

༄༅། །ཆོ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པའི་མདོ།

The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra (1)

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 849
Degé Kangyur vol. 100 (gzungs 'dus, e), folios 57.a–62.a.

Translated by Peter Alan Roberts and Emily Bower under the patronage and supervision
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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 best known of the two versions of this sūtra in the Kangyur.

ac.

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ac.1

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ac.2

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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 *sādhana*s 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 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 best known and most widely used of the two, and seems to represent Sanskrit source texts brought to Tibet in the later translation period. Even this version, however, is found in two near-duplicate copies in the Degé and other Kangyurs, with one word in the dhāraṇī consistently differing between the copies.

i.6 The other major version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2), Toh 675, appears to be derived from the same translation, 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.²

i.7 This sūtra³ 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.⁴

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 The name of the buddha who is the subject of this sūtra has three forms, of different lengths. The shortest version of his name is Aparimitāyus. The medium-length version is Aparimitāyurjñāna (“Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom”), and figures in the title of the sūtra. The longest form of the name, also in the sūtra, is Aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja (“The Blazing King Who Is Completely Certain of Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom”).⁵

i.10 The shortest name, Aparimitāyus, is translated into Tibetan as Tsepamé (*tshe dpag med* or, in full, *tshe dpag tu med pa*). Tsepamé, however, is also the Tibetan translation of Amitāyus, an alternative form of the name of the Buddha Amitābha found in many scriptures. These two buddhas, who seem to have been originally quite distinct, are often identified with each other—not only in Tibetan Buddhism but also in the Chinese and Japanese

traditions⁶—and the overlap of their names in Tibetan is therefore not the only factor at work. But partly as a result of back-translation from Tibetan into Sanskrit, Aparimitāyurjñāna has become commonly known as Amitāyus, a name which makes him difficult to distinguish from the Amitāyus who is Amitābha.

i.11 Other than by their names, a further means of distinguishing between these two buddhas is by their buddhafiels. In this sūtra, the Buddha Śākyamuni clearly introduces Aparimitāyurjñāna as dwelling in the realm named Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya (“Accumulation of Immeasurable Qualities”), which is situated in an upward direction from this world, i.e. toward the zenith. Tibetan authors who commented on the problem, even if they used the short form Tsepamé (Amitāyus), nevertheless took pains to distinguish between the two buddhas. On the one hand was “Amitāyus of the zenith” (*steng phyogs kyi tshe dpag med*) and “Amitāyus of Akaniṣṭha” (*’og min gyi tshe dpag med*, in the tantras), both likely to be references to Aparimitāyurjñāna. On the other was “Amitāyus of Sukhāvātī” (*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.⁷

i.12 Aparimitāyurjñāna is therefore presented here as quite distinct from the Amitāyus or Amitābha who resides in the realm of Sukhāvātī in the western direction. However, perhaps adding to the confusion, even the text of this present sūtra includes rebirth in Sukhāvātī among the results that will be obtained by those who write the sūtra down and recite it. This can presumably be explained by the fact that Sukhāvātī, described in several Kangyur sūtras⁸ and in many prayers, was the realm in which Mahāyāna Buddhists predominantly and almost generically prayed to be reborn.

i.13 Of the few other mentions specifically of Aparimitāyurjñāna in the canonical texts, one appears to be in *The Root Manual of the Rites of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Toh 543), in which the Buddha Śākyamuni tells of a buddha with the names Aparimitāyurjñānarāja and Amitāyurjñānaviniścayarājendra, who has taught the king of vidyās that consists of a single letter. His pure realm is called Amitavyūhāvātī, or simply Amitāyus.⁹ He is also mentioned as one of nine tathāgatas from buddhafiels in the eastern direction present in the assembly.¹⁰

i.14 Another, perhaps more significant, mention comes in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* (Toh 483 and 485). One of the many secondary maṇḍalas described in that influential Yogatantra work, widely used in funerary rites, is that of a tathāgata whose full name is given as Aparimitāyuhpuṇyajñāna-sambhāratejorāja, but who is referred to as Amitāyus in the several commentaries. He is invoked to protect from untimely death, and his mantra,

om puṇye puṇye mahā-puṇye aparimitāyurjñāna-sambhāropacite svāhā, bears a striking resemblance to the central section of the repeated dhāraṇī of the present text, as well as to the dhāraṇī of *The Essence of Aparimitāyus* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh673a.html>) (*tshe dpag med kyi snying po*, Toh 673a).¹¹ Its possible relationship to the present text is discussed further in i.24 below, and in the introduction to Toh 675 at i.29–31 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-393>).

i.15 The only other mention in the Kangyur of the tathāgata known as Aparimitāyurjñāna is, misleadingly, in the title of the text that follows the two versions of this sūtra in the Tantra section. Often confused with the present text, it is *The Dhāraṇī “The Essence of Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom”* (Toh 676, *Aparimitāyurjñānahṛdaya-nāma-dhāraṇī*),¹² but that work proves to be concerned solely with the “other” Amitāyus (or Aparimitāyus) to be identified with Amitābha, in Sukhāvātī. It shares no content with *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*, has an entirely different dhāraṇī, and—despite the title—the name Aparimitāyurjñāna does not appear within the text itself. However, the fact that it has that title, and its placement in most Kangyurs just after *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*, indicate that these two buddhas were already identified with each other by the time of the compilation of the Kangyurs—as indeed they are in the Buddhist traditions of East Asia.

i.16 In some later practice texts, both Amitābha and Amitāyus take the role of the *dharmakāya* deity of the lotus family, while in others Amitāyus may be specified as representing any of the three *kāyas*. Iconographically, Amitābha is often portrayed in *nirmāṇakāya* and Amitāyus in *saṃbhogakāya* form. In the present sūtra, however, there is no indication that Aparimitāyus is in *saṃbhogakāya* or any other specified form. In fact, there is no description of him at all—except perhaps that the appellation *tejorāja*, “blazing king,” might be taken to refer to his “fire-like” red appearance. His usual portrayal as red in color, wearing the *saṃbhogakāya* costume, and holding a vase of *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality, comes from the later tantra practices that have their origin in this sūtra.

