The Dhāraṇīs of Mahāvyutpatti #748: Origin and Formation

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to identify the sources of a list of twelve dhāraṇīs included in Rubric 748 of the Mahāvyutpatti. It produces evidence connecting this group with three similar dhāraṇī enumerations transmitted in the Ratnamegha, Tathāgataguṇa-jñānācintyavisayāvatāraṇīrdeṣa and Tathāgatamahākaruṇānīrdeṣa. The exposition of the Tathāgatamahākaruṇānīrdeṣa is particularly valuable since it preserves one of the earliest and most detailed discussions of dhāraṇī practice in Mahāyāna sūtras. The Ratnamegha is closest to the Mahāvyutpatti and thus the most likely source for its list.

THE MAHĀVYUTPATTI

The Mahāvyutpatti ranks probably among the best-known and most widely used lexicons in Indo-Tibetan philology. It is consulted routinely in Buddhological research mapping Tibet’s vast repository of sūtras and śāstras, brought together in the bKa’ ’gyur and bsTan ’gyur. It is also an important source for the study of Sanskrit grammar in Tibet (Verhagen 1988, 23; 1994, 9–45, esp. 15–19; 1997, 1017) and some of its compilers have even been linked to historical events during the Yarlung dynasty. As it provides Tibetan equivalents for almost ten thousand Sanskrit terms and expressions transmitted in Indian Buddhist texts, the Mahāvyutpatti stands at the centre of a complex matrix connecting the Buddhist cultures of the two countries. Its prominence both as a lexicon and conceptual node for thousands of scriptures gave the Mahāvyutpatti, and its affiliate treatises, significant research exposure. It is available in three modern editions (Sakaki 1962; Ishihama & Fukuda 1989; Sárközi 1995) derived from Tibetan and Mongolian sources.

Although the Mahāvyutpatti was produced in a period of Tibet’s history that is not particularly well documented, we possess a fairly good understanding of its purpose, funding, authorship and date of compilation. Since most of this is readily accessible in Tibetanological publications, I give here no more than the briefest of summaries as a frame for our dhāraṇī investigation. The Mahāvyutpatti (Tib. (sGrags) Bye brag tu rtogs (par) byed (pa) chen mo/po) consists of 9492 entries divided into
283 semantic rubrics (Ishihama & Fukuda 1989). Each entry consists of a Sanskrit term (or expression) and a Tibetan equivalent. Although the Mahāvyutpatti is not dated, it is usually linked with the reign of King Khri-lde-sroṅ-bstan (CE 798–800, 802–815) and his successor Khri-gtsug-lde-btsan (CE 815–841) (Simonsson 1957, 239–42). King Khri-lde-sroṅ-bstan commissioned the work in order to standardize Tibet’s translation language. He did so on the advice of ministers and councilors who judged the available idioms inadequate to achieve consistent renderings of Sanskrit technical terminology.

Almost overnight, the Mahāvyutpatti assumed a key role in the centrally decreed (bkas bcad) revision/redaction process (zu chen) designed to regularise current methods of translation. It was complemented by two other registers (vyutpatti) of similar function: the Madhyavyutpatti (Tib. sGra sbyor bsm (po) gnis (pa)) and *Svalpavyutpatti (Tib. Bye brag tu rtags byed chuṅ nu). The latter is now lost, but was still available in Bu-ston’s days during the mid-fourteenth century (Ruegg 1998, 121, n.13). Of the three, the Madhyavyutpatti is best understood. Its content, purpose and redactional principles are discussed in a good number of articles. The bstan’gyur colophon lists the people who participated in the compilation this work. They include many of the most prominent scholars and translators of the day. The Indian contingent consisted of Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, Śīlendrabodhi, Dānaśīla and Bodhimitra. In addition, the King sequested the services of six Tibetan scholars: Ratnarakṣita, Dharmatāśīla, Jñānasena (i.e. Zan sNa

1. Sakaki arrives at a slightly higher figure (9565) largely based on lexicographic and orthographic variants encountered in the Tibetan. Throughout this paper, I use the edition prepared by Ishihama & Fukuda. This edition does not give separate numbers to the rubrics but integrates them in the overall sequence. Thus, Rubric 748 in Ishihama & Fukuda corresponds to Sakaki Rubric 25. Since Ishihama & Fukuda do not number the rubrics separately, each of the rubrics is simultaneously an entry, e.g. Rubric 748 is also listed as Entry 748, but has twelve subentries (#749–60).

2. On the dates of the Tibetan kings from CE 756 to 815, see now Dotson (forthcoming).

3. rol-pa’i rdo-rje, in his Dag yig mkhas pa’i byun gnas, lists the *Svalpavyutpatti among the works essential for translating Tibetan texts into Mongolian. If this attestation is reliable and Rol-pa’i rdo-rje actually consulted the ‘minor register’, rather than reporting its usefulness in the abstract, the *Svalpavyutpatti would have still been extant in eighteenth-century Peking. But because he cites it together with eleven other grammatical treatises and lexicons, including the Mahāvyutpatti and Madhyavyutpatti, he may simply have included it for completeness. I do not think that this passage alone gives sufficient grounds to assume that the *Svalpavyutpatti survived that long (Taube 1978, 184–5). For a slightly different interpretation of this passage, see Simonsson (1957, 227–8).

4. Most of these are listed in Hu-von Hinüber (1997a). Others appear in Verhagen (1994) and Ruegg (1998). Since the Madhyavyutpatti has little bearing on the remit of the current investigation, I refer to it only in passing without full bibliographic survey. Even though the Madhyavyutpatti is closely allied with the Mahāvyutpatti in purpose and composition, it does not help us to trace the latter’s content since it was primarily put together to explain the Tibetan translations chosen for a given Sanskrit Mahāvyutpatti expression. It does not address the provenance of any of the 413 entries on which it comments.

5. The latter two participated in the translation of the Ratnamegha-sūtra (mDo sde, Wa, 112v7). The importance of this will become clear in due course.
nam Ye śes sde), Jayarakṣita, Mañjuśrīvarman and Ratnendraśīla (Simonsson 1957, 241). The Mahāvyutpatti required an even larger team. bsTan 'gyur catalogues record that it ‘was made by many translators and pandits’ (lo paṇ maṅ pos mzdad pa) (Ruegg 1998, 120). Since the catalogues give us neither the names nor overall number of participants, the staffing of its team remains unresolved. Most believe that the Mahāvyutpatti was put together by the same group that compiled the Madhyavyutpatti, perhaps enlarged through more Tibetans contributing in the burgeoning translation effort. Regardless of the actual size of the team, it was clearly a major project that would have required the combined resources of most scholars working at the royal court in that period.

SOURCES OF THE MAHĀVYUTPATTI

Tradition tells us that much about the circumstances of its compilation. It is not a great deal, but at least we get some sense of the scale of the project. Our sources yield less about the texts from which the Sanskrit expressions were taken. The colophon of the Madhyavyutpatti notes that they were brought together (bris) into a register (dkar chag), fixed as technical terms (mīn du btags pa), translated from the Indian language into Tibetan, as they appear in the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna (... theg pa che chuṅ las 'byun ba'i rgya gar gyi skad du kyi skad du bsgyur žin mīn du btags pa rnam dkar chag tu bris te) (Simonsson 1957, 241). Vajrayāna materials, it would seem, were not consulted. While this narrows down the field, we are still left with a large pool of source candidates, spanning several hundred works.

Scholarship has made little headway in identifying the texts that sourced the contents of the three vyutpttis (Taube 1978, 167). It is generally assumed that the terms were taken from the vast corpus of manuscripts that reached Tibet from India, Nepal and Central Asia in the eighth and ninth centuries. This is of course probable but too broad to be of much use. The titles of some of the rubrics in the Mahāvyutpatti allow us to be more specific. Five headings reveal the provenance of the expressions they accommodate: (1) Mvy #7654 derives from the Buddhāvatāmsaka, (2) Mvy #7779 from the Gaṇḍavyūha, (3) Mvy #7912 from the Lalitavistara, and (4) Mvy #8695 from the Pravrajyāvastu (Eimer 1985). (5) Mvy #504 lists 118 meditations (samādhi) supposedly derived from Prajñāpāramitā texts (śes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i naṅ nas 'byun ba'i tiṅ ne 'dzin gyi mīn la), but does not reveal a specific source.

6. Rin-chen bkra-śis, the author of the seventeenth-century Li śi gur khaṅ reports that the Mahāvyutpatti was composed ‘during the reign of King Khri Ral-pa-can by sKa (-ba dPal brtsegs), Chog (-ro Klu'i rgyal-mtshan), Žaṅ (-ban Ye śes sde) and others’. In later Tibetan accounts, the first two are often cited as the sole authors of the Madhyavyutpatti. Their contribution to the Mahāvyutpatti remains therefore somewhat uncertain (Taube 1978, 174, n.29).

7. Berthold Laufer (1898, 548) was perhaps the first to come to this conclusion.
We possess some information about the origin of the vinaya section (Mvy #8170–9413). Hu-von Hinüber linked one whole rubric (Mvy #9036) and several expressions within another section (Mvy #9200: 9263–9289) to Guṇaprabha’s Vinayasūtra and Vinayasūtravṛtti. Unless the compilers of the Mahāvyutpatti had access to a redaction of the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya that is no longer available, Guṇaprabha enjoyed seemingly greater esteem than the vinaya itself (Hu-von Hinüber 1997b, 343–4). Hu-von Hinüber’s findings widen the field and compel us to include also non-canonical treatises within the purview of our investigation.

Since the Mahāvyutpatti contains almost ten thousand entries assembled by a dozen or more scholars from hundreds of translations, we have little choice but to examine each of its rubrics on its own. In order to give structure to this process, I propose to divide the rubrics into three genres. First, there are those that reproduce established lists. Enumerations of this kind, in particular if their content is rare or unusual, are easier to trace than groups that consist of common expressions. The 17 titles of the Vinayavastu, now linked to the Vinayasūtra, belong to this category. Second, other lists have a specific but widely used content, such as Mvy #232 ‘About the names of the thirty-two physical characteristics of a Mahāpuruṣa’. Since this list was codified early and appears in similar form in numerous texts, it would probably be very difficult to connect it to any one particular source. Third, there are a good number of sections without Indian precedent. These were put together by the team and consist of expressions drawn from a range of texts. Their composite nature renders them untraceable as a whole. It might still be possible to identify within them individual subgroups, but this would require a very substantial search effort. The third category includes, for example, the epithets of the Tathāgata in Mvy #81, the list of 104 titles of Buddhist scriptures in Mvy #1329 and the extensive inventory of śrāvaka qualities reproduced in Mvy #1077. Since the last type offers no real prospect of identification, I propose to concentrate on those lists with an established, stable content. At the hub of my search I place Mahāyāna sūtras. Since the Mahāvyutpatti was conceived at a time when Mahāyāna spirituality was still a key concern to Tibet’s ruling class, a large proportion of its resources set aside for religious patronage were directed towards the translation of its texts. As a result, Mahāyāna sūtras would have been a natural first port of call, offering an abundant supply of Sanskrit expressions. Furthermore, the Mahāvyutpatti’s very purpose was of course to systematize the language used in the translation effort. This would have tied its content intrinsically to the texts whose translation it was designed to facilitate.

To begin with, we need to select a suitable Category I list. Ideally, it should consist of a set of prominent and conspicuous yet relatively rare expressions.

8. Hu-von Hinüber 1997a; 1997b. The second publication (1997b) is particularly useful since its notes give a number of good leads to previous research on the Mahāvyutpatti and its commentary, the Madhyayavutpatti.

9. Many of these translations are recorded in the Ldan-dkar-ma catalogue, named after the palace where a large part of the translation activity took place (Lalou 1953).
It is important for them to stand out in order to allow ready identification. But they must not be too popular either since this would make it very difficult to establish their precise origin. I spotted such a list while mapping the different functions of dhāraṇīs. A handful of sūtras preserve short enumerations of dhāraṇīs practised by bodhisattvas in the more advanced stages of the path. Some of these resemble a dhāraṇī list included in the Mahāvyutpatti (#748). In one text the concurrence is complete, in others only partial. Three of them are probably related and served as prototype for the Mahāvyutpatti dhāraṇīs. But we are now jumping ahead of ourselves. Let us first examine the Mahāvyutpatti list and its environment.

Mahāvyutpatti #748 consists of twelve dhāraṇīs all attributed to bodhisattvas. It is surrounded by five other groups of bodhisattva practice. These include a group of nine bodhisattva meditations (samādhi) (#738), twelve bodhisattva powers (bala) (#761), ten bodhisattva abilities (vaśitā) (#772), four bodhisattva assurances (vaśārādyā) (#783) and eighteen exclusive bodhisattva qualities (āvenika dharma) (#788). At first sight, the five seem familiar since sets of practices with identical titles and similar scope feature in many Mahāyāna sūtras. But this is deceptive. First, in the sūtras these practices are usually associated with the tathāgata, not with the bodhisattva. Secondly, their content is completely different. The two must therefore not be conflated. Since the Mahāvyutpatti positions the six groups next to each other, they probably serve as a catalogue of minor practices and complement the ten perfections (pāramitā) cited elsewhere (#915). Despite their prominence in the Mahāvyutpatti, little has been written about these bodhisattva dharmas. Apart from Étienne Lamotte, Sylvain Lévi and Franklin Edgerton, nobody seems to have even noticed them. What is their origin and how, if really so obscure, did they end up in the Mahāvyutpatti? Do they derive from the tathāgata qualities or constitute a separate tradition?

The first ‘modern’ reference to these six categories appears in Lévi’s translation of the Sūtrālāṃkāra (1911, 27, n.3). In an attempt to explain two sets of powers (bala) and assurances (vaśārādyā) that, according to the Sūtrālāṃkāra, signal membership in the tathāgata family (gotra), Lévi points to lists with identical titles (both for the buddha and bodhisattva) in the Mahāvyutpatti. He does not know what to make of them though, calling the bodhisattva vaśārādyā ‘une list fort obscure’. Edgerton’s discussion does not go much further. Although he cites all six, because he aligns them, like Lévi before him, with the tathāgata qualities,

10. The tathāgata qualities appear themselves in Mvy #117–347. For a canonical discussion of these attributes, turn, for example, to the Tathāgatamahākarunānirdeśa where they are called tathāgata activity (mDo sde, Pa, 185r6–216v1). The Bodhisattvapiṭaka-sūtra contains a similar exposition (dKon brtsegs, Ga, 8r6–48v6). I analyse these parallels in more detail later on. All references to the Tibetan bKa’gyur and bsTan ’gyur are to the sDe dge Edition (Taipei) prepared under the supervision of A. W. Barber (1991). In the transliteration of Tibetan terms, I follow the Library of Congress system.

