

Kirill M. Bogdanov

“Six Yogas” Practice in Text from IOM RAS Tangut Fund. Preface, Translation from the Tangut Language and Commentary

DOI: 10.55512/wmo697775

Submitted: August 14, 2025.
Accepted: October 02, 2025.

Abstract: This article presents a Russian translation, commentary and brief textual research of the Tangut manuscript (10th–13th cc.) describing a tantric practice possibly related to the doctrine of “Six Yogas” of the famous Indian tantric master Nāropa. Since the handwriting of this manuscript is nearly illegible, I have published here only part of this text which is more or less comprehensible due to its general meaning and structural completeness. Considering that this research aimed at the identification of the original specific traits of Tangut Buddhism which make it distinct from the neighboring Buddhist traditions that had, in their time, had a strong impact on its formation is a most important trend in this field, the publishing of this textual source could be helpful in this context.

Key words: Tangut Fund of IOM RAS, Tangut Buddhism, Tantra, “Six Yogas”

About the author: Kirill M. Bogdanov, Researcher, Serindica Laboratory, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation) (khmae@list.ru). ORCID: 0000-0001-9769-5918.

© Bogdanov Kirill M., 2025

Introduction

The Manuscript Tang 1872 (IOM RAS, Tangut Fund) is a text on Buddhist tantric tradition, which despite the absence of title and the author’s or compiler’s name could be related to the *Six Yogas* tractate mostly associated with the name of famous Buddhist Tantric master Nāropa (Skt. Nāropāda).¹ Here on should be precise that teachings similar to *Six Yogas* existed in India around this historical period. Theirs authorship was associated with the different Tantric teachers. Nāropa has compiled some 10 practices, later, they

¹ Nāropa was born in India, the data of his life — end of 10th — early 11th cc.

have been transformed in 6 yogas.² Glenn Mullin in his “Readings on The Six Yogas of Nāropa” gives the description of these 10 yogas, and also of the 6 yogas which were transmitted orally to Nāropa by his teacher, legendary Tantric master Tilopa.³ Therefore, it means that *Six Yogas* doctrine in some form is already existed in Tantric tradition before. It should be also added that Guenther in his book on Nāropa did not ever mention this practice under the *Six Yogas* name but treated it as “Walking the path of freedom by suffering the torments of the acts of self-denial”, and suggested that it consisted of 12 parts.⁴

Fragment described in this article was discovered in Khara-Khoto suburban by Piotr Kozlov expedition in 1907–1909. Therefore, it should be confirmed that this text date as a most part of Kozlov collection as 9th — early 13th cc. One should be remarked here that in IOM RAS Tangut Fund there are some writings of Nāropa, commentaries to these writings.⁵ Most of these texts are different size fragments written in hard cursive — trait that makes these texts’ interpreting difficult. On contrary, a text Tang 1872, despite its illegible writing, attracted attention by clear structure that supposed the logical consequence of a whole narration. The text’s language, grammar’s and lexica’s characteristics, appeared to be quite understandable. One should be supposed that this is original Tangut text, not translation from other languages. I can assume that it was composed on some personal practice experience based on Nāropa teachings. Text was checked by scribe or compiler; all comments and corrections were written in illegible cursive near to text’s line. These commentaries also could be the evidence that text was re-recorded from another source.

Originally, manuscript existed as scroll, now it consisted of two separate fragments: the first one — 23×58.5 cm, and the second one — 23×58 cm. The first fragment (Pl. 1), contained 22 lines of text with text’s beginning and complete meaning. It contains the description of three practices: yoga of the transference of mind (tib. ‘pho-ba), yoga of the radiant light (tib. ‘od-gsal), yoga of the dream state (tib. rmi-lam), the description of another yogas from this group (three or more?) is lost. The second fragment describes the concrete dreaming practice. I think its correct interpretation on

² ANDROSOV 2011: 296, 388.

³ MULLIN 2009: 23–31.

⁴ GUNTHER 1986: 41–81.

