

# Guhyasamāja

The *Guhyasamājantra* (Scripture of Esoteric Assembly) is one of the most influential scriptures in later Indian tantric Buddhism. The key term “esoteric assembly” here is explained in the scripture itself (ch. 18) as the aggregate (*samāja*) of body, speech, and mind (*guhya*). It is the principal scripture of the *yogottaratantra* class, the wave following the *yogatantra* in the historical development of tantric literature. In this scripture, esoteric eroticism, only marginal in the *yogatantras*, has moved to the foreground, and multi-faced, multi-armed male deities are represented and visualized copulating with their consorts. Likewise, teachings of sacramental consumption of impure substances have become conspicuous. A feature of esoteric eroticism is apparent right from the preamble of the scripture. Although it follows the style of the traditional Mahāyāna scriptures, in which the Buddha preaches in historical places or, especially in tantric literature, in some heaven or divine realm, here the Buddha is stated to reveal and preach this scripture in the vaginas of women (*yoṣidbhaga*), namely, of the goddesses.

The *Guhyasamājantra* as we have it consists of 18 chapters. The last chapter, the *Samājottara*, was, however, originally a different scripture and incorporated into the *Guhyasamājantra* complex at some later time. The Indo-Tibetan exegetical tradition recognizes some discontinuity and regards the first 17 chapters as the root scripture (*Mūlatantra*) and the last chapter as the supplementary scripture (*Uttaratantra*).

## Sources

Owing to its popularity, a number of Sanskrit manuscripts of this scripture survive. The extant manuscripts are divided into three types with regard to their contents: (1) manuscripts that contain the text of all 18 chapters; (2) manuscripts that contain the text of the 18-chapter *Guhyasamājantra* as the first half (*pūrvārdha*) and that of a redaction of the *Samputatantra/Samputodbhavantra* as the latter half (*parārdha/aparārdha/uttarārdha*); and (3) manuscripts that contain only the latter half of

the scripture. There are several other manuscripts that cannot be classified from the catalogues (Tsukamoto *et al.*, 1989). Since the *editio princeps* by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, the *Guhyasamājantra* has been published in its entirety four times, by Bhattacharyya (1931), Bagchi (1965), Matsunaga (1978), and Dwarikadas Shastri (1984). Below we follow the verse-numeration of Matsunaga’s edition. The whole text was also edited by F. Fremantle (1971), but this remains unpublished. The scripture has been translated in its entirety into modern languages three times, into English by Fremantle (1971), German by Gäng (1988), and Japanese by Matsunaga (1998, 2000).

The existence of a Dunhuang manuscript shows that the *Guhyasamājantra* proper (i.e. chs. 1–17) was translated into Tibetan in the Imperial Period (Eastman, 1980). The *Guhyasamājantra* proper and chapter 18 are contained as different scriptures in the Tibetan canon. The Tibetan title of the former is *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi gsang chen gsang ba ’dus pa zhes bya ba brtag pa’i rgyal po chen po* (D 442/P 81). The Tibetan title of the latter is simply *Rgyud phyi ma* (Skt. \**Uttaratantra*; D 443/P 81a). Śraddhākaravarman and Rin chen bzang po are registered as the translators of both. There are two versions of the canonical Tibetan translation, of which the respective revisers differ (Eastman, 1980, 9; Tsukamoto *et al.*, 1989, 231). Comparison between the Dunhuang manuscript and the canonical translation reveals that Rin chen bzang po was most likely not a translator but a reviser of the root scripture (Eastman, 1980).

The 18-chapter *Guhyasamājantra* was translated into Chinese as the *Yiqie rúlái jīngāng sānyè zuìshàng mìmi dàjiàowáng jīng* (一切如來金剛三業最上祕密大教王經; The Great King of Scripture that Teaches the Supreme Secrecy of the Three Kinds of Adamantine Action of All Tathāgatas; T. 885) by Shīhù (施護) in 1012 (Takeuchi, 1975). In this translation, transgressive expressions are either omitted or rewritten. For example, the above mentioned *yoṣidbhaga* (the vagina of women) is translated as “the purified sphere that is a transformation of right knowledge of all tathāgatas” (一切如來正智出生變化清淨境界; T. 885 [XVIII] 469c25–26).

Consequently, the translation has a number of obscure portions.

