

Aparimitāyus: “Tantra” and “Pure Land” in Medieval Indian Buddhism?

Richard K. Payne
Institute of Buddhist Studies

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I WAS A GRADUATE STUDENT, I spent late nights exploring the deeper recesses of the stacks at the University of California’s Doe Library. There I came across a wealth of instances of older literature on Buddhism, including a substantial number of German language publications. Searching through these holdings, I found the publications of Max Walleser, including his study and translation of a text from Nepal, the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* (an English translation of Walleser’s German is appended here).¹ Initially I was attracted to this text because it appeared to be simultaneously a Pure Land and a Vajrayana text, offering longevity and birth in Sukhāvātī through the recitation of a *dhāraṇī*. This struck me, those many years ago, as delightfully transgressive—it confounded the neat categories so familiar in the Buddhist studies of the 1970s, categories whose boundaries are overly-sharp, ahistorical, and either sectarian or ethnically defined. Since these boundaries continue to plague the field, the text continues to be a useful means of confounding these categories.

More recently, however, reflection on this literature has led me to three questions. The first has to do with the way in which the origins of East Asian Pure Land Buddhism in medieval India are studied. The second has to do with what it means to talk about “a buddha.” And, the third concerns the nature of *dhāraṇī* and the definition of tantra. The balance of this Introduction will discuss the literature associated with Aparimitāyus and the characteristics of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* itself.

The Tibetan Buddhist canon contains ten titles that include the name of this buddha in their title, two of which are also found in Chinese translation.² Given that this seems like a small body of literature, and that there is apparently no interest in *Aparimitāyus* among contemporary Buddhists and exceedingly little interest among contemporary Buddhist scholars, what is the import of this corpus?³ In addition to the linguistic interest identified by Walleser, the archeological record indicates that it was one of the most frequently copied sutras in Dunhuang, and apparently also enjoyed wide popularity in Nepal.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEXT

The *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* embodies a variety of the characteristics typical of late medieval Indian Mahayana, specifically what Gregory Schopen has called the cult of the book. *Sukhāvātī* as a general goal within Mahayana Buddhism and associations with the *caitya* are both aspects of the cult of the book found in this sutra.

Does the presence of a promise of birth in *Sukhāvātī* for those who copy out the text in itself establish that this text is part of or specifically influenced by the cult of *Amitābha*? In Schopen's analysis this is not the case. Rather, *Sukhāvātī* is a free-floating mytheme within late Indian Mahayana, or what Schopen calls "a generalized goal." He says,

The fact that rebirth in *Sukhāvātī* is promised as a reward in conjunction with the cult of the book, or the cult of a specific book, that is to say a cult form separate and independent from the cult of *Amitābha*, once again clearly indicates that *Sukhāvātī* here must have certainly been conceived of as a generalized religious goal in no way attached specifically to the cult of *Amitābha*.⁴

As a free-floating mytheme, *Sukhāvātī* is frequently used to support a practice associated with a different buddha.

According to Schopen, the cult of the book constituted a later innovation that put it in competition with the worship of *caitya*. He says that the cult of the book "did not develop in isolation. It had to contend at every step with the historical priority and the dominance of the *stūpa*/relic cult of early Buddhism in the milieu in which it was attempting to establish itself."⁵ Among other sources, Schopen notes that in the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* we find the following: "That country in

which they thus write the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, that country would become worthy of worship like a *caitya*.”⁶

We can see therefore that the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* has the characteristics typical of the period of medieval Indian Mahayana when cultic practices related to books were being asserted to be of equal value to those related to relics. Additionally, the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* offers birth in Sukhāvātī and other benefits to those who copy it out, justifications of its importance additional to equating the sutra’s value to that of a *caitya* as the object of cultic devotions.

In addition to the cultic emphasis on the book itself, the emphasis on a buddha whose name is so similar to the classically Pure Land buddha, Amitābha, as well as the centrality of a *dhāraṇī* create the anomaly alluded to above—should this text (together with its related texts) be considered part of the developing Pure Land Buddhist tradition or as a part of tantric Buddhism? Silk notes that this question has come up “a number of times in the scholarly literature. Is this a Pure Land text? Is it a Tantric text?”⁷ As will be discussed more fully below, the simple presence of a *dhāraṇī* may not be sufficient to characterize a text as tantric. In more detail, however, Silk points out that “even a broad and vague definition of Tantra” as including “concern with initiations, the role of a personal master or guru, the use of ‘ritual magic,’ however that might be understood, certain types of yogic practice, the use of oppositions or inversions, of maṇḍalas and mudrās and mantras, reference to transcendent tantric deities and the philosophic equation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the fusion of *prajñā* and *upāya*, and so on” would fail to include the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*.⁸ Silk notes, however, that Bu ston, the famed fourteenth-century Tibetan bibliographer, includes the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* in the category of *Kriyā* tantras. (Likewise, the *Taishō* editors considered the sutra to be an esoteric work, including two of the translations [nos. 936 & 937] in the second volume of the “Mikkyō” section [密教, T. vol. 19]).

How are we to assess Bu ston’s decision? Silk comments that “the existence of quite a number of *sādhanas* based on the *sūtra* is of great importance”⁹ when considering Bu ston’s classifications—and this provides us with an important guideline for considering the tantric character of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. Looking at the other *Aparimitāyus* literature found in the Tibetan canon, what we find is that there are several additional texts of a ritual nature that should be taken into account when considering the classification of this or other texts. The

nine other texts include the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-hṛdaya-nāma-dhāraṇī* (P 363 and P 475), the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-sādhana/Aparimitāyur-nāma-sādhana* (P 2990 and P 4886), the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-sādhana* (P 2992), the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi-nāma* (P 2993), the *Aparimitāyur-homa-vidhi-nāma* (P 2994), the *Aparimitāyur-stotra* (P 3522), the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-sādhana* (P 3523), the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-vidhi-nāma* (P 3524), and the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi-nāma* (P 4887). The existence of additional texts of this kind—and to my mind particularly the *homa*—point to *Aparimitāyus* being incorporated into tantric praxis. Silk’s suggestion seems to me to in fact be critical to our reflections here. It provides us with a more adequate way of thinking about how we categorize texts. This indicates that in at least some if not most cases, it is misleading to think of an individual text in isolation. In other words, we need to consider the context—not simply the social, historical, political, economic context that has become expected, but also the more literal “con-text” in the sense of other affiliated texts. At the same time, of course, such classifications must also be historically located. The fact that the unrecorded author of the *Aparimitāyus homa* would seem to have considered *Aparimitāyus* a tantric deity to the extent of evoking him in a *homa* ritual does not mean that earlier or later Buddhist practitioners would have had the same view. In other words, and perhaps obviously, bibliographic classifications—including “Pure Land” and “tantra”—are themselves historically conditioned. Such conditioning extends beyond bibliographic concerns to include the very formation of these two categories and the common presumption that they are somehow mutually exclusive.

THE ROLE OF APARIMITĀYUS IN THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM

In relation to the first of the questions raised here, that is, the relation between the *Aparimitāyus* corpus and the Indian origins of Pure Land Buddhism, Schopen suggests that “there is no evidence, either internal or external . . . that would even vaguely suggest”¹⁰ a direct connection between the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* and the cult of Amitābha. Granting Schopen’s point regarding the relation between the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* and the cult of Amitābha, it would, however, be mistaken to conclude that the cult of *Aparimitāyus* and its literature should be ignored in the study of the medieval Indian origins of what eventually becomes Pure

Land Buddhism in East Asia considered more generally—this is, after all, a different question. The similarity between the names Amitāyus and Aparimitāyus, and the relation of both to the benefit of longevity, suggest that there is a relation that needs to be pursued more fully.

One of the basic considerations for such a program is establishing at least an approximate historical period for the rise of a cult of Aparimitāyus. This can be partially answered by reference to the known dates of translations of texts into Chinese, and will be discussed more fully below. As far as dating the institution of a cult of Aparimitāyus, distinct from Amitābha and Amitāyus in the history of Buddhism in India, there is an anonymous translation into Chinese from the Liang dynasty period (502–557) (*T.* vol. 12, no. 370, [K 443], †*Aparimitāyurjñān ahrdayadhāraṇī*,¹¹ 阿彌陀鼓音聲王陀羅尼經).¹² Employing the span of a century as a (very) rough approximation of the average delay between a text being completed in India and appearing in Chinese translation, we may estimate that this text was probably written sometime during the first half of the fifth century.¹³

It is also appropriate to ask, as Jan Nattier does of the *Inquiry of Ugra*, why has this Aparimitāyus corpus played no role in the academic study of Buddhism? In the case of the Aparimitāyus literature, this is particularly striking on two counts. First, given the archeological record, it seems to have been one of the most popular bodies of literature in Nepal, in Dunhuang, and elsewhere throughout the Buddhist cosmopolis.¹⁴ Second, it was one of the very first Mahayana texts translated into a Western language, Max Walleser’s German translation appearing in 1916. Nattier has suggested three reasons that certain sutras have been selected as representative of the Mahayana. One is “the accident of their survival in Sanskrit,” the second is “their importance in Japan,” while the third is “their congeniality to contemporary western religious tastes.”¹⁵

As the *Aparimatāyuh-sūtra* does survive in Sanskrit—Walleser’s translation is of a Nepalese Sanskrit version¹⁶—we can look to the other two of Nattier’s three reasons for an explanation of the literature’s occlusion. Certainly, the Japanese context provides no hospitable setting for this material. Once Hōnen (1133–1212) had designated the larger and smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtras* and the *Contemplation Sutra* as the “triple sutras of the Pure Land” (*sanbukyō*, 三部經), they came to be seen as defining Pure Land Buddhism—itsself a sectarian identification created by Hōnen. Indeed the effect of sectarian historiography can

be seen in Fujita's assertion that "The primary sources for the study of early Pure Land Buddhism are the basic sutras," that is, the three designated as such by Hōnen.¹⁷ Such a retrospectivist view of historical research, that is, allowing what is important to us now to determine how we construct history back then, artificially restricts our range of inquiry and as a consequence distorts our understanding.

Working under the handicap of an artificial limitation of this kind would make it effectively impossible to ask such questions as the ones raised here: who is Aparimitāyus? What was his relation to the development of (proto-)Pure Land Buddhism in India? How widespread was his cult? Did cult practitioners consider him to be the same as or different from the more familiar figures, Amitābha and Amitāyus? Indeed, then, the marginalization of the Aparimitāyus corpus has been affected by contemporary Japanese preconceptions regarding the history of Buddhism, preconceptions that are themselves molded by sectarian ideologies rather than by historiographic methodologies.

The third consideration that Nattier raises—"congeniality to contemporary western religious tastes"—is already found in Walleser's introduction to his translation. Walleser notes that two manuscripts from Stein's Dunhuang findings are of particular linguistic interest because Hörnle has identified the texts as being in the "language of the Śakas," which Hörnle believed—mistakenly—is Khotanese,¹⁸ and that Sanskrit versions are also known of these two.¹⁹ The two sutras in question are the *Vajracchedikā* and the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. Walleser notes that while the *Vajracchedikā* has already been translated in 1881 by Max Müller, the *Aparimitāyuh* had as of his time received no such attention.

Walleser calls attention to the fact that in contrast with the *Vajracchedikā*, the *Aparimitāyuh* "does not measure up to the *Vajracchedikā* by a long way; it is after all definitely not a philosophic text, but rather 'a mystic mantra and the praise thereof as a means of promoting longevity,' a magical expression (*dhāraṇī*) the purpose of which is to produce a long life, the practical interest of which is at best that it shows to what extent superstition had taken hold of the roots of Buddhism during its late stages of development."²⁰ The final comment regarding the hold that superstition had taken on Buddhism in its late Indic period reflects a set of assumptions about the nature of institutional history that has plagued Buddhist studies. Originating with the Romantics, especially Hegel, the metaphor of organic life has been applied to religious and other social institutions.²¹ According to

this metaphor, social institutions such as Buddhism are born, mature, become senescent, decay, and finally die away. This fundamentally organic metaphor has entailed certain conclusions and judgments about the nature of late medieval Indian Buddhism that are not in fact the result of examining the historical record itself. The rhetoric of decadence, that is, the claim that later forms are necessarily decayed, inferior versions of earlier ones, has had a pervasive and misleading role in the representations of not only late Indian but also medieval Japanese Buddhism.²²

Regarding the contents of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, although Waller does not make this particular point, it is clear that it is the predilection of Western scholars to favor doctrinal contents and philosophic expositions that led to the early translation of the *Vajracchedikā* and its continuing role in the representation of Buddhism in the Western literature. This same predilection led to the almost total disregard of the *Aparimitāyuh* and its absence from any of the contemporary treatments of the origins of Pure Land or discussions of Indian Mahayana. One might further suggest that the tendency to take the Perfection of Wisdom literature as paradigmatic for Mahayana is the consequence of its *apparent* compatibility with the neo-Platonic religious conceptions central to modern Western religious culture. Key to this equation on the part of many scholars is the superficial similarity between what are treated by some Western scholars as the paradoxical thinking found in the Perfection of Wisdom literature and the neo-Platonic with its soteriology of paradox.

The privileging of doctrine and philosophy accords with the central role that theology has played in the study of religion from its founding as an academic enterprise into the second half of the twentieth century. Based on Protestant notions of the salvific role of proper belief (orthodoxy) and the correlative denigration of proper practice (orthopraxy), the study of religion in Europe and America focused on doctrine. This was further motivated by the goal of religious studies as it formed in the second half of the nineteenth century, at least in the United States, which was to facilitate the work of missionaries—familiarizing them with the *belief-systems* of non-Christian peoples in order to prepare them to be more effective in convincing these peoples of the falsehood of their beliefs and to convert.²³ This emphasis on doctrine is still reflected in contemporary textbooks in the study of religion, which tend to present what might be best called catechisms for each

of the “world’s major religions.”²⁴ Additionally, the philosophy of religion only further reifies the conception that the only important aspect of religion is its belief-system. All of this led to an almost total disregard of ceremony, pilgrimage, meditation, and ritual, while focusing attention on belief, doctrine, and philosophy as the basis of the field of study. More critically for our considerations here has been the privileging of Buddhist philosophy in the field of Buddhist studies.

Further influencing this marginalization are the ideas of cultural religious progress that structure much of modern scholarship, a narrative structure that is the inverse of the rhetoric of decadence, but which constitutes an equally influential narrative form. The notion of a cultural progress from magic to religion to science, based in the thought of Auguste Comte, was widely accepted in anthropological studies of religion. If my own educational experience is indicative, it was on the basis of these anthropological sources that more than one generation of religious studies scholars formed their conceptions of what constitutes religion as a respectable object of study, and magic as an unrespectable object of study. The association of *dhāraṇī* with magic, then, prevented scholarly attention from being paid to this particular text along with the vast majority of tantric texts for well over a century. Ironically, it seems largely through the association of Tibetan Buddhist scholastic philosophy with tantra that the latter came to be seen as a legitimate area of study for Western scholarship.

Thus, in addition to the context of Japanese Buddhist studies, the lack of “congeniality” between the Aparimitāyus corpus and “contemporary western religious tastes” has led to the text remaining outside the scope of even scholarly attention.²⁵ Historical inquiry, however, needs to self-critically avoid simply repeating the preconceptions of previous scholarship.

LOCATING THE TEXT TEMPORALLY

One of the issues that should complicate the study of the Indian origins of Pure Land Buddhism is the dating of the various texts. Of course, such dating remains difficult and in some cases dependent upon conjecture,²⁶ but reference to the known dates of translators gives us at least some baseline for analysis. In considering the question of the possible relation between the figures Aparimitāyus, Amitāyus,

and Amitābha, the dates of translations span the period from the first to the thirteenth centuries.

The earliest translation into Chinese is of the larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* (T. 361, 無量清淨平等覺經), and although traditionally attributed to Lokakṣema, and thus dated between 147 and 186,²⁷ recent research by Paul Harrison strongly suggests that this is as it stands a revision of Lokakṣema's earlier work by Zhi Quan. The earliest translation of the shorter *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* (also known as the *Amidakyō*, T. 366, 阿彌陀經) is attributed to Kumārajīva, and dates from approximately 402. The date given for the translation of the *Visualization Sutra* (also known as the *Kanmuryōjukyō*, T. 365, 觀無量壽經) is sometime between 424 and 453, and although traditionally attributed to Kālayaśas is now considered to be a Chinese apochryphon.²⁸ While there is a two to three hundred year gap between the translation of the larger *Sukhāvativyūha* and the other two, there is only a fifty to one hundred year gap between these latter translations, and the date of the first translation of one of the *Aparimitāyus* texts. This is the anonymous translation of the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-hṛdaya-dhāraṇī*, discussed above, which was made sometime between 502 and 557. The fact that this *Aparimitāyus* text was in circulation at a date so close to the shorter *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* and *Visualization Sutra* suggests that it may well have been part of the same milieu in fifth-century India, which in turn suggests that focusing solely on the three canonic sutras serves only to systematically exclude other sources of information about the Indian origins of Pure Land Buddhism.

The character of the Indian Mahayana milieu in which the text was written is indicated by the closing exaltation of the six perfections (Skt. *ṣaṭpāramitā*; Jpn. *ropparamitsu*, 六波羅蜜). It might be tempting to conclude therefore that the text dates from a period after the relatively early formulation of the six perfections²⁹ as a descriptor for the bodhisattva path, but prior to the extension of the list of perfections from six to ten generally considered to be a later development.³⁰ While this may in the very broadest sense be true, to base even relative dating on this would be to create a distorted view of the history by forcing it into a strictly linear progression. The contemporary conception of this history is more one of multiple streams of thought and practice, flowing together and apart, but not a single stream with one line of movement—the appearance of a single stream, of uniformity of thought and practice, being constructed after the fact. It is entirely

possible, indeed probable, that at the same time that some authors or groups were concerned with six perfections, there were other authors or groups concerned with ten. In other words, it is feasible that the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* was written after, say, the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, in which the ten bodhisattva abodes are each identified with one of ten perfections. Therefore, the presence of the six perfections at the end of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* can only be taken to indicate the *milieu* as one in which the six perfections were prevalent, and not as a definitive indicator of relative dating.

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY “A BUDDHA”?

The question that has been bothering me since I began working on this text is: what do we mean when we talk about a buddha? In East Asian Buddhism, particularly the Pure Land traditions, Amitābha and Amitāyus are treated as two epithets of the same buddha, Amitou or Amida.

So when we consider Aparimitāyus and read in the *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* that this is simply “another name for Amitāyu(s),”³¹ I find myself wondering what exactly this means, as well as self-reflexively wondering whether I have a significant question or if I am just simply-mindedly stuck on a self-created conundrum.³² One of my problems is that I am not sure that my question is a coherent one—that is, I am not sure what would constitute an answer. One way to approach the meta-question of whether or not the question of the identity of a buddha is a coherent question might be to ask whether there was a distinctive cult associated with some buddha. Another way of answering this question would be by examining the names given to buddhas. A third approach would be to consider the relation between a buddha and a buddha land.

CULT

The existence of a separate cult within the same religious milieu would clearly mean that for those practitioners, the two cult deities are distinct. This means, however, that any evidence regarding the existence of independent cults needs to be contextualized. For example, in contemporary Japanese Pure Land, Amitābha and Amitāyus are indistinguishably treated as simply two different Sanskrit names for the

Buddha Amida. According to this criteria, therefore, there is a single buddha who is the object of devotion, that is, there is only one cult. But this is not necessarily the case in other times and places.

If a separate, distinguishable cult is used as a criterion for a separate, distinguishable buddha, then what becomes of all of the groups of buddhas such as the thirty-five buddhas whose names are recited as part of the Chinese repentance rites,³³ the one thousand buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa³⁴ (each of whose names we know but for whom it seems rather unlikely that separate cults existed), as well as the unnamed and unnumbered “buddhas of the ten directions” and those “of the present.”³⁵ Conversely, what about those instances in which groups of buddhas treated simply as a group include buddhas for whom distinct cults did exist, such as Mañjusrī, Maitreya, and Kṣitigarbha?

NAMES

According to the recent work of Jan Nattier, the fact that the names *Amitābha* and *Amitāyus* are effectively indistinguishable in Chinese translations seems to have been a consequence of the process of translating Buddhist texts from Prakritic and Middle Indic forms into Chinese.³⁶ Given its relevance to the topic of this essay, it is worth quoting a concluding portion of her discussion at length.

The name *Amitāyus* does appear, of course, in some Indic-language texts . . . it seems likely that it originated as a variant of *Amitābha* in a Middle Indic form. But *Amitābha*, and not *Amitāyus*, remained by far the most common form of the name in India. This state of affairs is also reflected in Tibetan translations; indeed, it is striking that the name *Amitāyus* is not even registered in the traditional Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary, the *Mahāvīyutpatti*. In Chinese, by contrast, occurrences of *Wuliangshou* 無量壽 vastly outnumber those of *Wuliangguang* 無量光, *Wuliangguangming* 無量光明, or any other translation that can be equated with *Amitābha*. Even in cases where an extant Indian or Tibetan parallel points to the meaning of the name as “Measureless Light,” the corresponding Chinese text often reads *Wuliangshou*.

What we have here, in sum, is a clear example of cultural preferences at work, with the Indian sources, in the main, continuing a long-standing emphasis on luminosity, while Chinese audiences seized upon the alternative reading which emphasized Amida’s measureless life. The image of Amida was thus refracted through two quite different cultural lenses, yielding vastly different cultic and exegetical results.³⁷

While the ramifications of Nattier's work on the names Amitābha and Amitāyus for the figure of Aparimitāyus will require a separate inquiry, two points emerge as immediately relevant here. The Chinese cultural emphasis on longevity with the consequent preference for *Wuliangshou* helps us to understand why the Chinese titles of the two translations of the *Aparimitāyur[dhāraṇī]-sūtra* in the *Taishō* (nos. 936 & 937) use *Wuliangshou* as well. Also, when considering the nature of the benefits, the practitioner's motivation for personal longevity is probably not as strong in the Indo-Tibetan cultural milieu as it is in the Chinese. Nattier suggests that at this stage in the development of Mahayana thought, the longevity is that of the buddha, for whom as one who aids others,

it is vital that he remain in Sukhāvati for a long time, thus to be available to those devotees who seek rebirth there. We do not, however, see Amida appearing in these texts as an eternal object of devotion, in whose presence believers can enjoy ongoing bliss. On the contrary, as a Buddha his role is to help living beings to pass beyond *samsara*—and by implication, to depart from his own presence—at the quickest possible pace.³⁸

In other words, in the milieu of Buddhist India in which these figures came into prominence, there was a single buddha—Amitābha—and not two different buddhas having distinct characteristics and hence separate names. Rather, the process of interpretation inherent in translation and scribal emendation led to a form in Chinese being created that meant “immeasurable life” and which then created the appearance of a second Sanskrit name, Amitāyus.

One of the important factors in the appearance of two different figures, “Immeasurable Light” (Amitābha) and “Immeasurable Life” (*Wuliangshou*: Amitāyus), result, according to Nattier, from two different cultural predilections. They are not, after all, “actually the same thing”—much more recent symbolic and doctrinal equations found in some strains of contemporary Pure Land exegesis to the contrary. We also need to take into account the cultural predilections of modern scholarship, which tends toward standardization of names and terms in “proper” Sanskrit, and which has an effectively aesthetic preference for neatness and clarity.

Turning back to the main concern of this paper, Aparimitāyus, consideration of his name would compound the linguistic complexities already examined by Nattier. His name can be read simply as an alternative form of Amitāyus, what might be in a non-technical sense

a “superlative” form, but definitely carrying the same significance of longevity as that associated with Amitāyus. While we are all familiar with Amitāyus as meaning “Immeasurable Life,” Aparimitāyus means something more like “Completely Immeasurable Life,” which is how Walleser renders it.

