

# 1 Early Buddhist *rakṣā* literature – state of the art

The main purpose of Buddhist *rakṣā* texts is to provide protection. They represent tools for the accomplishment of worldly aims, such as protection against any kind of calamities, malignant beings and dangerous animals, well-being and other benefits, as well as a remedy to cure diseases and sickness. The positive impact of canonical Pāli *parittas* of the Theravāda school, mostly extracted from the *Sutta-piṭaka*, is already stated in the *Milindapañha* (originally composed in a middle-Indian language different from Pāli before the third century BC<sup>1</sup>):

*Puna bhagavatā parittā ca uddiṭṭhā, seyyathidaṃ ratanasuttaṃ  
khandhaparittaṃ moraparittaṃ dhajaggaparittaṃ āṭānāṭiyaparittaṃ  
aṅgulimālaparittaṃ. [...]*

*Kataparittaṃ hi mahārāja purisaṃ ḍasitukāmo ahi na ḍasati, vivaṭaṃ  
mukhaṃ pidahati. Corānaṃ ukkhittalaguḷaṃ pi na sambhavati. Te laguḷaṃ  
muñcitvā pemaṃ karonti. Kupito pi hatthināgo samāgantvā uparamati.  
Pajjalitamahāaggikkandho pi upagantvā nibbāyati. Viṣaṃ halāhalam pi  
khāyitaṃ agadaṃ sampajjati āhāratthaṃ vā pharati. Vadhakā hantukāmā  
upagantvā dāsabhūtā sampajjanti. Akkanto pi pāso na saṃvarati.*

(Mil 150.27–152.28)

But on the other hand the Pirit [*paritta*] service was promulgated by the Blessed One that is to say, the Ratana-sutta and the Khanda-parittā and the Mora-parittā and the Dhajagga-parittā and the Āṭānāṭiya-parittā and the Aṅgulimāla-parittā. [...]

[When *paritta* has been made, o King, a snake ready to bite a man] will not bite him, but close his jaws – the club which robbers hold aloft to strike him with will never strike; they will let it drop, and treat him kindly – the enraged elephant rushing at him will suddenly stop – the burning fiery conflagration surging towards him will die out – the malignant poison he has eaten will become harmless, and turn to food – assassins who have come to slay him will become as the slaves who wait upon him – and the trap into which he has trodden will hold him not.

(tr. Rhys Davids 1890: 213–216)

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<sup>1</sup> See Demiéville 1924 and Fussman 1993 for the history of translation of the *Milindapañha*.

The important role *rakṣā* texts always played in ritual practices cannot be underestimated. It is a special characteristic of these texts that they were not only preserved and transmitted, but actually applied in rituals and ceremonies to bring about their apotropaic effects in everyday life on almost every occasion. As noted by de Silva, “*PARITTA* is a very popular Buddhist ceremony in Śrī Laṅkā. It is not an exaggeration to say that hardly a day passes without this ceremony being performed.”<sup>2</sup> The same holds true for Burma, as was stated by Bode: “the Paritta [...] is, to this day, more widely known by the Burmese laity of all classes than any other Pali Book.”<sup>3</sup> Monks and lay followers alike, but especially monastics living in dangerous environments, in the wilderness, always memorised and recited protective texts from a very early date as a means of self-protection.

This chapter presents the state of the art of modern research on early Buddhist *rakṣā* literature. It furthermore establishes a common ground between *rakṣā* texts and medical treatises, and discusses whether the literary genre of *rakṣā* texts is derived from a now lost scientific source. Moreover, it intends to trace the origin of *mantras* in early Buddhist scriptures, and to examine the spread of *rakṣā mantras* from their place of origin on the Indian subcontinent throughout and beyond South Asia.

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<sup>2</sup> De Silva 1981: 3.

<sup>3</sup> Bode [1909] 1965: 3.

## 1.1 A classification of *rakṣā* texts

Skilling (1992) has presented different classes or collections of protective texts in his article on the *rakṣā* literature of the Śrāvakayāna tradition. While some of these texts belong to the earliest Buddhist literature and are ascribed to the Buddha himself, other texts emerged only in the first centuries of the Common Era. Skilling distinguishes four classes of *rakṣā* texts: 1) the *parittas* of the Theravādins, 2) the *mahāsūtras* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, 3) the *svastigāthās* of various schools, and 4) the *Pañcarakṣā* collection. Their characteristics shall be briefly described below.<sup>4</sup>

In the Theravāda school we find a series of texts under the Pāli name *paritta* (P. for “protection, safeguard”), which originates from the old Indian root *pari-trā* “to protect” and was often used synonymously to the term *rakṣā*.<sup>5</sup> An early list of *parittas* can be found in the *Milindapañha*,<sup>6</sup> and in the fifth century commentaries by Buddhaghosa.<sup>7</sup> Taken together these lists give the titles of nine *parittas*. Today there exist various collections not only in Pāli, but also in Singhalese, Burmese, and Siamese. In Śrī Laṅkā *parittas* constitute a collection of 29 texts called the *Catubhāṇavāra* gathered mostly from the *Sutta-piṭaka* preserved in Pāli.<sup>8</sup> The last seven *parittas* are, however, a later addition and Śrī Laṅkā commentaries of the

<sup>4</sup> For an extensive discussion of the four classes of *rakṣā* texts, see Skilling 1992: 116–144.

<sup>5</sup> The *paritta* collection is a, contrary to other classes of the *rakṣā* scriptures, well-examined literary genre. Lily de Silva gives a comprehensive bibliography of scholarly works in her study on the meaning, content, and historicity of Pāli *parittas*, and their application in ceremonies (cf. de Silva 1981: xi–xii). For further references, see Skilling 1992: 116. Particularly important is here Waldschmidt’s detailed description of a *paritta* ceremony (cf. Waldschmidt 1967a: 465–478). See also Harvey (1993: 53–84) for the use, function, and limitations of *parittas*.

<sup>6</sup> Mil 150.28–151.1: *Ratana-sutta, Khanda-paritta, Mora-paritta, Dhajagga-paritta, Ājānāṭiya-paritta, Angulimāla-paritta*.