Chinese and Sanskrit Versions

i.17 Two translations of this text 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.¹³ Both Chinese translations contain the “two *om*” dhāraṇī, and are therefore closer to the Khotanese, the other Tibetan version (2) of the text (Toh 675), and the Dunhuang manuscripts than they are to the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and to the present version (1) in Tibetan.

i.18

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.19 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 manuscript, 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.¹⁴ Jonathan Silk has made an English translation from Walleser’s edition of the Sanskrit,¹⁵ 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.20 The Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts are all of the “three *om*” version of the text, and therefore correspond more closely to the present version (1), Toh 674. The Khotanese, on the other hand, contains the “two *om*” version of the dhāranī throughout, and is thus closer to version (2) in Tibetan, Toh 675, to the many Dunhuang manuscripts in Tibetan, and to the two Chinese translations.

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

i.21 There are two different but closely related versions of *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* in most Kangyurs. We have called them *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) and (2), and in keeping with the tradition established by editors of all Kangyurs we have translated and published them separately, despite their similarity. They are found consecutively in the Tantra Collection, and according to Situ Panchen’s original catalog of the Degé Kangyur they 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 Toh 675 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html>), respectively.

i.22 Before discussing the complex differences between *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) and (2), it should be mentioned here that *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) itself also exists in two slightly different forms, the difference being a minor one in the dhāraṇī that is less significant than the differences between versions (1) and (2). In those Kangyurs that, like the Degé, have a separate compendium of incantations (*gzungs 'dus, dhāraṇī*) section, a second version of (1) appears there; in the Degé it is Toh 849, and is essentially a duplicate of the first (Toh 674), except that the dhāraṇī differs in one word. In the middle part of the repeated dhāraṇī, where the Toh 674 version has *aparimitāyur-puṇya-jñāna*, the Toh 849 version reads *aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna*. This latter reading is also found in the versions in the compendium of incantations in several Tshalpa Kangyurs;¹⁶ is the only version to be found in some other Kangyurs, notably those of the Themphangma group;¹⁷ and corresponds to the version in the Druptap Küntü, which will be mentioned in more detail below. Readers of this translation will see the version of the dhāraṇī corresponding to the version (Toh 674 or Toh 849) that they have selected.

i.23 To return to our discussion of the more significant differences between the two major variants, versions (1) and (2), the principal distinction lies again mainly in the repeated dhāraṇī, but in this case is a marked difference in its length and composition. In the present version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1), Toh 674 and 849, the middle part of the dhāraṇī comprises a phrase beginning “*om puṇye puṇye . . .*” that is not present in the other version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2), Toh 675, 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 674 and 849) the “three *om*” version (because the repeated dhāraṇī also contains two other phrases beginning with *om*), while the other one (Toh 675) it calls the “two *om*, no *puṇye*” version.¹⁸ In some other catalogs, e.g. the index to the Narthang Kangyur, the two texts are called respectively the “large and small *Tsédo*.”¹⁹

i.24 Another intriguing hint that the Kangyur provides us with regard to these two versions of the text is that the part of the dhāraṇī “present” in this version (1), Toh 674, but “missing” 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” (*hrdayavidyā, snying po'i rig pa*) of the tathāgata Aparimitāyuhpuṇyajñānasambhāratejorāja, the principal figure in a secondary maṇḍala.²⁰ 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. Its use in arguments and counter-arguments in favor of the authenticity of each of the two versions of the sūtra is discussed in the introduction to Toh 675 at i.29–31 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-393>).

i.25 The translation published here, the “three *om*” version, represents the form of the text most widely recited and reproduced in modern compilations. That the “two *om*” version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2), Toh 675, is also preserved in all Kangyurs as a separate text is an implicit recognition that both are authentic. The controversies that have nevertheless sometimes arisen about that question are discussed below and in the introduction to Toh 675, i.20–32 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-60>).

i.26 Apart from the composition of the dhāraṇī, there are some other relatively minor differences in wording between Toh 674 and 675, as recorded in the notes. Among these differences, the most significant are as follows:

- The name *tshe dpag tu med pa* (Aparimitāyus), which occurs a number of times here in Toh 674, is given its longer form in Toh 675 1.4 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-81>), 1.6 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-89>), and 1.8 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-94>): *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa* (Aparimitāyurjñāna).
- The Tibetan rendering of the longest form of the name Aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścitatejorāja is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par nges pa'i gzi brjid kyi rgyal po* in Toh 674, while in Toh 675 it is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par gdon mi za ba'i rgyal po*.²¹
- The name of Aparimitāyurjñāna’s realm here in Toh 674 is *yon tan dpag tu med pa sogs pa*²² (Aparimitaguṇasamcaya, “Accumulation of Immeasurable Qualities”), but in Toh 675 the first mention of it is just *yon tan dpag tu med pa* (Aparimitaguṇa, “Immeasurable Qualities”).

- Its second mention in Toh 675, however, not only gives it in full, as in Toh 674, but also prefixes it with the words *bde ba can* (Sukhāvati), 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.²³
- In the three paragraphs in which comparisons using analogies are made of the amounts of merit to be obtained through—here in Toh 674—reciting the sūtra (1.56, 1.58, and 1.60), Toh 675 seems to refer instead to merit obtained through the tathāgata Aparimitāyurjñāna himself rather than through reciting the text.
- Finally, Toh 674 has a curious concluding line that is not present 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. In Toh 675 (at 1.71 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-190>)) the ending is identical to standard endings.

i.27 There are no translators’ colophons to either version of the text, in any of the different Kangyurs. Nor are there colophons for the many reproductions of the text in other Tibetan compilations—with the exception of the version in the Druptap Küntü, mentioned below. Outside the texts themselves, this absence of information about the translators is confirmed in most of the Kangyur inventories and catalogs (including the catalog of the Degé Kangyur, which explicitly states that the translators are unknown)—but with two exceptions.

i.28 These two exceptions are the catalog (*dkar chag*) of the Narthang Kangyur (regarding both versions) and the lineage record of transmissions received by Minling Terchen Gyurme Dorje (regarding this version, Toh 674, only). Both attribute the translation to the Indian paṇḍita Puṇyasambhava and the Tibetan translator Patsap Nyima Drak, who were active in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. This same attribution is made in the colophon of the sūtra 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).²⁴ Now, these two translators are widely agreed to be the translators of the text that follows immediately after the two versions of *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* in the Kangyur, *The Dhāraṇī “Essence of Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom”* (Toh 676), which (as mentioned in i.15 above) is not closely related to *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* despite its title, and one possibility is that this attribution of *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* to those translators might have been an error brought about by the proximity of the texts and their confusingly similar titles.

i.29 In particular, the catalog of the Narthang Kangyur alone would seem to be an inadequate source of information here. The Narthang Kangyur was produced in the early 1730s, and reproduces versions of this group of texts, the equivalents of Toh 674 through Toh 676,²⁵ without colophons for either version of the sūtra. It is only in its catalog that the attribution to these two translators appears to be made. A look at the page in the catalog concerned reinforces suspicions of an erroneous attribution, as the carving of the catalog's woodblocks²⁶ seems to have run into problems for this entry, which coincides with a folio break. Indeed, the catalog not only appears to attribute both versions of *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* to these translators, but also omits naming these (or any) translators for the following text, *The Dhāraṇī "Essence of Aparimitāyurjñāna"* (Toh 676), which all the other Kangyur catalogs agree in attributing to them.

i.30 On the other hand, the evidence provided by Minling Terchen's lineage record carries considerably more weight. As well as naming the same two translators mentioned above, it details the several different sequences of lineage holders through whom the text of the "three *om* version" (i.e. Toh 674) came to Tibet, mostly including the sequence: Jetari; one or more of the masters known as Vajrāsana(pati); and Bari Lotsāwa Rinchen Drak (1040–1111), the second holder of the Sakya Throne. Abhayākaragupta (d. 1125, who may have been one of the Vajrāsana title holders) is also mentioned in one of these sequences.²⁷ Abhayākaragupta and Bari Lotsāwa are both associated with the transmission to Tibet of many Action Tantra practices, including several collections entitled *The One Hundred Sādhana*s. These were held and transmitted notably by the Sakya tradition, and if this text was among the many works brought to Tibet by this lineage and translated in the process, that would help explain how the attribution to the two translators was preserved outside the transmission of Kangyurs as such. It would also help explain why this text was classified as an Action Tantra, in common with all the other works in those collections.

i.31 Curiously, however, the attribution of this translation to Puṇyasambhava and Patsap Nyima Drak is complicated by several mentions in the commentaries of other translations. Writing in the early fifteenth century, Kunga Lekrin mentions a translation—apparently of this text—by Yarlung Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyaltsen, who lived in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and a later fourteenth century one by the Jonangpa scholars Kunpang Chödrak Palzang, Sabzang Mati Paṇchen, and Jonang Lotsāwa Lodrö Pal, all three contemporaries and important disciples of Dolpopa.²⁸ In the early seventeenth century, Amé Zhap Ngawang Kunga Sonam mentions the same names,²⁹ and his contemporary Tāranātha brings up the latter two, as well as mentioning Patsap, in his discussion of the

translation of the verbs used in their translation of 1.3.³⁰ These translations appear no longer to exist, but confirmation would require further research. The balance of the existing evidence, nevertheless, favors the idea that this version of *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* was indeed translated and introduced to Tibet by Puṇyasambhava and Patsap Nyima Drak in the late eleventh or early twelfth century.

i.32 We also know with little doubt (as discussed more fully in the introduction to *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2), Toh 675) that at least one version of the sūtra was translated during the early translation period. Both the early ninth century Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) and Phangthangma (*phang thang ma*) inventories of translated texts 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*).³¹ Material evidence, too, 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 850,³² 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.

i.33 All the Dunhuang manuscripts that we have been able to examine contain the “two om” version of the dhāraṇī.³³ 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.34 An additional confirmation of this hypothesis can be found in commentarial works by later Sakya scholars, Kunga Lekrin (a disciple of Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo) in the fifteenth century, and Amnye Zhab Ngawang Kunga Sönam in the seventeenth century. Both 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 (represented here). Following a leading statement attributed by Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo to his teachers, these authors are scathingly critical of the “two om” version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2), Toh 675, 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 the mutual lack of trust between proponents of the “late” versus

the “early” translation traditions regarding authenticity and lineage (which concerned principally the tantras rather than any of the other canonical genres).

i.35 Among other reasons they cite to justify this unusually harsh judgment, (for more detail, see introduction to *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2), Toh 675), Ngawang Kunga Sönam writes that Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo mentioned seeing three Sanskrit manuscripts of the sūtra, all of which were the “three *om*” version. While there is little doubt that this “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 reports seeing, on a visit to Narthang, several Sanskrit manuscripts of the sūtra, of which one was clearly the “two *om*” version. 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.³⁴ Ngorchen and his successors were also presumably unaware that in both of the two Chinese translations, too, the dhāraṇī is the “two *om*” version.³⁵

i.36 Apart from Tāranātha’s, we have not been able to find writings of the period defending the “two *om*” version from the disparagement of the authors mentioned, other than notes by catalog compilers to the effect that “both versions are authentic.” However, Amé Zhab’s writing on the subject in favor of the “three *om*” version does present some of the arguments used, in order to refute them—somewhat unconvincingly. More details are to be found in the introduction to *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2), Toh 675, at i.21 et seq. (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-61>).

i.37 Both versions, therefore, 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.

i.38 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 between the two versions in the Kangyurs (the principal ones listed above at i.26 and others in the notes) are relatively so minor that 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

Puṇyasambhava and Patsap Nyima Drak by several centuries—shows that they almost certainly represent a Tibetan translation different from the “two *om*” version (Toh 675) that has survived in the Kangyur.³⁶ It is therefore tempting to conjecture that the “two *om*” version in the Kangyur could in fact be a back-adaptation of the later translation, edited 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 in the “two *om*” version in the Kangyur. These elements are discussed more fully in the introduction to Toh 675, at [i.15 et seq.](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-49) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-49>).

The Sūtra in Buddhist Practice

- i.39 As mentioned above, 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 text³⁷ 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.³⁸
- 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 Lotsawa Rinchen Drak (mentioned above), and thereby became a part of the Sakya tradition.³⁹

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,⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹

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 in most Kangyurs as a tantra rather than as a sūtra.

i.44 We are delighted to have translated and published this version of *The Sūtra of Aparimitāyurjñāna*, a popular and widely used text, for the benefit of readers everywhere.

The Noble Mahāyāna
Sūtra of Aparimitāyurjñāna

1.

The Translation

[F.57.b]⁴²

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 Aparimita-guṇasaṃcaya.⁴³ There, the tathāgata, arhat, perfectly awakened buddha Aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścitatejorāja⁴⁴ resides and remains, sustaining and extending life to its very limit,⁴⁵ teaching 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 have premature deaths. Mañjuśrī, those beings who will write out or cause to be written out this Dharma discourse called 'Uttering the Praise of the Qualities⁴⁶ of the Tathāgata Aparimitāyus,'⁴⁷ and even those who hear or recite its title only, up to those who write a copy, keep it at home, 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 Aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścitatejorāja will be lengthened. Those beings whose lifespan is coming to an end, [F.58.a] who keep⁵¹ those names, will also 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 Aparimitāyus, will obtain these qualities and benefits.

1.7

om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye ⁵³ *aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |* ⁵⁴

1.8 “Mañjuśrī, those who write or cause to be written these one hundred and eight names of the tathāgata, 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 buddha realm of the tathāgata Aparimitāyus named Aparimita-guṇasaṃcaya.”⁵⁵

1.9 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-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*.⁵⁶

1.11 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-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, [F.58.b] uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.

1.13 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-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 puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-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 puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-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 samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | 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*. [F.59.a]

1.21 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.22 Then at that time three hundred sixty million⁵⁷ buddhas, with a single intention and a single voice, uttered this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.

1.23 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | 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 samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | 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 samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate*

- 1.28 Whoever writes or causes to be written⁵⁸ 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. [F.59.b]
- 1.29 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-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 samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate 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 samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | 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.⁵⁹
- 1.35 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā* | [F.60.a]
- 1.36 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* will be purified even of having committed the five karmas that have immediate result at death.⁶⁰
- 1.37

*om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate
samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye
aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-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.⁶¹

- 1.39 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate
samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye
aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-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 look to inflict.

- 1.41 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate
samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye
aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate
gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

- 1.42 When whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* dies, nine hundred ninety million buddhas will give them prophecies in person,⁶² 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.⁶³

- 1.43 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate
samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | [F.60.b] om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimita-
puṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-
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 puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye
aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-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 Sukhāvātī, the buddha realm of the tathāgata Amitābha.

1.47 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.48 Wherever this precious sūtra⁶⁴ is written or caused to be written,⁶⁵ that place will be a stūpa⁶⁶ 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.

1.49 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.50 Whoever writes or causes to be written this *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* [F.61.a] will never be reborn in a female state.

1.51 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parisuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*

1.52 Whoever makes a gift of even a single *kāṣṭhapaṇa* coin⁶⁷ with regard to this Dharma discourse, the *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*, will have made a gift of the whole trichilocosm filled with the seven jewels.

