

སངས་རྒྱལ་བདུན་པ།

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## The Seven Buddhas

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*Saptabuddhaka*

འཕགས་པ་སངས་རྒྱས་བདུན་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

*'phags pa sangs rgyas bdun pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Seven Buddhas”

*Āryasaptabuddhakanāmahāyānasūtra*



Toh 512

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co.

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## SUMMARY

s.

- s.1 *The Seven Buddhas* opens with the Buddha Śākyamuni residing in an alpine forest on Mount Kailāsa with a saṅgha of monks and bodhisattvas. The Buddha notices that a monk in the forest has been possessed by a spirit, which prompts the bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha to request that the Buddha teach a spell to cure diseases and exorcise demonic spirits. The Buddha then emanates as the set of “seven successive buddhas,” each of whom transmits a dhāraṇī to Ākāśagarbha. Each of the seven buddhas then provides ritual instructions for using the dhāraṇī.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.

- ac.1 Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the supervision of Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche. The translation was produced by Adam Krug, then checked against the Tibetan and edited by Ryan Damron.

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

## INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1

*The Seven Buddhas* opens with the Buddha residing in an alpine forest on Mount Kailāsa when he and the bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha, the central interlocutor of the text, notice that a monk in the forest has succumbed to some form of demonic possession. Ākāśagarbha supplicates Śākyamuni for a spell (*vidyāmantra*) to pacify illnesses and to exorcise possessing spirits. Śākyamuni then emanates six buddhas, with himself as the seventh. The seven buddhas, unlike more specific sets of buddhas figuring in some of the other short texts in this part of the Kangyur,<sup>1</sup> are mentioned in a wide range of Buddhist literature as the “seven successive buddhas,” (see below), and are enumerated as follows:

i.2

1. Vipāśyin
2. Śikhiṇ
3. Viśvabhū
4. Krakucchanda
5. Kanakamuni
6. Kāśyapa
7. Śākyamuni

i.3

Each of these buddhas proceeds to transmit a mantra to Ākāśagarbha along with a number of ritual instructions for incanting protection cords and various medicines with the mantra to cure or ward off illness and possession. Thus, although it is classified variously as a sūtra, tantra, or dhāraṇī (or in its Chinese recensions as both a sūtra and a dhāraṇī), *The Seven Buddhas* is perhaps best understood as a Buddhist medical text that promotes the use of various spells (termed variously as *dhāraṇīs*, *vidyāmantras*, *guhya-mantras*, or simply *mantras*) to treat a variety of wounds and illnesses. The text also promotes the use of its spells to treat disease conditions that are characterized by two of the most

intractable etiologies in the South Asian medical world—disease brought on by karmic obscurations and disease brought on by interference from demonic spirits.<sup>2</sup>

i.4 The seven buddhas enumerated here are the set usually known in the commentarial literature as the “seven successive buddhas” (*sangs rgyas rabs bdun*), and less often (especially in Vinaya works) as the “seven heroic buddhas” (*sangs rgyas dpa’ bo bdun*), a grouping well known in many texts from a wide range of Buddhist traditions.

i.5 The last four, starting with Krakucchanda, are the first four of the buddhas of the present *bhadra kalpa* or “fortunate eon,” and the first three, starting with Vipaśyin, are the last three buddhas of the preceding eon.

i.6 Named buddhas of the past<sup>3</sup> are a regular feature of the Jātaka literature, as well as of the episodes in many sūtras and vinaya texts in which the Buddha Śākyamuni recounts his own and others’ past lives. Explicit lists of such buddhas, often giving details of each, can be found in many works. For example, one of the several *Bahubuddhaka* (“many buddhas”) sūtras is represented among the first century BCE Gandhāra scrolls, and lists fifteen;<sup>4</sup> another version (incorporated in the *Mahāvastu*) mentions hundreds of millions; and the later Pali *Buddhavaṃsa* details twenty-five.

i.7 Among these enumerations of past buddhas, the set of seven that figures in the present text is perhaps the most consistent, and may possibly be the earliest. Its classic presentation is in the various Pāli, Sanskrit, and Chinese recensions of the *Mahāvadānasūtra*.<sup>5</sup> Among early Indian artworks depicting the seven buddhas are a series of relief carvings on the outer circumambulatory railing at the Bharhut stūpa that represent them aniconically as the specific species of tree under which they are said to have attained enlightenment, accompanied by inscriptions in late second-century BCE Brahmi script,<sup>6</sup> and first century BCE iconographic reliefs of them, accompanied by their trees and stūpas, on two architraves of the north gateway to the Sanchi stūpa.<sup>7</sup> Other representations of the seven buddhas appear at some of the most important surviving Buddhist archeological sites of later centuries such as the Amarāvati stūpa complex, the cave vihāra complexes of Ajanta, Ellora, and Kanheri, and as far to the northwest as the Swat Valley.<sup>8</sup>

i.8 While the names of these seven buddhas, both as a group and individually, are mentioned in a large number of Kangyur texts in all sections, there is only one other Kangyur work of which they are the main theme, *The Auspicious Verses of the Seven Successive Buddhas*,<sup>9</sup> a prayer to them in which the caste, birthplace, and tree under which each attained awakening are all mentioned.

i.9 In the present text, however, these seven buddhas are not invoked, prayed to, honored, or commemorated with any regard to the well defined role they play in other texts as the buddhas of the past; indeed the status of the first six



as the Buddha Śākyamuni's predecessors and teachers is not even once mentioned. Instead, they are called on for their healing power. As each in turn confers mantras, ritual details, botanical formulations, and other instructions for use against a range of illnesses, accidents, negative spirits, worldly problems, and spiritual obstacles, the perspective this text unfolds is on the therapeutic role of these seven familiar tathāghatas. This perspective is not an otherwise unknown one, for there are other works in which they have a similar function;<sup>10</sup> nevertheless, the degree of detail here may well be unique.