## Development of the Text

The *Guhyasamājantra*, with regard to meditation practices and the pantheons, employed and developed the system of the *Sarvathāgatattvasaṃgraha*, the main and earliest *yogatantra* scripture, which was translated into Chinese in 723 CE. The dates for the composition of the *Guhyasamājantra* proposed by B. Bhattacharya (1931, xxxiv) and A. Wayman (1973, 13–19) as the 3rd and the 4th century, respectively, are therefore too early. In the Sino-Japanese tradition, the *Sarvathāgatattvasaṃgraha* is the first section of the expanded version of the *Jīngāng dīng jīng* (金剛頂經; The Adamantine-Pinnacle Scripture) in 100,000 verses consisting of 18 sections. According to the *Jīngāng dīng jīng yúqié shībāhū zhīguī* (金剛頂經瑜伽十八會指歸; Key Points of the 18 Sections of the Yoga of the Adamantine Pinnacle Scripture; T. 869), a digest by Amoghavajra (不空; 705–774), of the expanded version of the *Jīngāng dīng jīng*, the *Mīmijūhū yúqié* (祕密集會瑜伽; Skt. \**Guhyasamājayoga*; T. 869 [XVIII] 287a28), is the 15th section. The summary of the *Mīmijūhū yúqié* is very brief, and it is implausible that it is the summary of the present 18-chapter *Guhyasamājantra*. The contents of the summary, however, correspond to that of chapter 5 of the present *Guhyasamājantra*, and it is therefore not implausible that the scripture existed in some form, perhaps in an early stage of its development, by the time Amoghavajra composed the digest (c. 746–774 CE; Giebel, 1995, 108–109; Matsunaga, 1978, xxiii ff.; 1980, 249–253; 1998a, 249–253).

Buddhaśrījñāna's period of activity is important to settle the date when the *Guhyasamājantra* was composed, since the Jñānapāda school, of which Buddhaśrījñāna is regarded as the founder, is one of the oldest exegetical schools of the scripture. Buddhaśrījñāna is associated with the Pala emperor Dharmapāla (r. c. 775–812). Hadano Hakuyu (1950) argues that Buddhaśrījñāna was active in the latter half of the 8th century and that the *Guhyasamājantra* existed in some form at the time of Buddhaśrījñāna on the basis of the following evidence: (1) Vairocana, who was a Tibetan and a contemporary of the Tibetan king Khri Song lde brtsan (r. 775[?]-797), introduced the *utpannakrama*/*niṣpannakrama* practice (see below) of the Jñānapāda school to Tibet; (2) Buddhaśrījñāna's works are recorded in the *Ldan dkar ma* catalogue of scriptures translated into

Tibetan; and (3) a commentary on the supplementary scripture by Viśvamitra (D 1844/P 2707) and a commentary on the root scripture by Vajrahāsa (D 1909/P 2772) were translated into Tibetan at the time of the *snga dar* (former diffusion). On the basis of Hadano Hakuyu's argument, Matsunaga Yūkei (1978, xxiv ff.) proposes that chapter 18 of the *Guhyasamājantra* was composed in the latter half of the 8th century. In addition, the existence of the Dunhuang manuscript mentioned above shows that the root scripture of the *Guhyasamājantra* had been composed in circa 800–900 CE (Eastman, 1980).

With regard to the root scripture, we see at least two stages of development, that is to say, chapters 13–17 were probably added later to the first 12 chapters. The reasons that Matsunaga Yūkei (1978, xxviii ff.; 1980, 237 ff.; 1998a, 237 ff.) proposes are as follows:

1. The *Sandhyāvyākaraṇa* (D 444/P 83), one of the explanatory scriptures (*vyākhyātantra*) free from interpretations belonging to a particular school, comments only on the first 12 chapters. This might imply that the *Guhyasamājantra* consisted of the first 12 chapters when the *Sandhyāvyākaraṇa* was composed, or at least that the explanatory scripture regarded chapters 13–17 as not essential.

2. The full set of deities who comprise the 19-deity *maṇḍala* of the Jñānapāda school is not found in the first 12 chapters, only in the latter five chapters. The *maṇḍala* taught in chapter 1 consists of 13 deities, and this *maṇḍala* is identical with the one taught in Indrabhūti's *Jñānasiddhi* (ch. 15), which is in turn assumed to be identical with the *maṇḍala* of "Indrabhūti's school" mentioned by Tsong kha pa.

3. The four-limbed meditation (*caturāṅga-sādhana* or *caturvidhopāya*) is regarded as essential in the supplementary chapter 18. The archetype of this four-limbed meditation is taught in chapter 12. This might imply that the scripture once ended with chapter 12.

4. Compared to the first 12 chapters, chapters 13–17 are relatively long. In addition, with regard to the contents, the characteristics of ritual manuals are conspicuous in chapters 13–17.

5. The supplementary chapter 18 summarizes and elaborates the teachings of the root scripture in the form of questions and answers. All the topics of these questions and answers are found in chapters 1–12.

The supplementary scripture, chapter 18, tries to homologize the different types of yoga taught in the root scripture with each limb of the four-limbed

yoga, which is unique to the Jñānapāda school. It is therefore inferred that the Jñānapāda school might have participated in the composition of chapters 13–17 of the *Guhyasamājantra*.

