Buddhism, Kingship and the Protection of the State: The *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* and *Dhāraṇī* Literature

Gergely Hidas

1 Introduction

This article focuses first on the ritual core of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*, which teaches the protection of the state for the mutual benefit of the Buddhist Sangha and the monarch. The essay then explores the ways in which this theme appears in *dhāraṇī* literature in the first half of the first millennium.¹ It is shown that offering safeguard to rulers and their regions is a long-established practice in South Asian Buddhism, persisting into modern times, and that there have been a variety of incantation scriptures available for accomplishing this task.

2 The *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*: The Sūtra of Golden Light

This scripture of Mahāyāna Buddhism survives in its oldest form in South Asia in two palm-leaf manuscripts from Nepal dated to the 14th and 16th centuries.² The remaining witnesses from the subcontinent are paper codices of later centuries, but dozens of Central Asian Sanskrit fragments survive from the second half of the first millennium. The Sanskrit text of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama* has been edited a few times, most recently by Skjaervø (2004). This scripture was remarkably influential across the Buddhist lands of Asia, and was translated into Chinese, Tibetan, Khotanese and several additional languages over the course of many centuries. The Chinese translation by Dharmakṣema is the earliest, from circa 417 CE, which marks the *terminus ante quem* for the emergence of this *sūtra*. Editions of Tibetan and Chinese recensions were published

¹ For a survey of *dhāraṇī* literature, see Hidas 2015.

² Cambridge Add. 2831, 1385 CE; Tōyō Bunkō 1979, 1581 CE. It appears that previous publications have left the dated colophon of the former manuscript unnoticed (NS 505 [1385 CE], written as *pañcādhikāḥ pañcaśataḥ*; see cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-02831/96, lines 3–4).

by Nobel in the 1940s and 1950s, while Skjaervø (2004) provides the most comprehensive treatment of the Khotanese version. Several translations of this scripture are available in Western languages, with Emmerick 1970 being the classical point of reference, based on the Sanskrit. An excellent overview of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama* with a detailed account of previous research was published by Gummer (2015).

3 The Ritual Core of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*

The structure of this scripture shows evidence of considerable expansion over the centuries. The most widespread Sanskrit version contains nineteen chapters, but Nobel (1937) suggests that there may only have been fourteen *parivartas* initially.³ He also proposed that chapter 3, the *Deśanāparivarta*, is likely to represent the original core of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama*, containing verses on the confession of sins, the resolution to attain buddhahood and praise of the buddhas, the recitation or hearing of which brings about great benefit.⁴ If we look, however, for chapters that actually have detailed ritual instructions, it appears that the ritual core of this *sūtra* is contained in sections 6, 7 and 8: the *Caturmahārājaparivarta*, *Sarasvatīparivarta* and *Śrīparivarta*. The latter two include more complex observances and *dhāraṇī*-spells.

Chapter 6, the *Caturmahārājaparivarta* or Chapter on the Four Great Kings,⁵ conveys an explicit message: those kings (*manuṣyarāja*) who venerate the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama* and support the Buddhist Sangha will be protected from hostile armies and other dangers by the Four Great Kings, and their countries will exist in highest state of harmony. Simultaneously, those who ignore this tradition will face decline. This *sūtra* directly and repeatedly refers to monarchs, and throughout this chapter and the whole scripture it is obvious that kings are envisaged as the principal target audience. At one point the

3 On the structure of this *sūtra*, see Skjaervø 2004, lii–liv. The earliest Chinese version contains eighteen chapters, while later Chinese and Tibetan recensions consist of 21, 24, 29 or 31 sections.

4 Cf. Suzuki 2012.

5 These eminent *yakṣas* Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūḍhaka, Virūpākṣa and Vaiśravaṇa are celestial guardians of the cardinal directions, along with their retinues in Jambudvīpa. From the Pali *Ātānāṭṭiya-sutta* (Dīgha-nikāya 32) to various Sanskrit *raṁṣā* texts, they often take the role of chief protectors. Note that the Four Great Kings guarded the cardinal points at the great stūpa of Bhārhuṭ, circa 100 BCE (Skilling 1992, 163). For a study of the Sanskrit *Ātānāṭṭiya/Ātānāṭṭika-sūtra*, see Sander 2007.

scripture calls itself a *rājaśāstra*,⁶ a text for kings, and it is notable that chapter 12 is entitled *Devendrasamayārājaśāstraparivartaḥ*, or Chapter of the Royal Treatise called Conventions for Divine Kings, which expounds the ideal of the Dharma-following monarch.⁷ On the basis of the general tone of the *Caturmahārājaparivarta* it is fairly evident that the main intended function of this *sūtra* was proselytizing, that is, attracting leaders of various regions to Buddhism by offering them mutually beneficial services. The Buddhist community appears to have been in perceptible need of securing support from the highest places; some passages seem to indicate a degree of despair, as reflected in their accentuation of vital threats for those not prepared to follow this tradition.⁸ It is also not unlikely that Buddhism was at times persecuted, as certain references indicate.⁹ Occasionally the text becomes somewhat guarded or equivocal, for example in its claim that the Four Great Kings and the summoned deities arrive in the king's palace with invisible bodies,¹⁰ which suggests an effort by the text's compilers to achieve their goals in the most secure possible ways. As for the ritual instructions in this chapter,¹¹ it is prescribed that the king should clean the palace, sprinkle the premises with perfumes and scatter flowers. He should prepare an ornamented Dharma-throne and a lower seat for himself. He should listen to this *sūtra* recited by a *dharmabhāṇaka* monk and honour those of the Sangha who present the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama*. As a result, the whole universe will be adorned, lit up by golden light. The Four Great Kings and other divine beings will approach the palace to listen to the recitation and will protect the sovereign and his realm.

