.28 “Next, concerning the characteristics of the channels, [F.192.a]
Seventy-two thousand external channels
Are located in the flesh and give rise to fat.
One hundred and twenty internal channels
Are located in the fat and give rise to marrow.
- 2.29 “Thirty-two secret channels
Are located in the bones and give rise to camphor.
The three suchness channels
Are located in the secret place and give rise to bliss.
- 2.30 “There are seventy-two thousand houses.
Each house has a hundred thousand further houses.
The types of worms²³ present in those houses
Are seventy-two thousand and their number
Should likewise be understood as multiplied by a hundred thousand.
- 2.31 “It is taught that in the inner and secret channels
The types of worms also correspond in number.
Within the three suchness channels
Are nine worms that give rise to desire.

- With the triad of day, night, and twilight,
These should be understood by the adept as nine.
- 2.32 “The camphor located in those channels
Is the ambrosia emergent from union.
Ambrosia and so forth has already been explained.
- 2.33 “Imagine that *yam* becomes a maṇḍala of wind,
And *ram* becomes a maṇḍala of fire.
On top of this is the syllable *a*, which becomes a skull cup.
Then *pam* becomes an eight-petaled lotus.
- 2.34 Imagine a moon disk inside of that.
Arrange the fleshes and so forth on it.
Conceived as four finger-widths, or a full thumb-length, above the central
deity,
One should visualize the syllables in reverse order,
- 2.35 “Blue, red, and white.
Imagine a *hūm* becoming a vajra.
Above, visualize the syllable *man*,
Resting on a sun disk.
This is the *union of ambrosia*.
- 2.36 “The five fleshes transform into the five seats.
The hooks transform into the five ambrosias.
The karmic winds fan the flames,
Which melts the moon, the central deity, and so forth—
This is *ordinary ambrosia*.
- 2.37 “The three letters and the sun melt—
This is called *divine ambrosia*.
That which is summoned by light rays
I have taught to be *wisdom ambrosia*.
- 2.38 “Circumambulating three times enlightened body, speech, and mind
Is the *practice of blessing*.
Tasting and offering the ambrosia
Is taught to be the *practice of offering*.
- 2.39 “Then comes the *practice of play*, [F.192.b]
Which should be understood to mean the right and left.
Next, in the *practice of melting*,
The equalizing wind and the fire of inner heat

Transform the subtle body into the essence of the four wisdoms.

- 2.40 “One part, Akṣobhya and Vairocana,
Is the flesh-eating ḍākinī, equanimity.
One part is concerted activity,
Which the worms, the action ḍākinīs, offer.
One part, wind and bile,
And through bile, phlegm, and so forth,
Should be learned from a master’s oral instructions.
- 2.41 “The gnosis ḍākinī—the channels—
Offers discriminating gnosis.
One part, the lack of nature,
With mirror-like gnosis,
The vajra ḍākinī offers.
- 2.42 “Winds are the vajra ḍākinī, and
Channels are the gnosis ḍākinī.
Camphor is the flesh-eating ḍākinī, and
Worms are the action ḍākinī.
- 2.43 “Furthermore, all the particulars of the ḍākinīs
That dwell in the channels and elsewhere
Should be understood in the proper order.
- 2.44 “Enlightened body is the action ḍākinī.
Enlightened speech is the flesh-eating ḍākinī.
Enlightened mind is the gnosis ḍākinī.
Great bliss is the vajra ḍākinī.
- 2.45 “Furthermore, the particulars of the ḍākinīs
Should be understood with respect to the central chakra.
- 2.46 “Joy is the action ḍākinī, and
Supreme joy is the flesh-eating ḍākinī.
Natural joy is the gnosis ḍākinī.
Great bliss is the vajra ḍākinī.
- 2.47 “The ḍāka is the moon disk,
And the ḍākinī is the sun.
The caṇḍalī, twenty-four,
Are ascertained as the four chakras that conceal them.
- 2.48 “The great bliss chakra is absorbed within the enjoyment chakra.
The enjoyment chakra is absorbed within the dharma chakra.

- As for the sequence of absorption above,
Everything fuses into a seminal drop.
- 2.49 “This is like how a single sun
Shines throughout the ten directions,
Yet its profusion of rays is fused with it.
It is also like the parasol of a universal monarch,
Which is an assembly of wooden machinery.
- 2.50 “Moreover, once absorbed into the dharma chakra at the heart, [F.193.a]
In the center of the sun and moon disk, the size of a chickpea,
Is a seminal drop, the size of a mustard seed.
Around this, on the left and right,
Is a mantra garland as fine as a strand of hair.
The vowels and consonants enwrap the drop like a snake.
- 2.51 “All that is the *practice of the seminal drop*.
Once the mind has become stable in this,
One may meditate on the *subtle practice*.
- 2.52 “Imagine that the moon dissolves into the letters,
The letters dissolve into the sun,
And then the sun dissolves into the *u* vowel diacritic.
The *u* vowel diacritic and the rest then gradually dissolve.
- 2.53 “The five limbs are the five gnoses.
That is the subtle practice.
Then, with one’s mind on the subtle *nāda*,
One is to meditate in stages.
- 2.54 “Then comes self-aware gnosis,
In which all phenomena, being empty, are of one taste.
- 2.55 “Moreover, the way in which
The dharma chakra and the emanation chakra
Drip and blaze
Should be learned from a master’s oral instructions.
- 2.56 “External concepts are exertion.
Internal concepts are the wind of vitality.
At the central channel where both vitality and exertion are constricted,
Above the nose-tip of the relative,
At a distance of four finger-widths, the three channels converge.

