

5 General discussion

The *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, extant in different forms and languages, has been employed in protective rites most probably from very early times. Later the text has been charged with linguistic features common to a wide range of early Buddhist protective scriptures. Thus, the *rakṣā* literature is strongly characterised by many popular cults, both Buddhist (like the cult of the Seven Buddhas and their trees), and pre-Buddhist (cults incorporated into the lore of Buddhist traditions at a very early time). These can be seen from various artistic representations on the railings of the great *stūpas* at Bhārhut, Sāñcī, and other ancient sites. The cults include those of the Four Great Kings, *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, divine beings, and goddesses. It is not only the Buddha himself, who provides spells and protection. Various potent beings are accredited with protective powers and do have the ability to either reveal magical formulas, or to safeguard the Buddhist community – monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen – from dangers and threats mentioned in *rakṣā* texts. The protective measures and means of efficacy of apotropaic texts, that is the concept of *maitrī* and *saccakiriya*, as well as the correct recitation of protective *mantras*, give reason to assume that the effect automatically occurs if a Buddhist practitioner recites the respective verses or spells or acts with friendliness towards all sentient beings. While recitation of the texts is still communicated as the primary means of efficacy, *rakṣā* texts present many more complex ritual instructions.

This chapter traces the textual history and development of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. The investigation of certain *rakṣā* cults, rites, and practices brings the discussion of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* to a conclusion and places the text in the wider context of Buddhist textual and ritual practices.

5.1 Textual history and development

5.1.1 Historical considerations

The earliest versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* are represented by four consecutive Pāli discourses of the Theravāda tradition, the *Bhaddekaratta-suttas*, with parallels in the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama*, which do not show any linguistic patterns of *rakṣā* texts. It is presently widely accepted that the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama* corresponds to the textual tradition of the Sarvāstivādins and was translated from a Middle Indic language with Sanskrit elements (this textual tradition is represented by X in the stemma below). Even though, the Pāli *suttas* do not contain any stylistic *rakṣā* elements, their special status in the Pāli *Majjhima-nikāya* points to the possibility that the texts might already have been employed in protective rituals.¹ As we have seen above it is not a typical linguistic feature that makes a text a *rakṣā* text, but the function, purpose, and use of a text.

The first evidence of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* as an apotropaic scripture containing formal characteristics of *rakṣā* literature are two Sanskrit manuscripts found in Central Asia, compiled for the use in apotropaic ritual practices. On palaeographical grounds, these manuscripts can be dated to the fifth to sixth centuries CE (SHT III 816), and from the seventh century CE onwards (SI 2044). The palm leaf material and the script of the manuscript SHT III 816, however, speak in favour of an early Indian origin and the manuscript must have been brought to Central Asia. The manuscript SI 2044, written on paper, surely originated in Central Asia. Though both manuscripts show rests of the canonical verses, they differ significantly not only from each other, but also from all other versions of this discourse.

Two different Sanskrit versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, which did not have the same linguistic shape, existed in Central Asia. This is not unusual for protective texts. Different recensions of other protective texts to be used for ritual purposes always existed side by side. There are two manuscripts of the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra* from Qizil containing two *mantras*, which can be found neither in the Gilgit manuscripts

¹ The *Bhadrakarātrī* verses included in the Royal Siamese Chanting Book (*Suat Mon Chabap Luang*) compiled at the behest of King Rāma V by Phussadeva in 1880 as the *Bhaddekaratta-gāthā* are still today recited during funeral rites in Siam.

nor in the Tibetan or Chinese translations. It is likely that these *mantras* were only integrated into texts employed in ritual practices.² The *Daśabala-sūtra* was included in a multiple-text manuscript together with other apotropaic texts in a clearly shortened form. Thus, Buddhist texts widely used for ritual practices did not circulate in, or have, a fixed form. In the publication of this very multiple-text manuscript, Hartmann and Wille remarked that:

Für die Wirksamkeit als Rakṣā ist also keineswegs der vollständige kanonische Wortlaut notwendig; es genügt ein Auszug mit den entscheidenden Punkten, und dieser Auszug wird dann um die Verehrungsformeln (*namas*) erweitert. Hinzu treten schließlich die Aufforderungen zur Schutzgewährung (*rakṣam bhavatu ...*).³

The same holds true for the Sanskrit versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, which include only the common verses while completely omitting the narrative context of the discourse, which, again, is not necessary to achieve the protective effect. The scribes remodelled the texts in ways that primarily suited most the ritual purposes. It is, therefore, the use of a manuscript and the function of a text that might have determined the linguistic shape of a text.

Moreover, there are Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* (Taishō XXI 1362 and D 313, taken as representative for various recensions included in different Kangyurs), which in the beginning closely follow the traditional wording of the canonical Pāli and Chinese discourses, However, they transition after the verses into a formulaic *rakṣā* text. Both recensions coincide at large and are almost verbatim counterparts. Since it is very unlikely that the later Tibetan text was done from the earlier Chinese model, we can conclude that both versions were translated from a now lost Indic version of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, which also influenced the composition of the Sanskrit manuscript SI 2044. This stage in the textual development is represented by Y in the stemma below.

The following stemma shows the textual development of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* with two textual traditions or texts that are not preserved:

² Cf. Sander 2007: 180.

³ Hartmann/Wille 2010: 368f.

- X: Indic texts of the Sarvāstivādins without any linguistic *raḥṣā* elements, model for MĀ 165–167, parallels to MN 132–134 and SHT III 816
- Y: Indic text containing *raḥṣā* elements, model for Taishō XXI 1362 and D 313, parallel to MN 133 and SI 2044

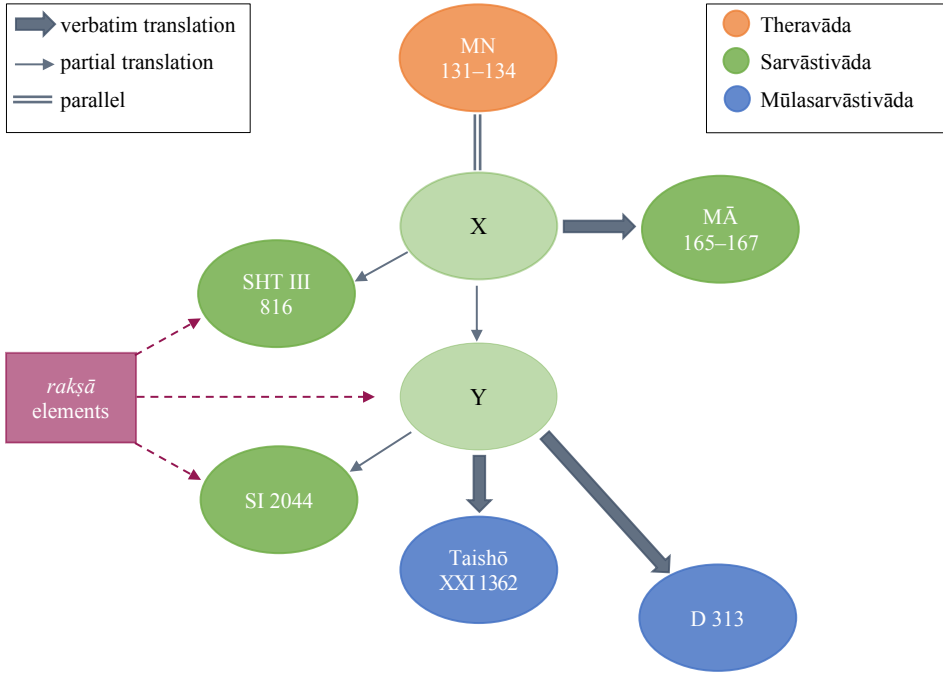


Figure 17: Stemma of the textual development of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*.

The lost Indic *raḥṣā* text Y, which served as model for the Chinese and Tibetan translations must have been composed sometime between the first century CE, with the emergence of *raḥṣā mantras*, and the seventh century CE, before the manuscript SI 2044 emerged (see timeline below). It is, however, impossible to trace this stage of textual development. Without any extant evidence, it is furthermore hazardous to give any concrete information on the linguistic shape of this text. It becomes even more difficult when we take into account that the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* existed in different forms.

The following timeline shows the textual history of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* and the date of emergence of the different recensions.⁴

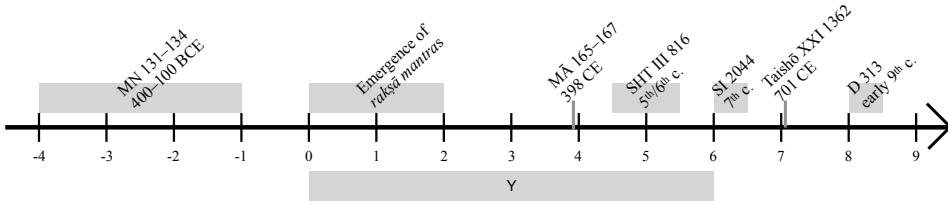


Figure 18: Timeline of the textual history of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*.

5.1.2 Textual development

The common verses

All versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* in Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan share, at least in part, the same set of four verses. These can be considered the seminal core of the *sūtra* common to all recensions (for the reading of the Pāli, Sanskrit, and Tibetan verses see table 13 below, for a translation of the Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan verses see table 14 below).

⁴ The discourses of the Pāli *Majjhima-nikāya* are ascribed to the Buddha himself. However, they have been transmitted orally for centuries until they have been written down during the first century BCE, which involves a gradual development of the collection including various changes and additions, as well as transmission errors.

Table 13: The *Bhadrakarārī* verses in Pāli, Sanskrit, and Tibetan.

MN 131 at MN III 187.21–28	SHT III 816 1r4–5	SI 2044 3r3–3v3	D 313
<p><i>Aññam nānvāgameyya, nappatīkanīkhe anāgataṃ. Yaḍ aññitaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ, appattañ ca anāgataṃ.</i></p>	<p><i>pratyuppannā ca (ye) ddharme tatra tatra vipāśakāḥ asaṃhārya vikalpasthah vidvas taṃ (nāvamanyate)</i></p>	<p><i>atitāṃ nānvāgamay(e)d tu na cākaṃkṣed anāgataṃ yaḍ atitāṃ niruddham tad asamprāptam anāgataṃ</i></p>	<p><i>das la rjes su phrad mi byed ma 'ongs pa la re ba med 'das pa gang yin de 'gags te ma 'ongs de ni ma phyin pa 'o</i></p>
<p><i>Paccuppannā ca yo dhammaṃ, tattha tattha vipassati. Asaṃhīraṃ asaṅkappaṃ, taṃ vidvā manubrūḥaye.</i></p>	<p><i>pratyuppannāṃ ca ye dharmāṃs tatra tatra vipāśya(kah a)saṃhārya vikalpāṃs ca vidvāṃs tān nāvamanyate</i></p>	<p><i>pratyuppannāṃ ca ye dharmāṃs tatra tatra vipāśya(kah a)saṃhārya vikalpāṃs ca vidvāṃs tān nāvamanyate</i></p>	<p><i>gang dag da ltar byung ba 'i chos de dang de la rab bitas nas rnam par riog pas mi 'phrogs par de dag mkhas pas khong du chud</i></p>
<p><i>Ajī' eva kieccaṃ ātappaṃ, ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve? Na hi no saṅgaram tena, mahāsenena maccunā.</i></p>	<p><i>adyeva kuryyam ādaptam ko jāne maranam {n} hi (śv)o</i></p>	<p><i>adyaiva kuryād ātaptam ko vidyā maraṇa(m hi śvas) na hi vaḥ saṅgani tena mahāsainyena mṛtyunā</i></p>	<p><i>sang tsam shi yang sus shes kyis de ring nyid du brtun te bya 'chi bdag sde chen de dang ni bdag tu shes pa ma yin no</i></p>
<p><i>Evam vihārim ātāpiṃ, ahorattam atanditaṃ. Taṃ ve bhaddekaratto ti, santo ācikkhate munīi.</i></p>	<p><i>viharante ca ... (bha)drakarārīyah sadaiva munir abhṛavīt</i></p>	<p><i>de ltar gnas shing rab brison la nyin mtshan snyom las med pas na de phyir mtshan mo bzang po yi mdo sde thub pas rtag tu gsungs</i></p>	

Table 14: Translation of the Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan verses.

MN 131 (tr. Sujato 2018 ⁵)	SI 2044	Taishō XXI 1362 (tr. Anālayo 2011: 757f.)	D 313
<p>Don't run back to the past, don't hope for the future. What's past is left behind; the future has not arrived;</p> <p>and phenomena in the present are clearly seen in every case. Knowing this, foster it – unfaltering, unshakable.</p>	<p>One should not follow after the past, one should not long for the future. What is past has been abandoned, and the future has not yet come.</p> <p>[Whatever] phenomena have arisen everywhere, he sees them with insight without being carried away by false discrimination. The wise [should] not treat them contemptuously.</p> <p>One should be diligent today; who knows [if] death [will come] tomorrow. There is no agreement with the Lord of Death and its great army.</p> <p>They dwell [...]</p>	<p>It is not proper to think of the past, do not long for the future.</p> <p>In relation to the present, contemplate all according to the Dharma, erroneous thinking is difficult to dispel, the wise should contemplate properly.</p> <p>It is fitting to quickly make an effort, who knows what will happen tomorrow, because the Lord of Death [and his] assembly are closely following you.</p> <p>For this reason I, the sage, have now expounded the discourse on the auspicious night.</p>	<p>One does not meet the past later on, regarding the future there is no hope. What is past has ceased, the future has not yet come.</p> <p>Having fully observed all aspects of whatever presently arisen phenomena, the wise should integrate them without being carried away by discursive thoughts.</p> <p>One could die just tomorrow - who knows? Therefore, one should be diligent today, so that the Lord of Death and [his] great army do not recognize you.</p> <p>In this way one should abide very diligently, without laziness, day and night. For that reason the sage always declared the Discourse on an Auspicious Night.</p>
<p>Today's the day to keenly work – who knows, tomorrow may bring death! For there is no bargain to be struck with Death and his mighty hordes.</p> <p>The peaceful sage explained it's those who keenly meditate like this, tireless all night and day, who truly have that one fine night.</p>	<p>One should be diligent today; who knows [if] death [will come] tomorrow. There is no agreement with the Lord of Death and its great army.</p> <p>They dwell [...]</p> <p>The sage has always declared the [Discourse] on an Auspicious Night.</p>	<p>In relation to the present, contemplate all according to the Dharma, erroneous thinking is difficult to dispel, the wise should contemplate properly.</p> <p>It is fitting to quickly make an effort, who knows what will happen tomorrow, because the Lord of Death [and his] assembly are closely following you.</p> <p>For this reason I, the sage, have now expounded the discourse on the auspicious night.</p>	<p>Having fully observed all aspects of whatever presently arisen phenomena, the wise should integrate them without being carried away by discursive thoughts.</p> <p>One could die just tomorrow - who knows? Therefore, one should be diligent today, so that the Lord of Death and [his] great army do not recognize you.</p> <p>In this way one should abide very diligently, without laziness, day and night. For that reason the sage always declared the Discourse on an Auspicious Night.</p>

5 <https://suttacentral.net/mn131/en/sujato> (last retrieved on 20.11.2020).

The first stanza tells us to let go of past and future, since the past is gone and the future has not yet come. This verse is missing in the SHT manuscript, and the gap of about twelve *aḥṣaras* at this point in the manuscript does not allow to reconstruct the whole verse, so that we have to assume that it was never there. The Chinese recension Taishō XXI 1362 has only the first half of the verse. All versions, the Sanskrit manuscript SI 2004, and the Chinese and Tibetan translations, closely agree with the Pāli stanza with some minor differences in wording. While the Pāli and Sanskrit recensions have *anvāgam* (Skt. for “to follow after”), in the first *pāda*, the Chinese reads 應念 (Ch. for “to think”), and the Tibetan has *rjes su phrad* (Tib. for “to meet later on”). The Tibetan equivalent to the Sanskrit reading would be *rjes su 'gro ba* (Mvy 5337: Skt. *anugam* for Tib. *rjes su 'gro ba*). This reading is preserved in a citation of the first half of this verse and the second verse in the Tibetan *Śarīrārthagāthā* of the *Yogācārabhūmi*.⁶ Since the reading of the verses in the *Yogācārabhūmi* and *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* also diverge in other places, the former cannot be seen as a correct translation of the Indic verse, and the latter as a corruption. Rather they represent two distinct translations of two Indic sources. Another difference in the wording of this verse appears in the third *pāda*, where the Pāli version reads *pahīna*, whereas the Sanskrit manuscript has *niruddha*. The Tibetan translation here follows the Sanskrit text and reads *'gags* (Mvy 6638: Skt. *niruddham* for Tib. *'gags*).

The second verse recommends to see with insight everything that arises in the present moment. While the Pāli verse reads *vipassati*, the Sanskrit versions have *vipaśaka* or *vipaśyaka* (BHSD 491/1: “Skt. *vi-paśyati* plus *-aka*”). In the second half of the verse, the Pāli discourse requests to remain unshakeably (P. *asaṅkappa*), whereas both Sanskrit texts and the Tibetan version advise to avoid false discrimination, or discursive thoughts (Mvy 4471: Skt. *vikalpa* for Tib. *rnam par rtog pa*). The final verb of this verse differs in all recensions. The Pāli text reads *anubrūhaye* (P. *anubrūheti* for “he/she/it fosters”), the Sanskrit manuscript SI 2044 has *nāvamanyate* (Skt. for “not to be treated contemptuously”), the Chinese translation reads 善觀 (Ch. for “to contemplate properly”), and the Tibetan version has *khong du chud* (Tib. for “to integrate”).

⁶ The full passage in the *Yogācārabhūmi* reads (D 4035 at 260b3–4):
'das la rjes su 'gro mi byed | ma 'ongs pa la re ba med |
da ltar byung chos gang yin pa | de dang de la rnam lta la |
mi 'phrogs kun du mi 'khrugs pa | de ni mkhas pas 'phel bar byed |

The third stanza commends the subject to begin practicing diligently right now, since death might come already tomorrow. The second half of this verse, which is missing in the SHT manuscript, slightly differs in the Indic sources and the Chinese and Tibetan translations. While the Pāli and Sanskrit texts read that there is no agreement with the Lord of Death, the Chinese and Tibetan recensions advise to be diligent because the Lord of Death is closely following you (Taishō XXI 1362), and so that the Lord of Death does not recognize you (D 313). In the first *pāda* of this verse, the Pāli and Sanskrit versions employ different grammatical forms. The Pāli text uses the gerundive (*kiccaṃ*), both Sanskrit manuscripts use optative forms (SHT: *kuryyam*, SI: *kuryāt*). In the second *pāda*, the SI manuscript is the only version to use a form of the verbal root *vid* for “to know” (*vidyā*, 3. sg. opt. of \sqrt{vid}). The Pāli text and the SHT manuscript use a form of the verbal root *jñā* (P. *jaññā*, SHT *jāne*, 3. sg. opt. of $\sqrt{jñā}$). The Tibetan recension has *shes pa* and thus follows the latter.

The fourth verse proclaims that the sage declared the Discourse on an Auspicious Night, so that we continuously practice in this way. The Chinese text only preserved the second half of this stanza; the whole verse is not present in the SHT manuscript. The Pāli and SI texts use different verbal roots for the final verb “to declare,” that is $\tilde{a}\sqrt{khyā}$ in the Pāli, and $\sqrt{brū}$ in the Sanskrit text.

Even at this point, the text of the four common verses gives important indications about the textual development of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. Regarding the differences in wording and grammar, it can be concluded that the Sanskrit manuscripts and the Tibetan translation go back to a common source. This fact is further reflected by commonalities in the textual structure of the SI recension and the Tibetan version, which will be discussed below.

Citations of the verses

The *Bhadrakarātrī* verses are quoted in a number of other works, which demonstrates the distribution of the verses and shows that they were widely known. The verses, or parts of them, were quoted in the following scriptures:⁷

– Asaṅga’s *Yogācārabhūmi* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins

⁷ Besides the quotations in the *Yogācārabhūmi* and in the **Bhāvanākramasūtrasamuccaya*, Skilling (1997a: 81f.) also mentions the quotation of the *Bhadrakarātrī* verses in the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa-ṭīkā*. It was, however, not possible to identify the latter.