<sup>7</sup> See for example the longest list in the commentary on the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the *Manoratha-pūraṇī*: Mp II 342.1–3: *Ājānāṭiya-paritta, Isigili-paritta, Dhajagga-paritta, Bojjhaṅga-paritta, Khandha-paritta, Mora-paritta, Metta-paritta, Ratana-paritta*.

<sup>8</sup> The 29 titles are (extracted from de Silva 1981: 5f.): *Saraṇagamana, Dasasikkhāpada, Sāmaṇerapañha, Dvattiṃsākāra, Paccavekkhaṇā, Dasadhamma-sutta, Mahāmangala-sutta, Ratana-sutta, Karaṇīyametta-sutta, Khanda-paritta, Mettānisamsa, Mittānisamsa, Mora-paritta, Canda-paritta, Suriya-paritta, Dhajagga-paritta, Mahākassapatthera-bojjhaṅga, Mahāmogallānathera-bojjhaṅga, Mahācundatthera-bojjhaṅga, Girimānanda-sutta, Isigili-sutta, Ājānāṭiya-sutta, Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta, Mahāsamaya-sutta, Parābhava-sutta, Alavaka-sutta, Aggikabhāradvāja-sutta, Kasībhāradvāja-sutta, and Saccavibhaṅga-sutta*.

twelfth and eighteenth centuries reference the shorter list of 22 *parittas*. The seven additional texts of the longer collection differ in order and context in different editions.

In the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition some of the *parittas* – the *Dhajagga-sutta*, the *Āṭānāṭṭiya-sutta*, and the *Mahāsamāya-sutta* – are classed under the term *mahāsūtra*, the *Dhvajāgra-mahāsūtra*, the *Āṭānāṭṭiya-mahāsūtra*,<sup>9</sup> and the *Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra*.<sup>10</sup> The counterpart to the Pāli *Ratana-sutta*, a *paritta* text, is the *Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra*. However, this is merely in terms of context, since they share only one common verse. The term *mahāsūtra* applies to a collection of six or eight *sūtras* in the *Āgamas* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translation. While the Chinese list refers to six *mahāsūtras*, the Tibetan list preserved in the early ninth century *Ldan dkar ma* or *Lhan dkar ma* (henceforth: *Ldan dkar ma*) catalogue as well as in Bu ston Rin chen grub's (1290–1364) *History of Buddhism* (Tib. *Chos 'byung*) some 500 years later gives nine titles.<sup>11</sup> According to Skilling, the collection of nine Tibetan *mahāsūtras* can be dated to the eighth century.<sup>12</sup> Together with one other text, which is not listed among these nine *sūtras*, but also bears the title *mahāsūtra*, the *Vaiśālīpraveśa-mahāsūtra*, we eventually can speak of a collection of ten *mahāsūtras*. Sanskrit fragments of six of these *sūtras* have been found in Central Asia. Even if they can certainly be classed as *rakṣā* texts according to their protective function, they are not explicitly labelled as *mahāsūtras*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This text bears slightly different titles in Tibet (Mūlasarvāstivāda) and Central Asia (Sarvāstivāda): *Āṭānāṭṭiya-mahāsūtra* in Tibetan translation, *Āṭānāṭṭika-sūtra* in Central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts.

<sup>10</sup> For an extensive study of *mahāsūtras* and their relation to *parittas* and other classes of *rakṣā* literature, see the general introduction in Skilling 1997a: 3–208, and especially 63–88. For the *Pañcatraya-* and *Māyājāla-mahāsūtras*, see Skilling 2017.

<sup>11</sup> The Sanskrit titles are (extracted from Skilling 1992: 126): *Cūḍasūnyatā-*, *Mahāsūnyatā-*, *Pañcatraya-*, *Māyājāla-*, *Bimbisārapratyudgamana-*, *Dhvajāgra-*, *Āṭānāṭṭiya-*, and *Mahāsamāja-mahāsūtra*. There are two *Dhvajāgra-mahāsūtras*.

<sup>12</sup> Skilling (1997a: 17): “The Mūlasarvāstivādin collection must have existed by the beginning of the eighth century, the date of translation of the Vinaya of that school into Chinese. As for the date of the texts themselves, not much can be said.”

<sup>13</sup> For a study on the Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Āṭānāṭṭika-sūtra* found in Central Asia and Gilgit, see Hoffmann [1939] 1987, and Sander 2007. For the *Mahāsamāja-sūtra*, see Waldschmidt [1932] 1979: 149–206, and Sander 1987b: 159–179; for the *Dhvajāgra-sūtra*, see Waldschmidt [1932] 1979: 43–53, and 1959; for the *Bimbisāra-sūtra*, see Waldschmidt [1932] 1979: 114–148.

The third class of *rakṣā* texts – or rather *rakṣā* verses – can be subsumed under the title *svastigāthās*, which promote welfare, benediction, or blessings. This group is represented by a multitude of verses known as *svasti-*, *svastyayana-*, or *maṅgala-gāthā*, *praṇidhāna* or *satyavāk*, which can be found in various Buddhist schools. The only extant collection of *svastigāthās* is found in Tibetan translation. The *Ldan kar ma* catalogue gives a list of seven texts, which it ascribes to the category of *Bkra shis kyi rnam grangs* (Skt. \**Svastiparyāya*).<sup>14</sup> *Svastigāthās* appear at the end of various divisions in the Tibetan Kangyur and Tengyur, and function as blessings upon completion of the meritorious work of compiling the Tibetan canon. The catalogue (Tib. *dkar chag*) to the Golden Tengyur (Tib. *Gser gyi lag bris ma*) created in the mid-eighteenth century explains the promotion of welfare on account of the compilation of the Buddhist scriptures as follows:

*da ni las byas pa don yod par bya ba'i phyir | bsngo ba dang | smon lam dang | bkra shis kyi skor 'di rnam la | [...]*

*gang zhig brjod na don rnam kun 'grub cing | gnas skabs kun tu bde legs 'gyur ba yi ||*

*bsngo ba smon lam bkra shis tshigs bcad skor || bzhi bcu tham pa legs par bzhugs pa yin ||*

(Golden Tengyur, 225, *dkar chag*, tso, 366.5–367.1)

Now, in order to make fruitful the work that has [just been] completed [the copying of the Tanjur], the dedications (*bsngo ba* = *pariṇamanā*), aspirations (*smoṅ lam* = *praṇidhāna*), and blessings (*bkra shis* = *maṅgala*) [follow] ...

