

༄༅། །ཆོ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པའི་མདོ།

The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra (2)

Aparimitāyurjñānasūtra

འཕགས་པ་ཚེ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra of Aparimitāyurjñāna

Āryāparimitāyurjñānanāmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 675
Degé Kangyur, vol. 91 (rgyud 'bum, ba), folios 216.a–220.b.

Translated by Peter Alan Roberts and Emily Bower under the patronage and supervision
of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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SUMMARY

- s.1 The Buddha, while at the Jetavana monastery in Śrāvastī, tells Mañjuśrī of a buddha realm far above the world, in which lives the Buddha Aparimitāyurjñāna. He states that those who recite, write, hear, and so on, the praise of this buddha, or make offerings to this text, will have numerous benefits, including a long life and a good rebirth. As vast numbers of buddhas recite it, the mantra, or *dhāraṇī*, of this buddha is repeated numerous times. This is the lesser known of the two versions of this sūtra in the Kangyur, but possibly represents the earlier translation.

ac.

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ac.1

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ac.2

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

. Overview .

- i.1 *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* is among the many canonical works in which a particular buddha in another buddhafiield is invoked along with the benefits of recalling his name and reciting his *dhāraṇī*. Associated as it is with longevity, this is one of the most widely read texts in the Kangyur, and *Aparimitāyurjñāna* (“Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom”) is one of the most frequently portrayed and well-known buddhas in the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism.
- i.2 The sūtra is commonly referred to as the *Tsédo* (*tshe mdo*, “Sūtra of Longevity”) or *Tsézung* (*tshe gzungs*, “Dhāraṇī of Longevity”), and contains a dhāraṇī that is repeated in the text twenty-nine times. It is included in many Tibetan liturgical compilations, and its recitation, usually with a specified number of repetitions, is often advised to people in poor health or facing other difficulties, or is commissioned on their behalf in monasteries.
- i.3 Although its title identifies it as a sūtra, it is placed in all Kangyurs with the Action Tantras (*bya ba’i rgyud*, *kriyātantra*). In common with many other works classified as Action Tantras, there is nevertheless little in the text to identify it as a tantra. The inclusion of a long, repeated dhāraṇī in Sanskrit is presumably one criterion for this classification, although there are many other canonical works with a similar structure that are placed with the sūtras. Other criteria may have been its classification and line of transmission in India, before it was taken to Tibet, or the fact that it has also formed the basis for a wide range of tantra practices, particularly among the higher levels of tantra, in the form of sādhanas of *Aparimitāyus*.¹
- i.4 The text has also survived in a large number of Sanskrit manuscripts (mostly later Nepalese ones); in two Chinese translations; and in a slightly different—perhaps earlier—Tibetan translation, represented by most of the

very numerous manuscripts found in the caves of Dunhuang, where a Khotanese manuscript (probably the oldest surviving version) was also found.

i.5 All Kangyurs include two major versions of the sūtra, similar in most respects but differing mainly in the presence or absence of one phrase in the repeated dhāraṇī. The background of the existence of these two versions is discussed below. The version translated here is the lesser known of the two, is much less widely used, and differs from Sanskrit source texts brought to Tibet in the later translation period to a greater extent than the other version.

i.6 The present version appears to be derived from the same translation as the other major version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html>), Toh 674, but the dhāraṇī it contains is the shorter one, matching those found in the Chinese translations, the Dunhuang manuscript in Khotanese, and the earlier Tibetan translation represented by the majority of the very numerous Dunhuang manuscripts in Tibetan.

i.7 This sūtra, to the extent that it may represent the translation available in the late eighth century, is one of the set known as the “ten royal sūtras,” thought to be so called either because they represent distillations of the most profound scriptures, or because according to traditional histories they were recommended to King Trisong Detsen for his daily practice by Guru Padmasambhava. As a result of practicing them, the king is said to have extended his life by thirteen years.²

i.8 In a similar vein, the fact that so many manuscript copies of this text have been found in the Dunhuang caves is due to their production by scribes there having been commissioned on behalf of Trisong Detsen’s grandson, Ralpachen (who reigned in the early ninth century) in order to ensure for the king the longevity that the text itself promises.

· Aparimitāyus, Amitāyus, and Amitābha ·

i.9 Aparimitāyurjñāna (“Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom”), the buddha who is the subject of this sūtra, despite being described in this text as dwelling in a realm situated in an upward direction from this world, i.e. toward the zenith, has been identified to a varying extent in both Tibet and East Asia with Amitābha, buddha of the realm called Sukhāvatī in the west. Both are often referred to by the shortened name Amitāyus in Sanskrit, Tsépaṃé (*tshe dpag med* or, in full, *tshe dpag tu med pa*) in Tibetan, but are nevertheless likely to have originally been seen as distinct. The confusion that has been caused by these partially overlapping identities is discussed in

detail in the introduction (i.9–i.16
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-14>)) to
Toh 674, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1).

The Tibetan Versions of the Sūtra in the Kangyur, Their Differences, and Their Translation

· · Differences in Content · ·

- i.10 There are two different but closely related versions of *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* in most Kangyurs. In keeping with the tradition established over the centuries by editors of all Kangyurs, we have here translated and published them separately, despite their similarity, and have labeled them *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) and (2). In the Kangyur the two versions are found consecutively in the Tantra Collection, and according to Situ Panchen’s original catalog of the Degé Kangyur both are placed with the Action (Kriyā) Tantras in the subdivision that corresponds to the principal deity (*rigs kyi gtso bo*) of the Padma (lotus) family. Their Degé recensions are cataloged as Toh 674 and 675, respectively.
- i.11 The principal distinction between the two versions lies in the length and composition of the repeated dhāraṇī. Compared to the present version (2) of the text, the dhāraṇī in the other version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1), Toh 674 and 849, is longer and contains an extra phrase in the middle beginning “*om puṇye puṇye . . .*” that is not present here, although the rest of the dhāraṇī is almost the same. It is on that basis that the catalog of the Degé Kangyur distinguishes the two texts by calling this one (Toh 675) the “two *om*, no *puṇye*” version (because the repeated dhāraṇī also contains two other phrases beginning with *om*), while the other one (Toh 674 and 849) it calls the “three *om*” version.³ In some other catalogs, e.g. the index to the Narthang Kangyur, the two versions (1) and (2) are called respectively the “large and small *Tsédo*.”⁴
- i.12 It is the other version, the “three *om*” version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1), Toh 674 and 849, that is the best known and most widely recited form of the text. It is also the one reproduced in most compilations of dhāraṇīs and anthologies of practice texts, whether ancient or modern. By contrast, the present “two *om*” version is only preserved in the Kangyur, as here, and is very little known or used. Nevertheless, the fact that it has been included in all Kangyurs as a separate text is an implicit recognition that both versions are authentic. The background to the existence of these two different versions, and the controversies that have sometimes arisen about their origins and authenticity, are explored in the introduction to *The Aparimitāyur-*

jñāna Sūtra (1), Toh 674 and 849 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-35>) and are set out in slightly more detail here.

i.13 One intriguing hint that the Kangyur provides us with regard to these two versions of the text is that the part of the *dhāraṇī* that is “added” in version (1), Toh 674, but “missing” here in version (2), Toh 675, is included in all Kangyurs, almost identically, but on its own, as the *dhāraṇī* that forms the very short content of another text in this group, *The Essence of Aparimitāyus* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh673a.html>), Toh 673a. There is no explanation in the various Kangyur catalogs for its presence, but the term “essence” (*hṛdaya*, *snying po*, sometimes rendered “heart mantra”) in its title identifies it as a mantra used in at least one tradition of the practice of *Aparimitāyus*. The only other mention of this mantra in the Kangyur appears to be in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, known best in Tibetan by its shortened title *sbyong rgyud* (the “Purification Tantra”), a tantra of the Yoga class, in which this same mantra is given as the “essence *vidyā*-mantra” (*hṛdayavidyā*, *snying po'i rig pa*) of the tathāgata *Aparimitāyuhpuṇyajñānasambhāratejorāja*, the principal figure in a secondary *maṇḍala*.⁵ What is confirmed by this mantra’s mention in the tantra, as well as its presence as Toh 673a, is at the very least that it is a potentially independent stand-alone mantra phrase, making it easier to understand that it might have been either added or removed at some stage in the evolving transmission of the *dhāraṇī* in the *sūtra*.

i.14 Apart from the composition of the *dhāraṇī*, there are a few other differences between Toh 674 and 675, mostly minor. Overall, the two versions appear to be much more closely related than they would be if they represented two different translations made entirely independently of each other.⁶ Some of the minor textual differences between the present version of the *sūtra* and Toh 674 are flagged in the notes, but among the more significant are the following:

- The name *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa* (*Aparimitāyurjñāna*), which occurs a number of times here in Toh 675, is given its shorter form in Toh 674: *tshe dpag tu med pa* (*Aparimitāyus*).
- The Tibetan rendering of the longest form of the name *Aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścitatejorāja* here (in Toh 675) is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par gdon mi za ba'i rgyal po*, while in Toh 674 it is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par nges pa'i gzi brjid kyi rgyal po*.⁷
- The name of *Aparimitāyurjñāna*’s realm in Toh 674 is *yon tan dpag tu med pa sogs pa*⁸ (*Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya*, “Accumulation of Immeasurable Qualities”), but here in Toh 675 at the first mention of it (see 1.3) it is just

yon tan dpag tu med pa (Aparimitaguṇa, “Immeasurable Qualities”).

- Its second mention here in Toh 675 (see [1.8](#)), however, not only gives it in full, as in Toh 674, but also prefixes it with the words *bde ba can*, which can be rendered as “blissful” but also as the realm name Sukhāvātī, somewhat confusingly identifying this realm with that of the “other” Amitāyus who is Amitābha, and perhaps confirming that the conflation of these two buddhas (see above) occurred at an early date in Tibet.⁹
- In the three paragraphs in which comparisons using analogies are made of the amounts of merit to be obtained through—in Toh 674—reciting the sūtra, here in Toh 675 ([1.56](#), [1.58](#), and [1.60](#)), the merit seems to be obtained through the tathāgata Aparimitāyurjñāna himself rather than through reciting the text.
- Finally, Toh 674 has a curious concluding line¹⁰ that is not present here in Toh 675: in addition to the beings in the world being overjoyed and rejoicing at the Buddha’s words, the Buddha himself is said to be pleased or delighted (*dgyes pa*). This appears to be the result of the Sanskrit *āttamanās* being translated twice, as descriptive for both the world and the Buddha. The ending here in Toh 675 matches similar instances of this standard ending formula.