- i.10 *The Seven Buddhas* was translated into Tibetan by the early ninth century, and the text is listed in both of the surviving imperial inventories: in the sūtra section of the *Denkarma*,<sup>11</sup> and in the dhāraṇī section of the *Phangthangma*.<sup>12</sup> None of the available recensions of the text include a colophon, so the precise identity of the translators is unknown.
- i.11 There is a substantial Tibetan commentary to the text written by the scholar Bodong Pañchen Choklé Namgyal (*bo dong paN chen phyogs las rnam rgyal*, 1375/6–1451) entitled *The General Sūtra Collection Ritual of the Seven Buddhas* (*sangs rgyas bdun pa'i mdo sde'i cho ga*), which contains instructions for a ritual of the seven buddhas employing the mantras in this sūtra.<sup>13</sup>
- i.12 The text was first translated into Chinese in the early half of the sixth century CE, and there are three Chinese translations that preserve separate titles for the text. The Liáng translation (Taishō 1333, c. 502–557 CE), whose translator is unknown, refers to the work as the \**Ākāśagarbhaparipṛchāsaptabuddhadhāraṇīsūtra* (虛空藏菩薩問七佛陀羅尼咒經).<sup>14</sup> The Jñānagupta translation (Taishō 1334, 587 CE) refers to the text as the \**Tathāgataupāyakauśalyamantrasūtra* (如來方便善巧咒經).<sup>15</sup> And finally, the Fatian translation (Taishō 1147, 984 CE) refers to the work as the \**Āryākāśagarbhabodhisattvadhāraṇīsūtra* (聖虛空藏菩薩陀羅尼經).<sup>16</sup> As in the Tibetan imperial inventories of translated works, this text's Chinese translations appear to have been classified variously as sūtra or dhāraṇī.
- i.13 This English translation is based on the three versions of text that are included in the General Sūtra Section (*mdo sde*), the Tantra Collection (*rgyud 'bum*), and the Compendium of Incantations (*gzungs 'dus*)<sup>17</sup> of the Degé Kangyur. The variants across these three versions of the text are relatively minor, but their consultation has been particularly helpful in identifying some of the medicinal plants and proper Sanskrit transliterations of the dhāraṇī-mantras in the text.<sup>18</sup> The dhāraṇīs are rendered in Sanskrit transliteration based on the three versions in the Degé Kangyur with variants from the Stok Palace Kangyur and the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) noted where appropriate. Tentative English translations are provided for each dhāraṇī in a note whenever possible.

tr.

## THE TRANSLATION

### The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

### The Seven Buddhas

- 1.1 [F.5.a] [F.39.a] Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.
- 1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling on the summit of Kailāsa in the abode of the gods close to where the sages live. He was accompanied by a great monastic saṅgha of around five hundred monks and five hundred bodhisattvas, including the bodhisattva great being Maitreya, the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha, Samantabhadra, Infinite Flowers, Samantakusuma, and others, all of whom were bodhisattvas who were just one birth away from awakening.
- 1.3 The Blessed One saw that a monk in that alpine forest had been possessed by a spirit, had collapsed, and was lying there naked and wailing with his arms raised up.
- 1.4 The bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha draped his upper robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, bowed to the Blessed One with his hands joined, and addressed him. “Blessed One, what is this great lamenting that fills the sky, and who is this naked monk raising his arms in distress?”<sup>19</sup>
- 1.5 The Blessed One told the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha, “Ākāśagarbha, this monk is ill. He has contracted an illness.”
- 1.6 The bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha then asked the Blessed One, [F.5.b] [F.39.b] “Will the Blessed One please teach a *vidyāmantra* that can pacify all manner of diseases and exorcise all manner of spirits?”
- 1.7 The Blessed One emanated the seven buddhas: six tathāgatas appeared in the sky, with the seventh being the Blessed One himself, the Tathāgata Śākyamuni.

- 1.8 The tathāgata Vipāśyin hovered in the sky above them and spoke these root verses of the secret mantra in order to benefit all beings, pacify all manner of illnesses, and exorcise all manner of spirits:

*namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | tadyathā | oṃ hala hala |<sup>20</sup>  
hili hilāya |<sup>21</sup> namo jaḡa | namaśca nāya | namo namaḥ svāhā |<sup>22</sup>*

- 1.9 The tathāgata Vipāśyin addressed the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha, saying, “Ākāśagarbha, whoever bears this vidyāmantra in mind, recites it, or masters it will not be slain by a weapon, nor will they die from drowning, fire,<sup>23</sup> or a painful illness. They will not suffer an unnatural death. Even poison they have eaten will become like food.

- 1.10 “If you recite the vidyāmantra seven times over your food and drink before consuming it, no one else can harm you, you will not contract any illnesses, and you will live for a long time, understand what you have studied, and have a vision of the seven tathāgatas.

- 1.11 “Recite this vidyāmantra in the ear of someone who has been wounded with a weapon and anoint them with jasmine oil incanted with the vidyāmantra.<sup>24</sup> If you anoint those who are afflicted with diseases such as leprosy or tumors with incanted oil that contains a mixture of jasmine, blue lotus, dill, and wild asparagus, they will recover from all their illnesses. This mantra can be used for all rites.”

- 1.12 Then the tathāgata Śikhin hovered in the sky above them and spoke these root verses of the secret mantra in order to benefit all beings, pacify all manner of illnesses, [F.6.a] [F.40.a] and exorcise all manner of spirits:

*namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | oṃ paca paca pācaya pācaya  
sarvabhūtānām | chindaya<sup>25</sup> kīlaya paravidyānām<sup>26</sup> svāhā |<sup>27</sup>*

- 1.13 “Ākāśagarbha, I and millions of Buddhas have taught this secret mantra in order to benefit all beings, to completely pacify all manner of illnesses, to ward off spirits that harm one’s meditation and cause nightmares, and to prevent untimely death. Now you must uphold it.