## Related Scriptures

As mentioned above, the *Guhyasamājantra* is related to the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*. Thus, at a later time, the *Guhyasamājantra* was classified as a *yogottaratantra* or a *mahāyogatantra*, or simply *yogatantra*. Aside from the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*, there are several scriptures closely related to the *Guhyasamājantra*. The *Māyājālatantra* and the *Guhyasamājantra* have a number of parallels (Matsunaga, 1980, 240–244; 1998a, 240–244). With regard to the practice of desire (*rāgacaryā*) taught in chapter 7, a very similar teaching – namely that tantric practitioners should avoid ascetic practices that weaken their faculties – is found in the chapter 36 of the *Paramādyā* (*Mantrakalpakhanda*; D 488, 242a7–243a2/P 120, 252a7–253a1), a scripture classified as a *yogatantra*, and one of the verses in the relevant passage in the *Paramādyā* is the same as *Guhyasamājantra* 7.2 (Tanemura, 2009, 488ff.). The name Ratnaketu – one of the five buddhas, who is situated in the south in the *maṇḍala* – is identical with the name of one of the four buddhas in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama*, which is different from the name of the buddha situated in the south in the *vajradhātumaṇḍala* taught in the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* (Tanaka, 2010, 278). The heart mantras of Akṣobhya, Vairocana, and Amitāyus/Amithābha, that is, *vajradhṛk*, *jinajik*, and *ārolik*, are taught in the *Susiddhikara* (D 807/P 431; Tanaka, 2010, 278).

The schools based on the *Guhyasamājantra* developed practices that are not taught in the scripture itself. Thus, at a later time, the explanatory scriptures were composed to authorize those practices. These explanatory scriptures, which are preserved in the Tibetan canon, are the *Sandhyāvṛyākaraṇa*, the *Vajramālā* (D 445/P 82), the *Caturdevīparipṛcchā* (D 446/P 85), the *Jñānavajrasamuccaya* (D 447/P 84; D 450 is perhaps a longer version; see Wedemeyer, 2007, 208n8), the *\*Vajrahṛdayālaṅkāra* (D 451/P 86), the *Advayasamatāvijaya* (D 452/P 87), and so on. Of these, the *Advayasamatāvijaya* survives in Sanskrit, and an edition of this text has been published (Fan, 2011).

## Pantheons

With regard to the pantheons or *maṇḍalas*, one of the greatest differences from those of the previous tantric scriptures is that the main deity is Akṣobhya rather than Vairocana, who became the main deity instead of Śākyamuni in early and middle tantric Buddhism. Akṣobhya is also regarded as identical with Vajrasattva or Vajradhara, who became the supreme deity in later tantric Buddhism.

The pantheon or *maṇḍala* of the *Guhyasamājantra* is described in chapter 1. The *maṇḍala* consists of 13 deities, namely the five buddhas, the four goddesses, and the four wrathful deities. As mentioned above, this 13-deity *maṇḍala* is identical with the one taught in Indrabhūti's *Jñānasiddhi* (Matsunaga, 1980, 237; 1998a, 237; Tanaka, 2010, 282). This “basic” *maṇḍala* is later developed into the two major *maṇḍalas* associated with the scripture, namely the 19-deity *maṇḍala* of the Jñānapāda school and the 32-deity *maṇḍala* of the Ārya school.

The Jñānapāda-school *maṇḍala* consists of the 13 deities taught in chapter 1 plus the six *vajra* goddesses (Kanamoto, 1986; Tanaka, 2010; see table 1). In this *maṇḍala*, the central deity is called Mañjuvajra rather than Akṣobhya. The deities are represented in sexual embrace with their male or female consorts.

The Ārya-school *maṇḍala* consists of the 13 deities plus five *vajra* goddesses, the eight great bodhisattvas, and the six wrathful deities (see table 2). The names of the female consorts of the ten wrathful deities are mentioned in the *Piṇḍikrama*, which is one of the important sources of the *utpattikrama* (steps of generation) practice of the Ārya school, but those goddesses are not counted as *maṇḍala* deities (Tanaka, 2010). The central deity is called Akṣobhyavajra. According to the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (an explanatory work by Abhayākara Gupta on various *maṇḍalas*), in this *maṇḍala*, only the central deity is represented as embracing his consort, Sparśavajrā. In addition, the wrathful deities situated in the protection wheel (*rakṣācakra*) are visualized as copulating with their consorts. It is impossible to reconstruct these two *maṇḍalas* from the *Guhyasamājantra* itself. It is the exegetical literature of these two schools that gives us details about these *maṇḍalas*.

One of the important theories concerning the *maṇḍala* introduced in the *Guhyasamājantra* and its exegetical literature is the homologization of the deities with the dogmatic notions such as the five

aggregates. This homologization is no doubt one of the theoretical bases for a practitioner to become aware that he or she is the supreme deity, that is, Vajradhara. With regard to this homologization, the scripture teaches only correspondences between the five buddhas and the five aggregates, the four goddesses and the four elements, and Vajradhara and ether (vss. 17.50–51 [verse numeration according to Matsunage, 1978]; see table 3.) This homologization was developed later in the exegetical schools.