The *Śarīrārthagāthā*, a collection of canonical verses in the eleventh section (*bhūmi*) of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, contains one and a half verses of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, the first two *pādas* of the first verse and the second verse (Y 138a4f.; Taishō XXX 1579 at 387c28–388a1; D 4035 at 260b3–4, Q 5536 at 303b3f.):

aṭītaṃ nānvāgamayen na pratikāṃkṣed anāgataṃ |
pratyutpannās ca ye dharmās tatra tatra vipāśyakaḥ |
asaṃhāryam asaṃkṣobhyaṃ tat vidvān anubr̥mhayet |

(after Enomoto 1989: 35 § 41)

The past [personality aggregates] should not be followed after, the future [ones] not hoped for.

According as a *dharma* is present, one should discern it thus.

Knowing that it cannot be removed and cannot be disturbed, one should promote it.

(tr. Wayman 1989: 209)

- **Bhāvanākramasūtrasamuccaya* (Tib. *Bsgom pa'i rim pa mdo kun las btus pa*):

mtshan mo bzang po'i mdo las kyang | sang tsam shi yang sus shes kyis | de
ring nyid nas brtan te bya || 'chi bdag sde chen de dag ni || bdag dang
bshes pa yod ma yin ||

(Q5329 at 149a7–8)

All four *Bhadrakarātrī* verses were included in the following works:

- *Lomasakaṅgiya-apadāna* 545 (Ap 506.20–23)

In this tale the god Candana delivers the *Bhadrakarātrī* verses to the main protagonist Lomasakaṅgiya. The same story occurs in the *Lomasakaṅgiya-bhaddekaratta-sutta* (MN 134), where the god Candana teaches the verses to the very same monk.

- *Sāsanapaṭṭhāna* of the *Netti-ppakarāṇa* (Nett 148.27–149.6)

The basic theme described in the *Bhadrakarātrī* verses finds a concise expression in a verse in the *Dharmapada* preserved in different parallel versions.⁸ The verse in the Pāli *Dhammapada* (verse 348) runs as follows:

muñca pure muñca pacchato, majjhe muñca bhavassa pārāgu

(Dhp 98.1–4)

Let go of the past, let go of the future, let go of the present, transcend existence.

The insertion of linguistic *rakṣā* elements

At some point in the history of the redaction and transmission of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, and we do not know when and where this shift took place, the text was supplied with an appendix. This appendix entails distinctive linguistic *rakṣā* elements, such as protective *mantras*, statements of homage, and ritual prescriptions, and lists apotropaic effects one can achieve by adhering to the *sūtra*'s instructions. The protective function is now explicitly made clear through a concluding formula. This formula, which found its way into numerous other *rakṣā* texts, generally reads: *rakṣam/rakṣā/rakṣa bhavati/tu* [name] *svāhā* “May there be protection for [name]. *svāhā!*” and *rakṣāṃ kurvantu/kuryāt* “They/one shall protect”.⁹ The text of the SI manuscript is the only Indic version of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, which features this formula. It reads: *rakṣam bhavatu* (SI 2044 2v4) “May there be protection!”. A similar statement, which expresses the protective function and concludes the list of apotropaic effects, can be found in the Chinese version of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. It reads: 擁護諸眾生 (Taishō XXI 1362 at 882b4) “May there be protection for all sentient beings”.

⁸ Cf. Dhp-P 150: *muñca pure muñca pacchato majjhe muñca bhavassa pārāgu*; Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* (Dhp-G^K 166): *muju pura muju pachadu, majadu muju bhavasa parako*, and Dhp-G^S 3,8=36: *muñce purado [muñc] ... bhavasa parago*; Sanskrit *Udānavarga* (Uv 29.57): *muñca purato muñca paścato, madhye muñca bhavasya pārāgaḥ*, and its Tibetan counterpart in stanza 29.60 (Zongtse/Dietz 1990: 326): *sngon bral phyi ma dang bral zhing | dbus bral srid pa'i pha rol phyin*.

⁹ The protective formula features in many manuscripts from Central Asia and Gilgit. For a list of 17 Central Asian manuscripts carrying the protective formula, see *Anhang II: Die Schutzformel in Turfan-Handschriften* in Hartmann/Wille 2010: 383–385. For manuscripts from Gilgit, see von Hinüber 1981.

The enhancement of a text with an appendix is one way to incorporate *mantras* and other protective devices into a seemingly ordinary *sūtra*. This tradition is represented by the Sanskrit manuscript SHT III 816, and the Chinese and Tibetan translations. The appendix was added to the traditional text after the common verses instead of the exposition of the discourse or commentary on the verses that can be found in the four consecutive Pāli discourses. While the Chinese and Tibetan translations follow the textual structure of the Pāli discourse in the first part, both Sanskrit manuscripts completely leave out the introductory narration of the traditional Pāli discourse, preserving the canonical core with the *Bhadrakarātrī* verses, which was enriched by *mantras* and *rakṣā* elements.

It is noteworthy that the SI manuscript takes a special position in the textual development of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. On the one hand, this text was, like the other *rakṣā* versions, endowed with *rakṣā* elements, on the other hand these elements have not been included into an appendix which was added to the canonical core. Rather they have been inserted right after the *nidāna*, inbetween the common verses, after the verses, and after the final conclusion. Consequently, the verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings was placed in between the common verses, which might seem surprising at first sight. The whole text of this manuscript, however, does not follow the structure of the Pāli parallel. The Tibetan translation follows the textual structure of the SI manuscript in this case and inserts this apotropaic verse amongst the common verses, whereas in the Chinese version the verse on the aspiration for welfare opens the appendix. Another special feature of the text of the SI manuscript is the insertion of a *rakṣā* passage right after the *nidāna*, which includes the Caṇḍālī story and one *mantra*.

Both Sanskrit texts represent abridged versions of the canonical discourse, which are used for ritual purposes. The narrative context is not crucial for their efficacy as *rakṣā* texts. The compilers of protective scriptures only used the canonical core of traditional *sūtras* and supplemented it with apotropaic formulas. The *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* is thus an important representative of the early Buddhist *rakṣā* literature with a huge range of evolutionary stages, even though it is at the moment impossible to trace back all stages in its textual development. Additionally, it thoroughly displays how Buddhists adapted texts for their needs and how the ritual function of a text influenced the linguistic shape it was transmitted in. (See table 15 below for a synoptic overview of the textual structure of the different versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. *Rakṣā* passages or elements are displayed with grey background.)

Table 15: Synoptic table of the textual structure of the *Bhadrakarāṅgī-sūtra*.

MN 133	SHT III 816	SI 2044	Taishō XXI 1362	D 313
Canonical text	Canonical text		Core passage	Core passage
Introduction (<i>nīdāna</i>): Rājagṛha	Introduction (<i>nīdāna</i>): Śrāvastī	Introduction (<i>nīdāna</i>): Rājagṛha	Introduction (<i>nīdāna</i>): Rājagṛha	Introduction (<i>nīdāna</i>): Rājagṛha
A god tells the monk Samiddhi to learn the discourse			A god tells a monk to request the discourse from the Buddha	A god tells a monk to request the discourse from the Buddha
Samiddhi requests the Buddha to teach the discourse			The monk requests the Buddha to teach the discourse	The monk requests the Buddha to teach the discourse
		Introductory narration with one <i>mantra</i>		
The Buddha teaches the verses 1–4	The Buddha teaches the verses 2 and 3	The verses 1–3	The Buddha teaches the verses 1–4	The Buddha teaches the verses 1–3
Mahākaccāna teaches the summary and exposition of the discourse				
		The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings		The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings
		Rest of verse 4		Verse 4
	Appendix		Appendix	Appendix
			The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings	
		<i>Rakṣā</i> passage with one <i>mantra</i>	The Buddha teaches two <i>mantras</i> and their effects	The Buddha teaches three <i>mantras</i> and their effects
	Three <i>mantras</i> and statements of homage		Two <i>mantras</i> and their effects	Statement of homage and two <i>mantras</i> and their effects
		Repetition of verses 1–3		
		Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion
		The Buddha teaches one <i>mantra</i> and its effects		

5.2 *Rakṣā* cults, rites, and practices

5.2.1 Protective *mantras*

The early Buddhist *rakṣā* literature has undergone various changes over time. The extension of traditional texts with *mantras* represents the most prominent distinguishing mark for the further development of *rakṣā* texts. The recitation of protective *mantras* then became the most important source of power in *rakṣā* texts. *Mantras* are among the most ancient elements of Buddhist ritual practices. They are a pan-Buddhist phenomenon and can be found in almost every Buddhist school of both Śrāvaka- and Mahāyāna tradition. Skilling persuasively characterizes the *mantras* of early *rakṣā* literature, which were recited to ward off calamities and evil spirits, to cure diseases and to promote welfare, as protective in contrast to spiritual *mantras*, which aim at awakening. In later *rakṣā* texts, however, the recitation of *mantras* not only ensured worldly interests like protection and welfare, but could equally lead to awakening. *Mantras* thus evolved into spiritual applications. The earliest evidence for this development can be found in the *Anantamukhanirhāradhāraṇī* (the earliest Chinese translation was produced between 223 and 253 CE), which advises that the recitation of *mantras* should be accompanied by meditation, which will eventually lead to awakening.¹⁰

Mantras in the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*

From what has been preserved, there are three *mantras* in the text of the SHT manuscript, all of which open with *tadyathā* and close with *svāhā*. However, this identification has to be treated with caution because of the incomplete state of preservation of the manuscript, which makes it sometimes difficult to decide where a *mantra* begins or ends. The SI manuscript shows two *mantras* and the opening marker of a third one. While two *mantras* open with *saryathīdam*, respectively *saryathīva*, one *mantra* opens with *tadyathā*. In no case, a closing marker is preserved. The Chinese version features four *mantras*, three of which open with *tadyathā*, one with **samyethidha*, which can be reconstructed as *saryathīdam*. All *mantras* close with *svāhā*. The Tibetan text contains five *mantras*, all of which open

¹⁰ For a study of this text, see Inagaki 1987.

with *tadyathā* and close with *svāhā*, except for the fourth *mantra*, which does not have a closing marker. The wording of the Chinese and Tibetan *mantras* largely agree, although the Tibetan *mantra* passages are extended. Moreover, some words or mantric syllables of the Chinese and Tibetan version agree with the wording of one of either of the Sanskrit manuscripts, or with both of them. The following table shows the reading of all *mantras* figuring in the four *rakṣā* versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. Parallel passages are marked in bold.

Table 16: The *Bhadrakarātrī* mantras.

	SHT III 816	SI 2044	Taishō XXI 1362	D 313
I	<i>tadyathā ace vice kuce sarve duṣṭā sthabhāma ... śamā gachamda svāhā</i>			
II	<i>tadyathā</i> v. n. v. r. n. ... rate : <i>hīnamadyama tā</i> ...	<i>tadyathā</i> ... mukāśe aṭīte anāgate pratyutpanne b. .e ... <i>mātaṅgī caṇḍī ghori gandhāri cori caṇḍīlī</i> ... saryyathīva vaṃtini vāriṇi gandhamartaṇḍe manini .i ... li ... gisara rakte <i>hīnamadhyamadhār iṇi maholani</i> d ...	<i>tadyathā binibhāraṇi buddhamatānadhe maniṇi ṭiṭiṭiṭi gauri gandhari caṇḍali mataṅgi saralamte maholana śabari cakra pāti śabari mahāśabari bhucidgini nininiminggini kilitāni svāhā</i>	<i>tadyathā, binibharadi, birini, birani, buddhamahartānadhe, mahini</i> minani, nininini, <i>titititi</i> , birati, <i>gauri, gandhāri, caṇḍāli, mātaṅgī, pukkaṣī, bramhani, drāmiḍī, drāmiḍī, śabarī, sadā lambhe, hīnamatyama udtarani, maholana, dalabhani, dalābhadre, mahādalāni, calāni, ushhe cakra bhaki, mahācakra bhaki, śabarī, śabarī, mahāśabarī, bhutsidgini, bhutsiringgina, nininiminggini, nimindhari bhutani svāhā</i>
III				<i>tadyathā, etututu, natumirni, kerniingku, sudtaritsalala, narta,</i>

Table 16 (continued)

	SHT III 816	SI 2044	Taishō XXI 1362	D 313
				<i>narmalulu, galulu, abatranone, shokanira, bhara dhasale, tara kretare dhātu, noddu, tala lālu, bata bhati, yabhati ye svāhā</i>
IV			<i>saṃyethidha arakāṭe narakāṭe bamsukapāyi kapotakapāyi tapodhane svāhā</i>	<i>tadyathā, arakāṭe, narakāṭe, baṃsuka, bayaiye, kapotaka bayaiye tabhotane svāhā</i>
V			<i>tadyathā niminimindhari trilokālo kani triśūladharaṇi akupi tiriti nili kudtokuṇto kudtokupi kurtikupini</i>	<i>tadyathā, niminimindhare, timiti minggali, trailoka abalo kani, trishuladharāṇi, akuphini, krimī kriti, kili kili, kudto kudto, kudto kudsī, kurti kupiti,</i>
VI	<i>tadyathā piśāci paṃṇaśabharīḥ śanaśabhari piśāciiṣṭarevati mālakamṇṭhi svāhā</i>		<i>tadyathā hili hili mili mili piśāci pārṇāśabari cili svāhā</i>	<i>tadyathā, hili mili, tsili, ili, mili, piśācī pārṇāśabari tsli tsili svāhā</i>

The following section presents different related aspects on the topic of protective *mantras*, which will help to understand their importance as a means of efficacy in *rakṣā* texts. It looks at the way how *mantras* were inserted into apotropaic texts, and discerns different designations of protective spells. Additionally, it explores the peculiarities of *rakṣā mantras* on the basis of their different elements, and their function and use in the texts.

How were *mantras* inserted into *rakṣā* texts?

The canonical texts of the Pāli *paritta* collection belong to the group of traditional *rakṣā* texts, which did not yet contain any *mantras* at this stage of development. It seems that the redaction of the Pāli canon had come to an end by the time *mantras* gained further influence in the first two centuries of the Common Era. Two of the Theravādin *parittas* were endowed with *mantras* by the Mūlasarvāstivādins and included in their *mahāsūtra* collection. These *mahāsūtras* are the *Ātānāṭṭiya-mahāsūtra*, which is based upon the *Ātānāṭṭiya-paritta*, and the *Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra*, the counterpart to the *Ratana-sutta*. Another representative of this evolution is the *Upasena-sūtra*, which carries on the *Khanda-paritta*. In all of these cases, *mantras* were inserted into the main textual body.

With the importation of *mantras* into *rakṣā* literature, an entirely new category of texts evolved. A special feature of these texts is the fact that they partly employ elements of older canonical texts and build new compositions around that already existing core, with the result that completely new texts emerged. They draw upon common elements of traditional *rakṣā* texts, enriching them not only with *mantras*, but also with preambles, verses of homage, lists of deities, and descriptions of rites, as well as popular cultic elements, like the cults of the previous Buddhas, the Four Great Kings, *yakṣas*, and the like. The five texts of the *Pañcarakṣā* collection are among the most important representatives of these newly composed texts. They are composite compilations, which must have evolved over several centuries. For instance, the *Mahāmāyūrī* comprises the protective verses already found in the Pāli *Khanda-paritta* and in the Sanskrit *Upasena-sūtra*.¹¹ Additionally, the *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra* includes the complete *Ratana-sutta*.¹²

Other texts were supplied with an appendix containing *mantras* and other protective elements, which were added to the core text and which supply this text with additional formal *rakṣā* elements. The *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* can be included in this category. The Pāli version of this *sūtra* and the canonical Chinese parallels do not show any protective devices, let alone *mantras*. In the textual development of this text, and we do not know when this took place, the Sanskrit manuscript SHT III

¹¹ For studies on the *Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī*, see Lévi 1915, De Vissier 1919–20, and Aalto 1954. A translation of the Chinese versions is available in DesJardins 2011, and a discussion of the textual history of the Chinese text in Sørensen 2006, and most recently in Overbey 2016. For the *Upasena-sūtra*, see Waldschmidt 1967b.

¹² For the *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra*, see Hidas 2013.

816, and the texts underlying the Tibetan translation, and one independent Chinese translation were endowed with such an appendix.

This method of text extension is represented by three more texts. The Central Asian Sanskrit version of the *Nagaropama-sūtra*, some Central Asian manuscripts of the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra*, and the Tibetan *Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra* were supplemented by an appendix. The traditional text of the *Nagaropama-sūtra* does not contain any linguistic *rakṣā* elements, but was endowed with an entire new text called *vyākaraṇa* describing the use of this *sūtra* for its protective powers. This appendix is lacking in all other recensions including the citation of the entire canonical text in the *Pravrajyāvastu* of the *Vinayavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.¹³ The *Āṭānāṭika-hṛdaya* was added to some Central Asian manuscripts of the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra*. This appendix is not found in canonical contexts, neither in Pāli nor in *Dīrgha-āgama* manuscripts from the northern Silk Route, nor in Gilgit manuscripts.¹⁴ Though the Pāli counterpart of the Tibetan *Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra*, the *Mahāsamaya-sutta*, is nowadays listed among the 29 *parittas* of the *Catubhāṇavāra*, it does not appear in the older and shorter list of 22 *parittas*, and only gained *rakṣā* status by the eighth century, at about the same time when the Tibetan *mahāsūtras* emerged. There are no *mantras* in the Pāli text, nor in the Central Asian Sanskrit recension, nor in the main body of the Tibetan *Mahāsamāja*. As Waldschmidt pointed out, the *mantras* were incorporated in the appendix exclusively added to the text underlying the Tibetan version.¹⁵

We can find the addition of an appendix with ritual and apotropaic prescriptions only in individual translations, and not in the canonical versions of the texts in the *Āgamas*. Oftentimes a series of *rakṣā* texts are grouped together in multiple-text manuscripts, which comprise a number of texts not directly belonging together. This fact suggests that protective texts, which took over an important role in Buddhist ritual practice, were transmitted independently or together with other *rakṣā* texts for ritual purposes, as Skilling pointed out:

Little is known at present about these annexes, which endow their texts with ritual and apotropaic functions. I do not think that the annex would have

¹³ For a discussion of the *Nagaropama-sūtra*, and the meaning of its appendix, as well as a transliteration, reconstruction, and translation of the Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts, see Bongard-Levin et al. 1996.

¹⁴ Cf. Sander 2007: 185. For text and translation of the *Āṭānāṭika-hṛdaya*, see Hoffmann [1939: 118–121] 1987: 102–105 with additions in Sander 1987b: 207f.

¹⁵ Cf. Waldschmidt 1932: 196f.

been attached to the canonical version of the *Mahāsamāja* – that is, in the *Dīrghāgama* – rather, it would appear only in versions used for ritual purposes, such as the Mahāsūtra collections. Similarly, the canonical *Nagaropama-sūtra* included in the *Nidānasamyukta* and incorporated into the *Pravrajyāvastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinayavastu* has no annex: the version with the annex was circulated independently or with other rakṣā texts.¹⁶

The different designations of protective *mantras*

The employment of specific terms for incantations used by different classes of texts, such as *mantra*, *dhāraṇī*, *vidyā*, and *paritta*, raised fundamental difficulties. In many studies on mantric scriptures, we find these terms, particularly *mantra* and *dhāraṇī*, used interchangeably as synonyms, and all translated as “magical spell” or “magical formula” without considering the different connotations the terms might have. We find *mantras* in all Indian traditions from the Vedic period up to the present day, whereas *dhāraṇī* is an exclusive Buddhist concept. The common perception is that *dhāraṇīs* rose to prominence in Mahāyāna literature and gained further popularity in tantric Buddhism. In order to fully understand Buddhist spell practices, it thus seems advisable to start with a discernment between the terms *mantra* and *dhāraṇī*.

The word *mantra* is derived from the Sanskrit root *man* “to think” to which the suffix *-tra*, indicating instrumentality, is added. Thus, a *mantra* is an “instrument of thought”. It is, however, impossible to translate the term by a single word. The entry in Monier-William’s Sanskrit-English dictionary gives various translations of the word *mantra*, among them “speech, sacred text, prayer, sacred formula, magical formula, incantation, charm, spell.”¹⁷ We can also see the multifaceted character in the many definitions, both formal and informal, at the beginning of numerous studies on *mantras*.¹⁸ The question that arises here is whether we should define

¹⁶ Skilling 1997a: 534f.

¹⁷ Cf. MW 786/1.