- 1.14 “Ākāśagarbha, if someone focuses on my heart mantra three times a day, they will not be harmed by others, they will meet the Tathāgata in their dreams, and they will not suffer a horrible death. When they die, they will meet with the tathāgatas and serve them.

- 1.15 “You can also use the rite to bind the patient with a protection cord against all manner of illnesses. In cases where an illness is the result of a humoral imbalance, you can incant jasmine oil with the mantra and give it to the patient. You can perform the rite of sealing off the directions with water incanted with the mantra, and you can use an incanted cord to protect yourself. You can tie a

blue protection cord incanted with the mantra on a child to guard against seizers that possess children. You can whisper the mantra seven times in the ear of someone who has been struck down with a weapon, and you can use it to control others with your mind.”

- 1.16 Then the tathāgata Viśvabhū hovered in the sky above them and spoke these root verses of the secret mantra in order to benefit all beings, pacify all manner of illnesses, and exorcise all manner of spirits:

*namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | oṃ kala kala | kili kili | kulu kulu | kulotsādanaṃ<sup>28</sup> kuru | sarva grahāṇāṃ svāhā |<sup>29</sup>*

- 1.17 “Ākāśagarbha, these root verses of the secret mantra are taught by all the past, future, and present tathāgatas of the fortunate eon, and now I have spoken them as well. [F.6.b] [F.40.b] Ākāśagarbha, you must uphold these root verses of the secret mantra.

- 1.18 “If someone bears in mind, recites, or masters them, they will not be harmed by a weapon, affected by poison, or affected by poisonous brews, nor will they become infected with plague. They will not drown, die of unnatural causes, or die from a weak constitution, unless these are karmic obscurations that result from a previous lifetime. Any monk, nun, or layperson who rises in the morning, washes their head, and recites this secret mantra one hundred and eight times before an image of the Tathāgata will be able to purify all their karmic obscurations.

- 1.19 “Once the dhāraṇī has been spoken to any hostile beings or kings, you will have power over all of them. You will master all fears. Wearing a white protection cord incanted with the mantra will guard against all manner of quarrelsome men and women, as well as any argument or dispute. An incanted protection cord made with fiber from a date tree can be used against diseases of the eye and hung on one’s ear. To paralyze an army, perform a fire offering one hundred and eight times with incanted popped rice that has been soaked in yogurt and honey while reciting the following mantra each time:

*rājanāṇi<sup>30</sup> rājāmātraṇi vā vaśī karotu<sup>31</sup> kāmēna |<sup>32</sup>*

- 1.20 “To purify all your own and all beings’ obscurations and misdeeds and to obtain great prosperity and wealth, recite the dhāraṇī while offering sesame seeds one thousand times into a fire altar<sup>33</sup> that has been kindled with date palm branches.<sup>34</sup> To purify all your misdeeds, master all vidyāmantras, or to ritually cleanse yourself you should wash with dill, spikenard,<sup>35</sup> foxtail millet, sirisa, valerian, saffron, nut grass, bitter gourd, bodhi tree, and mango flowers.<sup>36</sup> Next, fast for an entire day in front of a buddha image, and then place these

ingredients in a fresh vase. On the full moon, bathe in front of an image of the Buddha while reciting the heart mantra [F.7.a] [F.41.a] one thousand and eight times.

1.21 “To neutralize poison sit before an image of the Buddha and use a ladle made of teak to offer cow dung<sup>37</sup> onto a ritual fire while reciting the victim’s name one hundred and eight times. The poison will then be neutralized. This mantra protects one from seizers<sup>38</sup> and works for any rite associated with the spirits and the like. It will pacify them.”

1.22 “Then the blessed tathāgata Krakucchanda hovered in the sky above them and spoke the following root verses of the secret mantra in order to benefit all beings, pacify all manner of illnesses, and exorcise all manner of spirits:

*namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | namaḥ krakucchandāya |  
tathāgatāya | arhate samyaksaṅbuddhāya | oṃ kaṭa kaṭa | kaṭha kaṭha | kiṭi kiṭi |  
kiṭhi kiṭhi | kiṭāpaya<sup>39</sup> namaḥ svāhā |<sup>40</sup>*

1.23 “Ākāśagarbha, this has been taught by tathāgata, arhat, perfect complete buddhas bearing the name Krakucchanda in numbers equal to the grains of sand in the Ganges river, and now you must maintain this joyous root mantra.

1.24 “If this is received, born in mind, and mastered, then in the future, when monks, nuns, and laypeople gain faith in the Three Jewels, perform the bathing rite, and make offerings of flowers, incense, and perfume to the Buddha while reciting<sup>41</sup> this sacred mantra one hundred and eight times, they will be able to recall their past lives for seven lifetimes. They will become the greatest among gods or wheel-turning kings among humans. If they perform this rite correctly, this will be their final human birth. After they die, they will be born in Sukhāvātī.

1.25 “If they constantly recite the mantra, they will be free from all manner of illnesses in this lifetime and understand what they study. If they recite the mantra seven times over their food and drink and then consume it, they will be cured of any illness. [F.7.b] [F.41.b] Or, if they wish to quench their thirst, they should wash their food while reciting the mantra one thousand and eight times.

1.26 “A copper needle incanted with the mantra can be used to remove a tumor. If recited seven times, the mantra will free you from all manner of quarrels, disputes, and bondage. Your wealth will also continually increase, and you will be free from all manner of obstructing beings and corrupting beings.

1.27 “Or, if you wish to have a vision of the Tathāgata, draw a maṇḍala on a clean spot in the vicinity of a stūpa,<sup>42</sup> fumigate it with aloeswood, recite the mantra one thousand and eight times, and then lie on a cushion in front of the maṇḍala’s eastern side. When you fall asleep you will have a vision of the

Tathāgata. He will teach you whatever you ask<sup>43</sup> and can tell you anything you wish such as your lifespan, your strength, and whether you will be defeated or victorious in battle.”

