



## DHĀRAṆĪ

**DHĀRAṆĪ**, magic spells in the Buddhist Mahāyānist and Tantric (esoteric) traditions.

*i. In Khotanese.*

*ii. In Sogdian.*

### i. IN KHOTANESE

*Introduction.* *Dhāraṇīs* are, explained traditionally as “(capacity) to hold (Skt. *dhṛ-*) in memory”; shorter spells are called mantras. In the Buddhist Sanskrit texts *dhāraṇīs* can be recognized readily because they are often introduced by *tad yathā* (*syād yathā*) “thus” and end in *svāhā* “Hail!” Elements constituting *dhāraṇīs* are invocational formulae of the type “homage (*namo*) to so-and-so,” vocatives of various Buddhas’ names, and imperative verb forms or meaningless onomatopoeic syllables. *Dhāraṇīs* were incorporated into Mahāyāna sūtras from early times, e.g., chap. 21 (*dhāraṇī-parivarta*) of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (the Lotus Sutra), chap. 9 of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, or chap. 7 (*Sarasvatī-parivarta*) of the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra* (Sutra of Golden Light). In the later Tantric tradition numerous shorter texts were composed with such *dhāraṇīs* as their main part. Such texts are referred to as *dhāraṇīs* (not to be confused with the *dhāraṇīs* or *mantras* proper, which form the central part of them), as *sūtras*, or as *dhāraṇī-sūtras*.



Since *dhāraṇīs* are more often transcribed than translated, it is not surprising that we have few *dhāraṇīs* in the Khotanese language. What we have are translations from Sanskrit of either known or unknown originals. Some may be local compositions by the Khotanese, but their *dhāraṇī* part is written in Sanskrit in Khotanese spelling as are the translations. The following are examples of such texts.

Texts with known originals. 1. *Anantamu-khanirhāradhāraṇī-sūtra* (Inagaki). 2. *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra*. The transliteration given in Bailey (V, pp. 243ff.) omits the repetition of *dhāraṇīs*. Copies of Tibetan and Chinese translations of this sutra were mass-produced in Dunhuang under Tibetan rule. The latest count indicates the existence in various collections of 842 copies in Chinese (288 in London, 29 in Paris, 509 in Beijing, 11 in Kyoto, 5 in Taiwan), and 1899 copies in Tibetan (660 in London, 657 in Paris, 313 in Beijing, 218 in Japan, 51 in St. Petersburg). More copies in the Tibetan version are reported to remain unclassified in the India Office Library (Ueyama, pp. 438f.). 3. *Jñānolka-dhāraṇī*. The manuscripts of the Petrovsky collection have been published in facsimile by R. E. Emmerick and Vorob'ëva-Desjatovskaja (plates 2-6). The whereabouts of the folio in Japan (first published in facsimile in *Seiki Kōko Zufu* 2, 1915, and transliterated from a reproduced photo in the wrong order in Bailey, V, pp. 313f. as Otani 1-2) is unknown. 4. *Sumukha-(dhāraṇī) sūtra*. Following R. E. Emmerick (1979) two fragments of the Sanskrit text have been published together with corresponding Khotanese passages (Bongard-Levin and Vorobyova-Desya-tovskaya, 1980-81 and 1986a; see also idem, 1986b). Emmerick has published another fragment of the Sanskrit *Sumukhadhāraṇī* from the Crosby collection in the Library of Congress (1986).

Texts without known originals and given provisional titles. 1. *Amṛta-prabha-dhāraṇī*. 2. *Avalokiteśvara-dhāraṇī*.

Texts found with other Khotanese texts but not translated into Khotanese. 1. *Buddhoṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*. This popular esoteric text is at the beginning of the long scroll Ch. c. 001 (lines 1-11 in Bailey, V, p. 368; a few more syllables can be read on pl. CXLVI in Stein) at the British Library (Ind. Off.). 2. *Kauśika-prajñā-pāramitā* (see Conze, 1973, pp. 157ff.). The Sanskrit text in Khotanese spelling includes the *dhāraṇī* (Bailey, V, pp. 356ff) and two more fragments (probably scribal exercises; Bailey, III, pp. 102, 118). 3. *Sitāta-patra-(dhāraṇī)-sūtra*. The Sanskrit text with many *dhāraṇīs* in Khotanese spelling is found in two manuscripts (Bailey, V, pp. 359ff, 368ff.).



Other texts originally containing *dhāraṇīs* are, e.g., the *Adhyardhaśatikā* (Conze, 1973, pp. 184ff.), the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra* (Skjærvø, 1988), and the *Vajracchedikā* (Kumārajīva's Chinese version), although extant Khotanese versions do not extend to the *dhāraṇī* part.

See also [BUDDHISM iii](#).

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## ii. IN SOGDIAN

No *dhāraṇī* in Sogdian script has so far been encountered in Turfan MSS; those found among the Tun-huang MSS are:

1. *Nīlakaṇṭha-dhāraṇī* in Brahmi (47 lines) and its interlinear transcription in Sogdian script (60 lines) by the same scribe (Or. 8212 [175]; de la Vallée Poussin and Gauthiot); it is imperfect at the beginning by three phrases. According to Lévi, the *dhā-raṇī* is identical with that of Sahasrabhujāryāvalokiteśvara (*T[aishō] T[riṭṭaka]* XX, no. 1061), which in turn is almost the same as Nīla-kaṇṭhāvalokiteśvara's *dhāraṇī* (*T.T.*, XX, no. 1111; cf. the Sogdian title given in the text *1-LPw* *δsty* "ry'βr'wkδyšβr nyrknt n'm t'rny "dhāraṇī named thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara Nīlakaṇṭha"; on the Skt. and Tibetan versions see Wu chi-yu, pp. 67-68; Tsukamoto et al., pp. 129-30). This *dhāraṇī* is followed by a short, unidentified mantra named *wyspw* "γδ'k δβr'yn'k δrzy'wr pstrwm "hṛdaya mantra fulfilling all the wishes."

2. *Dhāraṇī* of the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-sūtra*, which is imperfect at the end, occupies lines 202-33 of P[elliot Sogdien] 7 (Benveniste, pp. 93-104); it is known from line 229 that the MS belonged to a man named *kry'n* (Skt. *kalyāṇa*). Among the extant versions of the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī* in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese (cf. Meisezahl, 1962; Meisezahl, 1965; Emmerick; and Tsukamoto et al., pp. 123-26), the shorter ones, i.e., those found in *T.T.* (XX, nos. 1093-94) and in a Sanskrit MS from Tun-huang are close to the Sogdian.

3. *Kṣitigarbha-dhāraṇī*, contained in P 18 (Benveniste, pp. 200-01). This *dhāraṇī* (28 lines) is similar to the *dhāraṇīs* found in *T.T.* (XX, no. 1159B) and a Tun-huang Chinese MS S.4543. An interesting feature of this text is that Skt. *-l-* is sometimes transcribed with *-rr-* in Sogdian script.

4. Sixteen unidentified *dhāraṇīs* found in P 8 (Benveniste, pp. 105-17); P 8 (lines 61-62) names itself "ry'βr'wkδyšβr pwtystβ mx'stβ 100 'št' n'm swtr γwβty'kh pwstk (= *Avalokiteśvarasyanā-māṣṭasatakastotra-sūtra*). They are short spells



against troubles and misfortunes preceded by homage to Avalokiteśvara. The first four are also found in P 8bis, which is another copy of the same text.

Three more mantras in Siddham script are quoted in P 14 and 15 (Benveniste, pp. 137-41). They are *Fo pu san mei yeh chou* (P 14, 30; *T.T.* XX, p. 204a), *Ch'u hu shên chou* (P 15, 14; *T.T.* XX, p. 191a), *Ching shui chên yen* (P15, 15; *T.T.* XVIII, p. 595a). The *prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya-mantra* is translated into Sogdian in P 16, 19-21 (cf. Benveniste, p. 143; Bailey, pp. 936-37).

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