

Considerations on the Dating and Geographical Origins of the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra*

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Introduction

The growth of serious and informed academic research into Buddhist *tantras* in the last few decades is noteworthy. Since the epoch-making publication of the *Hevajra Tantra* in 1956, a number of other valuable studies and editions have appeared. However, this ongoing interest in the Buddhist *tantras* still has many limitations and unfortunately, a detailed description of the development of tantric thought and practice is far from being complete. This situation will not be remedied until much more textual work has been done by the few scholars who have access to the original materials surviving in the various Asian languages. Moreover, almost without exception, present-day Western writers have relied solely on Tibetan materials and surviving Indic texts for their sources. Such studies often present a somewhat one-sided view of Tantric Buddhism as they tend to concentrate on the Anuttara-yoga *tantras*.

Yet apart from these admittedly interesting materials, there is also a wealth of other tantric literature preserved in Tibetan sources, dealing with the Kriyā, Caryā and Yoga *tantras*, that awaits detailed exploration and translation. Additionally, the neglect of the vast amount of literature related to Tantric Buddhism available in Chinese translation is quite regrettable, although this is understandable in view of the quite daunting range of linguistic skills which are needed to make full use of these texts. A comprehensive study of this material will be vital for an understanding of the origins of Tantric Buddhism, for while the Tibetan tradition is strong on later tantric works and less so on earlier ones, the situation with the Chinese materials is the reverse—they have preserved many of the earlier Indian texts which were never translated into Tibetan. Moreover, in stark contrast to the paucity of reliably dated materials from Indo-Tibetan sources, documents from the Chinese tradition often record various historical data with great accuracy. It is noteworthy that many of the dates when texts were translated into Chinese, during a nine hundred year period of translation activity, are known with a reasonable degree of accuracy in the majority of

cases, thereby providing us with an outline chronology for the development of Buddhist texts. It should, therefore, not surprise us if the insights we can derive from Chinese sources cast a different light on the development of Tantric Buddhism.

For example, it is normal to classify the *tantras* into four categories—Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga and Anuttara-yoga—following late Indian and Tibetan practice, and this system of classification is now treated by modern Western scholars as though it were definitive. But it is clear from a study of earlier Tantric materials, especially of those preserved in the Chinese tradition, that this system of classification, useful though it was to the later Indian exegetes and their Tibetan successors, was gradually developed to make sense of the mass of Tantric materials that they were faced with. Not only is this system of classification completely absent in Chinese materials, it is also noteworthy that Buddhaghosha (fl. 750 AD), in his general discussion of the *tantras* at the beginning of his Commentary and in his *Pinḍārtha* on the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, speaks only of Kriyā and Yoga *tantras*. He puts the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* in a special category of its own, which he calls “*ubhaya*” (dual) that bridges these two groups. This implies that any *tantras* which were later to be treated as Anuttara-yoga *tantras* were not as yet considered to be a separate class of works if indeed they existed at all. He lists such texts as *Susiddhikāra*, the *Guhyasāmānya-tantra*, the *Trisamayārāja*, the *Trikāya(uṣṇīṣa)*, the *Vajrapānyabhiṣeka* and the *Vidyādhara Collection* as representative of the Kriyā *tantras*, while he speaks of the *Sarvatathāgatatattva-saṃgraha* and the *Śrīparamādyā* as representative of the Yoga *tantras*. In fact, Buddhaghosha does not even set up an additional *yāna* such as Vajra-yana or Mantra-yana, but only speaks of the *pāramitānaya* and the *mantranaya* modes of practice within Mahāyāna.

Nevertheless, it is my view that this fourfold system of classification represents, in a general manner, the historical sequence in which the *tantras* were developed. In other words, the majority of the texts that came to be classified as Kriya *tantras* derive from the earliest proto-tantric phase, leading on through Caryā *tantras* to the Yoga and later to the Anuttara-yoga *tantras*. This can be seen most clearly when one examines the contents of texts with tantric-style elements surviving in Chinese, together with their dates of translation. To this end, we might briefly attempt to identify the key constituent elements which go to make up what one might call Tantric Buddhism in its widest sense, to get a better grasp of what we are dealing with.¹ Obviously it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a full-scale study and documentation of all these elements, so I shall merely confine myself to a summary of those features which seem to

¹ Traditional definitions are important in their own right but would seem to be less useful here since they rather beg the question.

characterise the spirit of Buddhist tantric thought, based on the list proposed by Teun Goudriaan in his work on Hindu Tantra, with appropriate emendments and additions:

1. Tantric Buddhism offers an alternative path to Enlightenment in addition to the standard Mahāyāna one.
2. Its teachings are aimed at lay practitioners in particular, rather than monks and nuns.
3. As a consequence of this, it recognizes mundane aims and attainments and often deals with practices which are more magical in character than spiritual.
4. It teaches special types of meditation (*sādhana*) as the path to realization, aimed at transforming the individual into an embodiment of the divine in this lifetime or after a short span of time.
5. Such kinds of meditation make extensive use of various kinds of *maṇḍalas*, *mudrās*, *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* as concrete expressions of the nature of reality.
6. The formation of images of the various deities during meditation by means of creative imagination plays a key role in the process of realization. These images may be viewed as being present externally or internally.
7. There is an exuberant proliferation in the number and types of Buddhas and other deities.
8. Great stress is laid upon the importance of the guru and the necessity of receiving the instructions and appropriate initiations for the *sādhana*s from him.
9. Speculations on the nature and power of speech are prominent, especially with regard to the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet.
10. Various customs and rituals, often of non-Buddhist origins, such as the *homa* rituals, are incorporated and adapted to Buddhist ends.
11. A spiritual physiology is taught as part of the process of transformation.
12. It stresses the importance of the feminine and utilizes various forms of sexual yoga.

Though by no means exhaustive, this list covers the main pre-occupations of the *tantras*. During the proto-tantric and early tantric phase only a few of these elements may occur together in any given text, but as we enter the middle and late phases, we find that an increasing number of them, in one form or another became incorporated into the texts. This process of synthesis and development seems to have extended over several centuries, from the earliest proto-tantric

texts down to the elaborate *Kālacakra-tantra*, which was possibly the last Buddhist tantra to be developed in India. While it would be foolhardy to make any definitive statements about the early development of the *tantras* at the present stage of our knowledge, it might be of interest to briefly examine this process in view of the above list of features, particularly from the evidence available to us from Chinese sources.

First, the general trend may be seen if we examine a simple listing of the main translations (Appendix 01) containing any of the above elements down to the early Tang period. (Other texts could be added to this list with some justification, such as the Pure Land cycle of texts). What immediately strikes one is the sudden increase of these texts from the Sui to the Tang Dynasty, an indication of the increasing popularity of “tantric” practice in India. Those translated after Xuàn-zàng, during the Tang and early Song periods, run into hundreds, and so are far too numerous to list. Looking at their contents we can see a gradual progression from external “mundane” rituals and objectives to the internal and the “spiritual”, from the unsystematic to the systematic. Hence, as their titles indicate, the majority of the earlier texts are connected with *dhāraṇīs* and they deal with various kinds of prayers or requests for liberation from sufferings, adversities or disasters. But we are unable to detect any fusion in a systematic manner of Buddhist thought with these prayers and practices. So, though a few of these texts, such as the *Sūtra on the Dhāraṇī Against Perversities* (T 1342) and the *Infinite Dhāraṇī of Entry into All Dharmas* (T 1343) refer to openness (*śūnyatā*) and others, such as the *Ṣaṇmukha-dhāraṇī* (T 1360, T 1361), mention “awareness-only” (*viññapti-mātra*), the general feeling one gets from looking at these texts is that they were for the benefit of unsophisticated ordinary people beyond the confines of the great monasteries such as Nālanda. Hence, the aims of the practices are often quite modest and do not entail a radical course of self development using the complex types of meditation (*bhāvanā*), the *maṇḍalas* or *mudrās* that are so characteristic of fully developed *tantras*. On the other hand, as one might expect to find in a popular devotional form of Buddhism, we can note the existence of various kinds of worship and offering (*pūja*) to the Buddhas which later form a part of tantric practice. It is noteworthy that some texts describe types of worship that employ visualization of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, especially those associated with the Pure Land group of texts. For example, the *Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra* (T 365), which was translated into Chinese by Kālayaśas c.430 AD, gives vivid descriptions of Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara and Mahā-sthāma-prāpta and also of the *maṇḍala*-like Pure Land of Amitābha itself. It can easily be seen how similar such meditative visualizations are to those prescribed in tantric texts both for worship and for *sādhana*. The visuali-

zations of the Pure Land parallel to a remarkable extent those of *maṇḍalas*, as for example, that in Chapter Sixteen of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*.