In chapter 7, the *Sarasvatīparivarta*,¹² the goddess Sarasvatī grants her support to the Dharma preacher through the gift of eloquence, and presents a bathing ritual with enchanted herbs for him and his audience in order to appease all disturbances. It is promised that, invoked by praise, Sarasvatī herself

6 *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* 6.2.6 (Skjaervø 2004): *yaḥ kaścīd bhadanta bhagavan manuṣya-rājo bhavet ya-m-anena Devendra-samayena rāja-śāstreṇa rājatvaṃ kārayet*.

7 Cf. also chapter 13 on King Susambhava.

8 Skjaervø 2004, 6.5.14–6.5.32. Chapter 12 also includes a description of grave dangers for kings who fail to follow the Dharma; see Skjaervø 2004, 12.17–12.61.

9 *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* 6.1.35–36 (Skjaervø 2004): *manuṣyarājā ... teṣāṃ sūtreṇa dhārakāṇāṃ bhikṣuṇāṃ sarva-pratyarthikebhya āraḥṣāṃ kuryāt*.

10 *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* 6.2.17, 6.2.37 (Skjaervø 2004): *te vāyaṃ bhadanta bhagavaṃś catvāro mahā-rājānaḥ sa-bala-parivārā anekair yakṣa-śata-sahasrair adṛṣyair kāyātma-bhāvais tenopasaṃkramiṣyāmaḥ*. It seems that the redactors wished to avoid the risk that the listener expects these divine beings to come in a perceptible form, and then perhaps be disappointed.

11 Skjaervø 2004, 6.3–6.4.

12 Skjaervø 2004, 7.1–7.67. For a detailed study of this chapter see Ludvik 2007, 145–221.

will appear and remove all diseases and difficulties. The ritual instructions prescribe that one should pound herbs and consecrate the powder with mantras at the time of the Puṣya constellation. A *maṇḍala* should be drawn with cow-dung, flowers should be scattered and gold and silver vessels filled. Four armed men and four well-adorned maidens should be placed there holding pots in their hands, thus accomplishing the protective sealing of the boundaries (*śīmā-bandha*). One should use incense, music, umbrellas, flags, banners, mirrors, arrows, spears and *dhāraṇī*-spells, and in due course bathe behind an image of the Buddha.¹³

In chapter 8, the *Śrīparivarta*,¹⁴ the goddess Śrī offers support to the Dharma preacher and good fortune to his audience. A rite which provides prosperity is described, through which Śrī herself enters that place. According to the ritual instructions, one's home must be purified and one should bathe and wear clean garments. One should offer worship (*pūjā*) with perfumes, flowers and incense, then sprinkle juices (*rasa*) and utter the names of Śrī, Ratnakusuma Tathāgata¹⁵ and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*. One should then recite *dhāraṇī*-spells, draw a *maṇḍala* of cow-dung and offer perfumes, flowers and incense. Finally, a pure seat should be provided where Śrī descends and stays.

As can be seen, chapters 7 and 8 contain ritual instructions primarily for securing health and wealth. These seem to be ancillary rites which accompany the ritual for the protection of the state taught in chapter 6. Interestingly, these rituals are actually more complex than those in the *Caturmahārājaparivarta*, where recitation is the main focus, potentially indicating a somewhat later date of composition. It is worth noting that chapters 9 and 10, the *Dṛḍhāparivarta* and *Samjñāyaparivarta*, also offer further support and protection but do not include detailed ritual instructions.

4 *Dhāraṇī* Literature Presenting Rites for the Protection of the State

Perhaps contemporaneous with the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*, there are at least three pieces of *dhāraṇī* literature proper which include detailed ritual instructions for the protection of the state: the *Dhvajāgrakeyūradhāraṇī*, *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā*/*Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinīdhāraṇī* and the *Mahāsāhasrapramar-*

13 Skjaervø 2004, lvi notes that the treatise on magical herbs and the *dhāraṇīs* may be later additions to this chapter.

14 Skjaervø 2004, 8.1–8.71. On Śrī Lakṣmī see Shaw 2006, 94–109.

15 Note that a Ratnakusumasamṇipitaḡātra Tathāgata is listed in the shorter *Sukhāvativyūha*.

danasūtra.¹⁶ The former two are centered on this theme, while in the latter the defence of the state is included as one among various rituals. In all three cases the monarch is directly referred to as the beneficiary of the rites.