11. I discuss their interpretation, for what it is worth, further below. But we should not pitch our expectations too high, since none of the three has much to say about those practices.
he soon gets stuck. The *bala* and *āvenika* lists, Edgerton reports, are ‘wholly different’ according to everything else he has seen and he describes the samādhi list as an ‘ad hoc invention’ (1953, 569). Lamotte’s analysis yields a little more. He identifies four texts that contain references to our bodhisattva dharmas (Śūraṃgasamādhi, Buddhāvataṃsaka, Vikurvaṇarājaparipṛcchā and Ratnamegha) but does not probe their connection with the Mahāvyutpatti (1970–81: 1605–8). To Lamotte these practices are relatively late, in particular if compared to the age of the Buddha attributes (p. 1606).

Today, fifty years on, we can say a great deal more about the bodhisattva dharmas and their sources. References to the six categories occur in half a dozen sūtras. The most important remains the Ratnameghasūtra (Rtm), as it contains the full set. Other material is buried in the expositions of the Tathāgatagunājñānācintyaviṣayavatāravirāja and Tathāgataguṇajñācintyaviṣayavatāravirājadeśa. Their accounts, in turn are complemented by a handful of citations from the Gaṇḍavyūha, Sāgara-pārājaparipṛcchā, Aṣṭasāhasrika-pārājaparipṛcchā, Pañcaviṃśatisūtra, Daśasahāsrika and Śatasahāsrika Prajñāpāramitā. Let us begin with the Ratnamegha.

**THE BODHISATTVA DHARMAS OF THE RATNAMEGHA**

The Ratnamegha has long been recognized to rank among the most authoritative Mahāyāna sūtras. It is available in four Chinese translations (T. 489, T. 658, T. 659, T.660), an eighth-century Tibetan translation (sDe dge no. 231) and a large number of extracts in Sanskrit preserved in Buddhist exegetical literature. A quick glance at commentarial sources within arm’s reach shows that it is cited in many places. Śāntideva, for example, quotes from the Ratnamegha no less than 29 times in the Śikṣāsamuccaya (Bendall 1897–1902, 7.13, etc.). The sūtra appears also four times in the Ākṣayamatinirdeṣṭaṣṭīkā and Bhāvanākrama (Tucci 1978, 514.14, 530.8–9, 531.23, 533.18), three times in the Sūtrasamuccaya (Pāsādika 1989, 69.6, 93.22, 136.6), twice in the Abhisamayālaṃkārālokā Prajñāpāramitā (Wogihara 1932, 64.8–9, 960.6) and once each in the Madhyamakāvatāra (La Vallée Poussin [1907–12] 1970b, 334–8). To be fair, Edgerton refers to a parallel listing in the Dharmasaṅgraha (Müller & Wenzel 1885, §74) and Daśabhūmika (Rahder 1926, 70.8–18) for the vaśitās but his other leads are of little value, since they point to occurrences of the root term (vaśi, bala, dhāraṇī, samādhi, etc.) without context.

12. To first sight, these references appear promising. However, three of the four sūtras transmit only the names of the categories. Their content is quite different. The Ratnamegha is the only one that preserves the titles as well as the individual practices cited in the Mahāvyutpatti categories.
13. I would like to thank Peter Skilling for drawing my attention to this parallel. Without this crucial lead, my investigation would have taken a very different direction.
14. For a full list, see Bendall (1897–1902, 380).
15. For a full list, see Bendall (1897–1902, 380).
16. bsTan 'gyur, mDo sde, Ci, 66r5, 101r5–v4, 125r1–4, 125v7–126r2.
13.12)\textsuperscript{17} and Prasannapadā (La Vallée Poussin [1903–1913] 1970a, 225.7). No doubt, a more systematic search would yield numerous other citations.

Most sections of the Ratnamegha are devoted to the bodhisattva path. Its exposition is broken down into about one hundred lists, each describing ten practices or qualities. Since no other sūtra relies quite as heavily on enumerations, they have come to form the text’s hallmark. It opens with a description of the better-known bodhisattva practices. This includes, in due order, the ten perfections (pāramitā: Wa, 11v–37r\textsuperscript{7}), nine bodhisattva meditations (samādhi: 47r–v1), twelve bodhisattva memories (dhāraṇī: 47v–3), six super-knowledges (abhijñā: 47v3–5), ten bodhisattva abilities, (vaśītā: 47v5–48r\textsuperscript{3}), ten bodhisattva powers (bala: 48r3–4), four bodhisattva assurances (vaiśāradya: 48r5–7) and eighteen exclusive bodhisattva qualities (āvenika: 48v1–6). Next, the sūtra gives four lists of attributes connected with the Buddha: ten tathāgata abilities (vaśītā: 48v6–49r2), four tathāgata assurances (vaiśāradya: 49r2–4), eighteen exclusive tathāgata qualities (āvenika: 49r4–v1) and thirty-two kinds of tathāgata compassion (karuṇā: 49v2–51r5). After this interlude about the Buddha, the text returns to the bodhisattva. Now it shifts its attention to the minor practices. These it divides into eighty-eight categories, most of which consist of ten constituents each (Wa, 54v1–109r3). Some of them are quite well known (e.g. apramāṇas, dhūtaguṇas) but many others are obscure. Most have no counterpart elsewhere, at least not in the format in which they appear here. I shall return to these practices later on. This section pretty much concludes the text.

A little earlier we established that the Ratnamegha was a frequently cited, and presumably popular, text in Buddhist India. I shall now present evidence that its fame reached well beyond the subcontinent, that its content helped to shape the Mahāvyutpatti. Much of my argument derives from the striking similarities that prevail between the lists of bodhisattva practices in those two texts. Broadly speaking, my analysis covers sequence, content and chronology. The parallels in organization are the most conspicuous, and hence make a good starting-point. Both Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti arrange their lists in similar sequence. The Ratnamegha orders them as follows: samādhi, dhāraṇī, abhijñā, vaśītā, bala, vaiśāradya and āvenika. The Mahāvyutpatti starts with the meditations (#738) and then proceeds to the dhāraṇīs (#748), powers (#761), abilities (#772), assurances (#783) and exclusive bodhisattva qualities (#788). In other words, it reverses the bala/vaśītā order and omits the abhijñās. Since the Mahāvyutpatti is wholly composite, compiled from multiple sources and governed by a strict editorial code, its organization is probably younger. The scholars who oversaw its gestation would have spotted that the super-knowledges are normally classed as buddha qualities.\textsuperscript{18} As

\textsuperscript{17} In his index, La Vallée Poussin lists a second Ratnamegha reference on page 222.11. This, however, is wrong since no such citation appears on that page or anywhere else in the text.

\textsuperscript{18} The Tathāgatamahākarunānirdesa (Pa, 197r5–200rs), for instance, ranks three of them as tathāgata activities (de bźin gśegs pa’i p’hrin las), nos 8–10. The Bodhisattvapitaka-sūtra (dKon brtsegs, Ga, 25r7–28v4) discusses the abhijñās in Chapter 4, ‘About the Inconceivability of the Tathāgata’ (de bźin gśegs pa’i bsam gyis mi khyab pa’i le’u (Kha, 288r1–Ga, 48v7)).
a result, they moved them to the front among the tathāgata attributes which open the Mahāvyutpatti. If the tathāgata qualities were compiled first, inspired by piety, convenience or chance, their order would have probably shaped the organization of the bodhisattva qualities. Since most sūtras place the tathāgata vaśītās immediately before the vaiśāradyas, the balas had to be placed ahead of the vaśītās. This measure aligned the bodhisattva practices with the more authoritative tathāgata attributes. The relocation of the abhijñās and adjustments within the samādhi list (discussed below) show that the Mahāvyutpatti did not just copy the Ratnamegha. In order to achieve an appropriate configuration, it subjected the content of the sūtra to careful scrutiny, moved it around or deleted parts as necessary.

However persuasive, parallels in sequence alone are insufficient to establish provenance. For this we need to examine the contents of the lists. I reproduce first the Ratnamegha version. The Sanskrit stems from the Mahāvyutpatti. The annotations after the Sanskrit highlight Tibetan variants in the Mahāvyutpatti.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: Ten bodhisattva meditations (byaṅ chub sems dpa’i tiṅ Ṉe ’dzin)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Rin chen kun tu ’phags pa (Mvy 739: ratnasamudgata but reads ’phags for ’phags pa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Šin tu gnas pa (Mvy 740: supratiṣṭhīta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Mi sgul ba (Mvy 741: ākampya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Phyir mi ldog pa (Mvy 742: avinivartaniyā)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Rin chen ’byuṅ gnas (Mvy 743: ratnākara but reads dkon mchog for rin chen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Ni ma’i od kyi gzi brjid (Mvy 744: sūryaprabhateja)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Don thams cad grub pa (Mvy 745: sarvārthasiddha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Ye sès sgron ma (Mvy 746: jñānolka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Da ltar gyi sans rgyas mṅon du bźugs pa (Mvy 747: pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthita but reads mṅon sum du for mṅon du)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) dPa’ bar ’gro ba’i tiṅ Ṉe ’dzin (śūraṃgamasamādhi but not given in Mvy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the meditations cited in both Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti are virtually identical. Differences in the Tibetan reflect editorial preference and do not call into question the Sanskrit match. The only difference is in volume. The Mahāvyutpatti gives nine samādhis while the Ratnamegha has ten. The missing meditation, Ratnamegha samādhi 10 (dpa’ bar ’gro ba’i tiṅ Ṉe ’dzin), is the famous śūraṃgamasamādhi, which occurs already in Mvy #504 as the first of 118 meditations of Prajñāpāramitā origin (#505). Its inclusion in #504 explains its omission from the bodhisattva samādhis. The compilers sought to avoid duplication; none of the remaining nine has a counterpart among the Prajñāpāramitā samādhis.

19. See, for example, the tathāgata description in the Mahāyānopadesa-sūtra (mDo sde, Ba, 281r3–297r3), which gives the following order: vaśītā, vaiśāradya, āveṇika. The Ratnacūḍaparipṛcchā records the same sequence (dkon brtseg, Cha, 228v5–6). The Tibetan version of the Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi (Harrison 1978, 169–85 (20A–22B)) replaces the vaśītās with the ten balas but otherwise follows the same order. In his translation, Harrison provides a fine English interpretation of the balas, vaiśāradyas and āveṇika dharmas (1990, 156–71). For a full discussion of the ten powers, assurances and exclusive buddha qualities, see Lamotte (1970–1981, 1505–1613, 1625–61).
The twelve dhāraṇīs of the Ratnamegha (reproduced in Table 2) constitute an exact match of Mvy #748. The Tibetan differs slightly twice (2, 9). Both cases mirror variants in translation terminology and do not affect the underlying Sanskrit. It is curious though that the Mahāvyutpatti favours nes pa over rnam par gdon mi za ba for niścaya (#757), given that it renders viniścaya through rnam par gdon mi za ba in Mvy #1382. This could of course be intentional, but might also be an editorial slip.

Once again, the Mahāvyutpatti/Ratnamegha lists run very close (Table 3). This time, they display discrepancies in organization, not translation. Rtm vaśitā 7 appears as Mvy vaśitā 8, Rtm vaśitā 8 as Mvy vaśitā 9 and Rtm vaśitā 9 as Mvy vaśitā 7. Otherwise, the two are identical. References to bodhisattva vaśitās are quite rare. I found only three other lists in the sūtras. Of these, the ten vaśitās of the Daśabhūmika (Rahder 1926, 70.8–18) are probably most famous. The same set surfaces twice in the Tgijn (Tsa, 129v2–130r1, 135v1–2), once with commentary and once as a plain list. The Ratnacūḍaparipṛcchā (dKon brtsegs, Cha, 231r4–233r3) preserves a different group of vaśitās (tshe, lus, chos, byin gyis rlabs). But for the first, this does not match the Ratnamegha version.
Table 4 gives the bodhisattva balas as recorded in the Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti. Like the vaśītas, the bala lists possess identical content but differ in arrangement. Rtm bala 6 corresponds to Mvy bala 7 and Rtm bala 7 matches Mvy bala 6. Apart from this, the two are the same.

Table 5 reproduces the bodhisattva assurances as they appear in the Ratnamegha. Again, there is no substantive difference between the Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti. Except for a handful of redactional variants in the Tibetan, the lists are virtually identical.

20. The bodhisattva powers (bala) and bodhisattva assurances (vaiśāradya) are discussed in Lamotte (1970–81, 1605–1613). He also cites two sets of exclusive bodhisattva qualities (āveṇika dharma) but offers little by way of explanation (p. 1607). Apart from the Ratnamegha, in the sūtras the three occur together only in the Vikurvaṇarājaparipṛcchā. As in the Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti, the powers appear here first (mDo sde, Ba, 202v–203v1), followed by four assurances(203v1–5) and eighteen exclusive bodhisattva qualities (203v5–207v2). Since the Vikurvaṇarājaparipṛcchā preserves a different set of vaiśāradyas and āveṇika dharmas, it cannot have been the source for the Mahāvyutpatti.
Table 6 does not require much comment. It enumerates the eighteen exclusive *bodhisattva* qualities (*āveṇika dharma*). Also here, *Ratnamegha* and *Mahāvyutpatti* preserve identical lists. Even though the *āveṇika dharma*s constitute the most voluminous group by far, they correspond practically word for word, arranged in the same order, in both texts.

In sum, for five of the six categories the *Ratnamegha* and *Mahāvyutpatti* give the same practices and adopt matching principles of organization. The only discrepancy occurs in the meditation group where the *Mahāvyutpatti* is one *samādhi* short. Since it lists the missing meditation elsewhere in a prominent position, this exclusion must have been a deliberate editorial decision to avoid repetition within its rubrics. The parallels between the *Ratnamegha* and *Mahāvyutpatti* suggest that the two are connected. Since the *Ratnamegha* was composed before the
Mahāvyutpatti, it was either the source for the Mahāvyutpatti or both took material from a third, as yet unidentified, common work.

In order to test the hypothesis of a shared source, we need to find another text with all six lists. Lévi and Edgerton knew of no such work. Lamotte met with similar enumerations in the Śūraṃgamasamādhi, Buddhāvatamsaka and Vikurvanarājaparipṛcchā. But since the content of these does not correspond to even one of our lists, let alone all six, they must constitute a different tradition. Perhaps we need to look elsewhere. As it is not viable to search the whole bKa’ ‘gyur for all six lists, I limit my efforts to the first two: the nine samādhis and twelve dhāranīs. Any text that served as blueprint for the Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti must include those as well. If there is none, we can be fairly confident that the Mahāvyutpatti took its bodhisattva practices from the Ratnamegha. If we find a text with both lists, we examine them and look for the remaining four.

I begin with the samādhi list. Descriptions of meditations are very frequent in Mahāyāna sūtras. Some develop in-depth discussions of the actual contemplative processes, but most give only the names of the samādhis and perhaps the benefits that derive from their practice. As a rule, the meditations are either connected with the buddha or the bodhisattva. In total, I counted over 1250 different titles. This figure is certain to go up if one were to scan all texts of the bKa’ ‘gyur and include references to individual samādhis. For this paper, I searched the Phal po che (Avataṃsaka), dKon brtsegs (Ratnakūṭa) and mDo sde (Sūtra) sections for lists of nine or more meditations. The vast majority is linked with the Tathāgata (1068 meditations over nine lists). Bodhisattva samādhis are fairly rare and appear by title only in the Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā and Gaṇḍavyūha (175 over two lists).21 Among all those lists, I found not a single one that would match, or even approximate, Mvy #738. Several of its samādhis occur in other sūtras but never as a group.22 Of course, until we have identified, and then examined, all the sources behind the Mahāvyutpatti, this does not establish a connection with the Ratnamegha. But it gives us some indication of the rarity of its bodhisattva samādhis. It appears that not many people knew of those meditations, individually or as a set.

21. I spotted these meditations in the following sources. (1) Tathāgata samādhis: Maitreyaparipṛcchā, dKon brtsegs, Cha, 108r–1–4 (10 meditations); Karanḍavyāha, mDo sde, Ja, 221v5–222v3 (64 meditations), 235r2–7 (17 meditations), 243v7–245r3 (34 meditations); Tgīn, mDo sde, Tsa, 139v6–140v4 (47 meditations); Drumakinnararājaparipṛcchā, Harrison (1992, 97.10–99.15) (50 meditations), Bodhisattvapitāka, Pagel (1995, 419–22) (101 meditations); Aksayamatinirdeśa (Braarvig 1993, 58.33–60.19) (118 meditations); Mahāmegha-sūtra, mDo sde, Wa, 146v5–153v4 (436 meditations); Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Ghoṣa (1902–14, 1412.8–1414.21) (121 meditations); Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Mitra (1888, 490.11–492.6) (60 meditations). (2) Bodhisattva samādhis: Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā, mDo sde, Pa, 290r6–292v6 (78 meditations); Gaṇḍavyāha, Suzuki & Idzumi (1949, 36.22–40.1) (97 meditations) (Phal po che, 304v5–308r2).

22. The ratnākarasamādhi (Mvy #743, Rtm 5), for example, features in position 8 of the list of the Drumakinnararājaparipṛcchā (Harrison 1992, 98.1); the śūraṃgamasamādhi is included in the Satasāhasrikā (Ghoṣa 1902–14, 1412.8).
References to dhāraṇīs, like meditations, are a regular feature in sūtra expositions. About a hundred texts speak of dhāraṇīs. Some interpret them as a type of scriptural memory that bodhisattvas produce during the advanced phases of the path. Others use the term to refer to magic spells recited for worldly or spiritual gain. Even though we possess now several good publications of dhāraṇī practice, significant gaps remain. For example, we still await a study mapping its full semantic range. Very often, dhāraṇī play a role in the acquisition of learning and thus promote recollection or understanding. Elsewhere, the term dhāraṇī is close to mantra and introduces a particular magic formula. Mahāyāna sūtras preserve a handful of expressions where dhāraṇī and mantra are juxtaposed. The Sūryagarbha and Buddhānāmasahasrāpanaṣatacaturtripaṇcadaśa, for instance, speak of dhāraṇīmantra. Others employ the terms dhāraṇīmantrapada,23 dhāraṇīpada24 and vidyamantrapada (pada).25 When dhāraṇī introduces a magic formula, the term mantra-pada is often used to close the spell. This happens in twenty-one sūtras. A small number of texts speak of non-Buddhists mantras, in particular dravidian mantras, brahmin mantras, vaiśya mantras and śudra mantras.26 In total, I identified thirty-seven sūtras that contain magic formulae. In some, the spells appear towards the end to give protection and closure, but many others place them in the centre of their discourse.28 Altogether, the sūtras preserve about one hundred and eighty

23. For example, see the Anantamukhanirhāra (Inagaki 1987, 150.3–4); Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Kern & Nanjio 1908–12, 396.3, 400.1); Mahāmegha, mDo sde, Wa, 259r4.
24. This expression appears in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Kern & Nanjio 1908–12, 398.3/5/8, 399.2/7/9); Mahāmegha, mDo sde, Wa, 257r4; Daśakṣitigarbha, mDo sde, Ža, 114v7, 115v2 and Daśabhūmika (Rahder 1926, 79.10).
25. See, Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā, mDo sde, Pa, 318v5, 327r1; Daśakṣitigarbha, mDo sde, Ža, 115v5, Saptabuddhaka, mDo sde, Ya, 14r2–5, Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā, mDo sde, Pha, 196v1, 197r1; Sūryagarbha-sūtra, mDo sde, Ža, 124r7, Za, 126v7, 127r4.
26. This term, although cited several times in exegetical literature, is not very frequent in the sūtras. I found only one reference in the bka’-gyur: In the Bhadrakarātri (mDo sde, Sa, 162v4), a text belonging to the Śrāvakayāna, Dravidian is translated with ’gro ldiṅ pa (dramidha). For a detailed analysis of one such Dravidian spell, see Bernhard (1967).
27. To my knowledge, these terms are used only once, and not in a Mahāyāna sūtra. They are cited in the Sārdūlakarṇāvadāna (mDo sde, Ah, 249v7, 250r2, 250r3/4). Since the avadāna does not discuss the content of these mantras, there is not much we can say about them. At any rate, they do not appear to be Buddhist in origin.
28. These include the following texts: Acintyabuddhaviṣayanirdeśa, Ākāśagarbha, Anantamukhinirhāra, Āṭānāṭīya, Bhadrakarātri, Brahmaviśeṣacintiparipṛcchā, Buddhākṣepaṇa, Buddhānāmasahasrāpanaṣatacaturtripaṇcadaśa, Daśakṣitigarbha, Drumakīmmanarājaparipṛcchā, Dvādaśabuddhaka, Gaganagarājaparipṛcchā, Karunāpāndarika, Lankāvatāra, Mahāmegha, Mahāmeghavāyumanḍalaparivartasarvanāgahṛdaya, Mahāpañirinvasānātra, Mahāsāma, Nāmāstīṣṭātikā, Prajñāpāramitā, Phags pa ṇtogs po chen po yoṅs su rayas pa’i mdo, Ratnakṛtuparivarta, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, Sāgarajaparipṛcchā, Sāgaranāgarājajaparipṛcchā, Saptabuddhaka, Samyagācāravṛttaganavarnavivayasyānī, Saptapāṇaṣaṣṭikā Prajñāpāramitā, Sarvadharma-ṇaśirvāna, Sarvatabhāgāthaśṛṅghānaśravasattvavālōkena, Śrīmahādevīvyākaraṇa, Sūryagarbha, Suvarnaprabhāsottama, Tathāgataguhya, Tathāgata-śrīśamaya, Vaiśāḷipraveśa, Vimalaprabhāpaparipṛcchā.
(different) spells. Some use very similar material, perhaps derived from a shared source. Their length varies considerably. Many consist of twelve or fewer components, other are much longer. Most have between thirty and fifty elements. The longest spell, transmitted in the Ratnaketuparivarta, divides into 118 components (Kurumiya 1978, 131.6–135.4). Table 7 assembles the principal expressions related to the term dhāraṇī.

References to dhāraṇī (gzuṅs) as a cognitive quality appear in fifty-three sources. Many of them align dhāraṇī with recollection (anusmṛti), meditation

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29. The status of some of the formulae is uncertain since many duplicate parts of other spells. In order to resolve this and establish the exact number, one would need to enter all formulae into a database and establish viable identity criteria. My figure does not take into account overlap.

30. A detailed account of the link between dhāraṇī and knowledge is preserved in the Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanā which contains one of the earliest discussions of bodhisattva dhāraṇī practice (mDo sde, Tsha, 238v2–239v1):

Next, Mañjuśrī explained at length the Dharma exposition called Dhāraṇī to the assembled bodhisattvas. What is dhāraṇī here? Dhāraṇī is infallible recollection, unwavering comprehension, lucid intelligence, realised understanding, knowledge to explain the path by pointing to the true nature of all factors, safeguarding the fruit after one has attained it, knowledge how to enter into flawless conduct, knowledge of the different wording of all teachings. O son of good family, dhāraṇī causes [the bodhisattva] to hold in mind (‘dzin par byed do) all factors of existence. How does dhāraṇī cause him to hold them in mind? It causes him to hold them in mind as empty, signless and wishless. He holds them in mind as dispassionate, abstracted and non-existent, as same, non-abiding, non-originating and non-arising, ... as lacking in self-existence and existence, ... as lacking in self and sentence ... as non-cognized (gzuṅ ba med pa), non-practised (sbyor ba med pa) and non-arisen (ma byuṅ ba), as neither seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or mentally apprehending. Therefore it is called dhāraṇī.

31. I noted the use of the term dhāraṇī in the following sūtras, listed here in alphabetical order: Ajāta-śrutakaukṛtyavinodanā, Aksayamatipariprccchā, Anantamudrā, Āṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Āṣṭaśāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Bhadrakalpika, Bhadramāyakāravyākārana, Bodhisattvapāṭīka, Buddhaḥkṣepaṇa, Buddhāsānti, Catuskanihāra, Daśabhūmika, Drumakinnarājapariprccchā, Gaganavarṇavinayāksānti, Ganganvīya, Guhāraṇamānusankusumitapariprccchā, Kāśyapaparivarta, Lallitavistarā, Mahāprātihāryanirdeśa, Mahāyānopadesa, ‘Phags pa byaṅ chub sems dpa’ byams pa dga’ ldan gnam du skye ba blais pa’ i mdo, Pañcaviṃśatikā Prajñāpāramitā, Pitāputrasamāgamana, Prajñāpāramitā Namāṣṭāśatikā, Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhavasthitasamādhi, Āṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Ratnacūḍapariprccchā, Ratnolka-dhāraṇī, Ratnolka-dhāraṇī, Samādhirāja, Samādhiṣvagottama, Samādhyagrottama, Samājācāravṛttapraganavanavinaḥkānti, Sarvavidyalayaśangagraha, Sarvavidyalayaśaṃkara, Sarvaśātāsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Sarvākṣarājapariprccchā, Sutthitamahābhadrakalpikā, Tathāgatagunjanācintyavajrayātānirdeśa, Tathāgataguhṣa, Tathāgatajñānamudrāsamādhi, Ugradattapariprccchā, Ugrāṇaḥdāraṇī, Vajramahābhadrā, Vajrapāṇi Prajñāpāramitā, Vidyutprāptapariprccchā, Vimalakīrtinirdeśa. This list demonstrates, if nothing else, that dhāraṇīs are much more frequent in the sūtras than hitherto assumed. It also establishes that they are not limited to a particular time period. Some of the sūtras that include dhāraṇīs have early Chinese translations (Ajātaśrutakaukṛtyavinodanā, Drumakinnarājapariprccchā), others are a good deal later (Samādhīrāja). A study of the use of dhāraṇīs in Mahāyāna sūtras, based on these and related sources, is in progress.

32. Two texts in particular connect dhāraṇī practice with the recollection of the Buddha. In the Anantarukṣaparinirṛkṣa, they hold in mind
the [preceding 108-component] dhāraṇī, contemplates neither conditioned nor unconditioned factors of existence, nor does he grasp them, hanker after them or denominate them. ... He practices only the recollection of the Buddha (sain rgyas rjes su dran pa)’ (mdo sde, Na, 292r–v3; Inagaki 1987, 153.1–15).

Jñānagarbha, in his commentary to the Anantamukhanirhāra, links artha-dhāraṇī with the practice of buddha recollection (Inagaki 1987, 102). The Gaṇḍavyūha refers to buddha recollection twice in a list of ten dhāraṇī cycles (Suzuki & Idzumi [1934] 1949, 305.17–306.1; Phal po che, A, 150r–v4):

Furthermore, I shall expound the Doctrine to sentient beings through ten thousand dhāraṇī cycles (dhāraṇi manḍala). What ten? (1) The dhāraṇī cycle called ‘gathering the whole ocean of the Dharma’ (sarvadharmasamudrasamavasaraṇa), (2) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘sustaining power of all factors of existence’ (sarvadharmādhiṣṭhāna), (3) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘holding in mind all clouds of the Dharma’ (sarvadharmameghasampratīccha) (4) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘lamp of the recollection of all tathāgatas’ (sarvatathāgatasmṛtipradīpa), (5) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘lamp of the ocean of the deeds of all beings’ (sarvasattvakarmasamudrapradīpa) [Tib: ‘essence which illuminates the ocean of the deeds of all beings’], (6) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘gathering [Tib: ‘applying oneself to’] the whole ocean of the methods of the vehicles (sarvyānana samudravimalasamavasaraṇa), (7) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘pronouncing the turning of the wheel of the names of all tathāgatas’ [Tib: ‘essence of the lamp of the whole ocean of buddhas’] (sarvatathāgatanāmacakrāvartanirghoṣa), (8) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘gathering of [Tib: ‘applying oneself to’] the elucidation of the ocean of previous resolutions of the buddhas of the three times’ (tryadhbuddhapürvapranidhānasāgaranirdeśa samavasaraṇa), (9) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘swift turning towards all factors of existence’ [Tib: ‘proclamation of the turning (gloṅ) of the wheel of the names of all tathāgatas’] (sarvadharmābhimukhāvartavega), and (10) dhāraṇī cycle called ‘light of entry into all-knowing’ [Tib: ‘going forth to the power of all-knowing’] (sarvajñatāveśaprabha).