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

1.54 Whoever makes an offering to this Dharma discourse⁶⁸ will have made an offering to the entirety of the good Dharma.⁶⁹

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

- 1.56 As a comparison, 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,⁷⁰ Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni, and so on, but it is impossible to calculate the extent of the accumulation of merit that comes from the *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.⁷¹
- 1.57 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | [F.61.b] tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapūṇye aparimitapūṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-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 as high as Sumeru, the king of mountains,⁷² but it is impossible to calculate the extent of the accumulation of merit that comes from the *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.⁷³
- 1.59 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapūṇye aparimitapūṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-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 that comes from the *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*.
- 1.61 *om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścita-tejorājāya tathāgatāya arhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya | tadyathā | om puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapūṇye aparimitapūṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.62 Whoever writes or causes to be written, honors,⁷⁴ 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 puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapūṇye aparimitapūṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.64 ⁷⁵The 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 city⁷⁶
The resounding⁷⁷ of the power of generosity is heard.

- 1.65 The Buddha has risen high through the power of good conduct, [F.62.a]
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,
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 puṇye puṇye mahāpuṇye aparimitapuṇye
aparimitapuṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite | om sarva-saṃskāra-parīśuddha-dharmate
gagana-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā |*
- 1.71 This is what the Bhagavān joyfully taught,⁷⁸ and Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta, the
complete assembly, and the world with its devas, humans, asuras, and
gandharvas were delighted and praised the Bhagavān's words.⁷⁹
- 1.72 *The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra of Aparimitāyurjñāna is concluded.*⁸⁰

n.

NOTES

- n.1 Tāranātha's commentary (see Khomthar Jamlö 2014, vol. 2, 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.45.
- n.2 The Dunhuang manuscripts, as far as we have been able to judge from those available for online viewing, are fairly consistent witnesses of one Tibetan translation, but that translation is significantly different from both of the canonical versions. Differences between the Dunhuang manuscripts and the translation presented here are mostly not noted, but details of the most significant differences between them and the other version, Toh 675 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html>), can be found in the notes to that translation.
- n.3 Or, perhaps more accurately the other version, *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (2) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html>), Toh 675, to the extent that it may represent the translation available in the late eighth century.
- n.4 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.5 There are several spellings of this name in Tibetan found in the canonical texts. Here in version (1) of the *sūtra* in the Degé (Toh 674 and 849) and in most other Kangyurs it is *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa shin tu rnam par nges pa'i gzi brjid kyi rgyal po*, while in version (2) of the *sūtra* (Toh 675) in most Kangyurs and 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*. 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.6](#) See Payne 2007, 283–85, and Nattier 2007.
- [n.7](#) The epithet Dundubhisvara is a particular feature of another Kangyur text, the *Aparimitāyurjñānahrdayadhāraṇī* (Toh 676), which, despite its misleading title, clearly features Amitābha-Amitāyus. See i.15 for more details.
- [n.8](#) See especially *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvati* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh115.html>) (*Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Toh 115) and *The Array of Amitābha* (*Amitabhavyūha*, Toh 49).
- [n.9](#) Dharmachakra Translation Committee (2020), chapter 27, especially 27.3–27.44 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh543.html#UT22084-088-038-3651>).
- [n.10](#) Dharmachakra Translation Committee (2020), chapter 1, 1.36 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh543.html#UT22084-088-038-96>).
- [n.11](#) See *Sarvādurgatipariśodhanatantra*, Degé Kangyur vol. 85: Toh 483, F.83.a et seq., and Toh 485, F.114.a et seq.; for Sanskrit see Skorupski 1983, pp. 186–88. The two versions (Skorupski labels them A and B) correspond to the early and later translation periods, and the mantra cited in this paragraph is the one from the later translation, version B. The mantra in version A is the same except that the word *karāṇi* is added before the final *svāhā*.
- [n.12](#) See this text and its introduction, Dharmachakra Translation Committee (2021), *The Dhāraṇī “Essence of Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom,”* i.8 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh676.html#UT22084-091-074-19>) and 1.12–14 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh676.html#UT22084-091-074-35>).
- [n.13](#) 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.14](#) 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.15](#) Silk 2004, pp. 423–29.
- [n.16](#) These Kangyurs, including the Lithang, Qianlong, Ragya, Urga, Phajoding, and Dodedrak, have two versions of the sūtra version (1) in their Tantra and Dhāraṇī sections with the same difference as between Toh 674 and 849.

- [n.17](#) This is the case in the Stok Palace, Shey, Gangteng, and Chizhi Kangyurs, all of predominantly Themphangma lineage, but also in the Lhasa (Zhol), Narthang, Phuktrak, and Neyphug mixed group Kangyurs.
- [n.18](#) Degé Kangyur, vol. 103 (dkar chag, lakṣmī), folio 152b.5–6.
- [n.19](#) *tshe mdo che chung gnyis*, Narthang index folio 12b.1 (p. 658).
- [n.20](#) 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.21](#) See also n.5.
- [n.22](#) But see also n.43.
- [n.23](#) This mention of Sukhāvātī (*bde ba can*) as a prefix to the name of the realm is not present in the Dunhuang manuscripts.
- [n.24](#) Druptap Küntü, vol. 12 (na), folio 339a.
- [n.25](#) Narthang Kangyur, vol. 93, folios 201.b–218.b. Note that the text we have labeled Toh 673a, *The Essence of Aparimitāyus*, is not present in the Narthang Kangyur.
- [n.26](#) Narthang Kangyur *dkar chag*, end of folio 113.b and beginning of folio 114a.
- [n.27](#) See Minling Terchen (1998), vol. 2 (kha), folios 265.b–266.b. While Minling Terchen’s lineage record does also mention the “shorter, two *om* version with no *pun̄yai* in the middle,” it unfortunately makes no statement about its provenance.
- [n.28](#) See Khomthar Jamlö (2014), p. 22.
- [n.29](#) See Khomthar Jamlö (2014), p. 42.
- [n.30](#) See n.43. Tāranātha’s comments can be seen in Khomthar Jamlö (2014), p. 65.
- [n.31](#) Denkarma, folio 302a.4; Phangthangma, folio 10 (p. 25).
- [n.32](#) Dotson 2016, 129–30.
- [n.33](#) 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 of the dhāraṇī 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.34 See Konow (1916), pp. 301–2.