The *Dhvajāgrakeyūrādhārāṇī*¹⁷ was edited by Giunta (2008) based on an undated palm-leaf manuscript, and compared with the Tibetan translation by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla and Ye shes sde of circa 800 CE.¹⁸ The Chinese translation by Dānapāla/Shi-hu dates to 982 CE.¹⁹ The setting of this scripture is the celestial Trāyastriṃśat abode where Śakra requests help from the Buddha after the gods have been defeated by the *asuras*, led by Vemacitrin. The lord tells Śakra to learn the invincible *Dhvajāgrakeyūrādhārāṇī*, which he had come to know from Aparājita dhvaja Tathāgata during a previous existence. Then the Bhagavān reveals the *dhārāṇī* and teaches that its user becomes victorious in battles and conflicts. The spell is to be fixed atop a banner (*dhvajāgra*) or around the neck, and protects kings (*manuṣyarāja*) or heroic people (*śūrapuruṣa*). Manifesting as a divine female, it stands in the frontline, providing fearlessness and protection, driving the enemy away as well as granting blessings and prosperity.²⁰ Following the main text, the manuscript incorporates the brief *Dhvajāgrakeyūrahṛdaya* “spell-essence.”

The *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā*/*Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinīdhārāṇī*²¹ was edited, along with the Tibetan translation²² by Bstan pa'i nyin byed,²³ by Banerjee (1941) on the basis of a palm-leaf manuscript dated to 1361 CE. No Chinese translation seems to be available. The setting of this scripture is Mount Svar-

16 While the Chinese and Tibetan translations of these scriptures are relatively late, on the basis of language and terminology it seems that all three date to the first half of the first millennium. On the approximate antiquity of the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanasūtra* see Hidas 2013, 229.

17 Cf. the *Dhajagga-sutta* in Pali (*Samyutta-nikāya* 1.11.3), where the Buddha teaches that, just as Sakka encouraged the gods to behold his banner or that of other deities when experiencing fear in a battle against the *asuras*, monks experiencing dread should call to mind the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

18 E.g. Derge Kanjur 612 = 923. Cf. also *Lhan kar ma* No. 376 (Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, 215) and Dunhuang 10L TIB J 372 (Dalton and van Schaik 2006, 106).

19 Taishō Tripiṭaka 943. Cf. also Taishō Tripiṭaka 1363 from 988 CE.

20 *Dhvajāgrakeyūrādhārāṇī* (Giunta 2008, 190): *dhvajāgre kaṇṭhe vā baddhvā dhārayitavyā | manuṣyarājñā śūrapuruṣāṇāṇ ca sarveṣa rakṣā karoti strīrūpadhārīṇī bhūtvā purataḥ tiṣṭhati abhayaṃ dadāti | rakṣā karoti parasainya vidrāpati māṅgalyaṃ pavitra śrīlakṣmī saṃsthāpikā*. Cf. the Śrīparivarta of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*.

21 Note that there exists another text titled *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā*, quoted, for example, in Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*.

22 E.g. Derge Kanjur 684.

23 Known more widely as Si tu Paṇ chen (1700–1775).

ṇaśṛṅga,²⁴ the mansion of Vaiśravaṇa, where Nārāyaṇa requests help from the Buddha upon defeat by the *asuras*, much like the *Dhvajāgrakeyūrādhārāṇī*. The lord tells him that earlier, during the reign of King Ratnaśrī of Magadha, there lived Sarveśvara Tathāgata, from whom the Bhagavān learned the *Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī* spell. For hundreds of thousands of years that king ruled righteously by the power of this *dhārāṇī*. In his next existence he was born as Māndhātā, a bodhisattva and *cakravartin* king,²⁵ who practiced charity for sixty-four thousand *kalpas* and became a buddha. Then the lord tells Nārāyaṇa that this spell should be learnt, recited and taught to others. The *dhārāṇī* should be fixed upon five models of chariots and placed across the battlefield. Then the personified Queen of Spells (i.e. Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī) should be visualized there as devouring the enemy.²⁶ At midday the king should write down this incantation with saffron, after which he is to conquer the hostile army.²⁷ By reciting this *dhārāṇī* three times daily one is freed from even the five sins of immediate retribution, gains heaps of merit and shall be able to remember former existences. Laypeople, monastics, kings (*rāja*), princes (*rājaputra*), Brahmins and Dharma preachers are all promised to benefit from this spell.

The *Mahāsāhasrapramardanasūtra* was edited in Iwamoto 1937 based primarily on a paper manuscript from 1553 (CE²⁸), while its rituals are studied in Hidas 2013. The Tibetan translation by Śilendrabodhi, Jñānasiddhi, Śākya-prabha and Ye shes sde dates to circa 800 CE, and the Chinese one was completed by Dānapāla/Shi-hu in 983 CE. The setting of this long and complex

24 The Suvarṇaśṛṅga is listed as a King of Mountains (*parvatarājā*) in the *Mahāmāyūrivid-yārājī* (Takubo 1972, 49).

25 For an overview of the classical Buddhist ideal of *cakravartin* kingship see Harvey 2007. On the *vidyādhara-cakravartin* of tantric Buddhism see Davidson 2002, 330–334.