- 1.28 Then the tathāgata Kanakamuni hovered in the sky above them and spoke these root verses of the secret mantra to benefit all beings, pacify all manner of illnesses, and exorcise all manner of spirits:

*namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | namaḥ kanakamunaye |  
tathāgatāya | arhate samyak sambuddhāya | tadyathā | oṃ sara sara sara sara | siri siri  
siri siri | sirāya |<sup>44</sup> dhama dhama dhama dhama | dhuma dhuma dhuma dhuma |<sup>45</sup>  
dhumāya | namo namaḥ | kanakamunaye | tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya  
svāhā |<sup>46</sup>*

- 1.29 The tathāgata Kanakamuni addressed the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha, saying, “Ākāśagarbha, whoever upholds this heart mantra and continuously recites it will not fear any weapon, nor will they die from fire, drowning, or lightning. They will be able to consume poisons as easily as food. They will not suffer an unnatural death or die due to a weak constitution. They will have a long life and be extremely prosperous. They will always be in the company of the Tathāgata and [F.8.a] [F.42.a] be blessed by him. If they recite the mantra at the three times of the day, they will purify all their karmic obscurations from previous lifetimes.

- 1.30 “If you want to cure another person’s illness, perform a cast offering according to your means, fumigate the room with incense or aloeswood, and wash all the food. For leprosy, tumors, and a swollen liver, pick some fresh sweet flag, mix it with honey, incant it with the mantra one thousand and eight times before an image of the Blessed Buddha, and rub the mixture on the affected area. The leprosy will fully heal.

- 1.31 “For a fever that returns every four days, recite the mantra one thousand and eight times over a garland of jasmine flowers before an image of the Blessed Buddha. Tie it around the patient’s head, and they will recover from the four-day fever.

“If you recite the mantra in the ear of someone who has been struck with a weapon, they will be cured of their amnesia.

- 1.32 “For those who have been possessed by a *kaṭapūtana*, fumigate the patient with flowers that have been offered to the Buddha. That and all other such rituals may be performed with this heart mantra, thus it is acceptable for any rite.”

- 1.33 Then the tathāgata Kāśyapa hovered in the sky above them and proclaimed these root verses of the secret mantra in order to benefit all beings, to pacify all manner of illnesses, and exorcise all manner of spirits:

*namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | oṃ hara hara hara hara |<sup>47</sup> ha  
ha ha | namaḥ kāśyapāya | tathāgatāya | arhate samyaksambuddhāya | sidhyantu  
mantrapada<sup>48</sup> svāhā |<sup>49</sup>*

1.34 The tathāgata Kāśyapa addressed the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha, saying, “Ākāśagarbha, blessed buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in thirty-two Ganges rivers have taught this heart mantra in the past. Now, Ākāśagarbha, you must preserve this heart mantra. You must master it.

1.35 “If someone who has received, recited, and mastered it recites it three times per day and three times per night, then, in brief, they will have a vision of the Tathāgata in their dreams [F.8.b] [F.42.b] and purify all their karmic obscurations except for any karma from their past lives. This mantra can be used for any rite.

1.36 “For illnesses such as leprosy and vitiligo,<sup>50</sup> offer flowers to the Buddha and recite the mantra one thousand and eight times over them before an image of the Buddha. After the patient has recited the mantra and bathed, they will recover. For a headache, one should place a flower offered to the Buddha before an image of the Buddha and recite the mantra before the image one thousand and eight times.<sup>51</sup> This mantra can be used in any ritual.”

1.37 Then the Blessed One, the Tathāgata Śākyamuni, hovered in the sky above them and spoke this vidyāmantra for the benefit of all beings:

*namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | tadyathā | ghume ghume  
mahāghume | tale tale mahātale | cale cale mahācale | dhure dhure mahādhure | tiri  
tiri mahātiri | kili kili mahākili | curu curu mahācuru | mili mili mahāmili | tili tili  
mahātili | dhume dhume mahādhume | cale cale mahācale | khiri khiri mahakhiri |  
cili cili mahācili svāhā |*

1.38 The Tathāgata Śākyamuni addressed the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha, saying, “Ākāśagarbha, to treat a headache, you should recite the mantra using your forefinger and the palm of your hand. You can disperse clouds using an incanted wand made of oleander wood. You can use incanted water to overcome poisoning. You can also perform any other rituals using the mantra, and you can include a bathing rite. It can be used for any rite in any context.”

1.39 After the Blessed One had said this, the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha was delighted and praised the Blessed One’s words.

1.40 *This concludes the noble Mahāyāna sūtra “The Seven Buddhas.”*

ab.

## ABBREVIATIONS

*D* Degé Kangyur

*K<sub>Q</sub>* Peking (Qianlong) Kangyur

*N* Narthang Kangyur

*S* Stok Palace Kangyur



## NOTES

n.

