

THE GLORIOUS KING OF TANTRAS THAT RESOLVES ALL SECRETS

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The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves All Secrets

Śrīguhyasarvacchindatantrarāja

dpal gsang ba thams cad gcod pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po

Toh. 384, Degé Kangyur (rgyud 'bum, Vol. Ga), folios 187a.2-
195b.7

**Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation
Committee**



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Summary

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.

Acknowledgments

Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee.

The principal translator for this text was James Gentry, who also wrote the introduction. Andreas Doctor later edited the translation and compared it with the original Tibetan.

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Introduction

This translation is based on seven Tibetan-language textual witnesses of a translation from Sanskrit into Tibetan ostensibly executed by the 11th century translation team of the Indian *paṇḍita* Gayādhara and the Tibetan translator Drogmi Śākya Yeshé (*'brog mi shā kya ye shes*). The Sanskrit manuscript(s) upon which tradition claims Gayādhara and Drogmi based their translation has since vanished from the purview of Buddhists and Buddhist scholars.¹ In reliance, then, on the two conjectured dates of Drogmi'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 Drogmi's death.³

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-10th century Tibetan classification schemes⁴ that were formalized by the 14th century in the structure of the Tibetan Kangyurs typically catalogue the translated texts of the Yoginītantra class, which Tibetans called “Mother tantras,” alongside what they called “Father tantras”⁵ and “Non-dual 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 collection”⁸ 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.

The same hierarchical logic is also reflected in the Kangyur’s internal sub-divisions of Highest Yoga tantra itself, where the highest of the high, Non-dual 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 sub-class’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*, 1308–1364) echoes the following popular tantric dictum:

Father tantra primarily teaches generation stage, mother tantra primarily teaches completion stage, and non-dual tantra primarily teaches their integration.⁹

In terms of content, then, Yoginītantras emphasize the apex of those Buddhist tantric methodologies developed on the Indian subcontinent from the 9th through the 12th centuries CE¹⁰ 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.

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.

Yet, alongside the profusion of elements that might reflect a non-monastic 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.

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 10th 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 which 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 which 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.

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 socio-religious figures and themes of this important period in Tibetan history, devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 5: "Drogmi: The Doyen of Central Tibetan Translators:" 161-209) to the life and career of Drokmi, including his relationship with the Indian scholar Gayādhara. I refer the reader to this chapter for a detailed discussion and analysis of Drokmi's and Gayādhara's lives and influence.

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).

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 sub-topics for further discussion. The following outline, which I have extracted in accordance with Vajragarbha's questions, reveals the tantra's thematic flow. Folio numbers correspond to the Degé witness.

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 "generated"? (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-)

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. Wheels, 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 non-duality 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)

This text is present in at least seven of the currently extant Kangyurs—the Cone, Degé, Lithang, Kangxi Peking, Stog Palace, Urga, and Yongle Peking versions¹⁴ (referenced here, following Harrison and Eimer’s suggested *sigla*,¹⁵ 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

[F.187a.2] I pay homage to Glorious Vajrasattva!

Thus have I heard 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 bodhisattva Vajragarbha and others performed three circumambulations counter clockwise, made outer, inner, and secret offerings, and asked the following:

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

The First Secret

The Blessed One said:

“Secret” is four-fold.
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 inhabitants.

Its individual features all have an intended meaning.
Firstly, 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.

Imagine that, like one candle lighting another,
The syllable *hūṃ* at the heart
Projects a black-hued *e*,
Which forms a vast, deep triangle.

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 non-virtues
That emerge from ordinary body, speech, and mind.

The dharma body is immaculate,
And therefore [F.187.b] naturally all-pervading.
This is the significance of vast.

Since even the noble listeners, solitary realizers,
And bodhisattvas as well,
Do not realize the dharma body,
It is explained with intention as deep.

Then, again the *hūṃ* at the heart
Projects a *hūṃ* syllable that forms into a vajra,
Which forms into a vajra tent.

There are two obstacles: first, to life,

And second, to liberation.
These are the two obstructing forces,
The outer and the inner.