⁵ N.A. Nevsky, first, distinguished these texts in Tangut collection and gave first common description. See: NEVSKY 1960: 82.

should seek in context of local indigenous believes.⁶ Moreover, despite the grammar and meaning compatibility of the end of the 22nd line of the first fragment and the 1st line of the second fragments, a small part of text joining the meaning of these two fragments, is also lost.⁷

Not being a specialist in Tantric Buddhism, I suppose there being of some incontinence in description of practices and theirs' "secret" meaning comparing to the similar ones in canonic texts on Six Yogas.⁸ Because of the incompetence in this field, I shall not even try to analyze probable differences, and just hope that some interested in this subject specialist will decide to do it. However, I am sure that this text is a significant source, because it is the evidence of practice experience of some Tantric, who lived around time of *Six Yogas* written fixation, i.e. 10–11th cc. when the principal school of Tibetan Buddhism has been established.⁹

I did not succeed to read or correctly interpret some characters, so this translation is preliminary one. All punctuation is made according me interpretation, for easy reading lines of translation are numerated according to Tangut text's structure. I didn't comment some basic Buddhist terms assuming that more likely specialists in Buddhism would read this translation.

Translation

1. Praise to all Gurus!

2. There are three types of transference of mind:

First type — transference in accordance with wisdom.

Second type — transference in the moment of violent death or disastrous occurrence.

Third type — transference according to acquired knowledge [about it].
First type transference

3. [could be accomplished] as a result of special teaching.

Second type — forced transference happens when Buddha while giving the freedom [from this world], shows mudra;¹⁰

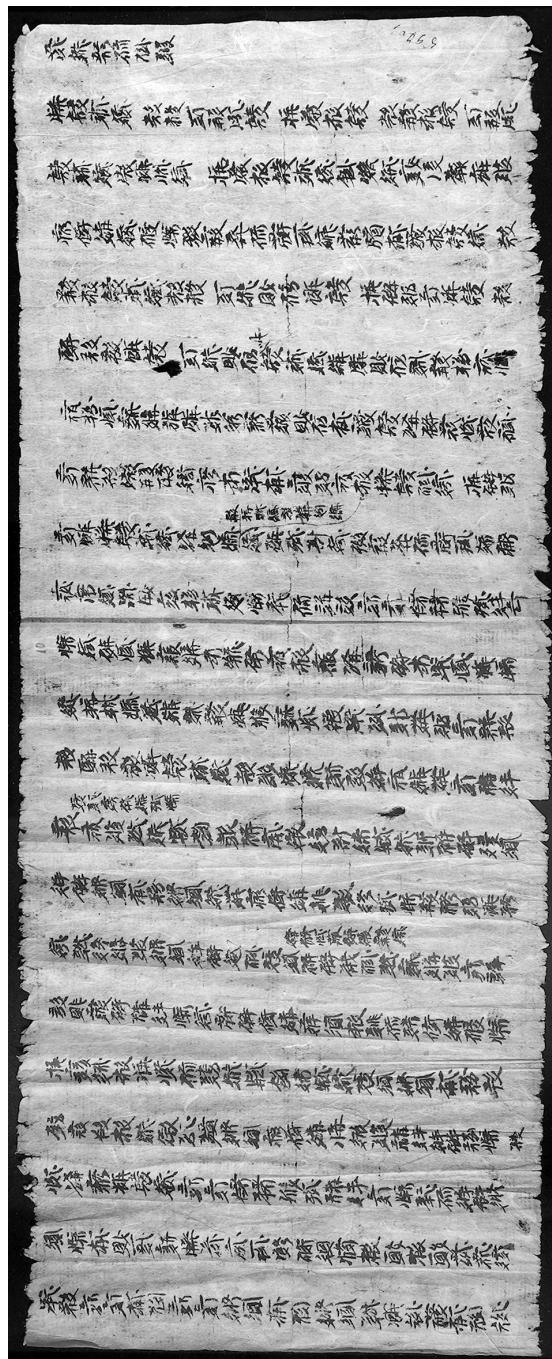
⁶ Therefore, I consider this part's publication as a premature.

⁷ In the second fragment the description of experience during yoga practice begins from the 4th dreaming, but logically the initial three should be described.

⁸ See: GUENTHER 1986; MULLING 2009.

⁹ KYCHANOV 1999: 31.

¹⁰ Literally "hand — seal" in the text (KYCHANOV 2006: 464).



Pl. 1.

Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of Russian Academy of Sciences,
Tangut Fund, Tang 1872, Tantric Text with Six Yogas Practice Description

4. In this moment on should concentrate on pure Sanskrit family,¹¹ and looking up on land of joy that on the [mount] Sumeru crown transfer [mind there].

5. Third type — transference according to acquired knowledge consists of three [types]:

the first, highest — transference into the Radiant light; the second, intermediate — transference into the corpse;¹²

6. the third, last one — transference according to the increased [merits].

The highest type — transference into the Radiant light¹³ [occurs] when [you] have been taught this [sādhanā] beforehand, then [while practiced it, the Radiant light] appeared.

7. [A capacity] of this sādhanā's accomplishment [points that] there was no past life rebirth.

If meditating on the Reality or the Radiant light emptiness, you will transfer mind [there], so the very center of [the emptiness you] are see and not see in the same time,

8. [this moment] attain Dharmakaya. Those who acquired firmness in dharma and do appropriate worship, should perceive the law of this transference.

The intermediate type —

9. transference of mind in moment of rebirthing in new body. This very moment [you] do visualize:

10. there is Shri Vajra-van holding vajra on the mountain Sumeru crown; in meditation go around him. When you will stay right before his face, your body will become radiant like Buddha's body.

11. Do realize this! As rules demand: in the state of dreaming make a vow. If in state of dreaming [you] can this sādhanā fulfill,

12. then in the moment of death due to the teaching received in past [life], transference [of mind] will take place and in next life you will get a new body.

13. The last type — transference of [mind] according to the increased [merits] happens while due to the Three Jewels worship Bodhicitta arises.

14. In past life the backbone of Buddha body — a stone — arose.¹⁴

¹¹ Probably, this phrase signifies some mantra's Sanskrit syllables.

¹² Here the reference to secret tantric practice — the transporting into the dead body that strongly differs from transference of mind practice.

¹³ Or acquisition of Radiant light.

¹⁴ Maybe it refers to Trikaya — three Buddha bodies.

When [you] will endure the entrance of downward whirl into the center of stomach¹⁵ and when upward whirl will overtake downward whirl,

15. then AH syllable will enter the center of stomach¹⁶ and a syllable HUM will enter into the center of the heart.¹⁷ When Hum syllable will rise up to highest spheres and will seal the pure Sanskrit family,¹⁸ this time in deep concentration and with joy this [sādhanā] fulfill.

16. In this moment when consequence of cloth¹⁹ is interrupted, Hum syllable is in the heart center, AH syllable is in the center of the stomach. When consequence of transference [will recover],

17. [you] should visualize before yourself the center of emptiness — Buddha's essence. Mediating on [the syllable] consequence from Sanskrit family [you] should seal the center of head crown with syllable KHI from Sanskrit family and [thus] destroy it. If caught in the Hell, [you should] meditate on Sanskrit family too.

18. Two elbows, head and two ribs [should be] chosen. Downward whirl will stop upward whirl, syllable AH in syllable HUM will enter.²⁰

19. A HI KA — while say [these syllables], obtained from highest spheres and syllable HUM will leave pure Sanskrit family,²¹ then in meditation [you] should contemplate as [this syllable] enters into the heart's center — Buddha's essence.

End.

20. And then according to Dharma the transference [will take place], the body will radiant. [In this moment] the essence of Buddha's body in meditation you should contemplate. In the heart center you should visualize syllable HUM.

21. The mind will transfer in to the vessel of light that gives a freedom. In all spheres the white beautiful dakinis' palaces will materialize,

22. You do collect them in your body. And syllable HUM do place in your body. That is why you...²²

¹⁵ Navel cakra.

¹⁶ I succeed to read a commentary near to this line: "Red syllable Ah, a secret one — in the corner of [triangle]. On should meditate on it, beforehand".

¹⁷ Heart cakra.

¹⁸ Literally "close up". Maybe it means "to complete a mantra".

¹⁹ Maybe metaphorically it means "tantric ritual".

²⁰ It means "join together".

²¹ Maybe it means "to form some mantra".

²² Here first fragment is cut.

References

ANDROSOV, Valerii P. 2011: *Indo-tibetskii buddizm. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* [Indo-Tibetan Buddhism Encyclopedic Dictionary]. Moscow: Orientalia.

GUENTHER, Herbert V. 1986: *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*. Boston–London: Shambala.

KYCHANOV, Evgenii I. 1999: *Katalog tangutskikh buddiiskikh pamiatnikov Instituta vostokovedeniia Rossiiskoi akademii nauk* [A Catalogue of Tangut Buddhist Books of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences]. Kyoto: Kyoto University.

KYCHANOV, Evgenii I. 2006: *Slovar' tangutskogo (Si Sia) iazyka* [Tangut-Russian-English-Chinese Dictionary]. Kyoto: Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University.

MULLIN, Glenn H. 2009: *Khrestomatia po Shesti iogam Naropy* [Readings on The Six Yogas of Naropa]. Moscow: Otkrytyi mir.

NEVSKY, Nikolai A. 1960: *Tangutskaia Filologija* [Tangut Philology]. In 2 vols. Vol. 1. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury.