

༄༅། །སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་གི་ཡོན་ཏན་བརྗོད་པའི་ཚེས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

**Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone
Ones' Buddhafields**

Buddhakṣetraguṇoktadharmaparyāya

འཕགས་པ་དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་གི་ཡོན་ཏན་བརྗོད་པའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

*'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa rnam kyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan brjod pa'i chos
kyi rnam grangs*

The Noble Dharma Discourse: Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone
Ones' Buddhafields

Āryatathāgatānām buddhakṣetraguṇoktadharmaparyāya



Toh 104
Degé Kangyur, vol. 48 (mdo sde, nga), folios 285.b–286.b.

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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 While the Buddha is staying in the kingdom of Magadha with an immense assembly of bodhisattvas, the bodhisattva Acintyaprabharāja gives a teaching on the relativity of time between different buddhafiels. Eleven buddhafiels are enumerated, with an eon in the first being equivalent to a day in the following buddhafielf, where an eon is, in turn, the equivalent of a day in the next, and so forth.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 Translated, edited, and finalized by the Subhashita Translation Group. The translation was produced by Lowell Cook, who also wrote the introduction. Benjamin Ewing checked the translation against the Tibetan and edited the text and introduction.

The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The sūtra *Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafiels* takes place in the kingdom of Magadha where the Buddha is dwelling amid an incalculable assembly of bodhisattvas. Among the bodhisattvas is the sūtra's primary speaker, Acintyaprabharāja, who offers a discourse on the relativity of time between buddhafiels. He enumerates eleven buddhafiels, with an eon in the first being equivalent to a day in the following buddhafiels, where an eon is, in turn, the equivalent of a day in the next, and so forth. The sūtra thus presents a hierarchy of buddhafiels that begins with our world and culminates with the paramount buddhafiels, Padmaśrī. This language of incredibly vast scales of time has the effect of testing the limits of human conception, thereby demonstrating that the qualities of the buddhas and their buddhafiels are beyond quantification or conceptualization. Acintyaprabharāja concludes his discourse by presenting the benefits of engaging with this sūtra, foremost of which is being visited by buddhas from an infinite number of buddhafiels at the moment of death.

i.2

Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafiels is nearly identical to "The Chapter on the Scale of Life," the thirty-seventh chapter of the *Ornaments of the Buddhas* (Toh 44, Skt. *Buddhāvataṃsaka*),¹ and *The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable* (Toh 268).² Of the three texts, *Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafiels* is the most elaborate in that it includes an introductory narrative (Skt. *nidāna*) and a conclusion whereas "The Chapter on the Scale of Life" does not, and it explicitly names the buddhafiels and their buddhas while *The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable* gives only the names of the buddhas.

i.3

Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafiels is not mentioned in either the Denkarma (Tib. *ldan/lhan dkar ma*) or Phangthangma (Tib. '*phang thang ma*) catalogs, the two extant indexes of translations from the Imperial Period (629–841 CE). Despite this, the Tibetan translation might be roughly dated between the late eighth to the early ninth century based on its

colophon, which states that it was translated by the Tibetan translator Yeshe Dé alongside the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla. It is worth noting, however, that the colophon that contains the names of the Indian and Tibetan translators is not found in any of the Thempangma (*them spangs ma*) Kangyurs.

i.4 There is an extant Sanskrit witness for *Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields* with the nearly identical title *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvananāma-mahāyānasūtra* (*The Mahāyāna Sūtra: Proclaiming the Qualities of the Infinite Buddhafields*).

This sūtra is the seventeenth in a manuscript collection of twenty sūtras that is presently held in Lhasa at the Potala Palace. The full manuscript, which was scribed by a single hand, is missing the final colophon that would have provided key information on the date and provenance of the collection, making it impossible to say when, where, or by whom the Sanskrit manuscript was compiled.³ In terms of content, the Sanskrit witness and Tibetan translation align closely, with only a handful of variants that have been noted below. The Sanskrit witness is particularly noteworthy for stating in its colophon that it belongs to “the extensive collection, *Ornaments of the Buddhas*,” making it one of the few Sanskrit sources to attest to the possible existence of an *Ornaments of the Buddhas* collection in India.⁴ The Tibetan translation of *Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields* does not explicitly identify itself as part of an *Ornaments of the Buddhas* collection as the *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana* does, suggesting that the former arrived in Tibet as an independently circulating sūtra that was not recognized as a part of the *Ornaments of the Buddhas* collection as it was transmitted to Tibet. Because both “The Chapter on the Scale of Life” of the *Ornaments of the Buddhas* and *The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable* are nearly identical in content to *Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields*, the *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana* serves as an important Sanskrit resource for studying those texts as well.

i.5 The translation offered here is based on the version found in the Degé Kangyur in close comparison with the Sanskrit text of the *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana*. Additionally, the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (Tib. *dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyurs were also consulted, and “The Chapter on the Scale of Life” and *The Sūtra of the Inconceivable King* informed this translation. A Chinese translation of the sūtra was produced by Faxian (337–ca. 422) and is included in the Chinese canon (Taishō 290 *Jiao liang yi qie fo cha gong de* 較量一切佛刹功德). An English translation of the *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana* has been published in Vinītā 2010 alongside a critical edition of the Sanskrit text and transcription of the Tibetan and Chinese translations.

The Translation

The Noble Dharma Discourse

**Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones'
Buddhafiels**

1. Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafiels

[F.285.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling at the seat of awakening,⁵ in a Dharma hermitage in the land of Magadha,⁶ where he was seated upon a lion throne in the center of a lotus, inlaid with jewels and vajras. He was accompanied by a great bodhisattva assembly of as many bodhisattva great beings as there are atoms throughout tens of trillions of indescribable buddhafiels.

1.2 Present within that assembly of bodhisattvas was a bodhisattva great being by the name of Acintyaprabharāja. Through the power of the Buddha, the bodhisattva great being Acintyaprabharāja rose from his seat and addressed the group of bodhisattvas: [F.286.a] “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in this Sahā world is but a single day in the realm of Sukhāvātī, the buddhafielf of the blessed Thus-Gone One Amitābha.

1.3 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in Sukhāvātī is but a single day in the realm of Abhirati, the buddhafielf of the blessed Thus-Gone One Akṣobhya.⁷

1.4 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Abhirati is but a single day in the realm of Kaṣāyadhvajā,⁸ the buddhafielf of the blessed Thus-Gone One Vajrasārapramardin.

1.5 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Kaṣāyadhvajā is but a single day in the realm of Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā, the buddhafielf of the blessed Thus-Gone One Suniścita padmaphullita gātra.

1.6 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā is but a single day in the realm of Virajā, the buddhafielf of the blessed Thus-Gone One Dharmadhvajā.

- 1.7 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Virajā is but a single day in the realm of Pradīpā, the buddhafiield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Siṃha.
- 1.8 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Pradīpā is but a single day in the realm of Suprabhā, the buddhafiield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Vairocana.
- 1.9 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Suprabhā is but a single day in the realm of Duratikramā, the buddhafiield of the blessed Thus-Gone Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra.
- 1.10 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Duratikramā is but a single day in the realm of Vyūhā, [F.286.b] the buddhafiield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Sarvābhijñāmatirāja.
- 1.11 “O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Vyūhā is but a single day in the realm of Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā, the buddhafiield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Candrabuddhi.
- 1.12 “O children of the Victorious One, continuing with this system of examining and calculating realms, after a distance equal to the total atoms in one million buddhafiields we arrive at the equivalent of a single day in the realm of Padmaśrī, the buddhafiield of the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, and completely perfect Buddha Bhadraśrī. This is a land where the bodhisattvas who follow the conduct of Samantabhadra make special preparations for the bodhisattva levels.⁹
- 1.13 “O children of the Victorious One, if any son or daughter of noble family holds, memorizes, recites,¹⁰ masters, or teaches in detail to others this Dharma discourse, *Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones’ Buddhafiields*,¹¹ then blessed buddhas from infinite oceans of limitless buddhafiields throughout the ten directions will be seated before them at the time of their death. They will recollect their lifetimes until they fully awaken to unsurpassed and completely perfect buddhahood.”
- 1.14 This was spoken with joy by the bodhisattva great being Acintyaprabharāja with the authorization of the thus-gone, worthy, completely perfect Buddha. The entire assembly of bodhisattva great beings praised what he had taught.
- 1.15 *This completes the noble Dharma discourse “Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones’ Buddhafiields.”¹²*

c.

Colophon

c.1 This was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla and the senior translator-editor, the venerable monk Yeshé Dé.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 See Subhashita Translation Group, trans., *The Chapter on The Scale of Life* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh44-37.html>), Toh 44-37 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2022).
- n.2 See Subhashita Translation Group, trans., *The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh268.html>), Toh 268 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2022).
- n.3 Though the manuscript itself is not presently accessible, a critical edition of the complete collection was edited and translated by Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā Tseng (2010).
- n.4 For an accessible and informative discussion of the complexities regarding the origin, content, and structure of the *Ornaments of the Buddhas* collections, see Hamar 2015.
- n.5 Tib. *byang chub kyi snying po na*; Skt. *bodhimaṇḍale*. The Tibetan term is typically a translation of *bodhimaṇḍa*, referring to the “seat of awakening.” The Skt. *bodhimaṇḍala* can be taken as either a variant or scribal corruption that conveys the same meaning.
- n.6 Tib. *mnyam dga'*. On the use of the Tib. term *mnyam dga' / mnyam dka'* as a translation of the Skt. term *maḡadha*, see Hahn 2012, an article dedicated to precisely this equivalence. The Skt. text confirms *maḡadheṣu*, “in Maḡadha.”
- n.7 This line is not found in the Skt. witness.
- n.8 Because the previous line was not included in the Skt. text, the Skt. sūtra proceeds from Sukhāvātī here instead of Abhirati. The Skt. reads, “an eon in the realm of Sukhāvātī is but a single day in the realm of Kaṣāyadhvajā . . .”