- n.1 See *The Eight Buddhas* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh271.html>) (Toh 271), *The Ten Buddhas* (Toh 272), and *The Twelve Buddhas* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh273.html>) (Toh 273, 511, 853).
- n.2 There is some ambivalence in the text about whether or not the dhāraṇīs of the seven buddhas can be effective in reversing or eliminating the negative effects of one’s previously accumulated karma. For a more thoroughgoing presentation of this issue see Krug (2019).
- n.3 Their existence is a natural consequence of the doctrine according to which a bodhisattva will become a buddha only after serving other buddhas, and eventually receiving *vyākaraṇa* (prediction of awakening) from one of them.
- n.4 Salomon (2018), pp. 265–293.
- n.5 In Pali, *Mahāpadānasutta* (<https://suttacentral.net/dn14/en/sujato>), *Dīgha Nikāya* 14. See also Davidson (2015), p. 132. In the same article, pp. 133–42, Davidson also speculates that the reason for the set of *seven* buddhas having become so widespread might be related to the brahmanical tradition whereby maintaining caste purity over the course of seven generations confers legitimacy on the status of ritual specialist.
- n.6 Davidson (2015), 129–30.
- n.7 Marshall (1918), p. 46 et seq.
- n.8 Davidson (2015), 130–31.
- n.9 *sangs rgyas rabs bdun gyi bkra shis tshigs su bcad pa*, Toh 821, 1104, and in the Tengyur 4412. For a translation, see Pearcey (2018).
- n.10 For example, in the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī* (*Destroyer of the Great Trichiliocosm*, Toh 556) Dharmachakra Translation Committee (2016), 1.297 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-090-002.html#UT22084-090-002-306>), 1.409 (

- 090-002-418), and 1.418 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-090-002.html#UT22084-090-002-427>).
- [n.11](#) Denkarma, folio 299.b. See also Yoshimura (1950), p. 135.
- [n.12](#) *dkar chag 'phang thang ma* (2003), 25.
- [n.13](#) Bodong Pañchen Choklé Namgyal (1969–1981).
- [n.14](#) Lewis R. Lancaster, “K346,” *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, accessed November 14, 2018, [http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0346.html](http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0346.html) (<http://databases.aibs.columbia.edu/index.php?clear=true>).
- [n.15](#) Lewis R. Lancaster, “K338,” *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, accessed November 14, 2018, [http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0338.html](http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0338.html) (<http://databases.aibs.columbia.edu/index.php?clear=true>). The Sanskrit back-translations for these titles are provided from Ronald M. Davidson’s study of the text. See Davidson (2015), 149.
- [n.16](#) Lewis R. Lancaster, “K1106,” *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, accessed November 14, 2018, [http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k1106.html](http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1106.html) ([http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k1106.html](http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1106.html)).
- [n.17](#) This text, Toh 852, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs 'dus, e*), are listed as being located in volume 101 of the Degé Kangyur by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). However, several other Kangyur databases—including the eKangyur that supplies the digital input version displayed by the 84000 Reading Room—list this work as being located in volume 102. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the two volumes of the *gzungs 'dus* section are an added supplement not mentioned in the original catalog, and also hinges on the fact that the compilers of the Tōhoku catalog placed another text—which forms a whole, very large volume—the *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratāntraṭīkā* (*dus 'khor 'grel bshad dri med 'od*, Toh 845), before the volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur, numbering it as vol. 100, although it is almost certainly intended to come right at the end of the Degé Kangyur texts as volume 102; indeed its final fifth chapter is often carried over and wrapped in the same volume as the Kangyur *dkar chags* (catalog). Please note this discrepancy when using the eKangyur viewer in this translation.
- [n.18](#) The correlating section from the eKangyur (based on the Degé) may be viewed by clicking on the folio references, which will be displayed according to the Toh number selected from the 84000 reading room: Toh 270 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh270.html>), Toh 512

- (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh512.html>), or Toh 852 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh852.html>).
- n.19 S, D (Toh 512, Toh 852): *lag pa bstod pa*; D (Toh 270): *lag pa stong pa*.
- n.20 D (Toh 270): *hulu hulu*.
- n.21 D (Toh 270): *hiliya*.
- n.22 Tentative English translation: Homage to the Buddha. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Saṅgha. *Tadyathā oṃ hala hala hili hili hilāya*. Homage to the world and homage to the guide. Homage to you, *svāhā*.
- n.23 The Tibetan for fire (*me*) does not appear here in D (Toh 270).
- n.24 The Tibetan does not always make it explicit that the materia medica used to treat various illnesses in the text should be incanted with the vidyāmantra, so this has been rendered explicit by the translator throughout the text where it is appropriate.
- n.25 D (Toh 270, Toh 512): *cchindaya*.
- n.26 D (Toh 512, Toh 852): *varaviānām*.
- n.27 Tentative English translation: Homage to the Buddha. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Saṅgha. *Oṃ cook cook, cook them out cook out all the spirits*. Pierce and pin down the enemy's vidyā beings *svāhā*.
- n.28 S: *kulotsādanam*; D (Toh 270): *kula udsadhanam*; D (Toh 512): *kulotsādhanānām*; D (Toh 852): *kulotsādhanānām*. The Stok Palace Kangyur contains the only truly viable transliteration of a Sanskrit term, so the transliteration and translation of this mantra follows the Stok Palace Kangyur.
- n.29 Tentative English translation: Homage to the Buddha. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Saṅgha. *Oṃ kala kala kili kili kulu kulu* destroy the clans of all seizers *svāhā*.
- n.30 D (Toh 270): *rājanām*; D (Toh 512, Toh 852), S: *rājānām*. The term *rājana* is a patronymic derived from the Sanskrit term for king (*rājan*) and thus means "belonging to a king." Here the term might be in the feminine singular accusative to signify the queen, or perhaps in a masculine plural accusative in which the nasal has been transcribed as *anusvara*. The context for the mantra and the inclusion of the phrase "or just the king" (*rājāmātram vā*) indicates that the term *rājanām* is likely meant here to signify the king's army.
- n.31 D (Toh 270): *vaśikarotu*; D (Toh 512, Toh 852): *vaśikaratu*; S: *vāśikāratu*. The transliteration preserved in D (Toh 270) is the proper imperative third person singular form of *ḥ*.