2.57 “Since this is the location where the breath is constricted,
Initially, one should hold it there.
Then, hold it in the place of emanation.
Alternatively, one should understand how to count it.”

3. THE THIRD SECRET

- 3.1 “Next is the third secret.
It is explained as the basic character of joy
In connection with the wisdom-gnosis initiation.
- 3.2 “The anus quivers and the body hairs rise.
Twelve nonobservations of the basic character of joy
Is taught to be its nature.
- 3.3 “With the circulation of the spirit of enlightenment, one reflects on
nonconceptuality.
Twenty-five nonobservations of supreme joy
Completely fills the secret gem.
- 3.4 “The nonobservation of innate joy
Is taught to be the dharma body.
The interruption of the flow of bliss is the joy of cessation;
Its nonobservation is the two form buddha bodies.
- 3.5 “Moreover, all the preliminaries,
The subsidiary techniques, and actual union,
Along with their intention, are in stages.
- 3.6 “Despite multiply radiating like a cluster of stars, [F.193.b]
They coalesce like the sun and moon.
Despite coalescing like the sun and moon,
They are nondual like an eclipse.”
- 3.7 Vajragarbha then asked:

“What is *a cluster of stars*?
What is *coalescence*?
What is *nonduality*?”

- 3.8 The Blessed One replied:
“The thirty-seven factors of enlightenment
Are radiated as the features of the cause.
The three buddha bodies and the five gnoses
Are radiated as the features of the fruition.
- 3.9 “The causes are absorbed within seven,
And the fruitions are absorbed within three.
The causes dissolve into the fruitions, and
The fruition should be meditated upon as twofold.
- 3.10 “All phenomena are the essence of mind.
Mind is of an empty nature.
All is of one taste in being empty.
This is the expanse devoid of accepting and rejecting.
- 3.11 “In order to fully purify desire,
Desire rooted in the five seals of enlightened body—
The pair of the great seal and the gnosis seal,
Along with the samaya seal, the dharma seal, and the action seal—
Becomes exceedingly profound.
- 3.12 “This is great bliss, which is threefold—
The natures of development and completion,
And the chakra of great bliss.
The first abides as the letter *e* at the secret nose-tip.
- 3.13 “The second, which fills the emanation chakra,
The awareness chakra, and the rest,
Abides in the Secret Guardian of Bliss.
- 3.14 “The natural chakra of great bliss
Is replete with the flavor of²⁴ great bliss,
Just as a sesame seed is with sesame butter.
- 3.15 “Like sap dripping
From a cut tree branch,
From that great bliss itself comes the
Form of hundreds, thousands,
Tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of tips of hair.
- 3.16 “First comes a cloudy form;
The second resembles smoke.
Third is the form of lightning;

- The fourth resembles a butter lamp.
The sequence of all these, moreover,
Occurs according to the order of the emanation chakra and the rest.
- 3.17 “The emergence of the form of clouds
Is the sign for birth, the syllable *a*.
That which resembles a butter lamp
Is taught to be the sign of *ham*, for²⁵ death.
- 3.18 “The fifth, which resembles space,
Should be understood as the empty sign
For the intermediate state, non-duality.
Moreover, [F.194.a] vibrating and so forth
Should be learned from a master’s oral instructions.
- 3.19 “Next, concerning the third secret,
The characteristics of the four joys
In connection with the wisdom-gnosis initiation are as follows:
The anus quivering, body hairs rising,
And the body vibrating are the essence of joy.
- 3.20 “Reflecting on the bliss of the spirit of enlightenment circulating
From the base of the secret vajra
Is the essence of supreme joy.
- 3.21 “Reflecting on vajra and lotus stoppered
Is the essence of innate joy.
Reflecting on the bliss of having the continuity of bliss interrupted
Is the essence of the joy of cessation.
- 3.22 “Moreover, the characteristics of all these,
Such as the factor of the spirit of enlightenment, and so forth,
Should be understood in terms of what was taught above.
- 3.23 “Joy is called *luminance*;
Supreme joy is *radiance*.
Extreme joy is *imminence*.
Innate joy is *clear light*.
- 3.24 “The natures of the four gnoses
Are the antidotes that destroy the four demons.
The coarse level is secretly destroyed by four.
The four subtle demons are naturally
Destroyed in the four chakras.

