The Seven Buddhas

Saptabuddhaka
The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Seven Buddhas”

Āryasaptabuddhakanāmanahāyānasūtra
This print version was generated at 1.34pm on Tuesday, 6th October 2020 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 If some time has elapsed since then, this version may have been superseded, as most of 84000’s published translations undergo significant updates from time to time.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 https://read.84000.co/translation/toh852.html.
CONTENTS

ti. Title
c. Contents
s. Summary
ac. Acknowledgements
i. Introduction
tr. The Seven Buddhas
    1. The Translation
ab. Abbreviations
n. Notes
b. Bibliography
g. Glossary
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.

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

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, are mentioned in a wide range of Buddhist literature as the “seven successive buddhas,” (see below), and are enumerated as follows:

1. Vipaśyin
2. Śikhin
3. Viśvabhū
4. Krakucchanda
5. Kanakamuni
6. Kāśyapa
7. Śākyamuni

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, guhyamantras, 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.²

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.

The last four, starting with Krakucchanda, are the first four of the buddhas of the present bhadrakalpa or “fortunate eon,” and the first three, starting with Vipaśyin, are the last three buddhas of the preceding eon.

Named buddhas of the past³ 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;⁴ another version (incorporated in the Mahāvastu) mentions hundreds of millions; and the later Pali Buddhavamsa details twenty-five.

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.⁵ 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,⁶ 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.⁷ Other representations of the seven buddhas appear at some of the most important surviving Buddhist archaeological sites of later centuries such as the Amarāvatī stūpa complex, the cave vihāra complexes of Ajanta, Ellora, and Kanheri, and as far to the northwest as the Swat Valley.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,⁹ a prayer to them in which the caste, birthplace, and tree under which each attained awakening are all mentioned.
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; nevertheless, the degree of detail here may well be unique.

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, and in the dhāraṇī section of the Phangthangma. None of the available recensions of the text include a colophon, so the precise identity of the translators is unknown.

There is a substantial Tibetan commentary to the text written by the scholar Bodong Panchen 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 pu’i mdo sde’i cho ga), which contains instructions for a ritual of the seven buddhas employing the mantras in this sūtra.

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 *Ākāśagarbhaparipṛcchāsaptabuddhahāraṇīsūtra (虚空藏菩薩問七佛陀羅尼經). The Jñānagupta translation (Taishō 1334, 587 CE) refers to the text as the *Tathāgata upāya-kauśalya mantra sūtra (如來方便善巧咒經). And finally, the Fatian translation (Taishō 1147, 984 CE) refers to the work as the Āryākāśagarbhabodhisattvadhāraṇīsūtra (聖虚空藏菩薩陀羅尼生). As in the Tibetan imperial inventories of translated works, this text’s Chinese translations appear to have been classified variously as sūtra or dhāraṇī.

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) 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. 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.
THE TRANSLATION

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

The Seven Buddhas
1.1 [F.65.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?”

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, “Will the Blessed One please teach a vidyāmantra that can pacify all manner of diseases and exorcise all manner of spirits?” [F.65.b]

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 Vipaśyin 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
hilī hilāya | namo jaga | namaśca nāya | namo namaḥ svāhā
The tathāgata Vipaśyin 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, or a painful illness. They will not suffer an unnatural death. Even poison they have eaten will become like food.

“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.

“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. 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.”

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, and exorcise all manner of spirits: [F.66.a]

\[
\text{namo \ buddhāya | namo \ dharmāya | namah \ saṅghāya | oṃ pac \ pācaya pācaya sarvaḥsūtanām | chindaya | kīlaya \ paravidyānāṃ svāhā.}
\]

“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.

“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.

“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.”
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:

\[
\text{namo buddhāya | namo dharmāya | namaḥ saṅghāya | oṃ kala kala | kili kili | kulu kulu | kulotsādanaṃ | kuru | sarva grahiṇiḥ svāhā}
\]

“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. Ākāśagarbha, you must [F.66.b] uphold these root verses of the secret mantra.

“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.

“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:

\[
rājanāṃ rājāmātraṃ vā vaśī karotu kāmena
\]

“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 that has been kindled with date palm branches. To purify all your misdeeds, master all vidyāmantras, or to ritually cleanse yourself you should wash with dill, spikenard, foxtail millet, sirisa, valerian, saffron, nut grass, bitter gourd, bodhi tree, and mango flowers. 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 one thousand and eight times.
"To neutralize poison [F.67.a] sit before an image of the Buddha and use a ladle made of teak to offer cow dung 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 seizors and works for any rite associated with the spirits and the like. It will pacify them."

"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:

\[
\text{nāmaḥ svāhā.}
\]

"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.

"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 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 Sukhāvatī.

"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. Or, if they wish to quench their thirst, they should wash their food while reciting the mantra one thousand and eight times.

"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.

"Or, if you wish to have a vision of the Tathāgata, draw a maṇḍala on a clean spot in the vicinity of a stūpa, 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 and can tell you anything you wish such as your lifespan, your strength, and whether you will be defeated or victorious in battle.”

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:

\[
\text{namo buddhāya} \quad \text{namo dharmāya} \quad \text{namo saṅghāya} \quad \text{namo kanakamunaye}\ \\
\text{tathāgatāya} \quad \text{arhate samyak sambuddhāya} \quad \text{tadyathā} \quad \text{oṃ sara sara sara sara} \quad \text{siri siri siri} \quad \text{siśya} \quad \text{dharma dharma dhama dhama} \quad \text{dhuma dhuma dhuma dhuma} \quad \text{dhuma dhuma dhuma dhuma} \quad \text{namo namaḥ} \quad \text{kanakamunaye} \quad \text{tathāgatāya arhate samyak-sambuddhāya svāhā}\n\]

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 be blessed by him. If they recite the mantra at the three times of the day, [F.68.a] they will purify all their karmic obscurations from previous lifetimes.

“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.

“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.

“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.”

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:
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.

“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 and purify all their karmic obscurations except for any karma from their past lives. This mantra can be used for any rite.

“For illnesses such as leprosy and vitiligo, 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. This mantra can be used in any ritual.”