- n.32 Tentative English translation: Bend the king's army (or just the king) to my will *svāhā*.
- n.33 D: *me bus*; this is taken here as a scribal error for *me bud*, which is a contracted compound for the Tibetan *me bud pa'i gnas* (Skt. *agnikaraṇasthānam*), a term that is commonly used to signify a fire altar.
- n.34 D (Toh 270 and Toh 512) repeat the line '*o ma can gyi shing gi sbar shing gis me bus la bsreg bya til dag lan stong sbyin sreg bya'o*. It has only been rendered once in translation.
- n.35 D (Toh 270): *na la da*; D (Toh 512, Toh 852): *na la*. This translation follows D (Toh 270). *Nalada* is a medicinal plant that is attested in the *Atharvaveda* and *Suśrutasaṃhitā*.
- n.36 D (Toh 270): *a mra'i mgo lcogs*; D (Toh 512, Toh 852): *a mra'i mgo thogs*. This translation follows D (Toh 270), which is a Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit *āmrastabaka*.
- n.37 D: *seng ldeng gi thur ma ba'i lci bar smyugs*; S: *seng ldeng gi phur ma spyi bor bsnyugs*.
- n.38 D (Toh 270): *gdon bsrung ba dang / 'byung po la sogs pa'i*; D (Toh 512): *gdon dang / srung ba dang / 'byung po la sogs pa'i*; D (Toh 852): *gdon dang srung ba dang 'byung po la sogs pa'i*; S: *gdon dang / bsrung ba dang / 'byung po la sogs pa'i*. This translation follows D (Toh 270). The variants in D (Toh 512, Toh 852) suggest that the term *srung ba* was read as another class of being in series with the terms *gdon* (*graha*) "seizer" and '*byung po* (*bhūta*) "spirit." This is taken as a scribal error based on lack of evidence for any class of being translated into Tibetan as *srung ba*. The tathāgata Viśvabhū's mantra is also explicitly directed at *grahas*. It is also possible to read the phrase *gdon bsrung ba* as *graharakṣā*, which could refer to an amulet used to protect one from *grahas*. The translation here remains ambiguous on this point and allows for this interpretation.
- n.39 S, D (Toh 512): *kiṭāpaya*; D (Toh 270): *kitāpaya*; D (Toh 852): *kiṭāvaya*.
- n.40 Tentative English translation: Homage to the Buddha. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Saṅgha. Homage to the tathāgata, arhat, perfect and complete buddha Krakucchanda. *oṃ kaṭa kaṭa kaṭha kaṭha kiṭi kiṭi kiṭhi kiṭhi kiṭāpaya*. Homage to you *svāhā*.
- n.41 D (Toh 270): *brjod par gyur*; D (Toh 512): *brjod 'byor par 'gyur*; D (Toh 852): '*byong bar 'gyur*; S: *brjod par 'gyur*.
- n.42 D (Toh 270): *mchod rten gyi 'khor sar*; D (Toh 512, Toh 852), S: '*jig rten gyi 'khor sar*.
- n.43 D (Toh 852), S: *yid la ci smos pa*; D (Toh 270): *yid la ci smon pa*; D (Toh 512): *yid la ci snos pa*.
- n.44 D (Toh 270), S: *sīrāya*.

- n.45 D (Toh 512 and Toh 852) are missing the fourth occurrence of *dhuma* here, but it is attested in D (Toh 270) and S. This also fits the pattern established by the previous line of the mantra.
- n.46 Tentative English translation: Homage to the Buddha. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Saṅgha. Homage to the tathāgata, arhat, perfect and complete buddha Kanakamuni. *tadyathā oṃ sara sara sara sara siri siri siri siri sirāya dhama dhama dhama dhuma dhuma dhuma dhuma dhumāya*. Homage to the tathāgata, arhat, perfect and complete buddha Kanakamuni *svāhā*.
- n.47 D (Toh 270): *hara hara hara*; S, D (Toh 512, Toh 852): *hara hara hara hara*.
- n.48 D (Toh 512): *mantrapada*; D (Toh 270): *mantrapadaiḥ*; D (Toh 852), S: *mantrapāda*. None of the Tibetan variants indicate the term *mantrapada* in the nominative plural, but the third person imperative plural verb *sidhyantu* requires a nominative plural, so the phrase *mantrapada* has been translated below as *mantrapadāḥ*.
- n.49 Tentative English translation: Homage to the Buddha. Homage to the Dharma. Homage to the Saṅgha. Dispel dispel dispel dispel *ha ha ha*. Homage to the tathāgata, arhat, perfect and complete buddha Kāśyapa. May these mantra verses be effective *svāhā*.
- n.50 D (Toh 270): *sha bkra*; D (Toh 512, Toh 852), S: *sha gar*. The Tibetan *sha bkra* translates the Sanskrit for several different skin diseases, all of which refer to a kind of white spot on the surface of the skin. This may account for the Tibetan variant *sha gar*. See glossary entry.
- n.51 D (Toh 270, Toh 512), S: *lan stong rtsa brgyad*; D (Toh 852): *lan bdun*.

b.

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## GLOSSARY

g.

g.1 Ākāśagarbha  
*nam mkha'i snying po*

ནམ་མཁའི་སྙིང་པོ།

*Ākāśagarbha*

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.2 Aloeswood

*a ga ru*

ཨ་ག་རུ།

*aguru · śimśapā*

The fragrant aloeswood tree *Aquilaria agallocha*. Alternately a Tibetan translation of *śimśapā*, which the *Atharvaveda* identifies as the tree *Dalbergia sissoo* or Indian redwood.

g.3 Bitter gourd

*in dra ba ru na*

ཨིན་བྲ་བ་རུ་ན།

*indrāvaruṇi*

*Cucumis trigonus*; colocynth, a wild bitter gourd, *Cucumis colocynthis*; the favorite plant of Indra and Varuṇa.

g.4 Bodhi tree

*byang chub kyi shing*

བྱང་ལྷུབ་ཀྱི་ཤིང།

*bodhitaru · bodhiṅkṣa*

*Ficus religiosa*.