¹⁸ The following two examples of definitions represent the two edges of a wide range of attempts undertaken to define *mantras*. In his extensive study on the Indian *mantra*, Gonda (1963: 247) gives an informal definition and describes the meaning of *mantras* over several pages. The quotation of one extract will suffice here. He defines Vedic *mantras* “as a general name for the formulas, verses or sequences of words in prose which contain praise [...], (which) are believed to have magical, religious, or spiritual efficiency, are recited, muttered or sung.” Bharati (1965: 111), on the other hand, gives the following functional definition of *mantras*: “A *mantra* is a quasi-morpheme or a series of quasi-morphemes, or a series of

mantras at all. Is it possible to find a definition that encapsulates all different aspects, meanings, functions, uses, practices, and varieties in form? *Mantras* permeate the religious life of India from the Vedic time until now and were commonly understood as means of power or magic. They vary in form, function, and content. *Mantras* have a meaning only within a certain discourse, they are culturally defined, and have a context-specific use. There exist various concepts of this complex term used for a long time in different literary genres. Therefore, *mantras* are difficult to define outside their particular context.

The word *dhāraṇī* is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhṛ* “to hold, keep, possess, bear” and is exclusively used in Buddhist terminology.¹⁹ In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Asaṅga (fourth century CE) distinguishes four types of *dhāraṇīs*:²⁰ *dharmadhāraṇī*, *arthadhāraṇī*, *mantradhāraṇī*, and *bodhisattvaḥṣāntilābhāya dhāraṇī*.²¹ The third category, the *mantradhāraṇī*, a magical formula for the alleviation of the calamities of living beings, is the one we are concerned with in *raḥṣā* literature. In his classification, Asaṅga defines the concept of *mantradhāraṇī* as follows:

*tatra mantradhāraṇī katamā | iha bodhisattvas tadrūpām samādhiḥṣītām
pratīlabhate yayā yāni mantrapadānītisaḥṣāmanāya sattvānām adhiṣṭhātī
tāni siddhāni bhavanti paramasiddhāny amoghāny anekavidhānām tīnām
saḥṣāmanāya | iyam ucyate bodhisattvasya mantradhāraṇī |*

(Lamotte 1949–80, IV: 1857)

Qu’est-ce que la *dhāraṇī* de mantra ? Le Bodhisattva gagne une telle maîtrise en concentration que par elle il consacre les syllabes magiques destinées à apaiser les fléaux de tous les êtres, et ces syllabes deviennent ainsi effectives, suprêmement effectives et infaillibles pour apaiser de multiples fléaux. Telle est, chez le Bodhisattva, la *dhāraṇī* de mantra.

(tr. Lamotte 1949–80, IV: 1858)

mixed genuine and quasi-morphemes arranged in conventional patterns, based on codified esoteric traditions, and passed on from one preceptor to one disciple in the course of a prescribed initiation ritual.” For further studies on the phenomenon of *mantras*, see Burchett 2008, Ghim 2014, Padoux 1989, and Wayman 1984b.

¹⁹ Cf. *dhāraṇī* in BHS 284/2: “(recorded nowhere except in BHS), *magic formula*: often consisting of meaningless combinations of syllables; in Tib. regularly *gzungs*, lit. *hold, support*, or (Mvy 4239) *gzungs sngags* (= *man-tra, incantation*).”

²⁰ The following discussion is based on Braarvig 1985: 19f., and Strauch 2014: 66.

²¹ Cf. Bbh 185.

The specific meaning of the word *dhāraṇī* in the compound *mantradhāraṇī* remained, however, problematic. The 21st chapter called *dhāraṇīparivarta* of the early Mahāyāna text the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (second century CE) reveals a number of *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs*. This text uses the terms *mantrapadadhāraṇī*, *dhāraṇīpada*, and *dhāraṇīmantrapada* side by side.²² Although the text of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* leaves no doubt that all of these expressions can be regarded as synonyms, several scholars suggested a number of different translations for the term *dhāraṇī* in the compound *mantradhāraṇī*. Lamotte and Braarvig propose that *dhāraṇī* here means the facility in retaining and remembering spells. It is the capacity to recall the teachings of the Buddha, what is credited with magical qualities. Lamotte defines *dhāraṇī* as a memorization technique rather than a magical spell:

Elle [the *dhāraṇī*] n'est pas à proprement parler un *mantra*, une formule magique, comme on traduit généralement; elle est au premier chef la mémorisation des enseignements de *tous* les Buddha.²³

Braarvig describes the *dhāraṇī* as the capacity to retain or recollect magical spells, even though he adds that in some works *dhāraṇī* refers to the spell itself:

The third, *mantradhāraṇī*, at first seems to justify the translation 'magical formula.' Here, the bodhisattva acquires the power of concentration, *samādhiḥ*, and he employs the mantras magically to alleviate the sufferings of living beings. A translation 'retain, recollect, have a magical formula in mind,' is, however, also possible; the *mantrapadāni*, words of the formula, alleviate sufferings *through dhāraṇī*. In other works, too, the *formula itself* usually is called *mantra* or *mantrapada*.²⁴

The definition of *dhāraṇī* in the *Ajātaśatru-kaukrīya-vinodanā-sūtra* (henceforth: AjKV),²⁵ however encompasses a still broader application of Buddhist concepts. This text belongs to a group of Mahāyāna *sūtras* translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema in the late second century CE, and thus provides us with important information on the development of practices in the early Mahāyāna. The AjKV

²² Cf. Vaidya 1960b: 233–235.

²³ Lamotte 1944–80, IV: 1854.

²⁴ Braarvig 1985: 19f.

²⁵ For a Sanskrit manuscript of this text from Bamiyan, now kept in the Schøyen Collection of Buddhist Manuscripts in Oslo, see Harrison/Hartmann 2000, and 2002.

refers to *dhāraṇī* not as a magical incantation, nor as memory or retention, but explains *dhāraṇī* as different qualities of knowledge. The Tibetan version reads:

*de la gzungs gang zhe na | gzungs zhes bya ba ni 'di lta ste | dran pa ma
nyams pa/ rtogs pa ma g.yengs pa | blo gros ma rmongs pa | shes rab
mngon du byed pa | chos thams cad la de bzhin nyid bstan pas lam bstan pa
shes pa | 'bras bu thob nas srung bar byed pa | lam skyon med pa la 'jug
shes pa | chos thams cad kyi tshig rab tu tha dad pa shes pa |*

(D 216 at mdo sde, tsha, 238v2–4)

What is *dhāraṇī*? *Dhāraṇī* is infallible recollection, unwavering comprehension, lucid intelligence, realized discriminative understanding, knowledge how to explain the path by pointing to the thusness in all factors of existence, safeguarding the fruit after one has attained it, knowledge how to enter into flawless conduct, knowledge of the different appellations of all factors of existence.

(tr. Braarvig/Pagel 2006: 25)

While some of the *dhāraṇī* scriptures refer to their *mantras* or spells as *dhāraṇī* – and this fact led scholars to interpret *dhāraṇī* as “spell” – the semantic range of this term exceeds the spheres of incantations. It is now widely accepted that its primary meaning is “memory”, “retention” or “mnemonic device”.²⁶ Davidson argues in his extensive study on the semantic values of the term *dhāraṇī* that it is polysemic and context-sensitive, a function term denoting “‘code/coding’ indicating both encryption signs and the system of coding/decoding such information.”²⁷ This term, often misunderstood by modern scholars and ancient translators alike, was thus often used to designate spells or magical formulas of Mahāyāna texts on the one hand. On the other hand the term *dhāraṇī* stands for remembrance, contemplation, or understanding in the context of a mnemonic device as part of the Bodhisattva practice.

The *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra* and the *Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra* call their spells *mantrapada*, whereas the *Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra* uses the two expressions *mantrapada* and

²⁶ Other noteworthy discussions of the meaning of the term *dhāraṇī* appear in Gyatso 1992: 173–178, and Nattier 2003: 291 n. 549. They both speak in favour of *dhāraṇī* as a mnemonic device.

²⁷ Davidson 2009: 118.

vidyā,²⁸ which can indubitably be regarded as synonyms. The term *vidyā* is also employed to designate the spell in the Gāndhārī **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* in its Gāndhārī equivalent *vija*,²⁹ and in the compound *vijaraya* (Skt. *vidyārāja*) “spell-king.”³⁰ This term is in close relation with its female counterpart *vidyārājñī* “spell-queen, queen among the spells,”³¹ as used in the texts of the *Pañcarakṣā* collection. Other texts introduce the expression *dhāraṇī* to indicate their formulas, which lead to the formation of the compounds *mantradhāraṇīpada* and *dhāraṇīmantrapada*.³² The following table shows the variety of terms, which were often used side by side to designate spells.

Table 17: *Mantra* terminology.

Term	Text	
	Śrāvakayāna	Mahāyāna
<i>mantra</i>	* <i>Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra</i> (G. <i>matra</i>) <i>Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna</i>	
<i>mantrapada</i>	<i>Āṭṇāṭṭiya-mahāsūtra</i> <i>Mahāmantrānusāriṇī</i> <i>Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī</i> <i>Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra</i> <i>Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra</i> <i>Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa</i> <i>Upasena-sūtra</i> <i>Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra</i>	<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvidyārājñī</i>
<i>mantradhāraṇī</i>		<i>Bodhisattvabhūmi</i>
<i>mantrapadadhāraṇī</i>		<i>Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra</i>
<i>dhāraṇī</i>		<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvidyārājñī</i> <i>Megha-sūtra</i>
<i>dhāraṇīpada</i>		<i>Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra</i>

²⁸ Cf. MW 964/1: knowledge, science, spell, incantation, magical skill.

²⁹ BajC 3.38: *aya khu Maṇaspiya vija* “This is the spell of Manasvin.”

³⁰ Cf. Strauch 2014: 74.

³¹ Cf. *vidyārāja* in BHSD 488/1: “lord or master (f. mistress) of magic spells, king of spells.”

³² For a discussion of the term *mantrapada* (Tib. *sngags kyi tshig*) and its variant *dhāraṇīmantrapada* (Tib. *gzungs sngags kyi tshig*), together with numerous references, see Pagel (2007: 58), who states at one point: “A *mantrapada* is always a magic formula recited (in ritual) to advance the spiritual aims of the bodhisattva.”

Table 17 (continued)

Term	Text	
	Śrāvakayāna	Mahāyāna
<i>dhāraṇīmantrapada</i>		<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvīdyārājñī</i> <i>Megha-sūtra</i> <i>Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra</i>
<i>vidyā</i>	<i>Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra</i> <i>Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra</i> <i>Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavātī</i> <i>*Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra</i> (G. <i>vija</i>) <i>Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa</i> <i>Ṣaḍakṣara-vidyā</i>	<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvīdyārājñī</i>
<i>vidyārājñī</i>	<i>Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī</i> <i>Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra</i> <i>Ṣaḍakṣara-vidyā</i>	<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvīdyārājñī</i>
<i>vidyārāja</i>	<i>*Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra</i> (G. <i>vijaraya</i>)	<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvīdyārāja/rājā</i>
<i>vidyāmantrapada</i>	<i>Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī</i>	<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvīdyārājñī</i>

The preferred phrases in the texts of the schools of the Sarvāstivāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, and Mahāsāṃghika are *mantra*, *vidyā*, and variations hereof. No *mantras* can be found in the collection of protective texts of the Theravādins. The term *dhāraṇī* only occurs in Mahāyāna scriptures and is not attested in Śrāvakayāna literature. Regarding the fluidity in the use of the above-cited terms, it seems to be, as Skilling has suggested,³³ more appropriate to apply the terms *mantra*, *dhāraṇī*, *vidyā*, and *paritta* exactly the way they are applied in the text under consideration.

The different elements of protective *mantras*

Rakṣā mantras do not only consist of unintelligible syllables, non-lexical phonemes or words without any known semantic value. They may also contain intelligible elements, such as words of homage to the Buddha, invocations – notably of female deities – injunctions, statements of truth, lists of poisons, etc. Another feature of

³³ Cf. Skilling 1992: 152.

mantras are discourse markers. The opening *tadyathā* (*tad* Skt. for “that,” *yathā* Skt. for “in such a manner as follows”), *syādyathedaṃ*,³⁴ and *saryathīdaṃ*,³⁵ and the closing markers *svāhā* (Skt. for “hail, success”) and *(i)ti*³⁶ are the most prominent in *rakṣā* literature. Other *mantras* are entirely composed of natural or grammatically intelligible language.³⁷

Among the unintelligible elements we find words such as *hulu mahāhulu hulu hulu*,³⁸ *hili hili mili mili kili kili cili cili sili sili*,³⁹ *hili cili khili cili*,⁴⁰ and many more. The expressions of homage include *namo buddhānām*, *namo ‘rhatām*, and *namo bhagavate*.⁴¹ Furthermore, goddesses are invoked by a list of female deities in the vocative case, such as *ghori gandhāri cori caṇḍali sopakke*,⁴² and *mātaṅgī pukkaṣī bramhani drāmiḍī śabarī*.⁴³ Other common elements of *rakṣā mantras* are injunctions and second person imperative verbs such as *rakṣa māṃ sarvasatvānāṃś ca*,⁴⁴ and *jambhaya stambhaya bhinda bhaṃjaya bandha mohaya*.⁴⁵ The *sacca-kiriya* phrases include *buddhasatyena dharmasatyena saṅghasatyena indrasatyena varuṇasatyena*,⁴⁶ and *sarvadevasatyādhiṣṭhānena*.⁴⁷ Finally, we find lists of poisons comprising the names of poisonous substances like *aṇḍarā paṇḍarā karaḍā keyūrā vindupati siripati*.⁴⁸ The ancient roots of Buddhist *mantras* and the precise significance of the unintelligible syllables remain, however, obscure.

³⁴ *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra*, Iwamoto 1937a: 4.21, 5.8 etc.

³⁵ SHT III 842v3, 845r6, 900r1, VI 1254r3, IX 2417v1; *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* SI 2044 1v5. Cf. P. *seyyathīdaṃ*, BHS *sayyathīdaṃ*.

³⁶ *Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra*, Skilling 1994: 444.9, 447.7 etc.

³⁷ See chapter 1.3 of the present work for the first *mantra* of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* only consisting of natural language.

³⁸ DKP, Harrison 2012: 84.

³⁹ *Mahāpratisarā*, Hidas 2012: 181.

⁴⁰ BajC 3, 36.

⁴¹ *Mahāmāyūrī*, Takubo 1972: 7.8, 10.9.

⁴² *Ātānāṭika-sūtra*, Hoffmann [1939: 49, 51] 1987: 33, 35.

⁴³ *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, D 313 at 162b5.

⁴⁴ *Mahāmāyūrī*, Takubo 1972: 9.1.

⁴⁵ *Ārya-mahāpratisarā-vidyārājñī-dhāraṇī*, Rinpoche/Pandey 1999: 134.15–16.

⁴⁶ *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra*, Skjærvø 2004: 179.

⁴⁷ *Megha-sūtra*, Bendall 1880: 300.

⁴⁸ *Mahāmāyūrī*, Takubo 1972: 55.15.

The function of *mantras* in *rakṣā* texts

Mantras function in protective texts as another means of efficacy, and their recitation is supposed to bring about protection, welfare, and other benefits. But why were *mantras* introduced into the *rakṣā* literature as an additional protective method? Why were they necessary to achieve the desired effect of apotropaic texts? *Rakṣā* texts were already used in apotropaic rituals before *mantras* were incorporated into *rakṣā* literature, and people believed in their protective powers. Nonetheless, *mantras* became the most important active principle of *rakṣā* texts. Despite this, little scholarly effort has been done so far to explore the function of *mantras* within the context of early Buddhist *rakṣā* literature. Winternitz sees the explanation of the necessity for the introduction of *mantras* as a protective device in a small episode of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*, where the Buddha counteracted a sorceress' spell of love that hit his disciple Ānanda with his own *mantra*. He was, therefore, able to rescue Ānanda from the witch's charm. Winternitz comments on this passage that it was necessary for the Buddhists to have their own formulas in order to defend themselves from the spells of sorcerers:

Die ganze große Literatur der Mantras und Dhāraṇīs, der Zaubersprüche und Beschwörungsformeln, im späten Mahāyāna findet in dieser kleinen Episode ihre Erklärung. Es war das Bedürfnis nach Mantras, nach Zaubersprüchen, im Volke vorhanden und diesem Bedürfnis mußte auch der Buddhismus Rechnung tragen. Um den Mantras der Zauberer entgegenzutreten, mußten auch die buddhistischen Mönche ihre ‚Mantras‘ haben. [...] Um die Mantras der Zauberer ‚zurückzuschlagen‘, brauchte man viele nach demselben Rezept gemachte Formeln und Sprüche. Zu diesem Rezept gehörten insbesondere die fortwährende Wiederholung gleichlautender Sätze und formelhafter Wendungen und die Einführung unverständlicher, geheimnisvollklingender Silben wie om, hūṃ, vaṃ, ho, phaṭ usw.⁴⁹

Winternitz was, however, mistaken in ascribing Buddhist spell literature to the later Mahāyāna tradition, as *mantras* can as well be found in the scriptures of Śrāvākayāna schools. Davidson gives a similar explication for the need of *mantras*, which is to ward off the malign effects of evil spirits and demons:

[W]hile there are spirits, *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, *kumbhāṇḍas*, and so on, who have decided to protect the Dharma, there are many, many more demons, spirits

⁴⁹ Winternitz 1912: 249.

and such like, who are not so beneficent, and this sets up the need for the expression of *mantras* to be used as apotropaic aids in warding off the less benign elements of the preternatural mob.⁵⁰

Mantras thus became an integral part of *rakṣā* literature and supported the other two protective devices, the concept of *maitrī* and the concept of *saccakiriyā*, for the attainment of positive effects. We can even perceive some kind of doubt about the efficacy of the latter two means. Especially, the principle of *maitrī*, mainly employed in earlier texts, was more and more supplemented, or even completely replaced by other protective means. As a result, we can see an increasing use of *mantras*, often together with *maitrī* and *saccakiriyā* verses, to ensure the benefits of the text, what Schmithausen has convincingly stated:

Though, on the one hand, friendliness tends to become regarded as an autonomous means for protection, irrespective of the reaction of the other side and even effective with regard to insentient forms of nature like water, fire or poison, there is, on the other hand, a tendency to have some doubt about its protective effectivity. At any rate, it is often supplemented or even replaced by other protective devices like commemoration of the Buddha or the Three Jewels, or appealing to their (or other powerful beings') protective power, or 'tapping' this power by means of truth magic. Increasingly, magical formulas (*mantra*, *dhāraṇī*) come to be employed, though often in connection with other devices.⁵¹

The mode of action of *mantras*

How does the recitation of *mantras* cause the effects given in the texts? The efficacy through the correct recitation of the wording of the *mantra* is mentioned in the early Gāndhārī **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra*, which tells that poisonous substances are subdued by knowing their names. The respective passage reads as follows:

*evam eva maṇaspiā evam eva maṇaspiā (evam eva ma)ṇaspi[a · imeṣa]
mahaviṣaṇa ṇamo jaṇea · ṇa teṇa maṇuṣaṇa bhayidave ...*

(BajC 3, 29–30)

⁵⁰ Davidson 2014a: 16.

⁵¹ Schmithausen 1997: 67.

Thus is (the spell) of Manasvin, thus is (the spell) of Manasvin, thus is (the spell) of Manasvin. (Who) would know the names of these great poisons has not to be afraid of human beings ...