The outer creates obstacles to life.
The inner creates obstacles to liberation.
The significance of the vajra tent
Is that it protects from the two-fold obstructions.

Then *yam*, just as before,
Projects a shape, like a half-moon.
It provides control over the abandonment of conceptuality
And the dawn of non-conceptuality.
This is the meaning of domination.

Concerning the significance of the four flags,
I have taught that it signifies all things
Present throughout the three times.

The triangular fire maṇḍala from *ram*
Signifies wrathful ritual.
The three-pronged vajra signifies the three buddha bodies.

The round water disk from *bam*
Is said to be the cessation of mental activity.
The vase is the four aspects of the dharma body.

The square golden earth from *lam*
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.

Symbolizing the absence of conceptuality about an ordinary
universe and inhabitants,
The eight charnel grounds
Should be arranged to left and right in order.

The concepts related to each feature, moreover,
Should be learned from a master's oral instructions.

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 non-
virtues.

The eight *nāgas* are stationed
To destroy the wicked ones
Of attachment, hatred and ignorance.

Rain clouds are arrayed
So that body and speech¹⁶ may act for the welfare of¹⁷ beings,
With divine pride in the two form buddha bodies
Endowed with great compassion. [F.188.a]

Inner and secret are the same.
Likewise, as for the ultimate, the fourth,
One should learn the oral tradition.

Then, inside, the celestial palace appears.
Bhṛuṃ creates an eight-spoked wheel.
The eight spokes stand for the eight consciousnesses.

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.

The five kinds of gems¹⁸ symbolize the five buddha bodies.
The five colors indicate the five families.
The four corners are said to be the four pure abodes.

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.

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, etc.

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.

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.

That completes the supportive maṇḍala
Conjoined with its intended meaning.

Next, the deities are generated
According to the four types of birth.

The miraculous manner is to arise instantaneously,
Like a fish jumping out of water.

Birth from heat and moisture is to arise from conditions,
Like a lotus nurtured by the sun.

Birth from an egg happens through projection and absorption,
Like copper produced from stone.

Birth from a womb occurs from union,
Burned from above and formed from below,
Like a statue created from wax.¹⁹

Vairocana is completed with the palace.
Later, the Heruka is generated.
Conferring initiation is the Blessed One Akṣobhya.
Praise is Ratnasambhava.

Offering is Amoghasiddhi.
Tasting ambrosia is Amitabha. [F.188.b]
The accomplishments that emerge
From these six aspects are extraordinary.

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.

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.

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.

Everything taught above
Should also be understood as four-fold.
Each one, moreover, is four-fold;
The manifold manner is exceedingly profound.

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.

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.

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!

The Blessed One said:

The thirty-seven, the pristine cause,
Gives rise to non-dual gnosis, the effect.
Therefore, the cause, which precedes the effect,
Is to become the principal deity.

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.

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.

“Development” is said to be done
By one who adheres to deity practice.
Multiple aspects, external and internal,
Are explained as its stages.

The particular supportive maṇḍala,
Is said to be of three types—
Without courtyard, without canopy, and with canopy—
According to inclination.

Due to the divisions of the four chakras,
Daily sessions are taught as four.²⁰
Breaks should also be understood to be four.

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.

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.

“View” refers to equipoise;
Subsequent attainment is explained as conduct.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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!

The Blessed One said:

Ambrosia is taught as three-fold.

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.

One should then gather *silha* wood, Akṣobhya, and dry manure.

This should begin on the twelfth and sixteenth days of the month.

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.

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.

Superior, mediocre, and inferior signs—
Blazing, wafting, and bubbling—
Are explained as pertaining to the external signs.

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.

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.

When *silha* and camphor abide in the center, [F.190.a]
The lower sixth circulates.
This is the secret ambrosia,
Which vanquishes grey hair, wrinkles, and death.

The practice of conduct is two-fold:
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.