Well-placed [here] are the forty-odd dedications, aspirations, and verses of blessings

which when recited accomplish all aims and promote welfare at all times.

(tr. Skilling 1992: 131)

<sup>14</sup> The seven titles are: *Bkra shis kyi chigs su bcad pa chen po*, *Shis pa brjod pa'i chigs su bcad pa*, *Bkra shis kyi shigs su bcad pa*, and *Bkra shis su bya ba'i shigs su bcad pa* (Skt. *Maṅgala*), and *Bde legs kyi chigs su bcad pa*, *Yang bde legs su bya ba'i chigs su bcad pa*, and *Yang bde legs su su 'gyur ba'i chigs su bcad pa* (Skt. *Svasti*) (cf. Lalou 1953: 330, 351, 353).

The five texts of the *Pañcarakṣā* (Skt. for “Five Protections”) collection belong to the fourth class of *rakṣā* texts. Strictly speaking, there are two different collections, one preserved in Tibetan, and one in Sanskrit. The two collections only share three texts, so that we should speak of seven, rather than five texts. The *Ldan kar ma* catalogue (section XIII) lists the following Tibetan texts under the equivalent title *Gzungs chen po lnga la* “The Five Great *Dhāraṇīs*”, probably an alternative name for the *Pañcarakṣā* collection in the Tibetan tradition: 1) *Rma bya chen mo* (Skt. *Mahāmāyūrī*), 2) *Stong chen mo rab tu 'joms pa* (Skt. *Mahāsāhasrapramardana*), 3) *Rig pa'i rgyal mo so sor 'brang ba chen mo* (Skt. *Mahāpratisāravidyārājñī*), 4) *Gsil ba'i chal chen mo* (Skt. *Mahāśītavana*), and 5) *Gsang sngags rjesu 'dzin pa* (Skt. *Mahāmantrānudhāri*).<sup>15</sup> A Tibetan manuscript found in Tabo<sup>16</sup> gives the same texts, but lists them in a different order: 1) *'Phags pa stong chen mo rab tu 'jom ba zhes bya ba'i mdo* (Skt. *Ārya-mahāsāhasra-pramardanī-sūtra*), 2) *'Phags pa rig sngags kyi rgyal mo rma bya chen mo* (Skt. *Ārya-mahā-māyūrī-vidyā-rājñī*), 3) *'Phags pa bsil ba'i tshal chen po'i mdo* (Skt. *Ārya-mahā-śītavana-sūtra*), 4) *'Phags pa rig pa'i rgyal mo so sor 'brang ba chen mo* (Skt. *Ārya-mahā-pratisarā-vidyārājñī*), and 5) *'Phags pa gsang sngags chen po rjes su 'dzin pa'i mdo* (Skt. *Ārya-mahā-mantra-anudharaṇi*[or *anudhāri*]-*sūtra*).<sup>17</sup> Hidas assumed that the latter list represents an earlier collection:

[I]t is possible that these five texts constituted a proto-*Pañcarakṣā*-collection in Sanskrit and later on two of them, the *Mahāśītavana* and the *Mahāmantrānudhāri* were replaced with the *Mahāśītavatī* and the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* respectively.<sup>18</sup>

The following table gives the titles of the five Sanskrit and Tibetan *Pañcarakṣā* texts. The Sanskrit titles of the Tibetan texts are extracted from the transliterations given internally at the beginning of the texts. The Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-sītavatī*, the *Be con chen po shes bya ba'i gzungs* or

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Lalou 1953: 327, 351.

<sup>16</sup> The collection of Tabo manuscripts can be dated from the mid-tenth to the sixteenth centuries (cf. Scherrer-Schaub/Bonani 2002). Although it is not possible to definitely date the manuscript under consideration, its structure, style, and archaic orthography speak in favour of its antiquity (cf. Harrison 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Harrison 1996: 53.

<sup>18</sup> Hidas 2012: 24 n. 16.

*Mahādaṇḍa-dhāraṇī* (displayed with grey background), is not listed among the “The Five Great *Dhāraṇīs*”.<sup>19</sup>

Table 2: The titles of the Sanskrit and Tibetan *Pañcarakṣā* texts.

Sanskrit titles	Tibetan titles
<i>Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra</i>	<i>Mahāsāhasrapramardanī-nāma-mahāyānasūtra</i> <i>Stong chen po rab tu 'joms pa shes bya ba 'i mdo</i> (D 558, Q 177)
<i>Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī</i>	<i>Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī</i> <i>Rig sngags kyi rgyal mo rma bya chen mo</i> (D 559, Q 178)
	<i>Mahāśītavana</i> <i>Bsil ba 'i tshal chen mo</i> (D 562, Q 180)
<i>Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavatī</i>	<i>Mahādaṇḍa-dhāraṇī</i> <i>Be con chen po shes bya ba 'i gzungs</i> (D 606, Q 308)
<i>Mahāpratisarā-mahāvidyārājñī</i>	<i>Mahāpratisarā-vidyārājñī</i> <i>Rig pa 'i rgyal mo so sor 'brang ba chen mo</i> (D 561, Q 179)
	<i>Mahāmantrānudharaṇī-sūtra</i> <i>Gsang sngags chen mo rjes su 'dzin pa 'i mdo</i> (D 563, Q 181)
<i>Mahāmantrānusāriṇī</i>	

Out of the seven *pañcarakṣā* texts, Skilling (1992) ascribes only the *Mahāpratisarā-mahāvidyārājñī* (henceforth: *Mahāpratisarā*) to the Mahāyāna, and classifies the other six texts under Śrāvakayāna.<sup>20</sup> However, Hidas (2017) remarks that some manuscript colophons refer to the *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavatī* as a Mahāyāna scripture.<sup>21</sup> Skilling describes the remaining five texts as Śrāvakayāna *rakṣās par excellence*. They are all compilations, which centre upon *parittas*, but expand upon this core with statements of homage, *mantras*, popular cultic practices, and ritual instructions. Skilling noted:

<sup>19</sup> Hidas demonstrated that the title *Mahāśītavatī* reflects a later stage in the transmission of this text. An early title is likely to have been *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavatī* or simply *Mahādaṇḍadhāraṇī*. For a critical edition, translation and study of this text, see Hidas 2017: 449. An edition of the *Mahāśītavatī* was originally published by Iwamoto 1937b.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Skilling 1992: 143.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hidas 2017: 454.

All have *paritta* at their heart, and are expanded by preambles, by verses of homage, by *mantras* and praises of *mantras*, by lists of deities, by descriptions of rites, and so on: they are composite compilations that must have evolved over several centuries. All contain common elements, such as the cult of past Buddhas, the Four Kings, and deities such as *yakṣas*, etc., common verses, and common phraseology.<sup>22</sup>

It is at present not possible to definitely date the composition of the *Pañcarakṣā* collections, since the manuscript evidence is rather late. The Tibetan translation was produced in about 800 CE, while the oldest manuscripts of the Indian collection can be dated to about 1100 CE. There is, however, a large timespan between the actual emergence of the individual texts, which were first transmitted independently before they were grouped together and formed the *Pañcarakṣā* collection, and the date of the oldest preserved manuscripts of the collections<sup>23</sup>

Skilling's classification of the *rakṣā* literature, however, does not comprise a number of *rakṣā* texts, which were transmitted independently, and which cannot be ascribed to one of the categories or collections of *rakṣā* texts discussed above. These texts include the *Asilomapratisara*,<sup>24</sup> the *Bhadrakarātrī-sūtra*, the *Daśabala-sūtra*,<sup>25</sup> the *Diśāsauvastika-sūtra*,<sup>26</sup> the *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra*,<sup>27</sup> the *\*Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra*,<sup>28</sup> the *Megha-sūtra*,<sup>29</sup> the *Mekhalā-dhāraṇī*,<sup>30</sup> the *Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa*,<sup>31</sup> the *Satyā-sūtra*,<sup>32</sup> the *Upasena-sūtra*,<sup>33</sup> and the *Vidyāsthānopama-sūtra*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Skilling 1992: 144.

<sup>23</sup> As Hidas pointed out, the *Mahāpratisarā* circulated in Gilgit in the first half of the seventh century, and he therefore places the *terminus ante quem* for the emergence of this text to the late sixth century, even if earlier forms of this text might have already existed in the fifth century (cf. Hidas 2012: 21 n. 4).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. SHT I+IV 60.

<sup>25</sup> The canonical *Daśabala-sūtra* in the *Majjhima-nikāya* and in the *Samyukta-āgama* does not show any protective elements or *mantras*, which were supplemented only in Central Asia. Cf. Waldschmidt [1932] 1979: 207–225, and 1958: 382–405. A complete overview of the four extant versions of the *sūtra* is available in Chung 2008: 165f., and 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Tournier 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Harrison 1992.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Strauch 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Bendall 1880.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Tripāṭhī 1980.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Bongard-Levin et al. 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Waldschmidt 1959: 18f.

All these texts bear linguistic elements typical for later *rakṣā* texts and can therefore easily be classed as *rakṣā* literature. It is, however, important to keep in mind that it is not a typical linguistic feature that makes a text a *rakṣā* text, but the function, purpose, and use of a text. This short list of texts is in no case complete for there are various other protective texts. Some manuscripts found in Gilgit, Bamiyan, Nepal, and Central Asia,<sup>35</sup> most of them still unidentified, seem to be *rakṣā* collections, or composite or multiple-text manuscripts comprising several *rakṣā* texts transmitted together in one manuscript.<sup>36</sup> It seems that the use and ritual function of texts might have determined the linguistic shape they were transmitted in. A complete inventory of existent *rakṣā* manuscripts in Indian languages is currently not available and remains a desirable subject of further research.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Waldschmidt 1967b.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Waldschmidt [1959: 3–8] 1967c: 373–378.

<sup>35</sup> For *rakṣā* manuscripts from Gilgit, see von Hinüber 1981, 2004: 12–17, 2014, and 2018. For *rakṣā* manuscripts from Bamiyan now scattered around the world and kept in various private collections, see the *Schøyen Collection of Buddhist Manuscripts* (Braarvig 2000–2016), and the *Hirayama Collection* (Tamaï 2016). Some *rakṣā* texts from Nepal can be found in R. Mitra 1882. In his *Survey of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Turfan Collection* (Berlin), Wille lists *rakṣā* manuscripts from Central Asia now kept in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (cf. Wille 2014: 205f.: Apotropaic texts (*rakṣā*) and other charms (*dhāraṇī*, *vidyā*, *mantra*)).

<sup>36</sup> For such a multiple-text manuscript, see Hartmann/Wille 2010: 365–382, and Hartmann 2017a: 77–79.

## 1.2 The source of protective texts

The healing of various kinds of diseases is one of the main purposes and functions of *rakṣā* literature. Throughout this literary genre we find lists of diseases, of poisonous substances, and of medicinal herbs, as well as instructions on how to conduct healing rituals. There was such faith in mantric scriptures that the recitation of *mantras* constituted a separate branch of early Indic Buddhist medical practice, and it is not too far-fetched to assume a medical origin from which Buddhist *rakṣā* literature evolved. Strauch (2014) suggested that a seemingly lost botanical or scientific tradition could be identified as one of the possible sources for Buddhist *rakṣā* practices.<sup>37</sup> Several apotropaic texts were indeed used in healing rites, and their *mantras* were widely employed as means to cure illnesses. Often, texts centring upon healing illnesses use the term *vidyā* to designate their spells, which comprises the science of medicine, as Waddell (1912) demonstrated:

*‘Vidyā’* with its meaning of higher knowledge or Art seems to have connoted frequently the art of medicine, so that most of the spells which are termed *Vidyā* purport to cure diseases – though many *Dhāraṇīs* also are expressedly intended for diseases.<sup>38</sup>

There is evidence from Central Asia that points to the use of the term *vidyā* in healing practices. Two spells (*vidyās*) on one folio of a composite manuscript (SHT III 842) represent healing spells against diseases. On the recto, there is a spell against diseases of any kind (Skt. *sarvaroga*) entitled *sarvarakṣā vidyā*, and on the verso we find a spell against headache (Skt. *śīrṣartti*). The spell for every kind of protection on the recto reads:

*tasya kaścīt prasahiṣyati devo vā nāgo vā asuro vā gandharvvo vā kinnaro vā mahorago vā yakṣo vā rākṣaso vā kumbhāṇḍo vā preto vā piśāco vā pūtano vā kaṭapūtano vā manuṣyo vā amanuṣyo vā yāva sarvvarogādhiḡato vā puṇyadattasya rakṣaṃ karomi paritraparigrahaṃ karomi yāva sarvvarogādhiḡato vā*

(SHT III 842r1–4)

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Strauch 2014: 81.

<sup>38</sup> Waddell 1912: 171.

He will withstand all diseases caused by any god, *nāga*, *asura*, *gandharva*, *kiṃnara*, *mahoraga*, *yakṣa*, *rākṣasa*, *kumbhāṇḍa*, *preta*, *piśāca*, *pūtana*, *kaṭapūtana*, human, or non-human. I provide protection for Punyadatta, and I safeguard from all diseases that come near.

Moreover, other *rakṣā* texts have been used in healing practices. There are several examples that show how the *Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī* (henceforth: *Mahāmāyūrī*) was employed for healing purposes. It was included in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*<sup>39</sup> of the *Vinayavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, which according to Zysk “represents the earliest form of Buddhist monastic medicine.”<sup>40</sup> There we are told that the Buddha once healed a young monk bitten by a snake by means of the recitation of the *Mahāmāyūrī mantra*.<sup>41</sup> The popularity of the *Mahāmāyūrī mantra* to cure illnesses in the early period (between the fourth and eighth centuries) is also expressed in the seventh century *Harṣacarita*, where Bāṇabhaṭṭa mentions that the *Mahāmāyūrī* was recited by the royal family for healing the emperor’s disease, and to secure the well-being of the residents of the royal palace.<sup>42</sup> The *Mahāmāyūrī* was also frequently applied as remedy in healing rites in China and Japan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>43</sup> The healing power of *dhāraṇīs* also played an important role in eighth century Japanese Buddhism, where the curing of the sick by chanting *dhāraṇīs* was included in the government’s legal code. The historiography *Continued History of Japan (Shoku nihongi)*, compiled in 797, tells us that a group of priests well versed in *dhāraṇīs* recited them for the protection and the health of the ruler and his family.<sup>44</sup>

The tradition of *mantra* healing is, however, deeply rooted outside of Buddhist practices, and found widespread application in early Vedic times. The main source for magico-religious healing is the *Atharvaveda*, which contains an enormous

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Dutt 1942: 286-288.

<sup>40</sup> Zysk 1991: 52.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Panglung 1980 and 1981: 61.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Cowell/Thomas 1897: 137.

<sup>43</sup> De Visser (1919-20: 387) writes on the use of the *Mahāmāyūrī* in China and Japan: “[...] daß besonders im elften und zwölften Jahrhundert viele berühmte Shingonpriester den Mahāmāyūrī-Ritus in erfolgreicher Weise beginnen, immer auf Befehl des Kaisers, um Regen hervorzurufen, der Kaiserin eine leichte Geburt zuteilwerden zu lassen, und den Kaiser von einer Krankheit oder einem leichten Unwohlsein zu befreien.”

<sup>44</sup> On the use of *dhāraṇīs* in Japanese Buddhist healing practices, see Abé 1999: 161f.

number of hymns and *mantras* devoted to healing illnesses.<sup>45</sup> These *mantras*, which were considered to be more efficacious than the actual use of herbs and medicine, were recited during special healing rites. This tradition continues then in scientific treatises, of which the *Bhela-*, *Caraka-*, and *Suśruta-saṃhitās* of the Āyurvedic tradition represent the oldest ones.<sup>46</sup> Halder summarizes the enumeration of diseases in the *Atharvaveda*, which can be cured through the utterance of *mantras*, as follows:

They are securing curatives for various otherwise incurable diseases produced by the sins of past life, viz. Fever, Cholera and Diabetes; stopping the flow of blood from wounds caused by injuries from weapons, preventing epileptic fits and possession by different types of evil spirits, such as the *bhūta*, *piśāca*, *brahma-rakṣas*, etc.; curing *vāta*, *pitta* and *śleṣman*, heart diseases, Jaundice, white leprosy, different kinds of fever, Phthisis, Dropsy; [c]uring worms in cows and horses, providing antidotes against all kinds of poisons, supplying curatives for the diseases of the head, eyes, nose, ears, tongue, neck and inflammation of the neck warding off the evil effects of a Brāhmaṇa's curse; arranging women's rites for securing sons, securing easy delivery and the welfare of the foetus.<sup>47</sup>

Almost identical lists of diseases can be found throughout Buddhist *rakṣā* literature in Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese sources. The positive effect of the *mantras* of various texts is to prevent or to heal all kinds of illnesses, which are enumerated after the *mantras*. These lists appear among others in the *Mahāmāyūrī*,<sup>48</sup> the Tibetan *Ṣaḍakṣara-vidyā*,<sup>49</sup> the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions of the *Ārya-tathāgatoṣṇīśasitātapatra-nāmāparājītā-pratyāṅgirā-mahāvidyārājñī* (henceforth: *Buddhoṣṇīśa*),<sup>50</sup> and the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī*.<sup>51</sup> Parts of an early Sanskrit

<sup>45</sup> For admirable studies on Indian classical medicine, see Filliozat 1949, and Roṣu 1989, who collected works on the history of Indian medicine by the two scholars Gustave Liétard and Palmyr Cordier.

<sup>46</sup> For a study on the use of *mantras* in Āyurvedic treatises, see Zysk 1989: 123–143.

<sup>47</sup> Halder 1977: 14.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Takubo 1972: 28f.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Holz 2017: 232.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Samten/Pandey 2002: 152f. For a Sanskrit manuscript from Turkestan, see Hoernle 1916: 52, no. 150. For a Sanskrit manuscript from Nepal, see R. Mitra 1882: 227 no. B 46. For the Chinese text, see Taishō IXX 943A, 944B, 945, 976, 977; for the Tibetan text, see A 709, A 1092, D 591, H 542, N 515, Q 203, Z 567; for a translation of the Tibetan version, see Waddell 1914: 49–54.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Meisezahl 1962: 314.

version of the *Mahāmāyūrī* were found among the so-called Bower Manuscript from Kucha, Central Asia, a collection of medical treatises. This treatise, which can be dated to the first half of the sixth century,<sup>52</sup> contains a similar list of diseases, though in a slightly different order.<sup>53</sup> The enumeration of illnesses, and of demons and other evil beings causing fever in the *Mahāmāyūrī* here serves as example (see table 3 for a comparative list of different kinds of fever and diseases in other sources):<sup>54</sup>

*śirorttim apanayantu. arddhāvabhedakam arocakam akṣirogaṃ nāsārogaṃ mukharogaṃ kaṅṭharogaṃ hṛdrogaṃ galagrahaṃ karṇaśūlaṃ dantaśūlaṃ hṛdayaśūlaṃ pāśvaśūlaṃ pṛṣṭhaśūlaṃ udaraśūlaṃ gaṇḍaśūlaṃ vaṣṭiśūlaṃ gudaśūlaṃ yoniśūlaṃ prajanaśūlaṃ ūruśūlaṃ jaṅghāśūlaṃ hastaśūlaṃ pādaśūlaṃ aṅgapratyaṅgaśūlaṃ jvaram apanayantu. ekāhikam dvāhikam trairāyikam cāturthakam saptaḥikam ardhmāsikam māsikam dvaimāsikam mauhūrtikam nityajvaram viśamajvaram bhūtajvaram pretajvaram mānuṣajvaram amānuṣajvaram vātikam paittikam śleṣmikam sānnipātikam sarvajvaram sarvavyādhiṃ sarvagraham sarvaviṣam sarvapāpam sarvabhayaṃ ca nāśayantu*

(Takubo 1972: 28f.)

Headache shall be removed. Hemiplegia, indigestion, diseases of the eyes, nose, mouth, throat, heart, compression of the throat, pain of the ears, teeth, heart, ribs, back, stomach, cheeks, bladder, piles, womb, menorrhagia, thighs, shanks, hands, feet, limbs, minor limbs, and fever shall be removed. Every day, every second day, every third day, every fourth day, every seventh day, every half a month, every month, every second month, momentary, uninterrupted, and irregular fever, fever caused by *bhūtas*, *pretas*, human, and non-human beings, illness that arises from a combined derangement of air, bile, and phlegm, every kind of fever, all plagues, all evil demons, all poisons, all evil, and all fears shall be extinguished.

<sup>52</sup> Date according to Sander 1987a.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Hoernle 1897: 223.

<sup>54</sup> For a comparative study of the above-mentioned sources containing lists of diseases, see Holz 2017: 237–240. Fragments of this list are also preserved in Sanskrit manuscripts from Turfan (cf. SHT III 900 and 906d).



Table 3 (continued)

<i>Mahāmāyūrī</i>	<i>Buddhoṣṇīṣa</i>	Bower Manuscript	<i>Atharvaveda</i>
<i>jaṃghāsūlaṃ</i>	<i>jaṅghāsūlaṃ</i>	<i>jaṃghāsūlaṃ</i>	<i>jānu</i>
<i>hastāsūlaṃ</i>	<i>hastāsūlaṃ</i>	<i>hastāsūlaṃ</i>	
<i>pādaśūlaṃ</i>	<i>pādaśūlaṃ</i>	<i>pādaśūlaṃ</i>	<i>pāda</i>
<i>aṅgapratyaṅgaśūlaṃ</i>	<i>aṅgapratyaṅgaśūlaṃ</i>	<i>aṅgapratyaṅgaśūlaṃ</i>	<i>aṅgabhedā</i>
<i>vātikaṃ</i>	<i>vātikāḥ</i>		<i>vāṭikāra</i>
<i>paittikaṃ</i>	<i>paittikāḥ</i>		
<i>śleṣmikaṃ</i>	<i>ślaiṣmikāḥ</i>		
<i>sānnipātikaṃ</i>	<i>sānnipātikāḥ</i>		
	<i>uraḥśūlaṃ</i>		
	<i>marmasūlaṃ</i>		

Further references to healing rituals, which frequently appear in protective scriptures, give another indication that *rakṣā* texts are based on medical sources. The texts give instructions on how to prepare these rites, which together with the recitation of *mantras* are then performed in order to cure a sick person. The *Mahāpratisarā* describes such a rite in the following way:<sup>55</sup>

*idānīm sampravakṣyāmi āturāṇām cikitsanam |*  
*caturaśraṃ maṇḍalaṃ kuryān mṛdgomayasamanvitam ||1||*

*pañcaraṅgikacūrṇena citrayen maṇḍalaṃ śubham |*  
*caturah pūrṇakumbhāmś ca sthāpayed vidhinā budhaḥ ||2||*

*puṣpāṇy avakiret tatra dhūpayed dhūpam uttamam |*  
*balikarma ca kurvīta mahāsāhasrapramardanam ||3||*

*pūrvavad gandhapuṣpāmś ca dadyāc cātra vidhānavit |*  
*catasras tīrikāḥ sthāpyāḥ sarvās ca paṭṭabaddhikāḥ ||4||*

*snāpayitvāturaṃ paścāc chucivastrasamāvṛtam |*  
*śubhagandhānuliptaṅgaṃ praveśayen madhyamaṇḍalam ||5||*

*pūrvāmukhaṃ niṣādyainam vidyām etām udāharet |*  
*saptaśo japtayā cāsya rakṣām kuryād vicakṣaṇaḥ ||6||*

*āturasya tato 'rthāya vārāmś cāpy ekaviṃśati |*  
*udāhared imām vidyām sarvarogapaśāntaye ||7||*

(Hidas 2012: 190f.)

<sup>55</sup> The *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra* also gives directions on how to conduct healing rituals (cf. Iwamoto 1937a: 30-43). Further healing rites can be found in the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra*, and in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (cf. Zysk 1991: 61f.).

Now I shall teach the healing of the sick.  
 One should make a square mandala with soil and cowdung. ||1||

One should draw a splendid mandala with five-coloured powder.  
 The wise one should place four filled jars according to the precept. ||2||

He should scatter flowers there and burn the finest incense.  
 He should make the offering crushing the Great Thousand. ||3||

Then the knower of the precepts should offer there fragrances and flowers  
 as before.  
 Four arrows are to be set in place, all bound with cloth. ||4||

Then one should bring the sick person to the middle of the mandala  
 Having bathed him, having had him dressed in clean clothes and his body  
 anointed with pleasant fragrances. ||5||

One should seat him facing East and should utter this spell.  
 By muttering it seven times the skilful one will bring about his protection. ||6||

Then for the advantage of the sick person one should utter this spell another  
 twenty-one times  
 For the cessation of all diseases. ||7||

(tr. Hidas 2012: 249f.)

Some *rakṣā* texts apply poisonous substances listed among the *mantras*, which are devoted to healing diseases. The Tibetan parallel of the Gāndhārī \**Manasvī-nāgarāja-sūtra*, the 'Phags pa *klu'i rgyal po gzi can gyis zhus pa zhes bza ba'i gzungs*, refers to the “Great poisons and medicines” using the phrase *dug dang sman chen po bco brygad po* (Z Vol. 101 p. 329.2, H Vol. 91 p. 316.2) “eighteen great poisons and medicines”. It was indicated by the *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra*, which shows a close connection to scientific traditions, that some *mantra* syllables or terms refer to poisonous or medical substances:

*vīryeṇa tejasā teṣāṃ viṣam astv aviṣam sadā |*  
*tatra mantrapadā bhonti nirviṣā viṣadūṣaṇāḥ ||*

*syād yathedam |*  
*harikeśi | nakile | rehile | amare aṇḍare paṇḍare | kaṭake | keyūre | hase*  
*hase hase | khase khase khase | kharaṅge | marugahaṇe svāhā || mumukṣa*  
*svāhā | hile svāhā | mile svāhā ||*

*hatā gaṇḍāḥ kilāsās ca vaisarpās ca vicarcikāḥ |*  
*piṭṭakā lohaliṅgās ca kacchūr bhavati saptamī ||*

(Iwamoto 1937a: 33)

By the energy, by the heat of them (i.e Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas, Arhats, etc.) the poison shall always be non-poisonous. There are *mantra* words which are poisonless (*nirviṣa*), which make poison effectless (*viṣadūṣaṇa*), namely:

harikeṣi. nakile. rehile. amare aṇḍare paṇḍare. kaṭake. keyūre. hase hase hase. khase khase khase. kharāṅge. marugahaṅe Hail. mumukṣa Hail. hile Hail. mile Hail.

Destroyed are goitress (*gaṇḍa*), cases of ‘white leprosy’ (*kilāsa*), the effect of the visarpa disease, itch (*vicarcikā*), cases of tartar (*piṭṭaka*), bloody abscesses, and scab (*kacchū*) as the seventh.

(tr. Strauch 2014: 79)

Some terms of this *mantra* can be connected with either poisonous or medical plants, although it is not possible at the moment to trace any similar list in the preserved early Āyurvedic or scientific scriptures of the Indian medical tradition.<sup>56</sup> It seems, however, highly probable that the list of poisons known to various *rakṣā* texts is derived from a now lost botanical or medical tradition, which has its origin outside of Buddhism, and which is not only deeply rooted in Indian magical healing circles, but also in a scientific tradition. This fact is further supported by the appearance of another list of healing substances, a list of medicinal herbs, which can be found in the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī*. This text says that illnesses are cured through recitation over medicinal herbs. By wearing them as an amulet protection and prosperity will be provided. The relevant passage of the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī* runs as follows:<sup>57</sup>

*jayā vijayā | nākulī | gandhanākulī vāruṇī abhayapāṇi | indrapāṇi |  
gandhapriyaṅgu | tagara cakrā | mahācakrā | viṣṇukrāntā | somarājī |  
sucandanā ceti || eṣāṃ yathāsambhavataḥ | aṣṭottaraśatavārān pariḥajya  
maṇiṃ kṛtvā śirasi bāhau vā dhārayitavyaṃ | bālānāṃ gale | nārīṇāṃ  
vilagne | svayam parama saubhāgyakaraṇaṃ | alakṣmīpraśamaṇaṃ putradañ  
ca || etena maṇinā bandhena sarvarakṣā kṛtā bhavati | viṣāgnirnnākramati |*

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Strauch (2014: 81) who identified G. *bidumati*, Skt. *bindukinī* or *binduka* as a poison, *pāṇḍara*, *kaṇḍa*, and *śrīmatī* as a kind of plant, *tarāṭa*, and *keyūra* as a certain medical plant, and *tejovātī* as a kind of pepper. For a discussion of the use of this spell in *rakṣā* texts and in Āyurvedic literature, see Strauch 2014: 75–78.

<sup>57</sup> The *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra* also gives a list of medicinal herbs (cf. Iwamoto 1937a: 30–43).

*viśakṛtaṃ notpadyate | utpannā api na pīḍāñ janayiṣyanti | śīghraṃ  
praśamayīṣyanti | grahāḥ praśamayīṣyanti |*

(Meisezahl 1962: 326)

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

(tr. Meisezahl 1962: 299)

As Zysk has convincingly shown, the use of *mantras* as remedy to cure diseases plays an important role in the medical tradition of the *Atharvaveda*, as well as in Āyurvedic sources. In his study of *mantras* in the *Āyurveda*, he refers to the following *mantra* in the *Uttarasthāna* of Vāgbhaṭa's *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya-saṃhitā*:<sup>58</sup>

*tadā mantraṃ*

*namaḥ puruṣasiṃhāya namo nārāyaṇāya ca |  
yathāsau nābhijānāti raṇe kṛṣṇaparājayam || 28 ||*

*raṇe kṛṣṇaḥ parājayam etena satyavākyena agado me prasidhyatu |  
namo vaiḍūryamāte hulu hulu rakṣa māṃ sarvaviṣebhyaḥ || 29 ||*

*hulu kulu rakṣa māṃ sarvaviṣebhyaḥ  
gauri gāndhāri caṇḍāli mātāṅgi svāhā*

(Utt 35.27–30)

Then [recite] the *mantra*:

Homage to Puruṣasiṃha, homage to Nārāyaṇa. Just as one does not know a defeat of Kṛṣṇa in a battle, may the antidote be effective for me by this true speech. Homage to Vaiḍūryamātā, *hulu hulu*, protect me from all poisons. *hulu kulu*, protect me from all poisons. *gauri*, *gāndhāri*, *caṇḍāli*, *mātāṅgi*, *svāhā!*

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Zysk 1989: 140f. n. 24.