26 For references to consuming the enemy cf. the *Dhvajāgrakeyūrahṛdaya*: *om bhagavati dhvajāgrakeyūre parasainyavidhvaṃsanakari | svasainyaparipālānakari | ulkā mukhi | kha kha | khāhi khāhi | parasainyam anantamukhenānantabhujena prahara prahara | hūm hūm phaṭ phaṭ svāhā*.

27 *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā* (Banerjee 1941, 4): *nārāyaṇa atha tasmin samparāye senayor ubhayor madhye pañcasu sthāneṣu etad dhārāṇīcakraṃ rathapratikṛtau yuñjyāt | nārāyaṇa ubhayor madhye parasenāgre tasmin rathamadhye mahāmāyāvijayavāhinīṃ nāma vidyārājīṃ anekasātasahasrarūpām anekasātasahasrabhujām trinetraṃ lohitaḥṣṇavarṇām dīptaiś caturvaktṛaiḥ parasenām bhakṣayantīm iva cintayet | svayam eva cakravartyākāraṃ kṛtvā madhyāhne dhārāṇīṃ kuṅkumena likhītvā rājā parasya ca senām svabhāvena māyāsadyśena cchādayan vivīdhena sāreṇa vijayī bhaviṣyati*.

28 Iwamoto (1937) consulted two undated paper manuscripts as well. All three codices are *Pañcarakṣā* collections kept in Japan. Many thanks to Dr. Kenichi Kuranishi for his help with the Japanese introduction to the edition.

scripture is Rājagṛha, where the Buddha and the Four Great Kings offer protection from calamities following an earthquake in Vaiśālī. Towards the end, this *sūtra* provides detailed instructions for several rituals, including one for the protection of the state. This prescribes that the royal residence (*rājadhānī*) should be cleaned and purified with flowers, incense and other offerings. Four maidens should be placed in the four directions with swords in their hands.²⁹ The *dhāraṇī* should be recited and written on strips of cloth, mounted on the top of *caityas*, trees and banners. Recitation should continue for a fortnight, thus saving the state.³⁰

5 *Dhāraṇī* Literature Making General Reference to the Protection of the State

Various examples of *dhāraṇī* literature, in the wider sense, include references to the defense of the state, while not being centered on this theme and lacking detailed ritual prescriptions. Schopen (1978: 363–367) lists the *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra*, *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Ratnaketuparivarta*, *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānavyūha* and *Śrīmahādevīvyākaraṇa* as relevant texts surviving among the Gilgit manuscripts (6th–7th centuries). The *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra* claims that all disturbances to an anointed *kṣatriya* king, including hostile armed forces, shall cease by performing worship (*pūjā*). The *Prajñāpāramitā* teaches that those who study this text shall be protected in the battlefield. The *Ratnaketuparivarta* declares that those kings who commit this spell-text to writing shall not face any danger from an enemy's army. If they raise the *Ratnaketudhāraṇī* on a banner they shall be victorious in battle. Paying reverence to the *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānavyūha* will cause victory for kings and queens in war and riots. Those monarchs who preserve the *Śrīmahādevīstotra* will face no calamities in their realm, and Śrī herself will reside in their homes.³¹ In addition to these scriptures, the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* states that to protect one's land from the enemy or calamities the ritually pure officiant should fill a vessel with various substances, perform great *pūjā* and recitation; peace shall follow thus.³² The *Amoghapāśakalparāja* teaches a couple of methods for success in warfare.

29 Cf. the *Sarasvatīparivarta* of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*.

30 For a detailed translation see Hidas 2013, 236–237. See also Gentry 2016.

31 Cf. the *Śrīparivarta* of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*.

32 *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* (Meisezahl 1962, 325–326): *paraviṣayarājyaraṣṭropadravarakṣāsu pūrṇakalaśaṃ sthāpayitvā śucinā śucivastraprāvṛtena mahatīm pūjāṃ kṛtvā vācayityam | mahāśāntir bhavati*. Cf. also *Amoghapāśakalparāja* 3b.

By the use of a magical noose the army of the enemy and its weapons shall be bound.³³ By encircling a sword the weapons of the enemy shall be broken and disabled.³⁴ The *Mahāpratisarāmahāvidyārājñī* promises the destruction of hostile armies and victory in battle with the help of its *dhāraṇī*.³⁵ This scripture includes a testimonial narrative in which King Brahmadatta overpowers the army of the enemy by fixing the spell upon his body before entering the battlefield.³⁶ In another story it is Śakra who defeats the *asuras* with the help of this incantation.³⁷

6 The Characteristics of Buddhist Rituals for the Protection of the State in the First Half of the First Millennium

As the passages above show, the protection of the state and acquiring safety in battle were recurring topics in Buddhist ritual literature from the early centuries of the common era onwards. The target audience was primarily monarchs.³⁸ Besides defence, the texts occasionally promise additional rewards as well, most commonly health and wealth. While these incantation scriptures principally aim at worldly goals, it is worth noting that in a few cases they promise a better future existence, such as rebirth as a bodhisattva. Even bud-