Other texts in the above list are important as they give some indication of the introduction and use of rituals. For example, the well-known *Mātāṅga-sūtra* (T 551, T 552, T 1300, T 130 I), first translated by Zhī-qīān in 230 AD and retranslated several times down to the late 5th century AD, speaks of a magical ritual used for subjugation. The earliest versions tell of a low-caste (*caṇḍalī*) woman who was infatuated with Ānanda. Her mother tries to entice him in the following manner. She magically creates flowers in eight jars of water and then taking these up, she casts them back into the jars while reciting spells. Later versions of the text also contain a simple *homa* ritual. The sorceress mother smears the floor of her house with cow-dung and spreads white rushes (*kuśa* grass ?) upon it. She then lights a large fire there and casts a hundred and eight flowers into it while reciting the necessary spell with each flower. These texts also contain six *dhāraṇīs* and the instructions for performing the associated ceremonies.

We see other ritual elements in the *Mahāmāyūrividyārāja-sūtra*. The several versions of this text in Chinese bear witness to its continuing popularity. In an appendix to it, translated by Śrī-mitra (T 1331) around 340 AD, there are instructions for the delimitation of the ritual area (*sīmabandha*), which is then to be decorated with five swords, five banners, five mirrors, twenty-one arrows and twenty-one lamps. This site is to be annointed with perfumes and mustard seeds are to be burnt to expel obstructing demons.

Further developments may be seen in the *Dhāraṇī for Great Benefit* (T 1335) translated by Tán-yào in 462. In addition to the burning of mustard seeds and such like, this text also prescribes the recitation of *mantras* before the images of various deities to bring about their appearance in order to fulfil the wishes of the practitioner. Again, it describes the making of a ritual area, but now with Buddha images arranged in a circle to receive offerings. *Maṇḍalas*, which figure so much in *tantras*, can be formally divided into two main categories according to Buddhaghūya—the intrinsically-existent *maṇḍala* and the representational *maṇḍalas*. The first of these is the “real” *maṇḍala* formed by the Buddha and the emanations of his qualities as Bodhisattvas and so forth. The second type is the graphic or plastic representation of the first. These two types seem to derive from different, though not entirely unrelated, sources. As mentioned above, one might see the origin of the intrinsically existent *maṇḍala* in the descriptions of the various pure lands, so striking is the similarity. On the other hand, the origins of the representational *maṇḍala* may well lie in the arrangement of Buddha and Bodhisattva images upon altars for worship. As images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas became acceptable to people in India, we often find representations of the Buddha flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi. With the proliferation

of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, one can understand how these would have come to resemble the basic pattern of a *maṇḍala* when arranged geometrically. Hence, the arrangement of such images in a circle which is described in the *Dhāraṇī for Great Benefit*, can be seen as a rudimentary *maṇḍala*. This same text also teaches various *siddhis* to stop storms, to make rain, to become invisible and so forth.

Further textual indications of the development of the *tantras* can be seen in the transition from a three Buddha Family arrangement to a five Buddha Family version. It is noteworthy that the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* seems to fluctuate between a three and fivefold arrangement, perhaps indicating its key role in the developmental process of the Buddhist *tantras*. Other noteworthy features are the movement from Śākyamuni to Vairocana, then to Akṣobhya and the Herukas as the main deity of the *maṇḍalas* and the predicator of the *tantras*. These changes also happen to correspond, for a large part, in sequence with the texts later to be classified with the four classes of *tantras*.

In addition to the evolutionary process indicated by the chronological sequence of these texts preserved in Chinese and their internal evidence, there are other indications we may note that speak of the spread and acceptance of tantric practices. For example, Śāntideva, who is thought to have been active during the early to mid 8th century, wrote the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, a valuable compilation of quotations from various Mahāyāna texts, dealing with the practices a Bodhisattva was expected to engage in. There are several interesting features to be found in this work relevant to the development of Tantric Buddhism in India. One is Śāntideva's acceptance and use as a textual authority (*āmnāya*) of the *Trisamayārāja*, one of the sources of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. The other is the evidence for the growing importance of internal visualization. These are the relevant passages:

1. "You should recite this *vidyā* mentioned in the *Trisamayārāja* for the *maṇḍala samaya*: Namaḥ sarvabuddhabodhisattvānām. Oṃ viraji viraji mahācakraviraji. Sata sata siirata sārata trapi trapi vidhamani. Sabhajani *sambhajani*, taramati, siddha agre tvaṃ svāhā. With that you may enter all *maṇḍalas*. Or else you should recite Essence of the Tathāgata eight thousand times and then enter into both mundane and supramundane *maṇḍalas*."²
2. "Focussing upon the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, you should also recite [the *mantras*] following the Rite of Good Conduct, with a mind that longs to benefit all beings. This prescribed rite (*vidhi*) should be observed at the

² Vaidya's edition, 77, 9.

conclusion of this ceremony. What is prescribed in the *Trisamayarāja* is authoritative (*āmnāya*), so there is no fault [in doing this].”³

3. “According to the *Trisamayarāja*, the prescribed ritual is to close your eyes and recite the Hundred Lettered [Mantra] eight thousand times, with your mind focussed upon the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. As soon as you have shut your eyes, you will behold the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and be freed from sins. Or else circumambulating a stūpa, you should recite it eight thousand times and also place books of the holy Dharma in front of the image in the shrine.”⁴
4. “The Bodhisattva who is endowed with eight qualities will constantly meet Buddhas. What are those eight ? He urges people to visualize the body-form of the Buddha, he worships (*upasthāna*) the Tathāgatas, he expounds the eternal form of the Tathāgata ... “ (From the *Brhatsāgara-nāgarāja-pariprcchā*).⁵
5. “Nobly born sons or daughters should visualize the Buddha depicted in paintings or described in books.” (from the *Śraddhabālādhānāvātāra-mudrā*).⁶

From this we can see that the kind of “tantric” practice generally accepted around that time already included the use of simple *maṇḍalas*, the recitation of *dhāraṇīs*, ritual worship (*pūja*) and visualization.⁷

Xuàn-zàng, the great Chinese traveller, was also in India until 645 and left a detailed account of his travels in the *Dà-táng-xī-yù-jì*. However he makes no mention of anything which indicates the wide-spread existence of tantric practices or texts, apart from the use of *dhāraṇīs*. It has been argued that this could be due to his lack of interest in such matters, yet as he was a keen observer of the state of Buddhism as he found it throughout India at that time, it would not be unreasonable to expect him to have mentioned such practices in passing had he actually witnessed them. It is likely that any specifically tantric texts and practices that were already in existence at that time had not yet gained general acceptance in the main centres of Buddhism, such as Nālanda, which he visited.

