དཔལ་ཡེ་ཤེས་གསང་བའི་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

The Glorious King of Tantras “Wisdom Secret”

Śrījñānaguhyatantrarāja

· Toh 392 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 79 (rgyud ’bum, ga), folios 219.a–220.a

For referencing Tibetan sources, please see our Scholar’s Edition

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Summary

s.1 *Wisdom Secret* is one of the thirty-two Rali tantras. It begins with the bodhisattva Vajragarbha requesting an explanation of the true nature (*tattva*) of the four initiations. In response, the Blessed One briefly explains the true nature of the generation stage before delving into a more extensive teaching on the completion stage. This discourse covers the true natures of the channels, winds, and drops as well as *caṇḍālī*, the four joys, and aspects of the subtle body. The Blessed One also describes the dangers of not understanding the eighteen true natures, an enumeration unique to this tantra. The true natures described within this work are shown to be the key point elevating this system of Buddhist tantra over other non-Buddhist and Buddhist schools. Although the Rali tantras are often said to be associated with the Cakraśaṃvara cycle of Yoginī tantras, the content of *Wisdom Secret* demonstrates that it is more closely aligned with the *Hevajra Tantra*.

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ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Lowell Cook produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Ryan Damron edited the translation and the introduction, and Linda Griffin copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

Introduction

i.1 *The Glorious King of Tantras "Wisdom Secret"* is one of the thirty-two Rali tantras (Toh 383–416) in the Degé Kangyur. This body of explanatory tantras, translated by Drokmi Lotsāwa Śākya Yeshé during the eleventh century, is said to be associated with the Cakraśaṃvara cycle of Yoginī tantras.[1] The Rali tantra corpus is divided into four groups—mind, speech, body, and miscellaneous—each comprising eight tantras. As a part of the second set of eight, *Wisdom Secret* is thus classified among the speech tantras. Despite its association with Cakraśaṃvara in the Degé Kangyur, the content of *Wisdom Secret* demonstrates that it is more closely aligned with the *Hevajra Tantra* (Toh 417–418). Like the *Hevajra Tantra*, the primary interlocutor of *Wisdom Secret* is the bodhisattva Vajragarbha, and the text features a discussion of the four initiations and four joys that closely aligns with the *Hevajra Tantra*. The text also incorporates a number of code words that are consistently used within the Hevajra system.

i.2 *Wisdom Secret* is bereft of any narrative introduction (*nidāna*) that would otherwise situate it within a given place and time. Instead, it opens with Vajragarbha's request for an explanation of the true nature of the four initiations. The idea of "true nature" is central to this text and is used to indicate the essential or ultimate correlate of a given feature of the tantric path. This term is employed here in a similar sense to the term *viśuddhi* (*rnam par dag ba*), "pure aspect," which associates a characteristic of the awakened experience with conceptual phenomena.[2] The Blessed One's discourse in *Wisdom Secret* progressively reveals the true natures of various features of the generation and completion stage practices that are the hallmark of Yoginī tantra practice. His treatment of the completion stage elucidates the true natures of the winds, drops, and channels, touching on caṇḍālī, the four joys, and aspects of the subtle body. The text then turns to a description of the downfalls of misunderstanding the eighteen true natures—an enumeration unique to this text—by way of similes, illustrating the dangers inherent in engaging in aspects

of tantric practice without understanding their true nature. The centrality of the true natures to this discourse is further highlighted when Vajragarbha asks the Blessed One what distinguishes one's own system—that is, presumably, Buddhist tantra in general or, more specifically, the Yoginī tantras—over other religious systems. The Blessed One replies that it is these true natures that make this system superior to both other Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools. The tantra's narrative then comes to a close with the same brevity with which it opened.

i.3 The language of *Wisdom Secret* is enigmatic, often necessitating further elaboration and commentary. Indeed, as the tantra itself says, it deals with topics that "should be learned from the words of the guru." Unfortunately, there is no direct commentary on this work found in the Tengyur, nor does it appear to have been widely quoted or referenced in subsequent Buddhist literature. One rare instance where the tantra is quoted occurs in the Third Gungthang Könchok Tenpai Dronmé's (gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, 1762–1823) *A Commentary on "The Profound Methods of the Maṇi Sādhana,"* where he quotes the line "is the two types of breath control—*a* and *haṁ*" in the context of explaining the individual syllables of the *maṇi* mantra.[3] There is a widely cited Atiyoga tantra from the Collected Tantras of the Old School (*rnying ma rgyud 'bum*) that also shares the title *Wisdom Secret* (*ye shes gsang ba*); however, these two works should not be conflated.