## Meditation Practices

The *Guhyasamājatantra* teaches various types of meditation or visualization (yoga), but it is very difficult to understand how these yogas are related to one another. In other words, it is very difficult to find a system of yoga in the scripture. The last chapter, the *Samājottara*, tries to synthesize the various types of yoga. It introduces the following four limbs (*caturaṅga*):

1. service (*sevā*; chs. 3, 7, and 11);
2. subaccomplishment (*upasādhana*; chs. 2, 6, 10, and 14);
3. accomplishment (*sādhana*; chs. 4, 8, 12, and 16); and
4. great accomplishment (*mahāsādhana*; chs. 5, 9, 13, and 17).

Generally, later tantric Buddhism has two systems of yoga: (1) *utpattikrama* (steps of generation) and (2) *utpannakrama*/*niṣpannakrama* (steps named perfected/steps for the perfected). The former is the meditation practice in which the practitioner unites with the visualized deity and emanates the *maṇḍala* deities. The latter is the meditation practice based on psychophysiological techniques. The practitioner controls the *cakras* and channels (*nāḍī*), which are supposed to exist in the human body and guide its energy, by means of sexual yoga, thereby attaining the state of being without conceptual cognition (*nirvikalpa*).

The *Guhyasamājatantra* proper does not teach these two systems. The *Samājottara* (18.84) mentions the names of these two systems and echoes a famous verse concerning the two truths in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* (24.8) by Nāgārjuna (Isaacson, 2001, 468–469). This fact implies that the compilers of this scripture regarded the *utpattikrama* as the practice at the mundane or lower level and the *utpannakrama* as that at the supramundane or higher level. The scripture, however, does not teach the concrete methods for either of these yogas.

The yoga based on the *Guhyasamājatantra* is developed in the two main exegetical schools, namely the Jñānapāda school and the Ārya school. The principal texts of the former are the works by Buddhaśrījñāna. Of these, the *Dvikramatattvabhāvanā Mukhāgama* (Oral Instruction Named Meditation on the Reality in Two Steps; D 1583/P 2716), is the revelation by Mañjuśrī to Buddhaśrījñāna. Buddhaśrījñāna was probably the first person who integrated the two systems of meditation into Buddhist tantric practice. The fact that the *Dvikramatattvabhāvanā Mukhāgama* is said to be the revelation by Mañjuśrī may imply that his system was established by Buddhaśrījñāna himself and thus that it was not entirely based on the *Guhyasamājatantra*. For the Jñānapāda school, the basic frame of the *utpattikrama* is the threefold meditation (*trisamāhi*) established in the *Sarvathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*: (1) *ādīyoga* (first union), (2) *maṇḍalarājāgrī* (supreme lord of the *maṇḍala*), and (3) *karmarājāgrī* (supreme lord of action). The system of the four limbs is incorporated into this basic frame. Each of the four limbs has three divisions, that is, inferior, middle, and advanced. The *ādīyoga* of the threefold meditation consists of the four limbs of the inferior and those of the middle, and the *maṇḍalarājāgrī* consists of the four limbs of the advanced. In addition, the four limbs bring about the four outcomes called natural outcome (*niṣyanda*), maturation (*vipāka*), manly action (*puruṣakāra*), and being free of defilements (*vaimalya*), respectively. The practitioner unites with the deity through a complicated process that consists of the threefold meditation, the four limbs, and the four outcomes (Tanaka, 2010, 489ff.; Kikuya, 2010; for a synopsis of Buddhaśrījñāna's *Samantabhadrasādhana*, see Tanaka, 2010, 501–503).

In the *utpannakrama* of this school, the practitioner attains the purified body (Skt. \**viśuddhikāya*; Tib. *rnam par dag pa'i sku*) by means of the yoga of *bindu* or *tilaka* (the subtle, imperishable “particle” in the *cakra* situated in the heart), which involves sexual union with a female consort and the resulting experience of bliss (Hadano, 1950, 43–44; Sakurai, 2007; Kikuya, 2010). Because of the limited number of primary sources and the small number of studies in this field, many parts of this practice are still unclear.

The basic structure of the *utpattikrama* of the Ārya school is also the threefold meditation. In the system of this school, the *ādīyoga*, which follows the preparatory process, is divided into the four sub-steps: *yoga*, *anuyoga*, *atīyoga*, and *mahāyoga*.



Having accomplished the triple body of the Buddha by means of empowerment of his body, speech, and mind through these four substeps, the practitioner becomes a buddha. Next, the practitioner emanates the *maṇḍala* deities by means of sexual-yogic union with his consort in the *maṇḍalarājāgrī*. After the third step, the *karmarājāgrī*, the practitioner who has risen up from the meditation should act as a buddha (Luo & Tomabechi, 2009; Hadano, 1950, 93ff.).