Beginners have both outer and inner ambrosias,
Whose potencies are also manifold—
It renders them devoid of grey hair and destroys conceptuality.
It consecrates the four maṇḍalas.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Vajragarbha then asked:

What is meant by “the sixth”?
What is a superior person like?
How is desire purified?
Tell me, O Spiritual Hero!

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."

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.

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.

Throughout a year, month, fortnight,
A day, night, and hour,
The sixth emerges for only a moment.
It is not the purview of beginners.

In the same way, a drop of ambrosia
Placed in a vessel of water
Is only experienced as water.
The ambrosia is not experienced.

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.

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.

One who engages in the great seal,
Adhering to a wisdom seal,
Is a superior person.
It is explained that he has seized the sixth.

“Desire” is cyclic existence,
Its purification is taught to be nirvana.

The Second Secret

Next is the second secret.
It is the profound meaning of dependent origination
In connection with the secret initiation.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

An adept should determine all of them
As being inside or outside of the spinal column.

There are also two types of chakra.
First are the chakras themselves; second the channels.
Chakras are also taught as four-fold:
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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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]

Eight, divided into right and left parts
Is concealed in the amount of sixteen.
Eight, with right, left, top, bottom,
Is concealed in the amount of thirty-two.

Eight divided into eight parts, with right, left, top, bottom,
And four intermediate directions,
Is concealed in the amount of sixty-four.
The fire at the Brahma confluence is concealed in fire.

In the dharma chakra at the heart all phenomena are known.
Therefore, awareness is concealed there.

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.

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.

Even though waters, streams, and rivers
Are caused to flow in numerous ways,
In the ocean they become one flavor.

Playing at the navel is the enlightened body of great bliss
Endowed with the liberations and emptinesses,
And likewise the major and minor marks.

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.

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.

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.

Naturally present
Are eight and five characteristics.
The eight are the eight first vowels.
The five are the five first consonants, or
The five suffix endings, the palace of knowledge.

To the right and left of the vowel letter of Hayagrīva

Are two *a* syllables, at the perimeter of which are nine petals.

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.
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.

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.

There are seventy-two thousand houses.
Each house has a hundred thousand further houses.
The types of worms²¹ present in those houses
Are seventy-two thousand and their number
Should likewise be understood as multiplied by a hundred
thousand.

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.

The camphor located in those channels
Is the ambrosia emergent from union.
Ambrosia and so forth has already been explained.

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 *paṃ* becomes an eight-petal lotus.

Imagine a moon disk inside of that.

Arrange the fleshs 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,

Blue, red, and white.

Imagine a *hūṃ* becoming a *vajra*.

Above, visualize the syllable *maṃ*,

Resting on a sun disk.

This is the union of ambrosia.

The five fleshs 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.

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.

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.”

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.

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.

The channels, the gnosis ḍākinī,
Offers discriminating gnosis.
One part, the lack of nature,
With mirror-like gnosis,
The vajra ḍākinī offers.

Winds are the vajra ḍākinī, and
Channels are the gnosis ḍākinī.
Camphor is the flesh-eating ḍākinī, and
Worms are the action ḍākinī.

Furthermore, all the particulars of the ḍākinīs
That dwell in the channels and elsewhere
Should be understood in the proper order.

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.

Furthermore, the particulars of the ḍākinīs
Should be understood with respect to the central chakra.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Moreover, once absorbed into the dharma chakra at the heart,
[F.193.a]
In the center of the sun and moon disc, the size of a chick pea,
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.

Those are the practice of the seminal drop.
Once the mind has become stable in this,
One may meditate on the subtle practice.

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.

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.

Then comes self-aware gnosis,
In which all phenomena, being empty, are of one taste.

Moreover, the way in which
The dharma chakra and the emanation chakra
Drip and blaze
Should be learned from a master's oral instructions.

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.

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.

The Third Secret

Next is the third secret.
It is explained as the basic character of joy
In connection with the wisdom-gnosis initiation.

The anus quivers and the body hairs rise.
Twelve non-observations of the basic character of joy
Is taught to be its nature.

With the circulation of the spirit of enlightenment, one reflects
on non-conceptuality.
Twenty-five non-observations of supreme joy
Completely fills the secret gem.