g.5 Cast offering

*gtor ma*

གཏོར་མ།

*bali*

An offering, originating in the vedic tradition, traditionally made out of uncooked food and performed at the home prior to cooking a meal by arranging portions of the ingredients and then casting them outside or into the sacred fire. Also translated here as “uncooked offering.”

g.6 Corrupting being

*log 'dren*

ལོག་འདྲེན།

*vināyaka*

A class of being that misleads or has a corrupting influence.

g.7 Date tree

*'o ma can gyi shing · shing 'o ma can*

འོ་མ་ཅན་གྱི་ཤིང་ . ཤིང་འོ་མ་ཅན།

*kṣīrikā · kṣīravrkṣa*

Identified in the *Mahābhārata* and *Lalitavistara* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh95.html>) as a variety of date tree.

g.8 Dhāraṇī

*gzungs*

གཟུངས།

*dhāraṇī*

g.9 Dill

*shu ti*

ཤུ་ཏི།

*śatapuṣpa*

Lit. “having one hundred flowers,” Monier-Williams notes this term is used in the Āyurvedic work *Suśrutasaṃhītā* to denote the plant *Anethum sowa*, also known as dill.

g.10 Fever that returns every four days

*zhag bzhi pa*

ཞག་བཞི་པ།

*caturthaka*

g.11 Four-day fever

*zhag bzhi pa*

ཞག་བཞི་པ།

*caturthaka*

See “fever that returns every four days.”

g.12 Foxtail millet

*khre*

མྲ།

*priyaṅgu · pītataṇḍulā*

*Panicum italicum.*

g.13 Infinite Flowers

*mtha' yas me tog*

མཐའ་ཡས་མེ་རྟོག

—

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.14 Kailāsa

*ti se'i ri*

ཏི་སེ་འི་རི།

*Kailāsa*

Mount Kailash, often considered the earthly representation of Mount Meru, the central world-axis in numerous South Asian cosmographies. In its role as the center of the cosmos, Mount Kailash is considered to be the dwelling place of numerous Buddhist and non-Buddhist deities including the Hindu god Śiva, the tantric Buddhist god Cakrasaṃvara, Kubera, and others. The mountain is considered sacred to Hindus, Buddhists, and Bönpos.

g.15 Kanakamuni

*gser thub*

གསེར་ཐུབ།

*Kanakamuni*

Fifth of the seven tathāgatas/buddhas. Identified in other texts as the second buddha to appear in the present eon.

g.16 Kāśyapa

*'od srung*

འོད་སྲུང།

*Kāśyapa*

The sixth of the seven tathāgatas/buddhas. Identified in other texts as the third buddha to appear in the present eon, and thus the immediated predecessor of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.17 Kaṭapūtana

*lus srul po*

ལུས་སྲུལ་པོ།

*kaṭapūtana*

A class of demonic, possessing beings.

g.18 Krakucchanda

*log par dad sel*

ལོག་པར་དད་སེལ།

*Krakucchanda*

The fourth of the seven tathāgatas/buddhas. Identified in other texts as the first buddha to appear in the present eon.

g.19 Leprosy

*mdze*

མཛོ།

*kuṣṭha*

g.20 Lightning

*lce 'babs pa*

ལྷེ་འབབས་པ།

*azani*

A thunderbolt or flash of lightning.

g.21 Maitreya

*byams pa*

བྱམས་པ།

*Maitreya*

The name of a bodhisattva. Maitreya is considered to currently reside in Tuṣita and awaits rebirth in the human realm as the next Buddha of the current eon.

g.22 Mango flowers

*a mra'i mgo ljogs*

ཨ་མྲའི་མགོ་ལྗོགས།

*āmrastabaka*

The blossoms of a mango tree.

g.23 Nut grass

*gla skang*

གླ་སྐང།

*mustah*

*Cyperus rotundus.*

g.24 Obstructing being

*bgegs*

བགེགས།

*vighna*

An obstacle and a class of demonic beings that cause obstacles.

g.25 Oleander wood

*shing ka ra vI ra*

ཤིང་ཀ་ར་བྱི་ར།

*karavīra*

The wood of *Nerium odorum*.

g.26 Possessed by a spirit

'byung pos zin

འབྱུང་པོས་ཟིན།

\*bhūtagraha \* bhūtāveśa

This is likely an alternate Tibetan translation for the Sanskrit phrase \*bhūtagraha, more commonly rendered in Tibetan as 'byung po'i gdon. The phrase shares semantic resonances with the compound bhūtagrahāviṣṭa / 'byung po'i gdon gyis non pa and the Sanskrit bhūtāveśa, all of which refer to being possessed by a class of spirit (bhūta / 'byung po).

g.27 Protection cord

skud pa

སྐུད་པ།

sūtra · tantru

A term used here to denote a piece of string incanted with a mantra that protects whomever wears it.

g.28 Result of a humoral imbalance

dus pa las gyur pa

དུས་པ་ལས་གྱུར་པ།

sāṃnipātika

A term in the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* that denotes a dangerous illness that results when all three humors are out of balance.

g.29 Saffron

gum kum · kur kum

གུམ་གུམ། · ཀུར་གུམ།

kuṅkuma

*Crocus sativus*, the plant and the pollen of the flowers.

g.30 Samantabhadra

kun tu bzang po

ཀུན་རྩ་བཟང་པོ།

Samantabhadra

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.31 Samantakusuma

kun nas me tog

ཀུན་ནས་མེ་རྟོག།

Samantakusuma

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.32 Sealing off the directions

phyogs bcing ba

ཕྱོགས་བཅིང་བ།

*digbandha*

A protection rite designed to guard the subject against attack or assault from demonic forces and mantra or vidyā beings.

g.33 Secret mantra

*gsang sngags*

གསང་སྐྱེགས།

*guhyanmantra*

A spell. Although a technical term in its own right, it is also at times used interchangeably with the terms *dhāraṇī* and *dhāraṇīmantra*, *vidyāmantra*, etc.

