

A Prayer for Rebirth in the Sukhāvātī

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The present contribution represents a translation and a short analytical study of a prayer for rebirth in the Sukhāvātī which was composed by Karma chags med, a Karma bka' bgyud master, who lived in the seventeenth century.¹ In the colophons to his works available to me, he calls himself dGe slong Rāgāsyā (Rā ga a sya), gTer blon Rāgāsyā or dGe slong brTson 'grus. My translation of his prayer is primarily based on a block print edition acquired in Nepal over ten years ago.² This prayer for rebirth in the Sukhāvātī constitutes an integral part of a one-volume collection of ritual texts relating to Amitābha's Sukhāvātī. The longest rituals included in it are the Sukhāvātī *sādhana* and a cluster of relevant funeral rites. The overall aim of all these rituals is to prepare the living for rebirth in the Sukhāvātī and to help the dying to traverse safely the distance between this world and the Sukhāvātī in order to live there in the presence of the Buddha Amitābha.

It is not my intention here to analyse the various strands of the development of Pure Land doctrine in Tibet or within the Karma bka' bgyud tradition. Rather, I shall analyse the content of this prayer in the context of canonical texts on which the Pure Land doctrine and practice are based, such as the two *Sukhāvātīvyūha-sūtras*³ and the *Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra*,⁴ and also within the

¹ Some nine volumes of his collected works were published in India between 1974–1984 under the title of *The Collected Works of Karma-chags-med (Rā-ga-a-sya)*. Volume I, published in 1984, contains a list of works included in his *gsung 'bum*.

² A critical edition of the Tibetan text, an annotated German translation and a fair amount of relevant information is to be found in P. Schwieger, *Ein tibetisches Wunschgebet um Wiedergeburt in der Sukhāvātī*, St. Augustin, 1978.

³ References to the Sanskrit texts of the Larger and Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* provided here in the footnotes are given to their edition published in Japan: *Bonzōwaei gappeki jōdo sambukyō*, Tokyo, Taitō Shuppan-sha, 1931. References to their English translations are to Max Müller's translation published in *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts*, SBE, London, OUP, 1894, reprinted in Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1968. The abbreviations Tr and Skt refer to the above-mentioned English translations and the Sanskrit texts respectively.

In the Tibetan bKa' 'gyur, the Sanskrit title of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* is given as *Amitābhavyūha* and that of the Smaller as *Sukhāvātīvyūha*. In Paul Demiéville's catalogue of the Taishō Issaikyō, published in *Hōbōgirin*, 1931, we find three different Sanskrit titles that are given for the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* (T360), namely *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, *Amitābhavyūha* and *A(pari)mitāyuh-sūtra* (followed by a question mark). The Chinese and Japanese titles of this *sūtra* are *Wou leang cheou king* and *Muryōjukyō*. In the same source, the Sanskrit title of the Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha* (T366) is given as *Sukhāvātī(amṛta)vyūha*, and its Chinese and Japanese titles as *A mi t'o king* and *Amidakyō*.

Out of the existing Chinese versions of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, the translation ascribed to Saṅghavarman and executed in AD 252 is considered as the most important one. The Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha* was translated by Kumārajīva in AD 402.

⁴ This text is said to have been translated into Chinese by Kālayāśas between AD 424–442. In

context of some other relevant Mahāyāna *sūtras* which speak of the realms or buddhafiels (*buddhakṣetra*) belonging to Amitābha and other Buddhas. Although Rāgāśya’s prayer as a whole, and in particular his description of the Sukhāvātī, is inspired by the *Sukhāvātīvyūhas*, it is very much a composite work drawing on other sources, such as the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra*, which clearly influenced him to unveil a somewhat different image and perception of the Sukhāvātī from what is generally known about it. Although his prayer is not divided into sections but flows on naturally from one image or thought to the next, I have inserted sectional divisions in order to facilitate my analysis.

The opening scene of the prayer (I) unfolds before us a vision of the Sukhāvātī located in the western direction. There then follows a *sādhana* type visualisation of Amitābha (II) and the two chief Bodhisattvas belonging to his retinue, namely Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.⁵ After their visualisation, there

Demiéville’s catalogue (T365), its Chinese and Japanese titles are given as *Kouan wou leang cheou fo king* and *Kammuryōjubutsukyō*. In J. Takakusu’s English translation from the Chinese, its title is given as *Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra*. In Nanjio’s catalogue (No 198) its title is suggested as *Buddhabhāṣitāmitayurbuddhadhyāna-sūtra* and in L. Renou & J. Filliozat, *L’Inde classique*, vol. 2, Paris, EFEO, 1953, 371, it is referred to as *Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti*. It should be pointed out that since at present the original Sanskrit of this text is not available and there is no trace of its Tibetan version, it is difficult to ascertain its precise Sanskrit title from the Chinese version. For a discussion concerning the authenticity of this text see Kōtatsu Fujita, “Textual Origins of the Kuan-liang-shou ching”, in R.E. Buswell, ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1990, 149–73.

My references to this text are given here to J. Takakusu’s English translation which is also included in the same volume as Max Müller’s translations of the *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* as detailed in the previous note.

⁵ The visualisation of Amitābha and the two Bodhisattvas is not described in the two *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* but it is detailed in the *Amitāyurdhyāna*, 178–85, as part of sixteen consecutive meditational exercises. In terms of textual space, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are not particularly prominent in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, and their names do not occur in the Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha*. They are, however, clearly shown in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* (Tr52/Skt114) as the two Bodhisattvas whose brightness (*prabhā*), far greater than that of the *śrāvakas* and all other Bodhisattvas, illuminates the Sukhāvātī with lasting splendour. It is also said in the same passage that they passed away from Śākyamuni’s *buddhakṣetra* and became born spontaneously (*upapanna*) in the Sukhāvātī. In another place, Avalokiteśvara is also referred to as a Buddha-son (*suta*).

follows one verse in praise of the Buddha and his entourage, and then a number of verses addressed specifically to Amitābha (III). These verses extol Amitābha and his constant concern for the welfare of living beings. He is praised for surveying living beings at all times with his loving compassion while persisting to live for countless *kalpas* without passing into the final *nirvāṇa*. The verses also recall Amitābha's promise to safeguard people who place their trust in him. The main thrust of these verses is to establish a firm bond between Amitābha and the devotee through trust and devotion. These verses are in harmony with the general doctrinal context expressed in the *Sukhāvātīvyūhas*. But they also include one assertion which is not quite in agreement with the Mahāyāna *sūtras* in general and those relating to the Sukhāvātī in particular. The author lauds Amitābha as dispersing millions of Avalokiteśvaras, Tārās and Padmasambhavas from the light rays emanating from his palms and heart. Avalokiteśvara certainly belongs to Amitābha's entourage in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* and in the *Amitāyurdhyāna*⁶ but Tārā and Padmasambhava do not. Tārā does not figure in Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Her appearance in Buddhism is rather late and seems to coincide with the emergence of the texts belonging to the *tantra* class. In chapter two of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* she appears with other goddesses in the company of Avalokiteśvara, and in the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* she is said to be his emanation. A number of Indian texts such as *Tārāmūlakalpa* and many hymns dedicated to Tārā indicate that her cult was well established in India before Buddhism reached Tibet.⁷ Bearing in mind that in the *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* there is a pronounced stress on the absence of women in the Sukhāvātī, something that Rāgāsya certainly knows,⁸ the introduction of Tārā, even as a goddess, seems rather anomalous. Padmasambhava is of course a well known tantric master who visited Tibet in the 8th century, and who was subsequently considered not only as the 'founder' of the Nyi ma pa tradition but also as a

⁶ Chapter twenty-four of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* is entirely preoccupied with descriptions of Avalokiteśvara's attributes and salvific activities in various guises for the benefit of other people. He is also said to live with Amitābha in the Sukhākara world. A fairly late *sūtra*, the *Karaṇḍavyūha*, contains a much more expanded account of Avalokiteśvara's activities as a universal saviour. This text provides elaborate descriptions of his wondrous manifestations in different destinies through which he alleviates sufferings, and sets living beings on the path to deliverance. The same text also describes his visits to different places, such as Sinhala or Magadha, where he performs all sorts of wonderful deeds to help others.

⁷ For a comprehensive study of the rituals focusing on the goddess Tārā, see S. Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978. A fair number of hymns in praise of Tārā composed by Indian masters has been translated in M. Willson, *In Praise of Tārā: Songs to the Saviouress*, London, Wisdom Publications, 1986.

⁸ See section IX, notes 61 and 101. It is also said in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr43/Skt90 that in addition to various items such as clouds of scented water, seven jewels, umbrellas, flags and flowers falling from above, musical instruments are played, and divine nymphs (*apsaras*) dance.

Buddha having eight different manifestations.⁹ The introduction of Tārā and Padmasambhava into this prayer for rebirth in the Sukhāvātī is an innovation, which was inspired no doubt by the texts relating to the cult of Tārā and Padmasambhava, both of whom are widely worshipped in Tibet. It is thus clear that Rāgāśya incorporated into his prayer certain elements from a widely diffused tradition in Tibet which certainly does not belong to the early Pure Land doctrinal and devotional context as known in the relevant *sūtras*. The three Pure Land texts were compiled several centuries before Buddhism was introduced to Tibet, and over a thousand years before Rāgāśya composed his prayer.

The next section of the prayer (IV) focuses on offering to Amitābha one's own body and merit, and items of worship consisting of mentally produced auspicious substances and jewels, Jambudvīpa and other continents, Mount Merus, suns and moons, and so forth; offerings which indeed include the whole world and its wealth. Among the various items of worship mentioned in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*¹⁰ we find such objects as flowers, incense, garlands, umbrellas, music and so forth, but we do not find any reference to offering the four continents, Merus, suns and moons. We find, however, in the same text a passage which seems to suggest that such offerings are not entirely suitable. We read in it that the surface of the Sukhāvātī is even and soft as the palms of the hands, and that it has no black mountains (*kālaparvata*), jewel mountains (*ratnaparvata*), Sumerus, Cakravāḍas or Mahācakravāḍas.¹¹ And again in another passage we read that even the names of fire, sun, moon, planets, lunar mansions, stars or darkness are not mentioned there.¹² Thus, it would seem that the things belonging to this world are not appropriate offerings to present to Amitābha. The offering of Mount Meru and the four continents represents a later development in Buddhism which, as part of tantric practice, is known as the offering of the *maṇḍala* (or *maṇḍalaka*). It is well-established in Tibet, and it is performed not only by tantric adepts but also by ordinary people. As such, this ritual is derived from later Indian sources.¹³

⁹ For an account of his life see G.C. Toussaint, tr., *Le dict de Padma (Padma thang-yig)*, Paris, 1933; translated into English from the French by K. Douglas & G. Bays, *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, 2 vols., Emeryville, Dharma Publishing, 1978. See also A.M. Blondeau, "Analysis of the Biographies of Padmasambhava According to the Tibetan Tradition: Classification of Sources", in M. Aris & Aung San Suu Kyi, eds., *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson*, Warminster, 1980, 45–52.

¹⁰ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr17/Skt34–6.

¹¹ *ibid.*, Tr36/Skt74.

¹² *ibid.*, Tr43/Skt90.

¹³ The bsTan 'gyur includes a fair number of such rituals translated from the Sanskrit. See for instance Buddhaguhya, *Maṇḍalakrīyavidhi*, TTP, vol. 81, 240-5-5/241-1-3 or Ratnākaraśānti, *Maṇḍalavidhi*, TTP, vol. 87, 167-1-7/167-4-2. One such text was described and translated a long time ago by L.A. Waddell in his *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet*, London, 1895, repr. New Delhi, Heritage Publishers, 1979, 398–400.

