

བདེ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་བོད་པ།

The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī

Sukhāvātīvyūha

འཕགས་པ་བདེ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་བཀོད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa bde ba can gyi bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvati”

Āryasukhāvativyūhanāmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 115
Degé Kangyur, vol. 51 (mdo sde, pa), folios 195.b-200.b.

Translated by the Sakya Pandita Translation Group (International Buddhist Academy
Division)
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

v 2.11 2012 - 2016

Generated by 84000 Reading Room v1.5.13

84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha is a global non-profit initiative that aims to translate all of the Buddha's words into modern languages, and to make them available to everyone.



This work is provided under the protection of a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution - Non-commercial - No-derivatives) 3.0 copyright. It may be copied or printed for fair use, but only with full attribution, and not for commercial advantage or personal compensation. For full details, see the Creative Commons license.

This print version was generated at 9.54pm on Thursday, 25th October 2018 from the online version of the text available on that date. If some time has elapsed since then, this version may have been superseded, as most of 84000's published translations undergo significant updates from time to time. For the latest online version, with bilingual display, interactive glossary entries and notes, and a variety of further download options, please see <http://read.84000.co/translation/toh115.html>.

co.

CONTENTS

- ti. Title
- co. Contents
- s. Summary
- ac. Acknowledgements
- i. Introduction
- tr. The Translation
- c. Colophon
- n. Notes
- b. Bibliography
- g. Glossary

s.

SUMMARY

s.1 In the Jeta Grove of Śrāvastī, Buddha Śākyamuni, surrounded by a large audience, presents to his disciple Śāriputra a detailed description of the realm of Sukhāvātī, a delightful, enlightened abode, free of suffering. Its inhabitants are described as mature beings in an environment where everything enhances their spiritual inclinations. The principal buddha of Sukhāvātī is addressed as Amitāyus (Limitless Life) as well as Amitābha (Limitless Light).

Buddha Śākyamuni further explains how virtuous people who focus single-mindedly on Buddha Amitābha will obtain a rebirth in Sukhāvātī in their next life, and he urges all to develop faith in this teaching. In support, he cites the similar way in which the various buddhas of the six directions exhort their followers to develop confidence in this teaching on Sukhāvātī.

The sūtra ends with a short dialogue between Śāriputra and Buddha Śākyamuni that highlights the difficulty of enlightened activity in a degenerate age.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 Translation by the Sakya Pandita Translation Group, International Buddhist Academy Division, Kathmandu, under the supervision of Khenpo Ngawang Jorden. This sūtra was translated into English by the monk Ngawang Rinchen Gyaltsen, Julia Stenzel, and Tsewang Gyaltsen.

This translation has been completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

INTRODUCTION

Origin and History

i.1 *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* is the shortest of three sūtras that expound the Land of Delight, the pure realm of Amitābha, called Sukhāvātī. The Kangyur includes Tibetan translations of two of these texts: this one, often called the “shorter” *Sukhāvātī*, and the “longer” sūtra, with the formal title *The Array of Amitābha* (Toh 49 in the Heap of Jewels section).¹ The third, *The Amitāyus Meditation Sūtra*,² is only extant in Chinese.

The shorter sūtra, according to the Sanskrit scholar Luis Gomez, first appeared in its written form during the first century CE, possibly in what was then Northwest India and is now Pakistan.³

Source Text and Various Versions

i.2 A Sanskrit version of the smaller *Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* is extant today, as well as Tibetan and Chinese translations. All the translations show some variation from the Sanskrit source in content and style, which can be attributed in part to cultural and geographic conditions in Tibet and China.⁴ The translations have become more influential than the original itself, for which we presently lack any contextual information.

i.3 There are several Chinese translations of this sūtra, dating from between 240 and 400 CE, but only one Tibetan version, translated in the eighth or ninth century. The Chinese versions of the sūtra spread through China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam and played an important role in the formation of the Pure Land schools in these countries. These versions appear to embellish the description of the wonders of the realm of Sukhāvātī,⁵ whereas the Tibetan version is more subdued and shows its main variations from the Sanskrit original in the names and the number of buddhas presiding over the different buddha realms. The various editions in the Tibetan canon, i.e., the Degé, Narthang, Peking, and Lhasa editions, show no major differences that would alter the meaning.

i.4 For the present translation, we have followed the Tibetan text, while comparing it with the Sanskrit original. Concerning the enumeration of names of the buddhas presiding over the various buddha realms, we have retained their original Sanskrit names, unless the Tibetan text had names without a known Sanskrit equivalent, in which case we chose to translate those names into English. The differences are further commented on in notes.

i.5 The Tibetan version of the smaller *Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* was translated by the Indian abbot Dānaśīla and the chief editor translator, the monk Yeshé Dé, as indicated in the colophon.

Main Points of the Subject Matter

i.6 The sūtra's overall subject is revealed in the title. The Sanskrit term *sukhāvātī*, in Tibetan Dewachen (*bde ba can*), designates a realm of delight, a place where no suffering is experienced. The inhabitants of this realm are spiritually advanced beings who enjoy the presence of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and arhats, and engage exclusively in wholesome activities. The principal buddha of this realm has two names, Amitāyus (Limitless Life) and Amitābha (Limitless Light). Even though it is not explicitly stated in this particular sūtra, Amitāyus is, in Vajrayāna contexts, sometimes considered a sambhogakāya form of Buddha Amitābha.⁶

The term *vyūha* (Tib. *bkod pa*) means “display,” indicating that the sūtra is to a large extent a description of this buddha realm and its characteristics. It is a land with lakes and forests full of jewels, with magical birds, and with little bells producing lovely sounds. Its ideal environment enhances the spiritual practice of Sukhāvātī's inhabitants.