As we have seen, the Chinese translators tend to either transliterate “Amitābha” phonetically as Amitou (阿彌陀) or interpret the meaning as “Immeasurable Life,” that is as Wuliangshou (無量壽). The Tibetan translations also seem to generally move toward a single rendering, that is, as *tshe dpag med* ཚེ་དཔག་མེད། (or *tshe dpag tu med pa*). There are, however, frequent occurrences of what appears to be a fuller name, Aparimitāyurjñāna, translated into Tibetan as *tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa* ཚེ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ། and meaning “Unlimited Life and Wisdom.”³⁹ Based on the Sanskrit texts he has examined, Silk gives Aprimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorāja.⁴⁰

BUDDHA LANDS

Looking into the sutra itself, however, we find that its author distinguishes both between Aparimitāyus and Amitābha, and between their lands, “Aparimita-guṇa-saṃcaya” (“immeasurable accumulation of virtue”) and Sukhāvati. The sutra opens with the Buddha Śākyamuni explaining to Mañjuśrī that “There is, Mañjuśrī, situated at the zenith of the world, a world-realm with the name ‘Immeasurable Accumulation of Merit’ (Aparimita-guṇa-saṃcaya) and that there dwells there the Shining King, Aparimitāyurjñāna.”⁴¹ In contrast, among the many benefits of writing out the text of the sutra oneself or of having another write it out is that such a person will “be born in Sukhāvati, the Buddha-field of the Tathāgata Amitābha.”⁴²

While this does not indicate any clear distinction between Aparimitāyus and Amitāyus, it does indicate that at least for the author of this text, Aparimitāyus is not the same as Amitābha. Taking this another step, to the extent that Amitāyus is identified with Sukhāvati as his buddha land, and that Aparimitāyus has a different buddha land, then Aparimitāyus is also to be distinguished from Amitāyus, as well as from Amitābha. The only alternative is to suggest, as Schopen does in an aside, that the two—Sukhāvati and Aparimitā-guṇa-saṃcaya—are “no more than two forms—perhaps only two different names—of a single ideal place.”⁴³ Here again, however, it would seem appropriate

to ask in what sense there is such a single ideal place—from Schopen’s perspective? From the perspective of the author of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*? According to some abstracted Buddhist cosmology?

ON THE DHĀRAṆĪ

While some authors have taken *dhāraṇī* as indicative of a Vajrayana influence,⁴⁴ or as at least part of the magical elements found in Mahayana in order to respond “to the religious needs of the common people,”⁴⁵ such views no longer seem supportable. As mnemonic devices (or “mnemotechnics” as Willemen has called them⁴⁶) *dhāraṇī* have a much longer history in Indian Buddhism and are found in distinctly non-Vajrayana settings. According to Willemen, Lamotte and Demieville have noted that the Dharmaguptakas had in addition to their well-known *Vinaya* not only a *bodhisattvapīṭaka* but also a *dhāraṇīpīṭaka*. Similarly, Lamotte notes that the Mahāsāṃghikas also had a *dhāraṇīpīṭaka* as well.⁴⁷ As a consequence, simply the presence of *dhāraṇī* cannot be considered an indication of any particular Vajrayana identity. Otherwise, for example, the *Lotus Sutra* would have to be considered a Vajrayana text. The same point that Schopen makes in his own study of two *dhāraṇī* can be made of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. Instead of anything that can be distinctly identified as tantric, such as “an emphasis on the central function of the *guru* as religious preceptor; by sets—usually graded—of specific initiations; by esotericism of doctrine, language and organization; and by a strong emphasis on the realization of the goal through highly structured ritual and meditative techniques,” one finds instead a high continuity with previous Mahayana literature.⁴⁸

I would suggest, however, that we should no more consider all *dhāraṇī* under the category of mnemonic devices than we should consider them all to be Vajrayana.⁴⁹ Despite their apparent origin as mnemonic devices, this does not mean that they were only employed as such. The way in which the various *dhāraṇī* are presented in the *Aparimitāyus* literature is as invocations for longevity. The meaning is not explained in terms of any particular doctrinal formulation. Instead, one finds assurances that anyone who hears, remembers, recites, writes, or has written out the 108 syllables of the *dhāraṇī* will acquire longevity. This would appear to suggest a different intellectual milieu from that highlighted by Nattier. As she points out in her study of the names Amitābha and Amitāyus, it is the longevity of the Buddha

Amitābha in order that he continue to be available to practitioners that is of central concern in the formation of the cult of Amitābha. Here in the explanation of the value of the Aparimitāyus *dhāraṇī*, however, it is clearly the longevity of the practitioner that is the goal. Though in accord with her argument, neither indicates the goal of immortality.

Extending Hirakawa's considerations of the development of *dhāraṇī*,⁵⁰ we can suggest that rather than a blanket assertion about the function of all *dhāraṇī*, it is necessary to place them in their particular textual, doctrinal, historical, linguistic, cultural, and social location. Beginning as mnemonic devices, it seems that they were then considered to have the power to improve memory and understanding. And, once the formulae came to be thought of as having a power in themselves—rather than by reference to their didactic content—then other powers, such as longevity, could be attributed to them as well.

Not only do the powers attributed to *dhāraṇī* change across time and religious culture, but so too do the conceptions of the means by which they are effective. In the religious culture of India, it is generally the recitation of a *dhāraṇī* that makes it efficacious, that is, the vibrations, the sound of it. Paul Copp has shown that in East Asia, however, the efficacy of *dhāraṇī* came in at least some cases to be considered to reside in its physical manifestation as writing. This physicality extended to the ability of the *dhāraṇī* to be effective through casting shadows and the movement of air past it.⁵¹ Similarly, the healing and awakening power of the “clear light” mantra (*kōmyō shingon* 光明真言) was thought to be conveyed by means of clean sand over which it had been recited.⁵² Thus, it is impossible to say “what a *dhāraṇī* is,” without considering where it is, and when it is.

DIFFERING VERSIONS OF THE APARIMITĀYUḤ DHĀRAṆĪ

Rolf Giebel has reconstructed the pronunciation of the Aparimitāyus *dhāraṇī* as found in the early sixth-century Chinese translation of the *Aparimitāyurjñānaḥṛdayadhāraṇī* (阿弥陀鼓音聲王陀羅尼經; T. 370). Giebel writes:

T.370 is also included in T.1336 (21: 598b–599a), and the *dhāraṇī* is virtually identical except for several scribal or typographical errors in the latter. The following reconstruction is purely provisional and is in parts little more than guesswork, and it also ignores possible alternative readings suggested by the Tibetan translation.⁵³

According to Giebel's reconstruction, the Sanskrit pronunciation of the *dhāraṇī* is probably

[12: 352c] tad yathā bale abale samabala ni[r]deśa nirjātane nirmutte nirmukhe j[v]araprasādhane sukhāvatinirdeśa amitāyu bale amitāya garbhanirhāre amitāya prasādhane nirbuddhe ākāsanirbuddha ākāsanirdeśa ākāsanirjāte ākāśakuśale ākāśadaśani ākāśadhiṭṭhāne rūpanirdeśa rūpa [?] catvāri-dharmaprasādhane catvāri-āryasatya-prasādhane catvāri-mārgabhā[va]nāprasādhane balavīryaprasādhane dharmacintane kuśale kuśalanirdeśa kuśalapratiṭṭhāne buddhakuśale vibuddhaprabhāse dharmakaraṇe nirjāte nirbuddhe vimale viraja raja rase rasāgge rasāgrabale rasāgra-adhiṭṭhāne kuśale pratikuśale vikuśale ṭhate sudā[n]tacitte suprasā[n]tacitte supratīṭṭhite sule sumukhe dharme dhadhate lepa capale anuśapale buddhākāśanirguṇe buddhākāśaguṇe svāhā.

This is sharply different from the form found in the texts consulted by Silk and Walleser. Based on his study of the Sanskrit texts, Jonathan Silk renders the *dhāraṇī* as

Om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñānasuviniścitatejorājā ya tathāgatāyārhate samyaksambuddhāya || tad yathā || om puṇya puṇya mahāpuṇya aparimitapuṇya aparimitāyuh puṇyajñānasambhāropacite||om sarvasaṃskārapariśuddhadharmate gagaṇasamudgate svabhāvaviśuddhe mahānayaaparivāre svāhā ||⁵⁴

Other than the initial “om” this is identical to the form that Walleser gives based on his Nepalese Sanskrit text. Given the differences between the two *dhāraṇī*, that is, the one found in the early Chinese translation and the Sanskrit Nepalese texts, it appears clear that they were subject to change as well. Again, it is not the case that there is a neat association of one specific *dhāraṇī* with one particular buddha. What this variation in *dhāraṇī* may be able to help us establish, however, is textual families. Where the same *dhāraṇī* is found in two texts would evidence a close relation between them.