The principal text for the *utpannakrama* of this school is the *Pañcakrama* attributed to Nāgārjuna (see Mimaki & Tomabechi, 1994). The present *Pañcakrama* consists, as the name suggests, of the following five steps:

1. *Vajrajāpakrama* (Step of Vajra Recitation);
2. *Sarvasuddhivīśuddhikrama* (Step of Purification by Purity of All; for different opinions with regard to this chapter's authorship, see Mimaki & Tomabechi, 1994, xii2);
3. *Svādhiṣṭhānakrama* (Step of Self-consecration);
4. *Paramarahasyasukhābhisaṃbodhikrama* (Step of Realization of the Supreme, Secret Bliss) or *Abhisaṃbodhikrama* (Step of Realization); and
5. *Yuganaddhakrama* (Step of Cooperative Union).

In the *utpannakrama* practice of this school, the practitioner controls his or her vital energy called *vāyu* (wind; i.e. *prāṇa*) and experiences imaginary death, thereby attaining *prabhāsvara* (clear light). This state is referred to as “nondual knowledge” or “nonconceptual cognition.” This *utpannakrama* practice is not taught in the *Guhyasamājantra* itself. The scriptural basis for this practice is the explanatory scriptures, which were probably compiled by this school.

## Esoteric Eroticism and Sacralization of Impure Substances

Esoteric eroticism is found in various parts of the *Guhyasamājantra*. For instance, the initiation rites called *guhyābhiṣeka* (secret empowerment) and *prajñājñānābhiṣeka* (empowerment of knowledge of wisdom), which are prescribed in chapter 18, involve sexual union with a female consort. In the *guhyābhiṣeka*, an initiand offers a female partner to his master, and the master has intercourse with her. Then the initiand is made to consume the sexual fluid from the sexual organs, which is taught to be the mind intent on awakening. In the *prajñājñānābhiṣeka*, the initiand copulates with the consort handed over by the master and experiences

bliss, that is, the “state of being without conceptual cognition.”

Sacralization of impure substances is also an element that became conspicuous in the *Guhyasamājantra*. These impure substances are mentioned as the “five nectars (*pañcāmṛta*),” that is, urine, feces, semen, blood, and human meat. The scripture prescribes that an initiate should eat these substances and worship the deities with them. The scripture also prescribes that an initiate should eat the “five meats,” that is, the meat of cows, dogs, elephants, horses, and humans. Both esoteric eroticism and sacralization of impure substances are influences of Śākta-Śaivism (Sanderson, 2009, 144ff.).

## Synopsis

The main topics of this scripture are the pantheons, meditation practice, and the religious observances to be kept by the initiates. However, these are not taught systematically through the chapters. In addition, the lord who gives the teachings of the *Guhyasamājantra* is called by various names such as Sarvatathāgata-kāyavāk-cittādhipati (“The Lord of Body, Speech, and Mind of All Tathāgatas”). The outlines of the individual chapters are as follows.

Chapter 1: After the preamble (*nidāna*), this chapter mainly teaches the emanation of the five buddhas, the four goddesses, and the four wrathful deities (i.e. the 13-deity *maṇḍala*).

Chapter 2: This chapter mainly teaches the essence of the mind intent on awakening (*bodhicitta*) in six verses. The four stanzas taught by the four buddhas Akṣobhya, Ratnaketu, Amitāyus, and Amoghasiddhi are also found in the *Māyājālatantra*; the stanza taught by Vairocana is found in the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*.

Chapter 3: This chapter teaches the visualization of the *maṇḍala* and the yoga of expansion and contraction. The iconographies of the five buddhas are also mentioned.

Chapter 4: The way of making the mind *maṇḍala*, which consists of the pledges of the deities, is taught. This chapter also teaches the sexual yoga with a 16-year-old maiden, who is to be empowered as the goddess Māmākī. Worship of the deities that involves consumption of impure substances is prescribed.

Chapter 5: This chapter prescribes the persons who are suitable to do the practices taught in this scripture. It emphasizes that untouchables, persons who have committed great sins, and persons

regarded as impure by mundane ethics are suitable as practitioners of this scripture.

Chapter 6: In this chapter, the five buddhas teach the mantras. Akṣobhya teaches the mantra for the empowerment of mind, Vairocana the mantra for the empowerment of body, Amitāyus the mantra for the empowerment of speech, Ratnaketu the mantra for attachment, and Amoghasiddhi the mantra for worship. This chapter also teaches the subtle yoga, in which the practitioner concentrates and visualizes a *vajra* and other sacred things on the tip of the nose, and prescribes the rules for the consumption of impure substances and meats.

Chapter 7: This chapter teaches that enjoyment of all desires is necessary for attainment of accomplishment (*siddhi*). As stated above, this teaching is closely related to that of the *Paramādyā*. In this teaching, the five objects of the sense faculties correspond to the five buddhas: sight corresponds to Vairocana, sound to Ratnaketu, smell to Amitāyus, flavor to Amoghavajra, and touch to Akṣobhya. This chapter also teaches visualization called recollection (*anusmṛti*), which involves sexual yoga with a female partner.

