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The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya

Caityadhāraṇī

ཤེས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་མཐར་ཕྱིན་པར་གྱུབ་པའི་མཆོད་རྟེན་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

shes pa thams cad mthar phyin par grub pa'i mchod rten zhes bya ba'i gzungs

The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya Perfectly Constructed with Complete Knowledge

Sarvaprajñāntapāramitāsiddhacaityadhāraṇī

· Toh 601 ·

Degé Kangyur vol. 90 (rgyud 'bum, pha), folios 260.a–266.b



Translated by Julian Schott
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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* is a short manual on the ritual preparation for and casting of small caityas from clay. The ritual has three main parts: a description of the general transformative power of the dhāraṇī, the preparation rituals for the ground and clay, and rituals for the consecration of the cast images. The main dhāraṇī, with the name *vimaloṣṇīṣa*, “stainless uṣṇīṣa,” was widely used in central and northeast Asian Buddhism, especially in the context of purification, consecration, and inauguration rituals.

ac.

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

- i.1 *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya Perfectly Constructed with Complete Knowledge*¹ is a dhāraṇī text that teaches detailed preparations for the construction of caityas (*mchod rten*), specifically the preparation of small caityas from clay, one form of *tsha-tsha* as they are commonly known in Tibet. The main dhāraṇī to be recited while crafting these small caityas is called the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* (“stainless uṣṇīṣa”) dhāraṇī, and is famed for its use in consecration and inauguration rituals. The *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī has a long history in India, as evidenced by its discovery on birch bark fragments from Gilgit dating to the seventh century² as well as by its inclusion in numerous small caityas and seals discovered at Bodh Gayā that date between the eighth and eleventh centuries³ and in caityas and dhāraṇī seals found at Nālandā, Ratnagiri, Paharpur, and Udayagiri.⁴ In addition, its discovery on clay seals as far as Indonesia⁵ and manuscript fragments found at Dunhuang⁶ suggest that the fame of this dhāraṇī extended well beyond India.
- i.2 There are two dhāraṇī texts in the Kangyur that have been (and still are today) the principal works employed in Tibetan rites for the consecration and inauguration caityas and stūpas. They are known as the “two stainless ones,”⁷ *The Radiance of the Stainless Uṣṇīṣa* (*Raśmivimaloṣṇīṣaprabhāsa*, Toh 599) and *The Dhāraṇī of Pure Stainless Light* (*Raśmivimalaviśuddhaprabhānāmadhāraṇī*, Toh 510). It is the first of these that is considered the main canonical text introducing and featuring the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī. It relates the narrative of how the dhāraṇī, emanated from the Buddha’s uṣṇīṣa, was first taught when a Trāyastriṃśa god was about to die and fall to the lower realms.⁸ The Buddha explains how it should be placed in caityas with a series of offerings and recitations in order to prolong life and purify the karmic causes of lower rebirth. The *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī is also counted as one of the “five great dhāraṇīs” (*gzung chen sde lnga*) used in consecration rituals in Tibet.⁹

- i.3 The present text, although it contains its own, different narrative, is in some ways a more practice oriented manual, detailing the use of the same dhāraṇī specifically for the preparation of miniature caityas, and can perhaps be seen as a derivative work of *The Radiance of the Stainless Uṣṇīṣa* itself. Nevertheless, in contrast to the primary title given at the beginning of the text, the colophon to *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* names it simply *The Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇī*. The exact wording of the dhāraṇī itself in this text differs slightly from the version in *The Radiance of the Stainless Uṣṇīṣa*.
- i.4 *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* begins with Vajradhara residing in a celestial caitya whose structure will be mirrored in the caitya maṇḍala taught later in the text. From this seat, he emits rays of light from his uṣṇīṣa and heart center to bless the universe and all the beings in it, filling the sky with images of dharmakāya caityas. Moved by this powerful display, Vajrapāṇi and the other bodhisattvas in attendance ask Vajradhara for instruction on the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī used to bless caityas. Vajradhara acquiesces, proceeding to teach the dhāraṇī along with variations to be used in specific scenarios. He then lauds the benefits of using the dhāraṇī when constructing caityas in general.
- i.5 Following this more general discourse on the use of the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī, Vajradhara offers a series of instructions on making a maṇḍala of miniature caityas, beginning with the identification and purification of the site from which clay will be excavated and the preparation of the site where the caityas will be made. Once these preliminary steps are taught, Vajradhara describes the procedure for making the caityas, including the softening of the clay with a mallet, the forming of the individual balls of clay, the preparation of the caitya molds, the process of inserting or impressing the dhāraṇī and other mantra syllables into the clay balls, and the casting of the caityas. Each of these steps is accompanied by a mantra recitation and a visualization sequence.
- i.6 Once the process of making the caityas has been explained, Vajradhara teaches his audience how to decorate the caityas, how to arrange them into the maṇḍala pattern, and how to arrange the entire ritual site in preparation for the main consecration rite. The primary maṇḍala described consists of five caityas: a central caitya surrounded by four caityas in each cardinal direction. Vajradhara repeatedly notes that this rite can be performed on any number of caityas—a hundred, a thousand, or even more.
- i.7 After detailing these steps and their respective mantras and visualization sequences, Vajradhara proceeds to the final instructions on the main consecration rite. The practitioner, identifying themselves as Vajradhara, blesses the individual parts of the ritual site and maṇḍala through mantra recitation and visualization, makes offerings to the maṇḍala of caityas, and

meditatively invokes the blessings of the five tathāgatas and the five families for each of the individual caityas. After completing this elaborate sequence, the practitioner is directed to recite the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī* for as long as they can.

i.8 Vajradhara concludes his discourse by identifying the challenges a practitioner may face in performing such a complex rite, offering remedies and encouragement and extolling the benefits that come from practicing it completely and correctly.

i.9 There is no known Sanskrit witness of *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya*, nor does it appear to have been translated into Chinese. Lacking an Indic witness, little is known about its circulation and use in India. As noted above, the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī*, the core dhāraṇī employed in this text, enjoyed widespread fame in India and beyond, likely because it was transmitted in scriptures and ritual manuals such as this one. Nonetheless, there is no further information on or versions of *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* beyond its Tibetan translation.

i.10 There is also little known about the provenance of the Tibetan translation of *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya*. Among the numerous versions of the translation included in the Kangyur and other scriptural collections, none include a translator's colophon that would provide information on its translators or the time and place in which it was translated. The text is not included in the imperial-period catalogs under its main title, but the Phangthangma (*'phang thang ma*) catalog does list a series of texts related to the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī* that cannot be correlated with extant Tibetan translations. Among them we find *The Dhāraṇī-Mantra of the Radiant Stainless Uṣṇīṣa Together with Its Rite* (*'phags pa gtsug tor dri ma med par snang ba'i gzungs sngags cho ga dang bcas pa*),¹⁰ which as the title indicates concerns the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī* in combination with ritual instructions for its use. Although this is more likely to be a reference to *The Radiance of the Stainless Uṣṇīṣa* (Toh 599) as mentioned above, it may possibly refer instead to *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* under a different title, as this text does describe an elaborate ritual that employs the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī*. If that were the case, it would indicate that *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* was translated prior to the Tibetan empire's collapse in 843.¹¹ As noted above, *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* appears to be known by multiple titles, yet another of which might be the title found in the Phangthangma. The colophon of the text translated below identifies it as *The Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇī*, and both the Phukdrak (*phug brag*) and Lang do (*lang mdo*) Kangyurs provide the alternate Sanskrit title *Vimaloṣṇīṣasarvacaityanāmadhāraṇī*, which can be tentatively translated as *The Dhāraṇī Called the Stainless Uṣṇīṣa for All Caityas*.