Recently, Richard McBride, Jr., has called into question the longstanding association between *dhāraṇī* and tantric Buddhism.⁵⁵ McBride has argued that *dhāraṇī* are not proto-tantric, but rather part of general Indian Mahayana Buddhism. This is true to the extent that *dhāraṇī* are not uniquely tantric in character. However, they were part of the Mahayana as it developed in mid- to late medieval India. So while they cannot be taken as a distinctive marker of tantric influence, they were part of the ongoing development of Buddhism in India, a development

in which language—especially extraordinary language such as *dhāraṇī* and mantra—was increasingly valorized as having a positive role in the practice of Buddhism, a central characteristic of tantric Buddhism.

In China, although the importation and translation of *dhāraṇī* sutras may simply have been part of the Indian Buddhism that was being imported, it seems overly analytic to separate that increasing valorization of language found in medieval Indian religious thought from the tantric character of some of the texts that include *dhāraṇī*, particularly as the distinction is ours and can hardly be one that the Chinese were making. At the same time, just because *dhāraṇī* are not uniquely tantric in character does not entail the conclusion that all *dhāraṇī* texts (i.e., texts such as this one that teach a particular *dhāraṇī*) can be automatically excluded from the category of tantric. Indeed, as we have seen, both Bu ston and the editors of the *Taishō* consider at least some of the *dhāraṇī* texts, such as those associated with Aparimitāyus, to be esoteric in character.

While *dhāraṇī* are not uniquely tantric, they do indicate the character of the religio-philosophic milieu in which both tantric and proto-Pure Land Buddhisms were developing. This milieu is one in which there was a positive valuation of the religious efficacy of language that stands in stark contrast to the Romantic presumptions that language is a hindrance. This latter forms a consistent part of contemporary Western religious culture and the modernist representations of Buddhism within that religious culture. Rather than a suspicion of language, medieval Indian religions, including Buddhism, are heir to the Vedic conceptions of language as metaphysically foundational and religiously central.

CONCLUSION

The examination of the literature associated with Aparimitāyus has contributed to three different sets of questions. First, it opens up the textual and historical basis for the study of the origins of Pure Land Buddhism in late medieval Indian Mahayana. Instead of focusing solely on the three texts selected by Hōnen, it is necessary to consider a wider range of texts and also figures. Second, a theoretical question has been raised, that is, how does contemporary Buddhist studies scholarship go about identifying what a buddha is? The closest thing to an answer to this question is that it is entirely contextual—whose conception are

we describing? Third, the character of *dhāraṇī* either as simply mnemonic devices or as indicative of a tantric affiliation is also a matter of context. Rather than saying that all *dhāraṇī* are one thing or another, it is necessary to consider the way in which specific *dhāraṇī* are used. *Dhāraṇī* are like so many of the various elements found in Mahayana and tantric ritual practice: they are deployed in support of a variety of competing goals.

The *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* points us away from an overly-reified conception of a singular, monolithic Pure Land tradition. This image of a Pure Land tradition has been that it originated in India with the three Pure Land sutras and continued in an unbroken and continuous line of ongoing development as it was transmitted to China and then further to Japan. Sectarian interpretations attribute the final climactic interpretations of the tradition either to Hōnen or Shinran, founders of authoritative traditions that continue into the present and which have spread to the West.

In place of this narrowly lineal conception, a different metaphor is perhaps much more appropriate. Instead of a single river, springing from a single, pure source, we can perhaps more accurately conceive of religious milieux as saturated solutions out of which various combinations of elements from time to time crystallize and fall out of solution. These crystalline forms are the texts that have come down to us. Thus, the generalized goal of birth in Sukhāvātī and the use of *dhāraṇī* are some of the elements in solution in the medieval Indian Buddhist milieu out of which the *Aparimitāyus* corpus was crystallized.

**THE NOBLE MAHĀYĀNA-SŪTRA
OF IMMEASURABLE LIFE AND WISDOM⁵⁶**

Trans. by Max Walleiser from his own critical edition of the Sanskrit
Trans. from Walleiser's German by Richard K. Payne

*Prefatory Note: items in parentheses () are Walleiser's additions, see his note 4; items in braces { } are my additions. Numbers in backslashes // indicate the pagination used in Walleiser's critical edition of the text. Walleiser abbreviates the many repetitions found in the text, particularly of the *dhāraṇī*. Personally, I find such abbreviation aesthetically displeasing, and so have restored that which was deleted. The interested reader is also advised to consult Jonathan Silk's translation of Walleiser's Sanskrit under the title: "A Sūtra for Long Life."⁵⁷*

Reverence to the holy, noble Avalokiteśvara!
 Oṃ! Reverence to all buddhas and bodhisattvas! /0/

Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Exalted One dwelt in Śrāvastī, in Jeta Grove, in the pleasure garden of Anāthapiṇḍada, together with a great multitude of mendicant monks, with 1,250 mendicant monks and fully as many bodhisattvas, *mahāsattvas*. Then the Exalted One spoke thus to Mañjuśrī, the Youthful⁵⁸ {*kumāra bhūtam*}:

“There is, Mañjuśrī, situated at the zenith a world,⁵⁹ a world-realm with the name ‘Immeasurable Accumulation of Virtue’ {*aparimita-guṇa-saṃcaya*}.⁶⁰ There dwells the ‘Shining King Fully Immeasurable Longevity and Excellent Wisdom’ called the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Perfectly Awakened [established on a basis⁶¹ of wisdom, a Sujata, a World-knower {*lokavid*}, an unexcelled guide of the training-followers, a teacher of gods and men, the illuminator, the exalted];⁶² he finds himself there [from beginning to end⁶³] and teaches living beings the law (dharma).

“Listen Mañjuśrī, the Youthful! These people of Jambudvīpa have short lives, living only one hundred years, and untimely deaths often befall them. However, Mañjuśrī, living beings who write out the text called *Treasury of the Virtues and Excellences of the Tathāgata Aparimitāyuh*, or have it written out, or have only heard the name [or have kept, or published it⁶⁴], or also, having obtained a copy of the book, keep it in a house, venerating it with flowers, incense, perfumes, garlands, when their life has lapsed will gain another one hundred years. Further, Mañjuśrī, living beings who hear, remember, [proclaim] the 108 syllables⁶⁵ {of the *dhāraṇī*} of this Tathāgata, Arhat, the Fully Awakened, of Unlimited Life and Wisdom, the excellent Shining King, will also lengthen their lifetimes. Thus, then, Mañjuśrī, when a son or daughter of a good family, wishing for a long life, will write out or have written out the 108 names {syllables?} of this Tathāgata Aparimitāyuh, they will then have these virtues and merits.”⁶⁶ /1/

Oṃ! Veneration to the eminent, Shining King of Unlimited Life and Wisdom, the Tathāgata, Holy, World-honored One! So then, Oṃ! Holy, holy, supremely holy, immeasurably holy, perpetually holy, accumulation of complete wisdom!⁶⁷ Oṃ! Oh you from all *saṃskāras* (workings) cleansed condition of the dharma, that you from heaven (*gagaṇa*) have come forth, free

of independent existence {svabhāva⁶⁸}, fully established in the great method {mahānaya parivāre⁶⁹}! Svāhā!

“Mañjuśrī, whoever writes out the 108 syllables of the Tathāgata, or has them written out, then has this gathered into a book, kept in a house, to preserve and proclaim it, will, when their life is at the point of passing away, have a hundred years added to it. And when this is past, he will be born in the buddha realm of the Tathāgata Aparimitāyuh, and he will (himself) live without end (aparimitāyuh), dwelling in the world “Immeasurable Accumulation of Virtue.” /2/

*oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārḥate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.*⁷⁰

At this time ninety-nine koṭis⁷¹ of buddhas with one mind and with one voice spoke this Aparimitāyuh-sūtra.⁷² /3/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārḥate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time eighty-four koṭis of buddhas with one mind and with one voice spoke this Aparimitāyuh-sūtra.