i.4 *Wisdom Secret* is one of the six Rali tantras translated by Drokmi Lotsāwa Śākya Yeshé in collaboration with the yoginī Candramāla.[4] While Drokmi's life is widely known and well documented,[5] little is known about Candramāla. She is said to have hailed from Laṅka, modern-day Sri Lanka, and was a teacher of Gayādhara, with whom Drokmi Śākya Yeshé translated many other Rali tantras. In his *A Letter of One Hundred and Eight Profound Instructions*, the Jonang master Künga Drolchok (kun dga' grol mchog, 1507–1566) writes that it was from a yoginī of Laṅka that Gayādhara received the trilogy of Arali tantras (*a ra li skor gsum*).[6] This, undoubtedly, would refer to Candramāla, demonstrat-

ing her connection with the (A)rali tantras. Beyond this, her biography, dates, and activity in Tibet are unknown.

i.5 There is, unfortunately, no extant Sanskrit witness of *Wisdom Secret*. In the catalog to the Degé Kangyur, Situ Paṇchen Chökyi Jungné notes that Butön Rinchen Drup, an earlier compiler of Indian texts in Tibet, initially harbored doubts about the Indian origins of the Rali tantras, only later to determine that the accusations against them as being Tibetan apocrypha were false.[7] In the absence of a Sanskrit witness, our translation was produced based on the edition of the Tibetan translation preserved in the Degé Kangyur. We also consulted the variant readings cited in the Comparative Edition Kangyur (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Manuscript (*stog pho brang bris ma*) Kangyur, though little variance of significance between the versions was found. This tantra is slightly more prevalent in the Tshalpa Kangyurs than in the Thempangma Kangyurs and is notably absent from the Lhasa Zhol and Narthang Kangyurs.

i.6 *Wisdom Secret* was never translated into Chinese. It was translated from Tibetan into Mongolian as part of the larger effort to translate the Kangyur into Mongolian, an undertaking that was completed in 1628–1629 under the patronage of the last Great Mongol Khan, Ligdan Khan (r. 1603–1629).[8] Beyond this, *Wisdom Secret* has not, to the best of our knowledge, been translated into any other languages, nor has it been the subject of any sustained scholarly research.

The Translation

1.

The Glorious King of Tantras

Wisdom Secret

1.1 Homage to Glorious Great Bliss.

1.2 “I pay genuine homage to he who is the essence—
Foremost of the four nāḍī-cakras in one’s own body,
And the thirty-seven factors of awakening.

1.3 “Please teach me the true natures of the four initiations.”

1.4 “Listen, Vajragarbha.[9]
I will first explain the true nature
Of the generation stage deities.

1.5 “Sixty-four are the minor marks.
Thirty-seven are the factors of awakening.
Five is for the five wisdoms.
The sole hero is the dharmadhātu.
The implements and complexion are taught elsewhere.

1.6 “The sizes of the *guhya*[10] vajra and bell
Are said to be that of a grain and a finger joint.
Their true nature is method and insight.
Ultimately, they are indivisible,
For there is no practice nor practitioner,
Nor is there anything attained by practicing.
There is nothing generated by causes and conditions.

1.7 “The five kāyas are in the ground of mind.
There is no one who reveals and nothing to be revealed.
To be beyond all fears and concepts
Is the true nature of the fourth.

1.8 “First, the true nature of the winds
Is the two types of breath control—*a* and *haṁ*.
A is the truth that everything
Is unborn from the beginning.
Haṁ is the absence of apprehended and apprehender.
Exhalation, inhalation, and retention are body, speech, and mind.
The ground of mind, the five kāyas,
Liberation, emptiness, and likewise
The implements, minor marks, and so forth
Are all the true nature of the winds.

1.9 “Next is the true nature of the drops.
The sun and moon are method and insight,
Whereas the mantra garland is the major and minor marks.
The drops are the nature of the five wisdoms,
The true nature of nonduality.
The subtle yoga[11] and so forth can be learned elsewhere.

1.10 “Next, I will clearly explain
The true nature of the lower gates.
The three channels are the essence of body, speech, and mind,
While the five channels are the five wisdoms.

1.11 “Caṇḍālī, inner heat, is twenty-four.
The wisdom of the true nature is twenty-four.
The activity of the dharmakāya is twenty-four.
Union is that of method and insight,

In that dripping and blazing are nondual.
The four cakras are the four kāyas,
Whereas six is for the six true natures.

1.12 “Tārā is the true nature of the winds.
Fire is the essence of Pāṇḍaravāsinī.
Sixteen is for the sixteen types of emptiness,
While four refers to the four wisdoms.

1.13 “The liberations, the types of emptiness, and likewise
The implements, the major and minor marks,
The vidyāmantras, the nine subtle absorptions,
The fifty wisdoms, and so forth are certainly
The true nature of the channel petals.