- 3.25 “The four joys based on the chakras
Themselves appear as the four gnosés,
And therefore destroy the four demons.
- 3.26 “The three poisons based on desire
Are the demon of afflictions,
Involving twelve attributes of desire.
The Secret Guardian of Bliss destroys the afflictions.
- 3.27 “Color and shape are the demon of the aggregates.
The Hayagrīva chakra destroys the aggregates.
The four concealed things are the demon of the gods.
The chakra of awareness destroys the demon of the gods.
- 3.28 “As for death, along with birth,
The secret of their nonorigination destroys the lord of death.
The destruction of the subtle demons is similar.
- 3.29 “Concerning the four moments and the four sections;
The four auspiciousnesses and the four truths;
The four elements and the four mothers;
The four pure stations, and so forth—
Apart from the four gnosés themselves
There is nothing higher to be found. [F.194.b]
- 3.30 “It is due to the particularities of concepts
And, furthermore, the particularities of inclinations
And the particularities of various religious systems
That such a plethora has been taught.
- 3.31 “A practitioner who has traversed the three initiations
Is taught to be a great, fully ordained monk.
For it is taught that he²⁶ will accomplish all.”
- 3.32 Vajragarbha then asked:

“What is such a triple-initiation fully ordained monk like?
What are his activities?”
- 3.33 The Blessed One replied:

“Fully ordained monks, and so forth, are threefold:
Prātimokṣa, bodhisattva,
And knowledge-holder fully ordained monks.

- 3.34 “According to the sequence of possessing
One, four, ten, or two hundred and fifty vows,
Temporary lay-vow holders, permanent lay-vow holders, novice monks,
And fully ordained monks, respectively, are those of prātimokṣa.
- 3.35 “Those of generosity, great generosity,
Extreme generosity, and complete generosity
Are bodhisattva temporary lay-vow holders, permanent lay-vow holders,
Novice monks, and fully ordained monks, respectively.
- 3.36 “Those who adhere to virtue
Upon having entered the maṇḍala
Are adherents of virtue, temporary lay-vow holders.
With seven, they are great.
- 3.37 “Concerning the particular three great ones,
By being in service to the virtue of the vase initiation,
One is in the service of virtue, a permanent lay-vow holder.
Therefore, with seven, they are great.
- 3.38 “One who is in accordance with the virtue of the secret initiation
Is in harmony with virtue, a novice.
With seven, they become great.
- 3.39 “By upholding that very virtue of wisdom-gnosis,
One is an upholder of virtue, a fully ordained monk.
With seven, they are great.
- 3.40 “These particular three great ones
Are also the three non-returners,
In that reverting back to karmic maturation, cyclic existence, and the lower
vehicle—
The three abandonments—are renounced by the three vehicles, respectively,
And those of the knowledge-holder vehicle adhere to the fruition.
- 3.41 “A practitioner who adheres to this fruition
Should dwell in the apparel
Of a householder, or a vajra-holder,
And confer initiations, consecrations, and so forth.
- 3.42 “I have not taught that one should perform secret conduct [F.195.a]
In the apparel of all three vehicles.
For example, copper is wrought from stone.
Based on copper, one can enjoy the appearance of gold.

When there is copper, there is no stone.
By becoming golden, stone no longer appears.

- 3.43 “The Buddha has not taught that
A knowledge-holder fully ordained monk
Should embody both
Prātimokṣa and bodhisattva vows.”

4.

THE FOURTH SECRET

4.1

“Next is the fourth secret,
Related to the fourth initiation.
Here one should meditate, having overcome
This perpetually shifting mind itself,
As well as its attendant objects of meditation—
The forms and so forth that it latches onto.

4.2

“Having fully relinquished all reference points
Of apprehended objects and apprehending subjects,
Since the nature of mind is inconceivable,
One should not think of anything whatsoever.

4.3

“When the nature of mind is submerged within the empty,
And the empty is well submerged within the mind,
Concepts of empty, not empty, and so forth
Are destroyed, leaving the mind like the sky.

4.4

“There does not exist a support, there is nothing supported.
Even the matchless state does not exist.
The perfected presence of precisely that
Is innate nondual awareness.”

5. THE FINAL TEACHING

5.1 Next, the Blessed One spoke on resolving:²⁷

“Having meditated authentically on the great seal,
Without understanding that the wrathful dances
And the seals are merely an illusory display,
One will be born as a haughty spirit—
One of the kings of the eight charnel grounds—
Devoid of compassion, an eater of flesh and blood.

5.2 “If one enters the outer, inner, concealed,
And ultimate maṇḍalas and obtains initiation,
One must meditate, recite, and so forth,
Lest one might obstruct and denigrate the secret mantra.