g.34 Seizer

*gdon*

གདོན།

*graha*

A class of demonic, possessing beings.

g.35 Seizers that possess children

*byis pa rnam kyī gdon*

བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་གདོན།

*bālagrahaḥ*

Literally “child snatchers,” the *bālagrahaḥ* are an important class of demonic being in both Āyurvedic literature and across both popular and institutional religious communities in South Asia and the broader South Asian cultural world.

g.36 Seven successive buddhas

*sangs rgyas rabs bdun*

སངས་སྐྱེས་རྒྱུས་རབས་བདུན།

*saptatathāgata*

The best known of many sets of past buddhas, including Śākyamuni as the seventh, his three predecessors in this eon, and the three last buddhas of the eon that preceded the present one.

g.37 Śikhin

*gtsug tor can*

གཙུག་ཏོར་ཅན།

*Śikhin*

The second of the seven tathāgatas/buddhas. Identified in other texts as the penultimate buddha to appear in the eon that preceded the present one.

g.38 Sirisa

*shi ri sha*

ཤི་རི་ཤ།

*śirīṣa*

The sirisa tree or *Acacia sirissa*.

g.39 Spikenard

*na la da*

ནལ་ད།

*nalada*

Identified as *Nardostachys jatamansi*, or Indian spikenard, a plant recognized for its medicinal properties in the *Atharvaveda* and *Suśrutasaṃhitā*. The Sanskrit epic poem called *Naiṣadhacarita* identifies this plant as the root of *Andropogon muricatus*. A number of classical Sanskrit lexicographers identify this plant as the blossom of *Hibiscus rosa sinensis*.

g.40 Spirit

*byung po*

བྱུང་པོ།

*bhūta*

A broad class of demonic, possessing beings of which there are numerous subdivisions outlined in Āyurvedic literature and Śaiva tantras, such as the *Netratantra* and *Kriyākallotara*, that preserve material from the now-lost genre of *bhūtatāntra* that discusses the symptomology, pathology, and treatment of demonic possession.

g.41 Sukhāvātī

*bde ba can*

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

*Sukhāvātī*

The name of the western buddhafield of the tathāgata Amitābha.

g.42 Suśrutasaṃhitā

—

*Suśrutasaṃhitā*

An ancient Indian Āyurvedic work.

g.43 Sweet flag

*shu dag*

ལྷུ་དག།

*vacā · ugragandhā*

The medicinal plant *Acorus calamus*.

g.44 Swollen liver

*mchin skran*

མཚིན་སྐྱེན།

*gulmakuṣṭha*

Listed as a type of leprosy in Monier-Williams, the literal translation of the term implies that it is a disease that is associated with the liver.

- g.45 Tumor  
*skrang*s · *lhog*  
 སྐངས། ལྷོག།  
*zoṭha* · *zvayathu* · *gaṇḍa*  
 A swelling, tumor, or morbid intumescence.
- g.46 Uncooked offering  
*gtor ma*  
 གཏོར་མ།  
*bali*  
 An offering, originating in the vedic tradition, traditionally made out of uncooked food and performed at the home prior to cooking a meal by arranging portions of the ingredients and then casting them outside or into the sacred fire. Also translated here as “cast offering.”
- g.47 Unnatural death  
*dus ma yin pa'i 'chi ba*  
 དུས་མ་ཡིན་པའི་འཆི་བ།  
*akālamaraṇa*  
 This term literally means an “untimely death.” In both Buddhist and non-Buddhist South Asian literature, human beings are said to be allotted a certain lifespan, and that lifespan is a function of the age in which they live. In the current age, the full human lifespan is said to be one hundred years. Thus any death that occurs before one has lived out an entire one hundred years is technically considered an “untimely death.” The list of various “untimely deaths” in Buddhist literature generally includes tragic and unnatural ways of dying such as drowning, contracting a sudden illness, being burned to death, etc.
- g.48 Untimely death  
*dus ma yin pa'i 'chi ba*  
 དུས་མ་ཡིན་པའི་འཆི་བ།  
*akālamaraṇa*  
 See “unnatural death.”
- g.49 Valerian  
*rgya spos*  
 རྒྱ་སྤོས།  
*tagara* · *tagaraka* · *nata*  
 Indian valerian or *Valeriana jatamansi*.
- g.50 Vidyāmantra  
*rig sngags*  
 རིག་སྒྲགས།  
*vidyāmantra*  
 A spell. Although a technical term in its own right, it is also used interchangeably at times with the terms *dhāraṇī* and *dhāraṇīmantra*, *guhyaṃantra*, etc.
- g.51 Vipāśyin



*rnam par gzigs*

རྣམ་པར་གླིང་མཁའ་མཁའ་མཁའ་མཁའ་

*Vipaśyin*

The first of the seven tathāgatas/buddhas. Identified in other texts as the last but two of the buddhas that appeared in the eon that preceded the present one.

g.52

Viśvabhū

*thams cad skyob*

ཐམས་ཅད་སྐྱོབ་པ།

*Viśvabhū*

The third of the seven tathāgatas/buddhas. Identified in other texts as the last buddha to appear in the eon that preceded the present one.

g.53

Vitiligo

*sha bkra · sha gar*

ཤ་བྲ་ག་ཤ་ག་ར།

*kilāsa · śvitra · sidhya · hariṇa*

A skin disorder characterized by a loss of pigmentation.

g.54

Wild asparagus

*nye'u shing · nye shing · rtsa ba brgya pa*

ཉེ་ལུ་ཤིང་། ཉེ་ཤིང་། རྩ་བ་བརྒྱུ་པ།

*śatāvarī · śatamūlī*

*Asparagus racemosus*, a common medicinal plant recognized as early as the *Suśrutasan̄hitā*.