The non-observation of innate joy
Is taught to be the dharma body.
The interruption of the flow of bliss is the joy of cessation;
Its non-observation is the two form buddha bodies.

Moreover, all the preliminaries,
The subsidiary techniques, and actual union,
Along with their intention, are in stages.

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 non-dual like an eclipse.

Vajragarbha then asked:

What is a cluster of stars?

What is coalescence?

What is non-duality?

The Blessed One said:

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.

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 two-fold.

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.

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.

This is great bliss, which is three-fold—
The natures of development and completion,
And the chakra of great bliss.
The first abides as the letter *e* at the secret nose-tip.

The second, which fills the emanation chakra,
The awareness chakra and the rest,

Abides in the Secret Guardian of Bliss.

The natural chakra of great bliss
Is replete with the flavor of²² great bliss,
Just as a sesame seed is with sesame butter.

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.

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.

The emergence of the form of cloud
Is the sign for birth, the syllable *a*.
That which resembles a butter lamp
Is taught to be the sign of *ham*, for²³ death.

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.

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.

Reflecting on the bliss of the spirit of enlightenment circulating
From the base of the secret vajra
Is the essence of supreme joy.

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.

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.

Joy is called “luminance;”
Supreme joy is radiance.
Extreme joy is imminence.
Innate joy is clear light.

The nature 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.

The four joys based on the chakras
Themselves appear as the four gnoses,
And therefore destroy the four demons.

The three poisons based on desire
Are the demon of afflictions,
Involving twelve attributes of desire.
The Secret Guardian of Bliss destroys the afflictions.

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.

As for death, along with birth,
The secret of their non-origination destroys the lord of death.
The destruction of the subtle demons is similar.

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 gnoses themselves
There is nothing higher to be found. [F.194.b]

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.

A practitioner who has traversed the three initiations
Is taught to be a great, fully ordained monk.
For it is taught that he²⁴ will accomplish all.

Vajragarbha then asked:

What is such a triple-initiation fully ordained monk like?
What are his activities?

The Blessed One said:

Fully ordained monks, and so forth, are three-fold:
Individual liberation, bodhisattva,
And knowledge-holder fully ordained monks.

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 individual liberation.

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.

Those who adhere to virtue
Upon having entered the maṇḍala
Are adherents of virtue, temporary lay-vow holders.
With seven, they are great.

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.

One who is in accordance with the virtue of the secret initiation
Is in harmony with virtue, a novice.
With seven, they become great.

By upholding that very virtue of wisdom-gnosis,
One is an upholder of virtue, a fully ordained monk.
With seven, they are great.

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.

A practitioner who adheres to this fruition
Should dwell in the apparel
Of a house-holder, or a vajra-holder,
And confer initiations, consecrations, and so forth.

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.

The Buddha has not taught that
A knowledge-holder fully ordained monk
Should embody both
Individual liberation and bodhisattva vows.

The Fourth Secret

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.

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.

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.

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 non-dual awareness.

The Final Teaching

Next, the Blessed One spoke on resolving:²⁵

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.

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.

Disparaging any spiritual practice,
Ridiculing²⁶ vajra siblings, disciples²⁷ 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.

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.

If one does not understand the hidden secret,
Through the three-fold non-observation 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.

Through knowing it, the very meaning of the view—ones' 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.

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.

The vase is taught to be the causal tantra;
The secret is the means tantra;
The wisdom-gnosis is the fruitional tantra.

Birth is taught to be the causal tantra.
Death is taught to be the means tantra.
The intermediate state is the fruitional tantra.

“Tantra” means continuum;
Its king, which teaches secrets,
Has taught secrets as four-fold.

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.

Then, bodhisattva Vajragarbha and an assembly of ḍākinīs equal in number to the atoms in Mount Meru circumambulated the Blessed One three times and disappeared.

This concludes The Glorious King of Tantras That Resolves All Secrets. Translated by the paṇḍita Gayādhara and the translator bhikṣu Śākya Yeshe.

