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The Prophecy on Mount Gośṛṅga

Gośṛṅgavyākaraṇa

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'phags pa glang ru lung bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “The Prophecy on Mount Gośṛṅga”

Āryagośṛṅgavyākaraṇanāmahāyānasūtra



Toh 357
Degé Kangyur, vol. 76 (mdo sde, aH), folios 220.b–232.a.

Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

First published 2021
Current version v 1.0.13 (2021)
Generated by 84000 Reading Room v2.5.2

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SUMMARY

- s.1 In this scripture the Buddha Śākyamuni travels miraculously from Rājagṛha with a large retinue of bodhisattvas, hearers, gods, and other beings to the Central Asian region of Khotan, which in this discourse has not yet been established as a kingdom but is covered by a great lake. Once there, the Buddha foretells how this will be the site of a future land called Virtue, which will contain a blessed stūpa called Gomasalaganda. The Buddha proceeds to explain to his retinue the excellent qualities of this land, foretelling many future events, and instructing his disciples how to guard and protect the land for the sake of beings at that time. At the end of his teaching, the Buddha asks the hearer Śāriputra and the divine king Vaiśravaṇa to drain the lake, thus diverting the water and rendering the land ready for future habitation.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the guidance of Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche. The translation was produced by Laura Dainty. Andreas Doctor compared the translation with the original Tibetan and edited the text. The introduction was written by Andreas Doctor and the 84000 editorial team.

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

i.1

*The Prophecy on Mount Gośṛṅga*¹ is an account of the Buddha Śākyamuni visiting the ancient Central Asian oasis state of Khotan, and prophesying its future as a Buddhist kingdom. It is one of a number of canonical texts in the form of prophecies that furnish Khotan with its Buddhist founding mythology. While other texts (detailed below) relate how the Buddha prophesied key figures in Khotan's founding, rule, and protection, this sūtra provides an account of how the Buddha also established and blessed the landscape itself and other physical features of the country.

The Narrative

i.2

Together with a large retinue of bodhisattvas, hearers, gods, and other beings, the Buddha travels miraculously through the sky from Rājagṛha in India to Khotan, which in this discourse has not yet been established as a country and at the outset remains covered by a giant lake. Once there, the Buddha visits the lakeshore and the nearby Mount Gośṛṅga. Gośṛṅga means "cow horn" in Sanskrit and the hill is said to have received this name due to having two pointed peaks. From the top of Mount Gośṛṅga the Buddha foretells how this will be the site of a future Buddhist land called Virtue, which will contain a stūpa known as Gomasalaganda and a range of other sacred temples and monuments. The Buddha continues to explain to his retinue the excellent qualities of this land, foretelling many future events, and instructing his disciples how to guard and protect the land for the sake of beings at that time. At the end of the discourse, the Buddha instructs the great hearer Śāriputra and the divine king Vaiśravaṇa to drain the lake's water by using their miraculous powers to crush one of the surrounding mountains, thus diverting the water and rendering the land ready for future inhabitants.

Khotan and Tibet

- i.3 The once great city-state of Khotan, called *li yul* in Tibetan,² is today called Hotan (or Hetian) and is located in China's Xinjiang province. An oasis kingdom on the southwest edge of the vast Taklamakhan desert that fills the Tarim Basin, Khotan lies to the north of the Kunlun mountain range, which divides it from present-day Ladakh to the southwest and from Western Tibet to the southeast. It was an important trade center on the southern branch of the Silk Route, which from Kashgar followed the southern side of the desert through Khotan and Shanshan to Lop Nor and Dunhuang. From the time of the emperor Aśoka onwards³ Khotan became an outpost of Indian culture and gradually, during the first millennium CE, a place where Chinese merchants, monks, and scholars encountered Indian Buddhist doctrine, practices, and texts. It therefore had an important role in the transmission of Buddhism to China and the rest of east Asia.
- i.4 Tibetans, too, may have encountered some aspects of the Indian Buddhist traditions in Khotan. Khotan was invaded by the Tibetans around the mid-seventh century CE at a time when, during the reigns of Songtsen Gampo and his successors, Tibetan political and military power were expanding. Khotanese accounts of the time saw the arrival of the Tibetans as destructive of Buddhist institutions there, and although the Tibetan court had recently begun to adopt Buddhist culture it is likely that its influence had not yet reached the far-flung army commanders. However, soon afterwards it appears that Tibetan occupation had proved relatively benign to Khotan's Buddhists, and for the next three centuries while Khotan was twice subject to Tibetan administration⁴ the cultural ties between Tibet and Khotan grew stronger.⁵ Indeed, some scholars attribute considerable importance to Khotan in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. Khotanese monks seem to have been welcomed in Tibet in the early eighth century by the Chinese queen of Tridé Tsukten, father of Trisong Deutsen, and for several centuries even after the collapse of the Tibetan imperial power in the mid-ninth century Tibetan and Khotanese monks and scholars were in frequent contact in Dunhuang and other cultural centers in Central Asia.⁶

The Sūtra in Khotanese and Tibetan Literature

- i.5 A considerable range of Buddhist literature in Khotanese, mostly Mahāyāna texts and many represented only by fragmentary manuscripts, has been identified. Khotanese was a Middle Iranian form of the Indo-European language family that developed from the vernacular of the region and, written in Brāhmī script, was used in Khotan for Buddhist texts from the sixth century CE onward.⁷ Many such texts must have circulated in Tibet as

Buddhism took root there, alongside texts in other Central Asian languages, Chinese, and increasingly—as the great imperial period of translations gathered pace—in Sanskrit.

i.6 The text must have been first translated into Tibetan no later than the early ninth century, since it is recorded in the *Denkarma*⁸ and *Phangthangma*⁹ inventories of Tibetan imperial translations. The sūtra may possibly have been known to the Chinese monk Xuanzang (600–664 CE), who referenced the legends contained in this text and associated works when writing about his travels through Khotan, which he visited in the first half of the seventh century.¹⁰ Interestingly, however, while the sūtra describes Khotan as a contested wilderness region sought after by various foreign powers, it foretells a time when the area will gain peace, prosperity, and protection under the governance of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist kingdoms. At the time of Xuanzang’s visit, not very long before the first Tibetan invasion of the country, it is unlikely that any Tibetan governance would have been foreseen as either Buddhist or benevolent. If the sūtra itself existed in some earlier form during the first half of the seventh century when the Buddhist rulers of Khotan were clinging to power in the face of rising threats from neighboring foreign powers, including Tibet and China, it is likely to have been adapted later to cast Tibet in a more favorable light. Any dating must therefore remain speculative in the absence of corroborating evidence.

i.7 Apart from the Tibetan translation and its presumed Khotanese source text, now lost, the sūtra is not known to exist in any other Asian language. It has no colophon to aid in determining who translated it and from what language. However, given both its content and Xuanzang’s testimony, it seems reasonable to assume that it came to Tibet from Khotan, and indeed Chomden Rikpai Raltri, the great thirteenth century scholar of Narthang who was instrumental in producing the first prototype Kangyur, includes it in a list of twenty canonical works that he believed (with doubt in a few cases) to have been translated into Tibetan from Khotanese.¹¹

i.8 Among these texts with a linguistic link to Khotan, a smaller number are works whose content also focuses on Khotan. Included among them is this sūtra, as well as *The Questions of Vimalaprabhā* (*Vimalaprabhāparipṛcchā*, Toh 168), which prophetically establishes the cast of characters who will play an important role in Khotan’s history and links them to the Buddha’s lifetime in India. The princess Vimalaprabhā, bodhisattva daughter of King Ajātaśatru of Magadha, receives a detailed prophecy of her future lives as a series of important and powerful female figures in Khotan, and especially one life as the formidable lady Rabngé—sister of the king of one neighboring country, widow of the king of another, Buddhist nun, and protectress of Khotan. Also related to Khotan are two texts found in the epistles section of the Tengyur:

The Prophecy of the Arhat Saṅghavardhana (*Arhatsaṅghavardhanavyākaraṇa*, Toh 4201) relates the future expulsion of Buddhist monks from Khotan and the difficulties they will encounter as they travel through Tibet to India, while *The Prophecy Concerning the Land of Khotan* (*li'i yul lung bstan pa*, Toh 4202) also relates Saṅghavardhana's prophecy and then goes on to provide versions of the Buddha's prophecies to Vimalaprabhā, Vaiśravaṇa, and others, and of his visit to Khotan as recounted in the present text, before detailing a long historical account of the country, its rulers, and its people.¹² Its title, confusingly but understandably, has sometimes been used to refer to the present text in the Tibetan literature.

- i.9 The sūtra itself, and to a greater degree these other texts associated with it, are part of a wider group of texts that focus on the spread, duration, and eventual decline of the Buddha's teachings, and have sometimes been termed "prophecies of decline" or "prophetic histories."¹³ Many of them include the term "prophecy" (*vyākaraṇa*) in their title, but unlike the majority of "prophecy" sūtras in which an individual's future awakening to buddhahood in another realm is proclaimed, the prophecies in this group of texts are concerned with broader events in this world, may contain warnings and advice on how to avoid the most negative outcomes, and recount events that may range from the mythical to the historical. Curiously, mentions of Khotan feature in texts of this genre more frequently than might be expected from its relatively modest historical profile, and the Khotan texts make up a substantial portion of the group, suggesting that the theme may have been especially popular in Central Asia. One example of the genre that references Khotan but was probably not translated from a Khotanese source is the *Sūryagarbha-mahāvaiṣṭhīpūṣṭasūtra* (Toh 257), which briefly tells the story of the Gomasalaganda stūpa that is also found in the sūtra translated here.¹⁴

The Text Interpreted as Applying to Nepal

- i.10 One of the themes central to this text, of a lake being miraculously drained to open a valley to habitation, is a recurrent legend common to several geographical locations, including Kashmir as related in the Purāṇas,¹⁵ places in Tibet, and in particular the Kathmandu valley. The legend as applied to the Kathmandu valley may well have several other sources, but a tendency among some Tibetan scholars specifically to locate this text in Nepal rather than Khotan appears to have contributed significantly to the corresponding mythology of the Kathmandu valley, as related in the much more recent Nepalese *Svayambhūpurāṇa* and *Vaṃśāvalī*, leading to a widespread belief in

both Tibet and Nepal that the land described in this sūtra was—or at least could also be—Nepal, and that Gośṛṅga was the hill at the western edge of the Kathmandu Valley on which the famous Svayambhū stūpa rests.¹⁶

- i.11 This mistaken location of the narrative seems to have been due to a lack of complete consensus among Tibetan authors as to what country the name Liyul (*li yul*, the usual Tibetan name for Khotan) actually refers.¹⁷ Evidence that some early Tibetan authors applied the name Liyul to Nepal can be inferred from specific refutations of that notion by early figures like Drolungpa, Sakya Paṇḍita, Chomden Rikpai Raltri,¹⁸ and Rendawa. Confirmation that it nevertheless persisted into the twentieth century can be seen in the writings of the renowned Tibetan traveler and scholar Gendun Chopel (1903–51), who felt the need to point out to his countrymen that this identification is not correct and that the features of the country, as described in this sūtra and the texts related to it, refer to Khotan.¹⁹

Western Interest in Khotan and its Literature

- i.12 The first scholar in the West to take an interest in Khotan seems to have been the nineteenth century French Sinologist, Abel Rémusat, who in 1820 published a study of Chinese texts about Khotan. W. Woodville Rockhill drew attention to the Tibetan texts on Khotan in his *Life of the Buddha*, published in 1884, while Édouard Chavannes and Sylvain Lévi published articles mentioning Khotanese texts in 1903 and 1905.
- i.13 A few years earlier, in 1900, Sir Auriel Stein, the great explorer of Central Asia, set out for Chinese Turkestan after learning of discoveries of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts in Kuchā and Khotan through the writings of Émile Senart and Rudolf Hoernle. In 1907, Stein published a full account of his archaeological findings together with a wealth of geographical, historical, and linguistic observations, identifying and describing the sacred geography and architecture mentioned in this sūtra.²⁰
- i.14 Stein's initial work on the Tibetan texts was subsequently developed further by Frederick Thomas, culminating in the publication in 1935 of complete English translations of this text and of the other closely associated texts mentioned above, *The Questions of Vimalaprabhā* (Toh 168), *The Prophecy of the Arhat Saṅghavardhana* (Toh 4201) and *The Prophecy Concerning the Land of Khotan* (Toh 4202), along with extracts from some other related works.²¹
- i.15 More recently, in 1967, Ronald Emmerick published translations of the two parts of *The Prophecy Concerning the Land of Khotan* (Toh 4202). He also published translations of other Khotanese works and a guide to Khotanese literature. A useful article by Sam van Schaik published in 2016 summarizes

published studies on Khotanese literature in general and on Khotanese works discovered at Dunhuang, including studies by Karashima, Kumamoto, Skjaervø, van Schaik, and Zhang and Rong.

- i.16 This English translation was prepared based on the Tibetan translation in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Comparative Edition (Tib. *dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur.

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra

The Prophecy on Mount Gośṛṅga

1.

The Translation

[F.220.b] [B1]

1.1 Homage to the blessed Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Buddha Śākyamuni, the god of gods who had attained perfect awakening through the ripening of merit accumulated over three countless eons and then brought disciples throughout the various regions of Jambudvīpa to maturity, [F.221.a] was residing in Rājagṛha, at the place of the mighty great sages,²² in the direction of the Vaiśālī region.²³ He was there together with a great retinue of many bodhisattvas, such as the bodhisattva great being noble Maitreya; one thousand two hundred and fifty great hearers, such as the elders Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana; many gods such as Brahmā and Śakra; many world protectors such as the divine king Vaiśravaṇa; many great nāga kings; many mighty yakṣas; many gandharvas, such as the gandharva king Pañcaśikha; many kinnaras such as the kinnara king Delightful; and many human kings of the Jambudvīpa continent, such as King Bimbisāra.

1.2 At that moment, the Buddha Śākyamuni, the god of gods, had a premonition and foresaw the future of a land called Virtue,²⁴ and thus he said to his vast retinue, “Noble children, in the north on the shore of River Goma, near Mount Gośṛṅga, is the palace of the mighty great sages—a stūpa called Gomasalaganda. There are deeds that must, without doubt, be performed there. Now the time to travel there has come.”

1.3 The Blessed Buddha, the god of gods, together with most of his retinue then rose up into the sky. The gandharva king Pañcaśikha and countless other gandharvas played many divine instruments in front, and the kinnara king Delightful and many other kinnaras made offerings from above as the Blessed Buddha was praised in enchanting tunes and divine voices. In the midst of that retinue and their homage he proceeded to Mount Gośṛṅga. Having arrived there, the Blessed Buddha, the god of gods, stood facing

north and gazed for a long time at the large ocean-like lake. [F.221.b] With his body upright, he immersed himself in many billions of meditative absorptions of the thus-gone ones. After three countless eons, he had²⁵ actualized the conduct, aspirations, and merit of a buddha. Right then, the Blessed Buddha, the god of gods, blessed Mount Gośṛṅga, the land of Virtue, and everything else from the golden base all the way up to the peak of existence. He granted it protection, purified it, established auspiciousness, secured its boundaries, engaged in recitation,²⁶ and performed virtue.

1.4 The Blessed Buddha, the god of gods, then announced to the entire retinue, “Mount Gośṛṅga, along with the Gomasalaganda stūpa—the palace of the blessed ones—and this land of Virtue constitute insignia, distinctions, hallmarks, and distinctive features of all the blessed buddhas of the excellent eon. It is for that reason that this land is called Virtue.”

1.5 The Blessed Buddha, the god of gods, next prophesied the coming of all the meritorious and virtue-performing kings, the faithful ones endowed with the Dharma, the patrons, and all the people of Khotan yet to appear in the land of Virtue, Virtuous Castle, as well as the individual saṅgha enclaves, temples, and hermitages.

1.6 At this point, the Blessed One told the bodhisattvas, “Noble children, you must also by all means bless this place so that, in the future, beings here may swiftly attain the utterly sublime and so that they will accomplish meditative absorption.”

1.7 Having said these words, the Blessed One retreated slightly from the lake shore. Immediately he was seated cross-legged upon a throne arranged at the peak of Mount Gośṛṅga. Facing west, he looked toward the Gomasalaganda stūpa, the palace of the blessed ones. [F.222.a] At that moment, twenty thousand bodhisattvas from other world systems and many sages endowed with the five superknowledges arrived together before the Blessed One. Having arrived, they prostrated to the Gomasalaganda stūpa, the palace of the blessed ones, and went there to take refuge. They also prostrated and went for refuge to the Blessed Buddha and his retinue, and then stood together to one side.

1.8 At that moment the Blessed Buddha was aware that the majority of the retinue had gathered, so he addressed the retinue: “Previously in this excellent eon four blessed ones appeared and they too blessed this Gomasalaganda stūpa as well as this country. In the future, during this excellent eon, one thousand and one buddhas will appear, and they too will all come here with their retinues and bless this Gomasalaganda stūpa and this country. They will secure its boundaries and establish auspiciousness and virtue. Now the time has come for me too to bless it, so I will do so.”

1.9

The Blessed Buddha, the god of gods, now rested in the meditative absorption called *the presence of present buddhas* and countless other absorptions of the thus-gone ones. At that time, the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmprāpta, nurturer of those who are resting in absorption and engaged in the concentrations, sat in front of the Buddha Kāśyapa's stūpa. He blessed that area so that in the future people would construct an image of him in that region. Likewise, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, who engages in vast aspirations, blessed the ground on Mount Gośṛṅga where a temple called Relinquishing was to appear, so that all those who come to that place could fulfill their aims. [F.222.b] Likewise, the bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha, who has strength that is as immeasurable as space, blessed the area where a temple called Relinquishing the Personality was to appear, so that it could become a place of worship. Likewise, the bodhisattva noble Avalokiteśvara, who is endowed with great compassion, blessed the ground where a temple called Radiant was to appear, so that the attainments could be accomplished there. Likewise, the bodhisattva Maitreya, who is endowed with constant love, blessed the ground where a temple called Visimonya was to appear, so that he could reside there. Likewise, the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, who has impeccable conduct, blessed the ground where a temple called Wisdom Mountain was to appear, so that that place would be worthy of homage. Likewise, the bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja, who possesses an unlimited ability to liberate beings to be trained, blessed the ground where a temple called Vanoco was to appear, so that the attainments could be accomplished there. Likewise, the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, who possesses great miraculous powers, blessed the ground where a temple called Sustaining the Saṅgha was to appear, so that the attainments could be accomplished there.

1.10 In this way, the Blessed Buddha, the other bodhisattvas, and all of the great worthy ones blessed the ground for all the temples, parks, and hermitages that were to appear throughout the land of Khotan so that they would be as beautiful, delightful, prosperous, and enchanting as the full moon encircled by the constellations of stars, orbiting through a clear sky. [F.223.a]

1.11 While the Blessed Buddha was present at Mount Gośṛṅga, all the bodhisattva great beings and the great worthy ones projected an array of light rays that illuminated the entire land of Khotan. At that very moment, three hundred and fifty-three lotuses emerged from the vast lake there. Inside each of these lotuses appeared the bodies of buddhas and bodhisattvas glowing with light. At that moment, the gods, seeing these signs—signs the likes of which they had never seen before—inquired of the Blessed Buddha as to their meaning.

1.12

The Blessed One replied, “Noble children, the appearance of these three hundred and fifty-three lotuses containing the bodies of the buddhas and bodhisattvas is a portent that in the future, when this land manifests, there will appear here, equal in number to these lotuses, hermitages and temples where the gong will be struck. This is a portent that in all of these places—the places where the land has been blessed by bodhisattva great beings, great hearers, and the array of projected light rays, and where I have blessed the Gomasalaganda stūpa, the palace of the thus-gone ones, and this land of Virtue—faithful patrons will all fashion images of the Buddha and others, and that whoever arrives in these places will accomplish all their wishes.”

1.13 At this point, the gods rose from their seats and asked the Blessed One, “Respected Blessed One, at what point in time will this land appear? Who will be its founders? [F.223.b] Esteemed Blessed One, it is now a wilderness with an abundance of water, so who will be the founders, and how?”

1.14 The Blessed One replied, “Noble children, listen. One hundred years after my nirvāṇa, there will appear in China a king called Cayang, who will have a thousand sons. He will order each of his sons to search for a piece of virgin land. Later on, he will hear that in the west there is a hill called Gośṛṅga and a land containing the Gomasalaganda stūpa, the palace of the thus-gone ones, which have been blessed by many thus-gone ones. Hearing this, he will think, ‘Oh, if only I had another son, I would send him to cultivate that land, which has been blessed by so many buddhas.’ At that time, that Chinese king will request Vaiśravaṇa to grant him a son. But Vaiśravaṇa will grant him a son of King Aśoka, here in Jambudvīpa.²⁷ This boy will have an excellent body, a beautiful appearance, and he will be a delight to the eyes. For this boy, a breast will appear from the ground and, through the strength of his previous merits and roots of virtue, he will suckle this breast. As a result, he will become known by the name Suckler of the Earth Breast. He will mature quickly, and his father, the Chinese king, will confer royal power upon him, bestow upon him a mass of wealth, and assign most of the ministers as his servants. The prince Suckler of the Earth Breast, together with a senior minister called Jangsho and many soldiers, will then leave China and come to this land. Arriving here, they will cultivate the land and, in order to found the country, Prince Suckler of the Earth Breast will name the place Land of Suckler of the Earth Breast.²⁸

1.15 “At that time, many Indian people will travel here from the west and request to become subjects of King Suckler of the Earth Breast. Thus, that single kingdom will contain various people. [F.224.a] The Chinese senior minister Jangsho, together with others, will then gradually found both Chinese and Indian villages, towns, and markets. In that way, King Suckler of the Earth Breast and his descendants will rule over these lands for many

generations. Each of these kings will, in turn, build hermitages and temples and offer them irrigation water, subjects, and counsel. Some of them will even take ordination themselves. Some of them will have their sons and daughters take ordination. Some of them will allow countless numbers of their subjects to take ordination. In this land, there will appear many people with the nature of bodhisattvas, who will constantly gather roots of virtue and engage in meritorious deeds based on the Three Jewels. In this way, King Suckler of the Earth Breast will establish this land.

1.16 “Each time a buddha appears, this land will appear and flourish. Why is it that, while other lands deteriorate and then remain empty and desolate for a long time, the land Virtue is adorned and beautified by people each time a buddha appears? It is because this land is the dwelling place of the saintly great sage, the domain of the thus-gone ones, the locale of the Gomasalaganda stūpa, which is near Mount Gośṛṅga and on the banks of the River Goma. This stūpa is called Gomasalaganda in the sūtras. In ordinary parlance, however, it is called ‘On the Bank of River Goma.’ Thus, for as long as that stūpa called On the Bank of River Goma, as well as Kāśyapa’s stūpa, flourish and are sites of worship, the land of Virtue will also flourish and prosper. Whenever these two stūpas fall into decline, this land will also fall into decline and become empty.”

1.17 Having heard the Blessed One’s explanation, the retinue of gods gathered there [F.224.b] gained great faith and veneration for the Gomasalaganda stūpa and Mount Gośṛṅga. They bowed down to the Blessed Buddha and went to him to take refuge. Then, in the Blessed One’s presence they made this aspiration: “At that time, may we take birth in that land within eminent families and guard the Well-Gone One’s teaching so that the righteous laws of the land never weaken!”

1.18 At that moment the Blessed One addressed the divine king Vaiśravaṇa, the bodhisattva great being Perceptive, the god of gods Ajita, the nāga king Gṛhadāha, the god Song of the Sky, the god Golden Garland, the goddess Hook Bearer, and the goddess Stable: “Noble children, I entrust to you the Gomasalaganda stūpa, Mount Gośṛṅga and its land, together with my teachings and my offspring. Be sure to guard them, protect them, nurture them, and pay homage to them! I entrust to you the monarchs of this land, the governing ministers, and all the patrons who act in accord with the Dharma. Protect them accordingly! I also entrust to you this discourse that describes Mount Gośṛṅga, so you must propagate and spread it! If at some point this land is endangered and ravaged by fire, water, or foreign armies, if you read this discourse, or recite it, pay homage to it, reflect upon it, and meditate upon it, the destructive forces afflicting this land will be pacified.

1.19

“In the future, due to the ripening of sentient beings’ former actions, the Sumpa and Tibetan people will come to this land. At that time, you must propound this discourse, for when they hear this discourse, then through its inherent power and the blessings of the gods, those faithless people will [F.225.a] not devastate the land but rather feel remorse. In the future, the Chinese will also come to this land. At that time, you must propound this discourse, for upon hearing it, they will give rise to faith, and through the strength of their faith, they will not inflict any harm on this land. Rather, they will grant it protection and engage in meritorious deeds. This being so, this discourse will be of benefit for this land. There are so many other benefits of this discourse, but it is not possible to mention them all in a short time. Therefore, I entrust this discourse to you.”

1.20 Vaiśravaṇa and the other gods, the nāga king, and the goddesses together with their retinues stood up. They kneeled down before the Blessed One and with their palms joined, exclaimed, “Respected Blessed One, we place the Blessed One’s commandment on the crown of our heads!” They then continued, “Just as the Teacher, the Blessed One, has instructed, we will guard the Gomasalaganda stūpa, Mount Gośṛṅga, and its land. We will guard the Well-Gone One’s teaching, the monarchs who act in accord with the Dharma, those who have gone forth, governors who act in accord with the Dharma, patrons who act in accord with the Dharma, and all those engaged in meritorious deeds. Blessed One, for as long as the Three Jewels are venerated in this land and for as long as the governors rule the land in accord with the Dharma and do not protect those who act in ways contrary to the Dharma, we will be able to guard this land. To ensure that this discourse may remain in the land of Khotan for a long time, we will make sure that the kings and ministers in the border regions surrounding Khotan hear that the Blessed One has taught this discourse at Mount Gośṛṅga for the benefit of the land of Khotan. We will make sure that they receive it in their hands and that their minds are transformed. [F.225.b]

1.21 “Blessed One, when the Three Jewels are no longer venerated in this land and when those who act in ways contrary to the Dharma are protected here, our splendor and might will decline so that we are no longer able to guard this land. Why? Because our might and splendor grow from the Well-Gone One’s teaching, from the land being correctly governed in accord with the Dharma, and from the roots of virtue engendered through meritorious deeds.”

1.22 Right then, the Blessed Buddha rose from his seat and from the edge of the peak of Mount Gośṛṅga he gazed toward the Gomasalaganda stūpa. Repeatedly—twice, thrice—he blessed the Gomasalaganda stūpa, the domain of the thus-gone ones, as well as Mount Gośṛṅga and the whole

region. He thus suffused the entire land of Khotan and all the countless beings dwelling in the lake there with light rays and great compassion. The light rays and his great compassion quelled all the sufferings of those beings dwelling in the water, freed them from anger and resentment, imbued them with loving kindness, and endowed them with the happiness of the gods. In that very instant, an uncountable number of those beings changed lives and were reborn as gods and humans. They acquired the seed for awakening, and their progress toward awakening became irreversible.

1.23 The Blessed One then called out to the gods three times and addressed them thus: “Noble children, these pledges of yours will not be fulfilled without perseverance. Noble children, I entrust to you this teaching of mine for which I underwent hardships for three countless eons. I also entrust to you the Gomasalaganda stūpa and its land. Guard them closely. [F.226.a] All of you, in whatever you do, should recall me, retain and protect the teachings, and thereby closely guard all those who have taken ordination under this teaching. Why, you may wonder? Some householders might gather roots of virtue and create vast amounts of merit each day for a hundred years, yet this would not amount to even one percent of the merit of someone who abides by the teachings for just a single day after going forth. Why is that? Because all of the buddhas, who are equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, have first given up their life as householders and gone forth, and attained awakening through that lifestyle.

1.24 “I too—having completed the six perfections, attained the tenth level, and entered my last life in cyclic existence—left the royal compound at midnight and went to the forest. From the forest I sent my mount to my father, the king. I then cut off my hair with my sword and gave hunters my fine, priceless clothes in exchange for saffron-colored Dharma robes. Donning those Dharma robes, I paid homage to all the buddhas of the three times, went to them for refuge, and then assumed the lifestyle of one who has gone forth. All of the gods then paid homage to me,²⁹ went to me for refuge, and followed my lead. Thus, I too attained perfect awakening through that lifestyle. For this reason, understand that the Well-Gone One’s teaching is sublime. Understand that to go forth is to possess merit. In this world it has never been seen or heard that someone with the trappings of a householder attained the states of a worthy one, a self-realized buddha, or unsurpassable awakening; such states are only attained by going forth. The sublime lifestyle of one who has gone forth is an object of veneration by all the gods and others in this world.”

1.25 All of the gods and goddesses now rose from their seats and pledged to the Blessed Buddha in unison, [F.226.b] “Respected Blessed One, we will do as the Blessed One has instructed. We will not intentionally transgress your

instructions. Here in this land we will fully guard, nurture, and uphold the Buddha's teaching and the stūpa that is the domain of the thus-gone ones. Blessed One, please endow us with strength! Why? Because in the future age of conflict, many enemies, faithless people, and adversaries who have yet to gain the special quality of faith in the Well-Gone One's teaching will come to this blessed land and persistently attempt to destroy the teaching."

1.26 The Blessed One then expressed his approval to the gods, saying, "Sublime beings, excellent! Excellent! I have blessed this land and due to those blessings its boundaries have been secured. In the future age of conflict, great armies of the Sumpa people, different clans of Drugu people, people from Hor, and other faithless people will come to destroy this land. At that time, blessed images of thus-gone ones will arrive here from other lands and they will guard the land's borders. Through the strength of that merit, this land will never be completely destroyed. Many bodhisattvas, gods, and mighty nāgas will follow these images and they will help avert harm in many regions. Enemies will be unable to destroy the land. From Blissful Castle an image of the thus-gone Source of Bliss will appear. It will then reside at Koshé Castle³⁰ and thereby guard the borders of the land. [F.227.a] In the northern lands, an image called Shenazha of the thus-gone Shenazha will emerge from underground and guard the land's borders. An image of the Thus-Gone One, called Kiulang, will appear and reside in the eastern region at Sand Castle and guard the land's borders. An image of the Thus-Gone One, called Chisé, will appear and remain in front of Kāśyapa's stūpa on Mount Gośṛṅga in the north. It will generate roots of virtue for the monks living in hermitages there and will guard the Thus-Gone One's teaching and the land's borders. In Virtuous Castle, an image of the Thus-Gone One, called Abiding in the Royal Palace, will remain in the Kasadzé market and guard Virtuous Castle and the borders of its land. King Yola will discuss plans to build a castle on the land called Nyomonya. There, an image of the Thus-Gone One, called Chugönpana, will abide and guard Virtuous Castle and the borders of its land.

1.27 "In Dinadzya Temple a cast image³¹ of the thus-gone Dīpaṅkara will arrive. This image will be the first cast image made in Jambudvīpa. People will name this image 'the circulating Dīpaṅkara.' It will become an example for all other cast images made throughout Khotan and it will guard the Well-Gone One's teaching and the land. Moreover, an image of the thus-gone Prabhūtaratna will come to the center of the land and secure the boundaries in all ten directions [F.227.b] and are venerated, this land will not be destroyed. If the people born in this land, or people from other lands feel heartfelt faith and devotion for these images of the thus-gone ones, feel

deeply inspired by them, and think, “These images of the thus-gone ones have come here to guard this land,” the images will benefit them as if they were the Buddha in person. Why? Because these images are blessed by me and by all the buddhas of the three times.

1.28 “Furthermore, a large image of me will be brought to this land by chariot. It will be installed in Virtuous Castle and be taken as a major object of veneration. As a result, wealthy merchants from other lands in all directions will come here and all negative forces will be pacified. Two hundred and eight images of the thus-gone ones, together with the Kāśyapa stūpa, will appear in this land. Each of them will display great miracles, purify the grave misdeeds of sentient beings, and dispel negative forces.

1.29 “If it so happens that some negative forces and causes of fear and terror do appear in this land, people should resort to the five regions for the sake of the country. If the king, or the ministers and governors of the land wish to create merit through the Well-Gone One’s teachings in order to free the land from fear, they should create merit at Tsarma Temple. Why? Because the faith and correct view of the people of this land are born in that temple. If at some point the king, or the ministers and governors of Khotan are faced with many kinds of negative forces, they should circumambulate Mount Gośṛṅga—that place where in the past the perfect buddhas were seated. [F.228.a] If the people of this land wish to purify their negative karma, they should make confessions before the Gomasalaganda stūpa. Why? Because this stūpa is like the buddha in person; whoever circumambulates it, or venerates it with flowers, incense, song, or music can diminish even the five inexpressible deeds, not to mention other negative acts. If the king, ministers, and governors of this land wish to take a vow of great discipline, they should take such a vow from the saṅgha³² at Mount Gośṛṅga, where the Thus-Gone One’s image called Chisé³³ and the Kāśyapa stūpa are. Why? Because in this land, perfect Dharma conduct³⁴ and impeccable discipline will arise there. If some people in this land find themselves facing grave privation,³⁵ they should go for refuge to the noble saṅgha living at Mount Gośṛṅga. Thereby they will be freed from their privation. Why? Because many thousands of people will gain liberation in that locale and it will remain until the end of time and not disappear. For these reasons, Mount Gośṛṅga, the Gomasalaganda stūpa, and its land are the site where the thus-gone ones assemble.”³⁶

1.30 At that moment, twenty thousand bodhisattvas arrived from the buddha realms in the ten directions. They bowed toward the Blessed One with palms joined, and in a single voice said, “Blessed One, we too will sustain and guard this land and the Thus-Gone One’s domain of activities³⁷ here in a variety of ways. For as long as the Well-Gone One’s teachings and the Three

Jewels remain, and for as long as the kings, ministers, and others maintain discipline, have faith, and rule the land in accord with the Dharma, we will not forsake this land. [F.228.b] We will continue to come here and, assuming whatever behavior and attire may be appropriate, we will fully ripen vast merit in a great number of beings, generate within them the wish to attain buddhahood, help them rest in concentration and absorption, and establish them irreversibly in buddhahood. In order to take these kinds of rebirth, some will take birth in the royal line, some will take ordination, while still others will assume the attire of householders.”

1.31 The Blessed One replied, “Noble children, excellent! Excellent! Noble children, may you gain the strength to do this—to ensure that all sentient beings within this land, the domain of all the buddhas of the Excellent Eon, proceed irreversibly to buddhahood!”

1.32 The gods Vaiśravaṇa and Ajita, together with all of the other gods present, then said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, please imbue these bodhisattva great beings with strength so that they may guard this land. Blessed One, through your blessings and power we too will guard the thus-gone ones’ domain and this land that has been blessed. We will not let it disappear. We will exert ourselves in this with great perseverance. If wild people, such as the faithless Drugu, or if armies from Hor and Sumpa come here, we will cause infighting between them, incite discord within their own troops, and make them perish. Alternatively, to ensure that they do not come here under any circumstances, so that they are unable to destroy the Thus-Gone One’s teachings, we will cause them to fall under the control of others. If Chinese armies come here, we will inspire them with faith, and ensure that they bring benefit to this land and in the future create great virtue through performing meritorious deeds here. [F.229.a] When at some point they inflict harm upon the beings of this land, we will once more engender faith in them and ensure that they comprehend this discourse. When in the future they seek control over the objects of the Three Jewels, seize power, and cause harm to meritorious beings, at that time we will empower and dispatch many of the yakṣas in our retinue—those who have faith as well as some who lack faith—to ensure that prolonged decline occurs in that country, and that they experience famine, disease, and attacks from foreign armies that make them unable to destroy this land. Even if they should plunder any wealth from the land of Khotan, we shall ensure that it brings them bad luck. Whichever country they visit, we will ensure that they are met not with hospitality but with rebellion. We will ensure that their governors and military leaders face decline. It should be known that it will be the same for the Tibetan army. When the land is ruled and protected in harmony with the Dharma, we will nurture it and make it victorious. However, when the Well-Gone One’s

teaching is destroyed and the people of the land are harmed, we will ensure that the army will be riven by internal strife and that the military leaders will suffer a great decline.³⁸ As for the details, it will occur just as already explained.

1.33 “In the future, there will be some kings and ministers of this land who will be full of deceit. They will have little merit and no faith. They will lust insatiably³⁹ after the property of the Three Jewels. They will contravene the rules of the country. They will pursue grandeur without paying attention to their wealth, and they will oppose those with merit by discrediting them. They will be shameless, flawed, and insatiable when it comes to sensual pleasures. They will feel offended by those who have gone forth. When these things happen [F.229.b] we will drive them out from this land and expel them to other inferior lands. In these ways, we will sustain and guard this land.

1.34 “Blessed One, in the future, during the age of conflict, there will appear demonic beings who will seek to destroy this land. These evildoers will be powerful. They will cause beings throughout the lands to lose their faith. There will be many of them—gods, nāgas, yakṣas, and rākṣasas—all with wicked and savage minds. If we are unable to bring these beings under our control, to what means should we turn?”

1.35 “Noble children,” the Blessed One replied, “do not be disheartened. Why not? In this world of the four continents there live many bodhisattvas, mighty gods, nāgas, and yakṣas who have attained the levels. Make elaborate offerings to them with a gentle state of mind, and at blessed places, such as the Gomasalaganda stūpa and the Tsarma Temple, you should resound a great number of the extensive Great Vehicle discourses, such as the *Perfection of Wisdom*, the *Great Assembly*, the *Ornaments of the Buddhas*, and the *Heap of Jewels*. Bodhisattvas on the ten levels—such beings with power and might— from other lands will then come to this land. Here they will let beings savor the taste of the Dharma and ensure they do not transgress the commitments of the thus-gone ones of the three times. They will guard the domain and the land of the buddhas of the Excellent Eon. They will also guard the people and teachings in this land.

1.36 “Moreover, in the future, the king of this land Virtue will grow weak, and this infirmity will render him unable to rule the land independently. As a result, the king will seek protection from other faithful monarchs, such as the Tibetan and Chinese kings, and they will proceed to protect the land. [F.230.a] Why? Because in the future, the Three Jewels will be present and widely venerated in the lands of China and Tibet. Those lands will also become the abodes of bodhisattva great beings. The people in those lands

will pursue the path of great awakening, have faith in the Great Vehicle, and exert themselves in meditative absorption. Through their power and might, the people of Khotan and the Three Jewels will not be destroyed.

1.37 “All of you sublime beings, you must also by all means ensure that the kings and ministers of Tibet and China pay service to the Gomasalaganda stūpa and this land of Virtue. You must cause them to perform extensive virtue through meritorious acts. When people from this land travel to foreign border lands where people lack faith, you must relieve them of their suffering and ensure their easy return to their homeland. Thus, you should transform their minds so they come to adopt the correct view and take delight in merit. Through the strength of these roots of virtue, sublime beings, your roots of virtue, and your luster, splendor, and retinues will increase and you will draw closer and closer to buddhahood. Repay the kindness of the instructions of the thus-gone ones of the three times! In this way, the people of this land will adopt the bodhisattva deeds that make them irreversible. They will possess compassion and truth. They will be generous, free of jealousy and resentment, have gratitude, delight in the Dharma, have the correct view, be free of all wrong views, and be gentle-minded. Because of this they shall be called people from the land of Virtue. Even the castle in this land will be filled with loving and gentle-minded people and adorned with several stūpas and temples. [F.230.b] For that reason, the castle is called Virtuous Castle.

1.38 “When faithless beings, hostile and antagonistic, come here from other lands, their minds will be transformed simply by touching the sand in this region and by partaking of the food grown in this land. They will become gentle, mild, and loving, free of anger and resentment. They will develop faith and they will not perform misdeeds in this land. Such are the numerous qualities of this land.”

1.39 The Blessed Buddha, having previously blessed the land three times, now emitted light rays infused with great compassion, which purified the minds of all of the beings there who were living in the water and filled them with happiness. The light then re-emerged from the water and spread out in all the buddha realms in the ten directions. The light rays then returned and merged with the light rays of the places blessed by the bodhisattva great beings, the light rays of the places blessed by the great hearers, and the light rays of the images of the thus-gone ones seated upon the lotuses that had emerged upon the lake. At that point, the rays exploded upward into the atmosphere, covering the sky above, and a rain of divine flowers showered down upon the entire land of Khotan.

1.40

As these divine flowers touched one another, sounds of the following gateways of Dharma rang out: the names of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha; the correct view; insight; discipline; roots of virtue; the austerities performed by the thus-gone ones; their aspirations; the bodhisattvas' miraculous feats and the ways they ripen sentient beings; the four results of spiritual practitioners: stream enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and worthy one; escape from the existences of the three realms; [F.231.a] the three gateways of liberation; destruction of the karmic formations; the applications of mindfulness; the truths of noble ones; the bases of miraculous absorption; concentration; the means of attracting disciples; correct discrimination; the four formless attainments; the purity of the faculties; and all the teachings that are in accord with the factors of awakening.

1.41 Moreover, there also arose sounds pertaining to the pure mind; the branches of awakening; the noble path; the attainments; the strength of the spiritual levels; great compassion and love; dependent origination; dispelling doubt; proceeding irreversibly toward buddhahood; meditative absorption; clear realization; acceptance that phenomena are unborn; the distinct qualities; the transformation into buddhahood; the impermanent, unsatisfactory, selfless, and empty; the unproduced; the unborn; the unmistaken; the limit of reality; the realization of nonconceptual wisdom that is implicit in buddha nature; the domain of the personally realized self-awareness of practitioners; and the sufferings of birth, aging, parting from what is dear, encountering what is disliked, and being unable to fulfill one's desires.

1.42 Moreover, the following sounds occurred: "within the five aggregates there is no sentient being, nor any soul, person, or life-force"; "the truth of phenomena is that all things are without birth, without cessation, without permanence, without annihilation, without coming, and without going"; the lineage of the Three Jewels; blessings; and "the delusion of the five types of beings is like a dream, and the formations of cyclic existence are like a prison, and like an illusion, a mirage, a reflection of the moon in water, and an echo." Moreover, the following other sounds occurred: "faith"; "clear realization"; "diligence"; "the path of the ten virtuous deeds"; "disenchantment with saṃsāra"; and hundreds, as well as thousands of other such sounds. [F.231.b]

1.43 All of the many assembled retinues, as well as the bodhisattvas who had arrived there from various other places, the gods and nāgas living on the earth, and the celestial gods and yakṣas, were all filled with wonder and rapture and they gained confidence in those sounds of gateways of Dharma.

1.44

In order to facilitate their understanding, the bodhisattva great being Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta then asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, for what purpose was this great miracle displayed?”

The Blessed One replied in a voice like that of Brahmā: “Mañjuśrī, these gateways of Dharma, which yield great blessings, were taught for the benefit of those who are to be born in the land of Virtue and for the benefit of the fourfold retinue. Through these gateways of Dharma, bodhisattvas will purify their faculties and consciousness with only a little hardship and a little effort and they will come to directly realize these gateways of Dharma. Beings of the future, from young children upward, will take joy in the realization of the Dharma and they will talk about these gateways of Dharma even in their games. Such sentient beings, by developing their faculties in this way, will purify the eye of Dharma and will thereby behold the bodies of the thus-gone ones. Purifying the ear of Dharma, they will hear and receive the Dharma. Their minds will be freed from all the formations and phenomena in saṃsāra. With such minds, they will exert themselves in virtue here in this blessed wilderness, or they will live on Mount Gośṛṅga and will all gain realization there. Evil Māra himself will be unable to harm them, let alone anyone else. It is like this. Even if the gods were to penalize and punish the retainers of yakṣas, gandharvas, or kinnaras, if these beings were to take shelter at the Gomāsalaganda stūpa and Mount Gośṛṅga, the gods would be unable to see them. Even if they should happen to see them, their minds would become peaceful. For this reason, Mount Gośṛṅga and the Gomāsalaganda stūpa are an asylum, [F.232.a] a sanctuary, and a haven. They are worthy of homage by beings living in other worlds. Simply to feel faith upon hearing the names of the Gomāsalaganda stūpa, Mount Gośṛṅga, the land of Virtue, Virtuous Castle, and the blessed hermitages will purify grave misdeeds.”

1.45 The Blessed One then told venerable Śāriputra and Vaiśravaṇa, “Noble sons, you two go and cut down Sha Mountain and transfer this large lake into the Gyisho River in the north. Thus, without harming any beings living in the water, you must guard and demarcate this land.”

1.46 The great hearer Śāriputra and Vaiśravaṇa said in response, “We shall do as you instruct.” Then they flew miraculously through the sky in the direction of Sha Mountain. Śāriputra held in his hand a staff and Vaiśravaṇa held a spear, and with these they cleaved Sha Mountain into two, picked up the pieces, and placed them down in the west. Thus, they created a large riverbank through which the lake with all the animals living therein was diverted into the Gyisho River. In this manner, the Gomāsalaganda stūpa, Mount Gośṛṅga, and the land of Khotan were brought into being.

1.47

At this point, the Blessed One entrusted the Gomasalaganda stūpa and the other places to the eight bodhisattva great beings such as noble Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, the twenty thousand bodhisattvas, the sages, the eight great gods such as Vaiśravaṇa and Gṛhadāha, and the remaining retinue of thirty-five thousand five hundred beings. All of the gods also accepted this entrustment. The Blessed One bestowed it accordingly.

1.48 When the Blessed One had thus spoken, the entire assembly rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.

1.49 *This completes The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “The Prophecy on Mount Gośṛṅga.”*

ab.

ABBREVIATIONS

D Degé (*sde dge* Kangyur)

K Kangxi (Kangxi) Kangyur

K_Y Yongle (*g.yung lo*) Kangyur

S Stok Palace (*stog pho brang bris ma*) Kangyur

n.

NOTES

- [n.1](#) We have translated the Tibetan title according to versions given in the Stok, Narthang, Choné, Lhasa, and Urga editions of the Kangyur and listed in the Denkarma and Pangthangma imperial inventories: *'phags pa ri glang ru lung bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*. Note that the Phangthangma has *glang tu* instead of *glang ru*. Some editions of the Kangyur consulted in the comparative Pedurma edition omit the term “mountain” (*ri*) in the title.
- [n.2](#) Another name by which Khotan is known in some Tibetan texts is *kha sha* or *kha sa*, which may be related to the Indic name *Kaṃsadeśa*. It is not clear where the Tibetan rendering *li* might have come from, and at some periods of Tibetan history not all scholars seem to have been clear about the country to which that name referred, some assuming it meant Nepal. Dungkar's dictionary devotes no less than two columns to a discussion of different scholars' views on the subject; see Dungkar 2002, pp. 1956-7. See also n.3, and Stein 1907, p. 153.
- [n.3](#) Indian Buddhist sources, including the *Aśokāvadāna* and *Kunālāvadāna*, give differing accounts of a son of Aśoka named Kunāla (or Kustana in the Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts, but according to Brough 1948, p. 334 n.6, following Lévi and Bailey, the indigenous form in Khotanese was Gostana), who—after having been blinded as a child by a jealous stepmother, or banished by Aśoka himself as a threat to his reign, or appointed as governor of Gandhāra—settled in Khotan as a founding ruler. His name constitutes one postulated origin of the name Khotan, and he is identified with Suckler of the Earth Breast in this and the other Tibetan texts on Khotan. See also n.27 and n.28.
- [n.4](#) Rule by China, lasting from the late seventh to late eighth century CE, intervened between the two periods of Tibetan administration.
- [n.5](#) See van Schaik 2016, pp. 50-52.

- n.6 See Snellgrove 1987, vol. 2, pp. 331-43; van Schaik 2016, pp. 51-61.
- n.7 In earlier centuries, Buddhist texts and other documents in Khotan were in Gāndhārī, written in the Kharoṣṭhī script.
- n.8 Denkarma, 300.b.7. The Denkarma being usually dated to 812 CE. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 155, no. 281. In the Denkarma, the text is somewhat oddly included under the rubric of sūtras belonging to the lesser vehicle.
- n.9 Phangthangma, 51.
- n.10 Stein 1907, p. 185. It is not clear whether Xuanzang encountered the sūtra itself or the summaries of its narrative found in the presumed Khotanese source texts of the *Arhatsaṅghavardhanavyākaraṇa* (Toh 4202), *li'i yul lung bstan pa* (Toh 4202), *Sūryagarbhaparipṛcchā* (Toh 257), and *Candragarbhaparipṛcchā*.
- n.11 See Chomden Rikpai Raltri, (1) F.26.a *et seq.*, (2) F.28.a *et seq.* Surprisingly, Chomden Rikpai Raltri seems to be the only scholar-compiler who mentions Khotanese at all in discussing the origins of the canonical texts. The paucity of references to Khotan may be related to a lack of consensus among scholars about the identity of the country called *li yul*; see n.2 and Dungkar 2002, pp. 1956-7.
- n.12 The version of Toh 4202 preserved in the Degé Tengyur is treated as a single work, but it is believed to comprise two distinct texts, partly on the basis of parallel versions found as separate works in the Dunhuang manuscripts. The “Prophecy” proper (*li yul lung bstan pa*) is found on folios 168.b–171.b.6, and with no obvious break the “Annals” (*li yul chos kyi lo rgyus*) from folio 171.b.7 through to the end of the text on folio 188.a.
- n.13 For an account of the Buddhist “prophetic history” literature, including an analysis of the Khotanese texts mentioned here, see Nattier 1991. One common feature is reference to the canonical Kauśāmbī story of decline following sectarian rivalry after foreign invasion. The present sūtra makes no such reference and is less focused on decline than the other Khotanese texts, making it something of an outlier.
- n.14 The passage starts in the text in the Degé Kangyur, vol. 66 (mdo sde, za) F.236.a *et seq.* This text, also known as the *Sūryagarbhaparipṛcchā*, is part of the Mahāsannipāta or “Great Collection” of texts, and other passages mentioning the same story are found in another work belonging to the same collection, the *Candragarbhaparipṛcchā*. This latter work is represented in the

Kangyur only by an excerpt (Toh 356) which does not seem to include such passages.

n.15 See Stein 1907, p. 160.

n.16 Brough 1948 outlines the parallels between the legends of Gośrṅga and Svayambhū and their sources.

n.17 Discussed at some length in Dungkar 2002, pp. 1956-7, and in Brough 1948, p. 338.

n.18 Dungkar 2002 (p. 1956) attributes to him the couplet: *sa nus bzung ba'i li yul de/ rgya bod mtshams kyi bal po min* ("This Liyul of Sustained by the Earth Breast / is not the Nepal on the border of India and Tibet").

n.19 Chopel 2014, p. 56–57. Note that the text he names as *li yul lung bstan* ("The Khotan Prophecy") could refer either to this sūtra, or to the text *li'i yul lung bstan pa* in the Epistles section of the Tengyur (Toh 4202).

n.20 See Stein 1907, in particular pp. 185–90.

n.21 Thomas 1935, in particular pp. 1–38.

n.22 It is not clear what the "place of the mighty great sages" (*thub pa drang strong chen po'i gnas*) may refer to. The same expression is used below in the following paragraph referring to the Gomasalaganda stūpa; otherwise, the only other mentions in the Kangyur of such a place are (1) in the *Vimala-prabhāparipṛcchā*, Toh 168, another text focusing on Khotan (see i.8) in which it also seems to be an epithet of the Gomasalaganda stūpa and perhaps other sacred Khotanese sites; and (2) in the setting of *The Ākāśagarbha Sūtra* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh260.html>) (Toh 260) in which it is described as being on Khalatika mountain.

n.23 The Vaiśālī region lies to the north of Rājagṛha, on the other side of the Ganges.

n.24 *dge ba*. This is probably derived from the name Khema (the equivalent of Sanskrit *kṣema*) for Khotan, as found in the Kharoṣṭhī texts. See Thomas 1938.

n.25 Reading *bdag nyid kyis* based on K and K_Y. S and D: *bdag nyid kyi*.

n.26 Translation tentative. Tibetan: *bzlas brjod*.

n.27 This sentence might seem confusing but is probably a very terse reference to the complex story told in other texts, notably the *Kuṇḍālāvadāna*, about Aśoka's son and potential heir Kuṇāla who, blinded and / or banished to Gandhāra,

later introduced Indian culture to Khotan. The name Kuṇāla has also been rendered Kustana, and the indigenous form in Khotan may have been Gostana. The identification of Kustana or Gostana with Suckler of the Earth Breast, and the notion that at some point in his youth he may have been adopted by the Chinese king is set out in the Tengyur text *li'i yul lung bstan pa* (*Kaṃsadeśavyākaraṇa*, Toh 4202), folios 174b.6–175.b.2; for an English translation, see Thomas 1935, pp. 97–100. See also n.3 and n.28.

- n.28 This a reference to the “folk etymology” whereby the name Khotan is derived from the Sanskrit name of Suckler of the Earth Breast, Kustana or Gostana. See Stein 1907, vol.1, p. 153.
- n.29 Translated based on S: *lha thams cad nga la phyag 'tshal*. D: *lha thams cad la phyag 'tshal*.
- n.30 D: *ko shed*. S: *ku shed*.
- n.31 Translation tentative. Tibetan: *thor khong du byas pa*.
- n.32 D: *de'i dge 'dun las mnod par bya'o*. S: *de'i dge 'dun la mchod par bya'o*.
- n.33 Translated based on K and S: *phyi se*. D: *pi se*.
- n.34 D: *chos kyi spyod pa*. S: *spyod pa*.
- n.35 Tibetan *chad pa*, which could also mean “punishment.”
- n.36 Translated based on S: *chang khyu*. D: *chang byu*.
- n.37 D: *spyod yul*. S: *spyod lam*.
- n.38 D: *che thang du rgud par*. S: *tshe thung du rgud par*.
- n.39 Translated based on S: *'jol nyog*. D: *'jol nyag*.

b.

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g.

GLOSSARY

g.1 Abiding in the Royal Palace

rgyal po'i pho brang gnas

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཕོ་བླང་གནས།

—

An image of the Buddha.

g.2 Acceptance that phenomena are unborn

mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa

མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཆོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

anutpattikadharmakṣānti

The attainment of effortless and spontaneous insight into emptiness and the lack of birth of phenomena. Attained by a bodhisattva on the 8th level.

g.3 Ajita

mi pham pa

མི་ཕམ་པ།

Ajita

A god.

g.4 Ākāśagarbha

nam mkha'i snying po

ནམ་མཁའི་སྤྱིང་པོ།

Ākāśagarbha

A bodhisattva.

g.5 Applications of mindfulness

dran pa nye bar gzhas pa

སྤྲུལ་ཉེས་ཀྱི་ཞུགས་པ།

smṛtyupasthāna

Four contemplations on (1) the body, (2) feelings, (3) mind, and (4) phenomena.

g.6 Aśoka

mya ngan med

ཐུ་དཀྱིལ་མེད།

Aśoka

The historical Indian king of the Maurya dynasty who ruled over most of India c. 268–232 BCE. In this text he appears to be briefly referenced as the biological father of the prince Suckler of the Earth Breast, adopted as the Chinese prince who, according to this text, is said to have been the first person to settle in Khotan.

g.7 Avalokiteśvara

spyang ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྲུལ་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག་

Avalokiteśvara

One of the main bodhisattva disciples of the Buddha Śākyamuni, praised for his compassion.

g.8 Bases of miraculous absorption

rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa

རྩུ་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་རྟུང་པ།

ṛddhipāda

Four types of absorption related to intention, diligence, attention, and analysis.

g.9 Bhaiṣajyarāja

sman gyi rgyal po

སྤྲུལ་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

Bhaiṣajyarāja

A bodhisattva.

g.10 Bimbisāra

gzugs can snying po

གཟུགས་ཅན་སྙིང་པོ།

Bimbisāra

A king of Magadha at the time of the Buddha, the father of Ajātaśatru.

g.11 Blissful Castle

mkhar bde ba can

མཁར་བདེ་བ་ཅན།

—

A castle in the country of Virtue.

g.12 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཙངས་པ།

Brahmā

One of the primary deities of the Brahmanical pantheon, Brahmā presides over a divine world where other beings consider him the creator. He occupies an important place in Buddhism as one of two deities (the other being Śakra) that are said to have first exhorted Śākyamuni to teach the Dharma. He is also considered to be the “Lord of the Sahā-world” (our universe).

g.13 Cayang

ca yang

ཅཡང།

—

A Chinese king. He is identified by Thomas (1935, p. 17) as the founder of the Qin dynasty: Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇; 259–210 BCE).

g.14 Chisé

phyi se

ཕྱི་སེ།

—

An image of the Buddha.

g.15 Chomden Rikpai Raltri

bcom ldan rigs pa'i ral gri

བཅོམ་ལྷན་རིགས་པའི་རལ་གྱི།

—

A great scholar of Narthang monastery in central Tibet. He lived from 1227 to 1305 and was one of the first compilers of the the Kangyur.

g.16 Chugönpana

cu gon pa na

ཅུགོན་པ་ན།

—

An image of the Buddha.

g.17 Correct discrimination

so so yang dag par rig pa

སོ་སོ་ཡང་དག་པར་རིག་པ།

pratisamvid

Correct knowledge of meaning, Dharma, language, and eloquence.

g.18 Delightful

yid 'ong

ཡིད་འོང་།

—

A kinnara king.

g.19 Dependent origination

rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba

རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་བར་འབྱུང་བ།

pratītyasamutpāda

The relative nature of phenomena, which arises in dependence upon causes and conditions. Together with the four noble truths, this was the first teaching given by the Buddha.

g.20 Dinadzya Temple

gtsug lag khang di na dzya

གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་དིན་ཏྲཱ།

—

A temple in Khotan.

g.21 Dīpaṅkara

mar me mdzad

མར་མེ་མཛད།

Dīpaṅkara

A previous buddha who gave Śākyamuni the prophecy of his buddhahood.

g.22 Drugu

gru gu

ལུ་གུ

—

Drugu is the name of an ancient people living in north west Tibet.

g.23 Elder

gnas brtan

གནས་བརྟན།

sthavira

A title used when addressing the most venerable bhikṣus.

g.24 Gandharva

dri za

དྷི་ཟ།

gandharva

A class of generally benevolent nonhuman beings who inhabit the sky and are most renowned as celestial musicians.

g.25 Golden Garland

gser gyi phreng ba can

གསེར་གྱི་ཕྱེང་བ་ཅན།

—

A god.

g.26 Goma

go ma

གོ་མ།

—

A river in Khotan.

g.27 Gomasalaganda

go ma sa la gan da

གོ་མ་ས་ལ་གན་ད།

—

A sacred stūpa in Khotan, said to have been blessed by several past buddhas.

g.28 Great Assembly

'dus pa chen po

འདུས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāsannipāta

A collection of seventeen sūtras on a range of themes, compiled as a separate collection. Today, this collection only exists in Chinese translation, although several of the individual scriptures exist in Sanskrit and Tibetan translation.

g.29 Gr̥hadāha

khyim 'tshig

ཁྱིམ་འཛིག་

Gr̥hadāha

A nāga king.

g.30 Gyisho River

gyi sho gtsang po

གྱི་ཤོ་གཙང་པོ།

—

A river in Khotan.

g.31 Heap of Jewels

dkon mchog brtsegs pa

དཀོན་མཆོག་བརྟེན་པ།

ratnakūṭa

Forty-nine selected sūtras on a range of themes, compiled as a separate collection.

g.32 Hearer

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

Someone who practices according to the Vehicle of the Hearers (those who hear the teachings from others); or, someone who heard the Dharma from the Buddha.

g.33 Hook Bearer

lcags kyu can

ལུགས་ཀྱི་ཅན།

—

A goddess.

g.34 Hor

hor

ཧོར།

—

A central Asian region, at times referring to Mongolia.

g.35 Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu gling

འཛམ་བུ་གླིང་།

Jambudvīpa

The continent where we currently live; i.e. the earth.

g.36 Jangsho

jang sho

ཇང་ཤོ།

—

A senior minister at the court of the Chinese king Cayang.

g.37 Kasadizé

tshong 'dus ka sa di ze

ཚོང་འདུས་ཀ་ས་དི་ཟེ།

—

A market in Virtuous Castle.

g.38 Kāśyapa

'od srung

འོད་སྤྱང་།

Kāśyapa

The buddha who preceded Śākyamuni in this Excellent Eon.

g.39 Khotan

li yul

ལི་ཡུལ།

—

An ancient kingdom, located on the southern branch of the Silk Route that passed through the Tarim Basin. The kingdom, which was an important oasis and center for trade, existed during the first millennium CE.

g.40 King Yola

rgyal po yo la

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡོ་ལ།

—

A king in Khotan. Identified by Thomas (1935, p. 25) as Yehu-la.

g.41 Kinnara

mi'am ci

མི་འམ་ཅི།

kinnara

A class of nonhuman beings that are half-human, half-animal. Typically they have animal heads atop human bodies. The term literally means “Is that human?”

g.42 Kiulang

ki'u lang

ཀི་ཁུ་ལང།

—

An image of the Buddha.

g.43 Koshé Castle

mkhar ko shed

མཁར་ཀོ་ཤེད།

—

An ancient settlement in the western part of Khotan.

g.44 Kṣitigarbha

sa'i snying po

སའི་སྙིང་པོ།

Kṣitigarbha

A bodhisattva.

g.45 Land of Suckler of the Earth Breast

sa las nu ma nu'i yul

ས་ལས་རྩ་མ་རྩའི་ཡུལ།

—

The name given to Khotan by prince Suckler of the Earth Breast.

g.46 Limit of reality

yang dag pa'i mtha'

ཡང་དག་པའི་མཐའ།

bhūtakotī

This term has three meanings: (1) a synonym for the ultimate nature, (2) the experience of the ultimate nature, and (3) the quiescent state of a worthy one (*arhat*) to be avoided by bodhisattvas.

g.47 Mahāsthāmprāpta

mtshu chen thob

མཐུ་ཆེན་ཐོབ།

Mahāsthāmprāpta

A bodhisattva.

g.48 Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

Maitreya

Name of a bodhisattva who will follow Śākyamuni as the fifth buddha of this eon.

g.49 Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa

འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུར་གྱུར་པ།

Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta

An epithet of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, meaning “the youthful Mañjuśrī.”

Mañjuśrī is one of the eight “close sons” of the Buddha and the embodiment of wisdom.

g.50 Maudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ།

Maudgalyāyana

An elder, a senior student of the Buddha.

g.51 Mount Gośṛṅga

ri glang ru

རིགྲང་རུ།

—

The hill in Khotan from which the Buddha delivers his prophecy. Gośṛṅga means “cow horn” in Sanskrit and the hill is said to have received this name due to having two pointed peaks.

g.52 Nāga

klu

ལྷ།

nāga

A nonhuman class of beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments and who are known to hoard wealth and esoteric teachings. They are associated with snakes and serpents.

g.53 Non-returner

phyir mi 'ong ba

ཕྱིར་མི་འོང་བ།

anāgāmin

The third level of noble ones when practicing the path of the hearers (bound to never be reborn).

g.54 Nyomonya

nyo mo nya

ཉོམོ་ལྷ།

—

A piece of land belonging to Virtuous Castle.

g.55 Once-returner

lan cig phyir 'ong ba

ལན་ཅིག་ཕྱིར་འོང་བ།

sakṛdāgāmin

The second level of Noble Ones when practicing the path of the hearers (bound to be born again no more than once).

g.56 Ornaments of the Buddhas

sangs rgyas phal po che

སངས་རྒྱས་པལ་པོ་ཆེ།

buddhāvataṃsaka

A collection of forty-five sūtras presented as a single, long sūtra, although many of its chapters are independent works.

g.57 Pañcaśikha

gtsug phud lnga pa

གཙུག་ཕུད་ལྔ་པ།

Pañcaśikha

A gandharva king who is employed by Śakra to serve the Buddha. He is sometimes said to be a form of Mañjuśrī or historically to have been his original identity.

g.58 Perceptive

'du shes can

འདུ་ཤེས་ཅན།

—

A bodhisattva.

g.59 Perfection of Wisdom

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ།

prajñāpāramitā

The collection of discourses on the Perfection of Wisdom.

g.60 Prabhūtaratna

rin chen mang

རིན་ཆེན་མང།

Prabhūtaratna

A buddha.

g.61 Radiant

'od can

འོད་ཅན།

—

A temple on Mount Gośṛṅga.

- g.62 Rājagṛha
rgyal po'i khab
 རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།
Rājagṛha
 The ancient capital of Magadha; the site where many Great Vehicle sūtras take place.
- g.63 Rākṣasa
srin po
 སྲིན་པོ།
rākṣasa
 A class of nonhuman beings that are often, but certainly not always, considered demonic in the Buddhist tradition. Some are flesh-eating demons who haunt frightening places.
- g.64 Relinquishing
spong byed
 སྤོང་བྱེད།
 —
 A temple on Mount Gośṛṅga.
- g.65 Relinquishing the Personality
'jig tshogs spong byed
 འཇིག་ཚོགས་སྤོང་བྱེད།
 —
 A temple on Mount Gośṛṅga.
- g.66 Śakra
brgya byin
 བརྒྱ་བྱིན།
Śakra
 An alternative name for Indra, lord of the gods, who, according to Buddhist cosmology, resides in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.
- g.67 Śākyamuni
shAkya thub pa
 སྤྲུ་ཐུབ་པ།
Śākyamuni

The buddha of this age; the historical buddha.

g.68 Samantabhadra

kun du bzang po

ཀུན་དུ་བཟང་པོ།

Samantabhadra

A bodhisattva.

g.69 Sand Castle

mkhar phye ma

མཁར་ཕྱེ་མ།

—

An ancient settlement in the eastern part of Khotan.

g.70 Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤ་རི་བུ།

Śāriputra

One of the closest disciples of the Buddha, known for his pure discipline.

g.71 Sha Mountain

sha'i ri

ཤ་རི་རི།

—

A legendary mountain in Khotan.

g.72 Shenazha

she na zha

ཤེན་མ།

—

A buddha.

g.73 Song of the Sky

nam mkha'i dbyangs

ནམ་མཁའི་དབྱངས།

—

A god.

g.74 Source of Bliss
bde ba'i 'byung gnas
བདེ་བའི་འབྱུང་གནས།

—

A buddha.

g.75 Stable
gnas can
གནས་ཅན།

—

A goddess.

g.76 Stream enterer
rgyun du zhugs pa
རྒྱུན་དུ་ཐྱུགས་པ།
srotāpanna

The first level of noble ones when practicing the path of the hearers.

g.77 Suckler of the Earth Breast
sa las nu ma nu
ས་ལས་སུ་མ་སུ།

—

Another name for the prince Kunāla, Kustana, or Gostana, biological son of Aśoka and adopted prince of China.

g.78 Sumpa
sum pa
སུམ་པ།

—

Sumpa is the name of an ancient people living to the north-west of Tibet. They may be the same as the people known as Supiya in Gāndhāran Kharoṣṭhī texts, or may be Hephthalites (see Thomas 1935, pp. 42, 156-9).

g.79 Sustaining the Saṅgha
dge 'dun skyong
དགེ་འདུན་སྐྱོང་།

—

A temple on Mount Gośṛṅga.

g.80 Three gateways of liberation

rnam par thar pa'i sgo gsum

རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པའི་སྒོ་གསུམ།

trivimokṣadvāra

Emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness.

g.81 Tsarma Temple

gtsug lag khang tshar ma

གཏུག་ལག་ཁང་ཚར་མ།

—

A temple in Khotan.

g.82 Vaiśālī

yangs pa can

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།

Vaiśālī

The ancient capital of the Licchavi republican state, the Buddha visited this city several times during his lifetime. It is perhaps most famous as the location where, on different occasions, the Buddha cured a plague, admitted the first nuns into the Buddhist order, was offered a bowl of honey by monkeys, and announced his parinirvāṇa three months prior to his departure.

g.83 Vaiśravaṇa

rnam thos kyi bu · rnam thos sras

རྣམ་ཐོས་ཀྱི་བུ། . རྣམ་ཐོས་སྲས།

Vaiśravaṇa

One of the four great guardian kings, he presides over the northern quarter and rules over the yakṣas. He is also known as Kubera.

g.84 Vanoco

ba no co

བ་ནོ་ཅ།

—

A temple on Mount Gośṛṅga.

g.85 Virtue

dge ba

-

དགེ་བ།

—

A country prophesied by the Buddha. It refers to the country of Khotan.

g.86 Virtuous Castle

mkhar dge ba can

མཁར་དགེ་བ་ཅན།

—

A castle in the country of Virtue.

g.87 Visimonya

bi si mo nya

བི་སི་མོ་ཉ།

—

A temple on Mount Gośṛṅga.

g.88 Wisdom Mountain

ye shes ri

ཡེ་ཤེས་རི།

—

A temple on Mount Gośṛṅga.

g.89 Worthy one

dgra bcom pa

དགྲ་བཙུམ་པ།

arhat

A person who has accomplished the final fruition of the path of the hearers and is liberated from saṃsāra.

g.90 Yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of nonhuman beings that haunt or protect natural places and cities. They can be malevolent or benevolent, and are known for bestowing wealth and worldly boons, as well as causing harm and destruction.