Four Main Topics

i.7 The sūtra contains four main topics: (1) the description of Sukhāvātī; (2) the prerequisites needed to take birth in this realm; (3) praise of this discourse expressed by other buddhas; and (4) Buddha Śākyamuni's supreme feat.

The Setting

i.8 The narrative of the sūtra takes place in the Jeta Grove of Śrāvastī, where Buddha Śākyamuni, in the presence of a large audience consisting of arhats and bodhisattvas, addresses his disciple Śāriputra and tells him about the realm of Sukhāvātī. The sūtra is in large part a discourse spoken by the Buddha. Even though the Buddha regularly asks the question, “Śāriputra, what do you think about this?” Śāriputra speaks only at the very end of the sūtra and praises the Buddha.

The sūtra ends with a short dialogue between Śāriputra and Buddha Śākyamuni that highlights the difficulty of Buddha Śākyamuni's attaining enlightenment and preaching in a degenerate age.

The Significance of Buddha Realms

- i.9 The notion of innumerable buddha realms coexisting with our reality became popular with the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism around the first century CE. They have been interchangeably translated as buddhafi elds, buddha realms, or pure lands.

In *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī*, the Land of Delight is described as a realm beyond space and time. The two larger sūtras elaborate on the history of its emergence. According to those sūtras, the Land of Delight is the result of the powerful vows of Buddha Amitābha, who out of great compassion created a safe environment for fortunate beings to progress toward spiritual maturity. The smaller sūtra, however, refers only to the existence of such a realm and its characteristics.

In the sūtra, Buddha Śākyamuni explains the manner in which beings take birth in this realm: fortunate sons and daughters are told to accumulate a significant amount of merit and direct their faith single-mindedly toward Buddha Amitābha.

Śākyamuni's discourse mentions an alternative title for this sūtra. He explains that there are countless buddha realms with tathāgatas who praise Sukhāvātī with a Dharma discourse called "Complete Embrace by All Buddhas."

References to the Sūtra in the Tibetan Canon

- i.10 The various sūtras of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī have inspired Tibetan masters to write prayers and practice rituals that allow adepts to enter Amitābha's realm. There are numerous Sukhāvātī-related compositions available in the Tengyur and in different collected works (*gsung 'bum*).

The Collection of Prayers for Sukhāvātī (bde smon phyogs bsgrigs) is a collection of prayers, practice rituals, and commentaries concerning the pure land of Amitābha. An edition was published in Chengdu in 2007 by Sichuan Minorities Publishing House (*Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang*).

One of the Tibetan masters who made Sukhāvātī a particular focus of attention was Chagmé Rinpoché (*'chags med*, 1610-1678). He composed *The Long Prayer of Sukhāvātī (mkhas grub rā ga a syas mdzad pa'i rnam dag bde chen zhing gi smon lam)*, among others.

Furthermore, the well-known *Noble King of Prayers for Good Conduct ('phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po)*, recited by adherents of all Tibetan schools, concludes with the aspiration for rebirth in the pure realm of Sukhāvātī. Praying to be born in the pure realm of Amitābha has become a major practice in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Academic Research

- i.11 There appears to be no translation of the Tibetan *Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* prior to the one published here. However, the Sanskrit version of the sūtra was translated into English and edited by Max Müller and Bunyiu Nanjio in Müller and

Nanjio (1883).

Luis O. Gomez has published a non-literal, poetic translation of the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the smaller and larger sūtras and gives an introduction to the main topics (Gomez 1996). His literal translation of the same sūtras is forthcoming. Hisao Inagaki has translated the three Pure Land sūtras on the basis of their Chinese versions; this translation appears in the BDK English Tripiṭaka Vol. 12, Berkeley, 1995. An earlier translation from the Chinese was published in Utsuki (1924).

Nakamura (1987) presents an historical introduction to the beginnings of Pure Land Buddhism and its textual sources in Indian Buddhism.

tr.

THE TRANSLATION

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī

- 1.1 [F.195.b] Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavān was dwelling in Anāthapiṇḍada's park in the Jeta Grove in Śrāvastī, along with a large monastic saṅgha of 1,250 bhikṣus,⁷ all of them great elders, śrāvakas, and arhats, such as the Elder Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Mahākātyāyana,⁸ Mahākapphiṇa, Mahākauṣṭhila, Revata, Śuddhipaṃthaka, Nanda, Ānanda, Rāhula, Gavāṃpati, Bharadvāja, Kālodāyin, Vakula, and Aniruddha. He dwelt with these and other great śrāvakas and with many bodhisattva mahāsattvas, such as the youthful Mañjuśrī, [F.196.a] the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Ajita, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Gandhahastin, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Nityodyukta, and the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Anikṣiptadhura, along with many other bodhisattva mahāsattvas. He was also accompanied by Indra, the lord of gods, and Brahmā, the ruler of the Sahā world, along with many myriads⁹ of gods.

- 1.2 On that occasion, the Bhagavān said to the venerable Śāriputra, “Śāriputra, if you go from this buddha realm past 100,000 myriad buddha realms toward the western direction, there is a world known as Sukhāvātī (The Delightful). In that place the Tathāgata, the arhat, the perfectly and fully enlightened buddha known as Amitāyus (Immeasurable Life), dwells, lives, and abides, teaching the Dharma.

“Now what do you think, Śāriputra, why is that world called ‘Sukhāvātī’?”

