

## *The Yogatattvabindu*



योगतत्त्वबिन्दु

# Yogatattvabindu

Critical Edition  
with annotated Translation

Von  
Nils Jacob Liersch

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# **Introduction**



The *Yogatattvabindu* (YTB) is a premodern Sanskrit Yoga text on Rājayoga that originated in northern India.<sup>1</sup> The most salient feature of the work that makes it historically significant is its highly differentiated taxonomy of types of Yoga. In the YTB's introduction, most manuscripts name fifteen types of Yoga, presented as subtypes of Rājayoga. The whole text is a yogic compendium in a textbook style written primarily in prose, where different topics are introduced in sections launched by recognizable phrases. Most sections deal with these subtypes of Rājayoga and their effects, but others also cover topics like yogic physiology and cosmogony.

One printed edition of the YTB was published in 1905 with a Hindi translation and based on an unknown manuscript(s). This publication has the title ' *Binduyoga* ' confirmed by the printed text's colophon. However, as I discuss in this book, the text was likely known as YTB.<sup>2</sup> The consulted manuscripts contain significant discrepancies and variant readings between them as well as the printed edition. A critical edition will undoubtedly improve on the published edition and shed further light on the transmission of this work. According to some manuscript colophons, the YTB was composed by one Rāmacandra Paramahansa in the late 17th - early 18th century. The date of composition is uncertain, although it must predate the oldest available manuscript, which was written in Nepal saṃvat 837, which is 1716 CE. Since the text of this manuscript is missing significant and lengthy parts (25% of the text) and contains various corruptions, one can assume that some time had passed from the original composition for the transmission to deteriorate to this extent. Therefore, it is likely that the work was composed at least a few decades before this Nepalese manuscript, perhaps sometime in the 17th century. The manuscripts are scattered over the Indian subcontinent, which suggests that it was widely transmitted at some point. Lengthy passages of the YTB are quoted without attribution in a text called *Yogasamgraha* as well as Sundaradeva's *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*.

The YTB has not been discussed or considered in secondary literature on Yoga. The only exception is **birch2014** (2014: 415–416) which briefly described the text in the context of the “fifteen medieval Yogas” and noted that a similar list occurs in Nārāyaṇatīrtha's *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā* (17th - 18th century), a commentary on Patañjali's Yogasūtras that integrates almost and identical taxonomy of yogas within

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<sup>1</sup>The detailed discussion of the place of origin is found on p.??.

<sup>2</sup>A discussion of the title is found on p.??.



the *aṣṭāṅga* format. An incomplete account of the fifteen Yogas is found within the Sanskrit Yoga text *Yogasvarodaya* (YSv), which is known only through quotations in the *Prāṇatoṣinī* and *Yogakarnikā*.<sup>3</sup> The YSv provides a total of fifteen Yogas but names only eight of them in its introductory *śloka*s. A complete account of the text is yet to be found. The *Yogasvarodaya* is the primary source and template for the compilation of the YTB. Rāmacandra closely follows the content and structure by rewriting the YSv's *śloka*s into prose. Due to the incomplete transmission of the YSv, Rāmacandra's YTB is a natural and valuable starting point for a more in-depth study of the taxonomy of the fifteen types of Yoga. The other source text that Rāmacandra used is the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* (SSP)<sup>4</sup> whose content he draws on, particularly in the last third of his composition. Another text that includes a similar taxonomy of twelve Yogas divided into three tetrads is Sundarāś's *brāj bhāṣa* Yoga text named *Sarvāṅgayogapradīpikā* which not just shares most of the types of Yogas but also many of the practices and contents found within the YTB and YSv. These complex taxonomies that emerged during the 17th and 18th centuries crossed sectarian divides and were adapted to the specific needs of different authors and traditions. The YTB thus encapsulates the diversity of Haṭha- and Rājayoga types and teachings after the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (15th century) that were adopted by a broad spectrum of religious traditions and strata of Indian society. In the particular case of the YTB, there are various statements throughout the text that reveal a strategy to detach Yoga from its renunciate connotations and to enforce the supremacy and universality of Rājayoga as a practice that can yield the highest benefits even for practitioners who enjoy worldly pleasures and an extravagant lifestyle. Textual evidence suggests the possibility that YTB may be a unique example of a Rājayoga text that was composed for a warrior aristocracy, members of a royal court, perhaps even members of a royal family or, at the very least, the wealthy upper class of society.

In addition, the in-depth analysis of the YTB also provides a far-reaching insight into a complex intertextual network, all of which essentially deliver the same sets

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<sup>3</sup>Manuscripts under the name of *Yogasvarodaya* seem to be lost. I was not able to allocate the manuscripts of the text in any manuscript catalogue at hand.

<sup>4</sup>[mallinsononline2013](#) (2013) estimated the age of the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* to circa 1700. The extensive use of the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* as Rāmacandra's source text and the bad condition of the oldest dated manuscript of the YTB suggests (not proves) an earlier dating of the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* up to several years or decades before 1700.

of yoga theorems and practices with minor deviations. The main focus here is on three to five *cakras*, sixteen *ādhāras*, two to five *lakṣyas*, and five *vyomas*. This network spans at least an entire millennium. It can be traced back to early śivaite tantras such as the *Netratantra*. From there those teachings can be found in early texts that teach Haṭhayoga such as *Śārṅghadhārapaddhati* and *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*. The transmission continues from there into medieval yoga texts such as the *Śivayogapradīpikā* all the way down to the texts already mentioned that are directly connected to the YTB to finally arrive in the late medieval Yogaupaniṣads such as the *Maṇḍalabrāhmaṇopaniṣat* and the extensive pre-modern yoga compendia such as the *Haṭhatattvakaumudī* and the *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*. The analytical examination of this network provides insights into the history of the related yoga traditions and enables, for example, the tracing of the genesis of individual yoga categories mentioned in the fifteen Yogas, such as Lakṣyayoga, whose techniques were originally taught in early śivaite tantras, but only labeled as a separate type of yoga in the 17th - 18th centuries.

This book contains an introduction, critical edition and annotated translation of the *Yogatattvabindu*. The introduction discusses provenance, authorship and the audience of the YTB. A comprehensive discussion of the taxonomy of the fifteen Yogas based on the critical edition of the YTB together with a close examination of the above mentioned related texts with similar taxonomies aims to establish their position within the broader history of yoga and elucidates this premodern late stage of development in the history of Haṭha- and Rājayoga traditions. The remainder of the introduction contains an overview of the manuscript evidence and the editorial policies underlying the edition.