The fifth section of Rāgāsya's prayer incorporates a group of spiritual exercises which is attested in early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and which constitutes an integral part of the Bodhisattva's daily practices. It includes the confession of sins, the act of raising the thought of enlightenment, sharing in the merit of other people, and requesting the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas not to pass into *nirvāṇa*. The confession of sins represents a comprehensive list of offences relating to the monastic code of conduct (*prātimokṣa*), the Bodhisattva morality (*śīla*), and the vows (*samvara*) of tantric adepts. The confession of sins as part of the Mahāyāna is attested in some of the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*. In the *Upāliparipṛcchā*, for instance, an early text included in the Mahāratnakūṭa, we already find a rather elaborate exposition of performing the confession before thirty-five Buddhas.¹⁴ The fact that the author includes the confession of offences specified in different *tantras* indicates that he also subscribed to the path of esoteric practices. The confession of sins and other exercises included in this section are not specifically mentioned in any of the *sūtras* relating to the Sukhāvātī. As there is no sin in that pure realm the need for confession does not arise. One may observe at this point that Rāgāsya casts his prayer and various acts of devotion very much from the perspective of this world and the way in which it functions, and not so much in terms of worship as performed in the Sukhāvātī.

The next section (VI) and those that follow it read very much like a prayer in a proper sense. Having pleaded with the Buddhas to stay in the world, and having aspired to have all living beings liberated through their Buddha activities, the author makes a general supplication for gaining certain benefits. He asks for mundane things such as good health and material prosperity, and also for the fulfilment of the Dharma and the welfare of all living beings. Next, he fervently asks on his own behalf and for those close to him that upon their death they should be met by Amitābha and his monks. He goes on to beseech the eight Bodhisattvas to appear in the sky and to provide guidance on the way to the Sukhāvātī realm. The arrival upon one's death of Amitābha in the company of his monks was pledged by Dharmākara in his eighteenth vow.¹⁵ This event is further elaborated upon in another passage of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*¹⁶ and again in the *Amitāyurdhyāna*.¹⁷ This last text describes the arrival of not only Amitābha and his monks, but also of Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta and countless Buddhas and gods. However, there is no mention in any of these *sūtras* of the eight Bodhisattvas. But there is a passage in the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-*

¹⁴ *Vinayaviniścaya-Upāliparipṛcchā*, ed. & tr. by P. Python, Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1973, 97–104.

¹⁵ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr15/Skt30.

¹⁶ See note 78.

¹⁷ *Amitāyurdhyāna*, 189.

*sūtra*¹⁸ where a group of eight Bodhisattvas is said to come at the moment of death. In addition to this textual evidence archaeological remains in India attest that there existed a tradition according to which Amitābha was depicted in the company of eight Bodhisattvas. This particular iconic tradition became widespread in Tibet, Central Asia, China and other Buddhist countries of the Far East.¹⁹ This seems to be a rather later development which certainly relates to the worship of Amitābha but does not figure in or seem to derive from the *sūtras* relating to the Sukhāvātī. This section also includes several moving verses which contrast the miseries of *samsāra* with the happy thought of reaching the Sukhāvātī. The passing happiness of gods and men, relatives, friends and worldly wealth are compared to worthless dreams, and the escape from *samsāra* and the eventual vision of Amitābha in the Sukhāvātī is compared to a wicked man freed from prison and a vulture released from its snare. The tone of these verses echo chapter two of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

The verses in the following section (VII) describe the manner of birth in the Sukhāvātī. In the second half of the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*,²⁰ Ajita, while being shown by the Buddha the various splendours of the Sukhāvātī, asks the Buddha to explain the reason why some beings, once born spontaneously, sit on lotuses with their legs crossed (*paryañka*) while others dwell within the calyx (*garbhāvāsa*) of lotus flowers. The Buddha explains that in the case of those in other buddhafiels who have unwavering faith in Amitābha and amass the stock of merit (*kuśalamūla*), the lotuses unfold at once, and they meet Amitābha. However, those who harbour doubts (*vicikitsā*) about birth in the Sukhāvātī, on being born there, remain in the calyx for five hundred years. Such people are deprived of seeing Buddhas and hearing the Dharma, and consequently are prevented from increasing their meritorious works.²¹ Quite naturally in order to

¹⁸ Quoted in G. Schopen, "Sukhāvātī as a Generalized Religious Goal in Sanskrit Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature", *IJJ*, 19, 1977, 178. The names of these eight Bodhisattvas are not given in the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra*, but a group of eight Bodhisattvas is mentioned in a short Mahāyāna *sūtra* entitled *Aṣṭamaṇḍalaka* included in the rGyud section of the bKa' 'gyur, TTP, vol. 6, 165-2-4, where their names correspond to those given in the next note. It is a short text which gives the names of the eight Bodhisattvas and their *mantras*, and a *mantra* for the central deity of the *maṇḍala* which is referred to as the Lord. The recitation of their *mantras* is said to bring mundane and transcendent attainments, including the elimination of the five heinous crimes.

¹⁹ See for instance M. Yoritomi, "An Iconographic Study of the Eight Bodhisattvas in Tibet", in T. Skorupski, ed., *Indo-Tibetan Studies*, Tring, 1991, 323–32, in particular page 323. The names of the eight Bodhisattvas as found in various lists are not always the same. According to Yoritomi, the group found in Tibet and surrounding areas includes Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, Samantabhadra, Ākāśagarbha, Kṣitigarbha, and Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin.

²⁰ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr62–63/S132–34.

²¹ This penalty for having doubts about one's birth in the Sukhāvātī seems somewhat incompatible with Dharmākara's forty-fourth vow in which he pledged that beings born in his realm should hear the Dharma dispensation (*deśanā*) as quickly as they think of it (*sahacittotpāda*).

prevent such an experience, our author pleads to have his lotus open at once so that he may be able to behold Amitābha and offer him homage.

The division between the people who have unwavering trust in Amitābha and those who doubt and, as a result, remain enclosed within the lotus calyx for five hundred years is made, as already indicated above, in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*. In the *Amitāyurdhyāna* the matter becomes more complicated. Towards the end of this text²² the Buddha explains to Ānanda and Vaidehī, the wife of Bimbisāra and mother of Ajātaśatru, the nine different categories of living beings who can be reborn in the Sukhāvātī. They are divided into three grades, each grade comprising three forms, namely highest, middle, and inferior. The grading is related to the moral qualities of living beings and to the period of time after which the lotuses will open after birth in the Sukhāvātī. The first grade, the highest, includes three classes of beings who have deep trust, understand the truth, believe in cause and effect, and cherish the thought of enlightenment. Upon their death, in accordance with the threefold division within this grade, their lotuses will open instantaneously, after one night, and after one day and night respectively. The three classes of living beings included within the second grade will be reborn soon, after seven days, and again after seven days. Within this category are included living beings who practise during their lives the five and the eight precepts, the observance of fasting, filial attitude towards their parents, benevolence and compassion. The third grade comprises three classes of living beings who are progressively weaker. The first class includes those who commit evil deeds but do not speak evil of the Mahāyāna texts. They are ignorant and not ashamed of their evil deeds. But still in the course of approaching their death, they may meet with a teacher who will explain to them the Mahāyāna texts and also teach them to utter the name of the Buddha Amitāyus. When such beings die, their lotuses open after a period of seven weeks. They will receive teachings from Amitābha's two chief Bodhisattvas and it will take ten lesser *kalpas* before they become able to enter the first Bodhisattva stage. Within the second class are included living beings who transgress the five or eight precepts, steal the Saṅgha's property and the personal belongings of individual monks. They are not ashamed but rather proud of their wicked actions. When their death approaches, they too will encounter a teacher who will explain to them the powers of Amitāyus, and praise morality, meditation, and wisdom. Since they heard such things, the well-deserved flames of hells will be transformed into cool winds carrying flowers with Buddha or Bodhisattva emanations approaching to meet them. After their birth in the Sukhāvātī, their lotuses will open after six *kalpas*. Finally, the lowest

²² *Amitāyurdhyāna*, 188–99.

class includes beings who committed all kinds of evil deeds, including the five heinous sins (*ānantarya*). As is well known a person who commits any of the five heinous sins deserves to be immediately reborn in hell. But contrary to this and what is said in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, the *Amitāyurdhyāna* offers hope even to this class of beings.²³ Prior to their death such beings will also meet a good teacher who will give them instructions in the Dharma, and some good friends will induce them to utter the name of the Buddha Amitāyus, and repeat the formula “Adoration to Buddha Amitāyus”.²⁴ Every time they utter the Buddha’s name, they will expiate the sins whose retribution requires a chain of births and deaths lasting for many *kalpas*. After their death, they will be reborn in the Sukhāvātī but their lotuses will not open for twelve great *kalpas*. In addition to the differentiations just stated, there are also differences between the escorts that accompany living beings on their way to the Sukhāvātī. When those belonging to the highest grade are approaching their death, the Buddha Amitāyus appears personally in the company of the two Bodhisattvas, countless Buddhas, gods, and his monks. In the case of living beings belonging to the lowest class of the third category, there appear only golden lotuses which resemble solar discs. Whatever differentiations and delays are involved in seeing the Buddha Amitāyus and hearing the Dharma, it seems apparent that no one has been excluded from being reborn in the Sukhāvātī. On the contrary even the worst sinners are assured of being saved. What seems to have happened is that the *Amitāyurdhyāna*, being posterior in time to the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, has reinterpreted the Buddha’s statements in the *Sukhāvātīvyūha* concerning the penalty of five hundred years and the exclusion of those who have committed the five heinous sins. Rāgāśya clearly follows the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* and one finds no traces of the lenient innovations introduced in the *Amitāyurdhyāna*; perhaps because this text has not been translated into Tibetan.

One of the activities performed in the Sukhāvātī and other buddhafiels, such as Akṣobhya’s Abhiratī, is the ability of the Bodhisattvas who live there to offer daily worship not only to the incumbent Buddha but also to the Buddhas in other buddhafiels. One is able to traverse instantly the vast distances between the various buddhafiels, offer worship and hear the Dharma, and then return unimpeded to the Sukhāvātī.²⁵ Taking up this idea, the verses in the next section (VIII) express the author’s aspirations to be able, during his future life in the Sukhāvātī, to offer homage to the various Buddhas, including the abodes of Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, Tārā, Padmasambhava, and to Maitreya and other future Buddhas of the auspicious *kalpa*. As already noted Tārā and Padmasambhava are not mentioned in the *Sukhāvātīvyūhas*. The worship of Vajrapāṇi,

²³ See notes 55 and 69, and *Amitāyurdhyāna*, 197–8.

²⁴ Skt: *namo ’amitāyuse buddhāya*.

²⁵ Larger *Sukhāvātī*, Tr16/Skt32.

Maitreya and other future Buddhas is not found in them either. Thus we have here yet another innovation inspired by other sources. Towards the end of section eight, we read that one *kalpa* in this auspicious *kalpa* equals one day in the Sukhāvātī. This is rather surprising because it suggests that the duration of the Sukhāvātī and the life of Amitābha/Amitāyus are in fact limited, despite being described as boundless or limitless. It is stated in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* that the length of Amitābha's life (*āyuhpramāṇa*) is immeasurable (*aparimita*), hence he is called Amitāyus.²⁶ In his fourteenth and fifteenth vows, Dharmākara pledged that if his own life span after his enlightenment and that of living beings (*sattva*) in his buddhafield could be calculated (*pramāṇī-kṛta*) then he would not become a Buddha.²⁷ The same is reiterated in the Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha* where the Buddha tells Śāriputra that the life span of both Amitāyus and men (*manuṣya*) in the Sukhāvātī is immeasurable.²⁸ It is not only the question of their life spans being limitless. The same is said about the splendour of Amitābha's light, the number of his *śrāvakas*, and the ornaments of the Sukhāvātī. But then in his twentieth vow Dharmākara pledged that all those born in his buddhafield should be bound to just one more birth (*ekajātī*) before gaining the state of enlightenment.²⁹ The fact that living beings born in the Sukhāvātī are destined to be born once more constitutes, of course, an integral part of the Pure Land teachings. However, since at least in one place we read that the life span of both Amitābha and living beings born in the Sukhāvātī is limitless, and yet men must die, it seems reasonable to ask whether Amitābha himself will persist to live 'forever' or whether he will also cease to live in the Sukhāvātī and pass into *parinirvāṇa*. We shall answer this question in the affirmative and discuss it more fully in section X. But before we move on, I would like to refer to at least one *sūtra* which specifies the duration of one day in the Sukhāvātī in the same way as Rāgāsya does. In the Tibetan version of the *Acintyarāja-sūtra*, a certain Bodhisattva named bSam gyis mi khyab pa'i rgyal po discourses on the duration of different *lokadhātus* before an assembly of the great Bodhisattvas. He tells them that in Śākyamuni's buddhafield, the Sahālokadhātu,³⁰ one *kalpa* amounts to one day in the Sukhāvātī, the world of Amitāyus, and again one *kalpa* in the Sukhāvātī amounts to one day in the buddhafield of the Buddha rDo rje rab tu 'joms pa.³¹ This statement and the fact

²⁶ *ibid.*, Tr32/Skt66.

²⁷ *ibid.*, Tr14/Skt28–30.

²⁸ Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr97/Skt200.

²⁹ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr15/Skt32. However, this vow excludes the Bodhisattvas who aspire to work for the benefit of living beings in order to lead them to *nirvāṇa*, and who are determined to pursue the Bodhisattva activities in all the *lokadhātus*, and serve all the Buddhas.

³⁰ Mi mjed kyi gyi 'jig rten gyi khams.

³¹ *Acintyarāja-sūtra*, TTP, vol. 37, 86-3-3. This order is followed up to the tenth Buddha. Although the names of these Buddhas are not well attested, that of the seventh is. He is named Vairocana/rNam par snang mdzad. After explaining the duration of one day in the realm of the tenth Buddha, it is said that if one continues to calculate in the same way, one day in the last *lokadhātu* of all the innumerable *lokadhātus* in the ten directions equals the multiplied figure of all such consecutive *kalpas*.

that the life span of at least human beings in the Sukhāvātī is limited suggest very strongly that the duration of the Sukhāvātī, and consequently of its Buddha, although said to be immeasurable, should come to an end.

Section nine is entirely dedicated to praising the beauty and splendour of the Sukhāvātī. The author emulates here the description of the Sukhāvātī as given in the two *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* and in particular as it is given in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, which by and large is a detailed description of that buddhafield. In each of the stanzas in this section, he describes one or more aspects of the Sukhāvātī such as its excellent qualities, the beauty of its landscape, palaces and rivers, the freedom from evil rebirth and so forth. Each of his descriptions is followed by an ardent supplication to be born in that realm of great happiness and beauty. A more detailed comparison between Rāgāsya's description and the one given in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* is dealt with in the footnotes to section nine.

The central theme of the final section (X) is the *parinirvāṇa* of Amitābha and his two chief Bodhisattvas. The section opens with a supplication that once Amitābha passes into *nirvāṇa*, the devotee wishes to remain inseparable from Avalokiteśvara as long as the dispensation of Amitābha's Dharma persists. Once Amitābha's dispensation ceases and Avalokiteśvara succeeds him as a Buddha, the devotee aspires to serve him and hear him teaching the Dharma. Then again, when Avalokiteśvara is succeeded by Mahāsthāmaprāpta as a Buddha, the devotee wishes to serve him. Finally, once this Buddha passes away, the devotee yearns to gain enlightenment and to save living beings in the same way as Amitāyus is currently doing. The prayer concludes with praises of Amitābha and supplications for protection and blessing.

The two *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* and *Amitāyurdhyāna* do not mention Amitābha's passing into the final *nirvāṇa*. There is, however, one passage in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* in which Ānanda asks the Buddha whether Dharmākara has already gained enlightenment and passed away (*parinirvṛta*) or whether he is still unenlightened (*anabhisambuddha*) or again whether he is enlightened and currently living. In reply, the Buddha explains to Ānanda that that Tathāgata is neither past (*na-atīta*) nor future (*na-anāgata*) but that at the present (*etarhi*) he lives (*tiṣṭhati*) and persists (*dhriyate*) teaching the Dharma.³² Further on in the same *sūtra*, the Buddha tells Ānanda that ten *kalpas* have elapsed since Amitāyus gained the highest and perfect enlightenment.

³² Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr27/Skt58.

The two instances above serve to show that the Buddha while discoursing on Amitābha and his Sukhāvātī, refers to them as being contemporary to his own times. Admittedly this and other Mahāyāna *sūtras* became known well after Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*, but still the point remains in force that they speak of Amitābha as contemporary. Moreover these two instances are not the only passages in which Amitābha is spoken of as being contemporary. In fact, the discourses of all three *sūtras* are cast in such a way as to allow no shadow of a doubt that the Buddha speaks of the Sukhāvātī and its incumbent Buddha as his contemporaries. We may also add here that although the Sukhāvātī is described as an exceptionally beautiful and happy buddhafiield free from evil rebirths and other defilements, it is nowhere stated in the *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* or the *Amitāyurdhyāna* that it is a transcendent buddhafiield. But first let us resolve the question of Amitābha's *parinirvāṇa*.

As already said, the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* clearly states that Amitābha has not as yet passed into the final *nirvāṇa*, but it does not go beyond that. Similarly the Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha* and the *Amitāyurdhyāna* do not mention it. There is, however, a Mahāyāna *sūtra* which provides an account of the final *nirvāṇa* of not only Amitābha but also of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. It is the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*.³³ In chapter four of this *sūtra* we learn about King Araṇemin who makes some forty-six vows before the Tathāgata Ratnagarbha, and receives from him a prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) that he will become a Buddha. The Buddha Ratnagarbha tells Araṇemin that in the western direction, beyond many buddhafiields, there is a *lokadhātu* called Indrasuvirājītā in which there lives the Tathāgata Indraghoṣeśvara. Once that Buddha passes away (*parinirvṛta*), his *lokadhātu* will become another *lokadhātu* called Meruprabhā and its Buddha will be named Acintyamatiguṇarāja. Following this order of 'succession', Ratnagarbha names two more Buddhas, and then says that he perceives innumerable Tathāgatas arising in that *lokadhātu*, which does not evolve (*na samvartate*) nor dissolve (*na nirvartate*). After a long time, when that *lokadhātu* becomes called Sukhāvātī, that King Araṇemin will become its incumbent Buddha named Amitāyus.³⁴ Upon King Araṇemin's homage to the

³³ There are two Chinese translations of this *sūtra*, one anonymous (T158) executed in the 4th/5th century, and one by Dharmakṣema carried out between AD 414–421. Although considered an early text, this *sūtra* seems to be later than the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* if one takes into account the dates of their translations into Chinese.

³⁴ *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, ed. by I. Yamada, London, SOAS, 1968, vol. II, 105–14. This *sūtra* is construed around two interlinked narratives, one about a past *buddhakṣetra* called Padma and its presiding Buddha Padmottara, and one about a *cakravartin* (mostly referred to in the text as *rāja*) called Araṇemin who had many princes and lived in a *buddhakṣetra* called Santīraṇa. The king's chief brahmin (*purohita*) named Samudraṇeru had a son who became a Buddha named Ratnagarbha. As the dialogues between Ratnagarbha and his audience unfold, one learns about a whole series of *prañidhānas* and *vyākaraṇas*. In addition to Araṇemin, who is the first to receive his prediction, we also learn of the *prañidhānas* and *vyākaraṇas* of his princes (the ninth of whom is to become Akṣobhya), of the past and future Buddhas, of the Buddhas of the *bhadrakalpa*, and of others, concluding with Samudraṇeru receiving his prediction to become Śākyamuni.

Buddha Ratnagarbha after receiving his prediction, the brahmin Samudrareṇu, the chief priest of Araṇemin, invites the first prince named Animīṣa to speak up. Animīṣa expresses his aspiration to become a Buddha after Araṇemin's *nirvāṇa* as Buddha Amitāyus. In response, the Buddha Ratnagarbha foretells that Animīṣa will become the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who will duly perform many deeds to alleviate the suffering of living beings, and that after Amitābha's demise he will become a Buddha named Samantaraśmy-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭarāja.³⁵ A similar prediction is made for the second prince named Nimi. The Buddha Ratnagarbha foretells that Nimi will become the Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta and subsequently a Buddha named Supraṭiṣṭhita-guṇamaṇi-kūṭarāja.³⁶ The above names of these three future Buddhas and the durations of their lives are the same in Rāgāśya's verses. Thus it seems reasonable to assume that this section was inspired by the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*.

At the concluding stage of this short analysis, I would like to share a few observations and reflections.

In various articles and monographs written by different scholars in connection with the Pure Land, the Sukhāvātī is frequently referred to as being a 'transcendent', 'contemporary transcendent', 'supramundane', or 'paradise-like' world. Taking into account Rāgāśya's prayer and the texts referred to in this article, it seems quite obvious that despite its extraordinary beauty and happiness, the Sukhāvātī is not a transcendent or supramundane world. It is clearly presented as Amitābha's buddhafiield, which is just one among many other buddhafiields. There are, no doubt, differences between various buddhafiields, but they are not differentiated as mundane or transcendent. The only valid distinction that is made in Mahāyāna *sūtras* between various buddha-fiields refers to their purity and impurity.³⁷ Such a distinction is not made in the *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* but Dharmākara does declare the purity (*pariśuddhi*) of his buddhafiield in the presence of the Buddha Lokeśvararāja, Māra, gods and men.³⁸ The Sukhāvātī, due to Dharmākara's fervent determination and subsequent meditation upon his buddhafiield for five *kalpas*, is 'superior' to other buddhafiields, not in the sense of being transcendent but rather in terms of its exceptional qualities. It is superior because of its physical beauty and its moral character. The Sukhāvātī is said to be prosperous (*ṛddhā*), flourishing

³⁵ *ibid.*, vol. II, 117–21.

³⁶ *ibid.*, vol. II, 121–23.

³⁷ And even this distinction is said to be merely subjective. See for instance *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, rendered into English by Sara Boin from the French translation by E. Lamotte, London, 1976, chapter I, and pages 275–84, especially page 279. See also the entry *butsudo* in *Hōbōgirin*.

³⁸ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr24/Skt52.

(*sphītā*), secure (*kṣemā*), plentiful (*subhikṣā*), lovely (*ramaṇīyā*), inhabited by gods (*deva*) and men (*manuṣya*), and free from the evil destinies (*durgati*) and untimely births (*akṣaṇopapatti*).³⁹ The fact that people die in the Sukhāvātī, and that Amitābha’s lifetime and the duration of the Sukhāvātī are limited, something that has been discussed above, affirms that the term ‘transcendent’ should not be applied to them. It should, however, be pointed out, that this statement is made within the context of the texts referred to in the present study, and does not take into account later texts and doctrinal treatises.

In addition to what has been just said about the Sukhāvātī as a buddhafiield, and without attempting to insinuate any contradictory implications, there is one further observation to be made about the Sukhāvātī. It is said in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*⁴⁰ that, except in conventional speech (*saṃvṛtivyavahāra*), there is no difference in the Sukhāvātī between gods and men. And again in two other passages of the same *sūtra*,⁴¹ we learn that the absence of any difference between gods and men is specifically applied to the Paranirmitavaśavartin gods and the men living in the Sukhāvātī. Furthermore, in the *Amitāyurdhyāna*, some aspects of the Sukhāvātī’s splendour are compared to the palace of Yama, and the body of Amitāyus is said to be one hundred thousand million times as bright as the colour of the *jambūnada* gold of Yama’s abode.⁴² Although the Sukhāvātī is free from the world of Yama,⁴³ such comparisons seem to suggest that the Sukhāvātī, at least in some respects, is comparable to the Paranirmitavaśavartin gods and to the abode of Yama. The Paranirmitavaśa-vartins dwell in the highest *devaloka* of the Kāmadhātu, and Māra is their chief and the sovereign of the Kāmadhātu.⁴⁴ Both Māra and Yama have very strong and almost exclusive associations with death. The former endeavours in this world to prevent people from conquering death, while the latter judges them after death. It seems, therefore, rather odd that the Sukhāvātī should be compared in any way to the Paranirmitavaśavartin gods and Yama’s palace. As I do not have at hand any further evidence, it cannot be conclusively argued, but only suggested, that at least in some respects, the Sukhāvātī would seem to have something to do with the happy afterlife of the departed ones. It is also fairly obvious from the *Amitāyurdhyāna* that practically everyone has been enabled to be saved by Amitāyus, including those who commit the five heinous sins. Thus

³⁹ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr33/Skt66.

⁴⁰ Tr62/Skt132.

⁴¹ Tr42/Skt86 and Tr62/Skt132.

⁴² *Amitāyurdhyāna*, 177 and 180.

⁴³ Yamaloka; Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr97/Skt200.

⁴⁴ E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1967, 761; see also the entry Māra in G.P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, London, Luzac & Co., 1937. It is said in the Brahmanimantaṇika-sutta of the Majjhima, I, 327, that even Brahmā and his companions are in the power of Māra.

the combination of the Sukhāvātī as a happy buddhafield and the possibility of attaining it by anyone who invokes the name of Amitābha, removes all anxieties about afterlife, and consequently dispels all worries about the dead, provided they heard the name of Amitābha before they died. It is important, however, to indicate that the two *Sukhāvātīvyūhas* and the *Amitāyurdhyāna* do not speak about the Sukhāvātī as the land of the dead, and I do not wish to suggest that it is. But who is concerned or worries about the dead? No doubt their descendants, and it is from their perspective that the Sukhāvātī can be seen as a happy land of those who preceded them in stepping beyond the threshold of death. Another explanation to account for the comparison of the Sukhāvātī's inhabitants with the Paranirmitavaśavartin gods may be sought in the possibility that the descriptions of at least some of the buddhafields were produced on the pattern of the higher abodes included within the threefold world (*trāidhātuka*). There is at least one other buddhafield whose inhabitants are compared to an abode included within the threefold world, namely those living in Akṣobhya's Abhirati are compared to the Thirty-three Gods (*trāyastriṃśa*).⁴⁵

The above analysis of Rāgāśya's prayer also induces me to make a few brief observations about Buddhist rituals. It is well known that the Buddha rejected Brahmanical rituals, and in particular bloody sacrifices, as meaningless and unhelpful in gaining spiritual progress and eventual deliverance. This firm rejection of ritualized sacrifices has been fundamentally sustained on the whole by the subsequent Buddhist traditions, including the *tantras*, which are in fact replete with rituals. The negative attitude towards rituals is rooted in the assumption that rituals without a proper moral intention and inner disposition do not bring the desired effect. But this does not necessarily imply that rituals as such are always meaningless and have no purpose. Some western scholars view the presence of rituals in Buddhism as a sign if not of deterioration then at least of strong influence of Brahmanical or indigenous practices, and also as something introduced for the benefit of ordinary people. Personally, I think that the presence of rituals in Buddhism is more complex than that and requires further investigation. It is possible to argue that the Buddha did not reject rituals as such but only certain types of rituals. It is also possible to challenge the opinion that during the Buddha's lifetime there were no rituals, and that they were eventually introduced by subsequent generations. On the contrary, it seems quite apparent that rituals were present in Buddhism from the very beginning, and that a number of important rituals were introduced by the Buddha himself.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Akṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūha, TTP, vol. 22, 140-2-3.

⁴⁶ The question of defining ritual or rituals is a complex one. There is no single Buddhist term in Sanskrit that embraces the fluctuating meaning of the Western term 'ritual'. Usually different Buddhist rituals have their specific names, for instance *kalpa*, *vidhi*, *karman*, *homa*, *sādhana*. The problem of definition is further complicated by the fact that there are considerable disagreements among the various interpretations produced by different branches of the social sciences and different religious traditions. It is not my intention to discuss here all such definitions or to produce my own definition but for the purpose of this short discussion, I will broadly understand ritual as "applied religion".

For instance the three refuges (*triśaraṇa*) and the monastic ordinations, both *pravrajyā* and *upasampadā*, constitute two important ritual procedures (*karman*) on the occasions when one becomes a Buddhist and a Buddhist monk respectively. They are not just mere formalities but bring about profound changes in the lives of those who go through them. When one takes the three refuges, one ceases to be a heretic (*tīrthika*) and commits oneself to tread the path of the Four Noble Truths that eventually concludes in *nirvāṇa*, and again on becoming a monk, one becomes the Buddha's son (*Śākya-putra*) and a field of merit (*puṇya*) for the laity. The *upośadha* (*uposatha*) celebration was introduced by the Buddha after receiving a request from King Bimbisāra to have some sort of celebration on the particular days of the waxing and waning moon. The subsequent communal recitation of the *prātimokṣa* on those days is of paramount importance because it sustains the moral purity of the Saṅgha.

Thus we have here two examples which serve to indicate that in some instances the Buddha introduced rituals of his own initiative, and on certain other occasions, he introduced them because a need to have some new rituals has arisen. The introduction of the *upośadha* further exemplifies the fact that, as the Buddhist religion progressed, innovations were introduced as part of new doctrinal and religious developments and apt spiritual dispositions at particular periods. Surely the great variety of rituals introduced in the course of Buddhist history was not intended merely to induce 'deterioration' or to usher in Brahmanical practices but rather to sustain and enrich the Buddhist practice. I am aware of the fact that the nature and interpretation of Buddhist rituals are deeply complex, something that cannot be resolved here, but still it is important to point out that the presence of rituals in Buddhism as a religion is not something entirely negative but rather an integral part of its practices. If the Pali Tipiṭaka, Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *tantras* truly have a canonical status as records of the Buddha's teaching (*buddhavacana*) then why should the rituals included in them be treated so negatively?

However, even if one does accept that rituals are indeed irrelevant within the context of primitive Buddhist practice and constitute later innovations, they still have a validity and importance for academic research. They can be used as sources of information on the nature and progressive stages of Buddhist doctrinal innovations and religious practices which were introduced and followed at particular historical periods. The Abhidharma works and doctrinal treatises (*śāstra*) written by Buddhist masters of all times, important as they are for our understanding and interpretation of Buddhism, merely reflect particular

doctrinal and philosophical developments, but considered alone, do not encompass the whole spectrum of Buddhist life. A practitioner acquainted with various doctrinal interpretations often has to choose and commit himself to one particular view. For instance a study of different rituals performed for the departed can help to ascertain whether a particular tradition accepts or rejects the notion of the intermediate state (*antarābhava*). One can also frequently establish whether a particular tradition actually follows its own doctrine. The *Kathāvatthu*, for instance, rejects the notion of the intermediate state. This doctrinal position is contradicted by some passages in the *Nikāyas* and is not convincingly reflected in Theravāda countries in rituals and beliefs connected with the dead.

Ritual texts can also contribute to our understanding and interpretation of particular philosophical concepts. The difficult concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), for example, is given a positive dimension in tantric rituals such as different types of evocation (*sādhana*). As one summons the knowledge-deities (*jñānadevatā*) from emptiness by means of rays of light dispersed from the seed syllables (*bīja*) of individual deities, it becomes apparent that emptiness is not a mere ‘dialectical device’ but is silently but conspicuously perceived as a perfect sphere with ‘ontological’ connotations. Furthermore, ritual texts broadly appertaining to one particular form of Buddhism can also serve as sources to work out the various strands and specific regional differences within that form of Buddhism. The prayer composed by Rāgāśya clearly demonstrates that his understanding and perception of the doctrine and practice relating to Amitābha’s Sukhāvatī have been considerably influenced and consequently modified by different Mahāyāna and indigenous Tibetan texts and practices which are not specifically connected with the Pure Land school. He incorporates into his prayer a number of elements which enable him to mould a particular image of the Sukhāvatī in terms of doctrine and practice, which is considerably different from that, let us say, of the Jōdo-shinshū followers.

As already stated above, the presence of rituals in Buddhism and their interpretation is complex and controversial, but still, whatever attitude one assumes towards them, they can be used meaningfully to understand the doctrine and practice of different Buddhist schools and Buddhism as a whole. I trust that my short analysis of Rāgāśya’s prayer has demonstrated this to some degree.

* * *

I

E-ma-ho (1b)

Towards the west from this world,
Beyond scores of countless worlds,⁴⁷
In the glorious sphere slightly raised, (2a)
Is the pure realm of the Sukhāvātī.

Although invisible to my dimmed sight,
The path to it shines like blazing fire
Within the sphere of the self-radiant mind.

II

In it, there resides the victorious lord Amitābha:
Crimson like a ruby, full of splendour and lustre,
Adorned with the splendid thirty-two major,
And the eighty minor, marks of distinction.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ In the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* this distance is given as one hundred thousand *niyutas* of *koṭis* of *buddhakṣetras*.

⁴⁸ *mtshan bzang so gnyis / dvātriṃśadvaralakṣaṇa & dpe byad brgyad bcu / aśītyanu-vyañjana*.

The lists of the thirty-two bodily marks of a *mahāpuruṣa* (*skyes bu chen po*) given in the *Dīghanikāya* (*Mahāpadāna-sutta & Lakkhaṇa-suttanta*), *Lalitavistara*, and *Dharmasaṃgraha* do not follow the same order and contain variations. The list given here follows the order, but not always the exact wording, of the *Mahāvvyūtpatti* (236-67): 1. protuberance on the top of the head (*dbu gtsug gtor dang ldan pa / uṣṇīśaśiraska*); 2. the hair on the head curled towards the right (*dbu skra g.yas su 'khyil ba / pradakṣiṇāvartakeśa*); 3. a prominent forehead (*dpral ba'i dbyes mñam pa / samalalāta*); 4. a hairy mole between the eye-brows (*mdzod spu / ūrṇākośa*); 5. deep blue eyes and eyelashes like a cow's (*spyān mthon mthing la ba'i rdzi ma lta bu / abhinīlanetrāgopakṣma*); 6. forty teeth (*tshems bzhi bcu mnga' ba / catvāriṃśaddanta*); 7. even teeth (*tshems mñam pa / samadanta*); 8. well spaced teeth (*tshems thags bzang ba / aviraladanta*); 9. bright white teeth (*tshems shin tu dkar ba / suśukladanta*); 10. a perfect sense of taste (*ro bro ba'i mchog dang ldan pa / rasarasāgra*); 11. jaws like a lion's (*'gram pa seng ge 'dra ba / siṃhahanu*); 12. a long and slender tongue (*ljags shin tu ring shing srab pa / prabhūtatanujihva*); 13. a voice like Brahmā's (*tshangs pa'i dbyangs / brahmasvara*); 14. an evenly rounded bust (*dpung mgo zhin tu zlum pa / susaṃvṛtaskandha*); 15. seven prominences [hands, feet, shoulders, back of the neck] (*bdun mtho ba / saptotsada*); 16. no indentation between the shoulders (*thal gong rgyas pa / citāntarāmsa*); 17. delicate and gold-like complexion (*pags pa srab cing mdog gser 'dra ba / sūkṣmasuvarṇachavi*); 18. hands reaching the knees while standing and without bending (*bzhengs bzhin du ma btud par phyag pus mo slebs pa / sthitānavanatāpralambabāhu*); 19. the front part of the body is like a lion's (*ro stod seng ge'i 'dra ba / siṃhapūrvārdhakāya*); 20. (bodily) symmetry of the *nyagrodha* tree (*shing nya gro dha ltar chu zheng gab pa / nyagrodhāparimaṇḍala*); 21. one clockwise curling hair to each pore (*spu re re nas skyes shing g.yas su 'khyil ba / ekaikaromāpradakṣiṇāvarta*); 22. body-hairs growing upwards (*sku'i spu gyen du phyogs pa / ūrdhvagaroma*); 23. male organs concealed in a sheath (*'doms kyi sba ba sbubs*

su nub pa / kośopagatavastiguhyā); 24. well rounded thighs (*brla legs par zlum pa / suvartitoru*); 25. concealed ankles [or Skt ?arched feet] (*zhabs kyi long bu mi mngon pa / utsaṅgāpāda*); 26. soft and tender palms and soles (*phyag dang zhabs kyi mthil 'jam shing gzhon sha chags pa / mṛdutarunahastapādā*); 27. webbed hands and feet (*phyag dang zhabs dra bas 'brel ba / jālāvanaddhastapādā*); 28. long fingers and toes (*sor mo ring ba / dīrghāṅguli*); 29. palms and soles marked with wheels (*phyag dang zhabs kyi mthil 'khor lo'i mtshan dang ldan pa / cakrāṅkitahastapādā*); 30. well positioned feet (*zhabs shin tu gnas pa / supraṭiṣṭhitapādā*); 31. projecting heels (*zhabs kyi mthil rting pa yangs pa / āyatapādapārṣṇi*); 32. legs like an antelope's (*byin pa ri dvags ai ṅe ya'i lta bu / aiṅṅeyajāṅgha*).

