On the Understanding of Other Cultures

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Piotr Balcerowicz & Marek Mejor
Sanskrit Manuscripts and Photos of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Giuseppe Tucci’s Collection. A Preliminary Report

FRANCESCO SFERRA

During his scientific expeditions to India, Nepal and Tibet in the thirties and forties (1933, 1935, 1939, 1949), Giuseppe TUCCI (1894–1984) had an opportunity to photograph, and in some cases to ask someone to copy, many important Buddhist works. Subsequently, some of the manuscripts that he had photographed became part of the collections in Indian and Nepalese libraries, but others were lost. TUCCI's photos of several of these manuscripts are the only documentation at our disposal. The study and the cataloguing of the photos and manuscripts (now held at the Oriental Department of the Library of the Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente [IsIAO, formerly IsMEO] in Rome) was begun about three years ago by Claudio CICUZZA and myself. This paper consists in a brief presentation of the first results of our work.

Regarding the photographic reproduction and the acquisition of manuscript material, the most important missions were those TUCCI carried out in 1939 and 1949. He concludes the brief report on his expedition to Tibet in 1939 with the following:

'The journey lasted ... seven months. My researches ... had specific archaeological and historical aims. The photographic documentation and the collection of scientific material are such as to permit a complete and definitive study of the political, artistic and religious history not merely of the regions crossed, but of most of Tibet in general. The hundreds of Sanskrit manuscripts discovered and photographed in the libraries of the explored monasteries will make a

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1 Special thanks are due to the authorities of the IsIAO for their financial support and permission to publish the photographs. I would also like to thank Mauro MAGGI for having read this paper and made some useful suggestions.

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great contribution to the study of Indian civilisation itself, which has been a source of continuous inspiration to Tibet'.

In his summing up, he laconically states:

'More than 1,500 pages of Indian palm-leaf manuscripts from Xth to XIVth centuries, discovered in various monasteries, were photographed.'

The first task we carried out, with the approval of the authorities of the Institute and with the collaboration of the former librarian, Mauro MAGGI, was to once again assemble the collection that was located in drawers and filing cabinets in various parts of the library, and kept in various folders and boxes, according to the criteria of TUCCI's study.

The collection actually consists in (A) four palm-leaf manuscripts written in Sinhalese characters (which most probably were not acquired on TUCCI’s missions) and in (B) forty-one manuscripts written on Nepalese paper and in Devanāgarī script.

The forty-one manuscripts are modern copies of ancient manuscripts commissioned by TUCCI himself, the originals of which have remained in the East. The manuscripts are of considerable scientific importance, because sometimes they are modern copies of otherwise unknown ancient manuscripts; for instance, we have a copy of the Vimala-prabhā, which at first glance does not seem to correspond to any of the manuscripts used by the editors; apart from some significant variants, not even the numbering of the verses of the Laghu-kāla-cakra-tantra corresponds to that so far established for the text.

Even more important are the photographic copies (negatives and prints) of ancient Indian manuscripts that TUCCI had made during his expeditions. In reorganising the collection we have therefore given precedence to this material.

Thus we have: (C) seven microfilms (including part of the manuscripts discovered in Gilgit); (D) fifty rolls of film (35 mm) containing on average twenty-four exposures, each of which reproduces a recto and a verso (among these manuscripts there are, for example, the Nepalese chronicles in Sanskrit); (E) circa four hundred negatives measuring 7 × 11 cm and containing on average the rectos or the versos of 15 palm-leaf folios, written in Newari script; and (F) approximately 650 photographic prints of various sizes also containing on average about a dozen folios, none of which corresponds either to the negatives or to the rolls of film (some prints contain only two folios, others as many as thirty). Some of these prints are on photographic paper, while others are on book paper—as if they had been prepared for publication. Half the texts had already been divided up and filed in grey folders bearing the title of the work.

Thus we have a total of about one-hundred and fifty codices and a slightly higher number of actual works. Obviously, we shall only be able to calculate the exact number of manuscripts and works when our task is completed.

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Some examples will suffice to give an idea of the value of the material that we are now studying. In 1996 David Pingree pointed out that among the photographic prints there are two of a Nepalese manuscript of the Yavana-jātaka by Sphujidvaja, now kept in Kathmandu with some folios missing and in a worse state of conservation than it was when photographed by TUCCI during his expeditions to Nepal (cf. Bollettino). The National Archives of Kathmandu also hold the originals of other works photographed by TUCCI, such as one of the manuscripts of the Amṛta-kanṭā by Raviśrīṇā; the manuscript of Vīmuktiśena’s Abhisamayālāṅkāra-vṛti that belonged to Guruji Hemraj Sharma; and, as was most kindly pointed out to me by Harunaga Isacson, also a copy of the Muktāvali by Ratnākaraśānti.

In other cases, the photos reproduce manuscripts that have either been completely lost or of which, as far as we know, the originals are not to be found in other

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2 TUCCI (1996c: 151–152): 'Il viaggio è durato [...] sette mesi. Le mie ricerche [...] hanno avuto scopi specialmente archeologici e storici. La documentazione fotografica e la raccolta del materiale scientifico è tale da permettere uno studio completo e definitivo sulla storia politica e artistica e religiosa non solo delle contrade attraversate, ma in generale di gran parte del Tibet. Allo stesso studio della civiltà indiana, che è stata l’ispiratrice continua del Tibet, grande contributo porteranno le centinaia di manoscritti in sanscrito scoperti e fotografati nelle biblioteche dei conventi esplorati.'

3 TUCCI (1996c: 153): 'Fotografate oltre 1500 pagine di manoscritti indiani su foglie di palma dal X al XIV sec. scoperti nei vari monasteri.' In 1956, in the 'Preface' to the first part of Minor Buddhist Texts, he wrote: ‘During my travels in Tibet and Nepal I came across many manuscripts of Sanskrit works which are, to my knowledge, so far unedited. I could acquire the originals of some of them; of others I took photos, of some I had copies made. The works which I so collected are chiefly Buddhist. It is my purpose to edit them in this series or to have them edited by my pupils. Though the works are not all of equal importance they will certainly contribute to a better knowledge of Buddhist thought’ (1986: xi).

4 There is also a tiny fragment of a manuscript written on birch bark.

5 The first part of this work has been edited by Corrado PENSA (1967). The second part will be published by Claudio CICUZZA.
European and Asiatic libraries. Regarding this, the negatives containing a manuscript of the \textit{Laghu-tantra-\textit{ti}k\={a}} by Vajrāraṇī and a very important copy of the \textit{Laghu-kāla-cakra-vimana-prabhā-\textit{ti}kā} by Puṇḍarīka in Bhujimol script are noteworthy. We have given a photograph of the latter to S.S. Bahulkar who is preparing a new edition of the text. There is no trace of the original manuscript brought to Rome by Tucci (cf. SFERRA (1995)). Neither do we know the exact location of a very important manuscript of the \textit{Prasanna-pādā} by Candakirti, known as the ‘manuscript of Rome’, which is a part of this collection.\textsuperscript{6}

The photographs of other manuscripts belong to the above group. Two at least are worth mentioning: a manuscript entitled \textit{Yukti-pradīpa}, which contains a brief Buddhist work that attempts to justify Tantric practices (the work is being studied by Harunaga Isaacson), and another manuscript entitled \textit{Sarva-sūddhi-viśuddhi-krama}, which corresponds to the second chapter of the \textit{Pañca-krama} by Nāgarjuna in the edition by MIMAKI–TOMABECHI (1994). This manuscript has not been used in their recent edition of the text.\textsuperscript{7}

Lastly, we are justified in saying, at least in one case, that Tucci’s photos are more useful to scholars than the original manuscript. I am referring specifically to a photograph and a microfilm of a portion (about 200 folios) of a manuscript from Gilgit (Pakistan) written on birch bark leaves and containing unique Buddhist texts (sections of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins: \textit{Sāyanāsana-vastu}, \textit{Adhikaraṇa-vastu} and the \textit{Sāṅgha-bhedā-vastu}). Tucci acquired this manuscript in Rawalpindi (Swāt) in 1956, gave it to the Pakistani Government, brought it to Italy for restoration by the Istituto centrale per la patologia del libro (Italian Office for the Restoration of Books) and for publication, and then returned it to the Museum of Karachi (cf. GNOLI (1977: xiv)).

The latter manuscript was laminated, a technique that subsequently proved inadequate. The disastrous effects of lamination can be seen, for instance, in the edition of the Khotanese \textit{Karma-vibhaṅga} by Mauro MAGGI and, more specifically, within the facsimiles of fragments of a manuscript, some folios of which are divided in two parts and kept respectively in London and Munich. The part held in London is laminated and hardly legible; the part in Munich, which was not treated in any way, is perfectly legible and well conserved (cf. MAGGI (1995: plates 4–7, 9)).

\textsuperscript{6} See \textit{Bollettino}. In a well-known paper, J.W. DE JONG (1978) uses the sigla R (= Rome) when he quotes Tucci’s photographs of this manuscript.

\textsuperscript{7} See the facsimile in the present volume on pp. 415–421 (eds.).

\textsuperscript{8} On the authorship of the \textit{Sarva-sūddhi-viśuddhi-krama} (alias Anuttara-sandhi)—which Samayavajra, Abhayākara-gupta and Parahitarakṣita consider to be a later interpolation—see MIMAKI–TOMABECHI (1994: x and note 12).

It is worth noting that in some instances Tucci photographed the same works as RĀHULA SĀNKṛTYĀYANA\textsuperscript{8} (e.g. the commentary by Karpakagomin on the \textit{Śvērāhunāma} chapter of the \textit{Pramāṇa-vārttika} by Dharmakirti, the \textit{Abhidharmakośa} by Vasubandhu, the \textit{Sahāpalambha-prakaraṇa} by Jitārī\textsuperscript{8}). Due to the undeveloped photographic techniques of the period and the often unfavourable conditions in which the photographers had to work, which resulted in the photographs being blurred at the edges, it is not unusual to find that the photos taken by Tucci and SĀNKṛTYĀYANA are of poor quality and that shadows, over-exposure and out of focus images, prevent a correct reading of the text. In many cases, a clear reading is made possible by comparing the two photographic reproductions, as I was personally able to verify when working on my critical edition of the \textit{Hevajra-tantra-piṇḍārtha-\textit{ti}kā} by Vajragarba, which will soon be published in the Rome Oriental Series. For this work I benefited from both the photos taken by SĀNKṛTYĀYANA (which I obtained thanks to Gustav Roth and Raffaele Torella) and those taken by Tucci. As luck would have it, the parts of the manuscript that were illegible in SĀNKṛTYĀYANA’s photos were readable in Tucci’s, and vice versa.

It is well-known that SĀNKṛTYĀYANA’s photos have been used for the critical editions of many works, especially of Buddhist \textit{pramāṇa} tradition (Dharmakirti, Ratnakirti, Karpakagomin, Paṇḍitaṣṭa). In his introduction to the \textit{Dharmottara-pradīpa} by Durvēka-miśa, Dalsukhbhai MALVANIA (1955: iii) writes: ‘The original copy covers 84 leaves. It is written in Newari script. When the photo-copy was made, the 60th leaf was not reversed. Consequently, 60a has been photographed twice, whereas there is no photo of the reverse, i.e., 60b. The manuscript is correct, but here and there it is indistinct.’ I have verified that folio 60b is actually present in Tucci’s photos, though unfortunately a shadow obscures the extreme left of the folio. Also regarding this text, Tucci’s photos permit the reader of other parts that the editor was obliged to indicate with ellipses.\textsuperscript{9}

In some cases, Tucci’s photos contain more leaves than SĀNKṛTYĀYANA’s: this happens with the \textit{Sāratamā}, the commentary by Ratnaśakarānti on the \textit{Āśaṭa-sahasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra}. It must be said, however, that the editor of this text was able to consult the manuscript as it was seen and documented by Tucci (cf. JAINI (1979: 2)).

\textsuperscript{8} See SĀNKṛTYĀYANA (1935) and SĀNKṛTYĀYANA (1937).

\textsuperscript{9} See the facsimile in the present volume on pp. 423–447 (eds.).
While we were cataloguing the negatives, we found that often the contents of the envelopes did not correspond to what was indicated on the outside. For example, the important commentary by Vajrapāṇi on the first chapter of the Cakra-saṁvara-tantra—soon to be published by Claudio Cicuzza (forthcoming)—, which was not photographed by SĀṆṆKYĀYANA, was discovered in an envelope on which was written ‘Commentary on the Evam-tantra’, while the Guhya-saṁaja-tantra-pradipōddyotana by Candrakīrti was in an envelope on which ‘Commentary on the Hevajra-tantra’ was indicated. The unfamiliarity with Sanskrit suggests that the person who wrote the indications on the envelopes and the notes contained in them, was not TUCCI.\textsuperscript{10} There is also a mystery surrounding the envelopes. These are numbered from one to forty-one, but there are nine envelopes missing (8, 9, 13, 14, 24, 26, 28, 29, 39). They were already missing on 9\textsuperscript{th} June 1960, as can be seen from the essential list made by Lionello Lanciotti.\textsuperscript{11} Each envelope usually contains twelve photographic plates; therefore about one-hundred and eight prints, and hence possibly over one thousand folios, are missing. Neither are we certain if there were more envelopes after no. 41. We can, nevertheless, suppose that there were, due to the fact that a number of the photographic prints without corresponding negatives are filed in grey folders marked with a number: numbers that correspond to some of the missing envelopes or envelopes that would have come after number forty-one; as in the case of the Hevajra-ḍākinī-jāla-saṁvara-paṇijikā (= Tri-vajra-ratnāvalī-mūlikā) by Kelikiśa that consists of 120 palm-leaves, documented with 7 photos and filed in folder 43; the Saṁputa-nāma-mahā-tantra-rāja (folder 42); and the Pāräjikā that consists of 77 palm-leaves (documented with 6 photos; folder 39). It is worth mentioning that the latter manuscript was not photographed by SĀṆṆKYĀYANA and also differs from the two manuscripts written on Nepalese paper, kept in the National Archives of Kathmandu. In any event, as we have mentioned, there are many photographs without negatives, files and reference numbers; for instance the Cittānanda-paṭi, a short treatise on alchemy divided into fourteen chapters and attributed to Nāgārjuna. Among these photos, there are also some that reproduce folios belonging to an important Buddhist Tantra, the Advaya-

\textsuperscript{10} The notes—when present—concern the title of the work, the number of negatives and, sometimes, the numbers of the folios, the name of the monastery where the manuscripts were kept and the date of reproduction.

\textsuperscript{11} Envelope 22 does not appear on the list compiled by Lionello Lanciotti, but it is part of the material we have recovered.

\textsuperscript{12} TUCCI (1996d: 12): ‘non vi è nulla di meno scientifico che arrogarsi un geloso monopolio del materiale scoperto.’
he took out from a chest some Indian manuscripts, written on palm-leaves, from the IX\textsuperscript{th} or X\textsuperscript{th} century: as pristine as if they had been made by the copyist yesterday. I examined them with great trepidation: they were poetic works by two authors who had been unknown until that moment. One is a summary in metre of Buddhist dogmatics and the other is a poem on one of the previous lives of the Buddha (Abhidharma-samuccaya-kārikā by Saṅghatrāta and Maṇi-cūḍā-jātaka by Sarvāraṇaśīta respectively). The history of Indian literature has thus been unexpectedly enriched by two new authors and two new works.\footnote{Tucci (1966a: 169–170): ‘A Kongkar c’è un incarnato che ha poco più di vent’anni. E’ nato a Lhasa; dopo compiuta la istruzione religiosa l’hanno condotto in questo luogo lontano da tutte le strade. Vive con una piccola comunità di monaci di lui tutti più anziani, forse sospirato della società di Lhasa, delle amicizie dei suoi primi anni e degli svaghi che la Città Santa offre anche ai rincantati. […] Ma questo povero giovane si trova rinchiuso in un monastero fuori mano, lontano dalle carovaniere battute, con un desiderio in cuore, che tutti i giovani hanno, di vedere cose nuove, di viaggiare per le contrade di cui i mercanti, che qualche volta lo vanno a trovare, gli descrivono le meraviglie. Ha in animo di andare anche lui in pellegrinaggio in India, ma il convento è troppo povero perché egli possa condurre a compimento il suo proposito. […] Quando da mio arrivo mi corre incontro: finalmente c’è un avvenimento nuovo nella sua vita sempre uguale! Egli si attacca a me come ad un vecchio amico, mi invita a pranzo, mi conduce egli stesso per il monastero, mi pone mille domande: vuol sapere come è fatto il mio paese quanto ci vuole per arrivare, che cosa sono il pirovaco e l’aeroplane, come funzionano le macchine; si riempie di meraviglia ingenua come un bimbo cui la fantasia racconta le fiate e non si vuole separare da me […]. Quando la tirannia del tempo mi costringe a prendere commiato da lui, lo vedo sinceramente commosso. Amicizia sbocciata in poche ore dal fondo di una solitudine acerb. Ma l’amicizia del giovane incarnato mi è stata preziosa. Mentre sedevamo a parlare di vari argomenti, discutendo io dei grandi maestri dell’India, egli ha tratto fuori da uno scirocco alcuni manoscritti indiani su fogli di palma del IX o del X secolo: freschi come se fossero usciti ieri dalle mani del copista. Li esamino con grande trepidazione: si tratta di opere poetiche di due autori fino ad oggi sconosciuti. Uno è un riasunto metrico della dominatica buddhista e l’altro un poema su una delle vite anteriori del Buddha (Abhidharma-samuccaya-kārikā di Saṅghatrāta e Maṇi-cūḍā-jātaka di Sarvāraṇaśīta). La storia della letteratura indiana si trova così arricchita improvvisamente di due nuovi nomi e di due nuove opere.’}
works represented and cataloguing of same. The first phase, the printing of the
negatives and the compilation of a provisional list, is currently underway. The task
is not easy; often the works are not even complete in the original version and are
difficult to read, and therefore it is not always possible to identify or read the
colophons. Nevertheless, we foresee completing the work and publishing a
catalogue of the entire collection in a relatively short time. We have seen that it is
possible to scan and transfer the negatives and the photographs to a CD-ROM. 14
After carrying out some tests we decided to entrust the work to a company in Rome
concerned with the preservation of archives (GAP S.r.l.), which already works with
the Istituto Centrale per la Patologia del Libro as well as with prestigious libraries,
lke the Casanatense. The work is still in progress. Recently, Akira Yuyama
(1992: vii) wrote:

‘One must lament the fact that there are still a number of important
collections, even in the West, about which we know very little. …
There are frustrating examples. Certain institutions hold extremely
important collections of rare materials. Every scholar knows about
them. But nobody knows their exact nature and content. The Istituto
Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente in Rome seems to be one
such institution. Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984) made immeasurably
significant contributions to Indo-Tibetan Buddhist studies as a result of
his expeditions to Himalayan and Tibetan regions. In his monumental
works one finds information about a good many important manuscript
materials. Alas! They are practically inaccessible to serious scholars in
related fields of study.’

We trust that this will be the last negative observation concerning the TUCCI
collection at the IIsAO, which in the near future will be readily accessible to
scholars throughout the world; something that most certainly would also have
gratified such an extraordinary master as Giuseppe Tucci.

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14 A similar project, which focuses more on art history, is underway in Holland (Kern
Institute Leiden) (De Boer (1999: column 5)).
APPENDIX I

Giuseppe Tucci’s Collection: Index of Works

The following list is provisional. The titles of works have been taken from the texts, where possible, and/or from the brief notes written on the envelopes (transcribed verbatim), which in many cases have proved to be inaccurate. A correct and more detailed list will be published with the catalogue and the CD-ROMs.

1. Negatives – 7 × 11 cm

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<td>Dharmakīrti</td>
<td>1–5/A</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Sa-skyä</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daśa-bhūmika-sūtra</td>
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<td>5–6/B</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sa-skyä</td>
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<td>Tri-skandha-deśanā</td>
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<td>7/Cb</td>
<td>} 2</td>
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<td>7/Cc</td>
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<td>Māṭiceṭa</td>
<td>7/D</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>Sāratamā</td>
<td>Ratnākaraśānti</td>
<td>12/G</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Durvekamśra</td>
<td>15/H (I)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ngor</td>
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<td>Durvekamśra</td>
<td>16/H (II)</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Sarva-sūddhi-viśuddhi-krama</td>
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<td>Ngor</td>
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¹ Negative No. 29 is missing and negative No. 6 is completely indecipherable.
² Negative No. 14 is missing.
2. Microfilms and Negatives – 35 mm

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<td>Sarvarakṣita</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vimalaprabhā</td>
<td>Puṇḍarīka</td>
<td>367</td>
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<td>Gilgit MS of the Sangha-bheda-vastu</td>
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<td>fols. 323–512&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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3. Photographs

Group I (photographic paper)

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<td>13</td>
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<td>Gilgit MS of the Sangha-bheda-vastu</td>
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<sup>3</sup> Negative No. 12 is missing.

<sup>4</sup> A negative has been cut in half.

<sup>5</sup> Fols. 398–405, 428, 432, 478–79 are missing; fol. 468r is blank.
4. Nepalese Paper MSS

The MSS kept in the Library contain the following texts:

1) Abhisamayālaṁkara,
2) Abhisamayālaṁkara-vṛtti by Vimuktsena,
3) Ārya-mahā-sahasra-pramardani,
4) Cakra-samvara-paṇḍikā,
5) Catus-piṭha-ṭīkā,
6) Daśa-bhūmiśvara,
7) Ekālaviṁśa,
8) Ekālaviṁśa-tantra-ṭīkā,
9) Deśākārya,
10) Dākini-guhya-samama-sādhana,
11) Dākini-vajra-paṇḍari-ṭīkā,
12) Guna-karanḍa-vyūha,
13) Herukabhūdaya-paṇḍikā,
14) Hevajra-sādhana-pradīpa,
15) Hevajra-tantra,
16) Kṣaṇayamāri-paṇḍikā,
17) Kalpa-raja-tantra,
18) Kapphinābhūdaya-kāvyā,
19) Khasama-tantra-ṭīkā,
20) Laghu-kāla-cakra-tantra,
21) Laghu-tantra-ṭīkā,
22) Laghu-abhidhāna,
23) Mahā-samaya-kalpa-rāja,
24) Mahā-kartikā,
25) Padmānī (Comm. on the Samvarādaya-tantra),
26) Paṇca-rakṣa, 6
27) Pāramitā-saṃsāra,
28) Rāja-paśri,
29) Śūtra-vṛtti,
30) Rāma-vinoda,
31) Rāyaparasaraṇī,
32) Saṃvarādaya-tantra-ṭīkā,
33) Vasanta-tilaka,
34) Vimalaprabhā.

6 This MS is illustrated.