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 | namah saṅghāya | om hara hara hara hara | ha ha ha | namah kāśyaspāya | tathāgatāya | arhate samyaksambuddhāya | sidhyantu mantrapada svāhā |
```

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.”

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

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

D Degé Kangyur
K$_Q$ Peking (Qianlong) Kangyur
N Narthang Kangyur
S Stok Palace Kangyur
See *The Eight Buddhas* ([link](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh271.html)) (Toh 271), *The Ten Buddhas* (Toh 272), and *The Twelve Buddhas* ([link](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh273.html)) (Toh 273, 511, 853).

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).

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.


In Pali, *Mahāpadānasutta* ([link](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.


Marshall (1918), p. 46 et seq.


*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).

Denkarma, folio 299.b. See also Yoshimura (1950), p. 135.

dkar chag ’phang thang ma (2003), 25.


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://databases.aibs.columbia.edu/index.php?clear=true). 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 *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantraṭīkā* (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.

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.
S, D (Toh 512, Toh 852): lag pa bstod pa; D (Toh 270): lag pa stong pa.

D (Toh 270): hulu hulu.

D (Toh 270): hiliya.


The Tibetan for fire (me) does not appear here in D (Toh 270).

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 vidyā mantra, so this has been rendered explicit by the translator throughout the text where it is appropriate.

D (Toh 270, Toh 512): cchindaya.

D (Toh 512, Toh 852): vanaviṇāṁ.

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.

S: kulotsādanaṃ; D (Toh 270): kula udsadhanam; D (Toh 512): kulotsādhanānāṁ; D (Toh 852): kulotsśādanānāṁ. 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.


D (Toh 270): rājanāṁ; D (Toh 512, Toh 852), S: rājānāṁ. 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” (rājānātvā vā) indicates that the term rājanāṁ is likely meant here to signify the king’s army.

D (Toh 270): vaśikarotu; D (Toh 512, Toh 852): vaśikaratu; S: vaśikāratu. The transliteration preserved in D (Toh 270) is the proper imperative third person singular form of kr.
Tentative English translation: Bend the king’s army (or just the king) to my will svāhā.

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. *agnikaranasthānam*), a term that is commonly used to signify a fire altar.

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.

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*.

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*.

D: *seng ldeng gi thur ma ba’i lci bar smyugs*; S: *seng ldeng gi phur ma spyi bor bsnyugs*.

D (Toh 270): *gdon bsrung ba dang/’byung po la sogs pa’i*; D (Toh 512): *gdon dang / srun ba dang /’byung po la sogs pa’i*; D (Toh 852): *gdon dang srun 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 *srun 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 *srun 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.


D (Toh 270): *mchod rten gyi ’khor sar*; D (Toh 512, Toh 852), S: *’jig rten gyi ’khor sar*. 
D (Toh 852), S: *yid la ci smo pa*; D (Toh 270): *yid la ci mon pa*; D (Toh 512): *yid la ci smo pa*.

D (Toh 270), S: *sīrāya*.

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.


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*.

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*.

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.

D (Toh 270, Toh 512), S: *lan stong rtsa brgyad*; D (Toh 852): *lan bdun*. 
BIBLIOGRAPHY


‘phags pa sangs rgyas bdun pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo (Āryasaptabuddhakārṇāmaḥāyānasūtras). Toh 512, Degé Kangyur vol. 88 (rgyud ’bum, na), folios 39.a–42.b.

‘phags pa sangs rgyas bdun pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo (Āryasaptabuddhakārṇāmaḥāyānasūtras). Toh 852, Degé Kangyur vol. 100 (gzungs ’dus, e), folios 65.a–68.b.


GLOSSARY

1. Ākāśagarbha
   nam mkha’i snying po
   The name of a bodhisattva.

2. Aloeswood
   a ga ru
   aguru · śiṃśapā
   The fragrant aloeswood tree Aquilaria agallocha. Alternately a Tibetan translation of śiṃśapā, which the Atharvaveda identifies as the tree Dalbergia sissoo or Indian redwood.

3. Bitter gourd
   in dra ba ru na
   indrāvaruṇi
   Cucumis trigonus; colocynth, a wild bitter gourd, Cucumis colocynthis; the favorite plant of Indra and Varuṇa.

4. Bodhi tree
   byang chub kyi shing
   bodhitaru · bodhirīkṣa
   Ficus religiosa.

5. Cast offering
   gtor ma
   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.”

**Corrupting being**

*log ᅕren*

*vināyaka*

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

**Date tree**

 `'o ma can gyi shing · shing `'o ma can`

*kṣīrikā · kṣīravṛkṣa*

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

**Dhāraṇī**

*gzungs*

*dhāranī*

**Dill**

*šu ti*

*śatapuspa*

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

**Fever that returns every four days**

*zhag bzhi pa*

*caṭurthāka*

**Four-day fever**

*zhag bzhi pa*

*caṭurthāka*

See “fever that returns every four days.”

**Foxtail millet**

*khre*

*শীর*
priyangu · pītatanḍula
Panicum italicum.

Infinite Flowers
mtha’ yas me tog

The name of a bodhisattva.

Kailāsa
ti se’i ri

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.

Kanakamuni
gser thub

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

Kāśyapa
‘od srung

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.

Kaṭapūtana
lus srul po

kaṭapūtana
A class of demonic, possessing beings.

Krakucchanda
log par dad sel

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

Leprosy

*Leprosy*  

_mdze_

kusṭha

Lightning

*Lightning*  

_ice 'babs pa_

azes

A thunderbolt or flash of lightning.

Maitreya

*Maitreya*  

_byams pa_

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.

Mango flowers

*Mango flowers*  

_a mra'i mgo ljogs_

āmrastabaka  

The blossoms of a mango tree.

Nut grass

*Nut grass*  

_gla skang_

mustah  

_Cyperus rotundus._

Obstructing being

*Obstructing being*  

_bgegs_

vighna  

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

Oleander wood

*Oleander wood*  

_shing ka ra vi ra_

karavīra
The wood of *Nerium odoratum*.

Possessed by a spirit

*byung pos zin

*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 *bhūtagrahinī*/*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*).

Protection cord

*skud pa*

*sūtra * tantru

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

Result of a humoral imbalance

*dus pa las gyur pa*

*sāṃnipātika*

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

Saffron

*guṃ kun * kur kun

*kuṅkuma*

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

Samantabhadra

*kun tu bzang po

*Samantabhadra*

The name of a bodhisattva.

Samantakusuma

*kun nas me tog

*Samantakusuma*

The name of a bodhisattva.

Sealing off the directions

*phyogs bcing ba*
digbandha

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

Secret mantra
gsang sngags

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.

Seizer
gdon

A class of demonic, possessing beings.

Seizers that possess children
byis pa rnams kyi gdon

bālagrahaḥ

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

Seven successive buddhas
sangs rgyas rabs bdun

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.

Śikhin
gtsg tor can

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.

Sirisa
shi ri shu

śirīṣa
The sirisa tree or *Acacia sirissa*.

**Spikenard**

*na la da*

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*.

**Spirit**

*byung po*

*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 *Kriyakalotara*, that preserve material from the now-lost genre of *bhūtatantra* that discusses the symptomology, pathology, and treatment of demonic possession.

**Sukhāvatī**

*bde ba can*

*Sukhāvatī*

The name of the western buddhafield of the tathāgata Amitābha.

**Suśrutasaṃhitā**

An ancient Indian Āyurvedic work.

**Sweet flag**

*shu dag*

*vacā · ugragandhā*

The medicinal plant *Acorus calamus*.

**Swollen liver**

*mchin skran*

*gułmakusṭha*

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.
Tumor

A swelling, tumor, or morbid intumescence.

Uncooked offering

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.”

Unnatural death

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.

Untimely death

See “unnatural death.”

Valerian

Indian valerian or Valeriana jatamansi.

Vidyāmantra

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

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.

A skin disorder characterized by a loss of pigmentation.

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