The list of the eighty minor marks also follows the order of the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (269-348): 1. fingernails of copper colour (*sen mo zangs kyi mdog lta bu / tāmranakha*); 2. smooth finger-nails (*sen mo mdog snum pa / snigdhanakha*); 3. prominent finger-nails (*sen mo mtho ba / tuṅganakha*); 4. rounded fingers (*sor mo rnam zlum pa / vṛttāṅguli*); 5. slender fingers (*sor mo byin gyis phra ba / anupūrvāṅguli*); 6. well developed fingers (*sor mo rnam rgyas / citāṅguli*); 7. concealed veins (*rtsa mi mngon pa / nigūḍhaśira*); 8. unknotted veins (*rtsa mdud med pa / nirgranthiśira*); 9. concealed ankles (*long bu mi mngon pa / gūḍhagulpha*); 10. even feet (*zhabs mi mñam pa med pa / aviśamapāda*); 11. gait of a lion (*seng ge'i stabs su gshegs pa / siṃhavikrāntagāmī*); 12. gait of an elephant (*glang po che'i stabs su gshegs pa / nāgavikrāntagāmī*); 13. gait of a swan (*nang pa'i stabs su gshegs pa / haṃsavikrāntagāmī*); 14. gait of a bull (*khyu mchog gi stabs su gshegs pa / vṛṣabhavikrāntagāmī*); 15. gait swaying towards the right (*g.yas phyogs su ldog cing gshegs pa / pradakṣiṇāvartagāmī*); 16. pleasing gait (*mdzes par gshegs pa / cārugāmī*); 17. steady gait (*mi g.yo bar gshegs pa / avakragāmī*); 18. rounded body (*sku 'khril bag chags pa / vṛttagātra*); 19. smooth body (*sku byi dor byas pa / mṛṣṭagātra*); 20. regular body (*sku rim par 'tsham pa / anupūrvagātra*); 21. pure body (*sku gtsang ba / śucigātra*); 22. tender body (*sku 'jam pa / mṛdugātra*); 23. stainless body (*sku rnam par dag pa / viśuddhagātra*); 24. sex organs complete (*mtshan yongs su rdzogs pa / paripūrṇavyaṅjana*); 25. body with broad and graceful limbs (*sku kho lag yangs shing bzang ba / prthucārumaṅdalagātra*); 26. even pace (*gom pa sñoms pa / samakrama*); 27. youthful body (*sku shing tu gzhon mdog can / sukumāragātra*); 28. zestful body (*sku shum pa med pa / adīnagātra*); 29. lofty body (*sku rgyas pa / unnatagātra*); 30. well-composed body (*sku shin tu grims pa / susaṃhitagātra*); 31. well-proportioned limbs and their parts (*sku yan lag dang ṅing lag shin tu rnam par 'byed pa / suvibhaktāṅgapatyaṅga*); 32. clear and pure sight (*gzigs pa rab rib med cing rnam par dag pa / vitimiraviśuddhāloka*); 33. rounded sides of the body (*dku skabs zlum po / vṛttakukṣi*); 34. smooth sides of the body (*dku skabs phin pa / mṛṣṭakukṣi*); 35. not bulging sides of the body (*dku ma rñongs pa / abhugnakukṣi*); 36. slim abdomen (*phyal phyang nge ba / kṣāmodara*); 37. deep navel (*lte ba zab pa / gaṃbhīranābhi*); 38. clockwise coiled navel (*lte ba g.yas phyogs su 'khyil ba / pradakṣiṇāvartanābhi*); 39. agreeable in all respects (*kun nas mdzes pa / samantaprāsādika*); 40. pure conduct (*kun tu spyod pa gtsang ba / śucisamācāra*); 41. body free from freckles and black spots (*sku la sme ba dang gnag bag med pa / vyapagatatilakakālagātra*); 42. delicate hands like cotton (*phyag shing bal ltar shin tu 'jam pa / tūlasadriśasukumārapāṇi*); 43. fine hand lines (*phyag gi ri mo mdangs yod pa / snigdhapāṇilekha*); 44. deep hand lines (*phyag gi ri mo zab pa / gaṃbhīrapāṇilekha*); 45. long hand lines (*phyag gi ri mo ring ba / āyatapāṇilekha*); 46. not too elongated mouth (*zhal ha cang yang mi ring ba / nātyāyatavadana*); 47. the mouth[, 's lustre] resembling the *bimba*[fruit] (*zhal la gzugs kyi gzugs brñan snang ba / bimbapratibimbadarśanavadana*); 48. pliable tongue (*ljags mñen pa*

Uṣṇīṣa on the head, wheels on the soles and so forth.
 He has one countenance and two hands
 Placed on the lap and holding an alms-bowl.
 Dressed in the three monastic robes,⁴⁹
 He remains seated with his legs crossed,
 Reposing over a moon-throne,
 Enveloped by one thousand lotuses.
 As he leans his back against the *bodhi*-tree,⁵⁰
 He gazes at me from afar with his merciful eyes.

/ *mṛdujihva*); 49. slender tongue (*ljags sgrab pa / tanujihva*); 50. red tongue (*ljags dmar ba / raktajihva*); 51. voice of a roaring elephant or thundering clouds (*glang po che'i nga ro dang 'brug gi sgra dang ldan pa / gajagarjitajīmūtaghoṣa*); 52. articulate, attractive and gentle speech (*gsung sñan cing mñen la 'jam pa / madhuracārumañjusvara*); 53. rounded canine teeth (*mche ba zlum ba / vṛttadaṃṣṭra*); 54. sharp canine teeth (*mche ba rno ba / tikṣṇadaṃṣṭra*); 55. white canine teeth (*mche ba dkar ba / śukladaṃṣṭra*); 56. even canine teeth (*mche ba mñam pa / samadaṃṣṭra*); 57. regular canine teeth (*mche ba byin gyis phra ba / anupūrvadaṃṣṭra*); 58. prominent nose (*shangs mtho ba / tuṅganāsa*); 59. neat nose (*shangs gtsang ba / śucināsa*); 60. clear eyes (*spyān rnam par dag pa / viśuddhanetra*); 61. large eyes (*spyān yangs pa / viśālanetra*); 62. thick eyelashes (*rdzi ma stug pa / citrapakṣma*); 63. (the white and dark sections of) the eyes beautifully (contrast) like the petals of a white and dark lotus (*spyān dkar nag 'byes shing pad ma'i 'dab ma'i mdangs lta bu / sitāsitakamalaśakalanayana*); 64. long eyebrows (*smin tshugs ring ba / āyatabhrū*); 65. soft eyebrows (*smin ma 'jam pa / ślakṣṇabhrū*); 66. even eyebrows (*smin ma spu mñam ba / samaromabhrū*); 67. smooth eyebrows (*smin ma snum pa / snigdhabhrū*); 68. thick and long ears (*sñan shal stug cing ring ba / pīnāyatakarna*); 69. even ears (*sñan mñam pa / samakarna*); 70. unimpaired hearing (*sñan gyi dbang po ma ñams pa / anupahatakarnendriya*); 71. well-formed forehead (*dpral ba legs par dbyes pa / supariṇatalalāṭa*); 72. broad forehead (*dpral ba dbyes che ba / pṛthulalāṭa*); 73. well-developed head (*dbu shin tu rgyas pa / suparipūrṇottamāṅga*); 74. black hair like the black bee (*dbu skra bung ba ltar nag pa / bhramarasadrśakeśa*); 75. thick hair (*dbu skra stug pa / citakeśa*); 76. soft hair (*dbu skra 'jam pa / ślakṣṇakeśa*); 77. undishevel-led/untousled hair (*dbu skra ma 'dzings pa / asaṃlulitakeśa*); 78. pliable hair (*dbu skra mi gshor ba / aparūṣakeśa*); 79. fragrant hair (*dbu skra dri zhim ba / surabhikeśa*); 80. the palms and soles marked with *śrīvatsa*, *svastika*, *nadyāvarta*, and *lalita* symbols (*phyag dang zhabs dpal gyi be'u dang bkra shis dang g.yung drung 'khyil bas brgyan pa / śrīvatsasvastikanandyāvartalalitapāñipāda*).

For a detailed although dated study of the *lakṣaṇas* and *anuvyañjanas*, see M. Burnouf, *Le lotus de la bonne loi*, Paris, 1925, Appendix VIII, 553–647.

⁴⁹ *chos gos rnam gsum / tricīvara*: 1. outer cloak (*snam sbyar / saṃghāṭī*); 2. upper robe (*bla gos / uttarāsaṅga*); 3. inner robe (*mthang gos / antarvāsa*).

⁵⁰ In the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr49–51/Skt110–12, Amitābha's *bodhi*-tree is said to be ten hundred *yojanas* high with the base of its trunk five hundred *yojanas* in circumference, and its branches spreading over eight hundred *yojanas*. It is always covered with foliage, flowers, fruits, ornaments, and precious jewels. Its sound, smell, the taste of its fruits, sight, and meditation on it, prevent the various diseases of the senses until one reaches enlightenment.

To his right is the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara:
White in colour and a white lotus in his left hand.
To his left is the Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta:
Blue and a lotus marked with a *vajra* in his left hand.
With their right hands they display
Towards me the gesture of protection.

The three lords abiding in splendour and majesty,
Resemble the victorious Mount Meru,⁵¹
Amidst one hundred million Bodhisattva-monks,
All of whom exude a golden hue of their bodies⁵²
Endowed with the major and minor marks of distinction,⁵³
And garbed in the three monastic robes.

III

Since they are neither near nor far away,
For prayers, veneration or salutations,
I bow down before them in devotion
With my body, speech and mind. (3a)

The *dharmakāya*⁵⁴ Amitābha as the family master
Disperses the manifestation of Avalokiteśvara
From the light rays of his right palm,
And again one hundred million mighty Avalokiteśvaras.
From the light rays of his left palm,
He disperses the manifestation of Tārā,
And again one hundred million Tārās.
From the light rays in his heart,
He disperses the manifestation of Padmasambhava,

⁵¹ The ninth meditation outlined in the *Amitāyurdhyāna*, 180, focuses on Amitāyus. He is not exactly compared with Mount Meru but the Buddha does tell Ānanda that the white tuft of hair between his eyebrows turns to the right just like five Sumeru mountains, and that the roots of the hair on his body issue rays resembling Sumerus.

⁵² In his third vow Dharmākara pledged that the beings born in his buddhfield should be of one colour (*ekavarṇa*), namely golden (*suvarṇa*). Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Tr12/Skt24.

⁵³ In the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Tr52/Skt114, the Buddha tells Ānanda that the Bodhisattvas born there are endowed with the thirty-two bodily marks of a *mahāpuruṣa* but no mention is made of the minor marks. They also have perfect members (*paripūrṇagātra*) and sharp faculties (*indriya*), are trained in meditation and intuitive powers (*dhyānābhijñā*), possess different kinds of wisdom (*prajñā*) and the faculty of those whose knowledge is perfect (*ājñātāvīndriya*). See also notes 102, 104 and 106.

⁵⁴ For new perceptive suggestions on how to interpret and translate this compound, see P. Harrison, “Is the dharma-kāya the Real ‘Phantom Body’ of the Buddha?”, *JIAS*, 15, 1992, 44–94, especially the final pages.

And again one hundred million Urgyans.
I bow before Amitābha in his *dharmakāya*.

He constantly reposes his Buddha-eyes
With loving kindness upon all living beings,
During the six watches of the day and night.
Whatever thoughts are retained or flow
Through the minds of all living beings,
He always knows them in his Mind.
Whatever words are uttered at all times
By the entire host of living beings,
He always hears them distinctly and precisely.
I bow before the omniscient Amitābha.