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārḥate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time seventy-seven koṭis of buddhas with one mind and with one voice spoke this Aparimitāyuh-sūtra.

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārḥate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time sixty-five koṭis of buddhas with one mind and with one voice spoke this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*.

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time fifty-five koṭis of buddhas with one mind and one voice spoke this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*.

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time forty-five koṭis of buddhas with one mind and with one voice spoke this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*.

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time thirty-six koṭis of buddhas with one mind and with one voice spoke this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*.

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time twenty-five koṭis of buddhas with one mind and with one voice spoke this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*.

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

At this time ten koṭis of buddhas, equal in number to the grains of sand of the Ganges, with one mind and with one voice spoke this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. /4/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever hears this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, writes it, has it written, when his life is coming to an end, he will have his life lengthened by another hundred years. /5/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will never be born in hell, nor will ever be born in an animal incarnation, nor be born in the world of Yama. Wherever he is born, in each birth he will remember all previous births. /6/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will thereby establish as many as 84,000 dharma-groups.⁷³ /7/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever will write out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or have it written out, will thereby differentiate and establish eighty-four thousand groups of dharmas.⁷⁴ /8/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, becomes thereby completely free from the five actions with immediate effects.⁷⁵ /9/

*oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.*⁷⁶

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will not be caused death or injury by the god of death (Māra) or those gods belonging to the clan of death, the *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, at any inopportune moment.⁷⁷ /10/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, at the time of death ninety-nine *koṭis* of buddhas will appear to him and a thousand buddhas will stretch out their hands to him; he will wander from buddha land to buddha land. He will not experience doubt, ignorance, nor ambiguous speech. /11/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will follow the four great kings, being protected, defended, guarded.⁷⁸ /11a/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhatē samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will be born in the world *Sukhāvātī*, in the buddha-field of the *Tathāgata Amitābha*. /12/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhatē samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

In whatever place on earth this precious *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* is written out, or caused to be written out, this place on earth becomes a *caitya*,⁷⁹ greeted with reverence, [venerated by passing on the right⁸⁰]. Those who have entered into⁸¹ an animal life, birds and *pretas*,⁸² when they come to this place,⁸³ it is entirely inevitable⁸⁴ that they shall be awakened to unexcelled enlightenment. /13/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhatē samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will never again be born as a woman.⁸⁵ /14/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhatē samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will never again live in poverty.⁸⁶ /15/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhatē samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-

saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, whoever gives only a *kārṣāpaṇa*⁸⁷ for the sake of this guide book, it is thereby as if he fills the three thousand, many thousand world-systems⁸⁸ with the seven precious substances and presents them as a donation. /16/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever at any time makes veneration to this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*,⁸⁹ venerates all good dharmas.⁹⁰ /17/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Although it may be possible to measure the extent of the merits of giving one of the seven precious substances each to the Tathāgatas Vipaśyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, and Śākyasiṃha, it is not possible to measure the extent of the merits of this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. /18/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Although the merit of giving precious substances equal in extent to the king of mountains, Sumeru, can be measured, one cannot measure the merits of this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. /19/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārhate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Although it may be possible to count each and every drop of the water that fills the four great oceans,⁹¹ it is not possible to measure the merits of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. /20/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārḥate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Whoever writes out this *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, or has it written out, will be well-received, venerated, being greeted and venerated by all of the tathāgatas in all of the buddha-lands in the ten directions. /21/

oṃ namo bhagavate aparimitāyur-jñāna-suviniścita-tejo-rājāya, tathāgatāyārḥate samyak-saṃbuddhāya, tadyathā, oṃ puṇya-puṇya-mahā-puṇya-aparimita-puṇya-aparimitayuh-puṇya-jñāna-saṃbhāropacite, oṃ sarva-saṃskāra-pariśuddha-dharmate gagaṇa-samudgate svabhāva-viśuddhe mahānaya-parivāre svāhā.

Then, at this time, the Exalted One spoke these verses:

The Buddha is unexcelled at the power of giving (*dāna*),
By the power of giving is this lion of men known.
One hears the sound of the power of giving
When one enters the city of compassion. /22/

The Buddha is unexcelled at the power of discipline (*śīla*),
By the power of discipline is this lion of men known.
One hears the sound of the power of discipline
When one enters the city of compassion.

The Buddha is unexcelled at the power of patience (*kṣānti*),
By the power of patience is this lion of men known.
One hears the sound of the power of patience
When one enters the city of compassion.

The Buddha is unexcelled at the power of effort (*vīrya*),
By the power of effort is this lion of men known.
One hears the sound of the power of effort
When one enters the city of compassion.

The Buddha is unexcelled at the power of meditation (*dhyāna*),
By the power of meditation is this lion of men known.
One hears the sound of the power of meditation

When one enters the city of compassion.

The Buddha is unexcelled at the power of wisdom (*prajñā*),

By the power of wisdom is this lion of men known.

One hears the sound of the power of wisdom

When one enters the city of compassion.

Thus spoke the Exalted One joyfully, and the *bhikṣus*, the *bodhisattvas-mahāsattvas*, and the vast assembly, and the worlds of gods, men, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *gandharvas*, found pleasure in what the Exalted One had spoken. /23/

Thus ends the Mahayana sutra, *Immeasurable Life*.

NOTES

1. This essay is based on an earlier version published under the title “The Cult of Ārya Aparimitāyus: Proto-Pure Land Buddhism in the Context of Indian Mahāyāna,” *The Pure Land*, n.s., 13–14 (1997): 19–36. I would like to thank Leslie Kawamura for providing me the opportunity to revise, correct, and expand on that earlier work.
2. For complete bibliographic information, see Payne, “The Cult of Ārya Aparimitāyus.”
3. Jonathan Silk has drawn attention to this text, noting its value in relation to the issue contextualizing questions of “importance.” He notes that if instead of our own philosophic or sectarian interests, we consider whether people followed the instructions of a sutra, then since it was copied countless times the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* was certainly important—by that measure. Additionally, the study of Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet has begun to draw scholarly attention, including Matthew Kapstein, “Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet? From Sukhāvātī to the Field of Great Bliss,” in *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Kenneth K. Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 16–51; and Georgios Halkias, “Transferring to the Land of Bliss: Among Sukhāvātī Texts and Practices in Tibet” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2006).
4. Gregory Schopen, “Sukhāvātī as a Generalized Religious Goal in Sanskrit Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 19, nos. 3–4 (1977): 188.
5. Gregory Schopen, “The Phrase ‘*sa pṛthivīpradeśas caityabhūto bhavet*’ in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17, nos. 3–4 (1975), reprinted in Gregory Schopen, *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 43.
6. Schopen, “The Phrase ‘*sa pṛthivīpradeśas caityabhūto bhavet*,” 35.
7. Silk, “The Most Important Buddhist Scripture?” (paper presented at the 12th Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Université of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland, August 27, 1999), 9. I wish to thank Prof. Silk for his willingness to share a copy of his paper with me.
8. *Ibid.*, 11.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Schopen, “Sukhāvātī,” 200.
11. #: Title restored from the Tibetan.
12. This predates by several centuries the translations by Facheng (法成; Skt. Dharmasiddhi; Tib. Chos grub), who is placed as having been active in the first

half of the ninth century (T. vol. 19, no. 936) and Fatian (法天; Skt. Dharmadeva [?]), who was active end of the tenth to beginning of the eleventh centuries (T. vol. 19, no. 937). See Paul Demieville, Hubert Durt, and Anna Seidel, eds., *Répertoire du Canon Bouddhique Sino-Japonais* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrient Maisonneuve, and Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1978), sv. "Hōjō" 255, and "Hōten" 257. Unfortunately, there seem to be no attributions for the Tibetan translations of this text.

13. This is, of course, a very rough "rule of thumb." There is nothing that would prevent a text from being immediately transported and translated, or, on the other hand, lingering for centuries in India until its eventual transmission and translation.