(tr. Strauch 2014: 75)

The *sūtra* here makes two points clear. First of all, the mantric words represent the names of poisons. Secondly, through the correct recitation of the *mantra* words and syllables one gains control and power over these substances and the danger, which comes from them is averted. Thus, the poisons can be eliminated by the mere recitation of their names. This is not only true for poisons, but also for dangerous beings, animals, and other threats. The terms the **Manasvi-nagara-ja-sūtra* lists as the names of poisons are generally subsumed as a group called *mahāviṣa* “great poisons”. Such a list is also found in the *Mahāmāyūrī*.⁵²

*Udgr̥h̥ṇa tvam Ānanda mahāviṣāṇāṃ nāmāni. tad yathā.
 Aṇḍarā, paṇḍarā, karaḍā, keyūrā, bhūtāṃgamā, bhūtapati, vindupati,
 śiripati, tejapati, tejograpati, yaśopati, araḍā, taraḍā, taradā, taratarāḍā,
 duttarā, danājuhā, juhā, johā, jolā, melā, phurā, guhā, rucirā, danturā,
 ilikikikā, kirikirikā, kāmavā, śatanturā, vikuli, kirimi, taraṅgā, ahituhi, duhi,
 vakve, vakvadūte, vatsamāte, mahāgāre, tulamve sulamve svāhā.
 Ity ete Ānanda mahāviṣās te ‘py anayā Mahāmāyūryāvidyārājñyā Svāter
 bhikṣor mama sarvasatvānāṃ ca rakṣāṃ kurvantu.*

(Takubo 1972: 55.14–56.1)

Take up, Ānanda, the names of the Great Poisons, namely:
 aṇḍarā, paṇḍarā, karaḍā, keyūrā, bhūtāṃgamā, bhūtapati, vindupati, śiripati,
 tejapati, tejograpati, yaśopati, araḍā, taraḍā, taradā, taratarāḍā, duttarā,
 danājuhā, juhā, johā, jolā, melā, phurā, guhā, rucirā, danturā, ilikikikā,
 kirikirikā, kāmavā, śatanturā, vikuli, kirimi, taraṅgā, ahituhi, duhi, vakve,
 vakvadūte, vatsamāte, mahāgāre, tulamve sulamve. Hail!
 These are, Ānanda, the Great Poisons. They too shall protect by the Great
 Peacock spell-queen the monk Svāti, me and all living beings.

(tr. after Strauch 2014: 76)

This list of poisonous substances, whose negative impacts are averted by recitation, is not the only common list that appears in *rakṣā* texts. Other threats, which will be

⁵² For a comparative list of variations hereof, and an investigation of the use of this spell in Buddhist protective texts and its parallels in Āyurvedic treatises, see Strauch 2014: 75–77.

warded off by the spell occur in the so-called list of calamities. These include harmful sentient beings and dangerous insentient things, like kings, thieves, fire, water, human beings, non-human beings, wild beasts, and serpents (*rāja, cora, aggi, udaka, manussa, amanussa, vāla, sirimsapa*). This list largely agrees with the ten *antarāyas* (P. for “obstacle, hindrance, danger”),⁵³ which are found in the Vinaya.⁵⁴ Such a list of calamities features in the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. The Chinese list reads:

擁護擁護我某甲於一切恐怖處 於一切疾病苦痛處 於一切憂愁相惱
處於一切 毒蟲毒藥處 於一切鬼魅厭禱處 於一切王賊水火處 於一
切猛獸驚怖處 於一切謗讟言訟處 於一切怨家鬥諍處 於一切身意
惡業處 所有語業四過處 於一切厄難危亡處 并執金剛神 常衛護
我某甲 并諸眷屬莎(引)訶(引)

(Taishō XXI 1362 at 882b18–25)

Protect [us]! Protect me and others from all frights, all diseases and pain, all kinds of miseries and afflictions, all venomous insects and poisonous herbs, all evil spirits and imprecations, all kings and thieves and water and fire, all wild animals and fear, all malicious accuse and arguments, all enemies and fights, all evil practices of body, mind and the four errors of verbal actions, all distress and indolence. Together with Vajrapāṇi always protect me and others together with our kinsmen. *svāhā*.

The Tibetan list reads as follows:

*bdag dang sems can thams cad lag na rdo rje dang lhan cig tu 'jigs pa
thams cad dang | nad thams cad dang | dug thams cad dang | rims thams
cad dang | gdon thams cad dang | gdug pas zin pa thams cad dang | chom
rkun thams cad dang | mi dang | mi ma yin pa thams cad dang | 'jigs pa
dang | gnod pa dang | nad 'go ba thams cad dang | 'thab pa dang | rnyog
pa dang | sdig pa dang | rtsod pa dang | 'gyed pa dang | mtshang 'dru ba
thams cad dang | lus dang | ngag dang | yid kyis ngan par spyad pa thams
cad dang | thams cad du 'jigs pa thams cad las srungs shig | srungs shig |*

(D 313 at 163b1–3)

Together with Vajrapāṇi protect me and all sentient beings, from all frights and all diseases, all poisons, all sickness, all evil spirits, everything afflicted

⁵³ Cf. PTSD 48.

⁵⁴ Cf. Strauch 2014: 69.

with miseries, all thieves, all human beings and non-human beings, fright, harm-doers, and all infections, battle, trouble, evil deeds, conflict, dispute, weakness, and evil practices of body, speech, and mind, and from all fears at all times! Protect us!

It is, however, not evident from these text passages that the recitation alone and the correct pronunciation of *mantras* does not always bring about the desired effect, but rather recitation, which is accompanied by rites and practices. The remarkable philosopher Dharmakīrti (around 600 CE) made this point clear. Dharmakīrti devoted two passages of his work the *Pramāṇavārttikasvayṛtti* to the discussion of *mantras* and their efficacy and gave the following definition of a *mantra*:

na mantrō nāmānyad eva kiṃcit satyādimatām vacanasamayād iti |

(Eltschinger 2008: 273 n. 4)

What we call a mantra is nothing other than the utterance and the agreement of [persons] who are endowed with truthfulness, etc.

(tr. Eltschinger 2008: 273)

Mantras are thus not automatically efficacious by the mere recitation of their phonemes but the efficacy implies an agreement of superior persons with exceptional qualities. This agreement defines the conditions for the efficacy of a *mantra* including correct pronunciation and ritual practices. Eltschinger explains this as follows:

In this agreement or promise, the creator of a mantra sets forth the conditions that any entitled user of his mantra must fulfill in order to obtain the expected result. [...] these conditions may pertain to such diverse aspects as rules for pronunciation, ritual procedures, ethical behavior or devotion.⁵⁵

Are *mantras* meaningful?

Another aspect of *mantras* is the question of whether they have meaning and, if so, of what sort. Are they meaningless or indeed a form of language? The mantric

⁵⁵ Eltschinger 2008: 275. See also Eltschinger 2001 for a more extensive discussion of Dharmakīrti's notion of *mantras* and their efficacy.

syllables, or non-lexical phonemes, were often regarded as meaningless gibberish and mumbo-jumbo. Many scholars, however, perceive *mantras* as a kind of speech act. This technical term was especially developed by Searle.⁵⁶ The expression “speech act” implies the approach to see *mantras* as actions. In this sense, a *mantra* was produced with an intention to evoke a reaction. It is an utterance that has a performative function in language and communication. As Padoux pointed out, *mantras* are meaningful and function in a ritual action:

First, that mantras, whether in the form of sentences, words, or sounds, have a ‘meaning’ (by which I mean that they help to do something), which very well may not appear in their verbal or phonetic sequence. Second, that their function is not one of the usual ones of language (namely, informative, constative, communicative) but is a direct action, generally a ritual one, or a psychological or mystical one. [...] Perhaps, one could say that mantras have no meaning in the usual sense of the word, which is not to say that they do not make sense for those who use them, but they do have efficiency. They bring about an effect or, to be more precise, they are deemed, within their own cultural context, to bring one about.⁵⁷

This idea is, however, disputed. Staal holds the opinion that *mantras* do not always require a speaker and a hearer. They do not necessarily convey information, and need not to be communicative. According to Staal, there is every reason to accept that *mantras*, even if they consist of language, are not used in the manner of language. He writes:

Mantras are used in ritual or meditation to bring about effects that are stated to be ‘ineffable’ and ‘beyond language’. This renders it all the more difficult to conceive of mantras as arising from language.⁵⁸

It is obvious that *mantras* are too complex to allow easy categorization. According to Wilke and Moebus, even the speech act theory is not adequate to explain *mantras* entirely, since it does not encapsulate all aspects of mantric language. It is for this reason that they define *mantras* as language acts:

However, speech act theory is insufficient to explain mantras fully, because they are regarded as effective of themselves. The mantras bring us to a

⁵⁶ Cf. Searle 1969, 1979, and Searle/Vanderveken 1985.

⁵⁷ Padoux 1989: 302.

⁵⁸ Staal 1989: 74.

radically participatory interpretation of language and to true language acts, i.e. to a use of language that can be categorized in speech act theory and yet at the same time goes beyond it. If, for example, the formula ‘for my life’ is spoken over the rice cooked on the daily sacrificial fire, this formula is effective of itself, owing to the sacrificial context. In the understanding of the Indian priest, mantras are therefore not a speech act at all in the strict sense. It is not the priest who performs something through language, i.e. brings about the blessing. The blessing is brought about by the formula itself.⁵⁹

As noted before, *mantras* do not only consist of unintelligible syllables, non-lexical phonemes, or words without any known semantic value, but may also contain intelligible elements, such as discourse markers, words of homage, invocations, injunctions, and acts of truth, and they can be composed entirely of natural language. Mantric language is, thereby, not an intentional language, and the words, as the examples of the **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* and the *Mahāmāyūrī* clearly demonstrate, are not arbitrary. They are sometimes conceived as a language beyond this world, the magical use of the language of *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, etc.⁶⁰ *Mantras* are verbal formulas, whose sounds, when properly vocalized, are believed to possess an innate power. It is the sound value that brings about the effect only when pronounced correctly, and this sound value is non-interchangeable.

In conclusion, *mantras* became a central element of newly composed *raḁṣā* texts and performed the function of supporting the other two protective devices, which were in use before *mantras* were introduced into *raḁṣā* literature. The effectiveness was thus achieved through correct recitation of the wording of the *mantra*. While the earliest collection of protective texts, the canonical Pāli *parittas* of the Theravāda school, do not contain any *mantras*, *raḁṣā* texts were extended with spells in the course of the development of *raḁṣā* literature. In some cases *mantras* were inserted right into the main textual body. Other scriptures were supplemented with an appendix, thereby charging the text with linguistic characteristics of *raḁṣā* literature. Elsewhere, even entirely new classes of texts evolved, which used central themes of older protective scriptures and built new compositions around their traditional core.

⁵⁹ Wilke/Moebus 2011: 406.

⁶⁰ In his study of Bhā(va)viveka’s understanding of *mantras* in his work *Tarkajvāla*, Braarvig (1997: 35f.) showed that: “Commenting on the *vidyāmantra*, Bhavya stated that the reason why the ‘words of wisdom’ (*vidyāśabda*) are not understood, is that they are in a language beyond this world (*lokottaravākya*), or in the language of Devas, Nāgas, Yakṣas, etc.”

5.2.2 Who provides the spell?

We have seen above that the effectiveness of *rakṣā* texts is closely related with the Buddha's capability to provide protection through his mere presence. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that spells given by the Buddha have the potency to be efficacious. In some *rakṣā* texts, such as in the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, the *Upasena-sūtra*, the Tibetan *Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra*, and the *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavatī*, the Buddha himself hands down the protective formula to his followers in need of shelter and safeguard, all for the advantage and benefit of the Buddhist community. The respective passage in the Tibetan *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* reads:

*de nas bcom ldan 'das kyis sems can thams cad rjes su bsrung ba'i phyir
mtshan mo bzang po'i mdo 'di bshad nas 'gro lding ba'i gsang sngags kyi
gzhi 'di dag gsungs so || tadya thā | bi ni bha ra di | bi ri ni | bi ra ni | bud
dha ma har tā na dhe | ma hi ni mi na ni | ni ni ni ni | ti ti ti ti | bi ra ti | gau
ri | gan dha ri | caṇ ḍa li | ma tang gī | pu ka asi | bramha ni | dra mi ḍī |
dra mi ḍī | shā bha di | [...]*

(D 313 at 162b4–5)

Having explained this Discourse on an Auspicious Night in order to protect all sentient beings, the Blessed One taught these *mantrapadas* of Drāmiḍa: *tadyathā, bi ni bha ra di, bi ri ni, bi ra ni, bud dha ma har tā na dhe, ma hi ni mi na ni, ni ni ni ni, ti ti ti ti, bi ra ti, gauri, gandhāri, caṇḍāli, mātaṅḍī, pukkasī, bramhani, drāmiḍī, drāmiḍī, śabarī [...]*

It is noteworthy that, unlike what we would expect in a Buddhist *sūtra*, it is often not the Buddha who first revealed the magical formula, but other potent beings, like previous Buddhas, the Four Great Kings, Śakra, and Brahmā. This is expressed in the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*:

*iyam ānanda ṣaḍakṣarīvidyā ṣaḍbhiḥ samyaksambuddhair bhāṣitā caturbhiḥ
ca mahārājaiḥ śakreṇa devānām indreṇa brahmaṇā ca sahāpatinā | mayā
caitarhi śākyamuninā samyaksambuddhena bhāṣitā | tvam apy etarhy
ānanda tāṃ dhāraya vācya paryavāpnuhi*

(Mukhopadhyaya 1954: 4)

Ānanda, this six-syllables spell was spoken by the six completely Enlightened Ones, and by the Four Great Kings, and by Śakra, the king of the gods, and by Brahmā, the Lord of the World. And now it is spoken by

me, Śākyamuni, the completely Enlightened One. Now you, Ānanda, also hold it, speak it, and master it.

Numerous *mantras* were handed over to the Buddha by other beings, and he then teaches the Buddhist assembly what he has learnt from them, thereby giving his sanction to their use. The Tibetan version of the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra* is first declared by the king Vaiśravaṇa who also delivers the nine *mantras*, which occur in the text, in the presence of the Buddha. The next day the Buddha repeats the *sūtra* to the monks and invites them to master it. The *Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa* is introduced by the Brahman Sanatkumāra, then the Four Great Kings take over the exposition of the text. Having heard the discourse from the Brahman Sanatkumāra and the Four Great Kings of the cardinal directions, again the Buddha reiterates it to the assembly and recommends to preserve it, take it up, recite, rehearse, and reflect upon it. In the **Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra*, the Buddha receives the *mantra* from the *nāgarāja* Manasvin and then announces what he has heard.

In other texts, potent beings perform the function of revealing *mantras* without the Buddha's consent. They provide protective spells for followers of the Buddha's teachings in times of need. The appendix of the Tibetan version of the *Mahāsamāja-sūtra* contains 19 *mantras*, where the first nine are each spoken by a different deity in a descending hierarchical order. The remaining formulas are pronounced by the Buddha. In his study on the Tibetan *mahāsūtras*, Skilling summarized this paragraph of the *Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra* as follows:

First are two deities of the Material Realm (*rūpadhātu*): the Śuddhāvāsa, the highest deities of the fourth *dhyāna*, followed by Brahmā, who belongs to the first *dhyāna*. These are followed by deities of the Realm of Sense-pleasures (*kāmadhātu*): from Kāmapati, of the highest level, to Śakra of the second level, to the Four Kings of the first level, and finally an Asura and a wind-god. The sections follow the same pattern for each group of deities. First they announce their intention to protect the *sūtra*, and extol the benefits that issue from recitation of the *sūtra* and the *mantra*. They then recite protective spells, in all cases described as *mantrapada*.⁶¹

Another group of potent beings are the Seven Buddhas. In *raṅṅā* texts they all appear at the same time and in the same place, revealing *mantras* as a group. The *Mahāmāyūrī* describes all of the Buddhas and their trees, and then gives individual *mantras* pronounced and approved (*bhāṣitā cābhyanumoditā ca*) by each of the

⁶¹ Skilling 1997a: 534.

Buddhas. The *mantra* of Vipāśyin, the first of the Seven Buddhas, will suffice here as an example:

*īyaṃ cānanda mahāmāyūrī vidyārājñī vipāśyinā samyaksambuddhena
bhāṣitā cābhyanumoditā ca. tadyathā.*

*araḍe karaḍe maraḍe madavardhane avaśabare ture ture care care śabare
parṇaśabare, hucu hucu, kuci kuci, mucu mucu, huci huci huci huci huci
huci huci, mucu mucu mucu mucu svāhā.*

(Takubo 1972: 43)

The Four Great Kings, usually referred to as *caturmahārāja*, not only reveal *mantras*, but also act as protectors for the preservation and defence of unprotected monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, which can be seen in the *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra*. Buddhist practitioners are protected by the words of the *mantra*, and beings who act against the Buddha's teachings will be subdued:

*de nas bcom ldan 'das la rgyal po chen po bzhis 'di skad ces gsol to || bcom
ldan 'das rgyal po bzhi po bdag cag dang | bcom ldan 'das kyi nyan thos
chen po de dag dang | bdag cag gis chos kyi rnam grangs 'di ring du gnas
par bgyi ba'i slad du | bsrung ba dang | sba ba dang | bskyab pa la brtson
par bgyi'o || [...] bcom ldan 'das dge slong | dge slong ma dang | dge
bsnyen dang | dge bsnyen ma gang dag sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la brston
pa dang | gzhan yang bcom ldan 'das kyi bstan pa la mngon par dad pa
srung ba ma mchis pa de dag bsrung ba'i ched du gsang sngags kyi tshig 'di
dag kha ton du bgyi'o || gsang sngags kyi tshig de dag gis gnod sbyin dang |
srin po dang | dri za dang | mi 'am ci dang | lto 'phye chen po dang | grul
bum la sogs pa dang | mi dang mi ma yin lags pa dang | gzhan yang sangs
rgyas kyi bstan pa la zhe sdang bar bgyid pa rnam shin tu tshar gcod par
'gyur ro ||
tadya thā | ta ra be a ra be | [...]*

(Harrison 1992: 293.10–295.5)

Then the four Great Kings said to the Lord, 'Lord, we four kings and those great śrāvakas of the Lord [and we?], so as to ensure that this discourse on dharma (*dharmaparyāya*) endures, will apply ourselves to its protection, preservation and defense. [...] Lord, in order that any unprotected bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs, upāsakas and upāsikās who are committed to the Buddha's teaching and any others who believe in the teaching of the Lord may be protected, the words of this *mantra* [...] are to be recited. By virtue of the words of that *mantra*, yakṣas, rākṣasas, gandharvas, kinnaras, mahoragas, kumbhāṇḍas and the like, human and

demonic beings, and any others who commit acts of hostility towards the Buddha's teaching will be utterly subdued.

(tr. Harrison/Coblin 2012: 69)

The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* contains *rakṣā mantras* spoken by two of the Four Great Kings, Vaiśravaṇa and Virūḍhaka, by *rākṣasīs*, and by Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja bestows protective spells on young men and women of good family who keep up the *sūtra* or turn it into a book. The respective passage reads as follows:

atha khalu bhaiṣajyarājo bodhisattvo mahāsattvas tasyām velāyām bhagavantam etad avocat dāsyāmo vyaṃ bhagavaṃs teṣāṃ kulaputrāṇāṃ kuladuhitṛṇāṃ vā yeṣāṃ ayaṃ saddharmapuṇḍarīko dharmaparyāyaḥ kāyagato vā syāt, pustakagato vā, rakṣāvaraṇaguptaye dhāraṇīmantra-padāni | tadyathā anye manye mane mamane [...] svāhā ||

(Vaidya 1960b: 233.14–21)

Then the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Bhaiṣajyarāja immediately said to the Lord: To those young men and ladies of good family, O Lord, who keep this Dharmaparyāya of the Lotus of the True Law in their memory or in a book, we will give talismanic words (*dhāraṇīpadāni*) for guard, defence, and protection; such as, *anye manye mane mamane [...]*.

(tr. Kern [1884] 1963: 371)

In the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama-sūtra*, the goddesses Sarasvatī⁶² and Śrī provide the spells. Sarasvatī hands down a *dhāraṇī* to a monk who preaches the *dharma* for the sake of preventing the loss of its memory, so that the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama* may flourish for the welfare of all those who listen to the Buddha's teachings, for their wisdom, knowledge, and prosperity. Sarasvatī said:

(mantrauśadhi) saṃyuktaṃ snānakarma bhāṣiṣyāmi tasya dharmabhānakasya bhikṣos teṣāṃ ca dharmasravanīkānāṃ satvānāṃ arthāya | sarvagrahanakṣatrajanmamaraṇapīḍā kalikalahakaluṣaḍimbaḍāmara-duḥsvapnavināyakaḍīḍāḥ sarvakākhordavetāḍāḥ praśamaṃ yāsyanti | auśadhayo mantrā yena snāpayanti ca paṇḍitāḥ ||

⁶² For a detailed discussion of the chapter on the goddess Sarasvatī, see Maue/Sertkaya 1986, and Nobel 1951.

vacā gorocanā sprkkā śīriṣaṃ śāmyakaṃ śamī |
indrahastā mahābhāgā dhyāmakam agaru tvacam ||
śrīveṣṭakam sarjarasaṃ śallakī guggulurasam |
tagaram patraśaileyaṃ candanam manaḥśilā ||
sarocanā ca kuṣṭham ca kuṃkumam mustasarṣapāḥ |
naladaṃ cavyaśūkṣmailā uśīraṃ nāgakesaram ||
etāni samabhāgāni puṣyanakṣatreṇa pīṣayet |
imair mantrapadais cūrṇam śatadhā cābhimantrayet ||
tadyathā || sukṛte karajātabhāgo | haṃsaraṇḍe indrajāmari sakadrepasade
avatāsikte kutra kuka vikala vimalamabhi śrīlamati sandhivudhumavati ||
śiri satyasthite svāhā ||

(Skjærvø 2004: 175f.)

‘I will explain the act of bathing attended by spells and medicaments. For the sake of the monk who preaches the Law and for the sake of those beings who listen to the Law, all the oppressions caused by planets, asterisms, birth or death, the oppressions caused by strife, quarrels, foul tumults and disorders, evil dreams, (or the god) Vināyaka, all Kākhordas and Vetālas will be completely removed.’ ‘Medicaments and spells with which the learned bathe: (1) *vacā*, (2) *gorocanā*, (3) *sprkkā*, (4) *śīriṣa*, (5) *śāmyaka*, (6) *śamī*, (7) *indrahastā*, (8) *mahābhāgā*, (9) [*dhy*]āma, (10) *agaru*, (11) *tvac*, (12) *śrīveṣṭaka*, (13) resin of *sarja*, (14) *śallakī*, (15) *guggulu*, (16) *tagara*, (17) *patra*, (18) *śaileya*, (19) *candana*, (20) *manaḥśilā*, (21) *sarocanā*, (22) *kuṣṭha*, (23) *kuṃkuma*, (24) *musta*, (25) *sarṣapa*, (26) *nalada*, (27) *cavya*, (28) *śūkṣmailā*, (29) *uśīra*, (30) *nāgakesara* – one should pound those, when Puṣya is the asterism, into equal portions and one should consecrate the powder a hundred times with the following spell, so: *sukṛte* [*karajātabhāgo*, *haṃsaraṇḍe indrajāmari sakadrepasade avatāsikte kutra kuka vikala vimalamabhi śrīlamati sandhivudhumavati*, *śiri satyasthite svāhā*.]

(tr. Emmerick [1970] 2001: 45f.)

The narrative in the *Ekādaśamukha-hṛdaya* relates a story, where Avalokiteśvara proposes to utter the *mantra* called *ekādaśahṛdaya*, which he has heard several *kalpas* ago from the Tathāgata Śatapadmanayanacūḍa. By the power of this *mantra* one can attain numerous benefits and avert all kinds of evils. The passage reads as follows:

*evaṃ mahardhiko 'yaṃ mama bhagavan hṛdayam ekavelāṃ prakāśitvā
catvāro mūlāpattayaḥ kṣayaṃ gacchanti pañcānantaryāṇi karmāṇi nir-
avayavaṃ tanvīkariṣyanti |*

(Dutt 1939: 38.5–7)

Blessed One, having recited just once my [Avalokiteśvara's] *hṛdaya* of great magnificent power, the four fundamental sins are eliminated and the five sins bringing immediate retribution will indivisibly diminish.

As we have seen, it is not only the Buddha himself who provides protective spells. Spells are also revealed by other potent beings, such as the Seven Buddhas, the Four Great Kings, Bodhisattvas, *nāgas*, goddesses, and other divine beings. While in some discourses the spells are first given to the Buddha, who repeats them to the Buddhist assembly, in other texts these beings hand over spells directly to the person in need without the Buddha's sanction. Even though this is not what we would expect in a Buddhist *sūtra*, the aforementioned examples show that it is not unusual within the literary genre of *rakṣā* texts for the discourses to be initially spoken by beings other than the Buddha, and are then repeated by him. In Skilling's study on the *rakṣā* literature, he references the longest and most influential *rakṣā*, the *Ātānāṭika-sūtra*, in saying that “[t]his seems to be a device to ‘convert’ a non-Buddhist text by giving it the sanction of the Buddha.”⁶³

5.2.3 Who provides protection?

Buddhist practitioners took advantage of the protective powers of the Buddha, the Three Jewels, and other powerful beings, deities, and protectors, who were believed to have the capacity of providing protection. Invocations and statements of homage, therefore, became an integral element of *rakṣā* literature and *mantras* of a wide range of texts of both the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna traditions. One of the earliest apotropaic scriptures, the *Dhajagga-sutta* of the Pāli *paritta* collection, references the protective powers of the Buddha and the Three Jewels. By recollecting the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha, fear and anxiety will disappear. The *sūtra* expresses this with the words:

⁶³ Skilling 1992: 159.

*evaṃ buddhaṃ sarantānaṃ | dhammaṃ saṅghaṅ ca bhikkhavo | bhayaṃ vā
chambhitattaṃ vā | lomahaṃso na hessatī ti ||*

(SN I 220.29–32)

For those who recall the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, bhikkhus, no fear or trepidation will arise, nor any grisly terror.

(tr. Bodhi 2000: 320f.)

Another *rakṣā* text, the *Vaiśālīpraveśa* of the Tibetan *mahāsūtra* collection, invokes various potent beings in descending hierarchical order. The *mahāsūtra* begins and ends with the order to disperse (Skt. *visarata*), which was transliterated from Sanskrit rather than translated. It then calls upon the wishes or intentions (Tib. *dgongs pa*, *bsams pa*) of all Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas*, *arhats*, *śaikṣas*, *śrāvakas*, truth-speakers, *dharmas*, Brahmā, Pratyekabrahma, Kāmeśvara, Indra, Deva, the Lord of *asuras* (Skt. *asurendra*), all *asuras*, the messenger of *asuras* (Skt. *asurapreṣya*), and all spirits (Skt. *bhūta*).⁶⁴ The Tibetan passage reads:

*bisarata | bisarata | bisarata | bisarata |
sangs rgyas 'jig rten la thugs brtse ba can gyis bka' stsal to || sangs rgyas
thams cad kyis dgongs pa | rang sangs rgyas thams cad kyis dgongs pa |
dgra bcom pa thams cad kyis bsams pa | slob pa thams cad kyis bsams pa |
nyan thos thams cad kyis bsams pa | bden pa'i tshig smra ba thams cad kyis
bsams pa | chos rnams kyis bsams pa | 'dod pa'i dbang phyug gis bsams
pa | tshangs pas bsams pa | tshangs pa so sos bsams pa | dbang po bsams
pa | lhas bsams pa | lha ma yin gyi dbang pos bsams pa | lha ma yin thams
cad kyis bsams pa | lha ma yin gyi mngag gzhug pas bsams pa | 'byung po
thams cas kyis bsams pa |
bisarata | bisarata | bisarata | bisarata |*

(Skilling 1994a: 569f.)

Central to a large number of *rakṣā* texts is the cult of the Seven Buddhas, who reveal magical formulas, and are also believed to possess the power to provide protection and methods of healing. The earliest appearance of the Seven Buddhas in *rakṣā* scriptures happens in the *Khandavatta-jātaka* (Jā 203), a parallel to the *Khanda-paritta*, which delivers verses for the protection from snakebite. There we find a statement of homage to the group of the Seven Buddhas, which reads:

⁶⁴ Cf. Skilling 1997a: 593f. for a summary of this *rakṣā* passage.

*katā me rakkhā, katā me parittā, paṭikkamantu bhūtāni,
so 'haṃ namo bhagavato namo sattannaṃ sammāsambuddhānaṃ 'ti.*

(Jā II 147.22–25)

My protection is complete, my safeguard has been done. May ghosts shrink back!

I (pay) homage to the Blessed One and the Seven Buddhas!

Further statements of homage to the Seven Buddhas occur in the Pāli *Āṭānāṭṭiya-sutta* (DN III 195.27–96.10), which refers to each of the Buddhas listing their names: Vipassi (Skt. Vipāśyin), Sikhi (Śikhin), Vessabhu (Viśvabhū), Krakucchanda (Kakucchanda), Koṇāgamana (Kanakamuni), Kassapa (Kāśyapa), and Aṅgīrasa (Śākyaṃuni).⁶⁵ Similar phrases appear in the *Mahāmāyūrī*, which give the Buddhas' names, and also mention the trees under which the Buddhas found their awakening:

*aśokam āśritya jino vipāśyī | śikhī jinaḥ puṇḍarīkasya mūle,
śālasya mūle upagamya viśvabhūt | śirīṣamūle krakucchandabrāhmaṇaḥ.
buddhaś ca kanakamuni udumbare | nyagrodhamūle upagamya kāśyapaḥ,
aśvatthamūle muni śākyaṃgavaḥ | upetya bodhiṃ samavāpya gotamaḥ.
eteṣu buddheṣu maharddhikeṣu | yā devatāḥ santi atiprasannāḥ,
tā devatā muditamanā udagrāḥ | kurvantu śāntiṃ ca śivaṃ ca nityaṃ.*

(Takubo 1972: 13.17–14.3)

The Jina Vipāśyin, resting on the *aśoka* [tree's feet], the Jina Śikhin on the *puṇḍarīka* [tree's] feet;

Viśvabhū having reached the feet of the *śāla* [tree], the brāhmin Krakucchanda the feet of the *śirīṣa* [tree];

The Buddha Kanakamuni the *udumbara* [tree's feet], Kāśyapa having reached the feet of the *nyagrodha* [tree];

The sage, the Śākya hero Gotama having approached the feet of the *aśvattha* [tree] and having attained awakening;

⁶⁵ The same statement of homage in the Sanskrit equivalent can be found in a manuscript from Turfan. Cf. SHT III 903r5f.: *namo vipāśyisya namo śikhisya namo vaiśravasya na[m]o (k)[r](akasundasya) namo [kanakamu]nisya namo kaśyapasya namo [śa]k[y]am(unisya).*

Those gods who are very favourable towards these Buddhas of great power, may those delighted and joyful gods always bestow peace and prosperity.

Interestingly, Vipasīyin is said to have found his awakening under the *aśoka* tree, whereas in other literary works he is associated with the *pāṭali* tree.⁶⁶ There seems to be some relationship between the *Mahāmāyūrī* and the early depictions of the trees of five of the Seven Buddhas at Bhārhut, where Vipasīyin, like in the *Mahāmāyūrī*, is displayed with the *aśoka* tree, what can be unmistakably identified by the accompanying inscription.⁶⁷

From early times, Buddhists invoked *nāgas* for the purpose of bringing about rain. The association of *nāgas* with rainfall goes back to their overall ability to control water resources. The most important source for rain rituals, and thus invocations of *nāgas*, is represented by the *Mahāmegha-sūtra*.⁶⁸ An early fifth century Chinese translation attributed to Dharmakṣema (414–421 CE) provides a short instruction part for a rain ritual (Taishō 387.12.1094b24–28):

If there is a head of a state who wishes to cause rain, [after] six days of fasting, the king should clean and wash himself. Then he should offer worship to the three gems, praising them humbly. Then he should invoke the name of the *nāgarāja*. O son of good family! There will be a transformation in the nature of the four *mahābhūta* elements. For one reciting and retaining this mantra, there is no place that heaven will not send down rain.

(tr. Davidson 2017: 158f.)

The next group of potent beings that enters the stage as protectors are the Four Great Kings who guard the four cardinal directions, each of them with a huge retinue of supernatural beings living in their realm. And so, the Four Great Kings decorated pillar reliefs at the cardinal points of the *stūpa* at Bhārhut, though only three of the pillars are preserved. The *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra*, the *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*,⁶⁹ and the *Mahāmāyūrī*⁷⁰ first describe each king and his companions and conclude with the following verse:

⁶⁶ Cf. for example the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* D II 4, and the *Nidānakathā* Jā I 41ff.

⁶⁷ Lüders (1963: 82, no. B 13) reads the inscription as: *bhagavato Vipasino bodhi* “The Bodhi tree of the holy Vipasi (Vipasīyin).”

⁶⁸ For an abridged edition and translation of the Sanskrit original, see Bendall 1880.

⁶⁹ Waldschmidt [1932] 1979: 171, 173.

⁷⁰ Takubo 1972: 17.

*pūrveṇa dhṛtirāṣṭras tu dakṣiṇena virūḍhakah | paścimena virūpākṣah
kuberaś cottarāṃ diśi || catvāra ete mahārājā lokapālā yaśasvinaḥ | diśaś
catasraḥ pālayanti mahardhikā mahābalāḥ ||*

(Hoffmann [1939: 65, 67] 1987: 49, 51)

Im Osten Dhṛtirāṣṭra, im Süden Virūḍhaka, im Westen Virūpākṣa und Kubera in der nördlichen Himmelsgegend: Diese vier Großkönige, die berühmten Welthüter, schützen die vier Himmelsgegenden, große Zaubermacht und große Kraft besitzend.

(tr. Hoffmann [1939: 99f.] 1987: 83f.)

The cult of the Four Great Kings also features in chapter six of the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra* (*Caturmahārājaparivarta*), where it is said that a human king receives well-being and protection of the Four Great Kings for himself and his kingdom by honouring the *sūtra*. Moreover, the Four Great Kings will watch over, guard, and protect all people.⁷¹ In the *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavati*, the Four Kings destroy evil creatures together with another divine being acting as a guardian, Vajrapāṇi, who is believed to protect the Buddhist *dharma* and its supporters.⁷² The following passage refers to him as the great leader of the *yakṣas*:

*yo graho na muñcet saptadhāsyā sphuṭen mūrdhā arjakasyeva mañjarī |
vajrapāṇiś cāsyā mahāyakṣasenāpatir vajrenādīptena samprajvālītena
ekajvālībhūtena dhyāyitvā mūrdhānaṃ sphaṭayet | catvāraś ca mahārājāno
'yomayena cakreṇa kṣuradhārā prahāreṇa vināśayeyuḥ |*

(Hidas 2017: 473f.)

If a Graha does not release, his head will split into seven like the blossom of the Arjaka plant. Vajrapāṇi, the great leader of the *Yakṣas*, will attentively

⁷¹ “We, the four great kings, dear Lord, together with the twenty-eight great generals of the *Yakṣas*, will continually watch over, guard, and protect the whole of Jampudvīpa with our divine eye, which is pure and surpasses human eyes. For this reason, dear Lord, the name world-protector has been ascribed to us four great kings. Whatever regions, dear Lord, in this Jampudvīpa will be smitten by a foreign army, will be oppressed by the affliction of hunger, by the affliction of illness, by hundreds of different oppressions, by thousands of oppressions, by hundreds of thousands of oppressions, we, dear Lord, the four great kings, will give encouragement to those monks who keep the *Suvarṇabhāsa*, king of *sūtras*” (tr. Emmerick [1970] 2001: 25).

⁷² On the history of Vajrapāṇi and the transformation of this Lord of the *yakṣas*, see Lamotte 1966, and Snellgrove 2002: 134–141.

break his head with a blazing, burning and single-flamed vajra. The Four Great Kings will destroy him with an iron discus and the stroke of a razor-edge.

(tr. Hidas 2017: 480f.)

It is, therefore, not surprising that Vajrapāṇi is invoked in the formulas of several apotropaic scriptures and requested to provide protection. References include SHT III 846: Dhāraṇī. *Beschwörung des Vajradhara (Vajrapāṇi)*,⁷³ and the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. A protective spell, which applies a *vajradhara-mantra*, can be found in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*.⁷⁴ The respective passages in the Chinese *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* reads as follows:

并執金剛神 常衛護我某甲 并諸眷屬

(Taishō XXI 1362 at 882b25)

Together with Vajrapāṇi always protect me and others together with our kinsmen!

The invocation of Vajrapāṇi in the Tibetan *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* reads:

bdag dang sems can thams cad lag na rdo rje dang lhan cig tu 'jigs pa thams cad dang | nad thams cad dang | dug thams cad dang | rims thams cad dang | gdon thams cad dang | gdug pas zin pa thams cad dang | chom rkun thams cad dang | mi dang | mi ma yin pa thams cad dang | 'jigs pa dang | gnod pa dang | nad 'go ba thams cad dang | 'thab pa dang | rnyog pa dang | sdig pa dang | rtsod pa dang | 'gyed pa dang | mtshang 'dru ba thams cad dang | lus dang | ngag dang | yid kyis ngan par spyad pa thams cad dang | thams cad du 'jigs pa thams cad las srungs shig | srungs shig |

(D 313 at 163b1–3)

⁷³ SHT III 846 r3, v8: *namo vajradharāya saparavārāya*. Waldschmidt (1971: 90 n. 2) notes in this respect: “Aufforderungen an den Angerufenen sind zahlreich, manchmal mit Namensnennung: *nīlāmya-vajradhara sma(ra) nayam* (V 9–10); *vajrapāṇi karmā* (für *karma*) *m-ādhi-krama ... samayaṃ tiṣṭha* (R 3); *svara* (für *smara* ?) *vajrapāṇi* (sic, R 5–6).”

⁷⁴ Bendall [1897–1902] 1970: 140.13–16: *athavānena sarvavajradharamantreṇa rakṣāṃ kuryāt | namas traiyabdhikānāṃ tathāgatānāṃ sarvavajradharānāṃ caṇḍāla | cala | vajra | śāntana | phalana | cara | māraṇa | vajradālaphaṭa | lalitaśikhara samantavajriṇi | jvala | namo 'stu te agrograsāsānānāṃ raṇa haṃ phula sphāṭa vajrottame svāhā ||*

Together with Vajrapāṇi protect me and all sentient beings, from all fears and all diseases, all poisons, all sickness, all evil spirits, everything afflicted with miseries, all thieves, all human beings and non-human beings, fright, harm-doers, and all infections, battle, trouble, evil deeds, conflict, dispute, weakness, and evil practices of body, speech, and mind, and from all fears at all times! Protect us!

In the *Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa*, different female *rākṣasīs* dwelling in different directions protect human beings. The first *rakṣā* passage with the two *rākṣasīs* Candraprabhā and Sūryaprabhā in the eastern direction is then repeated three times exchanging the names of the *rākṣasīs* and their directions: Sugriṇī and Vasugriṇī in the eastern direction, Caṇḍinī and Upacaṇḍinī in the southern direction, and Dṛṣyā and Mahādṛṣyā in the western direction. The text reads as follows:

*asti māriṣa purastimāyāṃ diśi dve mahārākṣasi prativasataś Candraprabhā
nāma Sūryaprabhā ca sahasraparivāre te mānuṣikāṃ prajāṃ rakṣāṃ
guptiṃ balaṃ phāṣaṃ sukhasparśavihāratāyai paripālayataḥ pathagatā apy
utpathagatā api ārāmagatā api śunyāgāragatā api ca tasraḥ*

(Bendall et al. 1996: 82f.)

There are, Good Sir, two great *rākṣasīs* dwelling in the eastern direction named Candraprabhā and Sūryaprabhā. They, together with their retinues [five] thousand strong, protect human beings so that they may remain safe, secure, strong, in comfort and in pleasure, whether they are on the right path or have gone astray, whether they are in pleasure gardens or in deserted houses.

(tr. Bendall et al. 1996: 96)

Female protectors are also prominent in the *svastigāthās*, a compendium of protective verses preserved in the Tibetan canon, in verses called **Āśīrvāda-gāthā* (Tib. *Shis par brjod pa'i tshigs su bcad pa*).⁷⁵ The same verses are transmitted independently in the *Lalitavistara*, the *Mahāvastu*,⁷⁶ and the *Diśāsauvastika-sūtra*.⁷⁷ In this short metrical text, the Buddha bestows a verse blessing upon the merchants

⁷⁵ D 4405, Q 728, 1048, 5949.

⁷⁶ For a summary of the verses transmitted in the *Lalitavistara* and the *Mahāvastu*, see Bareau 1959.

⁷⁷ For Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Diśāsauvastika-sūtra*, see SHT I 660, with additions in vol. IV: 340f., SHT XI 4376 and 4391, Wille 1996: 387f., and Tournier 2016: 407–438. For a related Uighur text, see Radloff/von Staël-Holstein 1910, and Yakup 2006.

Trapuṣa and Bhallika. The beings invoked are 32 celestial maidens (Skt. *devakanyā*), 28 constellations (Skt. *nakṣatra*), the Four Great Kings, eight *śramaṇas*, *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and gods, as summarized in the concluding verses:

aṣṭāvimśati nakṣatrā saptasapta caturdiśam |
saha candramasūryehi triṃśati bhonti-m-anūnakam ||

dvātriṃśati devakanyā ca aṣṭa-aṣṭa caturdiśam |
catvāro ca mahārājā lokapālā yaśasvinaḥ |
prajvalamānā varṇena rakṣanti te caturdiśam ||

purimakāṃ dhṛtarāṣṭro paścimakāṃ virūdhako |
dakṣiṇāṃ ca virūpākṣo kubero uttarāṃ diśāṃ ||

aṣṭa śramaṇā brāhmaṇā janapadeṣu kṣatriyā |
aṣṭa sa-indrakā devā sadā rakṣam karontu vo ||

(Tournier 2016: 433)

Twenty-eight constellations, seven for each of the four quarters, together with the sun and the moon, they make thirty in total.

Thirty-two celestial maidens, eight for each of the four quarters, and four great kings, illustrious protectors of the world, blazing with their colour, guard the four directions.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra [guards] the eastern [direction], Virūdhaka, the western, Virūpākṣa the southern, and Kubera [guards] the northern direction.

Eight *śramaṇas* and [eight] *brāhmaṇas*, [eight] *kṣatriyas* in the provinces, eight gods together with Indra, may they constantly guard you.

(tr. Tournier 2016: 437)

Female beings, especially goddesses, play a significant role in *rakṣā* literature. The *mantras* of a great number of texts invoke the names of female deities through a series of feminine vocatives. Among others they include *ghori*, *gauri*, *gandhāri*, *caṇḍālī*, *mātaṅgi*, *pukkasi*, *drāmiḍi*, and *śābari*.⁷⁸ The names of these goddesses denote women from outcaste and tribal groups.⁷⁹ The occurrence of the positive effects of the *rakṣā mantras* is thus ascribed to goddesses invoked. Though the names of these goddesses vary slightly between different versions, the scribes or

⁷⁸ For *mantras* of the *Mahāgaṇapati-vidyā* invoking goddesses in a Śaiva context, see Sanderson 2007: 199f. n. 16.

⁷⁹ On the outcaste goddess Mātaṅgī, see Kinsley 1998: 209–222.

translators clearly drew on a common stock of female deities, which appear in the *mantras* of numerous *rakṣā* texts (see table below for quotations from a wide variety of *rakṣā* texts).

The names of the female deities invoked in the *mantras* of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* read:

SHT III 816 v3–4

piśāci paṃnaśabharīḥ (śa)naśabhari piśā(c)i

SI 2044 3v5

(māta)ṅgī caṇḍi ghorī gandhāri cori caṇḍilī

Taishō XXI 1362 at 882a15–17 and 882b27–28

*gaurī gandhari caṇḍali matamgi, śabari mahāśabari
piśāci pārṇāśabari*

D 313 at 162b5–6 and 163b3–4

*gaurī, gandhāri, caṇḍālī, mātaṅgī, pukkāsī, bramhani, drāmiḍī, drāmiḍī,
śabarī, śabarī, śabarī, mahāśabarī
piśācī pārṇāśabari*

Table 18: Invocation of female deities.

Text	Quotation
<i>Ārya-avalokiteśvaramātānāma-dhāraṇī</i> (D 725 at 201b2)	<i>gau ri gandha ri drā ma te mā tanggi pukkā si kaṣṭhā ya mā tsaṇḍa lī</i>
<i>Ārya-cauravidhvansananāma-dhāraṇī</i> (D 629 at 67a6)	<i>gau ri gandha ri tsaṇḍa li ma taṅ gi pūkka si </i>
<i>Ārya-drāviḍa-vidyā-rāja</i> (De 2009: 42)	<i>gau ri gan dhā ri tsaṇḍā li mā tangi [...] śavari śavari</i>
<i>Asilomapratīśara</i> (SHT I+IV 60 5r1–2, 8v1)	<i>namo ghorisya namo gandharisya</i>
<i>Ātānātika-sūtra</i> (Hoffmann 1987: 33, 35) (Skilling 1994: 511, 553)	<i>ghori gandhāri cori caṇḍālī sopakke gau ri gan dhā ri ma taṅ gi tsaṇḍa li</i>

Table 18 (continued)

Text	Quotation
<i>Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra</i> (SHT III 816 v3–4) (SI 2044 3v5) (D 313 at 162b5) (D 313 at 163b3–4)	<i>paṃnaśabharīḥ śanaśabhari piśāci mātaṅgī caṇḍi ghoṛi gandhāri cori caṇḍilī gauri, gandhāri, caṇḍāli, mātaṅgī, pukkāsī, bramhani, drāmiḍī, drāmiḍī, śabari, piśācī pārṇaśabari</i>
<i>Mahābala-sūtra</i> (Bala 24.36f.)	<i>śa ba ri śa ba ri śa ba ri ma taṅ gi can da li</i>
<i>Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavatī</i> (Hidas 2017: 467.1–2)	<i>gauri gandhāri caṇḍāli mātaṅgi</i>
<i>Mahāmāyūrī</i> (Takubo 1972: 18)	<i>mātaṅgi caṇḍali puruṣa nici nici nigauri gandhāre caṇḍali mātaṅgi mālini hili hili āgati gati gauri gandhāri</i>
<i>Mahāpratisarā</i> (Hidas 2012: 178)	<i>gauri caṇḍāli mātaṅgi varcasī sumatī pukkāsī śavari śāviri śaṅkari dramīḍī drāmiḍī raudriṇi</i>
<i>Megha-sūtra</i> (Bendall 1880: 306)	<i>jāṅgule pukkāsī brahmaṇi mātaṅgi</i>
<i>Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa</i> (Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 83)	<i>ghoṛi gandhāri sopakke</i>
<i>Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra</i> (Vaidya 1960b: 234)	<i>gauri gandhāri caṇḍāli mātaṅgi pukkāsī</i>
SHT III 846 r7	<i>śabari śābari śābari mātaṅgacaṇḍālī</i>

Female deities are represented in reliefs at the great *stūpas* at Bhārhut, Sāñcī, Bodh-Gayā, Amarāvātī, and other ancient sacred sites,⁸⁰ together with the Seven Buddhas, the Four Great Kings at the gateways in the four cardinal directions, *yakṣas*, and *nāgas*. These depictions presuppose a well-established – presumably oral – tradition and figurative prototypes by the end of the second century BCE, which eventually found their way into magical circles. These beings, which serve an apotropaic role, thus created a protective circle along the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* of the *stūpas*. Skilling convincingly concludes that “[t]he *stūpas* themselves imply the existence of a lore and liturgy which belongs in part to the *rakṣā* literature.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ See Willis 2016 for figures of protective goddesses from Amarāvātī.

⁸¹ Skilling 1992: 163.

Many of the potent beings, who introduce magical formulas, are also believed to possess the power to provide protection. These beings are beseeched by the Buddhists through invocations and statements of homage, which became a central feature of *rakṣā mantras* and texts. The effectiveness of protective texts is thus ascribed to the beings invoked, including the Three Jewels, past Buddhas, female deities, and protectors, such as the Four Great Kings and Bodhisattvas.

5.2.4 Who is protected?

By now, it is evident that *rakṣā* texts found widespread application among Buddhist practitioners since the earliest times. Yet, the question arises of what the texts themselves tell us about their audiences. For whom were the texts written, by whom were they to be used, and who actually employed them? Often, the recipient is not explicitly mentioned. Instead, protection is sought for all living beings as expressed in the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*. The Chinese text reads:

擁護諸眾生 令離病憂怖
不祥及惡夢 險路常安隱

(Taishō XXI 1362 at 882b4–5)

All sentient beings are protected and cured. Should disease, grief, fear and misfortune come near, or in the case of an unwholesome dream and calamity, happiness will always be received.

The text of the Tibetan version reads:

*sems can thams cad srung shing sel | nad dang mya ngan 'jigs skye dang |
rmi lam mi shis mya ngan du | brjod na dpal du byed par 'gyur |*

(D 313 at 163a4–5)

All sentient beings are protected and cured. If this is recited in times of disease, pain, fear of rebirth, and sorrow caused by inauspicious dreams, glory will arise.

The *Mahāpratisarā* refers to sons and daughters of good families,⁸² Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras,⁸³ monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, kings and princes who should write down, memorise, and recite the spell:

*kaḥ punar vādo ya imāṃ mahāpratisarāṃ dhāraṇīm śrāddhaḥ kulaputro
vā kuladuhitā vā bhikṣur vā bhikṣuṇī vā upāsako vā upāsikā vā rājā vā
rājaputro vā brāhmaṇo vā kṣatriyo vā tadanyo vā yaḥ kaścit sakṛc
chroṣyati śrutvā ca mahatyā śraddhayā gauraveṇādhyāśayena likhīsyati
likhāpayīsyati dhārayīsyati vācayīsyati tīvreṇa manasā bhāvayīsyati
parebhyaś ca vistareṇa saṃprakāśayīsyati*

(Hidas 2012: 185)

[T]he faithful son or daughter of good family, a monk or nun, a layman or laywoman, a king, a prince, a Brahmin or a Kshatriya or anybody else who once hears this Great Amulet *dhāraṇī* and having heard it writes it down, gets it written down, memorises it and recites it with great faith, respect and determination, meditates upon it with sharp mind and reveals it to others in detail.

(tr. Hidas 2012: 246f.)

The main purpose of one of the oldest Buddhist protective texts, the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra*, is to protect monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen living in remote areas meditating in the forest from the potential dangers of evil *yakṣas*. They are instructed to learn and memorize the spells of this discourse for their protection and well-being, as well as to overcome troubles and pacify fierce beings. The respective passage reads:

*santi bhadanta bhagavataḥ śrāvakā bhikṣavo bhikṣuṇya upāsakā upāsikā
ye ‘raṇyavanaprasthāni prāntāni śayanāsanāny adhyāvasanti | santi cātra
vyādā yakṣā amanuṣyā naivāsikā ye bhagavatpravacane ‘bhīprasannā
anabhīprasannāś ca | [...] sādhu bhadanta bhagavataḥ śrāvakā bhikṣavo
bhikṣuṇya upāsakā upāsikā idam evāṭānāṭikam sūtram vi(dyām rakṣām
pādavandanīm vistareṇ)odgrhṇīyur (dhārayeyur ātmano guptaye rakṣāyai
sukhasparśavihāratāyā anabhīprasannānām vyādānām yakṣā)ṇām*

⁸² Hidas 2012: 128: *sahaśravaṇamātreṇāyaṃ mahābrāhmaṇa tasya kulaputrasya vā kuladuhitur vā sarvapāpavinirmuktir bhavati*. “Great Brahṃā, merely upon hearing, this liberates the son or daughter of good family from all misdeeds” (tr. Hidas 2012: 213).

⁸³ Hidas 2012: 166: *brāhmaṇe īśvaro lekhyāḥ kṣatriyeṣu maheśvaraḥ | śūdreṣu sadā saumyaṃ cakrasvāminam ālikhet || vaiśyeṣu vaiśravaṇam indram caiva sureśvaram |* “For a Brahmin one should paint Iśvara, for a Kshatriya Maheśvara, For Shudras one should always paint the benevolent Cakrasvāmin, For Vaishyas one should paint Vaiśravaṇa and Indra, the Lord of the Devas” (tr. Hidas 2012: 237).

amanuṣyāṇāṃ naivāsikānāṃ abhiprasā(dāyābhi)prasann(ā)nāṃ ca [bhū](yobhāyāya)

(Hoffmann [1939: 51–53] 1987: 35–37)

Es gibt, o Ehrwürdiger, Jünger des Erhabenen, Mönche und Nonnen, Laienanhänger und Laienanhängerinnen, die in Waldwildnissen gelegenen, einsamen Lagerstätten sich aufhalten. Und dort befinden sich böse Yakṣa-Ortsdämonen, die der Verkündigung des Erhabenen ergeben, und solche, die ihr nicht ergeben sind. [...] Gut mögen, o Ehrwürdiger, des Erhabenen Jünger, Mönche und Nonnen, Laienanhänger und Laienanhängerinnen dieses Āṭānāṭika-Sūtras, (-Zauberformel, -Schutzzauber, -Fußverehrung in vollem Umfang) lernen (und behalten zu ihrem Schutze, zur Bewachung, zum Wohlsein und um die nicht ergebenen bösen) Yakṣa-Ortsdämonen zur Ergebenheit zu bringen wie um die ergebenen zu vermehren.

(tr. Hoffmann [1939: 96f.] 1987: 80f.)

This passage makes two points clear: what kinds of people need protection, and what they need protection against. First of all, the text was written for the fourfold Buddhist assembly, monks and nuns, lay men and lay women. For the second point, the Buddhist community needs to be protected when they are living in isolated places, the wilderness. This idea finds full correspondence in the *Dhvajāgra-sūtra*, which teaches monks dwelling in solitude how to evade fright, consternation, and anxiety. The *Dhvajāgra-sūtra* runs thus:

sati vo bhikṣava aranyagatānāṃ vā vṛkṣamūlagatānāṃ vā śunyāgāra-gatānāṃ vā utpadyeta bhayaṃ vā chambitatvaṃ vā romaharṣo vā māṃ yūyaṃ tasmīṃ samaye ākārataḥ samanumarata | [...] māṃ vas tasmīṃ samaye ākārataḥ samanumaratām | yad utpatsyate bhayaṃ vā chambitativāṃ vā romaharṣo vā tat prahāsyate |

(Waldschmidt [1959: 9f.] 1967c: 379f.)

Falls euch, ihr Mönche, wenn ihr in der Einöde weilt, am Fuße eines Baumes weilt oder in einem (menschen)leeren Hause weilt, Furcht, Entsetzen oder Schaudern befällt, so erinnert euch zu dieser Zeit an mich, (meinen) Attributen nach, [...] Wenn ihr euch zu dieser Zeit an mich (meinen) Attributen nach erinnert, so wird, was an Furcht, Entsetzen oder Schaudern euch befallen sollte, vergehen.

(tr. Waldschmidt [1959: 9f.] 1967c: 379f.)

Other protective texts, like the *Diśāsauvastika-sūtra* and the *Dhvajāgra-mahāsūtra* I, are particularly designed for travelling merchants who set out on long and precarious journeys.⁸⁴ The verses of the *Diśāsauvastika* promise protection for travellers at any time, in whatever direction they might go. Therefore, the main body of the text is divided into four parts, each including invocations of divine beings who watch over the respective cardinal direction. The text thus establishes a protective circle. Two verses of the introductory blessing of the *Diśāsauvastika* also occur in different sets of verses in the *Dhvajāgra-mahāsūtra* I (verses 3, 4),⁸⁵ the *Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra* (verses 14, 15),⁸⁶ the *Mahāmāyūrī*,⁸⁷ the Chinese translation of the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya (Taishō II 125 at 727b8–c2),⁸⁸ in a late Nepalese *Svasti-vākya* (verses 3, 4),⁸⁹ and twice in the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* (verses 14, 15).⁹⁰ In the *Mahāvastu*, they are the verses two and three of the blessing pronounced by the Buddha upon the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika. The complete introductory blessing reads as follows:

diśāṃ sauvatthikaṃ divyaṃ maṅgalyaṃ arthasādhakaṃ |
yaṃ śrutvā sumanā sarve sarvārthāṃ sādhaiṣyatha ||

svasti vo dvipade bhotu svasti bhotu catuspade |
svasti mārge vrajantānāṃ svasti pratyāgateṣu ca ||

⁸⁴ For the role of merchants in Buddhism, see *Introduction: Road Map for Travelers* in Neelis 2011: 1–63.

⁸⁵ Skilling 1994a: 284: *khyed kyi rkang gnyis bde legs shing || khyed kyi rkang bzhi bde legs shog | khyed cag lam zhugs bde legs shing || phyir ldog pa na'ang bde legs shog | mtshan mo bde legs nyin bde legs || nyi ma'i gung la bde legs shing || khyed cag kun tu bde legs la || khyed la sdig pa ma 'byung shig ||*

⁸⁶ Skilling 1994a: 582: *rkang gnyis khyed cag bde legs shog | rkang bzhi khyed cag bde legs shog | khyed cag lam 'gro bde legs shog | phyir 'ong dag kyang bde legs shog | nyin mo bde legs mtshan bde legs || nyi ma'i gung la'ang bde legs shin || khyed cag kun tu bde legs shog | khyed cag sdig par ma gyur cig |*

⁸⁷ Takubo 1972: 14: *svasti vo dvipade bhotu | svasti vo 'stu catuspade | svasti mārgevrajaṭāṃ ca svasti pratyāgateṣu ca || svasti rātrau svasti divā svasti madhyāmdine sthite | sarvatra svasti vo bhotu mā caiṣā pāpam āgamet ||*

⁸⁸ For a translation of the verses, see Matsuda 2000: 24f.

⁸⁹ Skilling 1994a: 756: *svasti vo dvipade bhontu svasti vo 'stu catuspade | svasti vo vrajaṭāṃ mārge svasti pratyāgateṣu ca || svasti rātrau svasti divā svasti madhye dine sthite | sarvatra svasti vo bhontu mā caiṣāṃ pāpam āgamat ||*

⁹⁰ Skilling 1994a: 614f., 620: *svasti vo dvipade bhontu svasti vo 'stu catuspade | svasti vo vrajaṭāṃ mārge svasti pratyāgateṣu ca || svasti rātrau svasti divā svasti madhyāmdine sthite | sarvatra svasti vo bhontu mā caiṣāṃ pāpam āgamat ||*

*svasti rātrau svasti divā svasti madhyandine sthite |
sarvatra svasti vo bhotu mā ca vo pāpam āgame ||*

*śirī vo dakṣiṇe skandhe śirī vāme pratiṣṭhitā |
śirī vo aṃgamaṃgeṣu mālā va supraṭiṣṭhitā |
bhadraṃ vo bhadrāśirī vo vāñijā bhadraṃ astu vo ||*

(Tournier 2016: 426)

The [four] directions are [respectively] propitious, heavenly, auspicious and profitable. Having heard that, o benevolent ones, you shall succeed in all matters.

May welfare be granted to you bipeds, may welfare be granted to [your] quadrupeds, welfare to [you] who set out on the road and welfare to [you] who return.

Welfare at night, welfare during the day and welfare at noon, may there always be welfare and may no evil occur to you.

[May] good fortune rest on your right shoulder, [may] good fortune rest on your left shoulder, [may] good fortune be well installed on all your limbs, like a garland. Prosperity to you, prosperity and good fortune to you, o merchants, may prosperity be yours.

(tr. Tournier 2016: 434)

The *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra*, like the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra* and *Ratnaketu-parivarta* from Gilgit, gives ritual instructions to seal the boundaries of the state, and thus provides protection of the state.⁹¹ The respective passage reads:

*tena rāṣṭrasya sīmābandhayitukāmena susnātena triśuklabhuktena
pañcāmiṣaparivarjitena sarvamānuṣa śikṣāpadaparigṛhītena sarvasattva-
samacittena vastrābharaṇayuktana grāmanagananigama śṛṅgāṭakakulāny
apa-gatasamkārakūṭāni kṛtvā madhyamāyāṃ rājadhānyāṃ puṣpāvākīrṇāṃ
dharāṇīm kṛtvā nānāgandhā dhūpayitavyāḥ | [...] divase divase caikavāram
vidyā āvartayitavyā | evaṃ rāṣṭraḥ parimocito bhaviṣyati |*

(Hidas 2013: 234f.)

He who wishes to seal the boundaries of the state, having bathed well, having taken the three white foods, having avoided the five ‘meaty’ foods, having taken up all the precepts, having generated equanimity towards all

⁹¹ For more examples for the protection of the state or the ruling king from other texts, see Schopen 1978: 363–367.

beings, having put on [clean] clothes and ornaments, having cleared the heaps of rubbish in villages, towns, market-towns, crossways and residences and having scattered flowers on the ground in the middle of the royal capital, should burn various incense. [...] Each day this spell should be recited once. Thus the state will be saved.

(tr. Hidas 2013: 236f.)