· · Differences in Origin and Transmission · ·

- i.15 In essence, the other, best-known, “three *om*” version of the sūtra, Toh 674, was brought to Tibet and translated in the later, post-imperial period of transmission. The origins of the present “two *om*” version are less clear, but it is likely to represent sources known and translated in the early, imperial period.
- i.16 We have set out the evidence that the translation preserved in the Kangyur of the “three *om*” version (Toh 674) may be attributed to Puṇyasambhava and Patsap Nyima Drak in the late eleventh or early twelfth century—a widely accepted belief—in the introduction to that version of the text. It is based primarily on a mention in the lineage record of transmissions received by Minling Terchen Gyurme Dorje, mentions in Tāranātha’s commentary to the sūtra, and the colophon appended to the version of the text as reproduced in the Druptap Küntü (*sgrub thabs kun btus*), a collection of sādhanas of the Sakya tradition compiled by Jamyang Loter Wangpo (1847–1914). There is also evidence that other, later translations of the “three *om*” version were made.¹¹ Here we will concentrate in particular on what may be inferred of the origins of the present, “two *om*” version, Toh 675.

- i.17 The available sources of information about the origins of the two versions do not include the most usual ones for Kangyur texts, colophons and Kangyur catalogs. There are no translators' colophons to either version of the text in any of the different Kangyurs. Most of the Kangyur inventories and catalogs merely list the titles and distinguish them using epithets such as "three *om*" and "two *om*," or "long" and "short." Some, including the catalog of the Degé Kangyur, explicitly state that the translators are unknown. The one exception is the catalog (*dkar chag*) of the Narthang Kangyur, which appears to attribute *both* versions of the sūtra to Puṇyasambhava and Patsap Nyima Drak. As well as being inherently unlikely, this is at odds with all other sources of information. A look at the folios of the catalog concerned reinforces suspicions of an erroneous attribution, as the carving of the catalog's woodblocks seems to have run into problems for this entry, which coincides with a folio break. Indeed, the Narthang catalog's confusing attributions at this point do not reflect the titles or colophons in the body of the Narthang Kangyur itself.¹²
- i.18 Despite this dearth of direct canonical records, what we do know is that at least one version of the sūtra was translated during the early translation period. Firstly, both the early ninth century inventories of translated texts, the Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) and Phangthangma (*phang thang ma*), mention, respectively, texts entitled *The Dhāraṇī of Aparimitāyus* (*tshe dpag tu med pa'i gzungs*, 110 ślokas in length) and *Aparimitāyus* (*tshe dpag tu med pa*, 120 ślokas), both probably referring to a version of this text; in both inventories it is placed in the category "miscellaneous long and short dhāraṇīs" (*gzungs che phra sna tshogs*).¹³
- i.19 Secondly, very tangible evidence of the existence of translations in the early period is provided by the very large number of manuscript copies of the sūtra, in Tibetan, found among the Dunhuang manuscripts, a large group of which can be dated to between 830 and 850,¹⁴ most having apparently been made on the orders of King Ralpachen (r. 815–41)—presumably to create the meritorious results that the text itself describes. Crucially, all the Dunhuang manuscripts that we have been able to examine contain the "two *om*" version of the dhāraṇī.¹⁵ This fact, combined with the evidence from Minling Terchen, makes it very likely that the present version of the text, the "three *om*" version, is the translation dating from the later translation period, while Toh 675, the "two *om*" version, is more closely related to the one originally made in the early translation period.
- i.20 Thirdly, an early period translation of the "two *om*" version is the target of some openly dismissive remarks made in several works by later Sakya scholars, including Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo and his disciple Kunga Lekrin in the fifteenth century, and Amé Zhab Ngawang Kunga Sönam in the

seventeenth century. Both the latter authors discuss the various theories raised to account for the existence of the two versions, and go on to confirm the validity only of the later translation, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1), Toh 674. Following a leading statement attributed by Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo to his own teachers,¹⁶ they are both scathingly critical of the “two *om*” version, and of the “earlier translators” responsible for it, whom they accuse of deliberately omitting part of the dhāraṇī to express dissatisfaction with their stipend. Such comments have to be seen in the context of arguments regarding authenticity between proponents of the “late” versus the “early” translation traditions (which concerned principally the tantras rather than any of the other canonical genres), but they do at least confirm that the “two *om*” version of the text was widely recognized as having been translated in the early, imperial period.

· · Debates About Difference and Authenticity · ·

- i.21 The writings of Ngorchen, Kunga Lekrin, and Amé Zhab go to some lengths to throw doubt on the authenticity of the “two *om*” version, with Amé Zhab’s, in particular, using arguments that in some cases refute points made in favor of it by opponents in the debate who remain invisible and unidentified. For apart from Tāranātha’s commentary, we have not been able to find actual writings of the period defending the “two *om*” version from the disparagements of the authors mentioned, other than general notes by catalog compilers to the effect that “both versions are authentic.” The substance of such writings or statements can only be inferred, from arguments put forward in order to neutralize them by those in favor of the “three *om*” version. The following points represent the principal arguments that these writers deploy to justify their unusually harsh judgment.

· · · Absence of Indic source texts · · ·

- i.22 Amé Zhab writes that Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo personally examined three Sanskrit manuscripts of the sūtra, all of which were the “three *om*” version,¹⁷ implying that there were no Sanskrit texts attesting to the “two *om*” version. While there is little doubt that the “three *om*” version of the text is indeed authentic to its source, Ngorchen’s claim that it is the *only* authentic version is explicitly refuted and dismissed by Tāranātha, who in his commentary says there were many Sanskrit manuscripts of both versions,¹⁸ and relates in his autobiography how, on a visit to Narthang, he was himself shown several Sanskrit manuscripts of the sūtra, of which one was clearly the “two *om*” version.¹⁹

i.23 From today's perspective, no surviving Sanskrit versions of the text from Tibet have been discovered, and the only known Sanskrit manuscripts are Nepalese ones dating from much later centuries. However, the veracity of Tāranātha's report can be indirectly confirmed by Sten Konow's 1916 comparison of two versions, one in Sanskrit based on Nepalese manuscripts and one a Khotanese manuscript (probably centuries earlier) found in the Dunhuang caves by Sir Aurel Stein. The Nepalese Sanskrit has the "three *om*" version of the dhāraṇī while the Khotanese has the "two *om*" version.²⁰ Ngorchon and his successors were also presumably unaware that in both of the two Chinese translations, too, the dhāraṇī is the "two *om*" version.²¹

... Different versions might refer to different buddhas ...

i.24 The argument assumed here is based on the two more or less distinct buddhas to whom the shortened name Amitāyus, or Tsepamé (*tshe dpag med*) in Tibetan, might refer. Tibetan authors took pains to distinguish between, on the one hand, "Amitāyus of the zenith" (*steng phyogs kyi tshe dpag med*) and "Amitāyus of Akaniṣṭha" (*'og min gyi tshe dpag med*), both likely to be references to Aparimitāyurjñāna; and on the other, "Amitāyus of Sukhāvati" (*de ba can gyi tshe dpag med*), also sometimes known as "Amitāyus of the Drum of Immortality" (*'chi med rnga sgra'i tshe dpag med*, Dundubhisvara-Amitāyus), both of whom can be identified with Amitābha.

i.25 Conceivably, it could therefore be proposed that while one version of the text described the existence of one of these buddhas and the benefits to be obtained from remembering his name and honoring him, the other might be legitimately different because it focused instead on the other buddha. There are indeed some minor differences between the two versions concerning the names used at certain points in the text, as mentioned above at i.14. It is not clear who might have used this notion as an explanation for the existence of variant dhāraṇīs, but in any case both Kunga Lekrin and Amé Zhab²² are emphatic in insisting that both versions are clearly focused on the tathāgata Aparimitāyurjñāna, whose buddha realm is in the zenith.

... One hundred and eight names are mentioned in the sūtra itself ...

i.26 Both versions of the sūtra mention (in 1.5, 1.6, and 1.8) that the benefits of an increased lifespan will come to beings who hear, remember, or write "the one hundred and eight names of Aparimitāyurjñāna." Kunga Lekrin and Amé Zhab²³ interpret the one hundred and eight names as a reference to the dhāraṇī, the "three *om*" version of which does indeed have 108 syllables if the euphonic rules of Sanskrit are applied to elide the two instances of final

and initial *a*, or if the final *svāhā* is omitted. The “two *om*” dhāraṇī, they point out, only has seventy-seven syllables, is therefore incomplete, and must be incorrect.²⁴

i.27 At first sight, this is perhaps the most convincing argument in favor of the “three *om*” version of the text. On closer examination, however, some of its initial attractions seem less clear. To see the dhāraṇī as comprising one hundred and eight names requires a stretch of the imagination. The dhāraṇī contains semantically coherent words and phrases²⁵ of which few are actual “names,” and even if all the many compound words are divided into their irreducible units their number still remains less the number of syllables. Of the many “hundred-and-eight-name” or “hundred-name” texts to be found in the Kangyur and elsewhere,²⁶ most actually do contain distinct lists of names just as their titles suggest, and there do not seem to be other instances of a dhāraṇī being referred to as a “one-hundred-and-eight-syllable appellation,” as this phrase might possibly be interpreted.²⁷ Indeed, Tāranātha points out in his commentary²⁸ that to account for the fact that the one hundred and eight names are also mentioned in the “two *om*” version of the text we have to assume that it refers to a separate text on the one hundred and eight names elsewhere. Such cases, he says, are not unknown; he gives the example of the hundred names of Śrī Heruka. In fact, however, no text enumerating the hundred and eight names of Aparimitāyurjñāna appears ever to have been identified.

i.28 From the perspective we can take today, historically and geographically wider than was possible for those scholars, the strength of this argument using the hundred and eight names to promote the exclusive authenticity of the “three *om*” version is much diminished. That not only the Khotanese version (probably the oldest manuscript of all) but also the many Dunhuang texts and both Chinese translations all contain the “two *om*” dhāraṇī, with its seventy-seven syllables, yet still make mention of “one hundred and eight names” adds considerable weight to Tāranātha’s inference that this is not necessarily a reference to the dhāraṇī itself.

... The longer dhāraṇī may include a phrase added from elsewhere ...

i.29 Amé Zhab writes²⁹ that “certain later scholars” have claimed that the “two *om*” version is correct but that the dhāraṇī of the “three *om*” version has been expanded by adding to it the mantra of Aparimitāyus from the *sbyong rgyud*, i.e. the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, a tantra, widely used for funerary rites, of which there are two Tibetan translations in the Kangyur made in the early and later translation periods, Toh 483 and 485 respectively.

- i.30 It is true that in the “three *om*” version the centrally placed phrase starting “*om punye punye mahāpunye . . .*”—the phrase whose presence or absence marks the difference between the dhāraṇīs of the two versions—is very similar to a mantra found in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* as the “essence” (*hṛdaya, snying po*) mantra in one of the secondary maṇḍalas in the text, that of of a tathāgata whose full name is given as Aparimitāyuhṣuṇya-jñāna-sambhāratejorāja, but who is referred to as Amitāyus in the several commentaries. This mantra is also strikingly similar to the one introduced as the “essence” mantra of Aparimitāyus in the very short text that precedes the two *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtras* in most Kangyurs, and of which we have published a translation under the title *The Essence of Aparimitāyus* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh673a.html>) (Toh 673a).
- i.31 Amé Zhab, however, dismisses the argument as inadmissible, writing that in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* mantra the words *āyuhṣuṇya* and *sarvacayaṃkari* [sic] are found that are not in the dhāraṇī of the “three *om*” version; these scholars, he says, have simply not consulted the tantra properly. But his objections, valid though they presumably seemed from the copies of the relevant books he had to hand, are more easily dispelled than sustained. The first of the words he cites, *āyuhṣuṇya*, is present in one of the two only slightly differing variants of the “three *om*” dhāraṇī preserved in most Kangyurs, the version in the Tantra Collection (*rgyud ’bum*), *Toh 674* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-90>). The second, *sarvacayaṃkari*, is indeed not in any version of the present dhāraṇī but, even assuming that Amé Zhab had intended the somewhat different spellings *upacayakāriṇi* or *upacayakāraṇi* actually found in the Sanskrit and Tibetan respectively of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*, it is present only in the version of that tantra as translated in the later translation period (Toh 485), and is absent in the earlier translation (Toh 483), which reads *om punye punye mahāpunye aparimita-ayūḥpunya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite svāhā*.
- i.32 In other words, a close relationship between this Aparimitāyus mantra in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* and the dhāraṇī of the “three *om*” version of the sūtra does seem eminently possible, and would not seem particularly surprising given the cross-text interrelationships between mantras and dhāraṇīs of related buddhas and deities. It does seem to suggest that the phrase in question could be a potentially independent and detachable component of the dhāraṇī, but gives us no particular hint as to whether it is more likely to have been added to one version, or removed from another.³⁰

i.33 The story of these two different versions may seem already complex enough, but there is more to be explored. Apart from the differences in the dhāraṇī, the other differences (listed above at [i.14](#) and in the notes) between the two versions in the Kangyurs are relatively minor. These two translations seem most unlikely to have been made independently, even allowing for the possibility that the Sanskrit texts they were made from were very similar. The most obvious explanation might be that the later translation was based on the earlier, adapting it to conform to a slightly different Sanskrit original. However, an examination of the wording and terminology of the Dunhuang manuscripts—which predate the work of Puṇyasambhava and Patsap Nyima Drak by several centuries—shows that they almost certainly represent a Tibetan translation different from the present “two *om*” version (Toh 675) as it has survived in the Kangyur. It is therefore tempting to conjecture that this “two *om*” version in the Kangyur might in fact be a back-adaptation of the later translation, edited at some stage to conform to the alternative “two *om*” dhāraṇī of the earlier translation but not otherwise reflecting that earlier translation fully. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that a few significant elements of the later “three *om*” version that are not present in the “two *om*” Dunhuang manuscripts are present here. Among the most significant in this regard is the similar rendering, common to both Kangyur versions, of what we may presume to be the standard, modular phrase in the Sanskrit manuscripts, *eva hi tiṣṭhati dhriyate yāpayati*, as *bzhugs so/ /tshe 'dzin cing tshe mthar phyin par bzhed de* in [1.3](#), which Tāranātha identifies as a feature unique to the work of Patshap and the other later period translators.³¹

i.34 Whatever the case in this confusing blend of textual variation and admixture, there is no single clinching argument in favor of accepting one version over another. Both versions, surely, can be considered authentic; and although the compilers and editors of the many Kangyurs do not seem to have noted their reasons, there must have been enough consensus on this point—despite all the controversies—for both to have been preserved in all Kangyurs.

· Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Text ·

i.35 There are many surviving manuscripts of the text in Sanskrit, but none that can be reliably dated much before the early ninth century, the period when it was first translated into Chinese, and probably into Tibetan for the first time (see below). Most of the Sanskrit manuscripts are Nepalese and are dated considerably later.

- i.36 The oldest known Indic version of the text may be one from east Turkestan in what came to be called “Khotanese,” the old Iranian dialect of that region during the later period of the time when Buddhism was prevalent there. It is written in the Upright Gupta script, and probably dates to the seventh or eighth century. The manuscript was discovered in the Mogao caves in Dunhuang by Sir Aurel Stein in 1907, and in 1912 Ernst Leumann made a short comparison of the Sanskrit of this sūtra’s opening sentences with a few fragments of the Khotanese text. In 1916, two Sanskrit editions saw the light independently. One, by Sten Konow, compared an edition of a Nepalese Sanskrit version with a complete edition of the Khotanese fragments, along with the first English translation. The other, by Max Walleser, was based on a Nepalese manuscript and included a German translation. Walleser’s German translation has been translated into English by Richard K. Payne in his paper on this sūtra.³² Jonathan Silk has made an English translation from Walleser’s edition of the Sanskrit,³³ and attests in his unpublished paper, “The Most Important Buddhist Scripture? The *Aparimitāyurjñāna* and Medieval Buddhism,” to the relatively large number of extant Sanskrit manuscripts—well over one hundred—either in isolation or compilations, indicating how popular this sūtra was in Buddhist practice.
- i.37 As noted above, the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts are all of the “three *om*” version of the text, and therefore correspond more closely to version (1), Toh 674. The Khotanese, on the other hand, contains the “two *om*” version of the dhāraṇī throughout, and is thus closer to the present version and to the many Dunhuang manuscripts in Tibetan.
- i.38 Two translations of the sūtra into Chinese were made, one by Facheng (Taishō 936) in the early ninth century, and the other by Fatian (Taishō 937) in the late tenth century.³⁴ Both Chinese translations contain the “two *om*” dhāraṇī, and are therefore closer to the Khotanese, the present Tibetan version of the text, and the Dunhuang manuscripts than they are to the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and to version (1) in Tibetan, Toh 674.

· The Sūtra in Buddhist Practice ·

- i.39 As mentioned above in the overview of this introduction, recitation of the *Tsédo* a specified number of times has historically been—and is still nowadays—prescribed as a practice to people in poor health or facing other difficulties, and to practitioners more generally in order to ensure longevity, and so on. Recitation by the monks or nuns in a monastery is also commissioned for the same reasons. According to the *Padma Kathang*, the eighth century Tibetan king, Trisong Detsen, was advised to recite this text³⁵

daily (along with the other works known as the “ten royal sūtras”), as a result of which the king’s life is said to have been prolonged by thirteen years beyond the limit predicted by astrological reckoning.

i.40 The sūtra itself particularly emphasizes the beneficial effects of writing it out or causing it to be written out, and there is ample evidence that this recommendation was taken seriously in the form of the very large number of commissioned copies, mostly in Tibetan and Chinese and dating to the eighth and ninth centuries, found in the Dunhuang caves by Stein and Pelliot in the early years of the twentieth century. Many of them appear to have been commissioned in the name of the Tibetan king Ralpachen, who reigned in the early ninth century and was the grandson of Trisong Detsen. Among the bundles acquired by the two explorers for the British and French governments, there are over a thousand copies of the sūtra now in the British Library in London, and a similar number in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Some five hundred further copies remain in libraries in China, many have found their way to Japan, and there are some two hundred in St. Petersburg.³⁶ As noted in [i.19](#), a large majority of these manuscripts, and probably all of those from the period concerned, contain the equivalent of the “two om” dhāraṇī³⁷

i.41 In the context of tantric practice, the Tibetan canonical literature contains a number of sādhanas of Aparimitāyurjñāna, particularly among the higher levels of tantra. One example is the liturgy composed by the tenth-century Jetāri, one of the principal teachers of Vikramaśīla Monastery, which was known for its promulgation of higher tantras. That practice was introduced into Tibet by Bari Lotsāwa Rinchen Drak (mentioned above), and thereby became a part of the Sakya tradition.

i.42 There are also five Aparimitāyurjñāna texts in the Tengyur that were composed by Siddharājñī, a female guru active in India in the beginning of the twelfth century, from whom Rechungpa, pupil of the famous Milarepa, received transmissions that Marpa had not been able to bring back to Tibet. At least three if not all of these Siddharājñī texts were translated into Tibetan by Varacandra,³⁸ another of Rechungpa’s teachers, together with the Tibetan Lenchung Darma Tsultrim (*glan chung dar ma tshul khrims*), about whom little is known other than this translation work with Varacandra. Rechungpa introduced the practice into Tibet, where it spread from his own lineage, the Rechung Kagyü or Rechung Nyengyü, to other Kagyü traditions. These tantric Aparimitāyurjñāna practices are based upon the five-family system of the higher tantras, and they involve an elaborate visualization of oneself as a red Aparimitāyurjñāna, wearing the *saṃbhogakāya* costume and holding a

vase of *amṛta*, with an entourage of deities within a palace, and the visualization of channels within the body. As Aparimitāyurjñāna is auspicious for long life, his empowerment is given as a long life blessing.³⁹

i.43 Within the indigenous Tibetan literature, a very large number of Aparimitāyurjñāna sādhanas have been created over the centuries within all the lineages and schools. The Nyingma tradition of rediscovered treasure texts (*gter ma*), too, has produced many Aparimitāyurjñāna revelations, from Nyangral Nyima Ozer (*nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer*, 1136–1204) onward. The importance that Aparimitāyurjñāna assumed in tantric practice may be one of the reasons why this *Aparimitāyurjñānasūtra* was classified within most Kangyurs as a tantra rather than as a sūtra.

i.44 By far the most widely used version of the text for recitation in recent times has been the other version (1), Toh 674 and 849, and within that “three *om*” version it is the slightly different dhāraṇī of Toh 849 that most readers will find corresponds to practice texts in use in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and Dharma centers. Nevertheless, the present “two *om*” version has been preserved over the centuries in all Kangyurs, too, and readers familiar with the Chinese versions of the sūtra will find it more familiar than the other version. The text in this version is mentioned little in the literature of recent centuries but, interestingly, the Druptap Küntü collection, already mentioned above, contains two liturgical texts, both composed by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo in the late nineteenth century, in which he specifies that it is the “two *om*” dhāraṇī that is to be recited, both from the tradition brought to Tibet by Rechungpa. One is a longevity practice of Four-Armed White Amitāyus, extracted from the texts of Riwoche, and the other a White Aparimitāyurjñāna sādhana from the lineage that Rechungpa received from Siddharājñī.⁴⁰

i.45 We are delighted to have translated and published this version of *The Sūtra of Aparimitāyurjñāna*, little known yet present in all Kangyurs, in the hope that it will stimulate the interest of both practitioners and scholars.

The Noble Mahāyāna
Sūtra of Aparimitāyurjñāna

1.

The Translation

[F.216.a] [F.216.b]

1.1

Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1.2

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavān was staying in Jetavana, Anāthapiṇḍada's park in Śrāvastī, with a great saṅgha of bhikṣus comprised of 1,250 bhikṣus, and with a great number of bodhisattva mahāsattvas.

1.3

Then the Bhagavān said to Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta, "Mañjuśrī, in the upward direction there is a universe named Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya.⁴¹ There, the tathāgata, arhat, perfectly awakened buddha Aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja⁴² resides, and with the wish to sustain life and extend life to its very limit,⁴³ teaches the Dharma to beings.

1.4

"Listen, Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta, the lives of humans in this Jambudvīpa are short; their lifespan is no more than a hundred years, and most of them are seen to have⁴⁴ premature deaths. Mañjuśrī, those beings who will write out or cause to be written out this Dharma discourse called 'Uttering the Praise of the Qualities⁴⁵ of the Tathāgata Aparimitāyurjñāna,'⁴⁶ and even those who hear or recite its title only, up to those who write a copy, keep it at home,⁴⁷ and offer flowers, perfume, incense, and garlands to it,⁴⁸ will, when their lifespan is ending, still be able to live to a hundred years.

1.5

"Mañjuśrī, the lifespan of beings who hear⁴⁹ the one hundred and eight names⁵⁰ of the tathāgata Aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja will be lengthened. Those beings whose lifespan is coming to an end, who keep⁵¹ those names, will also [F.217.a] have their lifespan lengthened.

1.6

"Therefore, Mañjuśrī, the noble sons or noble daughters who wish to have long lives, and who hear, write, or cause to be written⁵² the one hundred and eight names of the tathāgata Aparimitāyurjñāna,⁵³ will obtain these qualities and benefits.⁵⁴

1.7

*om⁵⁵ namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*⁵⁶

1.8 “Mañjuśrī, those who write or cause to be written these one hundred and eight names of the tathāgata,⁵⁷ who make a text of them, keep it at home, and recite it, when their lifespan is coming to an end they will still be able to live to a hundred years. When they pass away from this world, they will be reborn in the tathāgata Aparimitāyurjñāna’s⁵⁸ blissful⁵⁹ buddha realm named Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya.”⁶⁰

1.9 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.10 Then at that time nine hundred ninety million buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.⁶¹

1.11 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.12 Then at that time eight hundred forty million buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.

1.13 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya* [F.217.b] *arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.14 Then at that time seven hundred seventy million buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.

1.15 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.16 Then at that time six hundred fifty million buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.

1.17 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.18 Then at that time five hundred fifty million buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.

- 1.19 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.20 Then at that time four hundred fifty million buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.
- 1.21 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.22 Then at that time three hundred fifty million⁶² buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.
- 1.23 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya [F.218.a] arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.24 Then at that time two hundred fifty million buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.
- 1.25 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.26 Then at that time tens of millions of buddhas, as many as there are grains of sand in ten Ganges Rivers, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.
- 1.27 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.28 Whoever writes or causes to be written⁶³ this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*, when their lifespan is coming to an end, will still be able to live to a hundred years and their lifespan will be lengthened.
- 1.29 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.30 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will never be born among hell beings, in the womb of an animal, or in Yama's realm. They will never have an unfortunate rebirth. Wherever they are reborn, in each rebirth they will remember their previous lifetimes.

1.31 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate* [F.218.b] *svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.32 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will cause the whole collection of eighty-four thousand Dharma teachings to be written.

1.33 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.34 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will cause the practice and the continuation of the whole collection of eighty-four thousand Dharma teachings.⁶⁴

1.35 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.36 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will be purified of the five karmas that have immediate result at death.⁶⁵

1.37 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.38 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will be purified of their accumulation of bad karma, even if it is the size of Mount Sumeru.⁶⁶

1.39 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.40 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will be invulnerable to any harm that Māra, Māra's gods, yakṣas, or rākṣasas may seek⁶⁷ to inflict.

1.41 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya* [F.219.a] *arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.42

When whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* dies, six hundred ninety million⁶⁸ buddhas will give them prophecies directly,⁶⁹ and a thousand buddhas will extend their hands to them. They will go from buddha realm to buddha realm. Have no doubt, hesitation, or uncertainty about this.⁷⁰

1.43 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitāyur-puṇya-jñāna saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.44 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will be followed by the four Mahārājas, who will guard, protect, and hide them.

1.45 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.46 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will be reborn in the world of Sukhāvatī, the buddha realm of the tathāgata Amitābha.

1.47 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.48 Wherever this sūtra⁷¹ is written or caused to be written,⁷² that place will be a stūpa⁷³ and worthy of veneration. Those birds and animals born in the animal realm who happen to hear this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will all become perfectly awakened in the highest, most complete awakening. [F.219.b]

1.49 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.50 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will never be reborn in a female state.

1.51 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.52

Whoever makes a gift of even a single *kārṣāpaṇa* coin⁷⁴ with regard to this Dharma discourse, the *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*, will have made a gift of the whole trichiliocosm filled with the seven jewels.

1.53 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.54 Whoever makes an offering to this Dharma discourse⁷⁵ will comprehend the entirety of the good Dharma.⁷⁶

1.55 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.56 As a comparison,⁷⁷ it is possible to calculate the extent of the accumulation of merit that comes from making offerings of the seven jewels to the tathāgatas Vipasyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhu, Krakucchanda, Kakutsunda⁷⁸ Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni, and so on, but it is impossible to calculate the extent of the accumulation of merit for Aparimitāyurjñāna.⁷⁹

1.57 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | [F.220.a] tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.58 As a comparison, it is possible to calculate the extent of the accumulation of merit that comes from making a gift of a heap of jewels the same as Sumeru, the king of mountains,⁸⁰ but it is impossible to calculate the extent of the accumulation of merit for Aparimitāyurjñāna.⁸¹

1.59 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.60 As a comparison, it is possible to count each drop that makes up all the water in the four great oceans, but it is impossible to calculate the extent of the accumulation of merit for Aparimitāyurjñāna.⁸²

1.61 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.62

Whoever writes or causes to be written, honors,⁸³ and makes offerings to this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will have paid homage and made offerings to all tathāgatas in all the buddha realms in the ten directions.

1.63 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate
samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate
gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.64 ⁸⁴The Buddha has risen high through the power of generosity,
The lion among men has realized the power of generosity,
And upon the compassionate one's entry into his city⁸⁵
The resounding⁸⁶ of the power of generosity is heard.

1.65 The Buddha has risen high through the power of good conduct,
The lion among men has realized the power of good conduct,
And upon the compassionate one's entry into his city
The resounding of the power of good conduct is heard.

1.66 The Buddha has risen high through the power of patience, [F.220.b]
The lion among men has realized the power of patience,
And upon the compassionate one's entry into his city
The resounding of the power of patience is heard.

1.67 The Buddha has risen high through the power of diligence,
The lion among men has realized the power of diligence,
And upon the compassionate one's entry into his city
The resounding of the power of diligence is heard.

1.68 The Buddha has risen high through the power of meditation,
The lion among men has realized the power of meditation,
And upon the compassionate one's entry into his city
The resounding of the power of meditation is heard.

1.69 The Buddha has risen high through the power of wisdom,
The lion among men has realized the power of wisdom,
And upon the compassionate one's entry into his city
The resounding of the power of wisdom is heard.

1.70 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate
samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate
gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.71

This is what the Bhagavān taught,⁸⁷ and Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta, the complete assembly, and the world with its devas, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were delighted and praised the Bhagavān's words.⁸⁸

1.72 *The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra of Aparimitāyurjñāna is concluded.*⁸⁹

n.

NOTES

- n.1 Tāranātha's commentary (Tāranātha 2014, pp. 75–77) points out elements of the text that can be interpreted according to a tantra perspective (primarily but not exclusively that of kriyātantra), in addition to the perspective of the pāramitā vehicle. See also n.43.
- n.2 The story is recounted in chapter 70 of the *Padma Kathang* (*padma bka' thang*); for more detail, see Khomthar Jamlö 2014, vol. 1, pp. 2–3.
- n.3 Degé Kangyur, vol. 103 (dkar chag, lakṣmī), folio 152b.5–6.
- n.4 *tshe mdo che chung gnyis*, Narthang index, folio 12b.1 (p. 658).
- n.5 The tantra exists in two versions in the Kangyur, one (Toh 483) translated in the early period and the other (Toh 485) some centuries later. The mantra in question is the same in both versions, except that the later version, instead of the compound *sambhāropacite*, has *sambhāropacayakāriṇi*. See Roberts and Bower (2021a), i.7
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh673a.html#UT22084-091-071-15>).
- n.6 The Dunhuang manuscripts, on the other hand, despite the closely similar content, do seem to represent a different translation from a near-identical source. See i.34.
- n.7 See also n.42.
- n.8 But see also n.41.
- n.9 This mention of Sukhāvātī (*bde ba can*) is, however, not present in the Dunhuang manuscripts.
- n.10 See Toh 674, 1.71 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-190>).

- [n.11](#) See the introduction to *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1), Toh 674, i.27–31 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-49>), in which references to these sources are provided.
- [n.12](#) See Narthang Kangyur *dkar chag*, vol. 102, end of folio 113.b and beginning of folio 114.a. For further details, see the introduction to Toh 674, i.29 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-389>).
- [n.13](#) Denkarma, folio 302.a.4; Phangthangma, folio 10 (p. 25).
- [n.14](#) Dotson 2016, 129–30.
- [n.15](#) Curiously, this finding seems not to have been reported before in Western academic studies. It is based on our examination of the Dunhuang manuscripts for which digitized images are available, and complete enough to judge. Some of these are listed in the bibliography with links to images on the sites of the International Dunhuang Project and Vienna Resources for Kanjur and Tenjur Studies. Dotson (2016, p. 137) does report that Akira Fujieda and Daishun Ueyama (1962) note two different lengths of the dhāraṇī in “some of the Tibetan Dunhuang *Ap* [manuscripts],” but without stating clearly whether this refers to the manuscripts in this particular group or others. Given our limited access to the manuscripts and inadequate resources for a detailed study, further investigation would be desirable. It should be noted that it is incorrect, strictly speaking, to call the version in the Dunhuang manuscripts the “two *om*” version, because in most of the Dunhuang manuscripts the dhāraṇī starts “*namo . . .*” (and in some cases “*tadyathā . . .*”) without the initial *om* of the canonical versions. These dhāraṇī therefore only have one *om*. Nevertheless, we will continue to use “the two *om* version” as a convenient shorthand to designate all versions of the dhāraṇī that lack the centrally placed phrase beginning “*om punye punye mahāpunye . . .*”.
- [n.16](#) *de ltar dpe gnyis snang yang rang gi ngo bo gcig yin te/ puN+ye med pa’i oM gnyis ma ni/ lots+tsha ba yon gyis ma mgu bas sngags la ser sna byas pas ma dag pa yin te/ mtshan brgya rtsa brgyad ma tshang ba’i phyir ro/ zhes bdag gi bla ma dag gsungs so/* (Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo, folio 118.a).
- [n.17](#) Amé Zhab (2014), p. 42.
- [n.18](#) Tāranātha (2014), p. 77.
- [n.19](#) See Tāranātha, p. 21.
- [n.20](#)

The Khotanese manuscript is written in Upright Gupta script and may date to the seventh or eighth century, possibly even earlier. See i.36 below and Konow (1916), pp. 301–2.

n.21 Ngorchén's raising of these refutations of the earlier version's authenticity, despite the apparent silence of earlier Sakya scholars on this issue, is presumably related to the fact that his lifetime (the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries) saw the first widespread appearance of newly compiled Kangyurs. The canonical translations in earlier generations had been represented only in a variety of localized library collections. Indeed, Ngorchén himself supervised the creation of a Kangyur sponsored by the King of Mustang, which seems to have included this text despite his misgivings.

n.22 See Kunga Lekrin (2014), pp. 21–22; Amé Zhab (2014), p. 43.

n.23 Kunga Lekrin (2014), p. 22 and Amé Zhab (2014), p. 42.

n.24 See also n.50.

n.25 See the English rendering in n.56.

n.26 There are some twenty such works in the Kangyur.

n.27 Compare, for example, the “hundred-syllable” (*yig brgya*) mantra of Vajrasattva.

n.28 Tāranātha (2014), p. 77. Paradoxically, Tāranātha includes the phrase “one hundred and eight names” in the title of his commentary, as part of the title by which he refers to the sūtra.

n.29 Amé Zhab (2014), p. 43.

n.30 See also the introduction to Toh 674, at i.14 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-24>) and i.24 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-42>).

n.31 See n.43.

n.32 See Leumann 1912, Konow 1916 (images of the Khotanese text can also be seen in plates XIV–XVII at the back of the Konow volume), and Payne 2007, pp. 273–308.

n.33 Silk 2004, pp. 423–29.

n.34

Taishō 936, *Dacheng wuliang shou jing* (大乘無量壽經); and Taishō 937, *Fo shuo dacheng sheng wuliang shou jue ding guangming wang rulai tuoluoni jing* (佛說大乘聖無量壽決定光明王如來陀羅尼經).

- n.35 Given the conjectures in the preceding section and especially the fact that only “two *om*” versions of the text can be confirmed to have existed before the late eleventh century, it is likely to have been this version rather than the other.
- n.36 See Dotson 2016; and also van Schaik, Sam, “The Whereabouts of the Tibetan Manuscripts from Dunhuang (<https://earlytibet.com/about/whereabouts/>).”
- n.37 The equivalent in basic content, but strictly speaking not in the number of *oms* they contain because the initial *om* is omitted.
- n.38 Varacandra is often written in the dialect form of “Walatsandra” and translated into Tibetan as *zla ba bzang po*.
- n.39 Although in some Tibetan traditions Cintācakra, commonly referred to as White Tārā, is more common as an actual long-life practice.
- n.40 See Druptap Küntü (1902), vol. 10 (tha), folios 339.b–341.a, and vol. 1 (ka), folios 191.a–195.b, respectively.
- n.41 We have here completed the name of the buddha realm in line with the form it takes in 1.8. For this mention, the Degé text of Toh 675 omits altogether the final part of the realm’s name, [*la*] *sogs pa* (*saṃcaya*), although in the Dunhuang manuscripts it is present, sometimes with and sometimes without *la*, and in the archaic orthography *scogs pa*. The Degé of Toh 674 and most other Kangyurs have *yon tan dpag tu med pa la sogs pa*. The usual meaning of *la sogs pa* is “et cetera,” and is probably a scribal corruption of *sogs pa*, which would be the correct translation of the *saṃcaya* in the Sanskrit. The Choné and Urga Kangyurs, in their “three *om*” versions of the text, have the correct *sogs pa* (Choné vol. 15, ba, F.281b.4; Urga vol. 101, e, F.57b.3), but in their “two *om*” versions omit this part of the name, as here in the Degé Kangyur (Choné vol. 15, ba, F.287b.8; Urga vol. 91, ba, F.216.b.3).
- n.42 “The Blazing King Who Is Completely Certain of Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom.” This is the longest form of Aparimitāyurjñāna’s name. There are several spellings of this name in Tibetan to be found in the canonical texts. Here in version (2) of the sūtra in the Degé (Toh 675) and in most other Kangyurs, as well as in the Dunhuang texts, it is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par gdon mi za ba’i rgyal po*, while in version (1) of the sūtra (Toh

674 and 849) in most Kangyurs it is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par nges pa'i gzi brjid kyi rgyal po*. In the Lhasa Kangyur, however, version (2) has the spelling *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par nges pa gdon mi za ba'i rgyal po*. The longest form of the equivalent name in *The Root Manual of the Rites of Mañjuśrī* (Toh 543, 27.27 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh543.html#UT22084-088-038-3692>)) is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa rnam par nges pa'i dbang po'i rgyal po*.

n.43 The Nepalese Sanskrit texts read *eva hi tiṣṭhati dhriyate yāpayati*, which is the standard phrase in descriptions of tathāgatas inhabiting their respective realms, and can be seen in the Sanskrit of such texts as *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* (Toh 115) 1.2 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh115.html#UT22084-051-003-15>). The standard rendering in Tibetan is *bzhugs te 'tsho zhing gzhes* (“resides, lives, and remains”) and is found in numerous translated sūtras. It is frequently followed by a phrase such as “and there teaches the Dharma.” Here, while in the Dunhuang manuscripts it is rendered *bzhugs te 'tsho zhing gzhes*, Toh 675 reads *bzhugs so/ 'tshe 'dzin cing tshe mthar phyin par bzhed de* and Toh 674, with a different spelling of the final verb, *bzhugs te tshe 'dzin cing tshe mthar phyin par gzhes te*. Tāranātha notes in his commentary (Tāranātha 2014, p. 65) that this expanded rendering is how Patshab Nyima Drak, Chödrak Pal (*kun spang chos grags dpal*), and Lodrö Pal (*lo tsA ba blo gros grags dpal*) translate this phrase, thus specifying the particular teaching taught and not simply applying to the one who teaches it (the significance of Tāranātha mentioning the latter two translators, both early fourteenth century Jonangpa scholars of whom sūtra translations do not appear to have survived, is not entirely clear to us). The other two commentaries follow similar interpretations, Amnyé Zhab (Amnyé Zhab 2014, p. 47) specifying that “extending life to its very limit” indeed refers to the actions of Aparimitāyus with regard to beings. Finally, the fact that in the present “two *om*” version, Toh 675, this phrase appears in Tibetan as the latter rendering, as in the “three *om*” version, Toh 674, while in the Dunhuang manuscripts it appears in the former, standard rendering, is further evidence that Toh 675 may be a back-adaptation of this translation to the “two *om*” form rather than simply representing an earlier translation (see Introduction i.34). Tāranātha also mentions (Tāranātha 2014, p. 76) the importance of this phrase, along with the wording of the verses on the six pāramitās (1.64 et seq.) as indicating an interpretation of the text as a tantra involving empowerment and blessing.

n.44 *bstan to*; the Dunhuang manuscripts have *brjod do*, “said to have.”

n.45

From the Sanskrit *guṇavarṇa*, which was translated into Tibetan as “qualities and praise” (*yon tan dang bsngags pa*).

n.46 According to Toh 675, the Khotanese, and the Dunhuang manuscripts. In the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and in Toh 674 1.4 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-81>), Aparimitāyurjñāna is shortened to Aparimitāyus.

n.47 *khyim na 'chang gi bar du byed dam*; the Dunhuang manuscripts have only *'chang ngam*, making no mention of “at home” or (with the preceding phrases) of a progression from hearing or writing the title alone to doing so for the whole text.

n.48 The Nepalese Sanskrit reads “who recite it and continually make offerings of flowers, perfume, incense, garlands, ointments, powders, robes, parasols, banners, bells, and flags.” None of the Tibetan versions, including the Dunhuang manuscripts, add these extra items of offering.

n.49 The Nepalese Sanskrit texts read *śroṣyanti dhārayiṣyanti vācayiṣyanti*, “hear, keep, or recite,” while the Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts mostly read *'dzin par 'gyur ba*, “hold.”

n.50 One hundred and eight names for this buddha are not given in this sūtra or in any other. This mention might possibly refer to another, lost sūtra, or perhaps be a corruption of repeating these actions 108 times (as one of the mentions in one of the Chinese translations seems to suggest). Alternatively—but plausibly only for the other version of the text, the “three *om*” version (Toh 674 and 849)—this could also be a peculiarly worded reference to the dhāraṇī having 108 syllables, which is the case if the two instances of the final and initial *a* in the Tibetan transliteration are elided into *ā* as they should be according to the rules of euphonic combination in classical Sanskrit (and as they are in the Sanskrit versions). Indeed, in the paragraph that follows and in 1.8, “the one hundred and eight names” does seem to refer to the dhāraṇī, and could therefore be interpreted as “the-one-hundred-and-eight-syllable appellation” of Buddha Aparimitāyurjñāna. On the other hand, here in Toh 675 and in the other “two *om*” versions of the text (the Dunhuang manuscripts, the Khotanese, and all the Chinese versions), the dhāraṇīs have far fewer syllables, yet this mention is present nevertheless (although in the case of the Dunhuang manuscripts only in the equivalent of the following paragraph, not in this one). The possible discrepancy was used by some Sarma authors (see introduction, i.26) as proof that the “two *om*” dhāraṇī was incomplete, but they may not have been

aware of the existence of Sanskrit manuscripts and Chinese translations featuring the “two *om*” version.

- n.51 This version, as well as Toh 674, has ‘*chang bar ’gyur ba*’ here, but as in the preceding sentence, the Nepalese Sanskrit texts read *śroṣyanti dhārayiṣyanti vācayiṣyanti*, “hear, keep, or recite.” Many of the Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts seem to omit this sentence entirely.
- n.52 The Nepalese Sanskrit texts read *śroṣyanti likhiṣyanti*, “hear or write.” The Tibetan version of the Druptap Küntü adds, at the end of these verbs, *klog par gyur pa*, “or recite,” not present in any of the canonical versions.
- n.53 As in n.46, according to Toh 675, the Khotanese, and the Dunhuang manuscripts. In the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and in Toh 674 1.6 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-89>), Aparimitāyurjñāna is shortened to Aparimitāyus.
- n.54 *de dag gi yon tan dang legs par gyur pa ni ’di dag go*; the Dunhuang manuscripts read *de dag gi yon tan dang legs pa ni ’di dag go*.
- n.55 The Dunhuang manuscripts omit the initial *om* in all instances of the dhāraṇī, but start the first instance (only) with *tadyathā*.
- n.56 The dhāraṇī transliterated throughout the text is shown according to the version in the Degé Kangyur. Versions in other Kangyurs have only minor variants in spelling and punctuation. An approximate translation is: “*Om*, Homage to the Bhagavān Aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja, the tathāgata, arhat, perfectly awakened buddha. It is thus: *Om*, the true nature that is completely pure of all mental events! The one who has risen high in the sky! Who is completely pure in nature! Whose entourage is of the great way! *Svāhā*.”
- n.57 The Dunhuang manuscripts make no mention here of the one hundred and eight names, but just read *sngags kyi tshig ’di dag*, “these mantra words.”
- n.58 As in n.46 and n.53, according to Toh 675, the Khotanese, and the Dunhuang manuscripts. In the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and in Toh 674 1.8 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-94>), Aparimitāyurjñāna is shortened to Aparimitāyus.
- n.59 The prefix *bde ba can*, which is here rendered as “blissful” but could also be interpreted as the realm name Sukhāvatī, is present in this version of the text but not in the equivalent sentence of Toh 674 (see Toh 674, 1.8 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-94>)), nor

in the Dunhuang manuscripts. It somewhat confusingly identifies this realm at the zenith with the western realm of the “other” Amitāyus who is Amitābha, perhaps confirming that the conflation of these two buddhas (see i.9) occurred at an early date in Tibet.