1.14 “As for the stage of abiding for the channels,
From the twined web of the cakras,
The right and left channels coil like a snake,
While the external right and left channels resemble a bow.[12]

1.15 “As for true nature of the third initiation,
Sihla is insight, the dharmadhātu,
Whereas camphor is method, the four wisdoms,
And the channels are Akaniṣṭha.

1.16 “Joy and supreme joy are the factors of awakening.
Innate joy is the dharmakāya.
The joy of cessation is the two form-kāyas.[13]
Sixteen is for the sixteen types of emptiness.

1.17 “The way of tantra is merely illusory.
Anyone who seeks self-awareness

Should first understand the essence,
And then they will know the true natures.

1.18 “If you do not know the true natures
And practice the profound path,
Your results will be naught; you certainly will be ruined.

1.19 “If you do not understand the true nature of the deity,
You are like a piśāca living in a charnel ground,
And like a piśācī in the charnel grounds.

1.20 “If you do not understand the true nature of the conduct,
You are like a madman living in a city,
And like a dog, a pig, a piśāca, and a rākṣasa.[14]

1.21 “Without understanding the true nature of the implements,
They are like weapons in Śakra’s hands.

1.22 “Without understanding the true nature of the mudrā,
She is like a royal consort in the lap of a king.

1.23 “Without understanding the true nature of the winds,
They are like smoke on the top of Śakra’s head.

1.24 “Without understanding the true nature of the channels,
They are like snakes in a sandalwood tree,
Like wrinkles on the body,
And like foul water[15] on the body.

1.25 “Without understanding the true nature of the drops,
They are like knots in a sandalwood tree.

1.26 “Without understanding the true nature of the cakras,

They are like the wheel in Śakra's hand
Or like the wheel of existence.

1.27 "Without understanding the true nature of the lotus,
It is like a lotus in a thicket of reeds.

1.28 "Without understanding the true nature of the rod,
It is like the dome of a caitya.

1.29 "Without understanding the true nature of union,
It is like the joining of the right and left palms.

1.30 "Without understanding the true nature of the place,
It is like the palace of a universal monarch.

1.31 "Without understanding the true nature of bodhicitta,
It is like phlegm from an unclean orifice.

1.32 "Without understanding the true nature of sihla,
It is like blood drawn by weapons and such things.

1.33 "Without understanding the true nature of joy,
It is like the lust of a prostitute.

1.34 "Without understanding the true nature of what is to be abandoned,
You are like a king without a capital city.

1.35 "Without understanding the true nature of the antidotes,
They are like a capital city without a king.

1.36 "Without understanding the true nature of self-awareness,
It is like empty space being compounded.

1.37 “These eighteen true natures, moreover,
Should be learned from the words of the guru.

1.38 “You will be liberated when you understand
The true nature that everything
Is illusory and dream-like, like lightning or a cloud.”

1.39 “O protector, great compassionate one,
For one seeking the wisdom of self-awareness,
Is there any distinction between
One’s own and others’ systems?”[16]

1.40 The Blessed One replied:

1.41 “There is a great distinction in the true natures.
For others, distinctions are made
Concerning the four initiations and the true nature of their path.
Ours surpass those of nihilists—
Those who believe in the self, Īśvara,
Fate, a creator, and the causal tantras—
Since they are beyond the self of the person.

1.42 “Followers of the śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha,
And Mahāyāna systems[17] are bound by the self of phenomena.
They are distinguished by perceptions of inferiority.[18]
Ours is distinguished from the Mahāyāna by the innate deity
And is greatly distinct from Yoga, Mahāyoga, and so forth
In terms of the true natures.[19]

1.43 “This has been well spoken and should be retained well.”

1.44 The entire gathering was delighted and rejoiced.

1.45 *This concludes the glorious king of tantras "The Suchness of the Wisdom Secret That Is Vajrasattva."*

Colophon

c.1 It was translated by the yoginī Candramāla and the translator-monk Śākya Yeshé.

Notes

1. As illustrated by the group's designation in the Degé Kangyur catalog (Toh 4568-4, folio 139.a): *'khor lo bde mchog gi bshad rgyud ra li so gnyis su grags pa* ("the thirty-two Rali tantras renowned as explanatory tantras for Cakraśaṃvara").

2. See for example chapter 1.9 of the *Hevajra Tantra*.

3. Gungthang Könchok Tenpai Dronmé 2003, p. 454.

4. The six Rali tantras that Drokmi Lotsāwa Śākya Yeshé translated together with Candramāla are Toh 392, 393 (*The Tantra of the Garland of Gnosis*), 394, 396, 403, and 405.