n.35 Ngorchén’s raising of these refutations of the earlier version’s authenticity, despite the 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.

n.36 Some of the more significant differences between the Kangyur versions and the Dunhuang manuscripts are recorded in the annotations to the translated text of version (2), Toh 675, q.v.

n.37 Or, rather, Toh 675, 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.

n.38 See Dotson 2016; and also van Schaik, Sam, “The Whereabouts of the Tibetan Manuscripts from Dunhuang (<https://earlytibet.com/about/whereabouts/>).”

n.39 The three texts (see bibliography) by Jetāri (also known as Jitāri) all contain in their titles the expanded name Aparimitāyurjñāna (Tib. *tshe dang ye shes*

dpag tu med pa) rather than just Amitāyus, but it is not entirely clear that they are focused on “Aparimitāyurjñāna of the zenith” rather than “Amitāyus of Sukhāvatī,” and while they mention the dhāraṇī to be recited they do not reproduce it. The sādhana (Toh 2699, F.67.a) instructs the reader to recite the name mantra (*ming gi sngags*), the essence mantra (*snying po'i sngags*), and the “dhāraṇī changed by the names” (*ming gis bsgyur na gzungs*), but then says “the dhāraṇī is that of Dundubhisvara” (*gzungs ni 'chi med nga sgra'o*, which suggests that the deity is rather Amitābha (see *The Dhāraṇī “Essence of Immeasurable Longevity and Wisdom”*, Toh 676, i.8 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh676.html#UT22084-091-074-19>)). The ritual (Toh 2700, F.67.b) is of the nine deity maṇḍala and, intriguingly, mentions setting up [the?] “two sūtras of Tsépamé” on tables to the south and north. It also mentions reciting the “long dhāraṇī mantra” (*gzungs kyi sngags rings*), the essence (*snying po*), and the wrathful mantra (*khro bo'i sngags*), but also includes “the six pāramitā verses of the dhāraṇī” (*gzungs kyi ni/ phar phyin drug gi tshig bcad*), this latter mention presumably referring to the verses starting at 1.64 near the end of the present text.

n.40

Varacandra is often written in the dialect form of “Walatsandra” and translated into Tibetan as *zla ba bzang po*.

n.41

Although in some Tibetan traditions Cintācakra, commonly referred to as White Tārā, is more common as an actual long-life practice.

n.42

This text, Toh 849, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs 'dus*, e), are listed as being located in volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). However, several other Kangyur databases—including the eKangyur that supplies the digital input version displayed by the 84000 Reading Room—list this work as being located in volume 101. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the two volumes of the *gzungs 'dus* section are an added supplement not mentioned in the original catalog, and also hinges on the fact that the compilers of the Tōhoku catalog placed another text—which forms a whole, very large volume—the *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratāṇṭikā* (*dus 'khor 'grel bshad dri med 'od*, Toh 845), before the volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur, numbering it as vol. 100, although it is almost certainly intended to come right at the end of the Degé Kangyur texts as volume 102; indeed its final fifth chapter is often carried over and wrapped in the same volume as the Kangyur *dkar chags* (catalog). Please note this discrepancy when using the eKangyur viewer in this translation.

n.43

The Degé 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 have the correct *sogs pa* (Choné vol. 15, ba, F.281b.4; Urga vol. 101, e, F.57b.3). Toh 675 omits altogether [*la*] *sogs pa* (*saṃcaya*), the final part of the realm’s name, but in the Dunhuang manuscripts it is present, sometimes with and sometimes without *la*, and in the archaic orthography *scogs pa*.

n.44 See n.5.

n.45 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 674 reads *bzhugs te tshe 'dzin cing tshe mthar phyin par gzhes* (Toh 675 is similar but has a different spelling of the last verb, *bzhed*). Tāranātha notes in his commentary (see Khomthar Jamlö 2014, vol. 2, p. 65) that this latter 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 (Khomthar Jamlö 2014, vol. 2, 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 “two *om*” version, Toh 675, this phrase appears in Tibetan as the latter rendering, as here, 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.38). Tāranātha also mentions (see Khomthar Jamlö 2014, vol. 2, 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.46 From the Sanskrit *guṇavarṇa*, which was translated into Tibetan as “qualities and praise” (*yon tan dang bsngags pa*).
- n.47 According to Toh 674 and the Nepalese Sanskrit. In the Khotanese and in Toh 675 (but not in the Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts), Aparimitāyus is lengthened to Aparimitāyurjñāna.
- 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.”
- 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, and most plausibly for this “three *om*” version, it 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” seems to refer to the dhāraṇī, and could therefore be interpreted as “the-one-hundred-and-eight-syllable appellation” of Buddha Aparimitāyus. On the other hand, in the “two *om*” versions of the text (Toh 675, the Dunhuang manuscripts, the Khotanese, and all the Chinese versions), the dhāraṇī only has 77 syllables, yet this mention is present nevertheless (though 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 to Toh 675 at i.26 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-387>)) 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 Toh 674 and 675 both have *’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 There is a difference here in the repeated dhāraṇī between the version in the Degé (and other Kangyurs’) Tantra Section (Toh 674) and the otherwise identical duplicate in the Compendium of Incantations (Toh 849). Where the Toh 674 version has *aparimitāyurpuṇya-jñāna*, the Toh 849 version reads *aparimitapuṇye aparimitapuṇya-jñāna*. The latter reading is also followed by many of the Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts, as it is in the Tibetan as reproduced in the Druptap Küntü. However, the “essence” mantra presented in *The Essence of Aparimitāyus* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh673a.html>) (Toh 673a) that appears to represent this same part of the dhāraṇī follows the former reading. See the Introduction, i.22; see also the introduction to Toh 673a (i.5 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh673a.html#UT22084-091-071-12>)) and Skorupski, pp. 188–9 and 214–5.
- n.54 The dhāraṇī transliterated throughout the text is shown according to the version, Toh 674 or Toh 849, that the reader has selected. Apart from the differences in the phrase mentioned in note 39, versions in other Kangyurs have only minor variants in spelling and punctuation. An approximate translation [of the version found Toh 849] is:
“*Oṃ*, Homage to the Bhagavān Aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja, the tathāgata, arhat, perfectly awakened buddha. It is thus: *Oṃ* Merit! Merit! Great merit! Immeasurable merit! The one who has gathered the accumulations of immeasurable merit and wisdom! *Oṃ*, 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.55 The Nepalese Sanskrit has the additional line, “And they will have measureless life in the Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya realm.”
- n.56 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*.
- n.57 According to the Nepalese Sanskrit and Toh 674. Toh 675 has “three hundred fifty million” in conformity with the other numbers.
- n.58 In the Tibetan of the Kangyur, for both Toh 674 and 675, this phrase and its recurrences in the passages that follow is *yi ger ’dri’am/ yi ger ’drir ’jug na*, but

in the Dunhuang manuscripts it is simply *'drir bchug na* or *'drir bcug na*, presumably meaning “set in writing.”

n.59 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.60 Here in Toh 674 this reads *de'i mtshams med pa lnga byas pa yang yongs su byang bar 'gyur ro*, while Toh 675 is closer to the Dunhuang manuscripts in reading *de'i mtshams med 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.

n.61 This paragraph is not present in the Nepalese Sanskrit texts, but is in the Dunhuang Khotanese (see Konow 1916, p. 312).

n.62 *mngon sum du lung ston pa mdzad*, which could also just mean “teach them in person.” The Nepalese Sanskrit has *darśanaṃ dāsyanti*, “appear before them.”

n.63 Degé has *ma za shig* here, as do the Dunhuang manuscripts, while Toh 675 has *ma byed cig*.

n.64 The Tibetan of the Degé (and all other Kangyurs except the Lithang and Choné) here has *mdo sde dkon mchog 'di*, “this precious sūtra,” while the Sanskrit and Khotanese, as in the other passages between the repeated *dhāraṇī*, has *aparimitāyuh sūtram*, “Aparimitāyus sūtra.” In Toh 675 (as well as for this version in the Lithang and Choné Kangyurs), the Tibetan reads simply *mdo sde 'di*, “this sūtra.”

n.65 The phrase “or caused to be written” is omitted in the Tibetan.

n.66 The phrase *sa prthivīpradeśaś 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.67 The Dunhuang manuscripts have *kar sha pa ni 'ga' zhig*, “a few *kārṣāpaṇa* coins.”
- n.68 According to the Tibetan *chos kyi rnam grangs*, which appears to have been translated from *dharmaparyāya*. One of the Nepalese Sanskrit versions reads “this Aparimitāyuh Sūtra” (Walleser 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.69 In Toh 675, this paragraph reads: “Those who make an offering to this Dharma discourse will comprehend the entirety of the good Dharma.”
- n.70 Toh 675 gives both Tibetan translations of Krakucchanda, appearing to add another buddha to the list because it adds an alternative translation for Krakucchanda, *'khor ba 'jig*, 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 *Mahāvīyuttpatti* has *log pa dad sel* for Krakucchanda, but this latter translation fell into disuse.
- n.71 Whereas this and the next two statements here in Toh 674 clearly refer to the merit related to the *Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra*, the equivalent phrases in Toh 675 (1.56–1.60 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-166>)) speak of the accumulation of merit “of” (or perhaps “relating to”) Aparimitāyurjñāna himself (i.e. the tathāgata, not the text): *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa'i bsod nams kyi phung po'i tshad ni bgrang bar mi nus so*. 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 and the Dunhuang texts all match Toh 674 in referring to the sūtra, not the tathāgata.
- n.72 Here in Toh 674, *rin po che'i phung po ri rab tsam spungs te sbyin pa byin pa*. In Toh 675, the wording is *ri'i rgyal po ri rab dang mnyam pa'i rin po che'i phung por byas te/sbyin pa byin pa*.

- n.73 This whole paragraph is absent in most of the complete Dunhuang manuscripts that we have seen.
- n.74 This version has *bsti stang du byas te*, while Toh 675 has *gus par byas te*. The Dunhuang manuscripts only have “causes to be written or makes offerings to.”
- n.75 One of the Nepalese Sanskrit versions (Walleser 1916, p. 25) introduces the following verses with the sentence, “Then at that time the Bhagavān spoke these verses:”.
- n.76 According to all three commentaries mentioned, “entering the city” (*grong khyer ’jug pa, pure praviśantaṁ*) 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.77 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.78 “Joyfully” (*dgyes shing*) seems anomalous here and is not usually a part of this traditional formula at the conclusion of sūtras. It may have been derived from *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 1.71 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh675.html#UT22084-091-073-190>), but is in some of the Dunhuang manuscripts.
- n.79 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.80 There is no translators’ colophon, although the version in the nineteenth-century Sakya compendium of sādhanas, the Druptap Küntü, has one; see introduction, i.27.