- 1.3 “Śāriputra, in the Sukhāvātī world, sentient beings experience neither physical pain nor mental suffering and the causes for their happiness are limitless. For this reason, this world is called Sukhāvātī. Furthermore, Śāriputra, the Sukhāvātī world is surrounded on all sides by seven layers of terraces, seven rows of palm trees, and filigrees of chimes. It is radiantly beautiful. Śāriputra, this buddha realm is beautifully adorned with displays of the excellences of buddha realms, such as the four kinds of

jewels, namely, gold, silver, beryl, and crystal. Furthermore, Śāriputra, the Sukhāvātī world has ponds adorned with seven kinds of jewels. The ponds are full of water possessing the eight qualities. They are covered by jeweled lotuses, are filled to the top to enable crows to drink, and are lined with golden sand. All around, on the four sides of the ponds are four radiantly elegant staircases, each made of one of the four precious substances: gold, silver, beryl, and crystal. By the banks of the ponds grow jeweled trees of the seven radiantly beautiful jewels: gold, silver, beryl, crystal, rosy pearls, emerald, and coral. From all those ponds grow lotuses that bloom as large as chariot wheels.

1.4 “The golden lotuses have a golden hue, a golden sheen, and manifest as gold. The blue ones have a blue hue, a blue sheen, and manifest as blue. The yellow ones have a yellow hue, a yellow sheen, and manifest as yellow. The red ones have a red hue, a red sheen, and manifest as red. The white ones have a white hue, a white sheen, and manifest as white. The iridescent ones have an iridescent hue, an iridescent sheen, and manifest as iridescence. Śāriputra, this buddha realm is beautifully adorned by such displays of the excellences of buddha realms. Furthermore, Śāriputra, in the Sukhāvātī world, the sound of divine cymbals is always heard. The vast ground is magnificent, as if golden in color. Śāriputra, this buddha realm is beautifully adorned by such displays of the excellences of buddha realms.

1.5 “Furthermore, Śāriputra, in that buddha realm a shower of divine flowers, divine mandārava flowers, descends three times every day and three times every night. In a single morning, the sentient beings that are born there proceed from one buddha realm to the next, paying homage to hundreds of thousands of buddhas. They also toss hundreds of thousands of bouquets of flowers toward each tathāgata. After making offerings, they return to that same world for their daily rest. [F.197.a] Śāriputra, this buddha realm is beautifully adorned by such displays of the excellences of buddha realms.

1.6 “Furthermore, Śāriputra, in the Sukhāvātī world there are swans, cranes, and peacocks that assemble three times during the day and three times at night and perform a concert, each singing its own melody. When they sing, the sounds of the powers, strengths, and branches of enlightenment emerge. Upon hearing those sounds, the sentient beings born there are moved to contemplate the Buddha, to contemplate the Dharma, and to contemplate the Saṅgha. Now what do you think about this, Śāriputra? Have those sentient beings taken birth as animals? You should not think so. Why is that so? Śāriputra, in this buddha realm there are not even words for birth as a hell being, birth as an animal, or birth in the world of the Lord of Death. Those flocks of birds were manifested by the Tathāgata Amitāyus himself to voice the sound of Dharma. Śāriputra, this buddha realm is beautifully adorned by such displays of the excellences of buddha realms.

1.7 “Furthermore, Śāriputra, when the wind blows in that buddha realm it sways the rows of palm trees and the filigree net of chimes, creating sweet, enchanting, and delightful sounds, like the myriad subtleties of divine cymbals when played by a skilled

- musician. The people there, upon hearing those sounds, settle into the recollection of the Buddha, the recollection of the Dharma, and the recollection of the Saṅgha. Śāriputra, this buddha realm is beautifully adorned by such displays of the excellences of buddha realms.
- 1.8 “Now what do you think, Śāriputra, [F.197.b] why is that tathāgata called ‘Amitāyus’ (Immeasurable Life)? Śāriputra, the lifespan of Tathāgata Amitāyus is immeasurable. For this reason, he is called ‘Tathāgata Amitāyus.’ Furthermore, Śāriputra, why is that tathāgata called ‘Amitābha’ (Immeasurable Light)? Śāriputra, the light of Tathāgata Amitābha shines unimpeded throughout all buddha realms. For this reason, he is called ‘Tathāgata Amitābha.’ The Bhagavān Tathāgata Amitābha fully awakened to unsurpassable, completely perfect enlightenment ten eons ago.
- 1.9 “Furthermore, Śāriputra, this bhagavān has an immeasurable saṅgha of śrāvakas, who are all pure arhats; their number cannot be easily expressed. Furthermore, Śāriputra, the sentient beings born in this buddha realm are all pure bodhisattvas who will not regress and are bound by only one more birth.¹⁰ Śāriputra, one cannot express the total number of bodhisattvas except to say that they are immeasurable or countless. Śāriputra, this buddha realm is beautifully adorned by such displays of the excellences of buddha realms.
- 1.10 “Therefore Śāriputra, sons and daughters of good family should completely dedicate all roots of virtue in a respectful manner to be born in that buddha realm. Why? Because by doing so, they will be able to meet holy beings similar to themselves. Śāriputra, one cannot take birth in the realm of Bhagavān Tathāgata Amitāyus merely with minimal roots of virtue.
- 1.11 “Śāriputra, if those sons and daughters of good family hear the name of the Bhagavān Tathāgata Amitāyus and keep it in mind unwaveringly for one, two, three, four, five, [F.198.a] six, or seven nights, when the hour of their death arrives, they will depart in an undeluded state. After they have passed away, the Tathāgata Amitābha will stand before them, entirely surrounded by a śrāvaka assembly and honored by a congregation of bodhisattvas. These sons and daughters of good family will be born in the Sukhāvātī world, the buddha realm of the Bhagavān Tathāgata Amitābha. Therefore, Śāriputra, having seen its real point, sons and daughters of good family, I declare, ought to respectfully make prayers to reach that buddha realm.
- 1.12 “O Śāriputra, I, the Tathāgata, at present praise [this Sukhāvātī].¹¹ So, likewise, Śāriputra, in the east, the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Tathāgata Merudhvaja, the Tathāgata Meru,¹² the Tathāgata Mahāmeru, the Tathāgata Mahāmeruprabhāsa,¹³ the Tathāgata Harmonious Speech, the Tathāgata Harmonious Voice,¹⁴ and the other bhagavān buddhas of the east, who are as numerous as the sands of the river Ganges, pervade their own buddha realms with the power of their speech¹⁵ and proclaim, ‘You should place your trust in this Dharma discourse called “Complete Embrace by all Buddhas,”¹⁶ which praises inconceivable qualities.’