33 *Amoghapāśakalparāja* 18b (Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai. 1998–2011): *sainyamadhyotkṣipet sainyā pāśabandhā bhavanti | saṃgrāmamadhye kṣipet sarvvaśastrapraharaṇadhanuśaraśaktiśasimusalamusuṇḍicakrakuntāyudhavarmakavacā sarve pāśabandhā bhavanti ||*. 21b: *saṃgrāmamadhye kṣipeta yasya nāmā kṣīpyate sa ca pāśabaddhā agratam upatiṣṭhati |*. 30a: *saṃgrāme yudhyamāne krodharājāṃ japatā pāśaṃ saṃgrāmamadhye kṣeptavyam | mahāntaṃ āśvīṣaṃ prādurbhavati | vikaṭākṣaṃ lolajihvaṃ aṅgārādīptinayanam saha darśanamātrāṇi caturaṅgaṃ balakāya diśividiśāni prapalāyante |*.

34 *Amoghapāśakalparāja* 29a (Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai. 1998–2011): *ato vidyādhareṇa krudhena khaḍga bhrāmayaṃ sarvvaviḥnavināyākānāṃ duṣṭayakṣarākṣasānāṃ sarvvabhūtānāṃ chinnā bhaviṣyati | sakṛtasamgrāmamadhye bhrāmayet sarvvayodhinānā(m) āyudhānā cchinnā bhaviṣyanti | stambhitāni bhaviṣyanti | sarve daśavidīśāni prapatāyanti |*.

35 Hidas 2012, 205, 241, 243, 249.

36 Hidas 2012, 216–217. Note the setting similar to the *Dhvajāgrakeyūradhāraṇī*.

37 Hidas 2012, 227.

38 Note that monarchs were also addressed in a highly elevated literary style by prominent Buddhist personalities such as Mātṛceta and Nāgārjuna in the first centuries CE (cf. e.g. Zimmermann 2006, 228–229, Sanderson 2009, 103–104, Bronkhorst 2011, 103–107). While works such as the *Ratnāvalī* lack the ritual instructions, as might be expected, their counsel of righteous governance, however idealized, sometimes resonates with certain parts of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsaśottamasūtra*.

dhahood is promised.³⁹ These texts of both mainstream and Mahāyāna Buddhism employ various ritual means, such as the use of mantra, *dhāraṇī*, *maṇḍala* and *sīmābandha*. It is difficult to suggest a precise chronology for the emergence of these scriptures and, for example, to estimate whether the grand *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* appeared first, with independent *dhāraṇī* texts following afterwards, or the reverse. What can be stated more or less with certainty is that all the aforementioned scriptures originate from the first half of the first millennium, but emerged over an uncertain interval of time.

As far as actual users or evidence for the protection of the state in South Asia is concerned, only indirect information is available. Various Chinese sources refer to the successful use of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* in some Indian kingdoms as early as the first century CE, although these may only be legendary accounts for the promotion of Buddhism in China.⁴⁰ A more telling piece of evidence, however, from the middle of the first millennium, is the Gilgit collection of manuscripts, where royal patronage and apotropaic literature are closely linked, albeit without surviving exemplars of the *Sūtra of Golden Light*.⁴¹ In the southern island of Sri Lanka, where monastics and worldly rulers were deeply interdependent for most of the centuries, we have no proof that the Sangha provided protection for the state or that the king used the above mentioned texts. There are however accounts from at least the fourth century CE onwards reporting the performance of *paritta*-recitals with the *Ratanasutta* in times of national calamities.⁴² Simultaneously, in East Asia we find plenty of direct evi-

39 See the *Nārāyaṇapariprcchā*.

40 Ludvik 2007, 150–151.

41 See von Hinüber 2014 and 2018. It is notable that in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* (early-7th-century), the *Mahāmāyūrī* (surviving in Gilgit in numerous manuscript copies) is mentioned as being recited for healing at the royal palace: "So amid the salutations of the chamberlains he slowly entered the palace. There he found people bestowing all their goods in presents, worshipping the family gods, engaged in cooking the ambrosial posset, performing the Six Oblation sacrifice, offering tremulous *Durvā* leaves besmeared with clotted butter, chanting the Mahā-Māyūrī hymn, purifying the household, completing the rites for keeping out the spirits by offerings. Earnest Brahmans were occupied in muttering Vedic texts; Śiva's temple resounded with the murmur of the Hendecad to Rudra; Śaivas of great holiness were bathing Virūpākṣa's image with thousands of vessels of milk." (Cowell and Thomas 1897, 137).