- n.60 The Nepalese Sanskrit here has the additional line, “And they will have measureless life in the Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya realm.”
- n.61 The Nepalese Sanskrit and Dunhuang Khotanese and Tibetan manuscripts, in all the references to the sūtra in the rest of the text, call it the *Aparimitāyus Sūtra*, and the Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts use the term *mdo* in place of the Degé’s *mdo sde*.
- n.62 The Nepalese Sanskrit and Toh 674 (1.22 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-114>)), as well as the Dunhuang manuscripts, here instead have “three hundred sixty million” in conformity with the other numbers.
- n.63 In the Tibetan of the Kangyur, here in Toh 675 as well as in Toh 674 (see Toh 674, 1.28 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-121>)), this phrase and its recurrences in the passages that follow is *yi ger 'dri'am/ yi ger 'drir 'jug na*. In some of the Dunhuang manuscripts it is *yi ger 'dri'am/ 'drir 'jug na*, while in others it is simply *'drir bchug na* or *'drir bcug na*, presumably meaning “set in writing.”
- n.64 This entire sentence, along with the repeated dhāraṇī that goes with it, is absent from the Khotanese manuscript (see Konow 1916, p. 310) and appears to be absent from the Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts that we have examined, although it is present in both Kangyur versions, in the Druptap Küntü, and in the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts.
- n.65 While Toh 674 reads *de'i mtshams med pa lnga byas pa yang yongs su byang bar 'gyur ro* (“will be purified even of having committed the five karmas . . .”), here in Toh 675 this reads more simply *de'i mtshams med pa lnga yongs su byang bar 'gyur ro*. This is closer than Toh 674 to the Dunhuang manuscripts, which read *de mtshams myed pa lnga yongs su 'byang bar 'gyur ro*. The Nepalese Sanskrit mentions the “karmic obscurations” of the five actions with immediate result (*pañcānantaryāṇi karmavaraṇāni*), with a precision that does not appear to be present in the Khotanese manuscript (see Konow 1916, p. 310).
- n.66 This paragraph is not present in the Nepalese Sanskrit texts, but is in the Dunhuang Khotanese (see Konow 1916 p. 312).

- n.67 Toh 675 here has *glags btsal kyang* where Toh 674 and the Dunhuang manuscripts have *glags bltas kyang*.
- n.68 Toh 674 and the Dunhuang manuscripts here have “nine hundred ninety million.”
- n.69 *mngon sum du lung ston pa mdzad*, which could also just mean “teach them,” is the reading here in both Toh 675 and Toh 674. The Dunhuang manuscripts have *mngon du ston par mdzad* or *mngon sum du ston pa mdzad*, “appear directly to them.” Nepalese Sanskrit has *darśanaṃ dāsyanti*, “appear before them.”
- n.70 Degé in this version has *ma byed cig*, while the other version (see Toh 674, 1.42 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-140>)) and the Dunhuang manuscripts read *ma za shig*.
- n.71 Here in Toh 675, the Tibetan of the Degé reads simply *mdo sde 'di*, “this sūtra,” while in the Dunhuang manuscripts, as well as in the other version, Toh 674 (in the Degé and all other Kangyurs except the Lithang and Choné), the equivalent phrase reads *mdo sde dkon mchog 'di*, “this precious sūtra.” In the “three *om*” version (i.e. the equivalent of Toh 674) in the Lithang and Choné Kangyurs, the phrase is as here. The Nepalese Sanskrit and Khotanese, here and in the other passages between the repeated *dhāraṇī*, instead use the title of the text, *aparimitāyuhī sūtram*, “the Aparimitāyus sūtra.”
- n.72 The phrase “or caused to be written” is omitted in the Tibetan.
- n.73 The phrase *sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet* (here rendered in Tibetan *sa phyogs de yang mchod rten du 'gyur te*) is to be found in a number of texts, including the *Vajracchedikā* (Toh 16), *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Toh 12), *Kāśyapaparivarta* (Toh 87), and *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtras* (Toh 555-57). In his detailed analysis of the use of the phrase, Schopen suggests (in essence) that it should probably be understood as meaning that the place where the written text in question is to be found becomes “like a stūpa” in the sense of being no less worthy of veneration than a monument housing or representing the relics of a tathāgata’s body, as set out in *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, Toh 176) 12.2–5 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh176.html#UT22084-060-005-442>), and in *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, Toh 113) 10.28–9 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh113.html?view-mode=editor#UT22084-051-001-1684>). See Schopen 2005, pp. 25–62.
- n.74 The Dunhuang manuscripts have *kar sha pa ni 'ga' zhig*, “a few *kārṣāpaṇa* coins.”

n.75

According to the Tibetan *chos kyi rnam grangs*, which appears to have been translated from *dharmaparyāya*, and is the same in the two canonical versions in Tibetan (Toh 674 and 675) as well as in the Dunhuang manuscripts. One of the Nepalese Sanskrit versions reads “this Aparimitāyuh Sūtra” (Walleiser 1916, p. 24), but the Nepalese Sanskrit edition used by Konow to compare with the Khotanese (Konow 1916, p. 319) has *dharmabhāṇaka*, which means “one who recites the Dharma from memory” or “one who expounds the teaching.”

n.76 The Degé here in Toh 675 reads *dam pa'i chos thams cad khong du chud par 'gyur*. In Toh 674 (1.54 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-162>)) this paragraph reads *dam pa'i chos mtha' dag mchod par 'gyur*, “will have made an offering to the entirety of the good Dharma.” In the Dunhuang manuscripts, it reads *dam pa'i chos mtha' dag chub par mchod par 'gyur*, with the same meaning.

n.77 *'di lta ste dper na*. In most (but not all) of the Dunhuang manuscripts, here and in the two similar statements that follow, *dper na* is absent.

n.78 *'khor ba 'jig*. Here Toh 675 appears to add another buddha to the list by including this alternative translation of Krakucchanda to the less common *log par dad sel*, but without omitting the latter. In the ninth century *Mahāvīyuttpati*, the Tibetan *'khor ba 'jig* was used to translate Kakutsunda, which is one of the hybrid Sanskrit forms for Krakucchanda (compare, for example, to Krakutsanda in the Sanskrit of the *White Lotus of Compassion Sūtra* and Kakusandha in Pali). The *Mahāvīyutpatti* has *log pa dad sel* for Krakucchanda, but this latter translation fell into disuse.

n.79 Whereas the equivalent phrases of this and the next two statements in Toh 674 (1.56–1.60 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-166>)) clearly refer to the merit related to the *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*, here in Toh 675 the accumulation of merit “of” (or perhaps “relating to”) *Aparimitāyurjñāna* himself (i.e. the tathāgata, not the text) is mentioned: *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa'i bsod nams kyi phung po'i tshad ni bgrang bar mi nus so*. This could be interpreted most literally as *Aparimitāyurjñāna*’s own merit, but presumably refers rather to the merit to be obtained by making offerings to him. This same difference between the two versions of the text is present in these three paragraphs, not only in the Degé Kangyur but also in the other Kangyurs, and does not therefore seem to be due merely to a one-off scribal error. The Nepalese Sanskrit and Khotanese manuscripts as well as the Dunhuang texts all match Toh 674 in referring to the sūtra, not the tathāgata.

n.80

Here in Toh 675, *ri'i rgyal po ri rab dang mnyam pa'i rin po che'i phung por byas te/ sbyin pa byin pa*. In Toh 674, the reading is *rin po che'i phung po ri rab tsam spungs te sbyin pa byin pa*.

- [n.81](#) See n.79. Also, this whole paragraph is absent in most of the complete Dunhuang manuscripts that we have seen, but is present in the Nepalese Sanskrit and Khotanese manuscripts.
- [n.82](#) See n.79.
- [n.83](#) This version has *gus par byas te*, while Toh 674 (1.62 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-175>)) has *bsti stang du byas te*. The Dunhuang manuscripts only have “causes to be written or makes offerings to.”
- [n.84](#) One of the Nepalese Sanskrit versions (Walleiser 1916, p. 25) introduces the following verses with the sentence, “Then at that time the Bhagavān spoke these verses:”.
- [n.85](#) According to all three commentaries—by Amé Zhab Ngawang Kunga Sönam, Kunga Lekrin, and Tāranātha—mentioned in the introduction, “entering the city” (*grong khyer 'jug pa, pure praviśantaṃ*) here and in the following verses refers to the Buddha engaging in benefiting others by teaching disciples. In addition, Tāranātha’s commentary seems to suggest that from a tantra perspective this is one element of the wording of the verses on the six pāramitās that can be taken as referring to empowerment.
- [n.86](#) The commentaries by Kunga Lekrin and Ngawang Kunga Sönam interpret the “resounding” (*sgra, śabda*) of the power of generosity (and of the other perfections in the verses that follow) as the Buddha’s proclamations of his past generosity and praise of generosity, etc. Tāranātha explains it as meaning the sound of the dhāraṇī, the very expression of the six perfections.
- [n.87](#) In Toh 674, at 1.71 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html#UT22084-091-072-190>), as well as in the Dunhuang manuscripts, the word “joyfully” (*dgyes shing*) is added before “taught.” It seems anomalous and is not usually a part of this traditional formula at the conclusion of sūtras. It may have been derived from the Sanskrit *idam avocad bhagavān āttamanās*, where *āttamanās* is describing the joy of the audience, but could possibly have been erroneously translated twice. It is not present in Toh 675, but is in some of the Dunhuang manuscripts.
- [n.88](#) The Nepalese Sanskrit has “This is what the Bhagavān said, and, overjoyed, the bhikṣus, the bodhisattva mahāsattvas, the complete assembly, and the

world with its devas, humans, asuras, and gandharvas praised the
Bhagavān's words."

n.89 There is no translators' colophon, although the version in the nineteenth-century Sakya compendium of sādhanas, the Druptap Küntü, has one; see introduction, i.15.

b.

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g.