Chapter 8: Requested by Ratnaketu, Vajradhara teaches how to worship the visualized *maṇḍala* and the master. This worship involves sexual yoga and enjoyment of objects agreeable to the five sense faculties and impure substances.

Chapter 9: First, the pledges (*samaya*) of the five buddha families are taught. The pledge of the *dveṣakula* (hatred family) is murder, of the *mohakula* (ignorance family) theft, of the *rāgakula* (desire family) sexual pleasure, of the *samayākarṣaṇakula* (pledge-attracting family) lying, and of the *ratnakula* (jewel family) abuse. The lord also teaches that the practice of desire is the practice of bodhisattvas, which is the supreme practice. The bodhisattvas ask the reason why the blessed one gives these transgressive teachings. The lord answers that the practice of desire is the practice of bodhisattvas, which is the supreme practice. For, just as ether pervades everywhere and is not confined in a specific place, likewise the pledges of the tathāgatas mentioned above should be understood.

Chapter 10: In this chapter, the lord teaches the mantras of body, speech, and mind; the meditation practices in which those mantras are employed; and the sexual yoga with a female partner called *mahāmudrā* (great seal).

Chapter 11: The three seed syllables called three *vajras* (i.e. *om*, *āḥ*, and *hūṃ*) and the heart mantra of the knowledge *vajra* (*jñānavajrahṛdaya*; i.e. *bhrūṃ*)

are taught. The lord teaches the yoga of the three *vajras* (i.e. the three seed syllables), of the five buddhas, and, again, of the three seed syllables.

Chapter 12: The theme of this chapter is the observances. First, the lord teaches the five kinds of meditations related to the pledges of the five buddhas. Then, the lord teaches the taking of pills that are to be visualized as transformations of the three seed syllables. Subsequently, the lord teaches the visualization of the five buddhas and the wrathful deities. The lord also teaches how to draw down the pledges (*samaya*). Next he teaches the fruits arising from the consumption of the “five meats” and impure substances and from the practice of the observances. Finally, the lord teaches the outline of the four-limbed yoga.

Chapter 13: The lord teaches various meditation practices such as the three-seed-syllable/*vajra* recitation (see above) and the ten kinds of recitation. The four kinds of rites – that is, quelling of calamities (*śāntika*), increase of fortunes (*pauṣṭika*), subjugation (*vaśya*), and subduing of enemies (*abhicāraka*) – and the deities employed in each rite are explained. The lord also teaches the visualization of the ten wrathful deities.

Chapter 14: The lord teaches the mantras of the four goddesses and their effects and then the mantras of the nine wrathful deities and their effects. Next the lord teaches how to draw down the deities. After that he prescribes the *abhicāraka* rite and, in connection with this rite, the rites in which spikes (*kīla*), weapons to kill the evil, are employed.

Chapter 15: The lord teaches (1) sexual yoga with a female partner; (2) various rites for the purpose of killing a hostile person; (3) consumption of pills made of impure substances, meats, metals, and so forth and their effects; (4) cure for snakebites and so forth; (5) cure for diseases; and (6) correspondences between dreams and supernatural effects (*siddhi*). The lord also teaches that all things lack inherent nature, they are like illusion, and therefore the effects of the rites do not exist from the viewpoint of supreme truth.

Chapter 16: First, the lord teaches how to draw the *vajra* body *maṇḍala* (*vajrakāyamaṇḍala*; i.e. the body *maṇḍala* of all tathāgatas) and the *vajra* speech *maṇḍala* (*vāgvajramaṇḍala*; i.e. the speech *maṇḍala* of all tathāgatas). Then the lord emanates the secret of the supreme, esoteric *maṇḍala* from his *vajra*-like body, speech, and mind. Despite the fact that he teaches these three kinds of *maṇḍala*, the lord prohibits practitioners from drawing external *maṇḍalas*. The lord again teaches how to draw a

*maṇḍala* and how to perform the fire rite. The lord also teaches the initiation ritual (*abhiṣeka*) of disciples, the description of which is simple and short. After this the lord teaches the observances to be kept by the initiates. Next the visualizations of the deities are prescribed. Finally, the lord teaches the postinitiatory observance called *vidyāvratā*, which is to be practiced with a female consort (*vidyā*).

Chapter 17: First the stanzas that praise the five buddhas are taught. Then the lord teaches various observances, including the rules for food. The lord states that the *vajra* of body, speech, and mind is beyond verbal expressions. The lord teaches the correspondences between the five buddhas and the five aggregates and between the four goddesses and the four elements. The greatness of the masters initiated into this scripture is told. Then the lord teaches the visualization of the great *maṇḍala* named the *vajra*-like source of all tathāgatas and bodhisattvas, the rite for killing hostile persons, and the worship of the deities with impure substances and sexual intercourse. Nonetheless, in the next passage, external ritual acts are prohibited. After this, the lord teaches the way of detoxification from all poison and how to kill a hostile person. In the prose after verse 71, the lord relates that the reason why the buddhas in the past did not reveal the *Guhyasamājantra* is that the audience was not mature enough, but that from now on, initiates of this scripture will attain awakening. Next the four goddesses praise Mahāvajradhara (“Great Vajra Holder”) and ask him for sexual intercourse. Finally, the secret of the *vajra* of body, speech, and mind is revealed.