42 Gunawardana 1979, 226–227; Norman 1983, 174. On *paritta* texts, the *Ratanasutta*/*Ratnasūtra* tradition and its remodelling as the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanasūtra* see Skilling 1992. Cf. also Hidas 2013. On modern Thai amulet cultures incorporating the *Ratanasutta* see McDaniel 2014, 143–144. On Southeast Asian aspects and the recitation of the *Mahādibbamanta* before going to battle see Skilling 2007, 195, and for a detailed study of this text Jaini 1965. Note that Pali canonical sources acknowledge the efficacy of spells, but do not have a high opinion of them: in the *Kevaṭṭasutta* (Dīgha-nikāya 11) the Buddha teaches

dence for protective practices employing *dhāraṇī* texts. De Visser (1935), May (1967), Sango (2015) and Gummer (2015) provide a detailed picture how the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* was actually used for the defense of the emperor and the state. From these studies it becomes clear that Japanese ritual procedures follow what is prescribed in the original Sanskrit remarkably closely;⁴³ it thus appears that the ‘periphery’ preserves well what may have once been the norm in the native center of this tradition.

7 The Continuity of Buddhist Rituals for the Protection of the State into Later Times

From the second half of the first millennium CE, new types of Buddhist ritual texts incorporated the theme of state protection in South Asia within the tantric traditions. Sanderson (2009, 105–106) refers to passages in the *Sarvavajrodāya* of Ānandagarbha and the *Guhyasamājamaṇḍalavidhi* of Dīpaṅkarabhadra (9th c.) being used for the protection of the monarch, in connection to rites of initiation. Sanderson (2009, 125) also observes that the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* and *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* both offer protection to the ruler through royal consecration. In the latter text protection is accomplished by Vajradhara and the Four Great Kings, reflecting continuity with earlier sources. As for chronicled accounts of the protection of royal dynasties, Sanderson (2004, 238; 2009, 93–94) refers to Tāranātha’s history of Indian Buddhism, which reports that upon seeing omens of the future ruin of the Pāla dynasty, the eminent master Buddhajñānapāda of Vikramaśīla persuaded Dharmapāla (r. circa 775–812) to institute a regular fire-sacrifice at the monastery in order to protect his dynasty. The rituals lasted for many years at immense cost. In another reference to Tāranātha, Sanderson (2009, 107) notes that tantric rituals were often performed to avert the enemy, especially Turuṣkas. Based on passages from the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* and a grant by the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Govinda III, dated to 805 CE, Sanderson (2003–2004, 433–434 fn. 308) writes that “[t]he practice of going into battle with an image of one’s personal deity and the belief that this will protect one’s troops and confound those of the

that monks who display supernatural powers in order to promote faith in the Bhagavān among people would be thought by some to have used incantations like the *Gandhārvijjā* or *Maṇikāvijjā* to achieve these accomplishments, rather than the power of their contemplation.

43 The *Sūtra of Golden Light* reached Japan as early as the end of the 6th century (Skjaervø 2004, xxxii).

enemy, is well attested in Indian Buddhist sources and in Far-Eastern sources derived from them.” A few texts of this period also pick up on the theme of protection in warfare. The *Siddhaikavīratāntra* introduces mantric amulets worn on the body which, with help from enchanted swords, ensure victory in battle.⁴⁴ The *Laghusaṃvaratāntra* claims that one who enters the battlefield after reciting a certain mantra one thousand times towards the enemy cannot be hurt by weapons and obtains an indestructible *vajra*-body.⁴⁵ Finally, one of the latest and most complex tantric scriptures in South Asia, the *Kālacakratāntra*, mentions a number of war-machines (*yantra*), presumably integrated into this religious text because of the imminent threat from Western ‘barbarian’ invaders in North India around the 11th century.⁴⁶

8 The Protection of the State in Modern Nepal

As for recent practices in the Kathmandu Valley, there is evidence for the performance of a royal ritual for protection involving *Pañcarakṣā* recitation in the era of Mahindra Vira Vikram Shah (r. 1955–1972). As the officiant, Ratnarāj Vajrācārya of Patan, kindly provided information, in 1962 he performed a ceremony in the royal palace for the protection of the monarch and his realm using this influential apotropaic collection.⁴⁷ In this part of South Asia, few early manuscripts of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama* survive, though this *sūtra* became part of the renowned *Navadharm* collection of nine texts in medieval times.⁴⁸

44 *Siddhaikavīratāntra* (Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai. 1995, 7): *kuṇikumādilikhitam kaṇṭhe bāhau mantram dhārayan saṃgrāme śāstram stambhayati; saṃgrāme ’nusmaran mantram vijayam labhate; khaḍgam abhimantrya saṃgrāme praviṣam jayam āśādayati.*

45 *Laghusaṃvaratāntra* 12.4 (Pandey 2002): *parasainyābhīmukham sahasrajaṭam kṛtvā saṃgrāme vā prativiśati. śāstraśāstair hanyamānasya vyathā notpadyate. na ca śāstrasaḥsrair bhidyate. vajraśarīram bhavati.* On the formation of the concept of *vajrakāya* see Radich 2011.

46 See Grönbold 1996. Many thanks to Dr. Péter-Dániel Szántó for calling my attention to this article. On Buddhism and warfare in a pan-Asian context through the ages see Jerryson and Juergensmeyer 2010.

47 Personal communication, April 2009. Many thanks to the late Min Bahadur Shakya for arranging a meeting with Ratnarāj Vajrācārya.