5. For a hagiography of Drokmi Śākya Yeshé, see Stearns 2001, pp. 83–101. For an academic appraisal of his life and works, see Davidson 2005, pp. 161–209.

6. Künga Drolchok, folios 25.b–26.a.

7. Toh 4568-4, folio 140.a: *de ltar ra li so gnyis la bu ston zhabs kyis rgyud sde spyi rnam du/ 'di rnams sngar rtsod pa can du grags shing/ rgyud yang dag yin par nges pa'ang 'ga' zhig snang la/ gzhan rnams la'ang the tshom gyi gzhi shin tu che bar snang bas dpyad par bya'o/ /zhes bkod kyang/ chos 'byung du/ 'di dag ga ya d+ha ras 'brog mi dang gnyos lo tsA gnyi ga la bshad pa'i rgyu dpe can yin pas bod kyis byas zer ba mi bden no/ /zhes thugs thag bcad snang ngo*."In his *General Presentation of the Tantras*, the eminent Butön writes of the thirty-two Rali tantras, 'These were previously known to be disputed and, though it appears that some of them are in fact genuine authentic tantras, the others seem to give major cause for doubt. As such, they should be further examined.' However, in his *History of Buddhism*, he seems to have made a firm decision, saying, 'The claim that these were made by Tibetans is not true since they had Indian manuscripts which Gayādhara taught to Drokmi and Nyö Lotsāwa.' "

8. Alexander Berzin, "Traditional Guidelines for Translating Buddhist Texts ," Study Buddhism, Berzin Archives, accessed October 26, 2023.

9. We have emended the reading to *nyon cig rdo rje snying po bdag*. Degé reads *nyon cig rdo rje snying po'i bdag*, which seems corrupt.

10. We follow the Tibetan translation in preserving the Sanskrit term (*gu h+ya*) rather than translating it.

11. Here we understand *phra mo* (*sūkṣma*) to be a contraction of *sūkṣamayoga*.

12. Meaning the shape of an archery bow (*gzhu*).

13. In the previous line, we understand the Tibetan *rang bzhin dga' ba* to be a translation of *sahajānanda*, the fourth of the four joys, and in this line, *bral ba'i dga' ba* is understood as a translation of *viramānanda*, the third joy.

14. Though *srin po* typically is the translation of *rākṣasa*, it can also be used to translate *piśāca*. Given that rak+Sha follows it, we have translated *srin po* as *piśāca* and *rak+Sha* as *rākṣasa*.

15. This is a tentative translation of *dri ma chu*.

16. Though not stated explicitly in the text, this appears to be a question posed by Vajragarbha.

17. Reading *rlung* as *lung*.

18. Reading *khyad* instead of *khyab*. We take this to be a scribal error in which the suffix *da* was misconstrued to look like a *ba* due to the *shad* punctuation marker at the end of the line.

19. Our translation of the Blessed One's reply is tentative.

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Glossary

absorption

snyoms ’jug

སྙོམས་འཇུག

samāpatti

The nine absorptions traditionally consist of the four absorptions of the form realm, the four absorptions of the formless realm, and the absorption of cessation.

Akaniṣṭha

’og min gnas

འོག་མིན་གནས།

akaniṣṭha

The eighth and highest level of the Realm of Form (*rūpadhātu*), the last of the five pure abodes (*śuddhāvāsa*); it is only accessible as the result of specific states of *dhyāna*. According to some texts this is where non-returners (*anāgāmin*) dwell in their last lives. In other texts it is the realm of the enjoyment body (*saṃbhogakāya*) and is a buddhafield associated with the Buddha Vairocana; it is accessible only to bodhisattvas on the tenth level.

bodhicitta

byang sems

བྱང་སེམས།

bodhicitta

In normative Mahāyāna doctrine, bodhicitta refers to the aspiration for awakening, in both its relative and absolute aspects. In tantric thought it frequently refers to semen in the context of its generation and manipulation in sexual yogic rites.

breath control

srog rtsol

སྲོག་རྩོལ།

prāṇāyāma

The manipulation of breath by means of yogic techniques.