However, this situation had changed by the time Yi-jìng arrived in India in 673. We find a number of references to tantric practices in his “Record of Eminent Monks who Sought the Dharma in the West” (*Xù-yú-qīā-fa-gāo-seng-zhuàn*),

³ *ibid.*, 153, 3.

⁴ *ibid.*, 96, 16.

⁵ *ibid.*, 164, 12.

⁶ *ibid.*, 51, 31.

⁷ The visualization of Buddhas was not in itself so revolutionary at this time, since the early Mahāyāna *sūtra* (pre 2nd century AD), the details and recommends such practices.

where there is the very suggestive remark that people “seek the secret books from the Nāga palaces in the oceans and search for *mantras* from stonechambers in the mountains”. Even more noteworthy is what he has to say in the section dealing with Dào-lin, who had also spent many years in India. It seems that Dào-lin was very interested in tantric practices. He resided for a number of years at Nālanda and then set out for Lata in Western India where he “stood before the divine altar and received the *vidyās* once again”. He then went northwards to Kashmir and Udyāna, possibly intending to return to China, although these areas are also traditionally noted for their tantric connections. Regarding the *vidyās*, Yi-jing says:

“It is said that the Vidyādhara Collection comprises a hundred thousand verses in Sanskrit, which in Chinese would amount to over three hundred rolls. But if one inspects these texts nowadays, it will be seen that many have been lost and few are complete. After the death of the Great Sage, Nāgārjuna, in particular, studied the main parts of this Collection. Then, one of his disciples called Nanda, who was both intelligent and learned, turned his attention to this text. He spent twelve years in the west of India, applying himself solely to the study of the *dhāraṇīs*. At length, he achieved success. Whenever it was time for him to eat, his meals descended from the sky. Furthermore, one day while he was reciting the *vidyās*, he wanted to get a wish-fulfilling jar, which he obtained after a short while. He was overjoyed to find that there was a book within this jar, but as he did not bind the jar with a *vidyā*, it suddenly vanished.

Then, fearing that the *vidyās* might be scattered and lost, the Dharma Master, Nanda, gathered them together into a single collection of about twelve thousand verses, forming a single corpus. In each verse, he matched up the text of the *vidyās* with *mudrās*. But although the words and the letters are similar [to those in normal use], in fact their meanings and usages are different.

Truly, there is no way of comprehending them without an oral transmission. Later, the Master Dignāga saw that the merit of this work surpassed the intelligence of ordinary people and its thought pushed reason to its limits. He put his hand upon the book and said sighing, “If this sage had applied his mind to logic, what honour would have remained for me?” One can see by this that the wise know their own value, but fools are blind to the worth of others. This Vidyā Collection of Prayers is not yet available in China, hence Dào-lin applied his mind to these subtleties.

So it is said in this Collection that “one will only succeed in walking in the sky, riding *nāgas*, commanding the hundred spirits or being a

benefactor of beings, by means of these *vidyas*". When I, Yi-jing, was staying at Nālanda, I went several times to the altar place, but as I was not successful in either my application to the essence of this teaching or in gaining merit, in the end I gave up my hopes. I have touched on the main points of these new teachings here, in order to make them known."

The Chinese word *tán*, translated in the above passages as "altar" is ambivalent, as it was also used on occasions to translate the word "*maṇḍala*". In view of the quotations given above from Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, one should consider the strong possibility that Yi-jing is referring to the existence of *maṇḍalas* at Nālanda while he was there. It should also be remembered that Śubhakarasiṃha, who translated the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* into Chinese, and his teacher, Dharmagupta, would have been at Nālanda exactly at the same time as Yi-jing was, which gives rise to the intriguing possibility that they may have actually met.

Yi-jing mentions at length another monk, the Dhyāna Master Wú-xing, who was in India around the same time as himself. He had been there since 667 and died as he began his journey back to China in 674. Upon his death, the large number of texts he had collected, together with his travelogue-report were forwarded to China. In the part of this report which survives, Wú-xing states that "Recently the Mantra Method has: come to be venerated throughout the land." More will be said about Wú-xing's importance later.

It is this period onwards, to the end of eighth century which saw the most rapid development in tantric thought and practice. For reasons that I give below in the next section, I believe it is likely that the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* was composed or "revealed" some time around 650 AD give or take a decade either way. If we examine its contents in comparison with other tantric works, it clearly belongs to the earliest phase of true *tantras*, both doctrinally and iconographically, and must precede all *Yoga tantras* and *Anuttara-yoga tantras*. For example, one indication of this is the basic three Buddha Family *maṇḍala* arrangement it describes, although its Uttara-tantra seems to be closer to a five Buddha Family form. Although we can identify several other works that would have been composed immediately following the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, the next major work in the development of tantric Buddhism must be the *Sarvatathāgatattva-saṃgraha*. This work is of seminal importance, as it heralds a number of innovations such as the adoption of a five Buddha Family pattern in contrast to the three Buddha Family pattern which is predominant in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. We are fortunate in possessing the Sanskrit text of this work, its Tibetan translation, as well as several Chinese versions. The earliest evidence we have for the existence of this Tantra again comes from Chinese sources. The Indian *ācārya* Vajrabodhi introduced elements derived from it,

which he had obtained around 700, into China with his *Recitation Sūtra Extracted from the Vajrasekhara Yoga* (T 866), which gives in a summarized form the basic meditational practices now found in the first section of the *Sarvatathāgatattva-saṃgraha*. It is thought by Japanese scholars that this summary is based on material pre-dating the more elaborate version of the *Sarvatathāgatattva-saṃgraha* (T 865), translated by Amoghavajra in 753.

A certain amount of circumstantial evidence points to South India as the area of its origin. For example, according to its Chinese commentary, a certain *bhadanta* (Nāgārjuna ?) took the *Tattvasaṃgraha* from the Iron Stūpa in South India. It is also stated in Vajrabodhi's biography that he received teachings on the *Tattvasaṃgraha* in southern India when he was thirty-one (700 AD) from Nāgabodhi (Nāgabodhi is said to have been the disciple of Nāgārjuna, according to Sino-Japanese traditions). This is the first datable reference to it, so we may assume therefore that it had come into existence by the last quarter of the seventh century, though this was unlikely to have been in the full form we now have. Finally, Amoghavajra who translated the first section of the *Sarvatathāgatattva-saṃgraha*, got his copy during his trip to southern India between 743–746.

Date of Compilation of Vairocanābhisambodhi

Following the above outline of the development of tantric Buddhism, it might be asked where the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* itself fits in. Once again we may arrive at a tentative date for its composition by making use of evidence available from Chinese tradition, in particular that concerning the key figures connected with the transmission of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. Of those, some mention should be first made of Wú-xíng, to whom I have already alluded, although he does not directly figure in the lineages of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. There is a biography of Wú-xíng in Yi-jìng's "Record of Eminent Monks", from which we learn the following details. In 667, Wú-xíng went to India via the southern sea route, like Yi-jìng. After residing a while in Sri Lanka and Harikela in Bengal, he made his way to Nālanda. There he studied Yogacāra, Mādhyamika and the *Abhidharmakośa*, and the works on logic by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti at the nearby Tiladhāka monastery. He translated parts of the Sarvāstivādin Āgama dealing with the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and sent these back to China. After a further period of residence at Nālanda, during which time he and Yi-jìng became friends, he decided to start the journey back to China via Northern India and so in 674, at the age of fifty-six, he parted from Yi-jìng. We know from the "Song Biographies of Notable Monks" (*Sòng-gao-seng-zhuàn*) that sadly, he never completed the journey, but died in India, as did so many other Chinese monks, soon afterwards. It is recorded in other Chinese sources that the Indian books he had collected were forwarded to China where they were stored in the Huá-yán

Temple. Among these were the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, the *Subāhupariṣcchā-sūtra* and the *Susiddhikāra-tantra*, texts which were all translated later by Śubhakarasiṃha.