You have solemnly declared that except
For those who've abandoned the Dharma,
And those who are guilty of the heinous sins,⁵⁵
All people who place their trust in you and pray,
Reciting a prayer for rebirth in the Sukhāvātī,
Once they reach the state between death and birth,⁵⁶
They will be guided by you to that realm.⁵⁷
I prostrate before Amitābha, the great guide.

As your lifetime persists for countless *kalpas*,
You have not as yet passed into *nirvāṇa*,
And now you remain seated before my eyes.
You have said that if one prays to you with ardent heart,
Though his life may wane without ripening his *karma*,
You will still enable him to live for a century,
And avert for him all untimely deaths.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ In his nineteenth vow Dharmākara pledged that the living beings who, upon hearing his name, aspire to be reborn in his buddhafield and dedicate their merit for that purpose, should be reborn in the Sukhāvātī, except for those who have committed the five heinous sins and those who have obstructed and abused the Dharma (*ānantaryakāriṇaḥ saddharmapratikṣepāvaraṇakṛtās ca*). Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr15/Skt32. For the five heinous sins see note 69. See also note 23.

⁵⁶ Tib/Skt: *bar do / antarābhava*.

⁵⁷ This is stated in the eighteenth vow in which Dharmākara pledged that those who raise the thought of enlightenment, hear his name, and meditate on him, should be attended by him and his monks at the time of their death (*maraṇakālasamaya*). As they worship him, their minds remain untroubled (*cittāvikṣepatā*). Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr15/Skt30. A similar passage is found in the Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr99/Skt202.

⁵⁸ There is obviously no passage in any of the relevant *sūtras* which promises a life span of one hundred years. But it is said that the Sukhāvātī is without hells (*niraya*), animals (*tiryag*), ghosts (*preta*), bodies of demigods (*asura*), and untimely births (*akṣaṇopapatti*). Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr33/Skt66.

I bow before the protector Amitāyus.

You have also declared that one acquires greater merit,
Than an act of generosity comprising the jewels
Of the vast and countless three thousand worlds⁵⁹
When, on hearing yours and Sukhāvati's names,
One folds together one's hands in devotion.
With this in mind, I bow with devotion to Amitābha.

Whoever, on hearing the name of Amitābha,
Generates just once a fervent act of faith, (4a)
Fetched from the heart's depths and free from deceit,
Will never relapse from the path of enlightenment.⁶⁰
I bow down before the protector Amitābha.

A person who hears the name of Amitābha,
Should he not gain the essence of enlightenment,
Becomes reborn in good families but not as a woman,⁶¹
And during the series of all his rebirths,
He progresses in improving his morality.
I bow down before the Sugata Amitābha.

IV

My body, my wealth as well as my roots of merit,⁶²
Whatever procurable true items of worship,
The mentally produced auspicious substances,
The luck-inducing symbols,⁶³ and the seven jewels,⁶⁴

⁵⁹ This comparison certainly matches the spirit of the Sukhāvati *sūtras* but it is not found in any of them.

⁶⁰ It is stated in Dharmākara's eleventh vow that all beings born in the Sukhāvati should be firmly established (*niyata*) till they reach their *mahāparinirvāṇa*. Larger *Sukhāvatiṣṭyūha*, Tr13/Skt28. Similar pledges are made with regard to Bodhisattvas in the thirty-third and forty-sixth vows. *Ibid.*, Tr19/Skt40; Tr22/Skt44.

⁶¹ It is vowed in the thirty-fourth vow that women in other buddhafields on hearing Amitābha's name should abandon carelessness (*pramāda*), raise the thought of enlightenment, and once released from birth (*jātivyatīrṭta*), they should despise their female nature (*strībhāva*) and never assume a second female existence. Larger *Sukhāvatiṣṭyūha*, Tr19/Skt40. In the forty-first vow, it is pledged that the beings who on hearing Amitābha's name and through the merit generated from it, should be born in good families till gaining enlightenment. *Ibid.*, Tr21/Skt42.

⁶² Tib/Skt: *dge rtsa / kuśalamūla*: (three) 1. non-desire (*'dod chags med pa / alobha*); 2. non-hatred (*zhe sdang med pa / adveṣa*); 3. non-delusion (*gti mug med pa / amoha*). For the ten wholesome actions see note 68.

⁶³ The compound *bkra shis rdzas rtags* stands here for the eight auspicious substances (*bkra shis rdzas brgyad / aṣṭamaṅgaladravya*) and the eight luck-inducing symbols (*bkra shis rtags brgyad / aṣṭamaṅgalacihna*).

The eight auspicious substances are: 1. a mirror (*me long / ādarśa*); 2. curds (*zho / dadhi*); 3. panic grass (*rtsa dur ba / duryā*); 4. the wood-apple fruit (*shing tog bil ba / bilva*); 5. a right coiled conch (*dung g.yas 'khyil / dakṣiṇāvatarasaṅkha*); 6. medicinal secretion (*gi wang / gorocanā*); 7. vermilion (*li khri / sindhūra*); 8. mustard seeds (*yungs kar / sarṣapa*).

The eight luck-inducing symbols are: 1. an endless knot (*dpal be'u / śrīvatsa*); 2. a lotus (*pad ma / padma*); 3. an umbrella (*gdugs / chatra*); 4. a right coiled conch (*dung g.yas 'khyil / dakṣiṇāvatarasaṅkha*); 5. a wheel (*'khor lo / cakra*); 6. a banner of victory (*rgyal mtshan / ketu*); 7. a treasure vase (*bum pa / kalaśa*); 8. a pair of golden fish (*gser nya / suvarṇamatsya*).

⁶⁴ Tib/Skt: *rin chen (sna) bdun / saptaratna*: 1. a wheel (*'khor lo / cakra*); 2. an elephant (*glang po / hasti*); 3. a horse (*rta mchog / aśva*); 4. a gem (*nor bu / maṇi*); 5. a queen (*btsun mo / strī*); 6. a minister (*blon po / mahāta*); 7. a sword (*dmag dpon / khādga*).

For a different set of seven jewels as given in the Smaller *Sukhāvatiṣṭyūha*, see note 94.

One hundred million of the four continents,
 Mount Merus, suns and moons
 Of the timelessly arisen three thousand worlds,
 The entire wealth of gods, men and nāgas —
 I seize them with my mind and offer them to Amitābha.
 May you accept them for my benefit
 Through the power of your compassion.

V

Commencing with my parents and myself,
 I recall all beings from the timeless dawn⁶⁵ until today:
 I confess the three unvirtuous acts of the body:
 Killing, stealing, and unchastity.⁶⁶
 I confess the four unvirtuous acts of the speech:
 Lying, slander, abuse, and frivolous talk.⁶⁷
 I confess the three unvirtuous acts of the mind:
 Covetousness, spitefulness, and perverse views.⁶⁸
 I confess the offences of the five heinous sins:
 The murder of father, mother, teacher, and arhat,

⁶⁵ Tib/Skt: *thog ma med pa 'i dus / anādikāla*.

⁶⁶ Tib/Skt: 1. *srog gcod pa / prāṇātipāta*; 2. *ma byin par len pa / adattādāna*; 3. *'dod pas log par gyem pa / kāmamithyācāra*.

⁶⁷ Tib/Skt: 1(4). *rdzun du smra ba / mṛṣāvāda*; 2(5). *phra mar smra ba / paiṣunyahavāda*; 3(6). *tshig rtsub mo smra ba / pārūṣyavāda*; 4(7). *tshig bkyal ba / saṃbhinnapralāpa*.

⁶⁸ Tib/Skt: 1(8). *brnab sems / abhidhyā*; 2(9). *gnod sems / vyāpāda*; 3(10). *log par lta ba / mithyādr̥ṣṭi*. The unvirtuous acts of the body, speech and mind taken together constitute a group of the ten unvirtuous or unwholesome actions (*mi dge bcu / daśakuśala*). The ten virtuous or wholesome actions (*daśakuśala*) comprise the abandonment of the ten unwholesome actions.

And the malice towards the bodies of the Victorious Ones.⁶⁹
 I confess the offences of the secondary heinous sins:⁷⁰
 Killing monks and novices, assaulting nuns,
 Destroying temples, images, *stūpas* and the like.
 I confess the evil deeds derived from apostasy:⁷¹
 False testimonies, perverse oaths and the like
 Pledged on the holy temples, scriptures or images.
 I confess the sins greater than the destruction
 Of living beings of the entire threefold world: (5a)
 The meaningless and great accumulation of sins
 Of blasphemous behaviour towards Bodhisattvas.
 I confess the perils⁷² menacing the growth of virtues,
 The untrue statements voiced or just intended
 In disregard of the pains in hells, short life and so forth,
 The evil deeds inspired by the five heinous sins,
 And the accumulation of irremissible evils.
 I confess the five categories of transgressions
 Which violate the *prātimokṣa* morality:
 The four defeats, the thirteen serious matters,
 Moderate offences, things to be confessed, and misdeeds.⁷³
 I confess the sins hampering the training of the *bodhi*-mind:
 The four perverse conducts,⁷⁴ and the eighteen cardinal offences.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Tib/Skt: *mtshams (med) lnga / pañcānantarīya*. Mvy 2324–28. The standard set of the five heinous sins instead of “the murder of teacher” as given here includes “causing schism in the Saṅgha”.

⁷⁰ Tib/Skt: *nye ba’i mtshams (med) lnga / upānantarīya*. The list given in the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (2330–2334) is slightly different: 1. assaulting an *arhanṭī*; 2. murder of a Bodhisattva who has gained the stage of certainty; 3. murder of a person who is undergoing training (*śaikṣa*); 4. misuse of the Saṅgha’s property; 5. destruction of *stūpas*.

⁷¹ Tib/Skt: *chos spangs / dharmapratikṣepa*.

⁷² Tib/Skt: *nyes dmigs / ādīnava*.

⁷³ Tib/Skt: 1. *phas pham pa / pārājika*; 2. *dge ’dun lhag ma / saṅghāvaśeśa*; 3. *spang ba’i ltung byed / naihsargika*; 4. *so sor bshags pa bya ba / pratideśanīya*; 5. *nyes byas / duṣkṛta*. In Asaṅga’s *Vinayasamgraha*, TTP, vol. 111, 22-5-1, the number four is given as *ltung byed / pātayantika*, which seems better because this term includes the offences arising from both the 30 *nihsargikas* and the 90 *pātayantikas*.

⁷⁴ Tib: *nag po’i chos bzhi*. They are given in Tsepak Rigzin’s *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, Dharamsala, 1986, as: 1. misleading the teacher; 2. inducing others to regret their virtuous deeds; 3. disparaging the Mahāyāna practitioners; 4. deceiving other people.

⁷⁵ The Tibetan text reads *ltung ba lnga lnga brgyad*. I presume that this expression stands for the eighteen cardinal offences (*rtsa ltung bco brgyad / aṣṭadaśamūlāpatti*). The list of these offences given here is taken from the *Tshig mdzod chen mo*: 1. praising oneself and disparaging others; 2. not dispensing material wealth and Dharma; 3. refusing to accept reprimands but finding faults in others; 4. abandoning the Mahāyāna and teaching a spurious Dharma; 5. stealing the property of the Three Jewels; 6. abandoning the holy Dharma; 7. harming ordained persons; 8. committing heinous sins; 9. holding perverted views; 10. destroying (holy) places; 11. explaining the profound things to unworthy recipients; 12. turning people away from the Mahāyāna; 13. abandoning the *prātimokṣa*; 14. reviling the Śrāvakayāna; 15. making false claims to higher attainments; 16. appropriating the wealth given to the Three Jewels; 17. advocating perverse morality; 18. abandoning the thought of enlightenment.

I confess the offences damaging the pledges of the secret *mantras*:
 The fourteen cardinal and the eight grave transgressions.⁷⁶
 I confess the failure to perceive sins as sins,
 The sins which are blameworthy by their nature:
 Eschewing vows, pursuance of unvirtuous deeds,
 Unchastity, drinking intoxicants and so forth.
 I confess the hurtful offences arising
 From ignorance of how to guard one's vows and pledges,
 While in possession of the refuges, vows, and initiations.
 I confess with great shame, anxiety and regret,
 The sins committed on previous occasions,
 Which pervade one's being like poisonous venom,
 Since they were not cleansed by sincere confession.
 If the mind is not harnessed from now on but stays impure,
 Certainly henceforth my life remains in jeopardy,
 As I shall go on amassing unvirtuous actions,
 And sustain my commitments with feeble mind.
 May the Sugata Amitābha together with his sons
 Bestow the blessing of purifying my life-series.