Butön Rinchen Drup

bu ston rin chen grub

བུ་སྟོན་རིན་ཆེན་གྲུབ།

A master of the Sakya school who lived from 1290–1364 CE. He was an influential scholar, historian, compiler, and cataloger of the canon. His compilation of lists of translated works contributed to the emergence of the Kangyur and Tengyur collections.

caitya

mchod rten

མཆོད་རྟེན།

caitya

The Tibetan translates both *stūpa* and *caitya* with the same word, *mchod rten*, meaning “basis” or “recipient” of “offerings” or “veneration.” Pali: *cetiya*.
A caitya, although often synonymous with *stūpa*, can also refer to any site, sanctuary or shrine that is made for veneration, and may or may not contain relics.
A stūpa, literally “heap” or “mound,” is a mounded or circular structure usually containing relics of the Buddha or the masters of the past. It is considered to be a sacred object representing the awakened mind of a buddha, but the symbolism of the stūpa is complex, and its design varies throughout the Buddhist world. Stūpas continue to be erected today as objects of veneration and merit making.

cakra

’khor lo

འཁོར་ལོ།

cakra

Circle; wheel; energy center in the subtle body—a nexus of channels.

camphor

ga pur

ཀཱ་པུར།

karpūra

Coded language for semen.

caṇḍālī

tsaN+DA lI

ཙཎྜཱ་ལཱི།

caṇḍālī

Blissful heat cultivated in the completion stage of tantric practice.

Candramāla

tsan+dra mA la

ཙནྡྲ་མཱ་ལ།

candramāla

A female practitioner from Sri Lanka about whom little is known. She collaborated with Śākya Yeshé in translating six Rali tantras (Toh 392, 393 (*The Tantra of the Garland of Gnosis*), 394, 396, 403, and 405).

channel

rtsa

རྩ།

nāḍī

The subtle channels in the body, imperceptible to ordinary senses, that conduct various types of vital energy.

channel petals

rtsa ’dab

རྩ་འདབ།

The secondary channels that branch off from the central channel and from the cakras.

completion stage

rdzogs pa’i rim pa

རྫོགས་པའི་རིམ་པ།

utpannakrama

The second of the two stages of tantric sādhana practiced. Its practices are specific to individual tantric systems but typically include sexual yogas, the consumption of illicit substances, manipulation of the subtle energetic anatomy, or resting in an uncontrived state.

dharmadhātu

chos kyi dbyings

ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས།

dharmadhātu

A term describing the totality of phenomena as they truly are, without being distorted by dualistic conceptualization.

dharmakāya

chos sku

ཆོས་སྐུ།

dharmakāya

Sometimes translated as “truth body,” “reality body,” or “body of qualities,” the term dharmakāya stands in distinction to the rūpakāya, or “form body” of a

buddha. In its earliest uses the term refers to the Buddha's qualities as a collective whole, or to his teachings as the embodiment of him. In later usage it primarily indicates the eternal, imperceivable realization of a buddha and is synonymous with the true nature of reality.

drop

thig le

ཐིག་ལེ།

bindu

A drop (as of liquids); a "drop" of concentrated energy in the channels of the subtle body.

eighteen true natures

de nyid bcwa brgyad

དེ་ཉིད་བཅྭ་བརྒྱད།

As described in *Secret Wisdom* (Toh 392), the eighteen true natures are those of the deity (*deva*, *lha*), conduct (*caryā*, *spyod pa*), implements (*cihna*, *phyag mtshan*), mudrā (*phyag rgya*), winds (*prāṇa*, *rlung*), channels (nāḍī, *rtsa*), drops (*bindu*, *thig le*), cakras (*'khor lo*), lotus (*padma*, *pad ma*), the rod (*ghana*, *stug po*), union (*sampuṭa*, *kha sbyor*), place (*gnas*), bodhicitta (*byang sems*), *sihla* (*sih+la*), joy (*ānanda*, *dga' ba*), what is to be abandoned (*prahātavya*, *spang bya*), antidotes (*pratipakṣa*, *gnyen po*), and self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*, *rang rig*).

factors of awakening

byang chub phyogs chos

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཕྱོགས་ཆོས།

bodhipakṣyadharma

Thirty-seven practices that lead the practitioner to the awakened state: the four applications of mindfulness, the four correct exertions, the four bases of supernatural power, the five masteries, the five powers, the eightfold path, and the seven branches of awakening. In the context of the generation stage, these factors appear as respective aspects of the deity.

five kāyas

sku lnga

སྐུ་ལྔ།

pañcakāya

The five kāyas are the dharmakāya, the saṃbhogakāya, the nirmāṇakāya, the svabhāvikakāya, and the vajrakāya. In some systems, particularly the Old Translations school (*snga ’gyur rnying ma*), they are the dharmakāya, the saṃbhogakāya, the nirmāṇakāya, the immutable vajrakāya, and the abhisaṃbodhikāya.

five wisdoms

ye shes lnga

ཡེ་ཤེས་ལྔ།

pañcajñāna

The five wisdoms are the mirror-like wisdom, the wisdom of equality, the wisdom of discernment, the all-accomplishing wisdom, and the wisdom of the dharmadhātu.

form kāyas

gzugs sku

གཟུགས་སྐུ།

rūpakāya

The sambhogakāya and the nirmāṇakāya.

four cakras

’khor lo bzhi

འཁོར་ལོ་བཞི།

In the Hevajra system, the four cakras are the cakra of great bliss (*bde chen gyi ’khor lo*), located at the crown; the cakra of enjoyment (*longs spyod kyi ’khor lo*), located at the throat; the cakra of qualities (*chos kyi ’khor lo*), located at the heart; and the cakra of creation (*lte ba sprul pa’i ’khor lo*), located at the navel.

four joys

dga’ ba bzhi

དགའ་བ་བཞི།

caturānanda

The four types of joy that arise during the practice of sexual union, the full understanding of which leads to liberation.