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**TABLE 7: Variants in dhāraṇī terminology**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dhāraṇī/Mantra term</th>
<th>Canonical source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dhāraṇīmantra</td>
<td>Buddhānāmasāhasrapañcaśatacautartripañčadāsa Śūryagarbha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhāraṇīmantrapada</td>
<td>Anantamukhanirhāra Mahāmegha Saddharmapuṇḍarīka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhāraṇipaḍa</td>
<td>Daśaksitigarbha Daśabhūmika Mahāmegha Saddharmapuṇḍarīka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidyantra(pada)</td>
<td>Gaṇanagaṇaparipṛcchā Daśaksitigarbha Sāgaranāgarāparipṛcchā Saptabuddhaka Śūryagarbha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dravidian mantra</td>
<td>Bhadrakarātī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmīn, vaisāya and śudra mantra</td>
<td>Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna</td>
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(samādhi), mindfulness (smṛti)\textsuperscript{33} or inspired eloquence (pratibhāna).\textsuperscript{34} Their frequency in the sūtras and association with key Buddhist practices render dhāraṇīs, both as an instrument of cognition and a resource in magic, central to the bodhisattva training.\textsuperscript{35} Such prominence would also explain their inclusion in the Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti alongside other key bodhisattva dharmas.

Since both texts give us specific dhāraṇī titles, we need to narrow down our analysis and focus on sūtras that record the names of dhāraṇīs. Most dhāraṇīs for which we have a title consist of a spell. It is usually appended at the end of the formula. From here it rarely moves. That is to say, the titles of dhāraṇī spells do not appear in lists removed from the formula they designate. The titles of dhāraṇīs linked with cognition, in contrast, occur rarely in isolation. Most are batched in lists, part of a larger catalogue of practices. In total, I counted forty-three different dhāraṇī titles. Thirty-eight appear in four separate clusters. The remainder

\textsuperscript{33} The connection to mindfulness is explicit in the Ratnacūḍaparipṛcchā, which proffers in general much useful information about the bodhisattva training (dKon brtsegs, Cha, 234r–7):

O son of good family, furthermore, through the bodhisattva’s power of faith, he does not approach any other [teacher] with devotion. Through the power of energy, he does not become dismayed at a later time (bar ma dor). Through the power of mindfulness, he attains dhāraṇī and inspired eloquence. Through the power of meditative understanding, he teaches the factors of existence to be alike (mtshuṅs par chos). Through the power of discriminative understanding, he eliminates all doubt in all sentient beings.

\textsuperscript{34} For a discussion establishing the link between dhāraṇī and pratibhāna, see Braarvig (1985; cf. Lamotte 1970–81, 1860). The Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśa brings many of these associations together into a single catalogue of dhāraṇī practices (alaṃkāra) (mdo sde, Pa, 159r; 164r–165r):

1. O son of good family, the dhāraṇī practices of the bodhisattva are of one kind: infallible recollection. 2. O son of good family, they are two kinds: memory and retention. 3. O son of good family, they are of three kinds: skill in meaning, phonemes and etymology. 4. O son of good family, they are of four kinds: statements free from lust, statements that are refined, statements about liberation and statements without falsehood. 5. O son of good family, they are of five kinds: reliance on meaning, gnosis and sūtras of certain meaning, reliance on the true nature of being, reliance on the supramundane over the mundane. 6. O son of good family, they are of six kinds: [to develop] a conduct that matches one’s statements, [to show] allegiance to statement that correspond with truth, to teach statements that are worthy to be kept in mind without conceit ... 7. O son of good family, they are of seven kinds: [to develop] inspired eloquence that is swift-paced, forceful, quick and dispassionate, that is without interruption, undistorted and consists of definitions (śin tu ṅes pa’i tshig). 8. O son of good family, they are of eight kinds: knowledge of the languages of gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras and mahoragas. 9. O son of good family, they are of nine kinds: lack of worry while in saṃsāra, absence of despondency in speech, fearlessness when explaining the Doctrine, ... 10. O son of good family, they are of ten kinds: knowledge how to teach resolutely to all those who harbour doubts, ... knowledge how to embark on analytic knowledge granted by the Buddha. O son of good family, the ten dhāraṇī practices of the bodhisattva are of this kind.

\textsuperscript{35} Until quite recently, many scholars thought dhāraṇī to be a marginal phenomenon in Mahāyāna sūtras. See, for example, Lamotte (1970–81, 1860) (‘Dans les oeuvres canoniques, les Mantra sont rares et font figure de hors-d’oeuvre.’) Lamotte then proceeds to cite passages from the āgamas and Karuṇāpundarīka that contain mantras.
are scattered over five texts, on occasion in duplicate or replicating dhāraṇīs in the lists.\footnote{These include the Maṅjuśrīmūlakalpa (Vaidya 1964, 8.31–32): meruśikharākūṭāgāra-dhāraṇī, ratnaśikharākūṭāgāra-dhāraṇī, danda-dhāraṇī, nirgraha-dhāraṇī, akāraṇa-dhāraṇī; Pārṇaparipṛcchā (dKon btsegs, Na, 1993r–4): maṇi du thos pa’i dños gzi’i tshig bzi, rnam pa sna tshogs kyi tshig bdun, sgo’i tshig bcu bzi pa; Bhadrakalpika (mDo sde, Ka, 14r4, Ka, 337v5–6): sants rgyas thams cad kyi bka’ dan nes pa’i tshig dan dbyais sdud pa, khyim can; Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśa (mDo sde, Pa, 231r5–233r6): *dhāraṇī-dhāraṇī (gzuṅs gzuṅs); Ratnakēṭuparivarta (Kurumiya 1978, 37.14): ratnakētu-dhāraṇī; Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā (mDo sde, Pha, 137r6): akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī (mi zad pa’i za ma tog ces bya ba’i gzuṅs); Buddhākṣepaṇa (mDo sde, Ya, 48r4): *sarvasiddhajñānamukha (thams cad grub pa’i ye shes kyi sgo); Pañcaśaṅcavātsaśāstrasīki Prajñāpāramitā (Khi kha, Kha, 371v2–372r3): aksayakarana-đhāraṇa, sāgaramudrā-dhāraṇa, *pragrāhaka-dhāraṇi; Daśasāhasri Prajñāpāramitā (Khi kha, Na, 366v2–367r4): aksayakarana, sāgarāmudrā, padmāvīya, *pragrāhaka. I would like to thank Peter Skilling for the dhāraṇī references in the last two Prajñāpāramitā texts.}

**DHĀRAṆĪ LISTS OUTSIDE THE RATNAMEGHA**

I begin our analysis with the ten dhāraṇī cycles (maṇḍala) of the Gaṇḍavyūha as this is fairly well known. It is preserved in Sanskrit and has been available in a critical edition for more than seventy years (Suzuki & Idzumi [1934] 1949, 66.13–23; Phal po che, Kha, 331v4–332r1).

**TABLE 8: The dhāraṇīs of the Gaṇḍavyūha**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) Śrutodgrahaṇa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2) Śāntamukha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Anantāvarta (Mvy 753)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Bhūmyavacāraṇānugama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Tejovāti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Padmāvvyūha (Mvy 755)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Svaraviviktā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Gaganagarbha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Jyotisakūṭa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Sāgaragarbha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How does the content of Table 8 compare to the dhāraṇīs of the Mahāvyutpatti? Two of the ten have a counterpart: anantāvarta (3) and padmāvvyūha (6). The first matches Mvy #753, the second Mvy #755. The other seven have no parallel. Gaṇḍavyūha 10 (sāgaragarbha) resembles Mvy #754 (sāgaramudrā). I conclude that the dhāraṇīs of the Gaṇḍavyūha and Mahāvyutpatti are not particularly close as a group even though they show some overlap. Another list occurs in the Aksayamatiṣṭaparipṛcchā of the Ratnakūṭa collection. This text too distinguishes ten dhāraṇīs (dKon btsegs, Cha, 181r3–6) (Table 9).
TABLE 9: The dhāraṇīs of the Aksāyatamiparipṛcchā

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Khyad par gyi byin gyi brlabs (*viśeṣādhiṣṭhita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>gZan gys mi thub pa (*parājīta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rab tu gnas pa (*pratiṣṭha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>gDul dka’ ba (*durdānta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yon tan sna tshogs (*nāṇāgūṇa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ye šes kyi dkyl ’khor gyi sgron ma (*jñānamandałapradīpa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Khyad par du ’phags pa (*viśiṣṭha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>rNgog pa med pa’i rtog pa (*anāvilakalpa(na))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>sGo mtha’ yas pa’i rgyan (*anantamukhālaṃkāra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Zad mi šes pa’i za ma tog (Mvy 752: akṣayakaṇḍa)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, each dhāraṇī is associated with a particular stage (bhūmi) in ascending order. The last and presumably most advanced dhāraṇī—akṣayakaṇḍa—corresponds to the fourth of the Mahāvyutpatti. None of the remaining nine has an exact counterpart. Three of them share material with the Mahāvyutpatti (sgo mtha’ yas pa’i rgyan, khyad par gyi byin gyi brlabs, rab tu gnas pa) but fall well short of a full match. Clearly, if the Aksāyatamiparipṛcchā or Gaṇḍavyūha were consulted for the Mahāvyutpatti list, they did not impress. Together they would have contributed only three dhāraṇīs. While the two may have inspired the formation of the Ratnamegha list in some loose sense, they are not a credible source for the Mahāvyutpatti.

For this we leave behind the well-charted territory of the Avataṃsaka and Ratnakūṭa collections and enter the Sūtra section of the bKa’ ’gyur. Here we meet with two texts that contain valuable thought on dhāraṇī: the Tathāgata-mahākaruṇānirdeśa (Tmkn) and Tathāgataaṇjañānācintyaviṣayāvataāraṇirdeśa (Tgjn). The Tmkn contains the longest (and perhaps earliest) exposition of bodhisattva dhāraṇī among the sūtras. It develops this in two phases. First, it batches dhāraṇī with three seminal practices (alaṃkāra). All three are well known and constitute together the bedrock of Buddhist spirituality: (1) śīla-alaṃkāra, (2) dhyāna-alaṃkāra and (3) prajñā-alaṃkāra. To this the text adds, crucially for us, (4) dhāraṇī-alaṃkāra (Pa, 159r7–165r3). The juxtaposition of dhāraṇī with śīla, dhyāna and prajñā attests to its status as a major practice. Since it features in fourth position, it was probably still new but accepted nonetheless. Dhāraṇī-alaṃkāra itself consists of ten subcategories, but because none of them bears on the Mahāvyutpatti list we ignore their content for the time being (Pa, 164r1–165r3). The second part of the dhāraṇī exposition is significantly more relevant. It emerges towards the end of the text.

37. The term alaṃkāra possesses a wide semantic range in Indian literature. In poetry it is often rendered by ‘ornament’ or ‘adornment’. Gonda (1975, 265–6) rejects this association for religious texts. References in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa and related works indicate that initially alaṃkāra was not at all about aesthetics. It designated a set of magical-religious expedients bearing ritual function in spiritual practice. Judging by the alaṃkāra passage of the Tmkn, which aligns alaṃkāra with śīla, dhyāna, prajñā and dhāraṇī, this would indeed be a more appropriate interpretation.
where Dhāraṇīśvararāja enquires about the forces that guide the bodhisattva’s conduct in the world. His actions are governed by eight dhāraṇīs (Pa, 219r1–228r2) (Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10: The dhāraṇīs of the Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) sGrva dbyaṅs rnam par dag pa (Mvy 751: viśuddhasvaranirghoṣa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Mi zad pa’i za ma tog (Mvy 752: āksayakaraṇa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) ’Khyil ba mtha’ yas (Mvy 753: anantāvarta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) rGya mtsho’i phyag rgya (Mvy 754: sāgaramudrā)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Pad ma vyūha (Mvy 755 pad ma bkod pa: padmavyūha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Chags pa med pa’i sgor ’jug pa (Mvy 756: asaṅgamukhapraveśa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) So so yān dag par rig pa rnam par ņes pa la ’jug pa (Mvy 757: pratisaṃvinniścayāvatāra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Saṅsrgyas kyil rgyan byin gyis brlabs pa (Mvy 758: buddhālaṃkārādhiṣṭhita)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content of this list runs very close to Mvy #748. Its eight dhāraṇīs are all included in the Mahāvyutpatti, even in identical order. Of course, the Tmkn is four dhāraṇīs shorter, but this does not deflect from the significance of its enumeration. Since Mvy #748 accommodates the whole list, the eight may have been an early prototype. But because the Tmkn list is so much shorter, we need to look for an intermediary that bridged the gap to the Mahāvyutpatti. As it stands today, the Tmkn cannot have been the direct source for either Mvy #748 or the Ratnamegha.

If the dhāraṇīs of the Tmkn, Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti all belong to the same tradition, we need to establish the circumstances that led to the longer list. Was the Ratnamegha the first text to produce the missing four or did it adopt them from another source? This leads us to the Tathāgataugnāṇācintyaviṣayāvatārānirdeśa. The Tgjn is a relatively short and obscure text that describes how spiritual friends (kalyāṇamitra) assist the bodhisattva in his spiritual quest. It matters to us since it cites ten dhāraṇīs among the many benefits that derive from such association (mdo sde, tsa, 140v4–7) (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11: The dhāraṇīs of the Tathāgataugnāṇācintyaviṣayāvatārānirdeśa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Saṅsrgyas kyil su daṅ kha dog mtha’ yas pa yoṅs su ’grub pa sgrub pa (Mvy 760: buddhakāyavarṇapariniṣpattyabhinirhāra, saṅsṛgyas kyil su kha dog yoṅs su rdoṣgs pa mnoṅ par sgrub pa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Ye šes daṅ ldan pa (Mvy 750: jñānavatī, ye šes ldan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) sGrva dbyaṅs rnam par dag pa (Mvy 751: viśuddhasvaranirghoṣa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Mi zad pa’i za ma tog (Mvy 752: āksayakaraṇa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) mTha’ yas ’khyil pa (Mvy 753: anantāvarta, ’khyil ba mtha’ yas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) rGya mtsho’i phyag rgya (Mvy 754: sāgaramudrā)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Padma bkod pa (Mvy 755: padmavyūha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Chags pa med pa’i sgor ’jug pa (Mvy 756: asaṅgamukhapraveśa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) So so yān dag par rig pa rnam par ņes pa la ’jug pa (Mvy 757: pratisaṃvinniścayāvatāra, ņes pa for rnam par ņes pa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Saṅsṛgyas kyil rgyan gyis byin gyis brlabs pa (Mvy 758: buddhālaṃkārādhiṣṭhita, saṅsṛgyas kyil rgyan byin gyis brlabs pa)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So what do we make of this group? How does it help us link the *Tmkn* with Mvy #748? First, we note that it falls still short of the lists in the *Mahāvyutpatti* and *Ratnamegha*. Two dhāraṇīs are missing: abhiṣecanī and anantavarṇa. Both appear at the periphery in position (1) and (11). The *Tgjn* reproduces the middle part or main body of our lists: Mvy #750–58 and Rtm 2–10. It also encompasses the eight dhāraṇīs of the *Tmkn* (*Tgjn* 2–10). Second, the *Tgjn* gives in first position the dhāraṇī that comes last in both *Mahāvyutpatti* and *Ratnamegha* (buddhakāyavarṇapariniṣpattyabhinirhāra). This suggests that the order at the margins had yet to be fixed. The centre ground was secured first. Third, the Tibetan of four dhāraṇīs of the *Tgjn* differs slightly from the version preserved in the *Mahāvyutpatti*, *Ratnamegha* and *Tmkn* (Mvy#750/Rtm2; Mvy#757/Rtm9/Tmkn7; Mvy#758/Rtm10/ Tmkn8; Mvy#760/Rtm12). Finally, the *Tgjn* does not consider its list closed. It speaks of the ten dhāraṇīs as an example of a much larger group (*de dag la sog pa gzuis bye ba khrag khrig bum phrag granis med pa dag kyin*; Tsa, 140v). The *Tmkn* and *Ratnamegha* do not allow for either addition or subtraction. Their lists are tightly indexed to the surrounding discourse and hold a specific place within the matrix of bodhisattva practice. How do we explain these differences?

It is odd that the *Tgjn* should begin its list with a dhāraṇī that marks normally the highpoint of the path and comes elsewhere last while retaining the order of the remaining nine. The explanation lies in the passage that introduces its dhāraṇī cluster. We noted already that the *Tgjn* derives the attainment of dhāraṇī from the company of virtuous friends (Tsa, 128v). Bodhisattvas who cultivate (yoṅs su ’dzin pa) such a relationship obtain two types of dhāraṇī: (1) dbai bskur bar ’gyur ba’i gzuis and (2) rgya mtsho dam pa’i sñiṅ po ddi ma med par snaṅ ba’od gsal ba’i gzuis. The first is very close to Mvy#749/Rtm1 (abhiṣecanī/dbai skur ldan); the second recalls Gaṇḍavyūha 10 (sāgaragarbha/rhya mtsho sñiṅ po). The reference to dbai bskur bar ’gyur ba’i gzuis underscores the *Tgjn*’s proximity to the *Ratnamegha* as this contains a dhāraṇī with a similar title. It is also one of the four not attested in the *Tmkn*. The *Tgjn* contains two more dhāraṇī references. Both speak of a buddhakāya-ananta-varṇa-pariniṣpattyabhinirhāra-dhāraṇī (saṅs rgyas kyi sku daṅ kha dog mtha’ yas yoṅs su ’grub pa) (134v3, 137r5). The title is of interest as it appears to be composite, accommodating two dhāraṇīs cited in the *Ratnamegha*: buddhakāya-varṇa-pariniṣpattyabhinirhāra and ananta-varṇa. If the *Ratnamegha* used the *Tgjn* as source, it is conceivable that it split the compound into two in order to achieve, together with dbai bskur bar ’gyur ba’i gzuis, a list of twelve. Perhaps it is a reflection of their origin that the former are listed next to each in the *Ratnamegha* (11/12). On the other hand, the reference to buddhakāyānantavarnapariniṣpattyabhinirhāra ahead of the list may explain why this dhāraṇī ranks first in the *Tgjn*. It is mentioned twice early on and might have been considered foundational to the whole group. The closing sentence seems to support this as it cites the buddhakāyānantavarnapariniṣpattyabhinirhāra as an example for all other dhāraṇīs produced through trust in the *Tgjn* (139v1, 140v6–7). The Buddha gives it first because he regards it pivotal to all dhāraṇī practice. This may have also been the reason why the *Ratnamegha* moved it to the very top. If we recognize dbai bskur bar ’gyur ba as a variant
translation for abhiṣecanī and divide buddhakāyānanta-varananiṃspattyaabhīnirhāra into ananta[-varṇa] and buddhakāyavaranaparinispatyabhīnirhāra, the gulf to the Ratnamegha is practically closed. Some questions though remain. For example, we still do not know why the Ratnamegha favoured dbaṅ bskur bar ’gyur ba i gzuris over rgya mtsho dam pa i sñin po dri ma med par snaṅ ba ‘od gsal ba i gzuris. Both appear in the prologue to the Tgjin’s dhāraṇī list, yet only the first is included.

The proposed ties between the Tmkn, Tgjin, Ratnamegha and Mvy #748 yield the following chronology. The Tmkn was the first to assemble a group of bodhisattva dhāraṇīs, accompanied by a systematic exposition of their application. The Tgjin adopted the central list but increased the Tmkn’s eight dhāraṇīs to ten. The Ratnamegha, in turn, drew on the Tgjin and added two more dhāraṇīs. In the late eighth century, its list of twelve was spotted by the Tibetans and incorporated into the Mahāvyutpatti. For this transmission to work, we need to compare it to the dates of our texts. I begin with the Mahāvyutpatti. The colophon of the Madhyavyutpatti places the Mahāvyutpatti into the reign of Khri-lde-sroṅ-bstan (CE 798–800, 802–815). Some entries were perhaps prepared a little earlier, but most of the work will have been done in the early ninth century. We know a good deal less about the Ratnamegha. Quotations in the Śikṣāsamuccaya show that it existed, in pretty much its current form, by the eighth century. Because it is cited in the Prasannapadā and Madhyamakāvatāra, it cannot be later than the first half of the seventh century. The Akṣayamatinirdeśāṭīkā, which quotes the Ratnamegha four times, poses some difficulty. The Tibetan tradition attributes the Akṣayamatinirdeśāṭīkā to Vasubandhu (Freeman 1991, 107–8, 112, 114). More recently it has been connected with Sthiramati, redacting material brought together by Vasubandhu before him (Braarvig 1993, cxxviii–cxxx). If Sthiramati was responsible for the final version, as is likely, the Akṣayamatinirdeśāṭīkā moves the terminus ad quem to the middle of the sixth century. The date of its first Chinese translation (T. 658, CE 503) propels the Ratnamegha, now a good fifty years younger, into the late fifth century. This version, though, cannot have been the source for the Mahāvyutpatti since the Chinese does not contain any of our six lists. They appear first in Dharmaruci’s late-seventh-century translation (T. 660, CE 693) (Lamotte 1970–81, 1608). This brings them fairly close to the reign of Khri-lde-sroṅ-bstan and the compilation of the Mahāvyutpatti. It is even conceivable that Dharmaruci used the same Sanskrit reedition as his colleagues in Lhasa a hundred years later. We know much less about the other two sūtras. Quotations of the Tmkn figure in the Ratnagotravibhāga (Johnston 1950, 3.15–17, 6.11–17)38 Madhyamakāvatara (La Vallée Poussin [1907–12] 1970b, 426) and Sūtrasamuccaya (Pāsādika 1989, 30.6–32.7, 129.1–130.14).39 But because these treatises are all quite late, they do not tell us much about its origin. The first Chinese translation of the Tmkn dates to CE 291 (T. 398). This

38. This text, as well the following two treatises, uses the sūtra’s alternative and perhaps more popular title, Dhāraṇīśvararājaparipṛcchā. For more information about this title, see Pagel (2007, 93 n79).
39. For further attestations see Ruegg (1969, 519).
establishes it as a third-century work. The Tgjn was less popular among commentators. It makes a brief appearance in the Ratnagotravibhāga (Johnston 1950, 3.7–10) and Śūtrasamuccaya (Pāsadika 1989, 14.11–24, 200.19–202.10) but nowhere else. It was rendered into Chinese between CE 334 and 431 (T. 302), but this translation is no longer extant. The earliest available Chinese version (T. 303) dates to the late sixth century (CE 585–601). Neither the Tmkn nor the Tgjn is cited in the Akṣayamatatrīkā.

Of course, none of these dates reveal the exact age of our texts. They tell us when they were first translated or called upon in sūtra exegesis. Some may have been around for centuries, others put together in the year of their translation. The dates are not without value though, for they issue benchmarks against which to measure text-internal data. In our case, they confirm that the proposed progression is chronologically feasible; that it all began with the dhāraṇīs of the Tathāgatamahākarunānirdeśa, the oldest of the four texts, continued with the Tgjn and ended in the Ratnamegha, which came to source Mvy #748.

AND AGAIN: RATNAMEGHA AND MAHĀVYUTPATTI

So far, my analysis of Mvy #748 drew primarily on the transmission of a single list of bodhisattva dhāraṇīs found in three different texts. I now shift focus and examine whether the Ratnamegha provided any other material for the Mahāvyutpatti. Because its exposition consists predominantly of lists, most would readily lend themselves to such a transfer. In the end, surprisingly few did.

Altogether, the Ratnamegha distinguishes 108 categories of Buddhist practice. Eighty-eight of those describe fairly minor components. The remaining twenty contain important material about the buddha and bodhisattva. This includes, for example, four groups of tathāgata attributes that it shares with the Mahāvyutpatti: ten tathāgata powers (bala: Wa, 48v6–49r2; Mvy #117), four tathāgata assurances (vaiśāradya: 49r2–4; Mvy #128), eighteen exclusive buddha qualities (āveṇika: 49r4–50r1; Mvy #133) and thirty-two types of tathāgata compassion (karunā, 49v1–51r5; Mvy #152). These are all well known and have parallels in other sūtras. Their prominence makes it difficult to identify the text from which the Mahāvyutpatti took those four lists. The Ratnamegha is a strong candidate. Its own tathāgata lists match the Mahāvyutpatti’s in content and organization. Moreover, if the Ratnamegha was the source for the bodhisattva dharmas, why not also for the buddha dharmas? But because the buddha dharmas appear in many sūtras in exactly that format, it is virtually impossible to tie them to any one text. This does not

40. I have reproduced the whole list, with Mahāvyutpatti parallels, in the appendix.
41. The list of 32 tathāgata compassions appears also in the Brahmavišeṣacintinīparipṛcchā (mDo sde, Ba, 45r7–47v3), Bodhisattvapitaka (Ga, 34r6–40r3) and the Tmkn (Pa, 175v5–182r3). For a good analysis of compassion in the Mahāyāna, see Lamotte (1970–81, 1705–17).
42. For a discussion of their format and early codification, see Lamotte (1970–81, 1505–1661).
apply to the minor bodhisattva qualities (Wa, 54v1–109r3). Each of these divides into ten factors connected to their cultivation. Some are well known and follow a clearly perceptible order (e.g. four apramāṇas (25–28), twelve dhūtagnas (41–52)). Most are strung together in random sequence. If there was ever a design behind their organization, it was not thought to require an explanation.

But how do they help us prove the link between the Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti? On first impression, they have little in common. Fewer than half (38) possess a counterpart in the Mahāvyutpatti. Even those that have a match appear in a different order, sometimes scattered over many rubrics. Rtm 74 and 75, for example, correspond to Mvy #1099 and #6331; Rtm 83 and 84 parallel Mvy #2415 and #9130. But the clue, I think, lies in these variations. Within this chaos, there are a number of minor, faintly affiliated attributes that appear in both texts side by side. Some are not recorded elsewhere in the sūtras, others have distant relatives. In many cases, their juxtaposition can only be explained if they were transported as a pair/group from the Ratnamegha to the Mahāvyutpatti. I give now some examples. Rtm 14 ( rigs pa ‘i spobs pa, Wa, 65r3–v1) and Rtm 15 (grol ba ‘i spobs pa, 65v1–3) correspond to Mvy #876 (yuktrapratibhāna) and Mvy #877 (muktapratibhāna). Rtm 22 (stoi pa ŋid kyi spyod yul ba, 70v5–71r2), Rtm 23 (mtns ha med pa la gnas pa, 71r2–71r4) and Rtm 24 (smn lam thams cad la gnas pa dan bral ba, Wa, 72v3–4) match Mvy #820 (śūnyatāgocara), Mvy #821 (animitavihārī) and Mvy #822 (sarvaprāṇidhānaniśrayavigata). Śūnyatā, animita and aprāṇihīta form of course a well-known triad that is recorded separately in the Mahāvyutpatti (#1545–7). Their connection in Mvy #820–3 is not clear. This applies also to the next five entries. Rtm 25 (byams pa ‘i bdon ŋid can, 72v5–73r1), Rtm 26 (sniṅ rje ‘i bdon ŋid can, 73r1–5), Rtm 27 (da ‘ba la gnas pa, 73r5–v4) and Rtm 28 (btaṅ sdoms la gnas pa, 73v4–74r2) correspond to Mvy #878 (maityātmaka), Mvy #879 (karunātmaka), Mvy #880 (muditāvihārī) and Mvy #881 (upekṣāvihārī). The first four components derive from the immeasurables (apramāṇa). Like śūnyatā, animita and aprāṇihīta, the apramāṇas constitute a discrete practice with its own Mahāvyutpatti rubric (#1506). The Ratnamegha divides them into pairs (ātmaka/vihārī) which is quite unusual. The Mahāvyutpatti reproduces them here in the same order (Mvy #878–81). Both cite abhijñāvikṛdita next (Mvy #884, Rtm 29). A few entries earlier, we meet in both with yutkapratibhāna (Mvy #876, Rtm 13) and muktapratibhāna (Mvy #877, Rtm 14). The juxtaposition of these expressions is unlikely to be a coincidence. All eight were probably transferred as a group to the Mahāvyutpatti. There are not many texts that expound these practices. Most concentrate on more popular topics, such as the pāramitās, bhūmis and bodhicittotpada. But the Ratnamegha would have been also a very convenient parent. Three-quarters of its exposition consists of serial enumerations, stringing together hundreds of practices. Such format facilitates the identification and extraction of individual items in preparation for transfer to another text. At this point, we should also recall that the translators of the Ratnamegha (Ratnaraksita, Dharmatāśīla) were both involved in the compilation of the Mahāvyutpatti. The fact that the two appear first in the list of Tibetan contributors (Simonsson 1957, 241) indicates that they must have
been of senior rank and probably had some say in the selection of source materials. At the very least, they would have had intimate knowledge of the Ratnamegha and its enumerations.43

Let us now return to the bodhisattva dhāraṇīs and examine the factors behind their inclusion in the Mahāvyutpatti. The Mahāvyutpatti was commissioned as a register of Buddhist terminology for use in the translation of Indian canonical sources. The inclusion of an expression would have been determined by its frequency, centrality and popularity. While it is not too difficult to assess frequency or centrality, there are no ready criteria to measure popularity. Furthermore, most entries consist only of headwords without indication about content or application. This holds true also for Mvy #748. Thus, in order to learn more of the nature and purpose of its dhāraṇīs, we need to turn to the expositions from which they derive.