48 On the *Navadharm* or *Navagrantha* collection, consisting of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Pañcarakṣā*, *Nāmasaṃgīti*, *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Daśabhūmi*, *Samādhirāja*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Lalitavistara* and *Laṅkāvatāra* in an earlier set, with the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* and *Tathāgataguhya* replacing the *Pañcarakṣā* and *Nāmasaṃgīti* in its present form, see Tuladhar-Douglas 2006, 144–147 and von Rospatt 2015, 819–821. The latter remarks that “[t]hese canonical works are not so much studied for their content as liturgically recited or put to other ritual uses.”

Various other scriptures of *dhāraṇī* literature, however, such as the *Pañcarakṣā*, are available in several old palm-leaf witnesses, and we have colophons from the wider region which indicate their use at the court.⁴⁹

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by ERC Synergy Project No. 609823. I am grateful to Dr. Michael Willis and Dr. Sam van Schaik for their support and Professor Harunaga Isaacson for useful suggestions.

References

- Banerjee, Anukul Chandra. 1941. *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.
- Bond, Kevin. 2014. "Buddhism on the Battlefield. The Cult of the 'Substitute Body' Talisman in Imperial Japan (1890–1945)." In *Material Culture and Asian Religions. Text, Image, Object*, edited by Benjamin J. Fleming and Richard D. Mann, 120–134. New York, London: Routledge.
- Bronkhorst, Johannes. 2011. *Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism*. Leiden: Brill.
- Cowell, Edward B. and Frederick W. Thomas. 1897. *The Harṣa-Carita of Bāṇa*. London: Royal Asiatic Society.
- Dalton, Jacob and Sam van Schaik. 2006. *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang. A Descriptive Catalogue of the Stein Collection at the British Library*. Leiden: Brill.
- Davidson, Ronald M. 2002. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Emmerick, Ronald E. 1996 [1970]. *The Sūtra of Golden Light*. Third revised edition. Oxford: The Pali Text Society.
- Gentry, James. 2016. Destroyer of the Great Trichiliocosm: Mahāsāhasrapramardanī. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh558.html>
- Giunta, Paolo. 2008. "The Āryadhvajāgrakeyūrā nāma dhāraṇī. Diplomatic Edition of MS Tucci 3.2.16." In *Sanskrit Texts from Giuseppe Tucci's Collection*, edited by Francesco Sferra, 187–194. Roma: Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente.

49 For the use of the *Pañcarakṣā* by a Pāla queen in the 11th century see Pal 1992 (cf. also Hidas 2012, 84–85). For modern talismanic cults related to warfare in Japan see Bond 2014, and for the protective *Jinapañjaragāthā* used in Thailand see McDaniel 2011, 77–120.

- Grönbold, Günter. 1996. "Kriegsmaschinen in einem buddhistischen Tantra." In *Festschrift Dieter Schlingloff*, edited by Friedrich Wilhelm, 63–97. Reinbek: Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen.
- Gummer, Natalie. 2015. "Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra." In *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism. Vol. 1. Literature and Languages*, edited by Jonathan Silk, Oskar von Hinüber and Vincent Eltschinger, 249–260. Leiden: Brill.
- Gunawardana, R.A.L.H. 1979. *Robe and Plough. Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Harvey, Peter. 2007. "Buddha and Cakravartins." In *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, edited by Damien Keown and Charles Prebish, 153–155. London, New York: Routledge.
- Herrmann-Pfandt, Adelheid. 2008. *Die lHan karma: ein früher Katalog der ins Tibetische übersetzten buddhistischen Texte. Kritische Neuausgabe mit Einleitung und Materialien*. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press.
- Hidas, Gergely. 2012. *Mahāpratisarā-Mahāvidyārājñī, The Great Amulet, Great Queen of Spells: Introduction, Critical Editions and Annotated Translation*. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan.
- Hidas, Gergely. 2013. "Rituals in the Mahāsāhasrapramardanasūtra." In *Puṣpikā: Tracing Ancient India through Texts and Traditions* edited by Nina Mirnig et al., 225–240. Oxford: Oxbow.
- Hidas, Gergely. 2015. "Dhāraṇī Sūtras." In *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism. Vol. 1. Literature and Languages*, edited by Jonathan Silk, Oskar von Hinüber and Vincent Eltschinger, 129–137. Leiden: Brill.
- Hinüber, Oskar von. 2014. "The Gilgit Manuscripts: An Ancient Buddhist Library in Modern Research." In *From Birch Bark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research. Papers Presented at the Conference Indic Buddhist Manuscripts: The State of the Field, Stanford, June 15–19, 2009*, edited by Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, 79–135. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press.
- Hinüber, Oskar von. 2018. "Magic Protection in the Palola Śāhi Kingdom: History and Context of Rakṣā Texts and Dhāraṇīs in 7th Century Gilgit." In *Katā Me Rakkhā, Katā Me Parittā. Protecting the Protective Texts and Manuscripts. Proceedings of the Second International Pali Studies Week, Paris 2016*, edited by Claudio Cicuzza, 217–237. Bangkok and Lumbini: Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation and Lumbini Research Institute.
- Iwamoto, Yutaka. 1937. *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī*. Kyoto.
- Jaini, Padmanabh S. 1965. "Mahāḍibbamanta: A Paritta Manuscript from Cambodia." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28: 61–80.
- Jerryson, Michael K. and Mark Juergensmeyer, eds. 2010. *Buddhist Warfare*. Oxford: University Press.
- Ludvik, Catherine. 2007. *Sarasvatī: Riverine Goddess of Knowledge. From the Manuscript-Carrying Viṇā-Player to the Weapon-Wielding Defender of the Dharma*. Leiden: Brill.