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་མྱེས་ཞབས་ངདབང་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 Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya

yon tan dpag tu med pa sog pa

ཡོན་ཏན་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་སོགས་པ།

Aparimitaguṇasaṃcaya

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

ཆེ་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*

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

· ཆེ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་ཤིན་ཏུ་རྣམ་པར་ངེས་པའི་གཟི་བརྗེད་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་ཇམ་པ།

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 Jonang Lotsāwa Lodrö Pal

jo nang lo tsA ba blo gros dpal

ཇོ་ནང་ལོ་ཙ་པ་བློ་གྲོ་ས་དཔལ།

—

A great fourteenth century (1299–1354) Jonangpa scholar of Sanskrit and translator, student of Dolpopa, who had earlier studied at Sangphu and Sakya. He is best known for his revised translations, made with Sabzang Mati Pañchen, of the *Kālacakrat Tantra* and *Vimalaprabhā*.

g.29 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.30 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.31 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.32 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 *Mahāvīryūtpatti* 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.33 Kunga Lekrin

kun dga' legs rin

ཀུན་དགའ་ལེགས་རིན།

—

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

g.34 Kunpang Chödrak Palzang

kun spangs chos grags dpal bzang

ཀུན་སྤངས་ཆོས་གྲགས་དཔལ་བཟང་།

—

A great fourteenth century Jonangpa scholar, practitioner, and translator (1283–1363), who had earlier studied at Sakya, with Butön at Zhalu, and with Tharpa Lotsāwa at Sangphu, before becoming the first major disciple of Dolpopa.

g.35 Mahāsattva

sems dpa' chen po

སེམས་དཔལ་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.36 Mañjuśrī

'jam dpal

འཇམ་དཔལ།

Mañjuśrī

See “Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta.”

g.37 **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 Mañjuśrī.”

g.38 **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.39 **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; Mrtyumāra (*'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.40 **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.41 **Minling Terchen**

smin gling gter chen

སློན་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.42 **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.43 **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.44 Paṇḍita
mkhas pa
མཁས་པ།
paṇḍita
An official title for a learned scholar in India.
- g.45 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.46 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.47 Perfection
pha rol tu phyin pa
ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ།
pāramitā
The six perfections of generosity, conduct, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom.
- g.48 Perfectly awakened buddha
yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas
ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས།
samyaksambuddha
A buddha who teaches the Dharma, as opposed to a pratyekabuddha.
- g.49 Rākṣasa
srin po
སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa

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

g.50 **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.51 **Sabzang Mati Paṇchen**

sa bzang ma ti paN chen blo gros rgyal mtshan

ས་བབ་མ་ཏི་པ་ཏེན་པཎ་ཅན་བློ་གྲོས་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

—

A great fourteenth century (1294–1376) Jonangpa scholar and translator, student of Dolpopa, who had earlier studied at Nyetang, Ralung, Sakya, and Zhalu. He is best known for his revised translations, made with Jonang Lotsāwa Lodrö Pal, of the *Kālacakrat Tantra* and *Vimalaprabhā*.

g.52 **Śākyamuni**

shA kya thub pa

ཤཱ་ཀྱ་ཐུབ་པ།

Śākyamuni

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

g.53 **Saṅgha**

dge 'dun

དགེ་འདུན།

saṅgha

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

g.54 **Seven jewels**

rin po che sna bdun

རིན་པོ་ཅེ་སྐད་བདུན་

ཟིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྒྲ་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.55 Śikhin

gtsug tor can

གཙུག་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.56 Śrāvastī

mnyan du yod pa

མཉམ་དུ་ཡོད་པ།

Śrāvastī

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

g.57 Stūpa

mchod rten

མཆོད་རྟེན།

caitya

Reliquary for the remains of a buddha or enlightened master.

g.58 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.59 Sumeru

ri rab

རི་རབ།

Sumeru

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

g.60 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.61 Tāranātha

tA ra nA tha

ཏཱ་ར་ནཱ་ཐ།

Tāranātha

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

g.62 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.63 Ten royal sūtras

rgyal po mdo bcu

རྒྱལ་པོ་མདོ་བཅུ།

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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) *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna* (*bzang spyod smon lam*, (Toh 44-45a) in chapter 45 of the *Avataṃsaka*); for aspiration (*smoṇ lam*), and described as vast (*rgya chen*). (2) *Vajravidāraṇādhāraṇī* (*rdo rje rnam 'joms*, Toh 750); for ablution (*khrus*). (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); for extending longevity (*tshe bsring*). (7) *gos sngon can gyi gzungs*, perhaps *Bhagavānnīlāmbaḍharavajrapāṇi-tantra* (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.64 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.65 Trisong Detsen

khri srong lde'u btsan

ཁྱི་སྟོང་ལྷེ་བཙན།

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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.66 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.67 Vipāśyin

rnam par gzig

རྣམ་པར་གླིང་མ།

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.68 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.69 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.70 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.71 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.72 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.

g.73 Yarlung Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyaltsen

yar klungs lo tsA ba grags pa rgyal mtshan

ཡར་ཁྲུང་ས་ལོ་ལྷ་བ་བླ་གཤམ་པ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

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The translator of a number of tantras in the Kangyur and commentarial works in the Tengyur, active in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (1242–1346), probably at Sakya.