Gayādhara

ga ya d+ha ra

ག་ཡ་ཌྷ་ར།

gayādhara

Indian paṇḍita, fl. ca. 975–1025 ce. Gayādhara is best known in connection with Drokmi Lotsāwa Śākya Yeshé and played a major role in transmitting Lamdré teachings into Tibet, but he was also a prolific translator.

generation stage

bskyed pa’i rim pa

བསྐྱེད་པའི་རིམ་པ།

utpattikrama

The first of the two stages of tantric practice, focused on the visualized development of the tantric maṇḍala and its deities and the recitation of mantra.

glorious great bliss

dpal bde ba chen po

དཔལ་བདེ་བ་ཆེན་པོ།

śrīmahāsukha

In tantric contexts, a common epithet for heruka-class deities. Cakraśaṃvara, Hevajra, and Mahāmāyā are examples of herukas.

initiation

dbang

དབང་།

abhiṣeka

The ritual process of being introduced to and authorized in the practice of specific deities, maṇḍalas, and yogas. The Sanskrit term literally means “sprinkling” or “anointing” and is modeled on rites of royal investiture. In the Yoginī tantras and systems derived from them, there are typically four main initiations: the vase initiation (*kalaśābhiṣeka*; *bum dbang*), secret initiation (*guhyābhiṣeka*; *gsang dbang*), insight-wisdom initiation (*prajñājñānābhiṣeka; shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*), and the “fourth initiation” (*caturthābhiṣeka*; *dbang bzhi pa*).

innate joy

rang bzhin dga’ ba

རང་བཞིན་དགའ་བ།

sahajānanda

The fourth of the four joys. Although referred to as the “fourth,” it is meant to be discerned at the end of the supreme joy and the onset of the joy of cessation. This joy characterizes the innate state.

insight

shes rab

ཤེས་རབ།

prajñā

Nondual wisdom or insight obtained through realization. In its tantric Buddhist usage, the term can refer to the consort of a male deity or of a male practitioner identifying with the deity.

Īśvara

dbang phyug

དབང་ཕྱུག

īśvara

joy

dga’ ba

དགའ་བ།

ānanda

The first of the four joys; it corresponds to the period in the sexual yoga up to the onset of climax.

joy of cessation

bral ba’i dga’ ba

བྲལ་བའི་དགའ་བ།

viramānanda

The third of the four joys; it corresponds to the period in the sexual yoga immediately after the climax.

mahāyāna

theg chen

ཐེག་ཆེན།

mahāyāna

When the Buddhist teachings are classified according to their power to lead beings to an awakened state, a distinction is made between the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle (Hīnayāna), which emphasizes the individual’s own freedom from cyclic existence as the primary motivation and goal, and those of the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna), which emphasizes altruism and has the liberation of all sentient beings as the principal objective. As the term “Great Vehicle” implies, the path followed by bodhisattvas is analogous to a large carriage that can transport a vast number of people to liberation, as compared to a smaller vehicle for the individual practitioner.

mahāyoga

rnal ’byor chen po

རྣལ་འབྱོར་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāyoga

A term used to describe the later tantras of the Yoga class that incorporated more transgressive practices and a wrathful aesthetic. Typified by the Guhyasamājatantra and Guhyagarbhatantra.

major and minor marks

mtshan dpe

མཚན་དཔེ།

lakṣaṇānuvyañjana

The thirty-two major and the eighty minor distinctive physical attributes of a buddha or a superior being.

method

thabs

ཐབས།

upāya

The concept of skillful or expedient means is central to the understanding of the Buddha's enlightened deeds and the many scriptures that are revealed contingent on the needs, interests, and mental dispositions of specific types of individuals. It is, therefore, equated with compassion and the form body of the buddhas, the rūpakāya.
According to the Great Vehicle, training in skillful means collectively denotes the first five of the six perfections when integrated with wisdom, the sixth perfection. It is therefore paired with wisdom (*prajñā*), forming the two indispensable aspects of the path. It is also the seventh of the ten perfections. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming*.)