- i.11 *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* is also found in two paracanonical collections: *The Extensive Collection of Early Translations of Canonical Scripture* of the Nyingma (*rnying ma*) tradition¹² and *The Collection of Maṇḍala Rituals from Old and New Exemplars at Palpung* of the Kagyü (*bka' brgyud*) school.¹³ In both cases the Tibetan translation bears the same title as that found in the majority of Kangyurs, *shes pas thams cad mthar phyin par grub pa'i mchod rten zhes bya ba'i gzungs*.
- i.12 As is often the case with dhāraṇī literature, *The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya* is preserved in two locations in the Degé Kangyur. Toh 601 is found among the Kriyātantras in the Tantra section (*rgyud 'bum*), while Toh 884 is located in the Collection of Dhāraṇīs (*gzungs 'dus*).¹⁴ Apart from a few scribal variations, these two versions are identical.
- i.13 The Degé versions of the Tibetan translation serve as the primary witnesses for this translation. The versions found in the Stok Palace (*stog pho brang*) and Phukdrak Kangyurs were also consulted closely, as were the annotations reported in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Degé Kangyur. Additionally, the version preserved in *The Extensive Collection of Early Translations* of the Nyingma tradition was studied as a representation of the text from a paracanonical source. No substantive differences were found among these numerous witnesses.
- i.14 The dhāraṇīs used in this text have been preserved as cited in the Degé witness, with only minor emendations to correct obvious orthographic errors. An important exception is the main dhāraṇī, the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī*, for which we have Sanskrit witnesses. There are, naturally, some differences between the dhāraṇī as reported in the different Sanskrit sources and the Degé witness. Thus, when possible and warranted, the Degé has been emended to align with the Sanskrit witnesses when the latter preserve the clearer reading.

The Dhāraṇī for a Caitya

1.

The Translation

[F.260.a]

1.1

Homage to the Three Jewels.

Homage to the Blessed One, Vajradhara.

Homage to the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, perfect Buddha, the king with majestic power over the mode, discipline, and miraculous display of all things.

1.2

Homage to the buddhas of the three times!

Homage to the virtuous Three Jewels!

I pay homage to Akṣobhya,

Amitābha, and Avalokiteśvara!

Homage to the three families!¹⁵

1.3

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One, the great Vajradhara, was dwelling in a great caitya with a central palace made of various precious substances surrounded by four immeasurable caityas. It sat atop a foundation that had the nature of a caitya and was made from the five kinds of materials from the great Mount Meru.¹⁶ The nature of this great caitya was such that even the space above its summit had the quality of a caitya. He was dwelling there together with Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, and other bodhisattvas of the tenth level, [F.260.b] as well as the protectors of the pure abodes, including Brahmā, Śakra, and the Four Great Kings.¹⁷

1.4

Then, a total of sixty quintillion¹⁸ light rays of various colors were emitted from the Blessed One's uṣṇīṣa, the śrīvatsa at his heart, and other places. The great brilliance of these light rays pervaded all the incalculable, inconceivable, and inexpressible realms of the trichiliocosm, filling them like a heap of mustard seeds. All those among the infinite number of beings who were blind could now see forms, those who were deaf could hear sounds,

those who stuttered could speak clearly, those with a limp or who had trouble walking could walk, those who were paralyzed and those who were sick were freed from their illness, hell beings had their lifespans reduced and were gradually freed from their torment, and all beings gradually became contemplative. The entire sky filled with dharmakāya mind-caityas, which grew in size. The rays of light then reentered the Blessed One's uṣṇīṣa, turning into a representation of the dharmakāya.

1.5 Vajrapāṇi and the rest of the entourage were astonished, and they worshiped the Blessed One with offerings of canopies, banners, flags, parasols, fly whisks, bells, silk scarves, incense, flowers, garlands, unguents, lamps, food, music, and the like. They asked the Blessed One, "Please, Blessed One, protector of beings who possesses great compassion, teach the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī*,¹⁹ the great spell used in the rite for blessing a caitya."

1.6 The Blessed One replied, "Here is the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī*, the great spell used in the rite for blessing a caitya. [F.261.a] Any son or daughter of noble family who understands, upholds, writes, reads, or makes its title known will entirely purify the five acts with immediate retribution, the ten unwholesome deeds, and any other negative actions they have performed. This is the *vimaloṣṇīṣa*, the great spell used in the rites for blessing a caitya:

1.7 *om traiyadhve sarvatathāgatahṛdayagarbhe jvala dharmadhātugarbhe saṃhāraṇa āyuh saṃśodhaya*²⁰ *pāpaṃ sarvatathāgatasamantoṣṇīṣavimale viśuddhe svāhā*.²¹

1.8 Immediately after he spoke this great spell, all the realms of the world took on the nature of a caitya. If this great spell is written on birch bark, cloth, or other tree bark and affixed to the top of a banner, the banner will become worthy of worship, one that is honored and venerated by all gods, humans, and the like. If this great spell is affixed to someone's body or neck, gods, humans, asuras, and the like will see that person as a buddha. If one recites this great spell when traversing rugged mountains, forests, isolated places, or other landscapes, all those mountains and landscapes will be like a caitya.

1.9 If one recites *om traiyadhve sarvatathāgatahṛdayagarbhe jvala dharmadhātugarbhe saṃhāraṇa*²² *āyuh saṃśodhaya pāpaṃ sarvatathāgatasamantoṣṇīṣavimale viśuddhe mahāviraṇa* *gambhīraṇi dharmadhātugarbhe vivisāra a a laṃ svāhā*,²³ the entire ground will take on the nature of a caitya.

1.10 If one utters this great mantra spell when crossing any body of water—such as a river, lake, or ocean—all that water will take on the nature of a caitya. After reciting *om traiyadhve sarvatathāgatahṛdayagarbhe jvala dharmadhātugarbhe saṃhāraṇa āyuh saṃśodhaya pāpaṃ sarvatathāgatasamantoṣṇīṣavimale viśuddhe mahāviraṇa* *gambhīraṇi dharmadhātugarbhe vivisāra a māṃaki svāhā*,²⁴ [F.261.b] all water will take on the nature of a caitya.

1.11 Additionally, when one casts this great spell in a way that pervades the whole of space, all of space will also take on the nature of a caitya. When reciting *om traiyadhve sarvatathāgatahṛdayagarbhe jvala dharmadhātugarbhe saṃhāraṇa āyuhḥ saṃśodhaya pāpaṃ sarvatathāgatasamantoṣṇīṣavimale viśuddhe mahāvīraṇa gambhīraṇi dharmadhātu vivisāra a a e khaṃ ya svāhā*,²⁵ all of space will take on the nature of a caitya and become worthy of veneration, circumambulation, and worship.

1.12 If one recites the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī* when making caityas from any of the five great elements, it purifies all afflictions and obscurations. Moreover, when a caitya is made with materials such as earth, wood, rock, mud, or clay onto which this mantra spell has been cast, those materials will produce a caitya made of various precious substances. When *om ratnacaitye pañcaye vivisāra svāhā*²⁶ is recited, cow dung and similar materials can be applied to result in a caitya made of various precious substances. If this great spell is not cast, even if one intends to fashion a caitya from gold, silver, lapis lazuli, and the rest of the seven precious substances, it will be no different than one made of stone, wood, or clay. Why? Because the blessing of the mantra and essence mantra will not have entered the nature of these materials. When blessed with the great spell, however, even a caitya made from any of the five great elements will purify the stains of the obscurations from incalculable eons so that one will be born into a householder family as great as a sal tree and go on to obtain the stage of nonregression. If one makes a caitya from stone, wood planks, and the like after blessing them with this great spell, there is no doubt that one will be born into a brahmin family as great as a sal tree, [F.262.a] gradually traverse the ten stages, and obtain the eleventh stage, Universal Light.²⁷ If one makes a caitya from gold, silver, lapis lazuli, and the like after blessing them with this great spell, there is no doubt that one will be born into a kṣatriya family as great as a sal tree and go on to obtain the stage of Vajradhara. Furthermore, if this great mantra spell is cast when making a single caitya, it will be as if ten million were made. If this great spell is not cast, even if ten million caityas are made it will be as if they are just one. Why would this be the case? The answer is the same as before.

1.13 The mantra for the great spell is *tadyathā sūkṣme sūkṣme śānte śānte nirākule yaśo tejo sarvabuddhe adhiṣṭhāna adhiṣṭhite anumide svāhā*.²⁸ Its procedure is as follows: if one makes a single caitya from a lump of clay after reciting the spell over it twenty-one times, it will be as if ten million are made. The corresponding amount and benefit of making a hundred cannot be expressed, even by the arhats among noble śrāvakas. The corresponding amount and benefit of making a thousand cannot be expressed, even by bodhisattvas. The corresponding amount and benefit of making ten

thousand cannot be expressed, even by the tathāgatas. The corresponding amount and benefit of making a hundred thousand cannot be expressed, even by the tathāgatas of the three times and ten directions.

1.14 For these reasons, one should perform the ritual offering, including the five supports for offering.²⁹ First, the local deities should be appeased at the site where the caityas will be made, where the clay for the caityas will be stored, and where the clay for the caityas will be excavated. Next, a boundary should be created to thwart any ill-intentioned obstructing spirits who live there and would disrupt the caitya and its virtue. To infuse a thread with the mantra of this great spell, recite *om vajrasūtra hūm phaṭ*³⁰ while visualizing a thread to be a vajra thread. [F.262.b] The area that encompasses the site for the caitya and the area that encompasses the site where the clay is located should be demarcated with the thread. When the ground is demarcated in this way, the specific patch of ground will take on the qualities of the various precious substances that are used for a caitya.

1.15 In the same space, one should next cast the great spell *om vajrakīli kīli kīlaya sarvaduṣṭam hūm phaṭ*³¹ on a rosewood stake that is eight fingers long. After reciting it seven times, one should visualize it as a vajra stake and plant one in the center and at the four corners of the demarcated area. If done in that way, one will be protected from all humans and nonhumans, unless their actions are the result of the ripening of previous karma. The rosewood stake should remain in the ground where the clay for the caitya is located and should not be removed for any reason until the clay is taken.

1.16 After that, cast the spell *om amṛte hana hana hūm phaṭ*³² on sesame seeds and white mustard seeds. It should be recited seven times, and the seeds should be scattered over the site. By doing so, this specific area will become the immeasurable seat of the tathāgatas.

1.17 Once the area has been blessed as the seat of the tathāgatas, the boundary against ill-intentioned obstructing spirits should be set by offering incense, flowers, oblations, and the like to the devas, nāgas, and asuras who reside in the area and then dedicating the merit. The area will be auspicious and blessed after the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī* has been recited.

1.18 Next, when digging up the clay for the caitya, one should dig while reciting *om vajra khana khana hūm phaṭ*³³ Digging while reciting this and visualizing the area as composed of the five precious substances will transform it into the pure body of the Tathāgata.

1.19 The clean earth that has been excavated should then be placed in a purified area, and the rite of pounding the earth should be performed. One should form the gesture of Amṛtakunḍalin over a mallet, press it with a three-pronged vajra,³⁴ and cast the great spell *vajramudgara ākoṭaya ākoṭaya*

*hūm phaṭ*³⁵ while pounding the earth. [F.263.a] After pounding the earth while reciting this seven times and visualizing the mallet as a vajra mallet, all afflictions and habitual tendencies will be purified and defeated.

- 1.20 Next comes the kneading of the clay. After touching scented water with the gesture of Amṛtakunḍalin, one should imagine the nature of reality as a white syllable *a* within the scented water. A bright moon disk appears from the syllable, shining with intense rays of light that pervade the scented water. Imagining that the scented water has taken on the nature of nectar, recite the great spell *om amṛte hūm phaṭ*. After blessing it with seven recitations, the scented water will be like a stream of great nectar.

- 1.21 One should then recite the following great spell for kneading the clay: *om vajra pramardanaya hūm phaṭ*.³⁶ After reciting it seven times, the clay will become the body of the Tathāgata. Now that the clay has been blessed as the inconceivable body of the Tathāgata, one should form the gesture of Amṛtakunḍalin over it while reciting the following great spell: *namo ratna-trayāya tadyathā sūkṣme sūkṣme śānte śānte dānte dānte nirākule yaśo yaśovati tejo śuddhe viśuddhe sarvatathāgata adhiṣṭhāna adhiṣṭhite ā namaḥ te hite svāhā*.³⁷ Once one has recited this great spell in three sets of seven, totaling twenty-one times, and blessed the clay with the great mantra spell, five kinds of wisdom-light rays will radiate from the clay into the ten directions and tame all beings as needed. The rays of light then return, causing the clay to take on the nature of the five precious substances and endowing it with the causes and conditions for the inconceivable body of the Tathāgata. This is what one should imagine. [F.263.b]

- 1.22 The following great spell should then be recited seven times while preparing balls of clay: *om vajra āyuṣe svāhā*.³⁸ Once blessed in this way, clouds of wisdom-light rays will radiate from the clay balls, pervade the limitless realms of the ten directions, and fulfill the aims of many beings. The clouds of light rays will then gather back into the clay balls, purifying them so that they are like crystals with the nature of precious wisdom. This is what one should imagine.

- 1.23 Next, the seal of the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* essence mantra is pressed into the clay balls, or the mantra is written on birch bark, cloth, paper, or any bark and inserted into them. The essence mantras of each of the five families—*om hūm trām hrī āḥ*³⁹—should be incorporated into the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* mantra so that they are joined as a pair, and then either affixed as a seal or inserted as a written mantra as appropriate. The ball of clay will then possess the wisdom mind of the Tathāgata. When inserting the spell, one should recite the mantra *om vajragarbhe svāhā*.⁴⁰ Once recited, the wisdom mind of all the tathāgatas will be gathered within it and fixed. This is what one should imagine.

- 1.24 After that, one should recite the great spell for anointing the interior of the caitya mold with the oil of white mustard seed or sesame oil: *om araṇe virāṇe svāhā*.⁴¹ Once this has been recited three times and the blessing conferred, the caitya will become a dharmadhātu caitya through the union of means and wisdom. This is what one should imagine.
- 1.25 Then, when pressing the caitya, one should recite the great spell *om vajra-mudgara ākoṭaya ākoṭaya hūm phaṭ*.⁴² Once it has been recited and the caitya pressed, it will become a dharmakāya caitya through the union of space and nondual wisdom. Because the caitya is made using the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* essence mantra in whichever form,⁴³ it will become an infinite dharmakāya caitya through the union of space and nondual wisdom. [F.264.a]
- 1.26 One should next extract the caitya while reciting the great spell for removing it from the mold: *om dharmadhātuye svāhā dharmadhātugarbhe svāhā*.⁴⁴ The caitya is extracted after reciting this seven times, at which point it emerges as an infinite dharmakāya caitya through the union of space and nondual wisdom. It will fulfill, in an extraordinary manner, the aims of all beings in this world until saṃsāra is empty. This is what one should imagine.
- 1.27 Once the caitya has been removed from its container, one should recite the great spell for the ring.⁴⁵ After reciting *om pramāṇaye svāhā*⁴⁶ and setting the ring, it should be adorned with a precious parasol, precious pinnacle, precious banner, silk streamers, and other ornaments. Ornamented with the various qualities of nirvāṇa, it will benefit beings according to their wishes. This is what one should imagine.
- 1.28 Then, when the caitya is covered with a cloth, one should recite the great spell *om dharmadhātusvabhāva viśuddhe dharma te svāhā*.⁴⁷ If one repeats this spell many times, the caitya will signify the pure dharmadhātu.
- 1.29 If the maṇḍala of prepared caityas consists of five caityas, one should draw a maṇḍala with a central space and spaces in the four directions, totaling five. When making any number of caityas—be it a hundred or a thousand—construct a stone base with a number of maṇḍala squares corresponding to the number of caityas.⁴⁸ It should be a square maṇḍala made of earth, stone, wood, and so forth. The throne beneath it can be a lion throne, a jewel throne, or a lotus throne. Once this base has been made, it should be sprinkled with cow dung mixed with scented water.
- 1.30 Water infused with saffron and sandalwood should be smeared in a circle to encompass the entire area where the central caitya and caityas in the four directions will be placed. [F.264.b] Use thread to demarcate and then draw the maṇḍala.⁴⁹ When drawing a maṇḍala for five caityas, draw a maṇḍala with five spaces—a central space and spaces in the four directions. In the same way, the lines of the vajra grid should be used to demarcate the space

into maṇḍala squares corresponding to the number of caityas, be they one hundred or one thousand. An eight-petaled lotus should be drawn in each of the spaces where a caitya is to be placed.