⁷⁶ Tib: *rtsa ltung bcu bzhi yan lag sbom po brygad*. Since there is no complete agreement as to the exact wording and the nature of these offences, I provide here a summary of the lists given in Abhayākara Gupta's *Vajrayānāpattimañjarī*, TTP, vol. 69, 279-2-8:

The fourteen cardinal offences (*rtsa ba'i ltung ba / mūlāpatti*): 1. irreverence towards the guru; 2. deviating from the Tathāgata's Word; 3. seeking faults with hatred in vajra-fellows; 4. abandoning benevolence (*maitrī*); 5. abandoning the thought of enlightenment; 6. deprecating the three Vehicles; 7. disclosing the secrets to immature living beings; 8. showing contempt for the five *skandhas* as having the nature of the five Tathāgatas; 9. having doubts that the *dharmas* are non-existent and pure by nature; 10. being fond of perverse people (*gdug pa*); 11. considering all the empty *dharmas* of the past, present, and future as being past, present, and future; 12. weakening other people's faith; 13. not adhering to the received pledges; 14. deprecating women.

The eight grave offences (*sbom po'i ltung ba / sthūlāpatti*): 1. taking on an unsuitable yoginī; 2. engaging her in the practice; 3. disclosing the secrets; 4. disputing the pledges; 5. giving perverse instructions to those who have faith; 6. staying more than seven days with the followers of the Śrāvakayāna; 7. boasting to be a yogin without knowing yoga; 8. teaching the Dharma to non-believers.

It was declared that if one discards envy and illwill
On hearing of other people's virtuous deeds,
And if one rejoices in their deeds with sincerity,
One will acquire merit equal to theirs.
For this reason I rejoice in all the virtuous deeds
Accomplished by the noble ones and ordinary people.
I raise the thought of the highest enlightenment,
And I rejoice in the magnanimous activities
Pursued for the benefit of living beings. (6a)
Rejecting the ten unvirtuous for the ten virtuous actions,
Safeguarding the life of others, practising generosity,
Protecting the vows, speaking the truth,
Conciliating quarrels, talking with calm and honesty,
Holding good conversations, decreasing desire,
Thinking with kindness and compassion,
And pursuing the practice of the Dharma—
I rejoice in all these virtuous activities.

I urge to proclaim the Dharma with speed and efficiency
In all the worlds dispersed in the ten directions,
Which remain for long periods without perfect Buddhas.
May the omniscient and merciful ones seek their benefit.

I pray to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
Dharma-upholders and spiritual friends,
Who are inclined to pass into *nirvāṇa*,
Not to enter into *nirvāṇa* but to remain here.

May through this, my virtuous actions of all times
Become ripe for the benefit of all living beings.
Once they all swiftly gain the perfect enlightenment,
May the three worlds rise from the pit of *samsāra*.

VI

May on swiftly maturing their virtues for my sake,
The eighteen untimely deaths⁷⁷ be appeased in this life.
May I have a body, healthy, strong and youthful,
And prosperity vast as the Ganges in spring.
May I remain free from demons and enemies,
And pursue the practice of the holy Dharma.
May all attempted goals become fulfilled
Through mere wishes and in accord with Dharma.

⁷⁷ Tib/Skt: *dus min 'chi ba / akālamṛtyu*. There exist lists of the eight kinds of untimely death but, unfortunately, I am unaware of a text providing a list of eighteen such deaths.

May the benefits of the teachings and living beings
Become fulfilled in faultless and perfect ways.
May the purpose of my human body be fulfilled.

May I and all those associated with me,
Immediately upon departing from this life,
Arrive before the face of the Buddha Amitābha,
Surrounded by the community of his monks.⁷⁸
May their sight, mental rapture and blissful vision
Suppress the painful experience of death.
May the brotherhood of the eight Bodhisattvas (7a)
Appear in the sky by their magical powers,
And may they point out and then guide me
Along the path which leads to the Sukhāvātī.
May I generate a fearful apprehension against
The unbearable sorrows of the evil rebirths,
And the fleeting happiness of gods and men.

From the timeless dawn till the present day,
Each moment in *samsāra* is a lasting one.
May I become totally weary of *samsāra*.
Though one may always gain human rebirths,
Still one must experience countless times
The woe of birth, old age, illness and death;
And the felicity of human and divine beings,
In this evil and decadent age full of dangers,
Resembles a mixture of food and poison.
May desire for it become completely extinct.

Relatives, food, wealth and dear friends,
Are impermanent as illusions and dreams.
May attachment to them become totally extinct.

Lands, countries, mountains, hamlets and homes,
Are like the hamlets and homes in dreamlands.
May their due worthlessness become disclosed.

⁷⁸ In the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr45/Skt96, the Buddha explains to Ānanda that living beings who think with reverence of the Tathāgata, amass their merit, direct their thought towards enlightenment, and pray to be reborn in that realm, will be visited at the time of their death by Amitābha surrounded by a host of monks. They will be filled with joy and become reborn in the Sukhāvātī. Further on in the same passage it is said that Amitābha will also appear, but only mentally created (*buddhinirmita*), before those who do not care about him and do not increase their wholesome works. They also will be reborn in the same realm through their meditation which relies on perceiving the sight of the Tathāgata, and through unfailing memory (*smṛti*).

Once freed from this relentless pit of *saṃsāra*,
Released like a great sinner from prison,
May I, without glancing back over it,
Proceed to the realm of the Sukhāvātī.

Once freed from all passion and attachment,
Like a vulture released from its snare,
May I, in one single moment, traverse
The sky towards the western direction,
Pass over the countless world spheres,
And arrive in the Sukhāvātī realm.

Once there, may I, on beholding the face
Of the Buddha Amitābha seated before me,
Become duly purged from all obscurations.

VII

Out of the four different places of birth,⁷⁹
The one inside the lotus essence is the best.
May I be granted such a miraculous birth,
And having perfected a body in a single moment,
May I gain a body with the marks of distinction.

Due to fearful hesitations about non-arising,
Those reborn in lotuses remain inside them,
Happy and rich, for some five hundred years.
Although they hear the Buddha's teaching,
But since their lotuses do not unfold,
They are prevented from meeting the Buddha.⁸⁰

May such a situation never happen to me.
May my lotus unfold at once upon my birth,
And may I behold the face of Amitābha.

May I worship the Buddha and his retinue
By dispersing limitless clouds of worship,
Produced from the palms of my hands⁸¹

⁷⁹ Tib/Skt: *skye gnas bzhi / catvāro yonayaḥ*: 1. birth from a womb (*mngal nas skye ba / jāṛāyuja*); 2. birth from an egg (*sgo nga las skye ba / aṅḍaja*); 3. birth from moist heat (*drod gsher las skye ba / saṃsvedaja*); 4. spontaneous birth (*brdzus te skye ba / upapāduka*).

⁸⁰ This has been discussed above. The actual imprisonment within the lotus is compared to a palace-like dungeon (*bandhanāgāra*); Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr63/Skt134.

⁸¹ It is said in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr27/Skt56, that after accomplishing the Bodhisattva practices, Dharmākara acquired extraordinary qualities and powers one of which was the ability to discharge from the palms of his hands (*pāṇitala*) all sorts of precious ornaments and different kinds of food. The Bodhisattvas born in the Sukhāvātī also have the ability to discharge from the palms of their hands different items of worship. *Ibid.*, Tr53–54/Skt116.

By the power of merit and magical skills. (8a)

May on that occasion the blessed Tathāgata
Stretch out and place his right hand on my head,
And bestow upon me the prophecy of enlightenment.
Having heard the profound and universal Dharma,
Let my life-series mature and deliverance be won.

VIII

May I be sheltered and constantly sustained
By Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta,
The two chief sons of the victorious one.

When the time comes to see them in that realm
And to present daily worship to Amitābha,
And the countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
Who reside in the ten directions,
May I offer my veneration to all of them
And receive from them the elixir of the Dharma.

May I, through unimpeded magical powers,
Set forth at sunrise for the realms of
Abhirati,⁸² Śrīmat,⁸³ Karmaprasiddhi,⁸⁴ and Ghanavyūha,⁸⁵
And ask Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi,
Vairocana and all the remaining Buddhas,
To grant me initiations, vows and blessings.
Then, having offered them manifold worship,
May I return at sunset without trouble or strain
To the realm of the Sukhāvātī.

May I meet and present oceans of worship
To one hundred million Avalokiteśvaras,
Tārās, Vajrapāṇis and Padmasambhavas,
In their one hundred million manifested realms
Of Potala,⁸⁶ Aṭakāvātī,⁸⁷ Cāmara,⁸⁸ and U-rgyan country.⁸⁹

⁸² mNgon dga'i zhing.

⁸³ dPal ldan zhing.

⁸⁴ Las rab rdzogs.

⁸⁵ sTug po bkod.

⁸⁶ Potala is referred to in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, ed. by Suzuki and Idzumi, 209. A short work entitled *Po ta la kar 'gro ba'i lam yig* (TTP, vol. 81, 235–238) describes the way of reaching Potala.

⁸⁷ ICang lo can. In the *Mahāvīryūtpatti* (4137), this name (also given as Alakāvātī) is listed among the names of different countries such as Avanti and Magadhā. In the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra*, the great goddess Śrī is styled as dwelling in the palace Aḍakāvātī in the excellent park Puṇyakusumaprabhā in the excellent abode named Suvarṇadhvaja made of the seven jewels. R.E. Emmerick, tr., *The Sūtra of Golden Light*, London, 1970, 49.

⁸⁸ rNga yab gling.

⁸⁹ U rgyan yul.

Then, having received initiations and profound instructions,
May I, swiftly and unimpeded, return from their places
To the realm of the Sukhāvātī.

May their divine eyes repose with brightness
Upon my relatives, monks, teachers and others.
May they protect, guard and bless them,
And, upon their death, lead them to that realm.

The duration of one *kalpa* in this auspicious *kalpa*
Amounts to one day in the Sukhāvātī.
May I adhere at all times to that realm
Free of death and lasting for countless *kalpas*.

When the Buddhas of this auspicious *kalpa*,
From Maitreya onwards and up to Mos pa, (9a)
Become present in this very world,
May I arrive here through magical powers,
Worship those Buddhas and hear their holy Dharma.
Then, once again, may I return without difficulty
To the realm of the Sukhāvātī.

IX

May I be reborn in that realm of the Sukhāvātī,
The highest and most noble of all the realms,
The epitome of all amassed excellent qualities
Of the entire eighty-one buddhafiels,
Of one hundred thousand millions of Buddhas.⁹⁰

May I be reborn in that realm, happy, gentle and vast,
That jewel-realm, smooth as the palms of one's hands,
Wide, large, effulgent, and blazing with light,
Giving in when pressed, and rising when drawn.⁹¹

⁹⁰ At the beginning of the larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, the Buddha Lokeśvararāja tells Dharmākara about eighty Buddhas who preceded him and explains the qualities of their buddhafiels. After that Dharmākara concentrated for five *kalpas* on a buddhafiels which was eighty-one times more excellent than than the eighty-one hundred thousand *niyutas* of *koṭis* of buddhafiels described to him by Lokeśvararāja.

⁹¹ In the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr43/Skt88, it is said that as one steps over different kinds of flowers, they sink in four fingers deep, and as one lifts one's feet, they rise again.