The Ratnamegha is a good starting-point since it contributes context and establishes the scope of the dhāraṇīs. Through their inclusion among six lists of bodhisattva dharmas, it places them firmly within the bodhisattva training. Their position between bodhisattva meditations and super-knowledges confirms the contemplative environment of their production. Most sūtras embed dhāraṇīs similarly within the practice of meditation and mindfulness (Braarvig 1985, 22; Copp forthcoming; Gyatso 1987, 100–105; Lamotte 1970–81, 1855–66). Since the Ratnamegha consists predominantly of bare lists, perhaps designed to achieve maximum coverage, it does not describe any of its dhāraṇīs. But because it constitutes the final stage of a long process of transmission, spanning four hundred years, it fixes their number at twelve.

The Tgjn provides context and gives us some sense of the evolution of our dhāraṇīs. Most appear also here in a bare list without commentary or annotation. As in the Ratnamegha, its list comes right after a group of meditations. In a separate section, several folios earlier, the Tgjn discusses the circumstances that lead to the production of three other dhāraṇīs: the abhiṣecanī (mDo sde, Tsa, 128v7), anantavarṇa and buddhakāyavarṇapariniṣpattyabhinirhāra (mdo sde, Tsa, 137r4–5). All three manifest through the company of virtuous friends (kalyāṇanitra). Mastery of the buddhakāyavarṇapariniṣpattyabhinirhāra allows the bodhisattva to pervade the spheres of the world with his newly acquired buddha body (Tsa, 137r7–8). Perhaps because the latter is a very advanced accomplishment, both Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti place it at the top of their lists. In the Tgjn, strangely though, it ranks first. Since the Buddha does not explain its allocation, and we possess little other information about this particular dhāraṇī, it is difficult to make sense of this decision. I suspect that the dhāraṇī was positioned ahead of all other because

43. On the role of these two translators in the larger revision process and their connection to the Ratnamegha, see Scherrer-Schaub (2002, esp. 297–304). This important publication throws very interesting light on the historical events surrounding the compilation of the Mahāvyutpatti corpus and is the first to highlight, albeit from a very different angle, the connection between the Ratnamegha and Mahāvyutpatti. In many ways, Scherrer-Schaub’s findings corroborate the close affiliation between the two brought out here through the twelve dhāraṇīs and surrounding bodhisattva practices.
it was considered fundamental to the whole group. The remaining dhāraṇīs (as well as the meditations and a host of other attainments) manifest through trust in the Tījin (Tsa, 139v1–141ri). They do not appear to be connected to any specific practice or attainment. How does this compare to the exposition of the Tmkn? As the oldest of our sources, one would perhaps expect it to yield more detail.

THE DHĀRAṇĪS OF THE TATHĀGATAMAHĀKARUṆĀNIRDEśA

The Tmkn preserves the most comprehensive description of dhāraṇī practice discovered so far. The liberal use of metaphors and profusion of examples indicate that its account may have been the first of its kind. Since its eight dhāraṇīs all appear in the Mahāvyutpatti, it is of considerable value to our investigation. According to the Tmkn, dhāraṇīs serve primarily to secure the transmission of the Dharma and thereby contribute to universal liberation (mDo sde, Pa, 219r4–5):

O son of good family, when bodhisattvas are established in the following [eight] dhāraṇīs, they hold in mind [the utterances] spoken by all the buddhas. The doctrine that they preached will not disappear. And because they are well spoken (legs par bṣad pas) they appease all sentient beings.

As a group, the eight help the bodhisattva to improve his teaching skills. This they achieve in different ways. The first dhāraṇī, called viśuddhasvaranirghoṣa (219r7–222v2), maps the resonance of the Dharma and its vast reach in the universe.44 It issues the ability to condense any number of sermons within the sound A. A stands here for the absence of attribution and prevents conditioned predication (mDo sde, Pa, 219v4–7):

In order to appease with such resolution as many sentient beings as he wishes, he makes appear by magic (sbyin gyis brlabs te) the lion throne

44. The Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra contains in Chapter 43 a useful but short passage which describes a ghoṣapraveśa-dhāraṇī (Lamotte 1970–81, 1866). However, because this does not overlap with the viśuddhasvaranirghoṣa, it falls outside the remit of the present investigation. A similar discussion occurs already in Chapter 1 (Lamotte 1970–81, 319–21) where the ghoṣapraveśa-dhāraṇī is cited alongside two other bodhisattva dhāraṇīs (srutadhara, vibhajyajñāna). Again, the description is quite different but it closes with an interesting list of ten dhāraṇīs reproduced here in Lamotte’s conjectural Sanskrit titles (Lamotte 1970–81, 321): (1) sānti, (2) ananta, (3) bhāmyamapāśyanā, (4) anubhāva, (5) padmavyūha, (6) ghoṣaparīśuddhi, (7) gaganagarbha, (8) sāgaragarbha, (9) sarvadharmabhūmiprabheda and (10) sarvadharmārthāloka. Three of them appear in the Gaṇḍavyūha (5, 7, 8), two in the Tmkn, Tījin and Ratnamegha (5, 6). Three more correspond in part with dhāraṇīs of the Gaṇḍavyūha list (1, 2, 3). The overlap between the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra and other canonical lists suggests that this particular cluster is probably composite, drawn from a range of sūtras. Since three of its dhāraṇīs have no parallel in any of our six lists (4, 9, 10), it is possible that these derive from a seventh, as yet unidentified, source.
that reaches as high as (tshad tsam ma) half a mile, a full mile, a mountain range and the Brahmaloka, sits down on it and teaches the Dharma. While he is sitting on the lion throne in that way, he illuminates all the buddha-fields of the ten directions and hears all the teachings that the buddhas, blessed ones have preached. And after he has heard them, he keeps them in mind with the help of the power of dhāraṇī and does not forget them. With the help of that quality (chos) he perceives (so sor myoṅ ba) the meaning (don) of the Dharma. Since he listens to other teachings (chos), he does not confuse (sgrīb par mi byed pa) [his audience] while teaching the Doctrine. Since he teaches the Dharma, he does not confuse [his audience] while listening to the Doctrine. Since he penetrates the one sound of letters (yi ge’i sgra gcig), he teaches entry into all the sounds of letters. Through (tshul gyis) enunciating the first of the letters, called A, he enunciates the vast gateway to the Dharma (chos kyi sgo mtha’ yas): through the characteristic of non-motion (’oṅ ba med pa), all factors of existence lack in motion; through non-transformation (’pho ba med pa), all factors do not transform; through non-fixation (gnas med pa), all factors lack fixation.

Mastery of the viśuddhasvaranirghoṣa-dhāraṇī enables bodhisattvas to purify their body, speech and mind (221v6–222r6) and to communicate with people regardless of language or spiritual disposition (222r6–v1):

A bodhisattva who is established in this dhāraṇī pervades (rgyas par ’geṅs so) with light as many buddha-fields as he has communicated (go bar byed pa) with his voice. That is to say, since he has attained the distinguished purity of this very dhāraṇī (gzuṅs ‘di nīḍ kyi ma ’dres pa’i khyad par), he will produce with the help of that light the Dharma method preached by all the buddhas of the ten directions.

The second dhāraṇī, entitled akṣayakaraṇḍa, addresses conceptual extension. It establishes the infinitude of the constituents of existence and describes its application to the bodhisattva’s knowledge of the Dharma (222v2–3, 224r3–4):

The teaching of this dhāraṇī is inexhaustible (akṣaya). The teaching about impermanence, saying ‘matter (gzugs) is impermanent’ is inexhaustible. The teaching about suffering, saying ‘matter is suffering’ is inexhaustible. The teaching about non-substantiality, saying ‘matter is non-substantial’ is inexhaustible. ...

Knowledge how to speak of the inexhaustibility (mi zad pa) of this heap (za ma tog) of a body arisen from the four great elements, knowledge how to embark on the inexhaustible Dharma discourse Ratnakaraṇḍaka (Mvy #1408) and inexhaustible knowledge of the teaching (bstan pa śes pa mi zad pa), this is called akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī. Through teaching this introductory exposition the akṣayakaraṇḍa[-dhāraṇī] will continue to be pronounced for a world age or more.
The anantāvarta-dhāraṇī, the third in the Tmkn, sets the parameter of liberation and describes the process through which it is achieved. It explains their operations using the components anta (mtha’) and āvarta (‘khyil ba) (224r–v7):

The term anta [indicating parameter] is about annihilation (chad pa) and permanence (rtag pa). The term āvarta [indicating process] is about the twelve factors of dependent co-origination. Through the condition of ignorance the karmic forces arise. ... Through the condition of becoming death, old age, affliction, suffering, unhappiness, etc., arise. ... The term anta is about saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. The term āvarta [indicates] that all factors are by nature in nirvāṇa. O son of good family, both anta and āvarta are boundless teachings.

This dhāraṇī, if properly accomplished, prepares for the attainment of two other dhāraṇīs: artha-dhāraṇī and vyañjana-dhāraṇī (224v7–225r1):

The bodhisattva who is established in the anantāvarta-dhāraṇī complies [both] with infinitude (mtha’ yas pa) and the turning of the Doctrine (chos ‘khyil ba). Even though he teaches the Doctrine indefinitely [for] a hundred thousand world ages, he will not reach the limit of the gnosis (ye šes) of the dhāraṇī of meaning (artha) and syllables (vyañjana). This is to embark on pursuing the anantāvarta-dhāraṇī.

The sāgaramudrā-dhāraṇī charts the content of the Doctrine. The first component of this dhāraṇī, sāgara (rgya mtsho), is compared to a vast receptacle holding all earthly manifestations (gzugs su snaṅ ba) (e.g. trees, mountains, etc.) (225r2–6). The second element, mudrā (phyag rgya), refers to the defining features of the Tathāgata. They consist of forty-three letters that summarize individual points of the Doctrine. The letter A stands for the teaching of non-instigation (anabhisaṃkāra), Ra for the proposition that all factors of existence are originally pure (rajas), Pa for the concept of absolute truth (paramārtha), and so forth. As a group, these letters/headwords constitute the arapacana syllabary (225r6–226r6):

O son of good family, a bodhisattva who is thus established in the sāgaramudrā-dhāraṇī is of the same physical character (lus rgya daṅ mtshuṅs pa) as all sentient beings. He is of the same vocal character as all sentient beings. He is of the same mental character as all sentient beings. The bodhisattva describes (kha’i sgo nas ... ‘byuṅ ṇo) the buddhas, blessed ones in the ten directions who have embarked [on] the task

45. The Tibetan reads here don daṅ tshig ‘brus gzuis. This phrase is certain to refer to the division of dhāraṇī practice into memory of meaning (artha) and memory of letters (vyañjana). Meaning and letter constitute the first two dhāraṇī categories of the Bodhisattvabhūmi (Wogihara 1930–36, 272.12–274.22) and other exegetical sources (Inagaki 1987, 103). For an analysis of the Bodhisattvabhūmi passage, see Gyatso (1992, 175–6), Inagaki (1987, 100–2) and Kapstein (2001, 237–8).

46. On the arapacana syllabary, see now Pagel (2007, 18–38).
of promulgating the teaching of the Dharma (chos kyi ston pa) bearing the same defining features (phyag rgyas btab ba dain mtshuṅs pa). All the bodhisattvas who promulgate the defining features (phyag rgya btab pa) of the Tathāgata are not led [astray] by other (ananyaneya) when they describe, without conceptualising, all the defining features using the tathāgata marks. Now, they describe the defining features as follows: the letter A is the defining feature of anabhisaṃskāra; the letter RA is the defining feature. ... O son of good family, in that way, every bodhisattva understands how to describe the defining features of all those sayings (yi ge) that [are used to] explain the Doctrine. O son of good family, this is to walk through the gate [leading] to the sāgaramudrā-dhāraṇī.

We are told here, I think, that sāgaramudrā prepares the bodhisattva for the ontological propositions encapsulated within the arapacana syllables. Put simply, it gives him the ability to penetrate the attributes and constituent processes of conditioned existence (226rs).

The fifth dhāraṇī, called padmavyūha, highlights the diversity of the buddha-dharma. It compares the plurality of teachings with the variations among lotus flowers. Each lotus is the source of a particular Dharma genre. In order to illustrate the breadth of the Dharma, the Buddha divides his discourses into ten well-known subcategories: sūtra, geya, vyākaraṇa, gāthā, uddāna, nidāna, itivṛttaka, jātaka, vaipulya and (Dharma)upadeśa (226r7–v1). But the lotus flower is more than a metaphor. It is the direct source of buddha activity (226v2–4):

The [bodhisattva] who issues from the lotus flowers that have thus appeared will not only eliminate the suffering which produces that [lotus] (de byed pa’i sdug bsnal) but also perform buddha activity. Light rays will issue from all the pores of the bodhisattva’s body. And more lotus flowers will spring from those light rays. Then manifestations (gzugs) of the bodhisattva will issue from those lotus flowers. Once they disperse into the vast, immeasurable world sphere of the ten directions, the [bodhisattvas] perform buddha activity. This is to walk through the gate [leading] to the padmavyūha-dhāraṇī.

The asaṅgamukhapraveśa-dhāraṇī examines the Dharma from a different angle. It describes the bodhisattva’s attitude towards the teachings of the Buddha. The asaṅgamukhapraveśa-dhāraṇī requires him to remain detached from their content and expression, no matter how precious these may appear (226v6–227r4):

[The bodhisattva] is not attached (la mi chags pa) to one teaching (bstan pa), two teachings, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine or ten teach-

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47. Most lists of aṅgas fall into one of two categories: they have either nine or twelve items. The present enumeration gives ten. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that it is two members short since lists fluctuate. For a good introduction to the aṅgas, see Lamotte (1958, 158–62).
ings. He is not attached to twenty, thirty, etc., teachings. Although he teaches [the Doctrine] using grammatical coherent words (\textit{idan pa: anvita}), powerful language (\textit{'byor ba}), definitions (\textit{śīn tu ņes pa’i tshig}), meaning (\textit{artha}) and syllables (\textit{tshig ‘bru}), he is not attached or fettered to [these teachings]. This is the \textit{dhāraṇī} called \textit{asaṅgamukhapraveśa}.

The \textit{pratisamvinniścayāvatāra-dhāraṇī}, item seven in our list, draws on the four analytic knowledges (\textit{pratisamvid}). It describes the universal reach of the \textit{Dharma} when expounded by a \textit{bodhisattva} in command of meaning (\textit{artha}), referent (\textit{dharma}), etymology (\textit{nirukti}) and eloquence (\textit{pratibhāna}). Each of the four knowledges is inexhaustible (\textit{akṣaya}) (277r4–5) and appeals to a particular segment of the population (227r5–7):

All sentient beings of the eastern world assemble around [a \textit{bodhisattva}] who has attained such [analytic] knowledge and inquire, using their own language (\textit{raṅ raṅ skad kyis}), about skill in meaning (\textit{don la mkhas pa}). The people of the southern world [assemble around him and] enquire about skill in referents. The people of the western world enquire about skill in etymology. The people of the northern world enquire about skill in eloquence.

For the \textit{bodhisattva} to teach in all those languages simultaneously, he achieves command of a type of meta-language that allows him to engage in various discourses at the same time (\textit{dus gcig tu brjod ciṅ skad sna tshogs la ‘jug pa}). In the end, he relies no longer on conventional speech but communicates through the \textit{Dharma} language (227v1):

Since he knows [how] to penetrate language, he [is able to] conform with all [types of] language. He appeases the mental manifestation (\textit{sems kyi rnam par rig pa: cittavijñapti}) of all sentient beings using a single language.

The eighth \textit{dhāraṇī}, \textit{buddhālaṃkārādhiṣṭhita}, signals that the \textit{bodhisattva} has attained buddhahood. It confers the activity of the \textit{buddha}’s body, speech and mind. Nourished through the sustaining power of the \textit{Tathāgata}, he casts aside weariness, understands the disposition of all people and adjusts his discourses to meet their spiritual needs. The \textit{buddhālaṃkārādhiṣṭhita-dhāraṇī}, in short, confers receptivity to the infinity of teaching modalities (227v5–228r1):

Although [the \textit{bodhisattva}] teaches the Doctrine continuously (\textit{rgyud kyis}) without nourishment for as long as he wishes – one day, two days, three days, four days, seven days, two weeks, one month, etc., up to ten thousand years – because he persists (\textit{śīn tu yoṅs su bzun ba’i phyir}) through the sustaining power of the \textit{Tathāgata}, his \textit{Dharma} introduction (\textit{dharmanamukha}) does not perish. His body and mind do not weary. [Instead] he acquires four [types of] high knowledge (\textit{śes pa chen po}). Which four? He understands (\textit{śes pa}) [how] to analyse the disposition and sayings of
sentient beings, he understands the [four] inexhaustible analytic knowledges, he understands how to differentiate between the vehicles (theg pa ji ltar rnam par dgod pa) and he understands [how] to teach the Doctrine suitably [adapted] to individual [people].

This dhāraṇī, therefore, just as its seven predecessors, is concerned with the spread and transmission of the Doctrine. But while the others focus on the Dharma or the bodhisattva's attitude towards the Dharma (its resonance (1), extension (2), parameter/processes (3), content (4), diversity (5), attitude (6) and reach (7)), the buddhālaṃkārādhiṣṭhita maps the intellectual capability of the audience. It signals the point where the bodhisattva fulfils his true teaching potential and acquires the body, speech and mind of a Buddha in its full glory. It is the moment of coronation (227v2-5):

O son of good family, in the upper part of [a place called] 'sPyi gtsug gi draṅ thad' located in the middle of the great maṇḍaladhātu there shall emerge the manifestation (sku) of a Tathāgata in gold, in the form of an image adorned with the buddha's [thirty-two] physical characteristics and [eighty] features of beauty. That tathāgata image places its right hand on top of the head of a bodhisattva who has attained such dhāraṇī and is [now] sitting on the great Dharma throne. As soon as the hand touches [his head] the bodhisattva acquires the [Tathāgata's] physical, vocal and mental conduct, beautified through buddha practices (alaṃkāra). Once he has acquired such qualities (chos), because he is [now able to] penetrate the mental disposition of the whole of saṃsāra, he teaches the Doctrine individually in a suitable manner.

These extracts reveal that the Tmkn posits a close link between dhāraṇī, scriptural memory and teaching. This association is well known from other sources. Since its exposition suffers from a few loose ends and makes no attempt to stratify dhāraṇī practice, the Tmkn was probably among the first to write about dhāraṇī in detail. To a degree, it would have drawn on expositions in earlier sources. But because our understanding of the circumstances in which Mahāyāna sūtra s were composed is patchy, it is not clear how exactly it evolved. In the next section we learn that four of its eight dhāraṇīs are used in six other texts. But this by itself does not tell us a great deal. We need first to take a closer look at the ways in which these sūtras describe them.

48. In addition to the passages discovered by Braarvig (1985; Aksayamatinirdeśa, Daśabhūmika, Saṃdhinirmocana, etc.) there is one other explicit attestation for the connection between the three. It appears in the Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa and runs as follows:

O Bhadra, if a bodhisattva possesses four qualities he attains dhāraṇī. Which four? (1) He is insatiable in his striving for great learning. (2) He venerates devotedly those who possess great learning. (3) He applies himself to teach the Dharma to others. (4) He aims to understand the hidden meaning of the Tathāgata’s teachings by arranging the words and letters into the right sequence. (Régamey [1938] 1990, 46.3–8)
Four of the dhāraṇīs in our lists appear outside the Tmkn/Tgjn/Rtm/Mvy. They include the (1) akṣayakaraṇḍa, (2) anantāvarta, (3) sāgaramudrā and (4) padmavyūha. They are used in six different sūtras: Gaṇḍavyūha (anantāvarta, padmavyūha), Aksayamatipariṇāca (aksayakaraṇḍa), Sāgaranāgarāparipriṃcā (aksayakaraṇḍa), Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā (aksayakaraṇḍa, sāgaramudrā, padmavyūha), Daśasāhasrikā (ditto) and Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitī (ditto). As a group, the four make up the centre of the Tmkn cluster and constitute perhaps its nucleus. They appear also in identical position and order in the Tgjn and Ratnamegha. As time went by, their number was increased through additional dhāraṇīs. We noted earlier that in the longer lists the dhāraṇīs in the middle stayed put; only the dhāraṇīs at the periphery moved around. Unfortunately, the situation is not as simple as it may seem. First, the four are not attested jointly in any of the six texts. Three occur together in Prajñāpāramitā sources, but the fourth (anantāvarta) is cited only in the Gaṇḍavyūha. Secondly, in two of the Prajñāpāramitī texts (Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā and Satasāhasrikā), the aksayakaraṇḍa-, sāgaramudrā- and padmavyūha-dhāraṇīs are accompanied by a fourth dhāraṇī which is not included in the Tmkn. It is called *pragrāhaka-dhāraṇī (yoṅs su ‘dzin pa’i gzuṅs). A similar dhāraṇī is already known from the Ajātasaṃkramaṇa (mDo sde, Tsha, 239v):

O son of good family, *dhāraṇī-dhāraṇī (gzuṅs gzuṅs źes bya ba ni) is correct conduct (nan tan: pratipatti) that complies with the Doctrine (chos) [applied] to those teachings (chos de dag la). Therefore it is called dhāraṇī.

The Prajñāpāramitī dhāraṇīs surface all in the same chapter (phyir mi ldog pa’i le’u) and carry similar definitions. Above all, they help safeguard the transmission of the Dharma (Ñi khri, Kha, 371v2–7; Khri pa, Na, 366v2–7; ’Bum, Tha, 143v3–144r1):

[The Blessed One said:] ‘Furthermore, O Subhūti, a bodhisattva, mahāsattva who does not fall back does not harbour any doubt or ambiguity about the Doctrine which the Arhart, Tathāgata Samyak Saṃbuddha teaches. He holds in mind everything that the buddhas, blessed ones say. Once he commits that to memory, he does not allow it to perish (chud za bar mi byed do). Why? Because in that way he attains memory (dhāraṇī). Then the venerable Subhūti spoke the following words to the Blessed One: ‘O Blessed One, what [kind of] memory does the bodhisattva, mahāsattva attain so that he does not seek for the sūtras preached by his (de’i) Tathāgata to vanish (cha ba pa mi ’tshal ba lags)?’ The Blessed One replied:

49. Both texts use the same Tibetan expression: de bźin du rgya mtsho’i phyag rgya dañ | pad mo rnam par bkod pa dañ | yoṅs su ’dzin pa’i gzuṅs; Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā, Ñi khri, Kha, 371v6; Satasāhasrikā, ’Bum, Tha, 43v7.
‘O Subhūti, it is when he attains the akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī that the sūtras preached by his Tathāgata do not perish. Likewise, it is when he attains the sāgaramudrā-dhāraṇī, padmavyūha-dhāraṇī and *pragrāhaka-dhāraṇī that the sūtras preached by his Tathāgata do not perish.’

This passage mirrors the application of dhāraṇī found in so many other sūtras. Dhāraṇīs constitute an instrument which enables the bodhisattva to hold in mind the teachings he received from the Tathāgata. But the Prajñāpāramitā texts go a little further and include all spoken words (‘Bum, Tha, 44r1–4; Ñi khri, Kha, 371v7–372r3):

Subhūti asked: ‘O Blessed One, does [the bodhisattva] not seek for anything [ever] spoken by śrāvakas, gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garūdas and mahoragas, let alone what is preached by the Tathāgata Arhant Samyuk Sambuddha, never to vanish (cha ba)?’ The Blessed One replied: ‘O Subhūti, the bodhisattva, mahāsattva does not harbour doubt or ambiguity about any of their sayings (skad), expressions (brda) or sounds (sgra) whatsoever (ruṅ ste). Why? Because he attains memory (gzuris).’

Since the transmissional history of the long Prajñāpāramitā works is intricate and largely unresolved, I am not able to explain why all three texts contain almost identical dhāraṇī extracts. It is likely that the passages are connected and drew on each other, but it is not clear which of the three came first. The fact that the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā and Śatasāhasrikā yield four dhāraṇī titles, while the Daśasāhasrikā records only three (omitting *pragrāhaka-dhāraṇī), shows that they are a little closer. Since the Daśasāhasrikā contains the shortest list, it preserves perhaps the earliest version. On the other hand, because the Prajñāpāramitā texts are intertwined, all three passages could also derive from a single source. We simply cannot tell.

There is not much point in turning to the Gaṇḍavyūha either, since its padmavyūha appears in a bare list, without indication of its purpose, scope or context. Its neighbours (tejovatī-, svaravivikta-dhāraṇī) are quite different too. In fact, apart from the last (sāgaragarbha), none of the remaining nine can be linked with the Prajñāpāramitā dhāraṇīs. And even this might be quite unrelated, since we have no means to establish that sāgaragarbha and sāgaramudrā possess the same content.

The situation in the Akṣayamatiparipṛcchā is similar. It too has one dhāraṇī with a match among the Prajñāpāramitā dhāraṇīs. This time it is aksayakaraṇḍa. The aksayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī is the last of its list. It marks the end of the path and manifests on the tenth stage (Cha, 181v6). The advanced position indicates that the aksayakaraṇḍa might rank highest, but because the Aksayamatiparipṛcchā does not explain its dhāraṇīs either, this cannot be verified. The other dhāraṇīs have no counterpart in our lists. Two might derive from similar attainments (Aks 1: khyad par gi byin gyis brlabs (*viśeṣādhiṣṭhāna) with Tmkn 8: buddhālaṃkāradhiṣṭhita and Aks 9: sgo mtha’ yas pa’i rgyan (*anantamukhālāṃkāra) with Tmkn 3: anantāvarta), although again, without description, we cannot substantiate such a link.
Our last stop is the Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā. This text holds much promise since it devotes a whole chapter to a single dhāraṇī: the akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī (mi zad pa’i za ma tog gi gzūṅ kyi le’u, Pha, 135r–145v). No other sūtra describes a dhāraṇī in that much detail. For the Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā, akṣayakaraṇḍa embodies the inexhaustibility of the Dharma. This it tackles from two perspectives. First, it defines the scope of the Buddha’s discourses (gtam). These it considers are infinite in nuance, reach and variation (Pha, 137r–v). Put simply, the text confirms the diversity of expression within the Doctrine. Second, the Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā argues that the Dharma is conceptually inexhaustible because it derives from components that are inexhaustible by themselves. To make its point, the sūtra lists sixteen groups of practices, all connected with akṣayakaraṇḍa. I reproduce the first three (137v–138r):

O lord of serpents, the akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī should be understood through four inexhaustibilities (mi zad pa ŋid). What four? The inexhaustibility of analytic knowledge (pratisaṃvid), gnosis (jñāna), discriminative understanding (prajñā) and inspiration of recollection (dhāraṇīpratibhāna). Those are the four.

O lord of serpents the akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī should be understood through four things difficult to fathom (duravagāha). What four? Intention (bsam pa) difficult to fathom, intellect (blo) difficult to fathom, Dharma entry (chos la ’jug pa) difficult to fathom and embarking on the conduct of people (sens can kyi spyod pa la ’jug pa) difficult to fathom. Those are the four.