GLOSSARY

g.1 Akaniṣṭha

'og min

འོག་མིན།

Akaniṣṭha

The highest of the heavenly levels of the form realm, but also in many Mahāyāna texts the buddhafield of the saṃbhogakāya buddhas.

g.2 Amitābha

'od dpag tu med pa

འོད་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ།

Amitābha

Originally primarily known as Amitāyus, the buddha of the western realm of Sukhāvatī. Rebirth in that realm has been an important goal since early Mahāyāna.

g.3 Amitāyus

tshe dpag med

ཚེ་དཔག་མེད།

Amitāyus

Amitāyus is commonly used as the short form of the Buddha Aparimitāyurjñāna's name. It also often refers to Amitābha, as it was also the principal name for Amitābha in the earlier sūtras on Sukhāvatī.

g.4 Amnyé Zhab Ngawang Kunga Sonam

a myes zhabs ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams

ཨ་མྲེ་ཞབས་ང་དབང་ཀུན་དགའ་བསོད་ནམས།

—

A seventeenth century scholar (1597–1659), the twenty-seventh Sakya Trizin.

g.5 Anāthapiṇḍada

mgon med zas sbyin

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྤྱོན།

Anāthapiṇḍada

A wealthy merchant in the town of Śrāvastī, who became a patron of the Buddha Śākyamuni. He bought Prince Jeta’s Park, the Jetavana, to be the Buddha’s first monastery, a place where the monks could stay during the monsoon. Although his Sanskrit name is Anāthapiṇḍada, he is better known in the West by the alternative form Anāthapiṇḍika that is predominant in the Pāli canon. Both mean “the one who gives food to the destitute.”

g.6 Aparimitaguṇasamcaya

yon tan dpag tu med pa sog pa

ཡོན་ཏན་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་ལ་སོགས་པ།

Aparimitaguṇasamcaya

The buddha realm of Aparimitāyus, located in the upward direction from our world. The name means “Accumulation of Immeasurable Qualities.”

g.7 Aparimitāyurjñāna

tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa

ཚེ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ།

Aparimitāyurjñāna

“The One Who Has Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom.” The middle length version of this buddha’s name, which is also the form in the title of the sūtra. For more details on this buddha, see [i.9](#).

g.8 Aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja

tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par gdon mi za ba’i rgyal po

· *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par nges pa’i gzi brjid kyi rgyal po*

ཚེ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་ཤིན་ཏུ་རྣམ་པར་གདོན་མི་བླ་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

· ཚེ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་ཤིན་ཏུ་རྣམ་པར་ངེས་པའི་གཟི་བརྗིད་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

Aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja

“The Blazing King Who Is Completely Certain of Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom.” The full version of Aparimitāyurjñāna’s name. For more details on this buddha, see [i.9](#).

Aparimitāyus

g.9 *tshe dpag tu med pa*

ཆོ་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ།

Aparimitāyus

“The One Who Has Immeasurable Longevity.” The shortest form of Aparimitāyurjñāna’s name. For more details on this buddha, see [i.9](#).

g.10 **Arhat**

dgra bcom pa

དག་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

Used both as an epithet of the Buddha and as the final accomplishment of the Śrāvakayāna.

g.11 **Asura**

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

One of the six classes of sentient beings. The asuras are engendered and dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility and are described as being incessantly embroiled in disputes with the gods (deva). They are frequently portrayed in brahmanical mythology as having a disruptive effect on cosmological and social harmony.

g.12 **Bhagavān**

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān

“One who has bhaga,” which has many diverse meanings including good fortune, happiness, and majesty. In the Buddhist context, it means one who has the good fortune of attaining enlightenment.

g.13 **Bhikṣu**

dge slong

དགེ་སྦྱང་།

bhikṣu

Fully ordained buddhist monk.

g.14 **Bodhisattva**

byang chub sems dpa'

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ།

bodhisattva

A person who is dedicated not merely to attaining liberation through attaining the state of an arhat, but to becoming a buddha. The designation was created through the Sanskritization of the Middle Indic *bodhisatto*, the Sanskrit equivalent of which might actually have been *bodhisakta*, “one who is fixed on enlightenment.”

g.15 Deva

lha

ལྷ།

deva

One of the five or six classes of sentient beings, specifically engendered and dominated by exaltation, indulgence, and pride. According to Buddhist cosmology, the gods are said to exist in many levels of celestial or divine realms, higher than that of the human realm, within in the desire realm, in the form realm, and in the formless realm.

g.16 Dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

The power of mental retention or a powerful recitation that is a precursor of mantras and is usually in the form of intelligible sentences or phrases said to hold the essence of teaching or meaning.

g.17 Dharma discourse

chos kyi rnam grangs

ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

dharmaparyāya

The word *paryāya* regularly has the sense of “method,” “procedure,” “approach,” but here it is simply “Dharma teaching,” “Dharma discourse,” or more literally, “approach to the Dharma.” The Chinese *fa men* (lit. “door to the Dharma”) conveys the sense of “access/approach” and by extension, “teaching.” The Tibetan *rnam grangs* easily misleads people into thinking that this has something to do with “enumeration.”

g.18 Dharmabhāṇaka

chos smra ba

ཚོས་སྒྲ་བ།

dharmabhāṇaka

In early Buddhism a section of the saṅgha would be *bhāṇakas*, who, particularly before the teachings were written down and were transmitted solely orally, were the key factor in the preservation of the teachings. Various groups of bhāṇakas specialized in memorizing and reciting a certain set of sūtras or vinaya.

g.19 Diligence

brtson 'grus

བརྩོན་འགྲུས།

vīrya

One of the six perfections. Perseverance and enthusiasm for virtue.

g.20 Five karmas that have immediate result at death

mtshams med pa lnga

མཚམས་མེད་པ་ལྔ།

pañcānantaryāṇi karmāṇi

Literally, “without an interval,” meaning that the results of these actions is rebirth in hell at the very instant of death. The five are: killing one’s mother, killing one’s father, killing an arhat, dividing the saṅgha, or wounding a buddha so that he bleeds.

g.21 Four Mahārājas

rgyal po chen po bzhi

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་བཞི།

caturmahārāja

Four deities on the base of Mount Meru, each one the guardian of his direction: Vaiśravaṇa in the north; Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the east; Virūpākṣa in the west; and Virūḍhaka in the south.

g.22 Gandharva

dri za

དྷི་ཟ།

gandharva

A race of deities who are renowned to be great musicians and gain their nutrition through smells.

g.23 Generosity

sbyin pa

སྤྱོན་པ།

dāna

The first of the six perfections.

g.24 Good conduct

tshul khrims

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།

śīla

The second of the six perfections. Morally virtuous or disciplined conduct and the abandonment of morally undisciplined conduct of body, speech, and mind. Also commonly called discipline and ethical conduct.

g.25 Great oceans

rgya mtsho chen po

རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāsamudrā

In Buddhist cosmology, the four oceans in between the four continents that are at the cardinal points of the flat disc of the world, with the gigantic Mount Sumeru in its center.

g.26 Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu'i gling

འཛམ་བུ་རྒྱུད།

Jambudvīpa

The name of the southern continent in Buddhist cosmology, which can mean the known world of humans or, more specifically, the Indian subcontinent. In the *Karaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, Sri Lanka is described as being separate from Jambudvīpa. A gigantic miraculous rose-apple tree at the source of the great Indian rivers is said to give the continent its name.

g.27 Jetavana

dze ta'i tshal

ཇོ་ཏཱ་འི་ཐཤ།

Jetavana

A park in Śrāvastī, the capital of the kingdom of Kośala. It was owned by Prince Jeta, and Anāthapiṇḍada bought it at a great price from him to offer to the Buddha as a place where the monks could be housed during the monsoon period, thus creating the first Buddhist monastery.

g.28 Kanakamuni

gser thub

གསེར་ཐུབ།

Kanakamuni

The fifth of the seven buddhas, with Śākyamuni as the seventh. The second buddha in this Bhadraka eon that we are in. In the *White Lotus of Compassion Sūtra*, Buddha Ratnagarbha specifically prophesies that the third of Ratnagarbha's thousand vedapāṭhaka pupils will be this buddha. He also earlier prophesies that his fifteenth brother will be a buddha who has that name.

g.29 Kārṣāpaṇa

kAr ShA pa Na

ཀར་ཤ་པ་ན།

kārṣāpaṇa

A coin that varied in value according as to whether it was made of gold, silver, or copper. It is presumably the latter, lower-value one that is being referred to here.

g.30 Kāśyapa

'od srung

འོད་སྤྱང་།

Kāśyapa

The sixth of the seven buddhas, with Śākyamuni as the seventh. The third buddha in this Bhadraka eon.

g.31 Krakucchanda

log par dad sel · 'khor ba 'jig

ལོག་པར་དད་སེལ། . འཁོར་བ་འཇིག

Krakucchanda · Krakutsanda

The fourth of the seven buddhas, with Śākyamuni as the seventh. Also, the first of the buddhas in this Bhadraka eon, with Śākyamuni as the fourth. The name is a Sanskritization of the Middle Indic name Kakusaṃdha, and is therefore an example of hybrid Sanskrit. It is also found in a semi-

Sanskritized form: Krakutsanda. The ninth-century *Mahāvīyutpatti* Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary lists Kakutsunda as the Sanskrit for 'khor ba 'jig, but has a separate entry *log par dad sel* for Krakucchanda, though later, as in this sūtra, Krakucchanda became translated as 'khor ba 'jig.

g.32 Kunga Lekrin

kun dga' legs rin

ཀུན་དགའ་ལེགས་རིན།

—

A fifteenth century Sakya scholar, nephew of Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo.

g.33 Mahāsattva

sems dpa' chen po

སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāsattva

An epithet for an accomplished bodhisattva. *The White Lotus of Compassion Sutra* goes further and says only those praying to attain buddhahood in an impure realm during a *kaliyuga* deserve the title, even though the early part of the sūtra uses it for all accomplished bodhisattvas.

g.34 Mañjuśrī

'jam dpal

འཇམ་དཔལ།

Mañjuśrī

See “Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta.”

g.35 Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa

འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུར་གྱུར་པ།

Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta

Evolved from the gandharva Pañcaśikha in early Buddhism, which remains one of Mañjuśrī's alternate names. Pañcaśikha was a gandharva who lived on a five-peaked mountain, and who brought the Buddha information on what was occurring in the paradises. Mañjuśrī is the first prominent bodhisattva after Maitreya in the early Mahāyāna sūtras, where he is known as Mañjughoṣa (“Having a Beautiful Voice”). He came to embody wisdom, and became one of the eight great bodhisattvas. In the early tantras he was the lord of one of the three buddha families. In the Sanskrit version of the sūtra, Kumārabhūta is a separate word rather than a compound with his

proper name. This means that it could be the second of his names, and it is glossed as meaning “always young.” Alternatively it could be treated simply as an adjective, as in “the youth Manjuśrī.”

g.36 Māra

bdud

བདུད།

Māra

Said to be the principal deity in Paranirmitavaśavartin, the highest paradise in the desire realm, and also portrayed as attempting to prevent the Buddha’s enlightenment. In early soteriological Indian religions, the principal deity in saṃsāra, such as Indra, would attempt to prevent anyone’s realization that would lead to such a liberation. The name Māra, literally “death,” is also used as an impersonal term for the factors that keep beings in saṃsara.

g.37 Māra’s gods

bdud kyi ris kyi lha

བདུད་ཀྱི་རིས་ཀྱི་ལྷ།

mārakāyika

Deities in the Paranirmitavaśavartin paradise in which Māra is the principal deity. They attempt to prevent anyone from attaining liberation from saṃsāra. This is distinct from the four personifications of obstacles to enlightenment: Devaputra-māra (*lha’i bu’i bdud*), the Divine Māra, which is the distraction of pleasures; Mṛtyumāra (*’chi bdag gi bdud*), the Māra of Death; Skandhamāra (*phung po’i bdud*), the Māra of the Aggregates, which is the body; and Kleśamāra (*nyon mongs pa’i bdud*), the Māra of the Afflictions.