(*sukhāvatyāṃ lokadhātau kalpaṃ tat kaṣāyadhvajāyāṃ lokadhātau . . . ekaṃ rātridivasam*).

- n.9 Skt. *yatra samantabhadracaritrāṇām bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām bhūmīparikarmaviśeṣaḥ*.
- n.10 Here the Skt. text includes “promotes it” (*bhāvayīṣyati*), which is not found in the Tib. translation.
- n.11 In this line the Skt. text attests to a near-identical rendering of the title of the sūtra as provided in the Tib. translation: *Tathāgatānām buddha-kṣetraḡuṇodbhāvanadharmaparyāyam*.
- n.12 The colophon of the Skt. sūtra reads, “This completes the seventeenth sūtra, the Mahāyāna sūtra titled *Proclaiming the Qualities of the Infinite Buddhafields*, which belongs to the extensive collection, the *Ornaments of the Buddhas* (*buddhāvataṃsakād vaipulyapiṭakād anantabuddhakṣetraḡuṇodbhāvanaṃ nāma mahāyānasūtram saptadaśaṃ samāptam*).

b.

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g.

GLOSSARY

g.1

Abhirati

mngon par dga' ba

མངོན་པར་དགའ་བ།

Abhirati

Abhirati (Delightful) is the buddhfield to the east inhabited by the Buddha Akṣobhya.

g.2

Acintyaprabharāja

'od bsam gyis mi khyab pa' i rgyal po

འོད་བསམ་མ་གྲིས་མི་ཁྱེལ་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

Acintyaprabharāja

Acintyaprabharāja (King of Inconceivable Light) is a bodhisattva who is the main speaker in Toh 104.

g.3

Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā

me long gi dkyil 'khor dbyangs

མེ་ལོང་གི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་དབྱངས།

Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā

Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā (Sound of the Mirror Disk) is a buddhfield inhabited by the Buddha Candrabuddhi.

g.4

Akṣobhya

mi 'khrugs pa

མི་འཁྱུགས་པ།

Akṣobhya

The buddha in the eastern realm, Abhirati. Akṣobhya (Unshakable) was well known early in the Mahāyāna tradition.

g.5 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

Amitābha

Amitābha (Immeasurable Light) is the buddha associated with the western realm of Sukhāvātī. He is also known as Amitāyus.

g.6 Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā

phyir mi ldog pa'i 'khor lo dbyangs

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྡོག་པའི་འཁོར་ལོ་དབྱངས།

Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā

Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā (Sound of the Wheel of Nonregression) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the Buddha Sunīcitapadmaphullitagātra.

“Nonregression” (Skt. *avaivartika*, Tib. *phyir mi ldog pa*) refers to a stage on the bodhisattva path where the practitioner will never turn back, or be turned back, from progress toward the full awakening of a buddha.

g.7 Bhadraśrī

dpal bzang po

དཔལ་བཟང་པོ།

Bhadraśrī

Bhadraśrī (Excellent Glory) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafiield Padmaśrī.

g.8 Bodhisattva level

sa

ས།

bhūmi

The stages a bodhisattva must traverse before reaching perfect buddhahood; traditionally ten in number, though some systems present more.

g.9 Buddhafiield

sangs rgyas kyi zhing

སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ཞིང།

buddhakṣetra

A buddhafiield is the particular world system over which a specific buddha presides. There are innumerable such fields in Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmology.

g.10 Candrabuddhi

zla ba'i thugs

ཟླ་བའི་སྤྱུག་སྤྱུག་།

Candrabuddhi

Candrabuddhi (Moon-Like Mind) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafiield Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā.

g.11 Dharmadhvaja

chos kyi rgyal mtshan

ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

Dharmadhvaja

Dharmadhvaja (Dharma Banner) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafiield Virajā.