1.31 Then, once the caitya maṇḍala has been set up, the request to remain is made using the mantra spell *om supraṭiṣṭha stūpe svāhā*.⁵⁰ After reciting this three times and setting out the caitya, it will function extraordinarily to serve the aims of oneself and others. The sequence for arranging the caityas is as follows: the first is placed in the center, then one proceeds sequentially to set one in the east, south, west, and north. The great spell to be recited while placing them is *om vajrapadmasamaye svāhā*.⁵¹ After reciting it three times, say, “please be seated on the vajra and lotus seat” while imagining that everything—the ground, the expanse of the sky, and the depths of the sea—is filled with caityas. Alternatively, one offers incense, flowers, and the rest of the fivefold offering and makes the request to remain after each caitya is made and placed in the maṇḍala.

1.32 The color of the caityas and other features are painted observing the following correspondences: white for pacification, yellow for increasing, red for magnetizing, and green for protection.⁵² The cloth should follow the same scheme. This is what one should imagine.

1.33 Next, the maṇḍala of caityas should be blessed. One should recite the mantra of the great spell *hūm raṃ svāhā*, which has emerged from the red syllable *raṃ* located above the maṇḍala. [F.265.a] After reciting it three times, a great flame of the wisdom of suchness will burn fiercely, purifying the concepts in those places⁵³ so that the very foundation of the maṇḍala will be made of the five precious substances. This is what one should imagine.

1.34 One should next recite the great spell *om a candramaṇḍala hūm phaṭ*,⁵⁴ which emerges from the place where a white syllable *a* stands in the center of the fivefold, hundredfold, or thousandfold maṇḍala grid. After reciting it an equivalent number of times,⁵⁵ each cell becomes a moon-disk seat for a caitya. This is what one should imagine.

1.35 After that, when performing the maṇḍala rite one should face either east or west, whichever is easier, and use one’s samādhi to transform oneself into the great seal, the form of Vajradhara.

1.36 Above a moon disk at the heart, one should create a five-pronged vajra that emits an effulgence of wisdom light. These rays of wisdom light radiate from every pore on one’s body, spreading infinitely like cloud banks of buddhas and their maṇḍalas. They bless all the realms of beings, fulfill their aims, and then dissolve back into one’s body. This is what one should imagine.

- 1.37 Next is the generation of the caitya palace. One should form the *vajradhātu*⁵⁶ gesture over the caitya placed in the maṇḍala, touch the top of the caitya, and then recite the mantra for the great spell: *om vajradhātu adhiṭṭha hūm*.⁵⁷ Through this blessing, the caitya will be established in the center of a moon seat upon a dharmadhātu maṇḍala and a ground made of precious substances, all within a palace composed of various precious materials.⁵⁸ This is what one should imagine.
- 1.38 Once each caitya has been prepared in this way, set out, and presented with different kinds of offerings, one should recite the spell for purifying different kinds of offerings, including lion banners, cooked rice, [F.265.b] arrangements of fine foods and the like, canopies, streamers, parasols, garlands, fragrances, lamps, and incense:⁵⁹ *om sarvapūja puṣpe svāhā*.⁶⁰ After it has been recited, its blessings will cause the offerings to amass as marvelous Samantabhadra offering clouds and fall like rain. This is what one should imagine.
- 1.39 The five kinds of offerings to a caitya should be presented one by one, and they should be offered as individual gifts to the extent one is able, even if the cloth is small, the canopies are frayed and so forth, and the parasols are small. While the rite is being performed, one should clarify one's samādhi, one's continuity of experience. To do this one should recognize and imagine that the five caityas—those in the center and four directions—share the extraordinary colors, ornaments, attributes, and retinues of the buddhas of the five families. One visualizes that those caityas, which are made of the five wisdoms, are pure and clear by nature, and that each letter of the *vimaloṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī* and the essence mantra of each of the five families in the center of those caitya vessels⁶¹ is brilliant and uniquely dazzling, like refined gold. The five families, in the form of infinite and multicolored rays of wisdom light, spread throughout the ten directions, adorning the infinite sky and the entirety of the dharmadhātu with clouds of tathāgata bodies. Having accomplished that, they bless all the realms of the world, serve the aims of all beings there, and fulfill their hopes. The rays of wisdom light return, strike the top of one's head and heart, and purify anything that obscures awakened activity and so forth. One should imagine that one now has the nature of vajra body, speech, and mind.⁶²
- 1.40 Next perform the reception using offering water consisting of scented water mixed with various fragrances. [F.266.a] Form the gesture of the offering water, place the conch shell on it, and imagine that a white syllable *a* in the scented water transforms into a moon disk from which shine rays of light that grant the scented water the nature of wisdom nectar. One should then recite the great spell for making offerings: *om amṛte argham pratīccha svāhā*.⁶³ After reciting it, one should scent the pinnacles of the caityas three

times by pouring the water.⁶⁴ The noble ones will be pleased with this offering. This should be expressed with the words “May all noble ones be pleased.” Then, using the oceanic cloud gesture,⁶⁵ the water should be sprinkled over the pinnacles, after which one imagines that it gathers in the wisdom body and all the marvelous initiations are conferred. After this, the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī should be read aloud an appropriate number of times,⁶⁶ the merit should be dedicated, and extensive aspirations should be made.

1.41 If one finds it difficult to complete this rite as prescribed, one should transform one’s body using the samādhi of one’s personal deity and not let that intention weaken. One should recognize that the caityas and articles of worship are the nature of the dharmadhātu in their pure aspect. If one makes caityas in this way, it is the same as the extensive rite. There is no contradiction. If even this is not possible, one can make a caitya by reciting the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī, keeping it in mind, writing it down, and carrying it with one. If one does this, it is in fact the extensive rite. Those caityas will be transformed into the body of the Tathāgata and will serve to benefit oneself and others in an extraordinary way. If one does not recite the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī, even when offerings are made and power invested, no power will be conferred. This is also said in scripture:

1.42 “When the nature of a mantra is not clear
For any spell or mantra,
And when the samādhi of realization is not clear,
All forms, including caityas and the like,
Will not be complete even when constructed.”⁶⁷ [F.266.b]

1.43 The qualities of a caitya and other images made by one who possesses secret mantra and realization are described as follows:

1.44 In this sublime caitya rite,
Casting a single caitya incanted with this dhāraṇī,
Which is distinct for its generation of merit,
Is the same as making ten million.

1.45 The five acts with immediate retribution and the mass of evil
Of those long in saṃsāra
Will all be cleansed,
So that they will have a miraculously long life.

1.46 In all their lives to come,
They will be born into sublime and exalted families,
Possess supreme enjoyments,
And be born as universal monarchs.