The close relation between the Buddhist community and the ruling kings at Gilgit is also evident from the colophons of various manuscripts, in which they are mentioned as donors for whom protection will be granted. Donors' names of local rulers not only appear in colophons, but were also inserted into the *dhāraṇī* or protective formula itself. As von Hinüber demonstrated in this regard, one folio of a *dhāraṇī* (page 2305), which was – mistakenly as it seems – put into the *Samghāta-sūtra*, contains a *rakṣā* formula that leaves space for the later insertion of a donor's name: "This is a text kept in reserve and not yet used in a ritual of protection, because there is a space left blank where a name would be filled in: ... *rakṣa rakṣa mama* – blank – *sarvasatvānām ...*."⁹²

This assumption is further supported by the fact that in the case of two Gilgit manuscripts of the *Mahāpratisarā*, the donors' names were filled in by a different hand from that of the scribe of the main text (GBMFE page 1082, lines 4f.; page 1141, line 3).⁹³ This shows that it was widespread custom to copy a text and prefabricate manuscripts to be used in ritual practices for the protection and well-being of the manuscript's donor. The same phenomenon of inserted names in protective formulas and colophons written by another scribe can be seen in manuscripts from Central Asia and Nepal, the most illustrative being perhaps the *Daśabala-sūtra* (SHT I 507) described by Waldschmidt:

In den nächsten drei Reihen folgt eine Dhāraṇī, die sich ähnlich am Ende eines jeden Bala wiederholt. Nach bhavatu ist der Rest der ersten Reihe ausgelöscht, doch ist svāhā (in anderen Fällen auch yā svāhā) noch gut zu lesen. In der zweiten Reihe findet sich jedes Mal, von einer anderen Hand mit dem Pinsel und viel größer geschrieben, lālāvinyāyā svāhā, was offenbar die Berichtigung des Ausgelöschten in der vorigen Reihe geben

⁹² Von Hinüber 2014: 80f. See also von Hinüber 1979, 1981, 2004.

⁹³ The formulas of the Gilgit manuscripts of the *Mahāpratisarā* with inserted names read e.g.: *rakṣa rakṣa mama Dinaśīnasya. ye mama Trailokadevisya ahitaiṣiṇas teṣāṃ sarveṣāṃ śarīraṃ jvālaya. svastir bhavatu mama Maṇikeasya. ye mama Śābyakhātunenasya ahitaiṣiṇas. rakṣa rakṣa mama Vāyuphunasya* (Hidas 2012: 30 n. 22).

soll. Dann folgt mitten in einem größeren freien Raum vor Beginn des nächsten Bala: *mālyika svāhā*, was wieder in der zierlichen Schrift der ursprünglichen Teile der Handschrift geschrieben ist.⁹⁴

The added word *lālāvinyāyā* most probably represents the name of the new owner of the manuscript. Hartmann and Wille pointed to an old Turk origin of this name.⁹⁵ Hartmann and Wille established the old Turk origin of another name, which appears in a scroll with various apotropaic texts (SHT I 499): *Vidyāsthānopama-sūtra: rakṣaṃ bhavatu | kutkātuṃsasya svāhā ||*. The same holds true for the name found in a colophon of another text of the same scroll: *rakṣaṃ me bhagavati | mā[m]. [m]. mā kiccikkis* nyāyabodhicittam*.⁹⁶

To summarize, the recipients of protection and well-being can generally be assigned to two groups: the beneficiary mentioned in a *rakṣā* text and the actual user of a text, whose name has been inserted in the manuscripts' colophons or in the *mantra* itself. The audiences of *rakṣā* texts usually include sons and daughters of good families, the fourfold Buddhist assembly, and especially monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen living in remote areas in wilderness. Some texts are specifically designed for travelling merchants, or provide protection of the state. Historical textual witnesses show that a *rakṣā* text was not only employed once in a protective rite by the local rulers and people, but that manuscripts were prefabricated and even reused.

5.2.5 Ritual instructions

Throughout *rakṣā* literature we find numerous prescriptions on the employment of spells and the use of protective *sūtras* the recipient must follow in order to achieve the benefits given in the protective scriptures. These ritual instructions, especially popular in later, post-canonical compilations, became a characteristic component in ritual *rakṣā* practices. Protection and welfare are not only granted through mere recitation of *mantras* and *sūtras*, but the recipient should furthermore take up, preserve, reflect upon, and teach others the expositions of the scriptures.

⁹⁴ Waldschmidt [1932: 231] 1979: 35 n. 21.

⁹⁵ Hartmann/Wille 2010: 384 n. 56: “,Lala‘ ist Bestandteil von alttürkischen Namen, und das in der nächsten Zeile folgende *mālyika* ist gewiß ebenfalls ein Eigenname.“

⁹⁶ Cf. Hartmann/Wille 2010: 383. More examples of donors' names can be found in the same place.

These kinds of directives can be found in the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* where it is said that all sentient beings will be entirely protected, when one apprehends, recites, and teaches others the whole discourse including the prose narratives, as well as the verses and *mantras*. This passage reads in the Chinese version:

若有苾芻苾芻尼鄔波索迦鄔波斯迦及餘善男子善女人等。於此善夜經中。若一伽他若一句咒。讀誦受持供養尊重。明解其義為他演說。當知是人於一切時無諸災厄。亦無枉橫及諸衰惱

(Taishō XXI 1362 882a23–26)

If a monk, nun, lay man or lay woman as well as any son and daughter of good family etc. recites, memorizes, worships with respect and explains the meaning of the discourse, the verses, the prose and the *mantras* of the Discourse on an Auspicious Night to others, you should know that this person will never meet any misfortune, calamities and suffering.

A similar statement occurs in the Tibetan translation of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*:

*dge slong rigs kyi bu'am | rigs kyi bu mo gang la la zhig gis sems can thams
cad rjes su bsrung ba'i phyir mtshan mo bzang po'i mdo sde 'di'i don
dang | tshig dang | tshigs su bcad pa dang | 'gro lding ba'i sngags kyi gzhi
'chang ngam | 'dzin tam | klog gam | yid la byed dam | kun chub par byed
dam | gzhan dag la'ang rgya cher yang dag par ston na | de'i lus la mes mi
tshugs par 'gyur |*

(D 313 at 162b7–163a2)

Monk, when any son of a good family, any daughter of a good family, in order to protect all sentient beings, holds, keeps, recites, concentrates on, masters, or even teaches others extensively, and in detail the meaning, the prose and the verses, and the *mantrapadas* of Drāmiḍa of this Discourse on an Auspicious Night, fire will not harm their bodies.

Other texts give even more extensive instructions on the ritual use of protective formulas. The preparation of potent objects, such as a knotted string of thread, a talisman, or an amulet containing a sheet of paper, birchbark, or cloth inscribed with *mantras*, as well as copying the text and turning it into a book, and the depositing of apotropaic objects as relics into *stūpas*, appear to be the most prominent practices mentioned in *rakṣā* texts. Other ritual uses prescribe the preparation of a *maṇḍala*,

the application of medicinal herbs, and the fastening of the spell on a flagstaff over a *caitya*, which should be worshipped and circumambulated.

The use of strings in ritual practices constitutes one major feature in the *paritta* ceremony of the Theravāda school. The monks hold on a white thread twisted around a pot of water while reciting *parittas*. The same thread is passed over to the laymen participating in the ritual.⁹⁷ The instruction passages in the *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavati* guide the preparation of a knotted string of thread with the protective *mantra* recited into a knot, which should be worn on the forearm or around the neck.⁹⁸ Additionally, offerings of fragrances, flowers, or seals should be done to secure protection. The text of the *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavati* runs as follows:

*asyāṃ khalu rāhula mahādaṇḍadhāraṇī vidyāyāṃ antaśo 'ṣṭottaraśata-
padānāṃ sūtraṃ granthiṃ baddhāyāṃ hastena dhāryamāṇāyāṃ kaṇṭhena
dhāryamāṇāyāṃ samantād yojanaśatasya rakṣā kṛtā bhaviṣyati | gandhair
vā puṣpair vā mudrābhir vā naiva manuṣyo vāmanuṣyo vābhibhaviṣyati | na
viṣaṃ na śastraṃ na rogo na jvaro na prajvaro na vidyāmantra na vetādaḥ |*

(Hidas 2017: 472)

O Rāhula, if one [recites and] ties this Great Daṇḍa-dhāraṇī Spell of an altogether hundred-and-eight *padas* into a knot on a thread and [it is] worn around the forearm or the neck, protection will be established all around up to one hundred *yojanas*. By [offering] fragrances, flowers or seals neither humans nor non-humans will come near, [similarly] to poison, weapons, sickness, fever, high fever, spells, mantras and Vetālas.

(tr. Hidas 2017: 480)

Tying strings around the body also forms part of the ritual instruction of another protective *dhāraṇī*, the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī*, where it is used to cure fever and to protect against demons:

⁹⁷ For a description of the *paritta* ceremony, see further Waldschmidt 1967a, and de Silva 1981.

⁹⁸ Hidas (2012: 33 n. 40.) points to further references to the preparation of protective threads. These appear in the *Mekhalā-dhāraṇī* (cf. Tripāṭhī 1981: 157), the *Hayagrīva-vidyā* (cf. Dutt 1939: 44.10), the *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra* (cf. Iwamoto 1937a: 41f.), and the *Mahāmāyūrī* (cf. Takubo 1972: 58).

sarvajvareṣu sūtrakam bandhayitavyam | sarvavyādhiṣu gḥṛtam tailam udakam vā parijapya dātavyam | kākhordacchedanam śastreṇa | rakṣā sūtreṇa | udarasūlena lavanodakam | viṣanāśanam mṛttikayā udakena vā | cakṣuroge śvetasūtrakam karṇṇe bandhayitavyam |

(Meisezahl 1962: 325)

A string must be tied for every kind of fever. For all diseases melted butter or sesame oil or water is to be used whilst reciting over them. The evil demons are to be killed with the sword; [white] thread will protect against them. Salted water is to be used for stomach-ache. Poisoning to be treated with argillaceous earth or with water. White thread is to be tied to the ear in case of sore eyes.

(tr. Meisezahl 1962: 298)

The same text also gives instructions for the application of medicinal herbs, and making a talisman (*maṇi*) out of them, which should be worn on the head or the upper arm. This talisman will bring about prosperity and avert misfortune. The passage in the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī* reads:

jayā vijayā | nākulī gandhanākulī | vāruṇī | abhayapāṇi | indrapāṇi | gandhapriyaṅgu | tagara cakrā | mahācakrā | viṣṇukrāntā | somarājī | sucandanā ceti | eṣāṃ yathāsambhavataḥ | aṣṭottaraśatavārān parijapya maṇim kṛtvā śirasi bāhau vā dhārayitavyam | bālānām gale | nārīṇām vilagne | svayam paramasaubhāgyakaraṇam | alakṣmīpraśamanam putradañ ca || etena maṇinā bandhena sarvarakṣā kṛtā bhavati | viṣāgnir nnākramati | viṣakṛtam notpadyate | utpannā api na pīḍāñ janayiṣyanti | śīghram praśamayīṣyanti |

(Meisezahl 1962: 326)

After having recited [the *Hṛdaya*] hundred-eight times over the medicinal herbs *jayā*, *vijayā*, *nākulī*, *gandhanākulī*, *cāriṇī*, *abhayapāṇi*, *indrapāṇi*, *gandhapriyaṅgu*, *tagara*, *cakrā*, *mahācakrā*, *viṣṇukrānta*, *somarājī* and *sunandā*, a talisman is to be made [from them] which must be put on the head or on the upper arm; boys [wear it] around the neck and girls around the waist. It will be the cause of great prosperity, elimination of misfortune and bestowing with children. When the talisman is worn, every possible protection is assured. Poison and fire shall not approach. Poisoning shall not occur, and if [such a case] were possible, it will be cured quickly.

(tr. Meisezahl 1962: 299)

The ritual instructions in the *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra* prescribe another way of using the protective formula. Having comprehended, memorised, recited, taught, and mastered it, one should write the *sūtra* down and turn it into a book:

imaṃ bhadanta bhagavan mahāsāhasrapramardanaṃ sūtrarājaṃ sarva-grahapramocanīyaṃ buddhamudrādharmaparyāyaṃ yaḥ kaścic chikṣā-padaṃ pariḡhṛtvā kāśāyadhārī udḡṛhya dhārayitvā vācayitvā deśayitvā paryavāpya likhitvā granthayitvā dhārayiṣyati tasya sarve iti bhayopadravopasargopāyāsā vairakalikalahaviḡraha bhaṇḍanavivādā yāvāt paiśunyaḥ akusālā dharmā nābhikramiṣyanti | ajayaś ca bhaviṣyati sarvaviheṭhakebhyah |

(Hidas 2013: 234)

Venerable Lord, whoever, having taken up the precepts and wearing a robe, retains this Crushing of the Great Thousand Sūtra King that liberates from all Grahas and that is a teaching with the seal of the Buddhas, having comprehended, memorised, recited, taught and mastered it and having written it down and made it into a book, to him no calamities, dangers, trouble, misfortune, irritations, hostility, discords, strifes, disputes, arguments, quarrels and even slanderous and unwholesome things will go near. He will be invincible by all those who injure.

(tr. Hidas 2013: 235f.)

The directive to write down the protective formula or *dhāraṇī* in book form (*dhāraṇīm pustake likhitvā*) is a prevalent element of a number of *rakṣā* texts, and can also be found in the *Ratnaketu-parivarta*:

yaḥ kaścic bhagini rājā kṣatriyo mūrdhābhiṣikto janapadasthāmaprāpta imāṃ ratnaketudhāraṇīm pustake likhitvā dhārayiṣyati [...] anekāni ca devanāgayakṣagandharvakoṭīnāyutaśatasahasrāṇi tasya rājñah kṣatriyasya pṛṣṭhataḥ samanubaddhā rākṣānuguptaye sthāsyanti |

(RKP 39)

Sister, whatsoever anointed kṣatriya king has obtained power over a people, and after having written in book form this *Ratnaketudhāraṇī* will preserve it [...]. And several koṭīs of nayutas of hundreds of thousands of devas, nāgas, yakṣas, and gandharvas will continue to follow behind that anointed kṣatriya king for the sake of guarding and protecting him.

(tr. Schopen 1978: 364)

Similar prescriptions occur in a number of Mahāyāna sūtras. They are related to the predominance of the cult of books and their importance as objects of worship in these texts. Books function as sacred and powerful objects, and provide protection by their presence. This becomes clear from many textual evidences. Especially informative is the following passage from the *Abhisamayālaṃkāṛālokā-prajñā-pāramitāvyaḅhyā* being a commentary on the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*.⁹⁹ This text does not only contain a long list of directives, but also the “escape clause” or limitations to its efficacy due to one’s past *karma* also common to some *rakṣā* texts. The respective passage reads:

yatra khalu punaḥ Kauśika kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā imāḃ prajñā-pāramitāḃ likhitvā pustakagatāḃ kṛtvā pūjāpūrvanḡamaḃ sthāpayiṣyati pūjayiṣyati tatra Kauśika ye kecit Cāturmahārājakāyikeṣu deveṣu devaputrā anuttarāyāḃ samyaksambodhau samprasthitās te ‘pi tatr’ āgantavyaḃ maḃsyante | te ‘pi tatr’ āgatyaināḃ prajñāpāramitāḃ pustakagatāḃ prekṣiṣyante vandiṣyante namaskariṣyanty udgrahīṣyanti dhārayiṣyanti vācayiṣyanti [...] tasya khalu punaḥ Kauśika kulaputra vā kuladuhitur vā grhaḃ vā layanaḃ vā prāsādo vā surakṣito bhaviṣyati | na ca tasya kaścid viheṭhako bhaviṣyati sthāpayitvā pūrvakarmavipākena ||

(AAĀ 254.8–19; 258.17–21)

Moreover, O Kauśika, wherever a son or daughter of good family, after having made it [i.e., the Perfection of Wisdom] into a book will – intending it above all for worship – set it up, will worship it, to that place, O Kauśika, all the sons of gods among the gods of the Four Great Kings who have set out for the most excellent, complete and perfect awakening will think they must come. Having come there they will gaze at it, will venerate it, render it honor, take it up, preserve it, recite [or read] it, etc. ... [then the same is said for a very long list of other categories of gods]. Moreover, Kauśika, the house, cell or mansion of that son or daughter of good family will come to be well protected, and there will be nothing that can harm him, except as a consequence of a previous action.

(tr. Schopen 2010: 49)

⁹⁹ On the book as sacred object in Mahāyāna sūtras, see Schopen 2010. Other examples quoted there include the *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā*, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* from Gilgit, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra*, the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*, and the *Sarvadharmaguṇavyūharāja-sūtra* and *Buddhabalādhāna-prātihāryavikurvāṇanirdeśa-sūtra* both from Gilgit.

Yet, *dhāraṇīs* should not only be written down in book form, but also carried on the body, and tied around the neck, as it becomes clear from the instruction passage in the Tibetan translation of the *Sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśodhanī-dhāraṇī*:

*rtaḡ tu bzlas brjod byas na las gcig tu brgyud pa thams cad rnam par dag
par 'gyur ro | ... lus la 'chang ngam glegs bam la bris nas mgul du thogs te
'chang na de la dus ma yin par 'chi ba rnams gtan du 'byung bar mi 'gyur
ro |*

(after Schopen 2012: 283)

If one recites the *dhāraṇī* constantly the whole series of his past acts would be purified/cleansed ... If one carries it on his person or if, having written it in a book and tying it around his neck, he wears it, for him the untimely death would never occur.

(tr. Schopen 2012: 283)

Although it is not quite clear from this passage whether only the *mantra*, which merely takes up a single line, or the whole *sūtra*, which takes up less than both sides of one folio should be written down into a book, it is obvious that the term *glegs bam* (Tib. for “book, leaves gathered between boards”) here, judging from the very short length of either possibility, refers to something much more like a portable booklet or amulet. This amulet is then to be worn around the neck. A similar injunction to write down the *sūtra* and to tie it around the body can be found in the Tibetan *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*:

*gang gis bris te skyes pa dang. bud med lus la btags na ni | skal pa bzang
dang gzi brjid dang | de yi dpal yang skye bar 'gyur |*

(D 313 at 163a 4–5)

Whoever writes it down, man or woman, if he or she ties it around the body, good fortune, splendour and glory will arise for them.

The practice of wearing a string of thread or an amulet around the body is well attested in ritual practices of various traditions, and was already deeply rooted in Brahmanical contexts before it entered Buddhist circles. Thus, the use of protective

threads or amulets is first attested in texts like the *Atharvaveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*.¹⁰⁰

It is not known when exactly the amulet use became an integral part of Buddhist protective rituals. In Gandhāra we find depictions of Bodhisattvas wearing a thread with small boxes presumably containing amulets as early as the second century CE.¹⁰¹ It is evident from textual finds from Central Asia, like the *Asilomapratīsarā* (SHT I+IV 60) and *Mahāpratisarā*, that the amulet cult was fully developed by the middle of the first millennium.¹⁰² The *Mahāpratisarā* seems to be the most popular text incorporating this cult saying that its *mantra* together with other illustrations and ornaments should be painted on birchbark or cloth with bezoar or saffron and, enclosed in an amulet, worn around the neck or arm.¹⁰³

Archaeological finds prove that at least some of the above-mentioned ritual prescriptions of *rakṣā* texts were carried out in the late medieval period, and became a very popular cult and widespread practice, especially in Central Asia and China. In 1944, archaeologists discovered a tomb in Chengdu, China and excavated a skeleton wearing a silver armlet on the upper right arm. This armlet turned out to be an amulet containing the *dhāraṇī* of the *Mahāpratisarā* in Sanskrit and in Chinese translation

¹⁰⁰ In his article *On Dhāraṇī and Pratisarā*, Sen (1965: 68) quotes an example extracted from the *Atharva-saṃhitā* 8.5: *ayaṃ pratisaro maṇir vīro vīrāya badhyate* “This mighty, magically potent amulet is tied for the protection of the mighty man.”

¹⁰¹ For a study on Bodhisattva images from Gandhāra carrying a string of charm boxes, see Pal 2006: 101–103.

¹⁰² References to the use of amulets with an inscribed spell occur in the *Vijayavatī-pratyāṅgirā-dhāraṇī* (cf. Waddell 1914: 93), the *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna-sattvāvalokana-buddhakṣetra-sandarśana-vyūha* (cf. Dutt 1939: 74.15), and the *Ārya-sarvatathāgatoṣṇīṣasitātapatrā-nāmāparājītā-pratyāṅgirā-mahāvīdyārājīṇī* (cf. Samten/Pandey 2002: 153.16–18) (references borrowed from Hidas 2012: 34 n. 40). Fragment 38 of a manuscript from Turfan, described and transliterated by Hartmann/Wille (2010), mentions birchbark or cloth as writing material for *rakṣā* texts. Hartmann and Wille cite some selected passages, which show the use of protective formulas as amulets (2010: 385f. Anhang III: Belege für Birkenrinde als Material für Rakṣā). These passages include: the *Mahāmāyūrī* (cf. Takubo 1972: 129.22–130.2), the *Mahāpratisarā* (cf. Hidas 2012: 164.5), the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (Mmk(V) 35.5–7), the *Ratna-mālāvadāna* (cf. Takahata 1954: 448.33–449.2), and an unidentified fragment edited in SHT VII: 269. See also the entry on amulets in the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* (Malalasekera et al. 1961–1965, Vol. I, fasc. 3: 493–502) for the use of protective amulets in China, Japan, Tibet, and Śrī Lāṅkā.

¹⁰³ The *Mahāpratisarāvīdyāvidhi*, an auxiliary text of the *Mahāpratisarā*, is a ritual manual describing how to prepare a protective circle (Skt. [*rakṣā*]cakra) or amulet of the *Mahāpratisarā*. For a critical edition and translation of this text, see Hidas 2010.

of the eighth century.¹⁰⁴ In the following years more amulets from Dunhuang inscribed with the *Mahāpratisarā*- as well as the *Sitātapatrā-dhāraṇī* came to light.¹⁰⁵ Two tenth century woodblock prints from the Mogao Caves, Dunhuang dedicated to Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha, were evidently produced to serve as amulets. These xylographs contain spells in Sanskrit written in Siddham characters and Chinese inscriptions giving the titles of the spells and descriptions of benefits and instructions for their use. They must have been folded, wrapped, and worn on the body.¹⁰⁶

Another ritual instruction can be found in a set of five *dhāraṇīs*, which prescribe to deposit the entire text or the *mantra* passage into *stūpas* or images as relics. Four of these texts are mentioned in Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan's (1147–1216) manual on the four different types of relics to be deposited in *stūpas*, *Arga'i cho ga dang rab tu gnas pa don gsal ba*. The four *dhāraṇīs*, the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya*, the *Vimaloṣṇīṣa*, the *Guhyadhātukaraṇḍa*, and the *Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣa*, along with the *Pratītyasamutpāda* classified as a group called the “Five Great *Dhāraṇīs*”, represent the fourth kind of relics, the relics of the *dharmakāya*. The fifth *dhāraṇī*, which is not mentioned by the manual, is the **Raśmīvimalaviśuddhaprabhā-dhāraṇī*.¹⁰⁷ The passage on the *dharmakāya* relics reads as follows:

The present topic is the method of inserting relics and so forth into *stūpas* so that they abide there. In general, there are four types of relics: 1. bodily relics, 2. bodily relics which are like mustard seeds, 3. hairs and nails, which are called relics of the garb, 4. *dhāraṇīs*, which are called relics of *dharmakāya*. The relics of *dharmakāya* are the five *dhāraṇīs* taught to be placed in *stūpas*: *Uṣṇīṣavijaya*, *Vimaloṣṇīṣa*, *Guhyadhātukaraṇḍa*, *Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣa*, *Pratītyasamutpāda*. Furthermore, the lamas taught that

¹⁰⁴ For a closer description of this amulet sheet, see Drège 1999, and Copp 2014: 59–63.

¹⁰⁵ For an amulet inscribed with Tibetan letters, see Lalou 1936. For more amulet sheets inscribed with the *Mahāpratisarā* in Central and East Asia, see Copp 2008a, and Tsiang 2010: 218–238. For *Mahāpratisarā maṇḍalas* depicting the *Mahāpratisara* deity surrounded by the *Mahāpratisarā mantra* from Dunhuang, see Sørensen 1991–92: 295–298.

¹⁰⁶ The instruction part in Chinese of one of the xylographs reads in translation: “[...] The four assemblies are universally encouraged to keep and wear this [amulet] to create a karmic basis [for a good fortune] and it is also avowed that they [will] ascend together to the true and eternal wonderful fruit” (tr. Hidas 2014:113).

¹⁰⁷ It is widespread custom to inscribe these six *dhāraṇīs* on *tsha tshas* (clay impressions) to be inserted inside *stūpas*, shrines, and sacred sites all over the Asian Buddhist world. Cf. Namgyal Lama 2013.

writing mantras endowed with blessings that appear in the tantras and sūtras and inserting them so as to abide [in stūpas] would [produce] immeasurable merit and great blessings.¹⁰⁸

It is clear from rich evidence that the instructions were actually put into practice, and that the way these texts were used is precisely in agreement with their teachings. Thus, the four *dhāraṇīs* were discovered installed in *stūpas* or images all over the Indian subcontinent and throughout the Buddhist world.

The *Vimaloṣṇīṣa* formula was stamped on a small clay tablet enclosed in a terracotta image of the Buddha, unearthed from a *stūpa* at Paharpur, Bangladesh. The same *dhāraṇī* was also discovered on birchbark strips in a *stūpa* at Gilgit,¹⁰⁹ and on seals from Bodh-Gayā and Śrāvastī.¹¹⁰ In Ratnagiri it was found on the back of an image of the Bodhisattva Lokeśvara. Mitra reads the inscribed *dhāraṇī* in the following form:

*oṃ straiyadhve sarvvatathāgatahṛdayagarbhe jvala dharmmadhātugarbhe
saṃbhara āyuṃ saṃśodhaya pāpaṃ sarvvatathāgatasamantoṣṇīṣa vimala-
viśuddhe svāhā.*

(after D. Mitra 1981: 104)

The *dhāraṇī* of the *Guhyadhātukaraṇḍa* was engraved on six granite tablets in northeastern Nāgarī dating to the ninth century found to the southeast of the northern Dagoba at the ancient site of Abhayagiriya in Śrī Laṅkā. Though the Sanskrit version seems to be lost, there is a Tibetan translation of it, which explains the benefits from depositing a copy of this text in a *stūpa* as follows:

Vajrapāṇi then says: ‘If, O Blessed One, someone made a copy of this text and put it into a *stūpa*, what root of merit would be produced?’ The Buddha answers by saying that ‘if someone made a copy of it and put it into a *stūpa*, that *stūpa* would become a *stūpa* of the relics of the ‘essence’ of *vajra* of all *Tathāgatas* [...], it would become a *stūpa* of ninety nine

¹⁰⁸ Bentor 1995: 256. These texts, or at least some of them, were oftentimes transmitted together, which can be seen from a multiple-text manuscript from the Pelliot Collection of Tibetan manuscripts (PT 350) from Dunhuang, which contains the following *dhāraṇīs*: the *Bodhi-garbhālamkāralakṣa-dhāraṇī*, the *Āryoṣṇīṣavimāla-dhāraṇī*, and the *Prañīyasamutpāda-hṛdaya* followed by a *mantra*. All of these texts open with a similar phrase, an instruction to place the entire text either in a shrine or a *stūpa* (cf. Scherrer-Schaub 1994).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. von Hinüber 2004: 14–16, nos. 4a, 4b, 4c.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Lawson 1985: 709.

millions of *Tathāgatas*, etc. (113–4–5ff.), and that if someone did *pūjā* to that *stūpa* he would become ‘irreversible’ from awakening, be freed from rebirths in the hells, be protected from malignant *nāgas*, frost, hail, poison, animals, and disease and sickness. The same benefits would result if the text were put into an image.¹¹¹

Extracts from the *Bodhigarbhālāṃkāralakṣa-dhāraṇī* were found inscribed on a stone slab from Cuttack, Orissa and on terracotta tablets from Nālandā, dating probably from the sixth to about the ninth centuries.¹¹² Further stamps with the *Bodhi* come from Śrāvastī, Ratnagiri, Kashmir, Hund, and Qunduz.¹¹³ The inscription on the Cuttack stone with the instruction to write down the *dhāraṇī* and to deposit it in a *stūpa* reads as follows:

*yaḥ kaścid bhikṣur vā bhikṣuṇī vā upāsako vā upāsikā vā | anyo vā yaḥ
kaś[c]i[t] śrāddhaḥ kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā [i]māṃ dhāraṇī[m]
l[i]kh[i]tvā 'bhya[m]tara[m] prakṣīpya caitya[m] [kari]ṣyati | tenaikena
caityena kṛtena lakṣam tathāgatacaityānāṃ kṛtaṃ bhavati |*

(Schopen [1985] 2005: 328)

Whatsoever monk or nun or layman or woman, or whatsoever other devout son or daughter of good family, after having written this *Dhāraṇī*, after having deposited it inside, will make a *caitya*, by that single *caitya* being made a hundred thousand *caityas* of the Tathāgata are (in effect) made.

(tr. Schopen [1985] 2005: 329)

After the translation of the **Rāsmivimalaviśuddhaprabhā-dhāraṇī* into Chinese in 704 CE (Taishō IXX 1024: *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing*) and its transmission to the Korean peninsula, the *sūtra* as well as its individual *dhāraṇīs* were enshrined in a number of *stūpas* throughout Korea, China, and Japan during the eighth century. The *dhāraṇī* was also found in several Sanskrit inscriptions from Yunnan.¹¹⁴ The text instructs people, devout practitioners as well as kings and rulers, to copy the *sūtra* and deposit it into the *stūpa*'s central pillar and around the four sides. By

¹¹¹ Schopen 1982: 104.

¹¹² The text of this *dhāraṇī* was first published by A. Ghosh in 1941–42, yet unidentified. In 1985, Schopen located this text as “an incomplete Sanskrit version of a short and virtually unknown text preserved in the various Kanjurs under the Tibetan title *Byang chub kyi snying po'i rgyan 'bum gyi gzungs*” (Schopen [1985] 2005: 314).

¹¹³ Cf. Strauch 2009: 38–40 for a list of all inscribed objects with the text of the *Bodhi*.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Liebenthal 1947: 23f.

drawing upon the *dhāraṇī*'s power, the *sūtra* then offers protection from dangers of the everyday life as well as protection of the state. The oldest extant printed version of the **Rāsmivimalaviśuddhaprabhā-dhāraṇī* is a woodblock print found in the *Śākyamuni Stūpa* at Pulguk Monastery in Kyongju, South Korea in 1966, a *stūpa* constructed in 751 CE.¹¹⁵

In many cases the effects of *rakṣā* texts do not automatically occur through the mere recitation of *mantras* and adherence to other protective devices. *Rakṣā* scriptures give a number of ritual instructions on *rakṣā* practices on the employment of spells and the use of protective *sūtras*. In order to achieve the benefits listed in a text, the recipient should take up, preserve, reflect upon, and teach others the *sūtra*. Further instructions include the preparation of potent objects such as a knotted string of thread, a talisman, or an amulet containing a *mantra*, as well as copying the text and turning it into a book, and the depositing of apotropaic objects as relics into *stūpas*. Epigraphical and archaeological finds prove that the ritual prescriptions of *rakṣā* texts were actually put into practice by the Buddhist community and found widespread application all over the Indian subcontinent and throughout the Buddhist world. The amulet sheets, seals, and inscribed objects found in *stūpas* and images suggest a complex history of Buddhist religious practices in which short *dhāraṇīs* with ritual prescriptions and instructions on how to employ the formulas took over an important role as a substantial part of Buddhism as a practiced religion. *Rakṣā* texts and later *dhāraṇīs* became the primary source for apotropaic practices rather than the canonical scriptures.

5.2.6 The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings

Another *rakṣā* element is the verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings, which occurs in the SI manuscript, as well as in the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra* in slightly different readings (see table below).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Tsiang 2010: 207–213. For a study of this text and its central role as ritual guidebook and cultic object in medieval Sinitic Buddhism, see McBride 2011.

Table 19: The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings as preserved in the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*.

SI 2044 3v1–2	Taishō XXI 1362 at 882a9–10	D 313 at 162b2–3
<p><i>sukhinaḥ sarve satvā hi sarve satvā nirāmayāḥ sarve bhadrāṇi paśyaṃtu ma kaś cit pāpam agamaḥ</i></p>	<p>常願諸有情 離苦獲安樂 不造諸惡業 恒修於眾善</p>	<p><i>sems can kun dang srog chags kun 'byung po kun dang thams cad kyang bde ba 'ba' zhig grub gyur te thams cad nyon mongs med par shog thams cad bzang po mthong gyur te gang yang sdig par ma gyur cig </i></p>
<p>May all beings be happy, may all beings be healthy. May they all experience auspiciousness, may misfortune not come to anybody.</p>	<p>May all sentient beings always be free from afflictions and attain happiness. May no evil whatsoever befall. May they always experience auspiciousness.</p>	<p>May all sentient beings, all living beings, and all <i>bhūtas</i>, everyone, only attain happiness. May they all be free from afflictive emotions. May they all experience auspiciousness. Whosoever may he not fall into evil.</p>

The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings became a popular verse for protection and blessing, and enjoyed widespread popularity from the Indian subcontinent to Central Asia, and even spread as far as Indonesia, as can be seen from numerous text examples and inscriptions. The verse can be found twice in the Tibetan translation of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, in the *Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra* and its parallel the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*. It also appears in the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī*, the Sanskrit counterpart of the *Vaiśālīpraveśa*, preserved in a Nepalese manuscript, and in the *Nityakarmapūjāvidhi*. In the *Mahāmāyūrī*, the *Upasena-sūtra* and its Pāli parallel, the *Khanda-paritta*, and in the Bower Manuscript, the verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings comes after the four *maitrī* verses against snakebite.¹¹⁶ (See table 20 below for the readings of the verse for the welfare of all beings in the aforementioned sources.)

¹¹⁶ For the *maitrī* verses against snakebite, see chapter 1.5.1 of the present work.

Table 20: The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings in other sources.

<i>Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra</i> (Skilling 1994a: 602)	<i>Mahāmantrānusārinī</i> (Skilling 1994a: 620)	<i>Mahāmāyūrī</i> (Takubo 1972: 6)	<i>Upasena-sūtra</i> (Waldschmidt [1957] 1967b: 40)	<i>Khanda-paritta</i> (AN II 73.4f.)	Bower Manuscript (Hoemle 1897: 225)
<i>sens can kun dang srog chags kun 'byung po kun dang khyed cag kun </i> <i>bde ba 'ba zhig ldan gyur cig thams cad nad mams med par shog kun gyis bzang mams mthong gyur cig gang yang sdig par ma gyur cig </i>	<i>sarve satvāḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve bhūtās ca kevalāḥ sarve vai sukhinah santu sarve santu nirāmayāḥ sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantū mā kaścit pāpam āgamat</i>	<i>sarve satvāḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve bhūtās ca kevalāḥ sarve vai sukhinah santu sarve santu nirāmayāḥ sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantū mā kaścit pāpam āgamatu</i>	<i>sukhinaḥ sarve satvā hi sarve satvā nirāmayāḥ sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantū mā caiśāṃ pāpam āgamat</i>	<i>sabbe sattā sabbe pāṇā sabbe bhūtā ca kevalā</i>	<i>sarve satvā sukho bhontu sarve bhontu anāmayā sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantū mā kaścha pāpam āchare</i>
May all sentient beings, all breathing beings, All living beings, and all of you Know naught but happiness. May all illness be banished; May all see the auspiciousness; May no evil whatsoever befall.	All sentient beings, all living beings, all <i>bhūtas</i> , everyone. May they all be happy, may they all be healthy. May they experience auspiciousness, may misfortune not come to anyone.	All sentient beings, all living beings, all <i>bhūtas</i> , everyone. May they all be happy, may they all be healthy. May they experience auspiciousness, may misfortune not come to anyone.	May all beings be happy, may all beings be healthy. May they all experience auspiciousness, may misfortune not come to anyone.	May all beings, all living things, all creatures, everyone, meet with good fortune; may nothing bad come to anyone.	May all beings enjoy happiness, may all enjoy health; may all experience pleasure, and may no one practice sin.
(tr. Skilling 1997a: 596)				(tr. Bodhi 2012: 455)	(tr. Hoemle 1897: 229)

Parts of the verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings can also be found on inscribed tablets from Maisūru, Karṇāṭaka, and Java, Indonesia.¹¹⁷ A stone tablet from Ḍambaḷ, in the Dhārṇwād District, Mysore (Karṇāṭaka), bearing an image of Tārā, carries a lengthy inscription, written in Old-Kannāḍa language, dating to Śaka era 1017, which corresponds to 1095–96 CE. It records the existence of two Buddhist *vihāras* at Ḍambaḷ in the eleventh century, which were built by Jain merchants of that region, and accounts certain grants to these two *vihāras*. Round the top of the stone there are three verses in Sanskrit comprising the stanza for welfare (verse 2).¹¹⁸ These verses read:

*Asarbbabhāvena yadṛchchheyā vā parānuvṛtṭyāvichikīṭasyā vā ye tvān
namaśyamīti munīndrabhadraṃ te śyāṃmarīṃ saṃpadam āpnuvanti ||*

*Sarbbe satvās sarbbe prāṇāḥ sarbbe bhūtās ca kevalāḥ sarbbe vai sukhinaḥ
santu sarbe santu nirāmayāḥ ||*

*Pāthaspārthivavahniṣūgapavanaprakhyātabhītyākulāprānatrāṇavidhāna-
labdhakarūṇavyāpārachintāturā prodyattaṣkarasindhuraharivyaḷādi-
saṃkāpahā tārā tūrṇṇavitūrṇṇavāṃchhitaphaḷā pāyāt sadā saṃgamaṃ ||*

(Fleet 1881: 187)

Those who do reverence to thee, who are propitious to Munīndras, – (*even though it be*) with imperfect faith, or spasmodically, or from imitation of others, or through mistake, – obtain the good fortune of becoming Śambaras.

May all sentient beings, and all (*who have*) souls, and all who are mere existing beings, – verily may all of them be happy, and all be free from illness!

May (*the goddess*) Tārā, – who is anxiously busied with her exercise of tenderness entailed by preserving (*persons possessed of*) souls who are distressed by the notorious fear of water and kings and volumes of fire and wind; who takes away the dread of bold thieves and oceans and elephants and lions and snakes, etc.; and who quickly confers the rewards that are desired, – always preserve Saṃgama!

(tr. Fleet 1881: 198f.)

¹¹⁷ These inscriptions are mentioned in Skilling 1997a: 596.

¹¹⁸ For a description of the stone tablet, as well as a reading and translation of the entire inscription, see Fleet 1881: 185–190, and for corrections, see Burgess 1881: 273f.

Another inscription from Indonesia attests the widespread popularity of the verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings. Eleven inscribed gold plates are kept in the National Museum in Jakarta, Indonesia.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, we do not have any information on how they got there and where they came from. De Casparis, who published a first reading and translation of these inscriptions in 1956, came to the conclusion that the plates most likely come from Indonesia itself. He defines the script as “a transitional phase between the Pallava script and the Old Javanese script of the oldest period”,¹²⁰ which he dates between 650 and 800 CE. These plates were probably deposited as relics in *stūpas* or temples.

The verse on the aspiration for the welfare of all sentient beings occurs twice on two different plates (plates c and j) together with the *ajñānāc cīyate karma* verse, a verse that is only known in Southeast Asian inscriptions and can so far not be traced in any Indian Buddhist text,¹²¹ and the *ye dharmā hetu* formula, though in different order on both plates. The verses run as follows:

*rūpinas*¹²² *sarvvasattvā hi sarvve santu nirāmanāḥ*
sarvve bhadrāṇi paśyanti mā kaścit pāpam āgamat ||

ajñānāc cīyate karma janmanaḥ karma kāraṇaḥ (sic: read kāraṇam)
jñānān na cīyate karma karmābhāvat na jāyante (sic: read jāyate) ||

ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetun teṣān tathāgata uvāca
teṣāñ ca yo nirodhaḥ evamvādī mahāśramaṇaḥ ||

(De Casparis 1956: 113)

May all beings be happy, may all beings be healthy.

May they all experience auspiciousness, may misfortune not come to anyone.

Karma is accumulated because of ignorance, *karma* is the cause of rebirth.

Through wisdom *karma* is not accumulated, in the absence of *karma* one is not reborn.

Of those phenomena that arise from a cause, the Tathāgata told their cause and their cessation. Thus the great ascetic proclaimed.

¹¹⁹ For a description of these plates and their inscriptions, see Skilling 2015: 31–36.

¹²⁰ De Casparis 1956: 49.

¹²¹ Cf. Skilling 2015: 18.

¹²² We would expect *sukhinaḥ* for *rūpinaḥ*.