- 1.13 “Likewise, in the south, the bhagavān buddhas of the south, such as the Tathāgata Candrasūryapradīpa, the Tathāgata Renown,¹⁷ the Tathāgata Yaśaḥprabha, the Tathāgata Mahārciskandha, [F.198.b] the Tathāgata Merupradīpa, the Tathāgata Anantavīrya, and others, who are as numerous as the sands of the river Ganges, pervade their own buddha realms with the power of their speech and proclaim, ‘You should place your trust in this Dharma discourse called “Complete Embrace by all Buddhas,” which praises inconceivable qualities.’
- 1.14 “Likewise, in the west, the bhagavān buddhas of the west, such as the Tathāgata Amitāyus, the Tathāgata Amitaskandha, the Tathāgata Amitadhvaja, the Tathāgata Mahāprabha, the Tathāgata Illuminating Light Rays,¹⁸ the Tathāgata Ratnaketu,¹⁹ the Tathāgata Śuddharaśmiprabha, and others, who are as numerous as the sands of the river Ganges, pervade their own buddha realms with the power of their speech and proclaim, ‘You should place your trust in this Dharma discourse called “Complete Embrace by all Buddhas,” which praises inconceivable qualities.’
- 1.15 “Likewise, in the north, the bhagavān buddhas of the north, such as the Tathāgata Mahārciskandha, the Tathāgata Vaiśvānaranirghoṣa, the Tathāgata Duṣpradhara, the Tathāgata Ādityasaṃbhava, the Tathāgata Jālinīprabha, the Tathāgata Prabhākara, and others,²⁰ who are as numerous as the sands of the river Ganges, pervade their own buddha realms with the power of their speech and proclaim, [F.199.a] ‘You should place your trust in this Dharma discourse called “Complete Embrace by all Buddhas,” which praises inconceivable qualities.’
- 1.16 “Likewise, in the nadir, the bhagavān buddhas of the nadir, such as the Tathāgata Siṃha, the Tathāgata Yaśas, the Tathāgata Yaśaḥprabhāsa, the Tathāgata Dharma, the Tathāgata Dharmadhara, the Tathāgata Dharmadhvaja, and others, who are numerous as the sands of the river Ganges, pervade their own buddha realms with the power of their speech and proclaim, ‘You should place your trust in this Dharma discourse called “Complete Embrace by all Buddhas,” which praises inconceivable qualities.’
- 1.17 “Likewise, in the zenith, the bhagavān buddhas of the zenith, such as the Tathāgata Brahmaghoṣa, the Tathāgata Nakṣatrarāja, the Tathāgata Gandhottama, the Tathāgata Gandhaprabhāsa, the Tathāgata Heap of Incense,²¹ the Tathāgata Ratnakusumasampuṣpitagoṭra, the Tathāgata Sālendrarāja, the Tathāgata Ratnotpalaśrī, the Tathāgata Sarvārthadarśa, the Tathāgata Sumerukalpa, and others²² who are as numerous as the sands of the river Ganges, pervade their own buddha realms with the power of their speech and proclaim, ‘You should place your trust [F.199.b] in this Dharma discourse called “Complete Embrace by all Buddhas,” which praises Sukhāvati’s inconceivable qualities.’
- 1.18 “What do you think about this, Śāriputra, why is this Dharma discourse called ‘Complete Embrace by All Buddhas’? Śāriputra, those sons and daughters of good family who have heard, now hear, or will hear this Dharma discourse and the names of those bhagavān buddhas will all be embraced completely by the bhagavān buddhas.²³ Śāriputra, of all those sentient beings who aspire, who have made, are making, or will

make aspirations to the Sukhāvātī world, the buddha realm of the Bhagavān Tathāgata Amitābha, none has turned away, is turning away, nor will ever turn away from the pursuit of unsurpassable, completely perfect enlightenment. Śāriputra, just as I now praise the inconceivable qualities of those bhagavān buddhas, likewise, Śāriputra, those bhagavān buddhas also praise my inconceivable qualities.”

1.19 Śāriputra declared,²⁴ “Bhagavān Śākyamuni, king of the Śākyas, you have fully awakened to unsurpassable, completely perfect enlightenment in this Sahā world. You have taught the Dharma that the whole world was reluctant to accept at the time of the degeneration of the eon, the degeneration of afflictions, the degeneration of beings, the degeneration of views, and the degeneration of lifespan.²⁵ How marvelous indeed!”