- May, Jacques. 1967. "Chingokokka." In *Hōbōgirin* IV. Paris; Tokyo: 322–327.
- McDaniel, Justin. 2011. *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk: Practicing Buddhism in Modern Thailand*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- McDaniel, Justin. 2014. "The Material Turn. An Introduction to Thai Sources for the Study of Buddhist Amulets." In *Material Culture and Asian Religions. Text, Image, Object*, edited by Benjamin J. Fleming and Richard D. Mann, 135–148. New York, London: Routledge.
- Meisezahl, Richard O. 1962. "The *Amoghapāśaḥṛdaya Dhāraṇī*. The Early Sanskrit Manuscript of the Reijunji Critically Edited and Translated." *Monumenta Nipponica* 17: 265–328.
- Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai. 1995. "Siddhaikavīratāntra." *Taishō Daigaku Sōgō–Bukkyō–Kenkyūsho–Kiyō* 15: 366–349 and 16: 1–9.
- Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai. 1998–2011. "Transcribed Sanskrit Text of the *Amoghapāśa-kalparāja*." *Taishō Daigaku Sōgō–Bukkyō–Kenkyūsho–Nenpō* 20–23, 26, 32, 33.
- Nobel, Johannes. 1937. *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra. Das Goldglanz-Sūtra. Ein Sanskrittext des Mahāyāna-Buddhismus*. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Norman, Kenneth Roy. 1983. *Pāli Literature. Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Pal, Pratapaditya. 1992. "Queen Uḍḍākā's Illuminated Manuscript." In *Indian Numismatics, History, Art and Culture: Essays in Honour of Dr. Parameshwari Lal Gupta*, edited by David W. Macdonald, et al., 291–296. Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan.
- Pandey, J.S. 2002. *Śrīherukābhīdhānam Cakrasaṃvaratantram with the Commentary of Bhavabhaṭṭa*. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies.
- Radich, Michael. 2011. "Immortal Buddhas and Their Indestructible Embodiments: The Advent of the Concept of Vajrakāya." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 34: 227–290.
- Rospatt, Alexander von. 2015. "Local Literatures: Nepal." In *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism. Vol. 1. Literature and Languages*, edited by Jonathan Silk, Oskar von Hinüber, and Vincent Eltschinger, 819–830. Leiden: Brill.
- Sander, Lore. 2007. "Preliminary Remarks on Two Versions of the Āṭānāṭiya (Āṭānāṭika)-Sūtra in Sanskrit." *Journal of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies* 11: 159–196.
- Sanderson, Alexis. 2003–2004. "The Śaiva Religion Among the Khmers, Part 1." *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 90–91: 349–463.
- Sanderson, Alexis. 2004. "Religion and the State: Śaiva Officials in the Territory of the Brahmanical Royal Chaplain." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47: 229–300.
- Sanderson, Alexis. 2009. "The Śaiva Age—The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism During the Early Medieval Period." In *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, edited by Shingo Einoo, 41–350. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo.

- Sango, Asuka. 2015. *The Halo of Golden Light. Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Schopen, Gregory. 1978. *The Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra and the Buddhism of Gilgit*. Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University.
- Shaw, Miranda. 2006. *Buddhist Goddesses of India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Skilling, Peter. 1992. "The Rakṣā Literature of the Śrāvakayāna." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 16: 109–182.
- Skilling, Peter. 2007. "King, Sangha and Brahmins: Ideology, Ritual and Power in Pre-modern Siam." In *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, edited by Ian Harris, 182–215. Abingdon; New York: Routledge.
- Skjærvø, Prods Oktor. 2004. *This Most Excellent Shine of Gold, King of Kings of Sūtras: The Khotanese Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra*. Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University.
- Suzuki, Takayasu. 2012. "Who Is the One That Has to Make Confession under the Instruction of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*?" *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 60: 1220–1228.
- Takubo, Shuyo. 1972. *Ārya-Mahā-Māyūrī Vidyā-Rājñī*. Tokyo: Sankibo.
- Tuladhar-Douglas, William. 2006. *Remaking Buddhism for Medieval Nepal: The Fifteenth-Century Reformation of Newar Buddhism*. Abingdon; New York: Routledge.
- de Visser, Marinus Willem. 1935. *Ancient Buddhism in Japan: Sūtras and Ceremonies in Use in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries A.D. and Their History in Later Times*. Leiden: Brill.
- Zimmermann, Michael. 2006. "Only a Fool Becomes a King: Buddhist Stances on Punishment." In *Buddhism and Violence*, edited by Michael Zimmermann, 213–242. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute.