

Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields

 $Buddhak {\it ṣetragunok} tadhar mapary \bar{\it a} ya$

तस्यायाता देवलेर योगेयायाता रस्याया ग्री यान्या मुखा ग्री लेट यो प्राप्त हर यहेर प्राप्त केरा ग्री रस्या ग्री र

'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa rnams kyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan brjod pa'i chos kyi rnam grangs
The Noble Dharma Discourse: Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields
Āryatathāgatānām buddhakṣetraguṇoktadharmaparyāya

 \cdot Toh 104 \cdot Degé Kangyur, vol. 48 (mdo sde, nga), folios 285.b–286.b

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

• Jinamitra • Dānaśīla • Yeshé Dé •



Translated by the Subhashita Translation Group under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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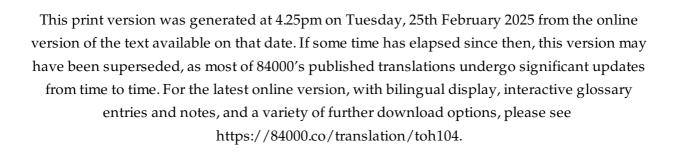
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SUMMARY

s.1 While the Buddha is staying in the kingdom of Magadha with an immense assembly of bodhisattvas, the bodhisattva Acintyaprabharāja gives a teaching on the relativity of time between different buddhafields. Eleven buddhafields are enumerated, with an eon in the first being equivalent to a day in the following buddhafield, where an eon is, in turn, the equivalent of a day in the next, and so forth.

s.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.

ac.1 Translated, edited, and finalized by the Subhashita Translation Group. The translation was produced by Lowell Cook, who also wrote the introduction. Benjamin Ewing checked the translation against the Tibetan and edited the text and introduction.

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

INTRODUCTION

i.1 The sutra Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields takes place in the kingdom of Magadha where the Buddha is dwelling amid an incalculable assembly of bodhisattvas. Among the bodhisattvas is the sūtra's primary speaker, Acintyaprabharāja, who offers a discourse on the relativity of time between buddhafields. He enumerates eleven buddhafields, with an eon in the first being equivalent to a day in the following buddhafield, where an eon is, in turn, the equivalent of a day in the next, and so forth. The sūtra thus presents a hierarchy of buddhafields that begins with our world and culminates with the paramount buddhafield, Padmaśrī. This language of incredibly vast scales of time has the effect of testing the limits of human conception, thereby demonstrating that the qualities of the buddhas and their buddhafields are beyond quantification or conceptualization. Acintyaprabharāja concludes his discourse by presenting the benefits of engaging with this sūtra, foremost of which is being visited by buddhas from an infinite number of buddhafields at the moment of death.

i.2

i.

Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields is nearly identical to "The Chapter on the Scale of Life," the thirty-seventh chapter of A Multitude of Buddhas (Toh 44, Skt. Buddhāvataṃsaka),¹ and The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable (Toh 268).² Of the three texts, Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields is the most elaborate in that it includes an introductory narrative (Skt. nidāna) and a conclusion whereas "The Chapter on the Scale of Life" does not, and it explicitly names the buddhafields and their buddhas while The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable gives only the names of the buddhas.

i.3

Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields is not mentioned in either the Denkarma (Tib. ldan/lhan dkar ma) or Phangthangma (Tib. 'phang thang ma) catalogs, the two extant indexes of translations from the Imperial Period (629–841 ce). Despite this, the Tibetan translation might be roughly dated to between the late eighth and early ninth century based on its

colophon, which states that it was translated by the Tibetan translator Yeshé Dé alongside the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla. It is worth noting, however, that the colophon that contains the names of the Indian and Tibetan translators is not found in any of the Thempangma (*them spangs ma*) Kangyurs.

i.4

There is an extant Sanskrit witness for Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields with the nearly identical title Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvananāma-mahāyānasūtra (The Mahāyāna Sūtra "Proclaiming the Qualities of the Infinite Buddhafields"). This sūtra in Sanskrit is the seventeenth in a manuscript collection of twenty sūtras that is presently held in Lhasa at the Potala Palace. The full manuscript, which was scribed by a single hand, is missing the final colophon that would have provided key information on the date and provenance of the collection, making it impossible to say when, where, or by whom the Sanskrit manuscript was compiled.³ In terms of content, the Sanskrit witness and Tibetan translation align closely, with only a handful of variants that have been noted below. The Sanskrit witness is particularly noteworthy for stating in its colophon that it belongs to "the extensive collection, A Multitude of Buddhas," making it one of the few Sanskrit sources to attest to the possible existence in India of A Multitude of Buddhas (Buddhāvataṃsaka) with that name, whether as a collection, a compilation, or a single long text. The Tibetan translation of Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields, unlike the Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana, does not explicitly identify itself as part of A Multitude of Buddhas, suggesting that it arrived in Tibet as an independently circulating sūtra without being so recognized. Because both "The Chapter on the Scale of Life" of A Multitude of Buddhas and The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable are nearly identical in content to Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields, the Anantabuddhaksetragunodbhāvana serves as an important Sanskrit resource for studying those texts as well.

i.5

The translation offered here is based on the version found in the Degé Kangyur in close comparison with the Sanskrit text of the *Anantabuddha-kṣetraguṇodbhāvana*. Additionally, the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (Tib. *dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyurs were also consulted, and "The Chapter on the Scale of Life" and *The Sūtra of the Inconceivable King* informed this translation. A Chinese translation of the sūtra was produced by Faxian (337–ca. 422) and is included in the Chinese canon (Taishō 290 *Jiao liang yi qie fo cha gong de* 較量一切佛刹功德). An English translation of the *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana* has been published in Vinītā 2010 alongside a critical edition of the Sanskrit text and transcription of the Tibetan and Chinese translations.

The Noble Dharma Discourse Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields

The Translation

[F.285.b]

1.

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling at the seat of awakening, in a Dharma hermitage in the land of Magadha, where he was seated upon a lion throne in the center of a lotus, inlaid with jewels and vajras. He was accompanied by a great bodhisattva assembly of as many bodhisattva great beings as there are atoms throughout tens of trillions of indescribable buddhafields.

- Present within that assembly of bodhisattvas was a bodhisattva great being by the name of Acintyaprabharāja. Through the power of the Buddha, the bodhisattva great being Acintyaprabharāja rose from his seat and addressed the group of bodhisattvas: [F.286.a] "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in this Sahā world is but a single day in the realm of Sukhāvatī, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Amitābha.
- 1.3 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in Sukhāvatī is but a single day in the realm of Abhirati, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Akṣobhya.⁷
- 1.4 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Abhirati is but a single day in the realm of Kaṣāyadhvajā, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Vajrasārapramardin.
- 1.5 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Kaṣāyadhvajā is but a single day in the realm of Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Suniścitapadmaphullitagātra.
- 1.6 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā is but a single day in the realm of Virajā, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Dharmadhvaja.

- 1.7 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Virajā is but a single day in the realm of Pradīpā, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Siṃha.
- 1.8 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Pradīpā is but a single day in the realm of Suprabhā, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Vairocana.
- 1.9 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Suprabhā is but a single day in the realm of Duratikramā, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra.
- 1.10 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Duratikramā is but a single day in the realm of Vyūhā, [F.286.b] the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Sarvābhijñāmatirāja.
- 1.11 "O children of the Victorious One, an eon in the realm of Vyūhā is but a single day in the realm of Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā, the buddhafield of the blessed Thus-Gone One Candrabuddhi.
- 1.12 "O children of the Victorious One, continuing with this system of examining and calculating realms, after a distance equal to the total atoms in one million buddhafields we arrive at the equivalent of a single day in the realm of Padmaśrī, the buddhafield of the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, and completely perfect Buddha Bhadraśrī. This is a land where the bodhisattvas who follow the conduct of Samantabhadra make special preparations for the bodhisattva levels.⁹
- 1.13 "O children of the Victorious One, if any son or daughter of noble family holds, memorizes, recites, 10 masters, or teaches in detail to others this Dharma discourse, *Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields*, 11 then blessed buddhas from infinite oceans of limitless buddhafields throughout the ten directions will be seated before them at the time of their death. They will recollect their lifetimes until they fully awaken to unsurpassed and completely perfect buddhahood."
- This was spoken with joy by the bodhisattva great being Acintyaprabharāja with the authorization of the thus-gone, worthy, completely perfect Buddha. The entire assembly of bodhisattva great beings praised what he had taught.
- 1.15 This completes the noble Dharma discourse "Expounding the Qualities of the Thus-Gone Ones' Buddhafields." 12

Colophon

c.1 This was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla and the senior translator-editor, the venerable monk Yeshé Dé.

c.

n. NOTES

- n.1 See Subhashita Translation Group, trans., <u>The Chapter on The Scale of Life</u>
 (https://read.84000.co/translation/toh44-37.html), Toh 44-37 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2022).
- n.2 See Subhashita Translation Group, trans., <u>The Sūtra of King of the Inconceivable</u> (https://read.84000.co/translation/toh268.html), Toh 268 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2022).
- n.3 Though the manuscript itself is not presently accessible, a critical edition of the complete collection was edited and translated by Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā Tseng (2010).
- n.4 For the complexities regarding the origin, content, and structure of the *A Multitude of Buddhas*, see 84000's Knowledge Base (https://site.84000.co/kb-articles/a-multitude-of-buddhas-kangyur-section) article on the subject; an accessible and informative discussion is also to be found in Hamar 2015.
- n.5 Tib. byang chub kyi snying po na; Skt. bodhimaṇḍale. The Tibetan term is typically a translation of bodhimaṇḍa, referring to the "seat of awakening." The Skt. bodhimaṇḍala can be taken as either a variant or scribal corruption that conveys the same meaning.
- n.6 Tib. *mnyam dga'*. On the use of the Tib. term *mnyam dga'* / *mnyam dka'* as a translation of the Skt. term *magadha*, see Hahn 2012, an article dedicated to precisely this equivalence. The Skt. text confirms *magadheṣu*, "in Magadha."
- n.7 This line is not found in the Skt. witness.
- n.8 Because the previous line was not included in the Skt. text, the Skt. sūtra proceeds from Sukhāvatī here instead of Abhirati. The Skt. reads, "an eon in the realm of Sukhāvatī is but a single day in the realm of Kaṣāyadhvajā…"

- (sukhāvatyāṃ lokadhātau kalpaṃ tat kaṣāyadhvajāyāṃ lokadhātau ... ekaṃ rātridivasam).
- n.9 Skt. yatra samantabhadracaritrāṇām bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām bhumīparikarmaviśeṣaḥ.
- n.10 Here the Skt. text includes "promotes it" (*bhāvayiṣyati*), which is not found in the Tib. translation.
- n.11 In this line the Skt. text attests to a near-identical rendering of the title of the sūtra as provided in the Tib. translation: *Tathāgatānām buddha-kṣetraguṇodbhāvanadharmaparyāyam*.
- n.12 The colophon of the Skt. sūtra reads, "This completes the seventeenth sūtra, the Mahāyāna sūtra titled *Proclaiming the Qualities of the Infinite Buddhafields*, which belongs to the extensive collection, *A Multitude of Buddhas* (buddhāvataṃsakād vaipulyapiṭakād anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvanaṃ nāma mahāyānasūtram saptadaśaṃ samāptam).

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· Types of attestation for names and terms of the corresponding · source language

Attested in source text AS

This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.

Attested in other text AO

This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.

Attested in dictionary AD

> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.

Approximate attestation AA

> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where the relationship between the Tibetan and source language is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.

Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering RP

This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the

term.

Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering RS

This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan

translation.

SU Source unspecified

> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

Abhirati g.1

mngon par dga' ba

सर्देब धर द्वाद चा

abhirati

Abhirati (Delightful) is the buddhafield to the east inhabited by the Buddha Aksobhya.

g.2 Acintyaprabharāja

'od bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i rgyal po

acintyaprabharāja

Acintyaprabharāja (King of Inconceivable Light) is a bodhisattva who is the main speaker in Toh 104.

g3 Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā

me long gi dkyil 'khor dbyangs

ādarśamandalacakranirghoṣā

Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā (Sound of the Mirror Disk) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Candrabuddhi.

g.4 Aksobhya

mi 'khrugs pa

প্স.বর্ষ্ট্রবাশ্বনা

akṣobhya

The buddha in the eastern realm, Abhirati. Akṣobhya (Unshakable) was well known early in the Mahāyāna tradition.

g.5 Amitābha

'od dpag med

amitābha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The buddha of the western buddhafield of Sukhāvatī, where fortunate beings are reborn to make further progress toward spiritual maturity. Amitābha made his great vows to create such a realm when he was a bodhisattva called Dharmākara. In the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, popular in East Asia, aspiring to be reborn in his buddha realm is the main emphasis; in other Mahāyāna traditions, too, it is a widespread practice. For a detailed description of the realm, see *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī*, Toh 115. In some tantras that make reference to the five families he is the tathāgata associated with the lotus family.

Amitābha, "Infinite Light," is also known in many Indian Buddhist works as Amitāyus, "Infinite Life." In both East Asian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions he is often conflated with another buddha named "Infinite Life," Aparimitāyus, or "Infinite Life and Wisdom," Aparimitāyurjñāna, the shorter version of whose name has also been back-translated from Tibetan into Sanskrit as Amitāyus but who presides over a realm in the zenith. For details on the relation between these buddhas and their names, see <u>The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra</u> (1) Toh 674, i.9.

g.6 Avaivartikacakranirghosā

phyir mi ldog pa'i 'khor lo dbyangs

avaivartikacakranirghosā

Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā (Sound of the Wheel of Nonregression) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Suniścitapadmaphullitagātra. "Nonregression" (Skt. *avaivartika*, Tib. *phyir mi ldog pa*) refers to a stage on the bodhisattva path where the practitioner will never turn back, or be turned back, from progress toward the full awakening of a buddha.

g.7 Bhadraśrī

dpal bzang po

รุนณ:กลระน์โ

bhadraśrī

Bhadraśrī (Excellent Glory) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Padmaśrī.

g.8 bodhisattva level

sa

31

bhūmi

The stages a bodhisattva must traverse before reaching perfect buddhahood; traditionally ten in number, though some systems present more.

g.9 buddhafield

sangs rgyas kyi zhing

buddhaksetra

A buddhafield is the particular world system over which a specific buddha presides. There are innumerable such fields in Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmology.

g.10 Candrabuddhi

zla ba'i thugs

candrabuddhi

Candrabuddhi (Moon-Like Mind) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Ādarśamaṇḍalacakranirghoṣā.

g.11 Dharmadhvaja

chos kyi rgyal mtshan

dharmadhvaja

Dharmadhvaja (Dharma Banner) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Virajā.

g.12 Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra

chos kyi 'od zer rab tu rgyas pa'i sku

dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra

Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra (Body of Blazing Dharma Light) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Duratikramā.

g.13 Duratikramā

'da' bar dka' ba

duratikramā

Duratikramā (Difficult to Transcend) is a buddhafield inhabited by the buddha Dharmaraśmiprajvalitagātra.

g.14 Kaṣāyadhvajā

ngur smrig gi rgyal mtshan

kasāyadhvajā

Kaṣāyadhvajā (Saffron-Colored Banners) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Vajrasārapramardin.

g.15 Magadha

mnyam dga'

মন্তম:ব্যানা

magadha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An ancient Indian kingdom that lay to the south of the Ganges River in what today is the state of Bihar. Magadha was the largest of the sixteen "great states" (*mahājanapada*) that flourished between the sixth and third centuries BCE in northern India. During the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni, it was ruled by King Bimbisāra and later by Bimbisāra's son, Ajātaśatru. Its capital was initially Rājagṛha (modern-day Rajgir) but was later moved to Pāṭaliputra (modern-day Patna). Over the centuries, with the expansion of the Magadha's might, it became the capital of the vast Mauryan empire and seat of the great King Aśoka.

This region is home to many of the most important Buddhist sites, including Bodh Gayā, where the Buddha attained awakening; Vulture Peak (Grdhra- $k\bar{u}$ ta), where the Buddha bestowed many well-known Mahāyāna sūtras; and the Buddhist university of Nālandā that flourished between the fifth and twelfth centuries CE, among many others.

g.16 Padmaśrī

pad mo dpal

यर्'र्से'र्पया

padmaśrī

Padmaśrī (Lotus Glory) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Bhadraśrī.

g.17 Pradīpā

mar me ldan

स्रम्भः स्रुद्धा

pradīpā

Pradīpā (Bright Lamp) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Simha.

g.18 Sahā world

mi mjed

भ्रीसहरा

sahā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The name for our world system, the universe of a thousand million worlds, or trichiliocosm, in which the four-continent world is located. Each trichiliocosm is ruled by a god Brahmā; thus, in this context, he bears the title of Sahāṃpati, Lord of Sahā. The world system of Sahā, or Sahālokadhātu, is also described as the buddhafield of the Buddha Śākyamuni where he teaches the Dharma to beings.

The name Sahā possibly derives from the Sanskrit \sqrt{sah} , "to bear, endure, or withstand." It is often interpreted as alluding to the inhabitants of this world being able to endure the suffering they encounter. The Tibetan translation, *mi mjed*, follows along the same lines. It literally means "not painful," in the sense that beings here are able to bear the suffering they experience.

g.19 Samantabhadra

kun tu bzang po

samantabhadra

Samantabhadra (Entirely Excellent) is one of the eight principal bodhisattvas. He is known for embodying the conduct of bodhisattvas through his vast aspirations, offerings, and deeds for the benefit of beings.

g.20 Sarvābhijñāmatirāja

mngon par shes pa thams cad blo gros 'od zer rgyal po

sarvābhijñāmatirāja

Sarvābhijñāmatirāja (King with a Mind of All Supernatural Abilities) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Vyūhā.

g.21 seat of awakening

byang chub kyi snying po

bodhimanda

The exact place where every buddha in this world will manifest the attainment of buddhahood. Specifically, this is the place beneath the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gayā.

g.22 Simha

seng ge

शेरको

simha

Siṃha (Lion) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Pradīpā.

g.23 Sukhāvatī

bde ba can

नरेन्द्र

sukhāvatī

Sukhāvatī (Blissful) is the buddhafield to the west inhabited by the buddha Amitābha, who is also known as Amitāyus. It is classically described in *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī* (<u>Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra</u>).

g.24 Suniścitapadmaphullitagātra

shin tu rnam par gdon mi za bar pad mo rab tu rgyas pa'i sku

suniścitapadmaphullitagātra

Suniścitapadmaphullitagātra (Lotus Body Blooming with Utter Certainty) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Avaivartikacakranirghoṣā.

g.25 Suprabhā

'od bzang po

र्देर्पत्रबर्ध्य

suprabhā

Suprabhā (Beautiful Light) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Vairocana.

g.26 Vairocana

rnam par snang mdzad

vairocana

Vairocana (Brilliance of the Sun) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Suprabhā.

g.27 Vajrasārapramardin

rdo rje snying pos rab tu 'dul ba

vajrasārapramardin

Vajrasārapramardin (Vajra Essence Vanquisher) is a buddha who inhabits the buddhafield Kaṣāyadhvajā.

g.28 Virajā

rdul dang bral ba

virajā

Virajā (Dustless) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Dharmadhvaja.

g.29 Vyūhā

rnam par brgyan pa

इस्राधराम्बुद्धाः

vyūhā

Vyūhā (Ornamented) is a buddhafield inhabited by the Buddha Sarvābhijñāmatirāja.