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The Dhāraṇī Praising the Qualities of the Immeasurable One

Aparimitaguṇānuśāṃsadhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་ཡོན་ཏན་བསྐྱེད་པ་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

'phags pa yon tan bsngags pa dpag tu med pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs

Noble Dhāraṇī Praising the Qualities of the Immeasurable One

Āryāparimitaguṇānuśāṃsanāmadhāraṇī

· Toh 679 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 91 (rgyud 'bum, ba), folio 223.a



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co.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ti. Title
- im. Imprint
- co. Contents
- s. Summary
- ac. Acknowledgements
- i. Introduction
- tr. The Translation
 - 1. Praising the Qualities of the Immeasurable One
- n. Notes
- b. Bibliography
 - Source Texts
 - Reference Works
- g. Glossary

s.

SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī that Praises the Qualities of the Immeasurable One* contains a short dhāraṇī mantra praising the tathāgata Amitābha and brief instructions on the benefits that result from its recitation.

ac.

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i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Dhāraṇī Praising the Qualities of the Immeasurable One consists of a short dhāraṇī praising Buddha Amitābha and a brief description of the benefits one accrues by reciting this dhāraṇī. These benefits range from the purification of negative deeds to having visions of the bodhisattva Maitreya, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and the buddha Amitābha himself. The Sanskrit term for the English “immeasurable” (*aparimita*) that appears in the title of this work can be interpreted as referring both to the Buddha Amitābha as “The Immeasurable One” and to the fact that the qualities that Amitābha possesses are themselves “immeasurable.” The phrase “The Immeasurable One” is used here to give coherence to the title in English, but the reader is invited to entertain the dual significance of the term when reading or reciting the text—that Amitābha is both immeasurably vast and possesses immeasurable qualities.¹

i.2

A Sanskrit version of this work is to our knowledge no longer extant. The text seems to have been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan no later than the early ninth century, as its title is recorded in the Denkarma² and Phangthangma³ Tibetan imperial translation catalogs. However, the Tibetan translation does not contain a colophon, so further details surrounding its translation into Tibetan are unknown. A Chinese translation of the text (Taishō 934) was completed by a certain Faxian (whose identity is surrounded with uncertainty) sometime between 989 and 999 CE.⁴

i.3

This brief scripture is missing from some Kangyur collections but appears twice in others.⁵ Its title does not appear in any of the Kangyur collections that belong purely to the Thempangma (*them spangs ma*) lineage. However, the Kangyur collections that belong to the Tshalpa (*tshal pa*) lineage include it twice, while the mixed lineage and independent collections include it either twice or only once. In the Degé Kangyur it appears in both the Tantra Collection (*rgyud 'bum*, Toh 679) and the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (*gzungs*

'*dus*, Toh 851).⁶ The dhāraṇī mantra featured in the text is also included in Butön Rinchen Drup's (*bu ston rin chen grub*, 1290–1364) *Collection of Dhāraṇī of the Four Classes of Secret Mantra*.⁷

- i.4 This English translation is based on the Degé Kangyur version of Toh 679 in consultation with the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*). In addition, we have compared Toh 679 to Toh 851 (Degé and Comparative Edition) and accounted for all significant differences in the notes. The dhāraṇī is rendered in Sanskrit diacritics following the Tibetan transliteration in the Tantra Collection of the Degé Kangyur (Toh 679), with major variants between Toh 679 and Toh 851 noted. An English translation of the dhāraṇī is also provided in a note.

The Noble Dhāraṇī
Praising the Qualities of the Immeasurable One

1.

The Translation

[F.223.a]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels.

1.2 *namo ratnatrayāya namo bhagavate amitabhāya tathāgatāya arhate saṃyaksambuddhāya |*
tadyathā oṃ amite amitodbhave amitasambhave amitavikrānte amitagaminī gagana-
*kīrtikare⁸ sarvākṣayaṃkare⁹ svāhā |*¹⁰

1.3 The ritual instructions for this dhāraṇī are as follows: Reciting it once purifies the karmic obscurations that you have accumulated over one hundred thousand eons. If you recite it three times a day every day, all your misdeeds will be purified, and you will obtain the roots of virtue generated by one thousand buddhas. If you recite it twenty-one times it will purify the four root downfalls.¹¹ If you recite it one hundred thousand times you will have a vision of Noble Maitreya. If you recite it two hundred thousand times you will have a vision of Noble Avalokiteśvara. If you recite it three hundred thousand times you will have a vision of the tathāgata Amitābha. Since the additional benefits are innumerable, this is only a brief summary.