Śubhakarasiṃha, who translated the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* into Chinese, was born as a prince in Orissa in 637 AD. Because of his outstanding abilities and popularity, he was named successor to the throne by his father, but when he ascended to the throne at the age of thirteen, his disgruntled brothers organized an armed rebellion. Śubhakarasiṃha defeated them, but was so dismayed by the misery of the war that he decided to transfer the throne to his eldest brother instead of punishing his brothers and to become a monk himself. During his youth he studied and travelled widely, until he finally arrived at Nālanda. There, he became the disciple of the Master (*ācārya*) Dharmagupta. Tibetan sources are apparently completely silent regarding this Dharmagupta, and very little is known even from Chinese materials but it is said that he was an expert in meditation and *mantra* practice. According to Chinese biographical records, he appeared to be only about forty years of age but was actually over eight hundred. Xuàn-zàng is also said to have met him while he was in India, when he looked about thirty, but was actually over seven hundred. Śubhakarasiṃha was taught the *mantras*, *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* and *samādhis* connected with the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* lineage by Dharmagupta and was given the initiations (*abhiṣeka*) by him. Afterwards, Śubhakarasiṃha travelled around the central Indian area, teaching and debating with non-Buddhists, and generally working for the benefit of the populace. One day, he was told, by his teacher Dharmagupta, that he had a profound karmic link with China, so he should go there and spread the teachings. This exhortation need not surprise us too much when we remember that there were a considerable number of Chinese monks at Nālanda around this time, including Yi-jìng, as well as an imperial ambassador.

Śubhakarasiṃha set out from Nālanda and began the long overland journey to China. He travelled through Kashmir and then went on to Udyāna, where he taught at the court of the ruler of the region. After he left Udyāna, he did not take the normal route through Central Asia along the Silk Road as he probably found his way blocked by the Arab military activities in the region. Instead he went through Tibet and reached China that way. It was in 716 that Śubhakarasiṃha finally arrived at the Chinese capital, Chang An. It is noteworthy that he was already eighty years of age when he arrived there. He busied himself visiting famous monks in Chang An, familiarized himself with the problems that he would face in translating Sanskrit texts into Chinese. The following year, having taken up residence at the Xī-míng Temple, he received an imperial command to begin translating. After the first short text he translated, his reputation increased but, unfortunately, he was ordered to hand over all the Sanskrit texts he had

brought from India to the imperial court, possibly for political reasons (the new emperor, Xuàn-zāng, may have been under pressure from the Taoists who had lost prestige with the increasing influence of Buddhism). Whatever the reason, Śubhakarasiṃha was left without anything to work on, so he went with the Chinese monk and mathematician Yī-xíng, who had become his disciple, to the Huá-yán Temple where the texts, collected some thirty years earlier by Wú-xíng before his death, were stored. Here, he obtained several books including the Sanskrit text of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. In 724, the Emperor went to Lo Yang and Śubhakarasiṃha was settled in the Fú-xiān Temple where he began his translation of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. By the next year, he and Yī-xíng had completed the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* together with an appendix which functions as a kind of *uttaratantra*.⁸ While work was progressing on the translation of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, he also lectured simultaneously on the text itself and a record of these lectures was kept by Yī-xíng, which forms the basis of the main Chinese commentary on the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, the *Dà-rì-jīng-shū*. Following the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, Śubhakarasiṃha also translated the *Subāhupariṣcchā*, the *Susiddhikāra* and some works connected with the *Tattvasaṃgraha*. In 732, he petitioned the Emperor to permit him to return home to India, but permission was refused. Finally, at the age of ninety-nine, on 7th November 735, Śubhakarasiṃha died in the meditation room and was buried with great honour, mourned by all up to the Emperor himself. He had been a monk for eighty years. Thereafter, the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* transmission lineage passed to native Chinese monks and others whose details need not concern us here.

The one major figure we should consider, on the Indo-Tibetan side of the tradition is Buddhaguhya. In stark contrast to the detailed biography we have of Śubhakarasiṃha, we know next to nothing about Buddhaguhya. Apart from his authorship of commentaries on the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* and other tantric texts, we have only one piece of reliable information about him. We do not even know the precise dates of his birth and death. There are a few inconsequential details about him, given by such Tibetan sources as Bu-ston, Tāranātha and gZhon nu dpal, mainly of interest to the hagiographer rather than the historian. However, putting together these fragments we can form the following outline of his biography. Buddhaguhya was probably born around 700, or a little before then, and lived based in the Vārānasi area. He was a direct disciple of

⁸ This exists in three versions—an earlier translation made by Vajrabodhi, that by Śubhakarasiṃha, and a Tibetan translation (P 3488) which is attributed to a dPal-bzang rabs-dga', included in the bsTan-'gyur. The Sanskrit title given with the Tibetan translation is *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi-tantra-sambaddhapūjavidhi*—"The Ritual of Worship Linked with the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi-tantra*."

Buddhajñānapāda, who is believed to have been deeply involved in the early development of the *Guhyasamāja*. According to rNying-ma sources, he is also said to have received teachings from Līlavajra on the *Māyājāla* cycle of texts, especially the *Guhyagarbha*. Later in his life, when he was an established and respected teacher, King Khri srong lde bstan sent a delegation including dPal brtsegs and others, to Buddhaguhya to invite him to Tibet to teach. This invitation is thought to have been made early in the reign of Khri srong lde bstan, around 760. Hence it is likely that he felt unable to undertake the journey because of his age and so he declined the invitation, telling the Tibetans that his protector, the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, had warned him that he would die if he went to Tibet. He wrote instead a letter addressed to the Tibetan King and people. Most of this letter is taken up with teachings and admonitions to the Tibetans in the tradition of Nāgārjuna's "Precious Garland" (*Ratnāvalī*), but Buddhaguhya mentions in passing that he instructed the visiting Tibetans on the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* and other texts. It is presumably then that these texts were taken to Tibet to be translated later by dPal brtsegs himself, aided by Śīlendrabodhi.

Looking at the commentaries and other works ascribed to Buddhaguhya in the Tenjur, it will be seen that he mainly specialized in the Kriyā and Yoga *tantras*. However, a number of other works are attributed to him in the Peking Edition of the Tenjur, all connected with various aspects of the *Guhyagarbha*, and, as already mentioned above, Buddhaguhya figures importantly in the transmission of the rNying-ma *tantras*, especially the *Guhyagarbha* cycle. Whether these works are genuinely his or not must await further study, though certainly there is no intrinsic reason why they should not be. Nevertheless, the works belonging to this group, which I have briefly examined, do seem stylistically quite different to Buddhaguhya's writings on the Kriyā and Yoga *tantras* and I cannot find any reference at all to the *Guhyagarbha* in any of his other works, even where this might have been appropriate. One possible solution is that he became involved in the *Guhyagarbha* later in his life, some time after having written those commentaries, but a detailed study of all the works attributed to Buddhaguhya would be necessary in order to make a definitive statement regarding his involvement with texts like the *Guhyagarbha*.

One may note here in passing that a link may be surmised between Jñānagarbha and Buddhaguhya from the fact that he was a member of the party which went to invite Buddhaguhya to Tibet. It is curious that Jñānagarbha is also said to have been taught by a Śrīgupta. No other information about this Śrīgupta (*dPal sbas*) seems to be available. Two suggestions may be made regarding his identity. First, could he be the same person as the Dharmagupta who taught Śubhakarasiṃha? We know that Dharmagupta was alive at least until 714 when Śubhakarasiṃha left Nālanda, so it would just be possible for him to have taught

Jñānagarbha during that latter's early youth, if we assume that Jñānagarbha was born in 700 or just before then. Though entirely speculative, this is an intriguing possibility. On the other hand, could this be nothing more than an alternative form of Buddhaguhya's name, for there is actually some uncertainty about the correct Sanskrit form of Buddhaguhya's own name. In later times, this is usually given in Tibetan as *Sangs rgyas gsang ba* which would be equivalent to Buddhaguhya. But in several colophons to his works in the Tenjur, both Buddhaguhya and Buddhagupta are given in transcription. Also the *IDan kar ma*, the oldest catalogue of Tibetan translations compiled in the early 9th century, gives the name as Buddhagupta⁹ in transcription as the author of the Commentaries on the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. Given the age of the *IDan kar ma*, might it not be reasonable to think that Buddhagupta is the correct form? In any case, it is noteworthy that there is this cluster of people with *gupta* as an element in their names (Dharmagupta, Buddhagupta, Śrīgupta) resident at Nālanda during the first half of the 8th century AD.

So, how does this information help us in dating the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*? As we know, the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* was translated by Śubhakarasiṃha into Chinese in 724 although it seems certain that he was unable to make use of his own version of the text, if in fact he had brought one with him. Instead he had to use a copy he and Yī-xíng found at the Huá-yán Temple in Chang-an. It is virtually certain that this copy of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* was one of the texts gathered by Wú-xíng, who was in India for eight years until his death there in 674. Of course, we do not know when he obtained a copy of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* during his stay in India, but let us assume that it would have been some time during the latter part of his sojourn, perhaps around 672 when he was beginning to think of returning to China. When we take into consideration the other evidence mentioned above regarding the increasing popularity of tantric practices around this time as evidenced by the Chinese translation records and Yī-jìng, it seems likely that *Vairocanābhisambodhi* was composed and gained acceptance some time shortly before Wú-xíng's arrival in India, perhaps about the middle of the seventh century at the earliest. This is also corroborated by the lineage given for the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* according to Chinese sources: Mahāvairocana → Vajrapāṇi → Dharmagupta → Śubhakarasiṃha. We see from this that Dharmagupta is the first human in the chain of transmission of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, so it is not unreasonable to assume that the first version of *Vairocanābhisambodhi* was compiled sometime during Dharmagupta's lifetime, which, if we discount the stories in the Chinese

⁹ There is also the problem of the identity of the *Sangs rgyas shas* known from rNying ma sources to have also been active during the second half of the 8th century, for this name may also be reconstructed as Buddhagupta.

records about his age as a pious fiction,¹⁰ would have been during the hundred years from around 615 to 715.¹¹ It may even be the case that Dharmagupta himself was actually involved in the composition of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. It is also difficult to imagine that *Vairocanābhisambodhi* was compiled much earlier than this date for the reason that none of the Indian monks (Zhi-tong, Bhagavaddharma, Atikuṭa, Divakara, Śikṣānanda, Mañicinta) arriving in China from India around the end of the seventh century, who were involved in the translation of the tantric type of texts, are known to have brought a copy of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* with them.

A further clue to the dating of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, or at least material related to it, may be contained in the *Uttaratantra* which follows the Tibetan translation of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* which is not found in the Chinese version and which seems to have been unknown to Śubhakarasiṃha. Though the following is somewhat speculative, there is some information contained in the *Uttaratantra* which may be interpreted in such a way as to give us some idea about the time of its composition. To begin with, it might not be unreasonable to assume that the *Vairocanābhisambodhi Uttaratantra* was intended originally as a short manual summarising the main rituals of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, perhaps for the convenience of the *ācāryas*. Such is the implication of the various comments made by Buddhaghūya when he mentions or quotes from it. If this is the case, then it was probably intended to be somewhat ephemeral although it has now achieved canonical status. The interesting aspect of this, from our point of view, are the chapter sections dealing with the rites of pacifying, enriching and so forth where there are given selections of planets and constellations (*nakṣatras*), as can be seen from Appendix 3. The particular rite is likely to be most effective if performed when one of the planets is in conjunction with the prescribed constellations. The list for the rite of destroying is the most interesting, for instead of the generally random pattern of constellations given for the other rites, we see that there is a consecutive block of four—*Uttaraphalgunā*, *Hasta*, *Citrā* and *Svāti*—which covers a 53 degree range of the sky. I suspect that the reason for this is linked to Saturn, which, together with Mars, is indicated for the rite of destroying. Saturn, as most people are aware, is a slow moving planet, for it takes almost twenty-nine years to complete one revolution around the sun. If the constellations prescribed for destroying were as random and spaced out as for the other rites, there would often have been gaps of several years before Saturn was conjoined with an appropriate constellation,

¹⁰ As with several other early figures in the history of tantric Buddhism, Dharmagupta is said to have lived for a prodigious length of time—over 800 years according to some sources.

¹¹ From Śubhakarasiṃha's biography, we know that he was still alive around 715 AD.

leaving Mars as the sole planet in use for this rite and thereby limiting the occasions when one could perform it. Indeed, it may even be possible that Mars was inserted here later, as it is also listed for the rite of subduing, and thus is the only planet to be listed twice. Whoever compiled the *Uttaratantra* seems to have included this block of four constellations to avoid that kind of situation, as Saturn would have taken about five years to pass through them all. Naturally this presupposes regular updating of the text, which was probably not done. Anyway, if we accept that such was the reason for this block of four constellations, then we have an important means of generating possible dates for the composition of the *Uttaratantra*. By calculating back, we find that Saturn entered the first of those constellations in the following years—682, 711, 740 and so on, every 29 years either way. Of these dates, 682 is probably too early, bearing in mind that Śubhakarasiṃha seems to have had no knowledge of it. On the other hand, though not impossible, 740 AD seems just a bit too late as it was accepted by Buddhaguhya’s time as a canonical text, so we may tentatively suggest that the *Uttaratantra* was composed around 711 which would fit in with the general chronological sequence of the *tantras*. Another clue may also be contained in the *Uttaratantra*. Unlike the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* itself, the phrase *gsan gba’i snying po* is used a number of times. It is not clear whether this is being used solely as an epithet or not, but it takes on a new light when we reconstruct the most likely Sanskrit form of this phrase—*guhyagarbha*, that is, ‘secret matrix’. Does this have any connection with the *Guhyagarbha-tantra*?

Place of Compilation

Naturally, there is no clear indication of the place of compilation in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, but everything points to somewhere in North-east India, especially to the region between Nālanda and the Himalayan foothills, some hundred miles or so to its north. The great monastic university of Nālanda flourished as one of the main centres of Mahāyāna learning from the 5th century onwards. During the centuries of its existence, many of the greatest Buddhist teachers lived and taught there. All the people we know were connected with the transmission of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* resided there. Śubhakarasiṃha received teachings on the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* at Nālanda from Dharmagupta and later carried on his teaching career in that area. Wú-xíng was based there during his stay in India and so it is probable that he also obtained his copy of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* there. Later, Buddhaguhya also resided at Nālanda, where he was visited by the Tibetan delegation bringing the invitation from Khri srong lde bstan to go to Tibet.

However, there is also another important source of information regarding possible areas of origin in the form of the various flora listed in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* and its *Uttaratantra*. It is curious that though various plants and trees

arc often mentioned in tantric ritual literature, I am not aware of any studies that make use of this data to assist the determination of geographical provenance of such texts. At risk of stating the obvious, plants and trees do not grow just anywhere at random, but their distribution is determined by the interaction of complex factors of temperature, humidity, altitude and soil conditions. For example, tropical plants will not be found in alpine environments, nor will aquatic plants be found in deserts. In the present case, the Indian subcontinent presents a wide range of habitats. The great botanist Hooker¹² classified India into three main areas: Himalayan, Eastern and Western, and these are further subdivided into seven areas with various types of flora specific to these areas: Eastern Himalayas, Western Himalayas, the Indus plain, the Gangetic plain, Malabar, the Deccan and Ceylon. Therefore, if we are able to identify the locations where the plants and trees mentioned in texts grow, we may thereby gain a valuable insight into the geographical origin of the text in question. Naturally, we may achieve greater certainty if there is a reasonable number of plants, while plants traditionally mentioned in Buddhist works with a “literary” sense, such as *padma*, *utpala*, *punḍarīka*, *udumbara* and so forth, are of little use.

In principle, the process by which we can cull this information is not especially complicated. When working with texts that survive only in Tibetan, we must first reconstruct the Sanskrit original. Often the Tibetan translation takes the forms of a simplified or abbreviated transliteration. However, this can be made somewhat difficult, especially in the case of less common flora, by textual corruptions that are rampant in any such transliterations. The situation is eased if a Chinese translation of the same text exists, as Chinese transliterations seem to be much more resistant to corruption due to the nature of Chinese characters themselves. Having arrived at the presumed Sanskrit original, we then need to identify the plant with its correct taxonym. Again there are a number of works that can help us in this task, especially those connected with Ayurvedic *materia medica*. Such reference works generally seem to be consistent and reliable, although one may note that differing taxonyms are sometimes given for the same Sanskrit plant. This may be due to imprecision in the range of the Sanskrit term or else to a degree of regional substitution. In studies I have done on lists of flora, I have encountered difficulties with under five percent of names. The final stage of the process, identification of the range of the geographical locations, is facilitated mainly by Hooker’s seven volume *Flora of British India*,¹³ supplemented by other surveys.

¹² J. Hooker, *A Sketch of the Flora of British India, Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1904.

¹³ The absence of this exhaustive survey from the libraries of Universities offering Indic studies is surprising. Copies are available for reference at Kew and at the Royal Horticultural Society.

The results of such research, in the case of the flora mentioned in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, are presented in Appendices 4 & 5. An examination of the data given in Appendix 5 would seem to point to the sub-Himalayan tract of India and Nepal, especially to the east, as the likely region where the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* was composed. That is to say, although the plants are individually found in several different regions, the only area where the largest number of them are found together is in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas. The plants which are mentioned and which grow outside that area are often those used for their resins to make incense.

Bearing the above information in mind, we might posit the following scenario, if we accept that such texts as the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* were composed by humans, albeit under divine inspiration. Though probably connected with the origins of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, Nālanda itself would have been bustling with the large numbers of students and teachers resident there, so it is hardly likely that the initial compiler of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* sat in a back room at the monastery writing it. It is more reasonable to suppose that people interested in meditation went on retreats to remote areas of the forest and mountains to engage in their practice, as they have always done throughout the history of Buddhism. Indeed, the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* itself recommends secluded places for the rituals connected with the *maṇḍalas* and subsequent meditational practices. These people may well have gone up to the southern slopes of the Himalayas and were inspired to compose such texts as the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* while there, whose practices reflect the kinds of meditational techniques they had evolved against an intellectual and devotional background which at this time was undergoing considerable ferment. After these texts had been composed, they would have been brought back to places like Nālanda as new revelations, rather like the *gter-ma* discoveries of later Tibetan tradition, to be promulgated, practised and commented upon by a larger audience.

I hope the above technique of using flora habitats may prove useful in providing clues to the origin of other Buddhist *tantras*. I am at present working on the various lists given in such Kriyā *tantras* as the *Susiddhikāra*, the *Guhyasāmānya*, with similar results concerning origins.

Appendix 1: Chinese Translations of Sūtras with Tantric Elements

Wu: Zhī-qiān (220-230 AD):
Anantamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1011)
Mātaṅga-sūtra (= *Śārdulakarṇāvadāna*) (T 1300)
Dhāraṇī of Supreme Illuminator (T 1351)
Puṣpakūṭadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1356)

- E. Chin (317–420): Dharmarakṣa:
Dhāraṇī for Relieving Toothache (T 1327)
Ārṣaprasāmanī-sūtra (T 1325)
Māyākārabhadradhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1378)
 * *Daṇḍalamāyā-dhāraṇī* (T 1391)
Maṇiratna-sūtra (T 1393)
 Nanda:
Sūtra of Avalokiteśvara's Dhāraṇī for Overcoming Poisoning (T 1043)
 Śrīmitra:
Abhiṣeka-sūtra (T 1331)
 Kumarajīva:
Mahāmāyurī-vidyārājñī (T 988)
 Buddhābhadda:
Avatamsakasūtra-hṛdayadhāraṇī (T 1021)
 Unknown:
Puṣpakūṭa-dhāraṇī (T 1357, T 1358)
- W. Chin: Dharmapala (385–400):
Mātāṅga-sūtra (T 1301)
 Shengjian:
Sūtra on the Dhāraṇī Against Perversities (T 1342)
- N. Liang (397–439): Fazhòng:
Mahāvaipulya-dhāraṇī (T 1339)
- Liu Sung (420-478): Guṇabhadra:
Anantamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1013)
 *Puṇyaśīla & Xuàn-chàng:
Anantamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1014)
 Kālayāśa:
Amitābhadhyāna-sūtra (T 365)
Bhaiṣajyarājabhaiṣajyasamudgati-sūtra (T 1161)
- Ch'i (479-502): Wàn-tiān-yì:
Infinite Dhāraṇī of Entry into all Dharmas (T 1343)
- Liang (505 556): Saṅghapala:
Mahāmāyurī-sūtra (T 984)
Anantamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1016)

- N. Wei (534-550): Buddhaśanta:
 Anantamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1015)
 Vajramaṇḍadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1344)
 Tán-yào:
 Dhāraṇī for Great Benefit (T 1335)
 Bodhiruci:
 Sarvabalarakṣadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1028)
- N. Chou (557-581): Jñānayaśa:
 Mahāmegha-sūtra (T 992, T 993)
 Yaśogupta:
 Avalokiteśvaraikadaśamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1070)
- Sui (851 - 618): Narendrayaśa:
 Mahāmegha-sūtra (T 991)
 Jñānagupta:
 Anantamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 10 17)
 Amoghapaśadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1 093)
 Tathāgatamahākauśalyopāyadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1334)
 Dharmolkadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1340)
 Mahābaladhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1341)
 Vajramaṇḍadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1345)
 Dhāraṇī of the 12 Buddhas (T 1348)
 Dhāraṇī of Supreme Illuminatio (T 1353, T 1354)
- T'ang: Xuàn-zàng (post-645):
 Sarvabuddhahṛdaya-dhāraṇī (T 918)
 Five Dhāraṇīs (T 1034)
 Avalokiteśvaraikadaśamukhadhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1071)
 Amoghapaśahṛdaya-sūtra (T 1094)
 Vasudhārādhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1162)
 Ṣaṇmukhadhāraṇī (T 1360, T 1361)
 Subāhumudrādhāraṇī-sūtra (T 1363)
 Sūtra of Most Secret Dhāraṇī of Eight Names (T 1365)
 Dhāraṇī that Saves from Adversities (T 1395)

Appendix 2: Works attributed to Buddhaguhya

- A. Kriyā Tantra Commentaries:
 Dhyānottara-ṭīkā (TTP 3495)

- Subāhupariṣṭcchā-piṇḍārtha* (TTP 3496)
Vajravidāraṇa-ṭīkā (TTP 3504)
Vajravidāraṇa-sādhana (TTP 3751)
Vajravidāraṇabali-vidhikrama (TTP 3752)
Vajravidāraṇa-snāhavidhi (TTP 3755)
- B. Commentaries on *Vairocanābhisambodhi*:
Vairocanābhisambodhi-piṇḍārtha (TTP 3486)
Vairocanābhisambodhi-vṛtti (TTP 3487 & Revision TTP 3490)
- C. Yoga Tantra Commentaries:
Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-viirtilw (TTP 3451)
Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-maṇḍalavidhikrama (TTP 3461)
Tantrārthāvatāra (TTP 3324)
- D. *Guhyagarbha* Commentaries, etc.:
Abhiṣekārtha-nirbheda (TTP 4722)
Vajrasattvamāyājālaprabhākrama (TTP 4731)
Mārgavyūha (TTP 4736)
Cittabindu-upadeśa (TTP 4738)
Śrīguhyagarbha-nāmacakṣuṣ-ṭīkā (TTP 4756)
Krodhamāyābhiṣekamaṇḍalavajrakarma-āvali (TTP 4761)
Māyābhiṣekasyaja-mūlavṛtti (TTP 4762)
- E. Miscellaneous:
Yogakalpavighna-nibarhaṇa (TTP 3283 & P5449)
Śrīvajrapāṇi-sādhana (TTP 3687)
Karmopāya (TTP 3754)
Dharmamaṇḍala-sūtra (TTP 4528)
Maṇḍalakriyā-vidhi (TTP 4581 & TTP 5439)
Bhoṭasvāmidaśagurulekha (TTP 5693)

Appendix 3: Astrological Data Given in the Vairocanābhisambodhi Uttaratāntra

Aśvirī	00 00'	From Aries	Bharanī	26 40'	From Aries
Kṛttikā	40 00'	<i>ibid.</i>	Rohiṇī	53 20'	<i>ibid.</i>
Mṛgaśirā	66 40'	<i>ibid.</i>	Ārdra	80 00'	<i>ibid.</i>
Punarvasu	93 20'	<i>ibid.</i>	Puṣyā	106 40'	<i>ibid.</i>
Āśleṣā	120 00'	<i>ibid.</i>	Maghā	133 20'	<i>ibid.</i>
Pūrvaphalguṇī	146 40'	<i>ibid.</i>	Uttaraphalguṇī	160 00'	<i>ibid.</i>

Hast	173 20'	<i>ibid.</i>	Citrā	186 40'	<i>ibid.</i>
Svāti	200 00'	<i>ibid.</i>	Viśākhā	213 20'	<i>ibid.</i>
Anurādhā	226 40'	<i>ibid.</i>	Jyeṣṭhā	240 00'	<i>ibid.</i>
Mūla	253 20'	<i>ibid.</i>	Pūrvāṣādhā	266 40'	<i>ibid.</i>
Uttarāṣādhā	280 00'	<i>ibid.</i>	Abhijit	Lies in direction of Vega, but omitted in later times	
Śravaṇā	293 20'	<i>ibid.</i>	Dhaniṣṭā	306 40'	<i>ibid.</i>
Śatabhisā	320 00'	<i>ibid.</i>	Pūrvabhadra	333 20'	<i>ibid.</i>
Uttarabhadra	346 40'	<i>ibid.</i>	Reva	ti360 00'	<i>ibid.</i>

A. Pacifying

1. Lunar phase: 5th day of waxing moon (*śuklapakṣa*), full moon
2. Governing planets: Moon, Venus
3. Constellations:

Āśleṣā	120 00'	extension from Aries
Maghā	133 20'	
Pūrvaphalguṇī	146 40'	
Uttarabhadra	346 40'	

B. Enriching

1. Lunar phase: 3rd, 5th and 7th days of waxing moon, new moon
2. Governing planets: Mercury, Jupiter
3. Constellations:

Rohiṇī	52 30'
Jyeṣṭhā	240 00'
Abhijit	In region of Vega
Dhaniṣṭā	306 40'

C. Subduing

1. Lunar phase: 9th day of waning moon (*kr̥ṣṇapakṣa*)
2. Governing planets: Sun, Mars
3. Constellations:

Kṛttikā	40 00'
Puṣyā	106 40'
Maghā	133 20'
Viśākhā	213 20'

D. Destroying

1. Lunar phase: 8th and 14th days of waning moon
2. Governing planets: Saturn, Mars
3. Constellations:

Aśvini	00 00'
Punarvasu	93 20'
Uttaraphalgunī	160 00'
Hasta	173 20'
Citrā	186 40'
Svāti	200 00'

Appendix 4: Key Passages in the Vairocanābhisambodhi Listing Flora

A. *de nas sngags pa de yis su || me tog ser po dkar po dmar ||
yid su 'ong bas nan tan du || lha rnams la ni mchod pa bya ||
pad ma 'am yang na ud pa la || nā ga ge sar pu na ga ||
tsam pa a sho ga ti la ka || pa ta la dang sa la' ang rung ||
de la sogs pa'i me tog rnams || yid du' on gzhing blta na sdug ||
bkra shis pa la sngags pa yis || mkhas pas nan tan mchod par bya ||
tsan dan ta gar spri ka dang || gur gum dang ni ru rta 'ang rung ||
spos mchog rab tu bzang po ni || sna tshogs yid du' ong ba dbul ||
a ga ru 'am sgron shing ngam || ga bur dang ni tsan dan dang ||
sa la'i thang chu bkra shis pa 'am || shi ri ba sa ka yang rung ||
gzhan yang bdug spos sna tshogs pa || bkra shis 'jig rten rnam grags pa ||
yid 'ong sngags pas cho ga bzhin || lha mams la ni dbul bar bya ||*
(TTP, *Tha*, 136a iii–v)

“Then the *mantrin* should earnestly make offerings to the deities, with pleasing yellow, white and red flowers. Such flowers as white and blue lotuses, *nāgakeśaras*, *punnāgas campakas*, *aśokas*, *tilakas* or else *pātala* and *sāla* flowers. Such flowers as those are fragrant, pleasing to look at and auspicious. The wise *mantrin* should carefully offer those. He should offer various fine, excellent, and pleasing perfumes, such as sandalwood, *tagara*, *sprkhā*, *kuṅkuma* and *kuṣṭha*. The *mantrin* should also offer to the deities, according to the rules, various incenses that are auspicious, world-famed and pleasing, such as *agaru*, *devadāru*, *karpāra*, *candana*, the gum of the *sāla* tree, or else the *śrīvāsaka*.”

B. *zhi ba'i cho ga la ni tsan dan dkr po ga bur dang sbyar ba dbul lo || ma' byor na bu
shel tse cig dbul lo || de bzhin du pad ma dkar po dang | sna ma'i me tog dang me tog ma
li ka dang | me tog pu ti ka la sogs me tog dkar po dri zhim pa | bkra shis pa gang yin pa
de dag dbul lo || zhi ba'i cho ga la dbul spos ni | ga bur dang tsan dan nam yang na shri
ba sa ka dbul lo ||* (TTP, *Tha*, 196b ii–iii)

“For the Pacifying ritual, you should offer white sandalwood mixed with *karpūra*. If you do not have these, offer one *uśūra*. Likewise you should offer sweet-smelling and auspicious white flowers such as white lotuses, *mālatī*, *mallikā* and *yūthika*. The perfumes for the Pacifying rituals are *karpūra*, *candana* or else *śrīvāsaka*.”

C. *gur gum ga bur bsres bas ni || rgyas pa dag la byug spas mchog ||
dri zhim kha dog ser po yang || de ma rnyed na sbyar bar bya ||
me tog tsam pa rab tu bzang || yu ti sna ma ser po dang ||
de las gzhan pa 'ang dri zhim pa || ser po dag ni dbul bar bya ||
gurgum a ka ru dang sbyar || sha kha ra dang sbyar ba dag ||
rgyas pa 'i las rnam s 'grub bya 'i phyir || bdug spas mkhas pas dbul bar bya ||
gu gul dang ni tsan dan yang || mar dang sbyar ba bdug spas mchog ||
sra rtsi bog ni gur gum sres || bdug spas sngags la mkhas pas dbul ||
(TTP, Tha, 199b iii–vi)*

“The most excellent perfume for Enriching is *kuṅkuma* mixed with *karpūra*. If you cannot obtain that, you should mix anything which is sweet-smelling and yellow. You should get *campaka* flowers, yellow *yūthika* and *mālatī*, or any other fragrant yellow ones and offer those. The incense the wise one should offer to accomplish the rite of Enriching is *kuṅkuma* mixed with *agaru*, and those mixed with sugar. The most excellent incense is *guggulī* and *candana* mixed with butter. The wise *mantrin* should also offer incense of *sāla* resin mixed with *kukuma*.”

D. *de la byug-spos la sogs-pa'i khyad-par ni tsan-dan dmar-po dang du-ru-kasol-ba dang bsres-pa'i bdug-spos nag-po dbul-lo || me-tog ud-pa-la mthing-ka dang | a-pa-ra-ji-ta mthing-ka-'am | gzhan-yang me-tog sngon-po-rnam dbul-lo || bdug-spos ni sra-rtsi-bog bu-ram dang sbyar-ba dbul-lo || (TTP, Tha, 203b iii - iv)*

“In regard to the specific types of incense and so forth, he should offer black perfume of red *candana* mixed with *turuṣka* charcoal, blue *aparājita* flowers or else other blue flowers. For incense, *sāla* resin mixed with molasses should be offered.”

Appendix 5: Identity of Flora Listed in the Vairocanābhisambodhi and their Habitats

1. *pad ma*: *padma* *Nymphaea alba*, Linn., Indigenous to Kashmir but cultivated throughout India.
2. *ud pa la*: *utpala*, *Nymphaea caerulea*, Sav., Cultivated throughout India.

3. *nā ga ge sar:* *nāgakeśara*, *Mesua ferrea*, Linn., East Himalayas, hills of East Bengal.
4. *pu na ga:* *punnāga*, *Terminalia arjuna*, W. & A. Sub-Himalayas, North-west Himalayas, Central India, Bihar, the Deccan and other places throughout India except East and Central Bengal.
5. *tsam pa:* *campaka*, *Michelia champaca*, Linn., East Nepal, Sikkim and warm-wet areas of Himalayas, but also cultivated in moist areas of India.
6. *a sho ka:* *aśoka*, *Saraca indica*, Linn., East Himalayas, Central India, W. Peninsula, Konkan. Cultivated in temples precincts throughout India.
7. *ti la ka:* *tilaka*, *Clerodendrum phlomoides*, NW Himalayas, sub-Himalayan tract, in drier climates extending to Bihar and Orissa, Deccan, Terai to Sri Lanka. *Wendlandia exerta*, DC Dry forests of sub-Himalayan tract, from Chenab eastwards to Nepal and Sikkim up to 4000', Orissa, Central India, N. Deccan, N. Konkan.
8. *pa fa la:* *pāṭala*, *Stereospermum suaveolens*, DC Sub-Himalayan warm-wet areas, from Jumna eastwards, Central India.
9. *sa la:* *sāla*, *Shorea robusta*, Gaertn., f. Sub-Himalayan tract, Assam and the hills of West Bengal.
10. *tsan dan:* *candana*, *Santalum album*, Linn., Cultivated throughout India, but indigenous to W. Peninsular from Nasik southwards.
11. *ta gar* *tagara*, *Tabernaemontana coronaria*, Willd., Sub-Himalayan tract from Jumna eastwards up to 2,000'. Commonly cultivated in gardens. Himalayas.
12. *spri ka:* *spṛkhā*, *Trigonella comiculata*, Linn., Bengal and Kashmir.
13. *gurgum:* *kuṅkuma*, *Crocus sativa*, Linn., indigenous to Kashmir.
14. *ru rta:* *kuṣṭha*, *Costus speciosus*, SM., Central and Eastern Himalayas.
15. *a ga ru:* *agaru*, *A. quileria agallocha*, Roxb., East Himalayas, Assam and Bhutan.
16. *sgron shing:* *devadāru*, *Cedrus deodara*, Roxb., NW Himalayas from Kumaon westwards and Nepal from 3,500'–12,000'. *Pinus picea*, Linn., "Pinus sylvestris, Linn., Pinus longifolia, Roxb.

17. *ga bur:* *karpūra*, *Dryobalanops aromatica*, Gaertn, not native to India, *Cinnamomum camphora*, Nees & Eberm. Cultivated throughout India, but not native.
18. *shi ri ba sa ka:* *śrīvāsaka*, *Pinus longifolia*, Roxb., Sub-Himalayan tract, abundant as far east as Nepal from 1,500' to 6,500', Bhutan.
19. *bu shel tse:* *uśira*, *Andropogon squarrosus*, Linn., Himalayan foothills., *Vetiveria zizanioides*, Linn., close relative of *Andropogon squarrosus*, throughout plains and hills of India up to 4,000'.
20. *pad ma dkar po:* *punḍarīka*, *Nelumbo nucifera*, Gaertn.
21. *sna ma:* *mālatī* (?), *Rosa glandulifera*, Linn., *Bassia latifolia*, Roxb. Cultivated in most parts of India, indigenous to sub-Himalayan tract. *Aganosma dichotoma*, K. Schum. Sikkim, Himalayas 3,000' to 4,000'.
22. *ma li ka:* *mallikā*, *Jasminum sambac*, Ait., Indigenous to W. Peninsula, but cultivated throughout India.
23. *yu ti ka:* *yūlthika*, *Jasminum auriculatum*, Vahl. In dry forests in the Deccan, but common throughout India in dry regions.
- 24a. *gu gul:* *guggala*, *Styrax benzoin*, Dryand., Malaya. *Balsamodendron mukal*, Hook., Sind, Rajasthan.
- 24b. *gu gul:* or: *guggulī*, *Boswellia serrata*, Roxb. Himalayan valleys.
25. *sra rtsi bog:* *sarjarasa*, *Shorea robusta*, Gaertn., (sap/resin) “*Pterocarpus santalinus*, Linn.,
26. *du ru ka:* *turuṣa*, *Juniperus communis*, Linn., Himalayas, from 5,000' to 15,000'. Larger sized tree in East and at lower heights.
27. *a pa ra dzi ta:* *aparājita*, *Clitoria temata*, Linn., Commonly cultivated in tropical zones of India from sub-Himalayas to Sri Lanka.

The following woods are also mentioned throughout the *Vairocanii.bhisalflbodhi Uttarantra* for burning in *homa* rituals:

28. *plag sha:* *plakṣa*, *Ficus lacor*, Buch, Ham, Sub-Himalayan tract up to 5,000', common in N. India, Bengal, Assam, Central Provinces, W. Peninsula. Not common wild.
29. *u du ba ra:* *udumbara*, *Ficus glomerata*, Roxb., Sub-Himalayan tract, Ajmeer and Merwara, Bihar, Bengal plains and Khasi Hills.
30. *a shva ttha:* *aśvattha*, *Ficus religiosa*, Linn., Indigenous to sub-Himalayan tract, but cultivated throughout India. Rare in N.W. India.

31. *seng ldeng*: *khadira*, *Acacia catechu*, Willd., Sub-Himalayan tract in valleys up to 3,000', also in hills of W. Peninsula.
32. *ka ra bi ra*: *karavīra*, *Nerium indicum*, Mill. Nepal up to 6,500', the Sindh.
33. *ba la ta ka*: *bhallātaka*, *Semecarpus anacardium*, Linn., Sub-Himalayan tract ascending to 3,500', Assam, the Khasi hills, Central India, W. Peninsula.
34. *ba ru ra*: *vibhītaka*, *Terminalia bellerica*, Roxb., Sub-Himalayan tract from Indus eastwards, common throughout India except arid regions.