May I be reborn in that realm of great wonders,
With its paradise-trees made of many jewels,
Adorned with leaves of silk and fruits of gems,
Bedecked with flocks of warbling magic birds,
And echoing the profound and universal Dharma.⁹²

May I be reborn in that realm of great beauty,
With its many scented rivers and their water of eight qualities,⁹³
Likewise with its bathing ponds filled with ambrosia,
Enclosed by the seven precious jewels, steps and railings,
With lotus flowers, sweet-scented and bearing fruits,⁹⁴
Glittering with masses of rays dispersing from the lotuses,
With each ray-tip adorned with a Buddha-manifestation.⁹⁵

May I be reborn in that realm of great happiness,
Devoid of the echoes of the eight handicaps⁹⁶ or evil rebirths,⁹⁷
The realm where no one has ever heard of defilements,⁹⁸
The three or the five poisons,⁹⁹ illnesses or demons,

⁹² The description given in the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Tr33–36/Skt66–76, is by far more elaborate.

⁹³ Skt: *aṣṭāṅgopetavāri*: 1. limpidity and purity, 2. refreshing coolness, 3. sweetness, 4. softness, 5. nurturing quality, 6. calmness, 7. power of preventing famine, 8. productiveness.

⁹⁴ The description given here of the rivers and the lotus ponds (*puṣkarīṇī*) corresponds very closely to the one given in the Smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Tr93/Skt196. This *sūtra* gives the following names of the seven jewels (*saptaratna*) which enclose the ponds: 1. gold (*suvarṇa*), 2. silver (*rūpya*), 3. lapis lazuli (*vaidūrya*), 4. crystal (*sphaṭika*), 5. ruby (*lohitamukta*), 6. diamond (*aśmagarbha*), 7. coral (*musāragalva*).

⁹⁵ Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Tr36/Skt74: “There are lotus flowers there, half a *yojana* large... one... ten *yojanas* large. From each jewel-lotus (*ratnapadma*), there issue thirty-six hundred thousand *koṭis* of light rays, and from each ray there issue thirty-six hundred thousand *koṭis* of Buddhas, ... who proceed to teach the Dharma to living beings in the countless realms in the ten directions.”

⁹⁶ The eight handicaps or disadvantages (*mi khom brgyad / aṣṭākṣaṇa*) refer to rebirths in circumstances which are not conducive to hearing the Buddha’s teachings. They are rebirths: 1. in hells (*dmyal ba / naraka*); 2. among animals (*dud ’gro / tiryag*); 3. among tormented spirits (*yi dags / preta*); 4. among gods enjoying long life (*lha tshe ring po / dīrghāyurdeva*); 5. among barbarian people (*mtha’ khob kyi mi / pratyantajanapada*); 6. with defective faculties (*dbang po ma tshang ba / indriyavaikalya*); 7. as an adherent of heretical doctrines (*log par lta ba / mithyādarśana*); 8. in regions without a Buddha (*de bzhin gshegs pa ma byung ba / tathāgatānutpāda*).

⁹⁷ In his first vow, Dharmākara pledged that his buddhafield should be free not only from the *niraya*, *tiryagyoni*, and *preta* realms but also from *asura* bodies.

⁹⁸ Tib/Skt: *nyon mongs / kleśa*.

⁹⁹ Three poisons: (*dug gsum / triviṣa*): 1. desire (*’dod chags / rāga*); 2. hatred (*zhe sdang / dveṣa*); 3. delusion (*gti mug / moha*).

Five poisons (*dug lnga / pañcaviṣa* or *nyon mongs lnga / pañcakleśa*): the three poisons plus 4. pride (*nga rgyal / māna*), and 5. envy (*phra dog / īrṣyā*).

Enemies, poverty, quarrels, disputes or any other sorrows.¹⁰⁰

May I be reborn in that realm of limitless good qualities,
Where there are no women nor birth from the womb,¹⁰¹
But where everyone is born from within lotus flowers,
Where all bodies are the same: golden in colour,
Adorned with the major and minor marks of distinction,¹⁰²
Majestic with five eyes¹⁰³ and five intuitive powers.¹⁰⁴

May I be reborn in that realm of complete happiness,
With its self-constructed palaces of different jewels,
Where all desired enjoyments arise from mere intentions, (10a)
Where all necessities are gained spontaneously with no effort,¹⁰⁵
Where there is no ‘I’ or ‘you’, and no adherence to the self,¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ In the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr40/Skt82, it is said that it is free from the sounds of unwholesome things (*akuśala*), hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), evil rebirths (*apāyadurgati*), and sorrow (*duḥkha*).

¹⁰¹ This agrees with the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr19/Skt40. See note 61. There are, however, women in Akṣobhya’s Abhirati, and also procreation which is achieved through mere looks and the pregnancy is said to be pure in the same way as it is among the Trāyastriṃśa gods. *Akṣobhyavyūha*, TTP, vol. 22, 140-1-7.

¹⁰² It is said in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr40/Skt82, that the beings who have been and who will be born in the Sukhāvātī will be endowed with exactly the same form (*rūpa*), colour (*varṇa*), strength, ornaments, palaces, and enjoyments as those of the Paranirmitavaśavartin gods. Such beings do not partake of solid food (*audārika*) but whatever food they desire, they become gratified with it without placing it into their mouth.

¹⁰³ This refers to the five special ‘visionary’ faculties of the Buddha: 1. physical eye, 2. divine eye, 3. wisdom eye, 4. Dharma eye, 5. knowledge eye.

¹⁰⁴ Tib/Skt: *mngon (par) shes (pa) lnga / pañcābhijñā*: 1. Divine eye (*lha’i mig / divyacakṣu*); 2. Divine ear (*lha’i rna ba / divyaśrotra*); 3. Knowledge of other people’s thoughts (*pha rol gyi sems shes pa / paracittajñāna*); 4. Knowledge of remembering former lives (*sngon gyi gnas rjes su dran pa / pūrvanivāsānusr̥tijñāna*); 5. Knowledge of magical powers (*rdzu ’phrul gyi bya ba shes pa / rddhividhijñāna*). This group of five intuitive powers belongs to the mundane order. In addition to constituting an independent group, it is frequently incorporated in a group of six *abhijñās*, with the knowledge of the destruction of impurities (*zag pa zad pa / āśravakṣaya*), a supramundane power, as the sixth.

¹⁰⁵ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr41–42/Skt84–86: all perfumes, musical instruments, ornaments, palaces (*vimāna*) with beds (*paryamka*) surrounded by thousands of nymphs (*apsaras*), and other things become available just as they are thought of.

¹⁰⁶ Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, M54–59/Skt118: the beings born there recite the story (*kathā*) of the Dharma, which is accompanied by omniscience (*sarvajñatā*); they have no notion of property (*parigrahasamjñā*); feel neither pleasure (*rati*) nor displeasure (*arati*); have no expectations (*apekṣā*), no thought (*citta*) of all beings; no notion of others (*anyatamakasaṃjñā*), of self (*svakasamjñā*), inequality (*asama*), strife (*vigraha*), dispute (*vivāda*), or opposition (*virodha*). Their minds are composed (*samacitta*), benevolent (*maitracitta*), tender (*mṛducitta*), affectionate (*snigdha*)... rich in good qualities and so on. This is succinctly expressed in Dharmākara’s tenth vow which states that the beings born in the Sukhāvātī must be without any notion of property (*pratigrahasamjñā*), even with regard to their own body.

Where all required clouds of worship emerge from the palms,
And where everyone follows the highest Mahāyāna Dharma.

May I be reborn in that realm of fulfilled wishes,
Where sweet-scented winds disperse showers of flowers,
With pleasing shapes, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches
Exuding from all trees, lotus flowers and rivers,
With constantly arising clouds of relish and worship,
Without women and yet crowded with magical goddesses,¹⁰⁷
With many goddesses of offerings¹⁰⁸ constantly dispensing worship.
When one wishes to rest, there is a jewel-palace.
When one wishes to sleep, there is a superb jewel-couch
With pillows and cushions of different kinds of costly silk.
When one wishes to hear the sounds of birds,
Trees, rivers, music and other things,
They all resound with the well-sounding Dharma.¹⁰⁹
When one requires silence, one hears no sounds.
The ambrosia ponds and rivers become cold or hot
In accordance with the wishes of each individual.

It is in that realm that resides the perfect Buddha Amitābha
Without passing into *nirvāṇa* for countless *kalpas*.
May I act as his attendant during that period.

X

When Amitābha passes away into tranquillity,
While his dispensation persists during its second period,
Lasting for *kalpas* equal to the sands of the Ganges,
May I remain inseparable from his regent Avalokiteśvara,
And firmly adhere to the holy Dharma of that period.

¹⁰⁷ Tib: *sprul pa'i lha mo*.

¹⁰⁸ Tib: *mchod pa'i lha mo*.

¹⁰⁹ It is said in the Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr95/Skt198, that in the Sukhāvātī there are swans (*haṃsa*), curlews (*krauñca*) and peacocks (*mayūra*) who gather together three times a day and three times a night and perform a concert (*saṃgīti*) in their own voices, dispersing the sound (*śabda*) of the higher faculties (*indriya*), powers (*bala*) and limbs of enlightenment (*bodhyaṅga*). The people (*manuṣya*) who hear these sounds recollect (*manasikāra*) the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha. The Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Tr61/Skt130, speaks of flocks of immortal birds (*amaradvija*) which make that realm resound with the Buddha voice (*svara*) so that the Bodhisattvas in the Sukhāvātī never remain without the Buddha recollection (*buddhānusrīti*).

On the morrow after the sunset of that holy Dharma,
When the heir Avalokiteśvara becomes a perfect Buddha
Named Samantaraśmy-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭarāja,¹¹⁰
May I serve him, worship and hear the holy Dharma.

As he abides with the life span of ninety-six hundred thousand
Of ten million *nayutas* of *kalpas*,¹¹¹
May I always remain his attendant, show reverence,
And adhere with attention to the holy Dharma. (11a)

When he passes into *nirvāṇa* and his dispensation
Persists for three hundred thousand of
Six *madhyas* of ten millions of *kalpas*,¹¹²
May I, at that time, adhere to the Dharma,
And never separate from Mahāsthāmaprāpta.

Next when Mahāsthāmaprāpta becomes a Buddha,
And a steadfast Tathāgata known by the name
Of Supraṭiṣṭhita-guṇamaṇi-kuṭarāja,¹¹³
With the life span and the dispensation
Of the same durations as those of Avalokiteśvara,
May I always remain an attendant of that Buddha,
Offer him worship and adhere to the holy Dharma.

Thereafter, as soon as my life has been bartered,
May I gain the supreme and perfect Buddhahood
In that very realm or any other pure realm.

Having become a perfect Buddha, may I, like Amitāyus,
Mature and liberate all beings by the mere hearing of my name.
May I guide them through my countless manifestations,
And may their many goals be naturally fulfilled without exertion.

O lustrous Amitābha in your *dharmakāya*,
Having the boundless radiance of the Tathāgata's
Life, merit, wisdom and excellent qualities,
O blessed lord of boundless life and knowledge,
It was foretold by the Buddha Śākyamuni
That a person who adheres to your name,

¹¹⁰ 'Od zer kun nas 'phags pa'i dpal brtsegs rgyal po. This corresponds to the Sanskrit name inserted here from the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, vol. II, 120.

¹¹¹ Tib: *bskal pa bye ba khrag khrig ni 'bum phrag dgu bcu rtsa drug*; *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, vol. II, 120, *ṣaṇṇavatikalpakotīniyutaśatasahasra*.

¹¹² Tib: *bskal pa dung phyur drug dang bye ba phrag 'bum phrag gsum*; *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, vol. II, 120, reads *triṣaṣṭikalpakoti*.

¹¹³ Rab tu brtan pa yon tan nor bu brtsegs pa'i rgyal po. His Sanskrit name is also taken from the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, vol. II, 122.

Except for the retribution of his previous *karma*,
Will be protected from fire, water, poison,
Weapons, *yakṣasas*, *rākṣasas*, and all other fears.
Thus, as I adhere to your name and offer homage,
I beg you to guard me against all fears and sorrows.

May everything become auspicious and perfect.
May all be fulfilled in accordance with my prayer
By the blessing of the perfected three Buddha-bodies,
By the blessing of the true and unchanging *dharmatā*,
And by the blessing of the undivided and complete Saṅgha.
I prostrate myself before the Three Jewels.
*Tadyathā pañcendriyāvabodhanāye svāhā.*¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ The rubric that follows explains that it is a *dhāraṇī* to make firm this prayer.