g.12 Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra

chos kyi 'od zer rab tu rgyas pa'i sku

ཚོས་ཀྱི་འོད་ཟེར་རབ་ཏུ་རྒྱས་པའི་སྐུ།

Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra

Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra (Body of Blazing Dharma Light) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafiield Duratikramā.

g.13 Duratikramā

'da' bar dka' ba

འདད་བར་དཀའ་བ།

Duratikramā

Duratikramā (Difficult to Transcend) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the buddha Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra.

g.14 Kaṣāyadhvajā

ngur smrig gi rgyal mtshan

ངུར་སྐྱིག་གི་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

Kaṣāyadhvajā

Kaṣāyadhvajā (Saffron-Colored Banners) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the Buddha Vajrasārapramardin.

g.15 Magadha

mnyam dga'

མཉམ་དགའ།

Magadha

An ancient Indian kingdom that lay to the south of the Ganges River in what today is the state of Bihar. Magadha was the largest of the sixteen “great states” (*mahājanapada*) that flourished between the sixth and third centuries BCE in northern India. During the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni, it was ruled by King Bimbisāra and was home to many of the most important Buddhist sites, including Bodh Gayā, Nālandā, and Rājagṛha. Its capital was initially Rājagṛha but was later moved to Pāṭaliputra (modern-day Patna) sometime after the reign of Bimbisāra’s usurper son, Ajātaśatru.

g.16 Padmaśrī

pad mo dpal

པད་མོ་དཔལ།

Padmaśrī

Padmaśrī (Lotus Glory) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the Buddha Bhadraśrī.

g.17 Pradīpā

mar me ldan

མར་མེ་ལྷན།

Pradīpā

Pradīpā (Bright Lamp) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the Buddha Siṃha.

g.18 Sahā world

mi mjed

མི་མཇེད།

sahā

This universe of ours, or the trichiliocosm (but sometimes referring to just this world system of four continents), 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.19 Samantabhadra

kun tu bzang po

ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ།

Samantabhadra

Samantabhadra (Entirely Excellent) is one of the eight principal bodhisattvas. He is known for embodying the conduct of bodhisattvas through his vast aspirations, offerings, and deeds for the benefit of beings.

g.20 Sarvābhijñāmatirāja

mngon par shes pa thams cad blo gros 'od zer rgyal po

མངོན་པར་ཤེས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྒྲོ་བློས་འོད་ཟེར་རྒྱལ་པོ།

Sarvābhijñāmatirāja

Sarvābhijñāmatirāja (King with a Mind of All Supernatural Abilities) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhfield Vyūhā.

g.21 Seat of awakening

byang chub kyi snying po

བྱང་ལྗེ་གྱི་སྙིང་པོ།

bodhimāṇḍa

The exact place where every buddha in this world will manifest the attainment of buddhahood. Specifically, this is the place beneath the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gayā.

g.22 Siṃha

seng ge

སེང་གེ།

Siṃha

Siṃha (Lion) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhfield Pradīpā.

g.23 Sukhāvātī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

Sukhāvātī

Sukhāvātī (Blissful) is the buddhfield to the west inhabited by the buddha Amitābha, who is also known as Amitāyus. It is classically described in *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī (Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh115.html>)).

- g.24 Suniścītapadmaphullitagātra
shin tu rnam par gdon mi za bar pad mo rab tu rgyas pa'i sku
 ཤིན་ཏུ་རྣམ་པར་གདོན་མི་བླ་བར་པད་མོ་རབ་ཏུ་སྐྱེས་པའི་སྐུ།
Suniścītapadmaphullitagātra
 Suniścītapadmaphullitagātra (Lotus Body Blooming with Utter Certainty) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafiield Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā.
- g.25 Suprabhā
'od bzang po
 འོད་བཟང་པོ།
Suprabhā
 Suprabhā (Beautiful Light) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the Buddha Vairocana.
- g.26 Vairocana
rnam par snang mdzad
 རྣམ་པར་སྐྱང་མཛད།
Vairocana
 Vairocana (Brilliance of the Sun) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafiield Suprabhā.
- g.27 Vajrasārapramardin
rdo rje snying pos rab tu 'dul ba
 རྩི་རླིང་པོས་རབ་ཏུ་འདུལ་བ།
Vajrasārapramardin
 Vajrasārapramardin (Vajra Essence Vanquisher) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafiield Kaṣāyadhvajā.
- g.28 Virajā
rdul dang bral ba
 རུལ་དང་བྲལ་བ།
Virajā
 Virajā (Dustless) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the Buddha Dharmadhvaja.
- g.29 Vyūhā
rnam par brgyan pa

ལྷ་པར་བརྒྱན་པ།

Vyūhā

Vyūhā (Ornamented) is a buddhafiield inhabited by the Buddha Sarvābhijñāmatirāja.