Chapter 18: This chapter consists mainly of 53 questions from the bodhisattvas to the lord and the answers to those questions. In those answers, the lord prescribes the initiation rites called *guhyābhiṣeka* and *prajñājñānābhiṣeka*. He teaches the consumption of the five impure substances called the “five nectars” and the “five meats” and teaches the yoga of four limbs (see above).

## Reception

The *Guhyasamājantra* was, and partly still is, very successful in India, the Tibeto-Himalayan region, and Mongolia. The popularity of this scripture in India is clear from the number of extant Sanskrit manuscripts. Especially in the Kathmandu Valley, the *Guhyasamājantra* is revered as one of

the “nine dharmas,” the nine scriptures regarded as important. In addition, many exegetical works of this scripture are written by Indian and Tibetan authors.

The scripture and the practices based on the scripture were transmitted by several exegetical schools. Of these, the Jñānapāda school and the Ārya school were the most influential. The system of the practice of the Jñānapāda school was transmitted mainly in the Vikramaśīla Monastery, which was founded and supported by the Pala emperors. The Ārya school became especially popular in Tibet. Tsong kha pa regards the Mādhyamika, especially the so-called Prāsaṅgika strand, as the highest in non-tantric Buddhism, and the *Guhyasamājantra*, especially the Ārya school, as the highest in tantric Buddhism. The reason why Tsong kha pa regarded the Ārya school as the highest is probably that the authors of the Mādhyamika and the Ārya school share the same names such as Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, and Candrakīrti.

Although the *Guhyasamājantra* was translated into Chinese, it was not propagated in East Asia. After Amoghavajra, tantric Buddhism in China declined rapidly, and translation of Indian Buddhist literature into Chinese came to an end. This means that the development of tantric Buddhism following the *yogatantra* hardly reached China or Japan. In this period, Chan Buddhism formed the mainstream of Chinese Buddhism. In this religious climate, the *Guhyasamājantra* was much less influential than tantric Buddhism in the earlier Tang period.

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**Table 1** The 19-deity *maṇḍala* of the Jñānapāda school according to according to Abhayākaragupta's *Niṣpannayogāvalī*

	Names of Deities	Positions	Heart-mantras	Syllables
1	Mañjuvajra <b>(Akṣobhya)</b>	Center	<i>oṃ āḥ maṃ hūṃ</i> <i>(vajradhṛk)</i>	<i>maṃ</i> <i>(hūṃ)</i>
2	<b>Vairocana</b>	East	<i>oṃ āḥ jinajik hūṃ</i>	<i>bhrum̐ (or</i> <i>bhrūṃ?)</i>
3	Ratneśa <b>(Ratnaketu)</b>	South	<i>oṃ āḥ ratnadhṛk hūṃ</i>	<i>ām̐</i>
4	Amitābha <b>(Amitāyus)</b>	West	<i>oṃ āḥ ārolik hūṃ</i>	<i>jrūṃ</i>
5	<b>Amoghasiddhi</b>	North	<i>oṃ āḥ prajñādhṛk hūṃ</i>	<i>kham̐</i>
6	<b>Locanā</b>	South-east	<i>oṃ āḥ moharati hūṃ</i>	<i>lam̐</i>
7	<b>Māmakī</b>	South-west	<i>oṃ āḥ dveṣarati hūṃ</i>	<i>maṃ</i>
8	<b>Pāṇḍarā</b>	North-west	<i>oṃ āḥ rāgarati hūṃ</i>	<i>paṃ</i>
9	<b>Tārā</b>	North-east	<i>oṃ āḥ vajrarati hūṃ</i>	<i>taṃ</i>
10	Rūpavajrā	South-east corner	<i>oṃ āḥ rūpavajre jah̐ hūṃ</i>	<i>jah̐</i>
11	Śabdavajrā	South-west corner	<i>oṃ āḥ śabdavajre hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
12	Gandhavajrā	North-west corner	<i>oṃ āḥ gandhavajre vaṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>vaṃ</i>
13	Rasavajrā	North-east corner	<i>oṃ āḥ rasavajre hoḥ̐ hūṃ</i>	<i>hoḥ̐</i>
14	Sparśavajrā	North at the east gate	<i>oṃ āḥ sparśavajre kham̐ hūṃ</i>	<i>kham̐</i>
15	Dharmadhātuvajrā	South at the east gate	<i>oṃ dharmadhātuvajre raṃ</i> <i>hūṃ</i>	<i>raṃ</i>
16	<b>Yamāntaka</b>	East gate	<i>oṃ āḥ yamāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
17	<b>Prajñāntaka</b>	South gate	<i>oṃ āḥ prajñāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
18	<b>Padmāntaka</b>	West gate	<i>oṃ āḥ padmāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
19	<b>Vighnāntaka</b>	North gate	<i>oṃ āḥ vighnāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>

(1) The deities in bold typeface are those of the 13-deity *maṇḍala* taught in the first chapter.