1.4 *This concludes “The Dhāraṇī Praising the Qualities of the Immeasurable One.”*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 We have translated the title of this text based on the Sanskrit title provided in the Tibetan text (*aparimitaguṇānuśāṁsa*). Here we have interpreted the Sanskrit compound to reflect the internal syntax **aparimitasya guṇānām anuśāṁsaḥ*. A literal translation of the Tibetan title (*yon tan bsngags pa dpag tu med pa*) might be *Immeasurable Praising of Qualities*. If the Tibetan title were to reflect our reading of the Sanskrit compound *aparimitaguṇānuśāṁsa* it would have to be emended to *dpag tu med pa'i yon tan bsngags pa*. Ultimately, the decision to follow the reading reflected in the Sanskrit title was supported by the fact that the dhāraṇī itself is clearly addressed to the buddha Amitābha. Translating the title based on the Tibetan would obscure the fact that the title is a reference to Amitābha, not just a generic sense of “immeasurable qualities.”
- n.2 Denkarma folio 303.a.6; see also Herrmann-Pfandt (2009), p. 238.
- n.3 *dkar chag 'phang thang ma* (2003), p. 30.
- n.4 For details about this translation and the inconclusive identification of Faxian (法賢), see Lancaster, “K 1224i (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1224i.html),” *Korean Buddhist Canon*, 2018.
- n.5 For details, see Resources for Kanjur and Tanjur Studies (<http://www.rkts.org/>).
- n.6 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 851 version of this text within vol. 100 or 101 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 851, n.6 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh851.html#UT22084-091-077-35>), for details.
- n.7 See Butön Rinchen Drup (1965–1971), vol. ma, p. 258.a.7–258.b.3.

- n.8 This reading is attested in Toh 851 as well as the Yongle, Narthang, and Lhasa (Zhol) editions of the Kangyur. Toh 679 reads *gaganakīrtikari*.
- n.9 This reading is attested in the Kangxi (Peking) edition of the Kangyur. Toh 679 and Toh 851 read *sarvākṣaṣayaṃkari*.
- n.10 Translation: "I pay homage to the Three Jewels. I pay homage to the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha—the blessed Amitābha with the following: *Oṃ* infinite one who arises from the infinite, whose nature is infinite, whose stride is infinite, whose range is infinite, who grants renown vast as the sky, who brings an end to all the afflictions, *svāhā*."
- n.11 The translation here follows the Yongle, Kangxi (Peking), Narthang, and Lhasa (Zhol) editions of the Kangyur, which read *ltung ba rtsa ba'i bzhi po*.

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 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

amitābha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The buddha of the western buddhafiield of Sukhāvātī, 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 Sukhāvātī*, 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.2 Avalokiteśvara

spyān ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

avalokiteśvara

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the “eight close sons of the Buddha,” he is also known as the bodhisattva who embodies compassion. In certain tantras, he is also the lord of the three families, where he embodies the compassion of the buddhas. In Tibet, he attained great significance as a special protector of Tibet, and in China, in female form, as Guanyin, the most important bodhisattva in all of East Asia.

g.3 four root downfalls

ltung ba bzhi

ལྷུང་བ་བཞི།

catvāra prapāta

The four root downfalls are roughly synonymous with the *pham pa bzhi* (*catvāra pārājika*), or the four transgressions that require expulsion from the monastic community. These four transgressions are applicable to the maintenance of monastic and lay vows alike, though their interpretations might differ depending on context. The four transgressions are: (1) violating

the vow of chastity (*mi tshangs pa spyod pa, abrahmacarya*); (2) stealing / taking what is not given (*mi byin par len pa, adattadāna*); (3) taking a life (*srog gcod pa, prāṇātīpāta*); and (4) lying (*rdzun du smra ba, mṛṣāvāda*).

g.4 Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

maitreya

An important bodhisattva in the Mahāyāna pantheon who is considered to currently reside in Tuṣita and awaits rebirth in the human realm as the next buddha of the current age.

g.5 roots of virtue

dge ba'i rtsa ba

དགེ་བའི་རྩ་བ།

kuśalamūla

The roots of virtue are of three types: absence of desire (*ma chags pa, alobha*), absence of anger (*zhe sdang med pa, adveṣa*), and absence of bewilderment (*gti mug med pa, amoha*). These three give rise to all wholesome qualities and hence they are called “roots.”