Notes

- 1 It should be noted that despite traditional claims there is considerable text internal evidence that this and many other works attributed to the pair of Gayādhara and Drokmi are not exactly translations based on Indian prototypes, but “grey 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 “grey texts,” see Davidson (2000), pp. 202-224.
- 2 The textual record is inconsistent with regard to Drokmi’s precise birth and death dates. Gene Smith’s *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center* records his birth at 992/993 and his death at 1043?/1072?. Very little information appears to exist with regard to Gayādhara’s precise dates.
- 3 Gö lotsāwa Zhönupal (’gos lo tsa ba gzhon nu dpal), p. 207.
- 4 For more on the Tibetan classification schemes for Indian tantric literature translated between the 10th through the 12th centuries see Gibson (1997), Snellgrove (1988), and more recently, Dalton (2005).
- 5 New translation schools usually cite the *Guhyasamājatantra* as the paradigmatic example of the Father class of tantras.
- 6 The *Kālacakratantra* is most often cited as the paradigmatic Non-dual tantra, although the nature and boundaries of this category has been a controversial topic among Tibetan exegetes.
- 7 Gray (2007, p. 5, fn. 10) states that the category “highest yoga tantra,” which translates “anuttarayoga-tantra,” is attested to in Tibetan translations of Indian Buddhist tantric literature like the Vajrapañjara and its commentaries. Moreover, Christian Wedemeyer in a personal correspondence has mentioned that “annuttarayoga-tantra” never appears in the Sanskrit literature, only “yoganiruttara.”
- 8 *rgyud ’bum* .
- 9 *phyogs bcu mun sel* (see bibliography), f. 479. It should be noted, however, that owing to his sectarian affiliation with the Old School (*rnying ma*) of secret mantra, Longchenpa groups these texts together under the rubric of “Great Yoga tantra” (Sanskrit: *Mahāyoga* ; Tibetan: *rnal ’byor chen po*) rather than that of Highest Yoga tantra. This is because Old School adherents claim that the tantras otherwise known as
- 10 These dates are advanced by Isaacson (1998).
- 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. 203-206.

- 12 Davidson (2005).
- 13 Gö lotsāwa Zhönupal (*'gos lo tsa ba gzhon nu dpal*): 205-209.
- 14 [C] rgyud, nga, 4b.5-13b.3. [D. No.] 0384, rgyud, ga 187a.2-195b7. [J] rgyud, nga, 4a.2-12a.2. [K. No.] 0029, rgyud, nga 4a8-13a3. [S] rgyud, kha 450a.4-461a.4. [U] rgyud, ga 187a.2-195b.7. [Y] rgyud, nga, 4a.8-13a.3.
- 15 Harrison and Eimer (1997).
- 16 S.Y. *gis* (instrumental/agentive particle): C.D.J.K.U. *gi* (genitive particle). 540.7 and.8 D.*gyis* .
- 17 K.Y. *gyi* (genitive particle): C.D.J.U. *gyis* (instrumental/agentive particle).
- 18 K.S.Y. *rin* (gem): C.D.J.U. *tshon* (color). 540.13.
- 19 S. *lugs* (bronze cast statue): C.D.J.K.U.Y. *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.
- 20 C.K.S.Y. */'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). I have made this selection out of consideration for the four line stanza structure that predominates in this text.
- 21 *srin bu* .
- 22 K.S.Y. *po'i* (genitive particle): C.D.J.U. *pos* (instrumental/agentive particle).
- 23 K.S.Y. *yi* (genitive particle): C.D.J.U. *yis* (instrumental/agentive particle).
- 24 K.S.Y. *yis* (instrumental/agentive particle): C.D.J.U. *yi* (genitive particle).
- 25 K.S.Y. *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.
- 26 S. *'phyä* (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).
- 27 S. *ma* (final syllable in “disciple”): C.D.J.K.U.Y. *la* (locative/object particle).

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- K: Peking bka' 'gyur, original wood-block print prepared in 1684/1692 under the Kangxi emperor. Rare text collection at Harvard-Yenching Library.

b) Individual Texts

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