1.20 The Bhagavān replied, “Śāriputra, having fully awakened to unsurpassable, completely perfect enlightenment in this world, the Sahā world, at the time of the five degenerations, I have taught the Dharma that the whole world was reluctant to accept. This is the supreme feat I have accomplished.”

1.21 After the Bhagavān [F.200.a] had thus spoken, the whole world, including the venerable Śāriputra, the great śrāvakas, bodhisattvas, gods, humans, demigods, and gandharvas were delighted and praised highly the words spoken by the Bhagavān.

c.

COLOPHON

c.1 This completes the Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra *The Display of Sukhāvātī*.

This sūtra was translated and finalized by the Indian abbot Dānaśīla and the principal revisor-translator, the monk Yeshé Dé, along with others.

n.

NOTES

- 1 Toh 49 (*'od dpag med kyi bkod pa'i mdo, Amitābhavyūhasūtra*), also known in Tibetan as *bde ba can gyi zhing * bkod pa'i bstan pa* (*The Teaching on the Display of the Pure Land * of Sukhāvati*) or, informally, the “longer” *Sukhāvati*.
- 2 The latter sūtra’s Sanskrit title *Amitāyurdhyānasūtra* is now believed to have been fabricated at a later date. Most scholars even consider the *Guan wu liang shou jing* to be a Chinese or Central Asian compilation. See Fujita (1990), especially p. 155 and n. 48, on the question of the title. On p. 155 Fujita says: “It cannot be determined categorically what the Sanskrit title of the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* might have been.”
- 3 Gomez (1996), xii.
- 4 Nakamura (1987), p. 204.
- 5 Nakamura (1987), p. 206.
- 6 But see also Roberts and Bower (forthcoming), Introduction, on the conflation of these two buddhas.
- 7 The Sanskrit has “...*abhijñānābhijñātaiḥ*”, i.e., “... bhikṣus, all of them proficient in the [five kinds of] superknowledge.” This is omitted in the Tibetan.
- 8 In the Sanskrit version the order is: Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Mahākapphiṇa, Mahākātyāyana.
- 9 Literally, the text has: 10 million (*bye ba*) x 10 billion (*khrag khrig*) x 100 thousand (*'bum phrag*). In the Sanskrit it says, according to Max Müller, a hundred thousand *nayutas*.
- 10 These are bodhisattvas removed from enlightenment by only one more *birth.
- 11 The Skt. has *tāṃ parikīrtayāmi*, “I praise this”; the feminine *tāṃ* (missing, of course, in the Tibetan) shows that what is being praised is indeed *Sukhāvati*.
- 12 This name is not mentioned in the Sanskrit text.
- 13 In the Sanskrit version this name is rendered as simply *Meruprabhāsa*.
- 14 The Tibetan version includes these last two names, *'jam sgra* (**mañjuvacana*) and *'jam dbyangs* (**mañjughoṣa*). There is no equivalent in the Sanskrit text, which instead has

- Mañjudhvaja (Beautiful Victory Banner).
- 15 Literally, the text says: “The buddhas cover their land with the power of their tongue faculty.”
- 16 The Sanskrit text has ... *sarvabuddhaparigrahaṃ nāma dharmaparyāyam*. This translates as “You should place your trust in this Dharma discourse called ‘The Grace [lit. the complete embrace] of All Buddhas.’ ” The word *nāma* (“called”) is missing in the Tibetan version, but has been added to clarify the meaning of this passage.
- 17 There is no equivalent in the Sanskrit version.
- 18 *’od zer snang ba*. There is no equivalent in the Sanskrit version.
- 19 The Sanskrit version reads Mahāratnaketu.
- 20 The Sanskrit mentions another tathāgata who does not figure in the Tibetan, Tathāgata Duṃdubhisvaranirghoṣa (=Dundubhisvaranirghoṣa).
- 21 *spos kyi phung po*. The Sanskrit here reads Mahārciskandha (Great Mass of Light).
- 22 The Sanskrit also mentions the Tathāgata Indraketuḍhvajarāja, who is absent in the Tibetan text.
- 23 The Sanskrit and Tibetan differ significantly here and in what immediately follows. We have translated on the basis of the Tibetan.
- 24 Here the Tibetan departs significantly from the Sanskrit, which has the other buddhas say these words.
- 25 The five degenerations. See glossary.

b.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tibetan Texts

'phags pa bde ba can gyi bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo. Toh 115, Degé Kangyur vol. 51 (mdo sde, ja), folios 195b–200b.

'phags pa bde ba can gyi bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo. bka' 'gyur (dpe bsdur ma) [Comparative Edition of the Kangyur], krung go'i bod rig pa zhib 'jug ste gnas kyi bka' bstan dpe sdur khang (The Tibetan Tripitaka Collation Bureau of the China Tibetology Research Center). 108 volumes. Beijing: krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang (China Tibetology Publishing House), 2006–2009, vol. 51, pp. 532–542.

Ha'o wun zhon and To'u tshun chi, eds. *bod rgya shan sbyar gyi shes bya'i rnam grangs kun btus tshig mdzod*. Beijing: mi rigs dpe skrun khang (Minorities Publishing House), 1987.

bde smon phyogs bsgrigs [*The Collection of Prayers for Sukhāvati*], Chengdu: si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang (Sichuan Minorities Publishing House), 2007.

mkhas grub nā ga a syas mdzad pa'i rnam dag bde chen zhing gi smon lam [*Long Prayer for Sukhāvati*], Chengdu: si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang (Sichuan Minorities Publishing House), 2007.

'phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po [*Noble King of Prayers for Good Conduct*], Toh 1095, Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, waM), folios 262a–266b.

Sanskrit Texts

Āryasukhāvātīvyūhanāmamahāyānasūtra. <http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de> (http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskrit/4_rellit/buddh/sukhvysu.htm). Accessed August 25, 2010.

Secondary Literature

Epstein, Ronald, trans. *The Amitābha Sūtra*. Hsüan Hua, A General Explanation of the Buddha Speaks of Amitābha Sūtra. San Francisco: Buddhist Text Translation Society, 1974. online.sfsu.edu (<http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/amitabha.htm>).

- Fujita, Kōtatsu. "Textual Origins of the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*," in Robert E. Buswell, Jr., ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990, pp. 149–173.
- Gomez, Luis O. *Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light; Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtras*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996.
- Hapatsch, Hischam A., trans. and ed. *Die Heiligen Schriften des Amitābha-Buddhismus: Das große Sukhāvātī-vyūha-Sūtra, Das kleine Sukhāvātī-vyūha-Sūtra, Das Meditationssūtra*. Berlin, 2007. www.littera.de (<http://www.littera.de/buecher/sukha.html>). Accessed 2010.
- Müller, Max, and Bunyiu Nanjio, trans. "Āryasukhāvātīvyūhasūtra." *Anecdota Oxoniensia: Aryan Series*. Vol. I, part II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883.
- Nakamura, Hajime. *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publications, 1987.
- Roberts, P. and Bower, E., trans. *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*. 84000 (forthcoming).
- Utsuki, Nishu. *The Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra or The Sūtra on the Buddha Amitāyus: Translated from the Chinese Version of Kumārajīva*. Kyoto: Educational Department of the West Hongwanji, 1924. web.mit.edu (<http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/smaller.html>).

GLOSSARY

g.

g.1 Ādityasaṃbhava

nyi ma'i 'byung

ཉི་མའི་འབྱུང།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.2 Ajita

mi pham

མི་ཕམ།

Name of a bodhisattva. Not to be confused with *ngon po mi pham*, Maitreya.

g.3 Akṣobhya

mi 'khrugs pa

མི་འགྲུགས་པ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.4 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

Buddha associated with Sukhāvati; buddha of the western direction; principal buddha of the Pure Land tradition; as the bodhisattva Dharmākara, he made forty-eight original vows (*praṇidhāna*) to bring beings to enlightenment, thus establishing Sukhāvati for their benefit; in tantrism he is one of the five dhyāni-buddhas and is associated with the aggregate of notions (*saṃjñāskandha*).

g.5 Amitadhvaja

rgyal msthan dpag med

རྒྱལ་མས་ཐན་དཔག་མེད།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.6 Amitaskandha

phung po dpag med

ཕུང་པོ་དཔག་མེད།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.7 Amitāyus

tshe dpag med

ཚོད་པག་མེད།

Buddha especially associated with life energy and long life; the Sambhogakāya aspect of Amitābha. □ Also a name of Amitābha.

g.8 Anantavīrya

brtson 'grus mtha' yas

བརྩོན་འགྲུས་མཐའ་ཡས།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.9 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.10 Anāthapiṇḍada

mgon med zas sbyin

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན།

A principal benefactor of the Buddha; he was the wealthy banker who acquired the grove of Prince Jeta, i.e., Jeta Grove, and donated it to the Buddhist community.

g.11 Anikṣiptadhura

brtson pa'i mi 'dor

བརྩོན་པའི་མི་འདོད།

Name of a bodhisattva.

g.12 Aniruddha

ma 'gag pa · 'gags pa med pa

མ་འགག་པ། · འགགས་པ་མེད་པ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.13 Arhat

dgra bcom pa

དག་བཅོམ་པ།

Final goal of the śrāvaka practitioner.

g.14 Beryl

bai dU rya

བེ་རུ་ཅ།

vaiḍūrya

Precious/semiprecious stone; sometimes translated as lapis lazuli.

g.15 Bhagavān

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

Bhagavat

Epithet of the Buddha.

g.16 Bharadvāja

bha ra dh+va dza

ལྷ་ར་དྭ་འཇོ།

Śrāvaka arhat; one of the sixteen sthavira arhats (see “elder”).

g.17 Bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་སེམས་དཔའ་ཚེན་པོ།

bodhisattva mahāsattva

Bodhisattva; someone who has the intent to achieve full enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings.

g.18 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

Lord of the Sahā world (q.v.). Buddhists see Brahmā as a god occupying a high position in cyclic existence, with a very long life and a great deal of power.

g.19 Brahmaghoṣa

tshangs pa'i dbyangs

ཚངས་པའི་དབྱངས།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.20 Branches of enlightenment

byang chub kyi yan lag

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག།

bodhyaṅgāni

The branches of, respectively, (1) authentic mindfulness; (2) authentic discrimination of dharmas; (3) authentic perseverance; (4) authentic joy; (5) authentic serenity; (6) authentic meditative absorption; and (7) authentic equanimity.

g.21 Candrasūryapradīpa

nyi zla sgron ma

ཉི་ཚེལ་སྒྲོན་མ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.22 Coral

spug gi shing

སྤུག་གི་ཤིང།

musāragatva

g.23 Cūḍapanthaka

lam phran bstan

ལམ་ཕྱན་བསྟན།

Śrāvaka arhat, one of the sixteen sthavira arhats (see “elder”).

g.24 Dānaśīla

dA na shI la

དྲ་ན་ཤི་ལ།

Translator of the *Sukhāvataṅgavyūhasūtra*.

g.25 Dharmadhara

chos 'dzin

ཚོས་འཛིན།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.26 Dharmadhvaja

chos kyi rgyal mtshan

ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.27 Duṃdubhisvaranirghoṣa

Name of a tathāgata.

g.28 Duṣpradhara

rab tu thul dka'

རབ་ཏུ་སྐྱལ་དཀའ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.29 Elder

gnas brtan

གནས་བརྟན།

sthavira

The term is used to designate a senior monk. The sixteen great arhats, or sixteen noble elders (*āryasthavira*), were the successors of the Buddha's teaching after he passed. They promised to preserve the teaching until the coming of the future Buddha Maitreya. They are on the path of seeing of the arhat path. Each arhat lived in a specific place: (1) Aṅgaja on Mt. Kailash; (2) Ajita in the Crystal Wood of Sages; (3) Vanavāsin on Mt. Saptaparnā; (4) Mahākālīka in Tāmradvīpa; (5) Vajrīputra in Siṃhaladvīpa; (6) Śrībhadrā on Yamunādvīpa; (7) Kanakavatsa in Kashmir; (8) Kanakabharadvāja in the Western continent of Godānīya; (9) Bakula in the northern continent of Uttarakuru; (10) Rāhula in Priyaṅgudvīpa; (11) Cūḍapanthaka on Mt. Ḡḍhrakūṭa; (12) Piṅḍolabharadvāja in the eastern continent of Pūrvavideha; (13) Mahāpanthaka in Trayatṛiṃśa; (14) Nāgasena on Mt. Meru; (15) Gopaka on Mt. Bihula; (16) Abhedya in the Himālayas.

g.30 Emerald

rdō'i snying po

རོདེ་སྤྱིང་པོ།

aśmagarbha

g.31 Five degenerations

snyigs ma lnga

སྤྱིགས་མ་ལྔ།

pañcakaṣāya

The five degenerations are: (1) degeneration of life span, (2) degeneration of views, (3) degeneration of the afflictions (4) degeneration of beings, and (5) the degeneration of the era.

g.32 Fully awakened

mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas

མངོན་པར་རྫོགས་པར་སངས་རྒྱལ།

abhisambuddha

A person who has manifested the complete enlightenment of a buddha of the greater vehicle.

g.33 Gandhahastin

spos kyi glang po

སྤོས་ཀྱི་གླང་པོ།

Name of a bodhisattva.

g.34 Gandhaprabhāsa

spos 'od

སྤོས་འོད།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.35 Gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

A class of spirit who lives on scents. Also, a type of celestial musician living on the rim of Mt Sumeru.

g.36 Gandhottama

spos mchog

སྤོས་མཚོག།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.37 Gavāṃpati

ba lang bdag

བ་ལང་བདག།

Śrāvaka arhat; one of the Buddha's five close arhat disciples. He took ordination from the Buddha and then became a disciple of Śāriputra.

g.38 Indra

brgya byin

བརྒྱུ་ཕྱིན།

Chief of the gods of the Thirty-Three, who presides over the desire realm heaven.

g.39 Jālinīprabha

dra ba can gyi 'od

དྲ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་འོད།

Jālenīprabha

Name of a tathāgata.

g.40 Jeta Grove

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

Jetavana

The grove of Prince Jeta in Śrāvastī; the Buddha taught many of his discourses there, especially during the rainy season retreat.

g.41 Kālodāyin

'char byed nag po

འཆར་བྱེད་ནག་པོ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.42 Lord of Death

gzhin rje

གཞིན་རྗེ།

Yama

Lord of Death.

g.43 Mahākapphiṇa

ka pi na chen po

ཀ་པི་ན་ཆེན་པོ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.44 Mahākāśyapa

'od srung chen po

འོད་སྲུང་ཆེན་པོ།

Śrāvaka arhat, one of the most important followers of the Buddha.

g.45 Mahākauṣṭhila

gsus po che

གསུས་པོ་ཆེ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.46 Mahāmeru

lhun po chen po

ལྷུན་པོ་ཆེན་པོ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.47 Mahāprabha

'od chen

འོད་ཆེན།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.48 Mahārciskandha

'od 'phro'i phung po chen po

འོད་འཕྲོ་འི་ཕུང་པོ་ཆེན་པོ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.49 Mahākātyāyana

kA tyA'i bu chen po

ཀཱ་ཏྱཱ་འི་བུ་ཆེན་པོ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.50 Mahāmaudgalyāyana

mood gal gyi bu chen po

མོལ་གཤམ་གྱི་བུ་ཆེན་པོ།

Śrāvaka arhat, one of the most important followers of the Buddha.

g.51 Mahāmeruprabhāsa

lhun po chen po snang ba

ལྷན་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་སྣང་བ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.52 Mandāra

man dA ra ba

མན་རྡ་ར་བ།

A heavenly tree.

g.53 Mañjudhvaja

Name of a tathāgata.

g.54 Mañjughoṣa

'jam dbyangs

འཇམ་དབྱངས།

Name of a tathāgata, a form of Mañjuśrī.

g.55 Mañjuśrī

'jam dpal gzhon nu

འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུ།

Name of a bodhisattva.

g.56 Mañjuvacana

'jam sgra

འཇམ་སྒྲ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.57 Meru

lhun po

ལྷན་པོ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.58 Merudhvaja

lhun po rgyal mtshan

ལྷན་པོ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.59 Merupradīpa

lhun po'i sgron ma

ལྷན་པོའི་སྒོན་མ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.60 Nakṣatrarāja

skar m'i rgyal po

སྐར་མའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.61 Nanda

dga' bo

དགའ་བོ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.62 Nityodyukta

rtag tu btson

རྟག་ཏུ་བརྩོན།

Name of a bodhisattva.

g.63 Not regress

phyir mi ldog pa

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྷོག་པ།

The third stage on the path to arhat-ship; a non-returner who will no longer be reborn into saṃsāra.

g.64 Palm tree

shing ta la

ཤིང་ཏ་ལ།

tāla

g.65 Perfectly and fully enlightened Buddha

yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas

ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱལ།

samyaksaṃbuddha

A term used to emphasize the superiority of buddhahood when contrasted with the achievement of the arhats and pratyekabuddhas. A samyaksaṃbuddha is considered superior by virtue of his compassionate activity, his omniscience and his ten special powers.

g.66 Powers

dbang po lnga

དབང་པོ་ལྔ།

pañca indriyāṇi

The five powers, or faculties, are those of (1) faith; (2) perseverance; (3) mindfulness; (4) meditative absorption or samādhi; and (5) wisdom or prajñā.

g.67 Prabhākara

'od kyi byung gnas

འོད་ཀྱི་བྱུང་གནས།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.68 Rāhula

sgra gcan zin

སླ་གཙན་ཟིན།

Śrāvaka arhat, one of the sixteen sthavira arhats (see “elder”).

g.69 Ratnaketu

rin po che'i tog

རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་རྟོག།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.70 Ratnakusumasamṣpitagotra

rin chen me tog shün tu rgyas pa'i rigs

རིན་ཆེན་མེ་ཏོག་ཤིན་ཏུ་རྒྱས་པའི་རིགས།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.71 Ratnotpalaśrī

rin chen ud pa la'i dpal

རིན་ཆེན་ཡུད་པ་ལའི་དཔལ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.72 Revata

nam gru

ནམ་གུ།

Śrāvaka arhat.

g.73 Sahā world

mi mjed · mi mjed kyi 'jig rten

མི་མཇེད། . མི་མཇེད་ཀྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན།

sahā · sahālokaadhatu

This universe of ours, presided over by Brahmā. The term is variously interpreted as meaning the world of suffering, of endurance, of fearlessness, or of concomitance (of karmic cause and effect).

g.74 Sālendrarāja

sA la'i dbang po'i rgyal po

སྐུ་ལའི་དབང་པོའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.75 Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤཱ་རིའི་བུ།

Śrāvaka arhat, one of the most important followers of the Buddha.

g.76 Sarvārthadarśa

mthong ba don yod

མཚོང་བ་དོན་ཡོད།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.77 Simha

seng ge

སེང་གེ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.78 Śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

Hinayāna practitioner of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma on the four noble truths, who realizes the suffering inherent in saṃsāra and focuses on understanding that there is no independent self. By conquering disturbing emotions, he liberates himself, attaining first the stage of stream enterer at the path of seeing, followed

by the stage of once-returner who will be reborn only one more time, and then the stage of non-returner who will no longer be reborn into saṃsāra. The final goal is to become an arhat. These four stages are also known as the “four results of spiritual practice.”

g.79 Śrāvastī

mnyan yod

མཉམ་ཡོད།

The capital city of Kosala where Buddha lived in the later years of his life.

g.80 Strengths

stobs lnga · stobs bcu

སྟོབས་ལྔ། · སྟོབས་བརྒྱ།

pañcabala · daśabala

For the five strengths, see “powers.” The ten strengths can refer either to one set of ten qualities of tathāgatas, or to a different list of ten strengths of bodhisattvas.

g.81 Śuddharaśmiprabha

'od zer dag pa

འོད་ཟེར་དག་པ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.82 Sukhāvātī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

Meaning “the delightful” or “the land of delight,” the name of the buddhafield of Amitābha / Amitāyus, in the western direction from our world.

g.83 Sumerukalpa

ri rab lta bu

རི་རབ་ལྷ་བླ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.84 Tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

Epithet of the Buddha.

g.85 Tathāgata Dharma

chos

ཚོས།

Dharma

Name of a tathāgata.

g.86 Unsurpassable, completely perfect enlightenment

bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub

བླ་ན་མེད་པ་ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་བྱང་ཆུབ།

anuttarasamyaksambodhi

An enlightenment that is authentically complete.

g.87 Vaiśvānaranirghoṣa

thams cad sgrol ba'i dbyangs sgrol

ཐམས་ཅད་སྐྱོལ་བའི་དབྱངས་སྐྱོལ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.88 Vakula

ba ku la

བ་ཀུ་ལ།

Bakula

Śrāvaka arhat; one of the sixteen sthavira arhats (see “elder”).

g.89 Water possessing the eight qualities

yan lag brgyad dang ldan pa'i chu

ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་དང་ལྷན་པའི་ཚུ།

The eight qualities of water: (1) sweet-tasting; (2) cool; (3) soft; (4) light; (5) transparent; (6) clean; (7) not harmful to the throat; and (8) beneficial to the stomach.

g.90 Yaśaḥprabha

grags pa'i 'od

གྲགས་པའི་འོད།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.91 Yaśaḥprabhāsa

grags 'od

གྲགས་འོད།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.92 Yaśas

grags pa

གྲགས་པ།

Name of a tathāgata.

g.93 Yeshé Dé

ban de ye shes sde

བན་དེ་ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

The monk Yeshé Dé, the translator of the *Sukhāvativyūhasūtra*.