- 1.47 They will know all their past and future lives,
 And in all worlds throughout the three times
- 1.48 Will never be separated from the Three Jewels.
 Unshaken by obstacles and harms,
 They will succeed in their intentions
 And in the end reach perfect awakening.
- 1.49 *This completes “The Vimaloṣṭhīśa Dhāraṇī.”⁶⁸*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 This translation of the title follows the Lhasa, Narthang, Phukdrak, and Stok Palace versions in reading *shes pa thams cad* rather than *shes pas thams cad* as attested in the Degé version (and most others).
- n.2 von Hinüber 2018, pp. 229–30.
- n.3 Hidas 2021, pp. 88–94.
- n.4 Schopen 2012, pp. 283–84.
- n.5 Griffiths 2014, pp. 181–83.
- n.6 Scherrer-Schaub 1994, p. 712.
- n.7 Dorjee 1996, p. 23, n. 1.
- n.8 In fact, *The Radiance of the Stainless Uṣṇīṣa* contains two dhāraṇīs, long and short, the short one being introduced as the “essence” or “heart” (*snying po*) of the long one. The dhāraṇī in the present text corresponds to the shorter of the two.
- n.9 Scherrer-Schaub 1994, p. 722, n. 71; Bentor 2003, p. 24, n. 22.
- n.10 Kawagoe 2005, p. 19.
- n.11 Lalou 1953, p. 327.
- n.12 *snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 3 (ka), pp. 437–60 ([BDRC W1PD100944](https://library.bdrclibrary.org/show/bdr:WA1PD100944?tabs=bdr:MW1PD100944,bdr:W1PD100944) (<https://library.bdrclibrary.org/show/bdr:WA1PD100944?tabs=bdr:MW1PD100944,bdr:W1PD100944>)).
- n.13 *dpal spungs dpe rnying gsar bskrun las dkyil chog phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 10 (tha), pp. 373–96 ([BDRC W3CN12210](https://library.bdrclibrary.org/show/bdr:W3CN12210)).

(<https://library.bdrclibrary.org/show/bdr:MW3CN12210?tabs=bdr:W3CN12210>)).

- n.14 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 884 version of this text within vol. 100 or 101 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 884, n.14 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh884.html#UT22084-090-045-286>), for details.
- n.15 In the context of Kriyātantra literature, the “three families” likely refers to the vajra, lotus, and tathāgata families.
- n.16 Tib. *ri rab chen po sna lnga las grub pa*. This translation is tentative.
- n.17 The term “pure abodes” (Skt. *śuddhāvāsa*; Tib. *gtsang ris*) typically refers to the five highest heavens in the form realm (Skt. *rūpadhātu*; Tib. *gzugs kham*). Here, however, the term appears to refer to a different set of heavens: the Saha world, which is our own world, located at the base of Mount Meru and presided over by Brahmā; the Heaven of the Four Great Kings (Skt. *Cāturmahārājakāyika*; Tib. *rgyal chen rigs bzhi pa*), located on the slopes of Mount Meru and presided over by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūdhaka, Virūpākṣa, and Vaiśravaṇa; and the Heaven of Thirty-Three (Skt. *Trāyastriṃśa*; Tib. *sum cu rtsa gsum pa*), located on the summit of Mount Meru and presided over by Śakra/Indra. The phrase “including” (Tib. *la sogs pa*) may indicate that gods from heavens higher than these are present as well.
- n.18 The exact number, taking *brgya stong* as a hundred thousand, *khrag khrig* as *niyuta*, i.e., a million, and *bye ba* as *koṭi*, i.e., ten million, would amount to 6×10^{18} .
- n.19 The title of this dhāraṇī is left untranslated in the Tibetan text, a convention that is followed here. The name of the dhāraṇī would be translated as “the stainless uṣṇīṣa.”
- n.20 Emending the dative *saṃśodhāya* to the verbal imperative *saṃśodhaya*. This emendation is made in the subsequent formulas without further notation.
- n.21 This can be tentatively translated as “*Om*, O you who have the innermost heart of all the tathāgatas of the three times, blaze! O you who have the essence of the dharmadhātu, gather vitality and purify negativity! You are pure, the stainless universal uṣṇīṣa of all tathāgatas, *svāhā*.” In the three repetitions of the spell that follow, an additional line is added, related respectively to the elements of earth, water, and space. With regard to the spell itself, see also Schopen 2005, pp. 334–38, von Hinüber 2018, p. 230, and Griffiths 2014, p. 182.

- n.22 In some of the extant Skt. witnesses of this dhāraṇī, the term here is *saṃvara* (“bind”).
- n.23 The lines appended here to the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī can be tentatively rendered as “O great dustless one, enter into the deep essence of the dharmadhātu. Spread and expand. *A a laṃ svāhā.*” The remaining dhāraṇīs replicate this added line, changing only the final syllables to align with the respective element. This dhāraṇī uses *a a laṃ* for the earth element.
- n.24 The translation of this dhāraṇī is the same as above, with the addition of *a māmaki* to correspond with the water element.
- n.25 The translation of this dhāraṇī is the same as above, with the addition of *a a e khaṃ ya* to correspond with the space element.
- n.26 This spell can be tentatively translated as “*Om*, suffuse the five used for a precious caitya, *svāhā.*”
- n.27 The eleventh stage (*bhūmi*) here refers to awakening, the stage of buddhahood. As is clear from the next line, this is not the final stage articulated in this text, as the “stage of Vajradhara” is considered distinct from the attainment of buddhahood.
- n.28 This can tentatively be translated as “It is so: Subtle, subtle, peaceful, peaceful, composed. Famous and bright. All buddhas. Bestow the blessing and rejoice, *svāhā.*” The precise meaning of *anumide*, which is attested in all versions, is not clear, and it is taken here as a corrupted form of *anumode*.
- n.29 This translation is tentative. It is unclear what the “five supports for offering” (*mchod pa’i rten lnga*) are. This may refer to a fivefold offering sequence for which Vajradhara assumes prior knowledge, or it may refer to the steps that follow immediately below. Both the narrative preamble to this text and the body of the main rite refer to a set of five caityas, thus the phrase *mchod pa’i rten lnga* could be read as “the five caityas.” However, the Tibetan translators were consistent in using *mchod rten* to render *caitya*, so the inclusion of the genitive particle in *mchod pa’i rten* suggests that they did not read the term *caitya* here.
- n.30 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra thread, *hūṃ phaṭ!*”
- n.31 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra stake! Drive in the stake! Bind all obstructing beings, *hūṃ phaṭ!*”
- n.32 This can be translated as “*Om*, deathless one. Strike, strike, *hūṃ phaṭ!*”

- n.33 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra dig, dig, *hūm phaṭ*.”
- n.34 This translation is tentative and could also be read as “Press the seal (*mudrā*; *phyag rgya*) of Amṛtakunḍalin into a mallet using a three-pronged vajra.” This interpretation seems less likely, however, as the *mudrā* of Amṛtakunḍalin is more likely a physical gesture rather than an image or string of syllables to be inscribed on the mallet.
- n.35 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra mallet, flatten, flatten, *hūm phaṭ*.”
- n.36 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra knead, *hūm phaṭ*.”
- n.37 This can be tentatively translated as “Homage to the Three Jewels. It is thus: Subtle, subtle. Peaceful, peaceful. Calm, calm and composed. Fame, famous. Bright and pure, pure. All tathāgatas. Bestow the blessing. *Ā*, homage to you. May there be benefit.”
- n.38 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra life, *svāhā*.”
- n.39 These are the seed syllables of, respectively, the tathāgata, vajra, jewel, lotus, and karma families.
- n.40 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra essence, *svāhā*.”
- n.41 This can be translated as “*Om*, dustless. Free of dust, *svāhā*.”
- n.42 This can be translated as “*Om*, vajra mallet, flatten, flatten, *hūm phaṭ*.”
- n.43 This seems to refer to the different options of placing the mantra as stated above.
- n.44 This can be translated as “*Om*, *svāhā* to the dharmadhātu, *svāhā* to the essence of the dharmadhātu.”
- n.45 It is not clear what ‘*khor lo gzugs pa*’ refers to exactly. It has been interpreted here as a ring set above the caitya as a decorative frame on which other adornments are affixed.
- n.46 This can be translated as “*Om*, measure, *svāhā*.”
- n.47 This can be translated as “*Om*, pure nature of dharmadhātu, *svāhā*.”
- n.48 This describes a base marked with a grid that has squares equal in number to the caityas made. There is some confusion in the text here, as it first says that one should construct a stone base or platform (*rdo’i stegs bu*), before listing the different materials it can be made of.

- n.49 The idea here seems to be to first lay out the maṇḍala grid with thread, and then use the thread as a guide for drawing the grid lines.
- n.50 This can be translated as “*Om*, remain firm, O stūpa, *svāhā*.”
- n.51 This can be translated as “*Om*, arranged on vajra and lotus, *svāhā*.”
- n.52 This list refers to different types of ritual activities for which the caitya maṇḍala may be used.
- n.53 “Those places” (*gnas de dag*) seems to refer to places where the individual caityas are placed in the maṇḍala.
- n.54 This can be translated as “*Om*, a, a moon disk, *hūṃ phaṭ*.”
- n.55 Equivalent, presumably, to the number of cells in the maṇḍala.
- n.56 The Tib. has the feminine term *rdo rje dbyings ma*, which is understood here to be feminine because it construes syntactically with the feminine term *mudrā* (“gesture”). This reading appears to be confirmed by the use of *vajradhātu* in the following mantra. Less likely, though not implausible, is that the Tib. term is equivalent to *rdo rje dbying phyug ma*, Vajradhātviśvarī, a female Buddhist deity.
- n.57 This can be translated as “*Om*, empowered as vajradhātu, *hūṃ*.”
- n.58 See Rospatt 1999, pp. 132–40 for other uses of the vajradhātu maṇḍala and dharmadhātu maṇḍala in caitya consecration rites.
- n.59 The syntax of this passage is challenging; thus its translation is tentative.
- n.60 This can be translated as “*Om*, may there be complete worship with flowers, *svāhā*.”
- n.61 *Om hūṃ traṃ hrī āḥ*, which was combined with the *vimaloṣṇīṣa* dhāraṇī and inserted into the clay, as described above.
- n.62 The main referent of this line is ambiguous. The line could plausibly read, “The rays of wisdom light return, strike the pinnacle and the heart of those caityas, and purify anything that obscures awakened activity and so forth. One should imagine that one now has the nature of vajra body, speech, and mind.”
- n.63 This can be translated as “*Om*, deathless one, please accept this offering water, *svāhā*.”

- n.64 The Tibetan terminology and syntax in this line is challenging, thus the translation is tentative. The subject is not explicit but is taken here to be the pinnacles of the caityas because the rite is intended to consecrate them. It is entirely possible, however, that it is the ritual officiant who is the target of the ritual action, as the phrase *dbu'i spyi bo*, here translated as “pinnacles,” could naturally be read as “crown of the head.” There is also some ambiguity about the ritual action being described. The idea seems to be that one scents (*bdugs*) the pinnacles by pouring /sprinkling (*sbrengs*) the scented water over them three times.
- n.65 This reference is uncertain, thus the translation is tentative. More literally, the Tibetan phrase *phyag rgya'i rgya mtsho'i sprin* would read “the oceanic cloud of gestures (*mudrā*; *phyag rgya*).”
- n.66 Tib. *ci mang du brjod pa*. It is not clear what the number of recitations would correspond to. Perhaps it is the number of caityas in the maṇḍala.
- n.67 The source of this citation could not be identified.
- n.68 Please see the [introduction](#) about the use of this title.

b.

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GLOSSARY

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

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> 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.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

g.1 affliction

nyon mongs pa

ཉོན་མོངས་པ།

kleśa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The essentially pure nature of mind is obscured and afflicted by various psychological defilements, which destroy the mind's peace and composure and lead to unwholesome deeds of body, speech, and mind, acting as causes for continued existence in saṃsāra. Included among them are the primary afflictions of desire (*rāga*), anger (*dveṣa*), and ignorance (*avidyā*). It is said that there are eighty-four thousand of these negative mental qualities, for which the eighty-four thousand categories of the Buddha's teachings serve as the antidote.

Kleśa is also commonly translated as “negative emotions,” “disturbing emotions,” and so on. The Pāli *kilesa*, Middle Indic *kileśa*, and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit *kleśa* all primarily mean “stain” or “defilement.” The translation “affliction” is a secondary development that derives from the more general (non-Buddhist) classical understanding of *√kliś* (“to harm,” “to afflict”). Both meanings are noted by Buddhist commentators.

g.2 Akṣobhya

mi 'khrugs pa

མི་འཁྱུགས་པ།

akṣobhya

A tathāgata and important esoteric deity. Among the five families, he is head of the vajra family.

g.3 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

amitābha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The buddha of the western buddhafiield 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 The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra (1) Toh 674, i.9.

g.4 Amṛtakuṇḍalin

bdud rtsi 'khyil pa

བདུད་རྩི་འཁྱིལ་པ།

amṛtakuṇḍalin

An esoteric deity counted among the eight or ten dispellers of obstacles (*vighnāntaka*) .

g.5 arhat

dgra bcom pa

དག་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to Buddhist tradition, one who is worthy of worship (*pūjām arhati*), or one who has conquered the enemies, the mental afflictions (*kleśa-ari-hata-vat*), and reached liberation from the cycle of rebirth and suffering. It is the fourth and highest of the four fruits attainable by śrāvakas. Also used as an epithet of the Buddha.

g.6 asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A type of nonhuman being whose precise status is subject to different views, but is included as one of the six classes of beings in the sixfold classification of realms of rebirth. In the Buddhist context, asuras are powerful beings said to be dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility. They are also known in the pre-Buddhist and pre-Vedic mythologies of India and Iran, and feature prominently in Vedic and post-Vedic Brahmanical mythology, as well as in the Buddhist tradition. In these traditions, asuras are often described as being engaged in interminable conflict with the devas (gods).

g.7 Avalokiteśvara

spyān ras gzigs

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།

avalokiteśvara

One of the most popular bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon and one of the eight “close sons” of the Buddha. He is regarded as the embodiment of compassion.

g.8 **blessed one**

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhist literature, this is an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four māras, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” saṃsāra and nirvāṇa—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four māras.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root √*bhañj* (“to break”).

g.9 **Brahmā**

tshangs pa

ཆོས་པ།

brahmā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A high-ranking deity presiding over a divine world; he is also considered to be the lord of the Sahā world (our universe). Though not considered a creator god in Buddhism, Brahmā occupies an important place as one of two gods (the other being Indra/Śakra) said to have first exhorted the Buddha Śākyamuni to teach the Dharma. The particular heavens found in the form realm over which Brahmā rules are often some of the most sought-after realms of higher rebirth in Buddhist literature. Since there are many universes or world systems, there are also multiple Brahmās presiding over them. His most frequent epithets are “Lord of the Sahā World” (*sahāṃpati*) and Great Brahmā (*mahābrahman*).

g.10 caitya

mchod rten

མཚན་རྟེན།

caitya

A general term for any structure or site that is deemed worthy of veneration. In Tibetan, the term can be literally translated as “a basis of worship.” Such a site can be naturally occurring but is more typically a structure erected for the purpose of worship. This can be a mound, a shrine, or other generically shaped structure, but in most Buddhist contexts is identified with the domed structure also known as a *stūpa*. Both *caitya* and *stūpa* are translated into Tibetan with the term *mchod rten*, but a *stūpa* is a subcategory of *caitya* that specifically contains a relic of the Buddha, another tathāgata, or another sacred person.

g.11 dharmadhātu

chos kyi dbyings

ཚུལ་གྱི་དབྱིངས།

dharmadhātu

A technical term used to express ultimate reality. It is interpreted variously—given the many connotations of *dharma/chos*—as the sphere, element, or nature of phenomena, reality, or truth.

g.12 dharmadhātu maṇḍala

chos kyi dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor

ཚུལ་གྱི་དབྱིངས་ཀྱི་དབྱིལ་འཁོར།

dharmadhātumaṇḍala

In this text, the term may refer to the dharmadhātu generically, or it may be the name of the specific maṇḍala associated with Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjuśrī, the first of the seven principal maṇḍalas of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* (Toh 360).

g.13 dharmakāya

chos kyi sku

ཚུལ་གྱི་སྐུ།

dharmakāya

In distinction to the *rūpakāya*, or form body of a buddha, this is the eternal, imperceivable realization of a buddha. In origin it was a term for the presence of the Dharma, and it has since become synonymous with the true

nature.

g.14 five acts with immediate retribution

mtshams med pa lnga

མཚམས་མེད་པ་ལྔ།

pañcānantaryakarman

These are five acts that, due to the severity of their transgression, will cause immediate rebirth in Avīci, the deepest of hells. The acts classically listed that lead to such rebirth are (1) killing one's father, (2) killing one's mother, (3) killing an arhat, (4) shedding a buddha's blood with malicious intent, and (5) causing a schism in the saṅgha.

g.15 five families

rigs lnga

རིགས་ལྔ།

pañcakula

The tathāgata, vajra, jewel, lotus, and karma families. Each of these families is associated with a specific direction, type of activity, and mode of awakened wisdom, and each is headed by a specific tathāgata. When displayed in maṇḍala formation, Vairocana heads the tathāgata family at the center, and Akṣobhya presides over the vajra family in the east, Ratnasambhava over the jewel family in the south, Amitābha/Amitāyus over the lotus family in the west, and Amoghasiddhi over the karma family in the north. In maṇḍalas associated with the Mahāyoga tantras, Vairocana and Akṣobhya switch places.

g.16 five great elements

'byung ba chen po · 'byung ba chen po lnga po

འབྱུང་བ་ཆེན་པོ། · འབྱུང་བ་ཆེན་པོ་ལྔ་པོ།

mahābhūta · pañcamahābhūta

The gross elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space.

g.17 five precious substances

rin po che sna lnga

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ལྔ་ལྔ།

—

g.18 five wisdoms

ye shes lnga

ཡེ་ཤེས་ལྔ།

pañcajñāna

The five wisdoms each express a distinct quality of awakened cognition associated with one of the buddhas of the five families. The five are (1) the wisdom of the dharmadhātu (*dharmadhātuñāna; chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes*), (2) mirror-like wisdom (*ādarśajñāna; me long lta bu'i ye shes*), (3) the wisdom of equality (*samatājñāna; mnyam nyid ye shes*), (4) the wisdom of thorough discrimination (*pratyavekṣaṇājñāna; so sor rtog pa'i ye shes*), and (5) the wisdom of accomplishing activities (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānañāna; bya ba grub pa'i ye shes*).

g.19 Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

ལྔ་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་བཞི།

cāturmahārāja

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Four gods who live on the lower slopes (fourth level) of Mount Meru in the eponymous Heaven of the Four Great Kings (*Cāturmahārājika, rgyal chen bzhi'i ris*) and guard the four cardinal directions. Each is the leader of a nonhuman class of beings living in his realm. They are Dhṛtarāṣṭra, ruling the gandharvas in the east; Virūḍhaka, ruling over the kumbhāṇḍas in the south; Virūpākṣa, ruling the nāgas in the west; and Vaiśravaṇa (also known as Kubera) ruling the yakṣas in the north. Also referred to as Guardians of the World or World Protectors (*lokapāla, 'jig rten skyong ba*).

g.20 great seal

phyag rgya chen po

ཕྱག་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāmudrā

An important and polyvalent term in esoteric Buddhist literature, it is used here to refer to the form of Vajradhara as a “seal” of ultimate reality that one adopts in one’s meditative practice.

g.21 habitual tendencies

bag chags

བག་ཆགས།

vāsanā

Karmic traces or residues imprinted by past actions that manifest as tendencies predisposing one to particular patterns of behavior.

g.22 Maitreya

byams pa

བཱིཌཱེཤི།

maitreya

The future buddha, he resides in Tuṣita heaven until his rebirth as the fifth of the thousand buddhas to appear in this eon.

g.23 Mañjuśrī

'jam dpal

འཇམ་དཔལ།

mañjuśrī

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Mañjuśrī is one of the “eight close sons of the Buddha” and a bodhisattva who embodies wisdom. He is a major figure in the Mahāyāna sūtras, appearing often as an interlocutor of the Buddha. In his most well-known iconographic form, he is portrayed bearing the sword of wisdom in his right hand and a volume of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in his left. To his name, Mañjuśrī, meaning “Gentle and Glorious One,” is often added the epithet Kumārabhūta, “having a youthful form.” He is also called Mañjughoṣa, Mañjusvara, and Pañcaśikha.

g.24 Mount Meru

ri rab

རི་རབ།

meru

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to ancient Buddhist cosmology, this is the great mountain forming the axis of the universe. At its summit is Sudarśana, home of Śakra and his thirty-two gods, and on its flanks live the asuras. The mount has four sides facing the cardinal directions, each of which is made of a different precious stone. Surrounding it are several mountain ranges and the great ocean where the four principal island continents lie: in the south, Jambudvīpa (our world); in the west, Godānīya; in the north, Uttarakuru; and in the east, Pūrvavideha. Above it are the abodes of the desire realm gods. It is variously referred to as Meru, Mount Meru, Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru.

g.25 nāga

klu

ལྷ

nāga

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments, where they guard wealth and sometimes also teachings. Nāgas are associated with serpents and have a snakelike appearance. In Buddhist art and in written accounts, they are regularly portrayed as half human and half snake, and they are also said to have the ability to change into human form. Some nāgas are Dharma protectors, but they can also bring retribution if they are disturbed. They may likewise fight one another, wage war, and destroy the lands of others by causing lightning, hail, and flooding.

g.26 oblation

gtor ma

གཏོར་མ།

bali

An offering of food items made to deities or spirits. Such an oblation may be elaborate and use multiple kinds of food articles, or it may simply be a ritual cake.

g.27 obscuration

sgrib pa

སྒྲིབ་པ།

āvaraṇa

The obscurations to liberation and omniscience. They are generally categorized as two types: afflictive obscurations (*kleśāvaraṇa*), the arising of afflictive emotions, and cognitive obscurations (*jñeyāvaraṇa*), those caused by misapprehension and incorrect understanding of the nature of reality.

g.28 offering water

ar+g+ha

ཨར་ག་མ།

argha

Water used ritually to receive or welcome deities and other beings into the ritual environment. It parallels the practice of offering washing water to a guest when they first arrive in one's home.

g.29 pure abodes

gtsang ris

གཙུག་ལྷན་

śuddhāvāsa

Usually referring to the last five of the seventeen realms of the form realm (*rūpadhātu*) and often equated with Akaniṣṭha, which is the first of the highest five. In this text, the expression seems to refer to the heavens in the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*). See [n.17](#).

g.30 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་ཕྱིན།

śakra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The lord of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*trāyastriṃśa*). Alternatively known as Indra, the deity that is called “lord of the gods” dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation *brgya byin* (meaning “one hundred sacrifices”) is based on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śata-kratu*, one who has performed a hundred sacrifices. Each world with a central Sumeru has a Śakra. Also known by other names such as Kauśika, Devendra, and Śacipati.

g.31 samādhi

ting nge 'dzin

ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན།

samādhi

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In a general sense, *samādhi* can describe a number of different meditative states. In the Mahāyāna literature, in particular in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, we find extensive lists of different samādhis, numbering over one hundred.

In a more restricted sense, and when understood as a mental state, *samādhi* is defined as the one-pointedness of the mind (*cittaikāgratā*), the ability to remain on the same object over long periods of time. The *Draḥor Bamponyipa* (*sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*) commentary on the *Mahāvīyutpatti* explains the term *samādhi* as referring to the instrument through which mind and mental states “get collected,” i.e., it is by the force of samādhi that the continuum of mind and mental states becomes collected on a single point of reference without getting distracted.

g.32 Samantabhadra offering clouds

kun du bzang po'i mchod pa'i sprin phung

ཀུན་དུ་བཟང་པོའི་མཆོད་པའི་སྒྲིན་ཕུང་།

samantabhadrapūjamegha

The mode of making offerings in the mode of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, who emanated exponentially proliferating clouds of offerings.

g.33 seven precious substances

rin po che sna bdun

འུགས་པོ་ཆེ་སྣ་བདུན།

saptaratna

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The set of seven precious materials or substances includes a range of precious metals and gems, but their exact list varies. The set often consists of gold, silver, beryl, crystal, red pearls, emeralds, and white coral, but may also contain lapis lazuli, ruby, sapphire, chrysoberyl, diamonds, etc. The term is frequently used in the sūtras to exemplify preciousness, wealth, and beauty, and can describe treasures, offering materials, or the features of architectural structures such as stūpas, palaces, thrones, etc. The set is also used to describe the beauty and prosperity of buddha realms and the realms of the gods.

In other contexts, the term *saptaratna* can also refer to the seven precious possessions of a cakravartin or to a set of seven precious moral qualities.

g.34 spell

rig pa · rig sngags

རིག་པ། · རིག་སྒྲུགས།

vidyā

A type of mantra-like formula that is used to accomplish a ritual goal. It can be associated with either ordinary attainments or the goal of awakening.

g.35 śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Sanskrit term *śrāvaka*, and the Tibetan *nyan thos*, both derived from the verb “to hear,” are usually defined as “those who *hear* the teaching from the Buddha and *make it heard* to others.” Primarily this refers to those disciples of

the Buddha who aspire to attain the state of an arhat seeking their own liberation and nirvāṇa. They are the practitioners of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma on the four noble truths, who realize the suffering inherent in saṃsāra and focus on understanding that there is no independent self. By conquering afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), they liberate themselves, attaining first the stage of stream enterers at the path of seeing, followed by the stage of once-returners who will be reborn only one more time, and then the stage of non-returners who will no longer be reborn into the desire realm. The final goal is to become an arhat. These four stages are also known as the “four results of spiritual practice.”

g.36 śrīvatsa

dpal gyi be'u

དཔལ་གྱི་བེུ།

śrīvatsa

One of the eighty minor marks of a great being, it is a swirl of hair in the center of the chest, a symbol shared by the Brahmanical deity Viṣṇu. It is often symbolically referred to as an “endless knot.”

g.37 stage of nonregression

phyir mi ldog pa'i sa

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྟོག་པའི་ས།

avaivartika

A stage on the bodhisattva path on which the practitioner will never turn back, or be turned back, from progress toward the full awakening of a buddha.

g.38 ten stages

sa bcu rim

ས་བརྒྱའི་རིམ།

daśabhūmi

The ten stages of a bodhisattva’s progress to buddhahood: (1) Joyous (*Pramuditā*), (2) Stainless (*Vimalā*), (3) Luminous (*Prabhākarī*), (4) Radiant (*Arciṣmatī*), (5) Hard to Overcome (*Sudurjayā*), (6) Manifest (*Abhimukhī*), (7) Far-Reaching (*Dūraṅgamā*), (8) Immovable (*Acalā*), (9) Good Intellect (*Sādhumatī*), and (10) Dharma Cloud (*Dharmameghā*).

g.39 ten unwholesome deeds

mi dge ba bcu

མི་དགེ་བ་བརྒྱ།

daśākuśalakarman

The ten negative actions to be avoided. Traditionally these are listed according to the threefold distinction of body, speech, and mind. The ten are (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) slanderous speech, (6) harsh speech, (7) meaningless speech, (8) covetousness, (9) ill will, and (10) wrong views.

g.40 three families

rigs gsum

དྲིགས་གསུམ།

trikula

Three families—tathāgata, vajra, and lotus—into which esoteric Buddhist deities are classified.

g.41 Three Jewels

dkon mchog gsum

དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ།

triratna

The three objects of refuge: the Buddha, the Dharma (his teachings), and the Saṅgha (the Buddhist community).

g.42 trichiliocosm

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

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

trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The largest universe described in Buddhist cosmology. This term, in Abhidharma cosmology, refers to 1,000³ world systems, i.e., 1,000 “dichiliocosms” or “two thousand great thousand world realms” (*dvisāhasra-mahāsāhasralokadhātu*), which are in turn made up of 1,000 first-order world systems, each with its own Mount Sumeru, continents, sun and moon, etc.

g.43 Universal Light

kun tu 'od

ཀུན་ཏུ་འོད།

samantaprabhā

The eleventh bodhisattva level, it is the level on which buddhahood is attained.

g.44 universal monarch

'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po

འཁོར་ལོས་སྐུར་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

cakravartin

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An ideal monarch or emperor who, as the result of the merit accumulated in previous lifetimes, rules over a vast realm in accordance with the Dharma. Such a monarch is called a *cakravartin* because he bears a wheel (*cakra*) that rolls (*variate*) across the earth, bringing all lands and kingdoms under his power. The cakravartin conquers his territory without causing harm, and his activity causes beings to enter the path of wholesome actions. According to Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, just as with the buddhas, only one cakravartin appears in a world system at any given time. They are likewise endowed with the thirty-two major marks of a great being (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*), but a cakravartin's marks are outshined by those of a buddha. They possess seven precious objects: the wheel, the elephant, the horse, the wish-fulfilling gem, the queen, the general, and the minister. An illustrative passage about the cakravartin and his possessions can be found in *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 3.3–3.13.

Vasubandhu lists four types of cakravartins: (1) the cakravartin with a golden wheel (*suvarṇacakravartin*) rules over four continents and is invited by lesser kings to be their ruler; (2) the cakravartin with a silver wheel (*rūpyacakravartin*) rules over three continents and his opponents submit to him as he approaches; (3) the cakravartin with a copper wheel (*tāmracakravartin*) rules over two continents and his opponents submit themselves after preparing for battle; and (4) the cakravartin with an iron wheel (*ayaścakravartin*) rules over one continent and his opponents submit themselves after brandishing weapons.

g.45 uṣṇīṣa

uSh+NI Sha · gtsug tor

ཡུམྲི་ཤ། · གཏུག་ཏོར།

uṣṇīṣa

One of the thirty-two signs of a great being. In its simplest form it is that the head has a heightened or pointed shape (like a turban). More elaborately it refers to a dome-shaped extension of the top of the head, or even to an

invisible extension of immense height.

g.46 Vajradhara

rdo rje 'dzin pa

རྡོ་རྗེ་འཛིན་པ།

vajradhara

In tantric traditions, the name of a primordial buddha.

g.47 vajradhātu

rdo rje dbyings ma

རྡོ་རྗེ་དབྱིངས་མ།

vajradhātu

A technical term roughly equivalent with *dharmadhātu* and most probably to be understood in the context of the respective maṇḍala central to many Yoga tantras.

g.48 Vajrapāṇi

lag na rdo rje

ལག་ན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

vajrapāṇi

Vajrapāṇi appears throughout Buddhist literature in the overlapping roles of a yakṣa, bodhisattva, and esoteric deity. As the latter, he is frequently an interlocutor in and transmitter of tantric scripture.