(2) There are some variants in the syllables of the deities.

(3) The heart-mantras are taught in Abhayākaragupta's *Vajrāvalī*.

**Table 2** The 32-deity maṇḍala of the Ārya school according to Abhayākaragupta's *Niṣpannayogāvalī*

	Names of deities		mantra*	syllable
1	Akṣobhya	Center	<i>oṃ āḥ vajradhṛk hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
2	Sparśavajrā	Center	<i>oṃ āḥ sparśavajre khaṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>spaṃ</i>
3	Vairocana	East	<i>oṃ āḥ jinajik hūṃ</i>	<i>oṃ</i>
4	Ratnasambhava	South	<i>oṃ āḥ ratnadhṛk hūṃ</i>	<i>svā</i>
5	Amitābha	West	<i>oṃ āḥ ārolik hūṃ</i>	<i>ā</i>
6	Amoghasiddhi	North	<i>oṃ āḥ prajñādhṛk hūṃ</i>	<i>hā</i>
7	Locanā	South-east	<i>oṃ āḥ moharati hūṃ</i>	<i>laṃ</i>
8	Māmakī	South-west	<i>oṃ āḥ dveṣarati hūṃ</i>	<i>maṃ</i>
9	Pāṇḍalavāsini	North-west	<i>oṃ āḥ rāgarati hūṃ</i>	<i>paṃ</i>
10	Tārā	North-east	<i>oṃ āḥ vajrarati hūṃ</i>	<i>taṃ</i>
11	Rūpavajrā	South-east in the second zone	<i>oṃ āḥ rūpavajre jaḥ hūṃ</i>	<i>jaḥ</i>
12	Śabdavajrā	South-west in the second zone	<i>oṃ āḥ śabdavajre hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
13	Gandhvajrā	North-west in the second zone	<i>oṃ āḥ gandhavajre vaṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>vaṃ</i>
14	Rasavajrā	North-east in the second zone	<i>oṃ āḥ rasavajre hoḥ hūṃ</i>	<i>hoḥ</i>
15	Maitreya	East in the third zone	<i>oṃ āḥ maitreya maiṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>maiṃ</i>
16	Kṣitigarbha	East in the third zone	<i>oṃ āḥ kṣitigarbha thlīṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>kṣiṃ</i>
17	Vajrapāṇi	South in the third zone	<i>oṃ āḥ vajrapāṇe oṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>oṃ</i>
18	Khagarbha (Ākāśagarbha)	South in the third zone	<i>oṃ āḥ khagarbha oṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>oṃ</i>
19	Lokeśvara	West in the third zone	<i>oṃ āḥ lokeśvara oṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>oṃ</i>
20	Mañjuśrī	West in the third zone	<i>oṃ āḥ mañjughoṣa hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>

		zone		
21	Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin	North in the third zone	<i>oṃ āḥ sarvanivaraṇaviṣkhambhin oṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>oṃ</i>
22	Samantabhadra	North in the South zone	<i>oṃ āḥ samatabhadra saṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>saṃ</i>
23	Yamāntaka	East gate	<i>oṃ āḥ yamāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
24	Prajñāntaka	South gate	<i>oṃ āḥ prajñāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
25	Padmāntaka	West gate	<i>oṃ āḥ padmāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
26	Vighnāntaka	North gate	<i>oṃ āḥ vighnāntakṛt hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
27	Acala	South-east corner	<i>oṃ āḥ acala hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
28	Ṭakkirāja	South-west corner	<i>oṃ āḥ ṭakki hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
29	Nīladaṇḍa	North-west corner	<i>oṃ āḥ nīladaṇḍa hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
30	Mahābala	North-east corner	<i>oṃ āḥ mahābala hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
31	Uṣṇīṣacakravartin	Upper	<i>oṃ āḥ uṣṇīṣa hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>
32	Sumbharāja	Lower	<i>oṃ āḥ sumbha hūṃ hūṃ</i>	<i>hūṃ</i>

(1) There are some variants in the syllables of the deities.

(2) Tha mantras are taught in Abhayākaragupta's *Vajrāvalī*.

**Table 3** Symbolization of the deities taught in the *Guhyasamājatantra*.

The Five Buddhas	the five aggregates (according to the exegetical literature Akṣobhya = <i>vijñāna</i> , Vairocana = <i>rūpa</i> , Ratnaketu = <i>vedanā</i> , Amitāyus = <i>saṃjñā</i> , Amogashiddhi = <i>saṃskāra</i> )
Locanā	earth
Māmakī	water
Pāṇḍarā	fire
Tārā	wind
Vajradhara	ether