minor marks

dpe byad

དཔེ་བྱད།

vyañjana

The eighty secondary physical characteristics of a buddha and of other great beings (*mahāpuruṣa*), which include such details as the redness of the fingernails and the blackness of the hair. They are considered “minor” in terms of being secondary to the thirty-two major marks or signs of a great being.

mudrā

phyag rgya

ཕྱག་རྒྱ།

mudrā

A seal, in both the literal and metaphoric sense. The term *mudrā* is applied to an array of symbolic hand gestures, and, as in this text, is used to designate the female spiritual consort.

nihilist

chad pa

ཆད་པ།

uccheda, ucchedadṛṣṭi

Proponents of the extreme philosophical view that rejects rebirth and the law of karma by considering that causes (and thus actions) do not have effects and that the self, being the same as one or all of the aggregates (*skandhas*), ends at death. This view is often mentioned along with its opposite view, the extreme of eternalism or permanence.

Pāṇḍaravāsinī

gos dkar

གོས་དཀར།

pāṇḍaravāsinī

A female buddha of the lotus family.

piśāca

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

piśāca

A class of nonhuman beings that, like several other classes of nonhuman beings, take spontaneous birth. Ranking below rākṣasas, they are less powerful and more akin to pretas. They are said to dwell in impure and perilous places, where they feed on impure things, including flesh. This could account for the name *piśāca*, which possibly derives from √*piś*, to carve or chop meat, as reflected also in the Tibetan *sha za*, "meat eater." They are often described as having an unpleasant appearance, and at times they appear with animal bodies. Some possess the ability to enter the dead bodies of humans, thereby becoming so-called *vetāla*, to touch whom is fatal.

piśācī

srin mo

སྲིན་མོ།

piśācī

A female piśāca.

pratyekabuddha

rang rgyal

རང་རྒྱལ།

pratyekabuddha

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” (*khaḍgaviṣāṇakalpa*) for their preference for staying in solitude or as “congregators” (*vargacārin*) when their preference is to stay among peers.

rākṣasa

rak+Sha

རྐྱཤ།

rākṣasa

A class of nonhuman beings that are often, but certainly not always, considered demonic in the Buddhist tradition. They are often depicted as flesh-eating monsters who haunt frightening places and are ugly and evil-natured with a yearning for human flesh, and who additionally have miraculous powers, such as being able to change their appearance.

Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

śakra

The lord of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*trāyastriṃśa*). Alternatively known as Indra, the deity that is called “lord of the gods” dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation *brgya byin* (meaning “one hundred sacrifices”) is based on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śata-kratu*, one who has performed a hundred sacrifices. Each world with a central Sumeru has a Śakra. Also known by other names such as Kauśika, Devendra, and Śacipati.

Śākya Yeshé

shAkya ye shes

ཤཱཀྱ་ཡེ་ཤེས།

Śākya Yeshé of the Drokmi clan lived from 992 or 993 to 1043 or 1072. He was a Tibetan translator (of an early phase of the later translation period) and an important figure in the Lamdré (lam ’bras) lineage.

self-awareness

rang rig

རང་རིག

svasaṃvedana

The nonconceptual awareness that is both the basis for and the result of tantric practice.

sihla

sih+la

སིལ་ཧླ།

sihla

“Olibanum,” this is coded language for menstrual blood.

Situ Paṇchen Chökyi Jungné

si tu paN chen chos kyi ’byung gnas

སི་ཏུ་པཎ་ཆེན་ཆོས་ཀྱི་འབྱུང་གནས།

The eighth Tai Situpa (1700–1777) in the Karma Kagyü tradition, he oversaw the creation of the Degé Kangyur.

sixteen types of emptiness

stong pa bcu drug

སྟོང་པ་བཅུ་དྲུག

ṣoḍaśaśūnyatā

The classical set of sixteen types of emptiness described in many Mahāyāna philosophical texts is (1) inner emptiness, (2) outer emptiness, (3) outer and inner emptiness, (4) the emptiness of emptiness, (5) ultimate emptiness, (6) the emptiness of compounded phenomena, (7) the emptiness of uncompounded phenomena, (8) beginningless and endless emptiness, (9) the emptiness of nonrejection, (10) natural emptiness, (11) the emptiness of all phenomena, (12) the emptiness of own-characteristics, (13) the emptiness of the unobserved,

(14) the emptiness of nonentities, (15) the emptiness of own-essence, and (16) the emptiness of own-essence of nonentities.

sole hero

dpa’ bo gcig pa

དཔའ་བོ་གཅིག་པ།

ekavīra

A type of tantric maṇḍala in which only the central deity and their consort are visualized, without a circle of surrounding deities. Also the term applied to the central deity of such a maṇḍala.

śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

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 seeking their own 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.”

stage of abiding

gnas pa’i rim

གནས་པའི་རིམ།

The stage of a given practice wherein one maintains the practice for as long as possible or desired.

suchness

de kho na nyid

དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད།

tathatā

supreme joy

mchog dga'

མཆོག་དགའ།

paramānanda

The second of the four joys; it corresponds to the sexual climax.

Tārā

sgrol ma

སྒྲོལ་མ།

tārā

A female buddha.

three channels

rtsa gsum

རྩ་གསུམ།

The channels are subtle psychophysical channels that run vertically in the body. There are typically 72,000 channels said to reside in the body; however, of these the most important are the three main channels—the central channel (Skt. *avadhūti*, Tib, *dbu ma*), the right channel (Skt. *rasanā*, Tib. *ro ma*), and the left channel (Skt. *lalanā*, Tib. *rkyang ma*).

true nature

de nyid

དེ་ཁིད།

tattva

Literally “thatness”—in the general sense it is the true nature or reality of things.

universal monarch

’khor lo sgyur rgyal

འཁོར་ལོ་སྒྱུར་རྒྱལ།

cakravartīrāja

An ideal monarch or emperor who, as the result of the merit accumulated in previous lifetimes, rules over a vast realm in accordance with the Dharma. Such a monarch is called a *cakravartin* because he bears a wheel (*cakra*) that rolls (*vartate*) across the earth, bringing all lands and kingdoms under his power. The cakravartin conquers his territory without causing harm, and his activity causes beings to enter the path of wholesome actions. According to Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa*, just as with the buddhas, only one cakravartin appears in a world system at any given time. They are likewise endowed with the thirty-two major marks of a great being (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*), but a cakravartin’s marks are outshined by those of a buddha. They possess seven precious objects: the wheel, the elephant, the horse, the wish-fulfilling gem, the queen, the general, and the minister. An illustrative passage about the cakravartin and his possessions can be found in *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 3.3–3.13.

Vasubandhu lists four types of cakravartins: (1) the cakravartin with a golden wheel (*suvarṇacakravartin*) rules over four continents and is invited by lesser kings to be their ruler; (2) the cakravartin with a silver wheel (*rūpyacakravartin*) rules over three continents and his opponents submit to him as he approaches; (3) the cakravartin with a copper wheel (*tāmracakravartin*) rules over two continents and his opponents submit themselves after preparing for battle; and (4) the cakravartin with an iron wheel (*ayaścakravartin*) rules over one continent and his opponents submit themselves after brandishing weapons.

Vajragarbha

rdo rje snying po

རྡོ་རྗེ་སྙིང་པོ།

vajragarbha

The interlocutor in *Wisdom Secret* who is perhaps best known as the main interlocutor in the *Hevajra Tantra*.

Vajrasattva

rdo rje sems dpa’

རྡོ་རྗེ་སེམས་དཔའ།

vajrasattva

Used as a proper name, Vajrasattva is one of the principal deities of the esoteric Buddhist pantheon, regarded as both a source of the Buddhist tantras and the exemplar of the awakened state. As an adjective, the term vajrasattva, literally “vajra being,” can also be applied to other esoteric Buddhist deities, particularly Vajrapāṇi.

vidyāmantra

rig sngags

རིག་སྔགས།

vidyāmantra

A spell. Although a technical term in its own right, it is also used interchangeably at times with the terms *dhāraṇī* and *dhāraṇīmantra, guhyamantra,* etc.

wind

rlung

ཀློང་།

prāṇa

A subtle form of energy that travels through the body's channels (Skt. nāḍī, Tib. *rtsa*).

yoga

rnal 'byor

རྣལ་འབྱོར།

yoga

The Yoga tantras are the highest of the three groups of so-called "outer" tantras. They utilize generation stage practices and place more emphasis on the cultivation of internal meditative practices than on external ritual. The *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* is the primary representative of this class.

yoginī

rnal 'byor ma

རྣལ་འབྱོར་མ།

yoginī

This term applies to (1) various groups of female deities that appear in tantric maṇḍalas or that dwell in the subtle channels; (2) a general class of nonhuman female beings that are similar to and overlap with ḍākinīs; and (3) female adepts of yoga.

Yoginī tantra

rnal 'byor ma'i rgyud

རྣལ་འབྱོར་མའི་རྒྱུད།

yoginītantra

A class of Buddhist tantra focused upon the figure of the yoginī and the meditative manipulation of the subtle energetic anatomy of the physical body. This genre is typified by the *Hevajra Tantra*, *Cakraśaṃvara Tantra*, and *Mahāmāyā Tantra*.