O lord of serpents, the following four should be understood as the quintessence (sñiṅ po) and components (yi ge) of the akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī. What four? It is the quintessence (sñiṅ po byed pa) for understanding (ses rab), for accomplishment (sgrub pa), [for] fixation in patient acceptance (bzod pa la gnas pa) and [for] carrying out (uttāraṇa) one’s planned undertakings (brtsams pa ŋams ‘og tu chud par byed pa). Those are the four.

This extract portrays the akṣayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī as a receptacle of advanced practices and insights. Its holder gains access to analytic knowledge, gnosis, and so on, as these are its very constituents. Bhāvaviveka makes use of this interpretation when he refers to this passage in the Tarkajvāla to challenge the efficacy of

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50. The full list runs as follows: (1) inexhaustibility (mi zad ba ŋid: aksayatva), (2) difficult to fathom (gtiṅ dpag dka’ ba: duravagāha), (3) quintessence and letters (sniṅ po dān yi ge), (4) ascertainment (ṅes pa byed pa), (5) light (snaṅ ba: āloka), (6) zeal (rtun pa: ātāpin), (7) perpetual Dharma search (chos yors su tshol ba mthar thug pa med pa), (8) insatiability (chos mi sê pa: atṛpta), (9) difficult to reach (tshugs par dka’ ba), (10) absence of contamination (ma ’dres pa: asaṃbhinna), (11) absence of blame (smad du med pa), (12) power (stobs: bala), (13) inexhaustible, great treasure (gter chen po mi zad pa), (14) immeasurability (tshad med pa ŋid), (15) presence of purpose (don yod pa ŋid: sadarthatva), (16) attainment of assurance (mi ’jigs pa thob pa) (Pha, 137v–139v).
mantra practice (Kapstein 2001, 246, 250). Towards the end of the *aṣṭayakāraṇḍa-dhāraṇī* chapter, the Buddha describes the achievements that spring from the practice of this *dhāraṇī*. It places the bodhisattva on the seat of awakening, reveals the various sources (*byuṅ gnas*) of the Doctrine and turns him into their receptacle (*za ma tog: karaṇḍa*) (Pha, 144r–s). Ultimately, *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa* achieves comprehension of all sounds (*sgra thams cad la ’jug pa*) (Pha, 144r). Bhāvaviveka, again in the *Tarkajvāla*, discloses the individual components used in communication (Kapstein 2001, 250.14–17):

[The bodhisattva who embarks upon the *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī*] penetrates (*’jug pa*) the phonetic systems (*yi ge’i lugs*), names (*miṅ*), expressions (*brda ba*) and Dharma terminology (*chos kyi brda ba*).

The passage brings us back to the first, and perhaps quintessential quality of *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa*: competence in language and the constituent discourses of the *Dharma*. The *Tmkn* puts forward a very similar interpretation (Pa, 224r–s):

Likewise, [a bodhisattva] who understands (*’jug pa*) [how] to pronounce a single sound (*sgra*) [taken from] amongst (*bar la*) the aggregates, elements and sensefields, [from amongst] all accumulations of names (*miṅ*), phrases (*tshig*) and phonemes (*yi ge*) as well as all factors of existence (*chos*), once he perceives [the *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī*] as an inexhaustible teaching (*bstan pa mi zad pa sès par*), will engage at length in all [teachings] (*thams cad la rgyas par sbyar ro*).

This extract, in turn, connects the *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī* with the ability to preach the *Dharma*. Any one sound, provided it is produced through this *dhāraṇī*, has the potential to secure the diffusion of the Doctrine. The practice of *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa*, then, is primarily about the preservation of the Buddha’s teachings and their circulation among men. In a sense, it is both the most fundamental and advanced form of *dhāraṇī*: it lays the foundation for the path and constitutes its high point when brought to perfection.

The *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa* is the only *dhāraṇī* of our twelve that is described in two sources. The disappointing attestation of the others reduces the value of our findings since they cannot be independently confirmed. As a result, they do not carry over to other sources or traditions within Buddhism, let alone apply to Buddhism as a whole. What we have achieved today places *dhāraṇī* on the map, but it does not charter their application or explain their rise to prominence in the tantras. This, in any case, was not what we set out to do. Our aim was to identify the origin

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51. Bhāvaviveka does not quote the whole passage, but produces a summary of the principal elements. Furthermore, he does not consider the remainder of the chapter where the Buddha connects the *aṣṭayakaraṇḍa-dhāraṇī* with the *bodhisattvapitaka* (Pha, 139v) and the attendant practices. Both Braarvig (1997) and Kapstein (2001) consult this passage in order to extrapolate Bhāvaviveka’s stance on the application of mantras.
and formation of the bodhisattva dhāraṇīs in the Mahāvyutpatti. In this, I believe, we had some success.

CONCLUSIONS

Our investigation identified the Ratnamegha as the probable source for the twelve dhāraṇīs of the Mahāvyutpatti. The Ratnamegha contains a cluster of dhāraṇīs with identical content and sequence. Since it is not included in all Chinese versions, but appears only in a late-eighth-century translation – a mere hundred years before the compilation of the Mahāvyutpatti – it is possible that the cluster was added subsequently. If this is true, the Mahāvyutpatti might well have used a similar redaction as the Chinese.

We also managed to chart the transmission of the dhāraṇīs before their inclusion in the Ratnamegha. Similar but shorter lists are used in the Tmkn and Tgjn. Their format and content suggests that the dhāraṇīs appeared first in the Tmkn. From here, they entered the Tgjn, which in turn became the source for the Ratnamegha. It is difficult to sketch the history of Mvy #748 prior to the Tmkn. Three of its twelve dhāraṇīs (akṣayakaraṇḍa, sāgaramudrā, padmavyūha) feature as a group in the Śatasāhasrikā, Daśasāhasrikā and Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā. But because the passages in which they occur are almost identical and may go back to a single source, we should not give too much weight to this attestation. If they derive from the same text, they are not independent. By the same token, their transfer from text to text would underpin their collective popularity. Because the three sit in the middle of all dhāraṇī lists in identical order, they may have been their early core.

The Tmkn gave us an opportunity to examine the purpose and diversity of the dhāraṇī genre. Its account records important progression in dhāraṇī conception. By the time the Tmkn was composed, the Mahāyāna had begun to catalogue, and differentiate between, a growing number of dhāraṇīs. For the first time perhaps, its scholars felt sufficiently confident to define their content, rank them and connect the dhāraṇīs to other practices.

While investigating the transmission of Mvy #478, we saw that also its adjacent rubrics (#738, #761–88) derive in all likelihood from the Ratnamegha. In content and organization, the five are virtually identical in both texts. Many depict categories of bodhisattva practice that have no known parallel in other sūtras. Like the dhāraṇīs, they too appear only in the Ratnamegha’s late Chinese and Tibetan translations.

But to map their origin and transmission, one would need to prepare a study similar to this for each category. And even that would not necessarily yield firm results. In fact, also much of what I have said about dhāraṇīs must remain tentative. There are about four dozen other sūtras that speak of dhāraṇī practice. Although none is linked to Mvy #748, they will need to be examined before too long. We have made a start, but there is still a long way to go.
## ABBREVIATIONS

### Sanskrit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aks</td>
<td>Akṣayamatiparipṛcchā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmas</td>
<td>Dharmasāṅgha (Müller)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mvy</td>
<td>Mahāvyutpatti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tgjn</td>
<td>Tathāgataugamajñānācintyavīśayāvataśārañdeśa-sūtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tmkn</td>
<td>Tathāgatamahākaranānirdeśa-sūtra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rtm</td>
<td>Ratnamegha-sūtra</td>
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### Tibetan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phal po che</td>
<td>Budhāvatamsaka in Tibetan bKa’ 'gyur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dKon brtsegs</td>
<td>Ratnakūta collection in Tibetan bKa’ 'gyur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mDo sde</td>
<td>Sūtra collection in Tibetan bKa’ 'gyur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ñi khri</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khri pa</td>
<td>Section title of Daśasahāsrikā Prajñāpāramitā in Tibetan bKa’ 'gyur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Bum</td>
<td>Section title of Śatasahāsrikā Prajñāpāramitā in Tibetan bKa’ 'gyur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ka, Kha, etc.</td>
<td>Indicates volume numbers in bKa’ 'gyur</td>
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### Other

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<td>#</td>
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APPENDIX: EIGHTY-EIGHT CATEGORIES OF MINOR BODHISATTVA PRACTICES

RATNAMEGHA: MDO SDE, WA, 54V1–109R3

(1) nam mkha’ daṅ mtshuṅs pa
(2) nam mkha’ daṅ mtshuṅs pa
(3) zla ba daṅ ’dra ba
(4) ñi ma daṅ ’dra ba
(5) ser gi daṅ ’dra ba
(6) ’dul ba (Mvy 10, damya)
(7) caṅ śes pa (Mvy 1083, ājāneya)
(8) pad ma daṅ ’dra ba
(9) sems rgya che ba
(10) rnam par dag pa (Mvy 289, viśuddha)
(11) sems nem nur med pa
(12) blo rgya mtsho dañ mtshuñs pa
(13) blo žìb pa
(14) rigs pa’i spobs pa can (Mvy 876, yukta-pratibhāna: rigs par spobs pa)
(15) groñ ba’i spobs pa can (Mvy 877, muktapratibhāna: spobs pa groñ ba)
(16) rnam par dag pa’i spobs pa can
(17) sems can thams cad mgur bar byed pa’i spobs pa can
(18) tshig guñ bar’gyur ba
(19) chos brijkod pa
(20) chos kyi rjes su’brañ ba (Mvy 1024, dharmānusāsri)
(21) chos kyi dbyiñs la mkhas pa (Mvy 1092, dharmadhātukuśala)
(22) stoñ pa ŋiñ kyi spyod yul ba (Mvy 820, śānyatāgocara)
(23) mtshan ma med pa la gnas pa (Mvy 821, animittavihārī)
(24) smon lam thams cad la gnas pa dañ bral ba (Mvy 822, sarvapraṇidhānaniśrayavigata)
(25) byams pa’i bdag ŋiñ can (Mvy 878, maitryātmaka)
(26) sūñ rje’i bdag ŋiñ can (Mvy 879, karuñātmaka)
(27) dga’ ba la gnas pa (Mvy 880, muditāvihārī)
(28) bañ sñoms la gnas pa (Mvy 881, upesāvihārī)
(29) miñ par ŋes pas rnam par rol pa (Mvy 884, abhijñāvīkṛṣḍita)
(30) mi khom pa bryagad rnam par spañs pa
(31) byañ chub kyi sems ma stor ba
(32) tshe rabs dran pa (Mvy 227, jātismara)
(33) dge ba’i bšes griend dañ ma bral ba
(34) sdiq pa’i groñs po yoñs su spañs pa
(35) de bzin gšegs pa’ai skul’i chos ŋiñ thob pa
(36) lus rdo rje ltar sra ba
(37) ded dpon chen po
(38) lam la mkhas pa
(39) lam ma log par ston pa
(40) rtañ tu rgyun mi chad par sems mñañ par gšag pa
(41) phyag dar khrod pa (Mvy 1131, pāñśaktulika)
(42) chos gos gsum pa (Mvy 1132, traicīvarika)
(43) phyiñ pa can (Mvy 1133, nāma(nt)ika)
(44) bsod sñoms pa (Mvy 1134, painḍapatiñka)
(45) stan gcig pa (Mvy 1135, aikāsanika)
(46) tas phyis mi len pa (Mvy 1136, khalupaścād-bhattika)
(47) dgon pa pa (Mvy 1137, āranyaka)
(48) sūñ druñ pa (Mvy 1138, vṛksamulika)
(49) bla gab med pa (Mvy 1139, ābhīvavakāsīka)
(50) dur khrod pa (Mvy 1140, śmāśānīka)
(51) cog bu pa (Mvy 1141, naśadika)
(52) gži ji bžin pa (Mvy 1142, yātihāsamstarika)
(53) rnal ‘byor spyod pa (Mvy 1644, yogācāra)
(54) mdo sde ‘dzin pa (Mvy 5138, sūtradhara)
(55) ‘dul ba ‘dzin pa (Mvy 5139, vinayadhara)
(56) cho ga dañ spyod yul dañ spyod pa dañ spyod lam phun sum tshogs pa
(57) ser sna dañ phrag dog dañ bral ba
(58) sems can thams cad la sems sñoms pa
(59) de bžin gšegs pa la mchod pa dañ rim gro bya ba la mkhas pa
(60) na rgyal bcom pa
(61) dad pa mañ ba
(62) kun rdzob la mkhas pa
(63) don dam pa la mkhas pa
(64) rten ciñ ‘brel bar’byuñ ba la mkhas pa
(65) bdag śes pa (Mvy 2400, ātmajña)
(66) 'jig rten śes pa (Mvy 2399, lokajña)
(67) saṅs rgyas kyi žiṅ yoṅs su dag pa dag tu skye ba
(68) mṅal gyi dri mas ma gos par skye ba
(69) khyim gyi gnas nas mṅon par byuṅ ba
(70) 'tsho ba yoṅs su dag pa
(71) yid yoṅs su mi skye ba
(72) de bzin gṣegs pa rṇams kyi bka' bzin byed pa
(73) bzin 'dzum žiṅ khro gñer med pa
(74) maṅ du thos pa (Mvy 1099, bahuśrūta)
(75) dam pa'i chos yoṅs su 'dzin pa (Mvy 6331, saddharmaparigrāhaka)
(76) chos kyi rgyal po'i sras (Mvy 1093, dharmanājaputra)
(77) bṛgya byin daṅ tshaṅs pa daṅ 'jig rten skyoṅ bas bṣtsu (?) ba
(78) bsam pa daṅ bag la ṇal śes pa
(79) sems can yoṅs su smin par bya ba cho ga śes pa
(80) des pa
(81) 'grags na bde ba
(82) bsdū ba'i dṅos po la mkhas pa
(83) tshul du śis pa (Mvy 2415, prāśādika)
(84) gnas bca' ba (Mvy 9130, āśrayanijyam)
(85) rtsi'i rgyal po'i śiṅ chen po lta bu
(86) bsod nam bya ba la brtson pa
(87) sprul pa la mkhas pa
(88) myur du bla na med pa yaṅ dag par rdzogs pa'i byaṅ chub mṅon par rdzogs par 'tshaṅ rgya ba