14. For a discussion of the vast quantity of copies of the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, and other languages, see Silk, "The Most Important Buddhist Scripture?," 6.

15. Jan Nattier, *A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path according to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugraparipṛcchā)*, Studies in the Buddhist Traditions (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 7.

16. On the basis of an admittedly "preliminary and limited search" Silk "has located more than 130 manuscript copies of the Sanskrit *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, both as an independent text and included in collections of dhāraṇī-sūtras" ("The Most Important Buddhist Scripture?," 6).

17. Kōtatsu Fujita, "Pure Land Buddhism in India," trans. Taitetsu Unno, in *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development*, ed. James Foard, Richard Solomon, and Richard K. Payne, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 3 (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies, 1996), 6.

18. Jan Nattier, personal communication, May 2, 2004. According to her analysis the term Śaka is a mistaken Sanskritization of the ethnonym Saka.

19. Max Walleser, *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtram: Nach einer nepalesischen Sanskrit-Handschrift mit der tibetischen und chinesischen Version*, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 12 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1916), 5.

20. Ibid., 6. Internal quotation is from Rajendralala Mitra, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal* (1882; repr., Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1971), 41.

21. See Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), chap. 4, "The Organic Worldview," 80–109.

22. See Richard K. Payne, "Introduction," in *Tantric Buddhism in East Asia*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006); and Richard K. Payne,

“Traditionalist Representations of Buddhism,” in press, *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, third series, no. 10 (2008).

23. For this history, see Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth Publishers, 1986).

24. One singularly memorable instance of this was a textbook in which the only discussion of ritual was relegated to an introductory chapter on “primitive religions.” The implications of such an authorial decision are obvious. This textbook is still in print, and now in its sixth edition.

25. Such factors in the formation of the contemporary understanding of Buddhist history is an instance of the more generally recognized phenomenon of the role of interests in theory formation, as studied for example in the sociology of knowledge. See, for example, David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 170–173. Such interests can perhaps best be understood to include both intellectual and personal/social/political/economic interests. This is evidenced, for example, by my own intellectual interest in exploring that which transgresses categories, and my professional interests as a graduate student in laying claim to some field of inquiry as my own academic specialization.

26. See Nattier’s cogent discussion of the problems of intra-textual analysis, *A Few Good Men*, 48–51.

27. The dates are those of Lokakṣema’s earliest arrival in Loyang (variants being 167, 168, and 176), where he was active until 186 (Demiéville, et al., *Répertoire du Canon Bouddhique*, s.v. “Shi Rakusen,” 277). This is not the version most widely referred to, which would be the *Wuliangshou jing* (T. 360, 無量壽經, *Muryōjūkyō*), selected by Hōnen as one of the “three Pure Land sutras.”

28. Jan Nattier, “The Names of Amitābha/Amitāyus in Early Chinese Buddhist Translations (1),” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism, Soka University* 9 (March 2006): 183.

29. The six perfections are found in texts such as the *Ṣaṭpāramitā-sūtra* (T. vol. 17, no. 778, 菩薩內習六波羅蜜經), which was translated into Chinese at a rather early date. This translation is attributed to Buddhadeva (嚴佛調), active ca. 180s. Hobogirin, s.v. “Gombucchō” 252. Regarding other sutras identifying six perfections, see Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographic Notes* (1980; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 219.

30. See Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, s.v. “Bodhisattva(s)” (New York: Macmillan, 2004).

31. G.P. Malalasekera, ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Government of Ceylon, 1964–2004), vol. II, fasc. 1, s.v. “Aparimitāyu.”

32. We should note that it has been suggested that both Amitābha and

Amitāyus are “back-translations” into Sanskrit of the same Gandhari Prakṛt name. Charles Willemen, “Esoteric Buddhism in China” (lecture, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, April 28, 2004).

33. Bruce Williams, “*Mea Maxima Vikalpa*: Repentance, Meditation, and the Dynamics of Liberation in Medieval Chinese Buddhism, 500–650 CE” (PhD diss., University of California, 2002), 32–33.

34. Dharma Publishing Staff, trans., *The Fortunate Aeon: How the Thousand Buddhas Become Enlightened*, 4 vols. (Berkeley, CA: Dharma Publishing, 1986).

35. Paul Harrison, *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*, Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series 5 (Tokyo: The International Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1990).

36. Jan Nattier, “The Names of Amitābha/Amitāyus in Early Chinese Buddhist Translations (1),” 183–199; and Jan Nattier, “The Names of Amitābha/Amitāyus in Early Chinese Buddhist Translations (2),” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University* 9 (March 2007): 359–394.

37. Nattier, “The Names of Amitābha/Amitāyus in Early Chinese Buddhist Translations (2),” 389–390.

38. *Ibid.*, 387–388. (Tangentially, we may note that this effectively negates any attempt to equate Sukhāvātī and the Christian Heaven.)

39. The titles of P nos. 361/362/474, 363/475, 2990, 2993, 3523, and 3524 use the longer epithet, while P nos. 2994, 3522, and 4886 use the shorter. What remains unclear to me is how Ratna Handurukande and Kōyū Tamura in the *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* articles (beginning with “Aparimitāyu(h)–stotra,” vol. 2, fasc. 1, 16 through to “Aparimitāyus–sūtropadeśa,” vol. 2, fasc. 1, 21) claim to reconstruct Aparimitāyus rather than Amitāyus or Amitābha from Tibetan and Chinese titles, which do not to me at least appear to make this explicit. I can understand if there is a Khotanese or Nepali version, but in many of these cases there doesn’t seem to be—only a Tibetan text, for example. The *Hobogirin* catalogue notes that such reconstructions are doubtful; see, for example, T. nos. 360, 361, 362, 363.

40. Silk, “The Most Important Buddhist Scripture?,” 3.

41. My translation of Max Walleser, *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtram Nach einer Nepalesischen Sanskrit-Handschrift mit der tibetischen und chinesischen Version*, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophische-historische Klasse, vol. 7 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter’s Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1916), 30.

42. My translation of *ibid.*, 34.

43. Schopen, “Sukhāvātī,” 181.

44. See for example, Hisao Inagaki, *The Anantamukharnirhāra-Dhāraṇī and Jñānagarbha's Commentary: A Study and the Tibetan Text* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1987), 100.
45. Akira Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, trans. Paul Groner, Asian Studies at Hawaii 36 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 3, 294.
46. Walleser, *Aparimitāyur-sūtram*.
47. Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin, Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 36 (Louvain-le-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1988), 286.
48. Gregory Schopen, "The Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣa and Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇīs in Indian Inscriptions: Two Sources for the Practice of Buddhism in Medieval India," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für Indische Philosophie* 29 (1985): 147.
49. For a valuable discussion of various emic understandings of *dhāraṇī*, including the mnemonic interpretation, see chap. 3 of Paul Copp, "Voice, Dust, Shadow, Stone: The Making of Spells in Medieval Chinese Buddhism" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005), 113–170.
50. Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, 301.
51. Copp, "Voice, Dust, Shadow, Stone," esp. chap. 6, 237–299.
52. Mark Unno, *Shingon Refractions: Myōe and the Mantra of Light* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004).
53. Rolf Giebel, personal communication, September 9, 2005.
54. Silk, "The Most Important Buddhist Scripture?," 4; Jonathan Silk, "A Sūtra for Long Life," in *Buddhist Scriptures*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 425.
55. Richard McBride, II, "Is there really 'esoteric' Buddhism?," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 2 (2004): 329–356. See also McBride, "Dhāraṇī and Spells in Medieval Sinitic Buddhism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 85–114.
56. {RKP: Walleser's notes are rendered as given. Where it has been possible to add bibliographic or other information, these appear in braces. More recent relevant publications are also noted as "Cf."}
57. {RKP: Jonathan Silk, "A Sūtra for Long Life," in *Buddhist Scriptures*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 423–429.}
58. {RKP: Silk gives "Crown Prince."}
59. *upariṣṭād-diśi*. See the parallel textual locations in the *Lalita-vistara*, ed.

Rāj. Mitra, p. 368, l. 5, and Śata-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā ed. Bibl. Ind. p. 50, l. 18. {RKP: Rajendralāla Mitra, *The Lalita-Vistara, or Memoirs of the Early Life of Śākya Siṅha* (Calcutta, 1881); Pratāpacandra Ghoṣa, ed., *Çatasāhasrikā-Prajñā-Pāramitā: A Theological and Philosophical Discourse of Buddha with His Disciples (in a Hundred-Thousand Stanzas)*, Biblioteca Indica, work no. 153 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1902).} The reading of the Calcutta manuscript, also employed by Hörnle and Leumann, is corrected by this. {RKP: re. R. Hörnle, probably “The unknown languages of E. Turkestan,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1910): 384ff. Re. E. Leumann, probably *Zur nordarischen Sprache und Literatur* (Strassburg, 1912). See also perhaps, Ernst Leumann, *Buddhistische literatur nordarisch und deutsch*, Abhandlung für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, vol. 15, no. 2 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1920).}

60. Taking into account the frequency with which *dhātu* is treated as a feminine in Buddhist texts (e.g. the Lalita vistara), I retain the reading of *sañcayā* in my manuscript.

61. The bracketed passage [. . .] is absent in all versions, including the Calcutta ms., and it therefore appears to be a scribal emendation of my {Nepali} manuscript.

62. The legitimacy of this rendering from the Sanskrit *caraṇa* is provided by the Chinese, among others. See de Harlez, Voc. bouddh. p. 5, n. 5. {RKP: Charles de Harlez, *Vocabulaire bouddhique sanscrit-chinois . . . Precis de doctrine bouddhique* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1897).}

63. Following the Tibetan version, the phrase *ājāti-paryantaṃ* has been added.

64. The presentation of this {phrase: “or have kept, or published it”}, left out at this point from the Tibetan, is familiar to us from the Prajñā-pāramitā. See, for example, Aṣṭasāh. Prjñ. ed. Bibl. Ind. p. 49ff. {RKP: *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Cf. Edward Conze, trans., *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary* (frequent reprints; Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973).}

65. {RKP: Walleser uses “names,” but this is perhaps a mistaken presumption that we are dealing here with something similar to the idea of the “one hundred names of God.” This is clearly, however, a reference to the 108 syllables of the *dhāraṇī* itself. In Walleser’s rendering, adhered to here, there would appear to be 110 syllables. There are, however, two instances of what might be called double *a*’s, *puṇya-āparimita*, and these would no doubt have been counted as a single long *a* (*ā*) by the author, thus giving 108 rather than 110.}

66. Skt. *ānuśaṃsā*, Tib. *lesg par hgyur ba*; cf. Speyer Av. śat. II. 220, *Divyāvādāna*, Index, s.v.; Pāli *ānisaṃso*. {RKP: Re. third item: cf. J. S. Speyer, ed., *Avadānaçataka: A Century of Edifying Tales Belonging to the Hīnayāna*, Bibliotheca buddhica, 3 (St. Petersburg: Commisionnaires de l’Academie Impériale des Sciences, 1906–1909); and J. S. Speyer, “Critical Remarks on the Text of the

Divyavadana,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 16. Cf. Andy Rotman, trans., *Divine Stories: Divyavadana Part 1* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008).}

67. In this situation °*upacite* can have three different meanings, depending upon whether one regards it as dative, singular, masculine for °*cit* (suffixless stem as *nomen agentis*), or as vocative, singular, feminine for °*cite* (passive particle, attributive to *dharmate*), or as it is understood here, as vocative, singular, feminine for °*citi* (*nomen agentis*).

68. {RKP: Any attempt to translate a *dhāraṇī* is complex and difficult, its difficulty perhaps only exceeded by attempting to translate a mantra. There is indeed a reasonable argument to be made for not attempting to translate either, particularly as once they moved into Tibetan and Chinese, both *dhāraṇī* and mantra were with apparently only a very few exceptions simply rendered phonetically. Here Walleser renders *svabhāva* as *Eigensein*, which correlates with the English “own-being,” which is not only cacophonous, but unenlightening. What I have come to understand by *svabhāva* is “independent existence” (cf. Latin *sui generis*), as opposed to “interdependence.” The meaning here, then, would seem to be that the Buddha is free of the illusion of independent existence.}

69. {RKP: Walleser renders *mahānaya parivāre* as *Beweisfahren*. My rendering here is based on the Sanskrit, which means that while “great method” for *mahānaya* is fairly straightforward, “fully established in” for *parivāre* is rather tentative. Unfortunately, in the critical edition of the Tibetan that Walleser provides, he has simply given the same Sanskrit, apparently indicating that the Tibetan for the *dhāraṇī* is a phonetic transcription and not a translation.}

70. {RKP: This is the *dhāraṇī* as given by Walleser on p. 22 of his critical edition of the Sanskrit. Max Walleser, *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtram Nach einer nepalesischen Sanskrit-Handschrift mit der tibetischen und chinesischen Version* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter’s Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1916). See also, Silk, “A Sūtra for Long Life,” 425.}

71. One *koṭi* = ten million.

72. Here following the Tibetan; however, the Chinese translation has “with one meaning and many voices” which would point back to the Skt. *ekamatenāneka-savreṇa*.

73. [. . .] missing from the Tibetan.

74. The manuscript has *dharmarājikā*. We are reading it here in accord with the Tibetan translation, which gives *dharmaskandha*.

75. Regarding the five *ānanataryāni karmāni* (matricide, patricide, killing an arhant, harming a buddha, causing a division in the community) see *Dharmasaṅgraha* (Anecd. Ox I.5), pp. 13, 48. {RKP: F. Max Müller and H. Wen-

zel, eds., *The Dharma-samgraha: An Ancient Collection of Buddhist Technical Terms*, Anecdota oxoniensia, Aryan series, vol. 1, pt. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885). Cf. Tashi Zangmo and Dechen Chime, trans., *Dharmasaṅgrahaḥ: Excellent Collection of Doctrines of Ācārya Nāgārjuna* (Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1993).}

76. {Following the *dhāraṇī*} the Tibetan version adds the following sentence at this point: “Whoever . . . written out, the transgressions that they have accumulated, even though as vast as Meru, will be eradicated.”

77. Tibetan: “Also, even if they have the opportunity, they will not seize the opportunity.”

78. This sentence is missing in the manuscript, and we have inserted it following the Tibetan version. The existence of a parallel passage in the Chinese assures that it is original.

79. A grave mound for interring relics, or more generally, a monument or cenotaph.

80. [. . .] missing from the Tibetan.

81. Following the Tibetan translation *mṛga* is added to the manuscript version.

82. As per the Tibetan amplification (*yi dvags*).

83. See *Śikṣāsamuccaya* p. 174, l. 17: “yeṣāṃ tasya nāmadheyam nipatet karṇe,” cited from the *Gharīṣajya-guru-vaidūrya-prabhā-rāja-sūtra*; see also *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha*, ed. Calc., p. 25, l. 17. {RKP: Re. first: Śāntideva, *Cikshasamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Teaching*, Bibliotheca Buddhica, vol. 1 (repr., ’s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957; orig. pub., St. Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1897–1902). Re. second, cf. Lokesh Chandra, *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha-sūtra, or, The Supernal Virtues of Avalokiteśvara* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1999).}

84. Amplified with “on the path to awakening.”

85. See *Śikṣāsamuccaya* p. 176, l. 2: “tasya strī-bhāvo na bhaviṣyati” (cited from the *Mañjuśrī-buddha-kṣetra-guṇa-vyūhalaṅkāra-sūtra*).

86. This sentence is missing from the Tibetan translation, and it is easy to see the amendment to the manuscript.

87. A small coin.

88. “élément du troisième grand millénaire” (de Harlez, Voc. bouddh., p. 37, T’oung-Pao vol. VII, 4; VIII, 2). {RKP: See Rupert Gethin, “Cosmology,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert J. Buswell Jr., 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004).}

89. Tibetan: “these *dharma-paryāya*.”

90. Following the Tibetan, the reading is something like “sakala-sad-dharmāḥ pūjitā bhaviṣyanti.”

91. See *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha* p. 40, l. 11: “śakyam mayā mahā-samudrasyaikam (*sic!*) udaka-vinduṃ gaṇayituṃ na tu. . .” Similarly, *ibid.*, 19, l. 15.