g.38 Meditation

bsam gtan

བསམ་གཏན།

dhyāna

The fifth of the six perfections. Generally one of the synonyms for meditation, referring to a state of mental stability. The specific four concentrations are four successively subtler states of meditation that are said to lead to rebirth into the corresponding four levels of the form realm.

g.39 Minling Terchen

smin gling gter chen

སེམས་གླིང་གཏེར་ཆེན་

སྤྱིན་གླིང་གཏེར་ཆེན།

—

Gyurme Dorje (*'gyur med rdo rje*), the first throneholder of Mindroling (*smin grol gling*), also known as Terdak Lingpa (*gter bdag gling pa*), a great scholar, author, and discoverer of spiritual treasures (1646–1714).

g.40 Ngawang Kunga Sönam

a myes zhabs ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams

ཨ་མྱེས་ཞབས་ངག་དབང་ཀུན་དགའ་བསོད་ནམས།

—

The 27th Sakya throneholder (1597–1659), an accomplished scholar, author, and diplomat.

g.41 Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo

ngor chen kun dga' bzang po

ངོར་ཆེན་ཀུན་དགའ་བཟང་པོ།

—

A great Sakya scholar and prolific author (1382–1456), founder of the Ngor tradition and the monastery of Ngor Ewam Chöden.

g.42 Paṇḍita

mkhas pa

མཁས་པ།

paṇḍita

An official title for a learned scholar in India.

g.43 Patience

bzod pa

བཟོད་པ།

kṣānti

The third of the six perfections. As such it can be classified into three modes: the capacity to tolerate abuse from sentient beings, to tolerate the hardships of the path to buddhahood, and to tolerate the profound nature of ultimate reality.

g.44 Patsap Nyima Drak

pa tshab nyi ma grags

པ་ཚབ་ཉིམ་གྲགས།

—
A Tibetan translator, particularly known for translating important
Mādhyamika texts, circa 1055–1145.

g.45 Perfection

pha rol tu phyin pa

ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ།

pāramitā

The six perfections of generosity, conduct, patience, diligence, meditation,
and wisdom.

g.46 Perfectly awakened buddha

yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas

ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱལ།

samyaksaṃbuddha

A buddha who teaches the Dharma, as opposed to a pratyekabuddha.

g.47 Rākṣasa

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa

A race of ugly, evil-natured supernatural beings with a yearning for human
flesh.

g.48 Ralpachen

khri ral pa can

ཁྲི་རལ་པ་ཅན།

—

Considered to be the third great Dharma king of Tibet, he was the grandson
of Trisong Detsen and reigned from 815 to 838 or 841. His reign saw the
expansion of Tibet's political dominion to its greatest extent, and a
significant continuation of the “early period” of imperially sponsored text
translation, the end of which is traditionally marked by the end of his reign.

g.49 Rechungpa

ras chung pa

རས་ཚུང་པ།

—

(1083–1161). A close disciple of Milarepa, who traveled to India and brought back some of the teaching cycles that Marpa had not transmitted, as well as the Amitāyus tradition he received from the yoginī Siddharājñī.

g.50 Śākyamuni

shA kya thub pa

ལྷ་ཀྱ་ཐུབ་པ།

Śākyamuni

The name of the buddha of our era, the fourth buddha of this Bhadraka eon.

g.51 Saṅgha

dge 'dun

དགེ་འདུན།

saṅgha

The community of followers of the Buddha's teachings, particularly the monastics.

g.52 Seven jewels

rin po che sna bdun

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྟུ་བདུན།

saptaratna

When associated with the seven heavenly bodies, and therefore the seven days of the week, they are: ruby for the sun; moonstone or pearl for the moon; coral for Mars; emerald for Mercury; yellow sapphire for Jupiter; diamond for Venus; and blue sapphire for Saturn. There are variant lists that are not associated with the heavenly bodies but, retaining the number seven, include gold, silver, and so on.

g.53 Siddharājñī

ma gcig grub pa'i rgyal mo

མ་གཅིག་གྲུབ་པའི་རྒྱལ་མོ།

Siddharājñī

A twelfth century yoginī, female guru of Rechungpa.

g.54 Śikhin

gtsug tor can

གཏུག་ཏོར་ཅན།

Śikhin

In early Buddhism, the second of the seven buddhas, with Śākyamuni as the seventh. The first three buddhas—Vipaśyin, Śikhin, and Viśvabhu—are in an earlier eon than the Bhadraka eon, and therefore Śākyamuni is more commonly referred to as the fourth buddha.

g.55 Śrāvastī

mnyan du yod pa

མཉན་དུ་ཡོད་པ།

Śrāvastī

The capital of the kingdom of Kośala, where the Buddha spent many monsoon retreats.

g.56 Stūpa

mchod rten

མཚོད་རྟེན།

caitya

Reliquary for the remains of a buddha or enlightened master.

g.57 Sukhāvatī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

Sukhāvatī

The realm of Buddha Amitāyus, more commonly known as Amitābha, as first described in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*.

g.58 Sumeru

ri rab

རི་རབ།

Sumeru

The mountain in the center of the disc of the world with the four continents around it.

g.59 Sūtra

mdo

མདོ།

sūtra

In Indian literature, originally an orally transmitted memorized text, often a series of central points in concentrated form, and hence, called a sūtra, which means “thread.” In Buddhism, particularly with the lengthy Mahāyāna sutras, it came to mean any teaching of the Buddha, and later specifically those that were not part of the tantra tradition, even though a number of texts with the title of sūtra are classed as tantras. In the division of the Buddha’s teachings into twelve kinds, sūtra then has the specific meaning of any prose passages within a sūtra, tantra, or vinaya text.

g.60 Tāranātha

tA ra nA tha

ཏཱ་ར་ནཱ་ཐ་

Tāranātha

The great Jonang master, 26th throneholder of the tradition (1575–1634).

g.61 Tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

One of the Buddha’s titles. “Gata,” although literally meaning “gone,” is a past-passive participle used to describe a state or condition of existence. Because the Buddha’s state is inconceivable, he is called “the one who is thus.”

g.62 Ten royal sūtras

rgyal po mdo bcu

རྒྱལ་པོ་མདོ་བཅུ།

—

This set of sūtras is so called either because they represent distillations of the most profound scriptures, or because according to traditional histories they were recommended to King Trisong Detsen for his daily practice by Guru Padmasambhava. These are: (1) *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* (*bzang spyod smon lam*, (Toh 44-45a) in chapter 45 of the *Avataṃsaka*); for aspiration (*smom lam*), and described as vast (*rgya chen*). (2) *Vajravidāraṇādhāraṇī* (*rdo rje rnam 'joms*, Toh 750); for ablution (*khros*). (3) *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya* (*shes rab snying po*, Toh 21 and 531); for the view (*lta ba*), and described as profound (*zab mo*). (4) *Atyaya-jñāna* (*'da' ka ye shes*, Toh 122 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh122.html>)); for cultivation (*sgom pa*) and described as of definitive meaning (*nges don*). (5) *bya ba ltung bshags* (part

of *Vinayaviniścayopāliparipṛcchā*, Toh 68
 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh68.html#UT22084-043-005-94>)); for
 purification of karmic obscurations (*las sgrib dag pa*). (6) *Aparimitāyurjñāna* (*tshe*
dang ye shes dpag tu med pa'i mdo, Toh 674
 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh674.html>)); for extending longevity
 (*tshe bsring*). (7) *gos sngon can gyi gzungs*, perhaps *Bhagavānnīlāmbaradhara-*
vajrapāṇitantra (Toh 498 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh498.html>)) but
 possibly another of the several texts on this form of Vajrapāṇi; for protection
 (*srung ba*). (8) *Uṣṇīṣasitātapatrā* (*gtsug tor gdugs dkar*, Toh 590, 591, and 592); for
 averting (*zlog pa*). (9) *Vasudhāra* (*nor rgyun ma*, Toh 663 and 664); for increasing
 resources (*longs spyod spel ba*). (10) *Ekākṣarīmātāprajñāpāramitā* (*sher phyin yi ge*
gcig ma, Toh 23); for the essence (*snying po*).

g.63 Trichiliocosm

stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi kham

སྟོང་གསུམ་གྱི་སྟོང་ཆེན་པོའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu

A thousand groups of a thousand groups of a thousand four-continent
 worlds, which makes one universe that can be the field of activity of a
 buddha.

g.64 Trisong Detsen

khri srong lde'u btsan

ཁྱི་སྟོང་ལྷེ་འཇམ་མགོན་པོ།

—

Considered to be the second great Dharma king of Tibet, he is thought to
 have been born in 742, and to have reigned from 754 until his death in 797 or
 799. It was during his reign that the “early period” of imperially sponsored
 text translation gathered momentum, as the Buddhist teachings gained
 widespread acceptance in Tibet.

g.65 Unfortunate

mi khom pa

མི་ཁོམ་པ།

akṣaṇa

The Sanskrit has its origins in the vocabulary of dice gambling, but in
 Buddhism refers to rebirths, human or otherwise, in which one will be
 unable to practice the Dharma. The Tibetan (also found as *mi khoms pa*) is
 based on the opposite of *khom*, *khoms* meaning leisure, opportunity, freedom.

There is a list of eight unfortunate rebirths: as hell beings, pretas, animals, or long-living deities; in lands without the Dharma; with defective faculties; holding wrong views; and in a world where a buddha has not appeared.

g.66 Vipāśyin

rnam par gzigs

རྣམ་པར་གླིངས།

Vipāśyin

In early Buddhism, the first of the seven buddhas, with Śākyamuni as the seventh. The first three buddhas —Vipāśyin, Śikhin, and Viśvabhu—are in an earlier eon than the Bhadraka eon, and therefore Śākyamuni is more commonly referred to as the fourth buddha.

g.67 Viśvabhu

thams cad skyob

ཐམས་ཅད་སྐྱོབ།

Viśvabhu

In early Buddhism, the third of the seven buddhas, with Śākyamuni as the seventh. The first three buddhas—Vipāśyin, Śikhin, and Viśvabhu—are in an earlier eon than the Bhadraka eon, and therefore Śākyamuni is more commonly referred to as the fourth buddha.

g.68 Wisdom

ye shes

ཡེ་ཤེས།

jñāna

Also known as “pristine awareness,” “primordial wisdom,” “primordial awareness,” “gnosis,” or the like. Typically refers to nonconceptual states of knowledge.

g.69 Wisdom

shes rab

ཤེས་རབ།

prajñā

The sixth of the six perfections, it refers to the profound understanding of the emptiness of all phenomena, the realization of ultimate reality.

g.70 Yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of supernatural beings, often represented as the attendants of Kubera, the god of wealth, but the term is also applied to spirits. Although they are generally portrayed as benevolent, the Tibetan translation means “harm giver,” as they are also capable of causing harm.

g.71 Yama's realm

gshin rje'i 'jig rten

གཤིན་རྗེའི་འཇིག་རྟེན།

yamaloka

The land of the dead ruled over by the Lord of Death. In Buddhism it refers to the *preta* realm, where beings generally suffer from hunger and thirst, which in traditional Brahmanism is the fate of those departed without descendants to make ancestral offerings.