5.3 “Disparaging any spiritual practice,
Ridiculing²⁸ vajra siblings, disciples²⁹ with shared tantric commitments,
Breaking the root and branch samaya vows,
Cursing the lama—by the fruition of these
One will be born as a hell-being in Endless Torment.

5.4 “I have explained that not to understand
The significance of the channel-chakras
Of profound interdependent origination [F.195.b]
Is to straddle a blade sixteen finger-widths long.

5.5 “If one does not understand the hidden secret,
Through the threefold nonobservation of the concealed
One will be born below as a hell being.
As the wheel of a cart revolves,
So will one revolve due to the maturation of karma.

- 5.6 “Through knowing it, the very meaning of the view—one’s own self-awareness;
Self-awareness, whatever bliss is desired;
Self-awareness, whatever illusory display is desired;
Self-awareness, like a crystal orb;
Basic space and gnosis, and so forth—
Is thus resolved.
- 5.7 “The meaning of tantra is threefold.
The chakra of great bliss is the causal tantra;
The secret nose-tip is the means tantra;
The Secret Guardian of Bliss is the fruitional tantra.
- 5.8 “The vase is taught to be the causal tantra;
The secret is the means tantra;
The wisdom-gnosis is the fruitional tantra.
- 5.9 “Birth is taught to be the causal tantra.
Death is taught to be the means tantra.
The intermediate state is the fruitional tantra.
- 5.10 “ ‘Tantra’ means *continuum*;
Its king, which teaches secrets,
Has taught secrets as fourfold.
- 5.11 “The vase initiation is secret for beginners.
At the time of the vase initiation, the secret initiation is secret.
Wisdom-gnosis is secret in the secret initiation.
Self-awareness is secret in the wisdom-gnosis initiation.
The secret chakra is the fourth secret.”
- 5.12 Then, the bodhisattva Vajragarbha and an assembly of ḍākinīs equal in number to the atoms in Mount Meru circumambulated the Blessed One three times and disappeared.
- 5.13 *This concludes “The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves All Secrets.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated by the paṇḍita Gayādhara and the translator bhikṣu Śākya Yeshe.

ab.

ABBREVIATIONS

- C* Choné Kangyur
- D* Degé Kangyur
- J* Lithang Kangyur
- K* Kangxi Peking Kangyur
- S* Stok Palace Kangyur
- U* Urga Kangyur
- Y* Yongle Peking Kangyur

n.

NOTES

- n.1 It should be noted that despite traditional claims there is considerable internal textual evidence that this and many other works attributed to the pair of Gayādhara and Drokmi are not exactly translations based on Indian prototypes, but “gray texts,” that is, texts that were never completely Indian or Tibetan, but originated from the inspired collaborations of Tibetan and Indian translators and scholars. For more on the notion of “gray texts,” see Davidson (2000), pp. 202–24.
- n.2 The textual record is inconsistent with regard to Drokmi’s precise birth and death dates. In the BDRC database of persons, his birth year is given as 992/993 and his death as 1043?/1072?. Very little information appears to exist with regard to Gayādhara’s precise dates.
- n.3 Gö Lotsāwa Zhönupal (translation), p. 207.
- n.4 For more on the Tibetan classification schemes for Indian tantric literature translated between the tenth through the twelfth centuries see Gibson (1997), Snellgrove (1988), and, more recently, Dalton (2005).
- n.5 New translation schools usually cite the *Guhyasamājatantra* as the paradigmatic example of the Father class of tantras.
- n.6 The *Kālacakratantra* is most often cited as the paradigmatic Nondual tantra, although the nature and boundaries of this category has been a controversial topic among Tibetan exegetes.
- n.7 Gray (2007, p. 5, n. 10) states that the category “unexcelled yoga tantra” (*rnal ’byor bla med kyi rgyud*), which translates “anuttarayoga-tantra,” is attested in Tibetan translations of Indian Buddhist tantric literature like the *Vajrapañjara* and its commentaries. However, Christian Wedemeyer in a personal

correspondence has mentioned that “annuttarayoga-tantra” never appears in the Sanskrit literature, only “yoganiruttara.”

- n.8 *rgyud 'bum*.
- n.9 Longchenpa, F.479. It should be noted, however, that owing to his affiliation with the Old School (*rnying ma*) of secret mantra, Longchenpa groups these texts together under the rubric of “Great Yoga tantra” (Skt. *Mahāyoga*, Tib. *rnal 'byor chen po*) rather than that of Unexcelled Yoga tantra. This is because Old School adherents claim that the tantras otherwise known as “Unexcelled Yoga” are surpassed in efficacy and profundity by the dispensation of the Great Perfection.
- n.10 These dates are advanced by Isaacson (1998).
- n.11 Alexis Sanderson’s work has been particularly focused on the fluidity between Buddhist and Śaiva tantric textual traditions. Sanderson argues that it was the Buddhists who borrowed language and imagery from Śaiva traditions. For a strong counterargument to Sanderson’s claims, see Davidson (2002), pp. 203–6.
- n.12 Davidson (2005).
- n.13 Gö Lotsāwa Zhönupal (translation), pp. 205–9.
- n.14 The exceptions are two translated by Drokmi with Ratnavajra (Toh 383 and 389), and six translated by Drokmi with Yoginī Candramāla (Toh 392–394, 396, 403, and 405).
- n.15 See Butön, F.178.b. He also mentions that they were translated from Indian originals, and that it is not true that they were composed in Tibet—a reference to continuing controversies over their authenticity as canonical texts (see [n.1](#)). Editors of the different Kangyurs mostly followed his opinion and included them, but their disputed status led to all except the last, Toh 414, being excluded from the Narthang Kangyur (and hence, later still, from the Lhasa Kangyur).
- n.16 See [bibliography](#) for details.
- n.17 Harrison and Eimer (1997).
- n.18 Y, S *gis* (instrumental/agentive particle); C, D, J, K, U *gi* (genitive particle).
- n.19 K, Y *gyi* (genitive particle); C, D, J, U *gyis* (instrumental/agentive particle).
- n.20 K, Y, S *rin* (“gem”); C, D, J, U *tshon* (“color”).

- n.21 *S lugs* (“bronze cast statue”); C, D, J, K, Y, U *gzugs* (“form”). In his review of this translation, a referee preferred this reading, stating that it refers to the “lost wax” technique of casting bronze statues.
- n.22 C, K, Y, S /*khor lo bzhi yi dbye ba yis*/ /*nyin thun bzhi ru gsungs pa yin*/ (“Due to the divisions of the four chakras / Daily sessions are taught as four”). D, J, U /*khor lo bzhi yi dbye ba yis*/ /*nyin thun bzhi yi dbye ba yi*/ /*nyin mtshan bzhi ru gsungs pa yin*/ (“Due to the divisions of the four chakras / Daily sessions are taught as four / In the divisions of the four periods of the day”). We have made this selection out of consideration for the four-line stanza structure that predominates in this text.
- n.23 *srin bu*.
- n.24 K, Y, S *po'i* (genitive particle); C, D, J, U *pos* (instrumental/agentive particle).
- n.25 K, Y, S *yi* (genitive particle); C, D, J, U *yis* (instrumental/agentive particle).
- n.26 K, Y, S *yis* (instrumental/agentive particle); C, D, J, U *yi* (genitive particle).
- n.27 K, Y, S *gcod* (“resolving”). C, D, J, U *spyod* (“conduct”). This selection is based on the logic of the text, which is structured according to the title and the opening questions.
- n.28 S *'phyā* (“to ridicule, insult”). C *'byar* (?). D, J, U *'phyar* (“to lift”). K *phyir* (“in order,” “for the sake of,” “because of”). Y *phyar* (“to lift”).
- n.29 S *ma* (final syllable in “disciple”). C, D, J, K, Y, U *la* (locative/object particle).

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for names and terms of the corresponding ·
source language

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where the relationship between the Tibetan and source language is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

g.1 accomplishment

dngos grub

དངོས་གྲུབ།

siddhi

g.2 action seal

las kyi phyag rgya

ལས་ཀྱི་ཕྱག་རྒྱ།

karmamudrā

g.3 adornment

rgyan

རྒྱན།

ābharāṇa · vibhūṣaṇa · maṇḍana

g.4 affliction

nyon mongs pa

ཉོན་མོངས་པ།

kleśa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The essentially pure nature of mind is obscured and afflicted by various psychological defilements, which destroy the mind’s peace and composure and lead to unwholesome deeds of body, speech, and mind, acting as causes for continued existence in saṃsāra. Included among them are the primary afflictions of desire (*rāga*), anger (*dveṣa*), and ignorance (*avidyā*). It is said that there are eighty-four thousand of these negative mental qualities, for which the eighty-four thousand categories of the Buddha’s teachings serve as the antidote.

Kleśa is also commonly translated as “negative emotions,” “disturbing emotions,” and so on. The Pāli *kilesa*, Middle Indic *kileśa*, and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit *kleśa* all primarily mean “stain” or “defilement.” The translation “affliction” is a secondary development that derives from the more general (non-Buddhist) classical understanding of $\sqrt{\text{kliś}}$ (“to harm,” “to afflict”). Both meanings are noted by Buddhist commentators.

g.5 Akṣobhya

mi bskyod pa

མི་བསྐྱོད་པ།

akṣobhya

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Lit. “Not Disturbed” or “Immovable One.” The buddha in the eastern realm of Abhirati. A well-known buddha in Mahāyāna, regarded in the higher tantras as the head of one of the five buddha families, the vajra family in the east.

g.6 ambrosia

bdud rtsi

བདུད་རྩི།

amṛta

g.7 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

amitābha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The buddha of the western buddhafiield of Sukhāvātī, where fortunate beings are reborn to make further progress toward spiritual maturity.

Amitābha made his great vows to create such a realm when he was a bodhisattva called Dharmākara. In the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, popular in East Asia, aspiring to be reborn in his buddha realm is the main emphasis; in other Mahāyāna traditions, too, it is a widespread practice. For a detailed description of the realm, see *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī*, Toh 115. In some tantras that make reference to the five families he is the tathāgata associated with the the lotus family.

Amitābha, “Infinite Light,” is also known in many Indian Buddhist works as Amitāyus, “Infinite Life.” In both East Asian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions he is often conflated with another buddha named “Infinite Life,”

Aparimitāyus, or “Infinite Life and Wisdom,” Aparimitāyurjñāna, the shorter version of whose name has also been back-translated from Tibetan into Sanskrit as Amitāyus but who presides over a realm in the zenith. For details on the relation between these buddhas and their names, see *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) Toh 674, i.9.

g.8 Amoghasiddhi

don grub

དོན་གུབ།

amoghasiddhi

g.9 apprehended

gzung ba

གཟུང་བ།

grāhya

g.10 apprehending

'dzin pa

འཇིན་པ།

grah

g.11 awareness

rig pa

རིག་པ།

saṃvedana

g.12 blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root √*bhañj* (“to break”).

g.13 Brahma confluence

tshangs mdo

ཚེངས་མདོ།

—

g.14 buddha

sangs rgyas

སངས་རྒྱས།

buddha

g.15 Butön

bu ston rin chen grub

བྱ་སྟོན་རིན་ཆེན་གྲུབ།

—

g.16 central deity

gtso bo

གཙོ་བོ།

maṇḍaleśa

g.17 chakra

'khor lo

འཁོར་ལོ།

cakra

Also rendered in this sūtra as “wheel.”

g.18 channels

rtsa

རྩ།

nādī

g.19 completion stage

rdzogs rim

རྫོགས་རིམ།

sampannakrama

g.20 consciousness

rnam shes

རྣམ་ཤེས།

vijñāna · jñāna

g.21 cyclic existence

'khor ba

འཁོར་བ།

saṃsāra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A state of involuntary existence conditioned by afflicted mental states and the imprint of past actions, characterized by suffering in a cycle of life, death, and rebirth. On its reversal, the contrasting state of nirvāṇa is attained, free

from suffering and the processes of rebirth.

g.22 *ḍākinī*

mkha' 'gro ma

མཁའ་འགྲོ་མ།

ḍākinī

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of powerful nonhuman female beings who play a variety of roles in Indic literature in general and Buddhist literature specifically. Essentially synonymous with yoginīs, ḍākinīs are liminal and often dangerous beings who can be propitiated to acquire both mundane and transcendent spiritual accomplishments. In the higher Buddhist tantras, ḍākinīs are often considered embodiments of awakening and feature prominently in tantric maṇḍalas.

g.23 demon

bdud

བདུད།

māra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Māra, literally “death” or “maker of death,” is the name of the deva who tried to prevent the Buddha from achieving awakening, the name given to the class of beings he leads, and also an impersonal term for the destructive forces that keep beings imprisoned in saṃsāra:

(1) As a deva, Māra is said to be the principal deity in the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations (*paranirmitavaśavartin*), the highest paradise in the desire realm. He famously attempted to prevent the Buddha’s awakening under the Bodhi tree—see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 21.1—and later sought many times to thwart the Buddha’s activity. In the sūtras, he often also creates obstacles to the progress of śrāvakas and bodhisattvas. (2) The devas ruled over by Māra are collectively called *mārakāyika* or *mārakāyikadevatā*, the “deities of Māra’s family or class.” In general, these māras too do not wish any being to escape from saṃsāra, but can also change their ways and even end up developing faith in the Buddha, as exemplified by Sārthavāha; see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 21.14 and 21.43. (3) The term māra can also be understood as personifying four defects that prevent awakening, called (i) the divine māra (*devaputramāra*), which is the distraction of pleasures; (ii) the māra of Death (*mṛtyumāra*), which is having one’s life interrupted; (iii) the

māra of the aggregates (*skandhamāra*), which is identifying with the five aggregates; and (iv) the māra of the afflictions (*kleśamāra*), which is being under the sway of the negative emotions of desire, hatred, and ignorance.

g.24 development stage

bskyed rim

བསྐྱེད་རིམ།

utpattikrama

g.25 dharma body

chos sku

ཚོས་སྐུ།

dharmakāya

g.26 disk

dkyil 'khor

དཀྱིལ་འཁོར།

maṇḍala

Also rendered in this sūtra as “maṇḍala.”

g.27 Drokmi

'brog mi shAkya ye shes

འབྲོག་མི་ཤུག་ཡེ་ཤེས།

—

Drokmi Śākya Yeshé, the great eleventh century translator from Lhatsé in Western Tsang.

g.28 eight great charnel grounds

dur khrod chen po brgyad

དུར་ཁྲོད་ཆེན་པོ་བརྒྱད།

aṣṭa mahāśmaśānāni

g.29 emanation body

sprul pa'i sku

སྐྱུལ་པའི་སྐུ།

nirmāṇakāya

g.30 Endless Torment

mnar med

མནའ་མེད།

avīci

g.31 enjoyment body

longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku

ལོངས་སྤྱོད་རྫོགས་པའི་སྐུ།

saṃbhogakāya

g.32 enlightened body, speech, and mind

sku gsung thugs

སྐུ་གསུང་ཐུགས།

kāyavākcitta

g.33 Equipoise

mnyam bzhag

མཉམ་བཞག།

samāhita

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A state of deep concentration in which the mind is absorbed in its object to such a degree that conceptual thought is suspended. It is sometimes interpreted as settling (*āhita*) the mind in equanimity (*sama*).

g.34 factors of enlightenment

byang chub kyi yan lag

བྱང་ལྔའུ་གྱི་ཡན་ལམ།

bodhyaṅga

g.35 fruition

'bras bu

འབྲས་བུ།

phalatva · phalatā

g.36 Gayādhara

ga ya dha ra

ག་ཡ་རྣ་ར།

gayādhara

- g.37 gnosis
ye shes
ཡེ་ཤེས།
jñāna
- g.38 great seal
phyag rgya chen po
ཕྱག་རྒྱ་ཚེན་པོ།
mahāmudrā
- g.39 Hayagrīva
rta mgrin
རྩ་མགྲིན།
hayagrīva
- g.40 Heruka
he ru ka
ཧེ་རུ་ཀ།
heruka
- g.41 initiation
dbang
དབང།
abhiṣeka
- g.42 innate
lhan skyes
ལྷན་སྐྱེས།
sahaja
- g.43 inner heat
gtum mo
གཏུམ་མོ།
caṇḍālī
- g.44 Interdependent origination
rten cing 'brel ba

ཐྱིན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་བ།

pratītyasamutpāda

g.45 joy

dga' ba

དགའ་བ།

tuṣṭi · nandana

g.46 knowledge-holder

rig pa 'dzin pa

རིག་པ་འཛིན་པ།

vidyādhara

g.47 listener

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Sanskrit term *śrāvaka*, and the Tibetan *nyan thos*, both derived from the verb “to hear,” are usually defined as “those who *hear* the teaching from the Buddha and *make it heard* to others.” Primarily this refers to those disciples of the Buddha who aspire to attain the state of an arhat by seeking self-liberation and nirvāṇa. They are the practitioners of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma on the four noble truths, who realize the suffering inherent in saṃsāra and focus on understanding that there is no independent self. By conquering afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), they liberate themselves, attaining first the stage of stream enterers at the path of seeing, followed by the stage of once-returners who will be reborn only one more time, and then the stage of non-returners who will no longer be reborn into the desire realm. The final goal is to become an arhat. These four stages are also known as the “four results of spiritual practice.”

g.48 major and minor marks

mtshan dpe

མཚན་དཔེ།

lakṣaṇavyañjanāni

g.49 maṇḍala

dkyil 'khor

དཀྱིལ་འཁོར།

maṇḍala

Also rendered in this sūtra as “disk.”

g.50 **mantra**

sngags

མཚན་མོ།

mantra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A formula of words or syllables that are recited aloud or mentally in order to bring about a magical or soteriological effect or result. The term has been etymologized to mean “that which protects (*trā*) the mind (*man*)”.

g.51 **mantra garland**

sngags phreng

མཚན་མོ་ཐྱེང་།

mantramālā · mantrāvālī

g.52 **mental activity**

spros pa

སྤྲོས་པ།

prapañca

g.53 **Mount Meru**

ri rab

རི་རབ།

sumeru

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to ancient Buddhist cosmology, this is the great mountain forming the axis of the universe. At its summit is Sudarśana, home of Śakra and his thirty-two gods, and on its flanks live the asuras. The mount has four sides facing the cardinal directions, each of which is made of a different precious stone. Surrounding it are several mountain ranges and the great ocean where the four principal island continents lie: in the south, Jambudvīpa (our world); in the west, Godānīya; in the north, Uttarakuru; and in the east, Pūrvavideha. Above it are the abodes of the desire realm gods. It is variously referred to as Meru, Mount Meru, Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru.

g.54 **nature**

rang bzhin

རང་བཞིན།

prakṛti · svabhāva

g.55 nonobservations

mi dmigs pa

མི་དམིགས་པ།

anupalabdhi

g.56 obstructing forces

bgegs

བགེགས།

vighna

g.57 Pāṇḍaravāsini

gos dkar mo

གོས་དཀར་མོ།

pāṇḍaravāsini

g.58 prātimokṣa

so sor thar pa

སོ་སོར་ཐར་པ།

prātimokṣa

“Prātimokṣa” is the name given to the code of conduct binding on monks and nuns. The term can be used to refer both to the disciplinary rules themselves and to the texts from the Vinaya that contain them.

g.59 Ratnasambhava

rin chen 'byung gnas

རིན་ཆེན་འབྱུང་གནས།

ratnasambhava

g.60 relative

kun rdzob

ཀུན་རྫོབ།

saṃvṛti

g.61 Rudra

ru dra

འཇམ་མཉམས་

rudra

g.62 samaya vows

dam tshig

དམ་ཚིག་

samaya

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Literally, in Sanskrit, “coming together.” *Samaya* refers to precepts given by the teacher, the corresponding commitment by the pupil, and the bond that results, which can also be the bond between the practitioner and the deity or a spirit. It can also mean a special juncture or circumstance, or an ordinary time or season.

g.63 seal

phyag rgya

ཕྱག་རྒྱ།

mudrā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A seal, in both the literal and metaphoric sense. *Mudrā* is also the name given to an array of symbolic hand gestures, which range from the gesture of touching the earth displayed by the Buddha upon attaining awakening to the numerous gestures used in tantric rituals to symbolize offerings, consecrations, etc. Iconographically, *mudrās* are used as a way of communicating an action performed by the deity or a specific aspect a deity or buddha is displaying, in which case the same figure can be depicted using different hand gestures to signify that they are either meditating, teaching, granting freedom from fear, etc. In Tantric texts, the term is also used to designate the female spiritual consort in her various aspects.

g.64 Secret Guardian of Bliss

gsang ba bde skyong

གསང་བ་བདེ་སྐྱོད།

—

g.65 self-awareness

rang rig

རང་རིག

svasaṃvedana · svasaṃvedana

g.66 seminal drop

thig le

ཐིག་ལེ།

bindu

g.67 seminal fluid

thig le

ཐིག་ལེ།

bindu

g.68 Śītavana

si hla ling

སི་ལྷ་ལིང་།

śītavana

g.69 solitary realizer

rang rgyal

རང་རྒྱལ།

pratyekabuddha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Literally, “buddha for oneself” or “solitary realizer.” Someone who, in his or her last life, attains awakening entirely through their own contemplation, without relying on a teacher. Unlike the awakening of a fully realized buddha (*samyaksambuddha*), the accomplishment of a pratyekabuddha is not regarded as final or ultimate. They attain realization of the nature of dependent origination, the selflessness of the person, and a partial realization of the selflessness of phenomena, by observing the suchness of all that arises through interdependence. This is the result of progress in previous lives but, unlike a buddha, they do not have the necessary merit, compassion or motivation to teach others. They are named as “rhinoceros-like” (*khadgaviṣāṇakalpa*) for their preference for staying in solitude or as “congregators” (*vargacārin*) when their preference is to stay among peers.

g.70 spirit of enlightenment

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ལྡན་གྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In the general Mahāyāna teachings, bodhicitta, the mind of awakening, is the intention or the strong aspiration to attain awakening for the sake of all sentient beings. Its two aspects on the relative level of truth are famously summarized in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (chapter 1, verses 15, 16):

“Bodhicitta, the awakened mind, is known in brief to have two aspects: First, aspiring, bodhicitta in intention; Then active bodhicitta, practical engagement. These correspond to the wish to go and then actually setting out.” On the level of absolute truth, bodhicitta is the realization of emptiness or the awakened mind itself.

g.71 Spiritual Hero

dpa' bo

དཔའ་འོ།

—

g.72 Subsequent attainment

rjes thob

རྗེས་ཐོབ།

prṣṭhalabdhajñāna

g.73 support

rten

རྟེན།

āśraya · niśraya

g.74 Tārā

sgrol ma

སྐྱོལ་མ།

tārā

g.75 universe and its inhabitants

snod bcud

སྐྱོད་བཅུད།

sthāvarajāṅgama

g.76 Vairocana

rnam snang

རྣམ་སྒྲོན།

vairocana

g.77 vajra

rdo rje

རྡོ་རྗེ།

vajra

—

g.78 Vajra Lady

rdo rje btsun mo

རྡོ་རྗེ་བཙུན་མོ།

—

g.79 Vajragarbha

rdo rje snying po

རྡོ་རྗེ་སྤྱིང་པོ།

vajragarbha

g.80 Vajrasattva

rdo rje sems dpa'

རྡོ་རྗེ་སེམས་དཔལ།

vajrasattoa

g.81 view

lta ba

ལྟ་བུ།

darśana · drṣṭi

g.82 wheel

'khor lo

འཁོར་ལོ།

cakra

Also rendered in this sūtra as “chakra.”

g.83 wind

rlung

རླུང་།

vāta · vāyu · prāṇa

g.84 **wisdom**

shes rab

ཤེས་རབ།

prajñā