This *mantra* not only shares some linguistic features with the *mantras* of *rakṣā* literature, but also its benefits. It is believed to ward off all kinds of poisons, ghosts, demons, sorcery, misfortune, epidemic, disease, famine, war, thunderbolt, and fear.<sup>59</sup> Similar lists of calamities can be found throughout Buddhist *rakṣā* literature.<sup>60</sup> The Āyurvedic *mantra* of the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya-saṃhitā* also shares the alinguistic syllables *hulu hulu, hulu kulu* with the *mantras* of *rakṣā* literature, as well as the series of invocations of the female deities *gauri gāndhāri cāṇḍālī mātaṅgi*. The close relationship between the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya-saṃhitā mantra* and Buddhist *rakṣā mantras* suggests that they could possibly be derived from a common source.

In summary, besides providing protection and welfare for all sentient beings, one of the main functions of *rakṣā* texts is curing diseases. Protective texts were widely employed in healing rituals. Furthermore, we find lists of diseases, which will not occur by the recitation of spells, references to healing rites, as well as lists of poisonous substances and medicinal herbs throughout *rakṣā* literature. The close relationship of protective texts and medical treatises points to a common scientific source, although it is at this point impossible to establish this common origin.

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<sup>59</sup> Utt 35.30: *aśeṣaviṣavetālagrahakārmaṇapāpmasu | marakavyādhidurbhikṣayuddhāsānibhayeṣu ca.*

<sup>60</sup> For an example of such a list of calamities, see chapter 5.2.1 of the present work.

### 1.3 Mantric scriptures in early Buddhism

With the discovery of numerous Gāndhārī manuscripts in the 1990s and early 2000s, which completely changed our perception of early Buddhism, we are now able to date the beginnings of early Buddhist spell practices. The \**Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra*, which is part of the Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts,<sup>61</sup> represents the earliest material for the employment of *mantras* in Buddhist *rakṣā* literature. The central theme of this text is fearlessness. The *nāgarāja* Manasvin approaches the Buddha and delivers a special *mantra* to avoid and avert every kind of calamity. As Strauch demonstrated, with its phraseology and compositional structure, this *sūtra* follows a certain pattern, which then became a common feature of post-canonical apotropaic texts.<sup>62</sup> On philological and palaeographical grounds, the manuscripts of the Bajaur Collection can be dated to the first two centuries of the Common Era. The composition of the \**Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* thus falls into the time of the very beginning of the use of *mantras* in the *rakṣā* literature as suggested by Peter Skilling.<sup>63</sup>

Further literary evidence for the early use of *mantras* is represented by two Chinese translations. The Chinese version of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* in the Śrāvakayāna tradition, and the *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* in the Mahāyāna tradition belong to the very first scriptures containing *mantras*.

The introductory story of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*, story 33 in the *Dīvyāvadāna* collection, was translated into Chinese by Zhu Luyan together with Zhi Qian in 230 CE under the name *Mātāṅgī-sūtra* (Taishō 1300: *Modengqie jing* 摩登伽經).<sup>64</sup> The text begins with the following narration: Overpowered by a magical spell cast by a *caṇḍāla* woman, whose daughter Prakṛti had fallen in love with him, Ānanda enters their house. In awareness of the danger that awaits him, because of this violation of the Vinaya, he invokes the Buddha who is able to rescue him by a magical counterspell. The Buddha's spells, more powerful than spells of any sorcerer, annihilate other magical formulas. In this way Ānanda gets away from the two

<sup>61</sup> For an extensive survey of the Gāndhārī manuscripts of the Bajaur Collection, see Strauch 2008, and Falk/Strauch 2014.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Strauch 2014: 81.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Skilling 1992: 168.

<sup>64</sup> In the appendix of their edition of the *Dīvyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil briefly describe four Chinese translations of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* (Taishō 551, 552, 1300, 1301) among them the *Mātāṅgī-sūtra* (cf. Cowell/Neil [1886] 1970: 657; see also Zinkgräf 1940).

women. The *mantra* recited by the Buddha to release Ānanda from the witch's spell consists entirely of grammatically intelligible language. The text of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* runs as follows:

*atha bhagavān āyusmantam ānandaṃ samanvāharati sma | samanvāhṛtya  
saṃbuddhamantraiś caṇḍālanmantrān pratihanti sma | tatreyam vidyāḥ |  
sthitir acyutiḥ sunītiḥ | svasti sarvaprāṇibhyaḥ |  
sarah prasannaṃ nirdoṣaṃ praśāntaṃ sarvato 'bhayaṃ |  
ītayo yatra śāmyanti bhayāni calitāni ca |  
[tasmai] devā namasyanti sarvasiddhās ca yoginaḥ |  
etena satyavākyena svastyānandāya bhikṣave ||*

(Mukhopadhyaya 1954: 3–4)

The Blessed One then focused his attention on the venerable Ānanda. Having turned his attention [on him] he struck back the *mantras* of the Caṇḍāla women with the *mantras* of the Enlightened One. This is the spell then:

Standing firm, imperishable, free from distress, well-being for all sentient beings.

Water, clear, faultless, calm, and entirely fearless,

Where plagues, fears, and disordered senses are extinguished.

To that, gods, all *siddhas*, and *yogins* will pay homage.

By this assertion of truth, [may there be] well-being for the monk Ānanda.

This passage is followed by the injunction to Ānanda to take up, hold, speak, and master the so-called six-syllables spell,<sup>65</sup> whose benefits and scope of use clearly exceed those of the first *mantra*:

*udgrhṇa tvam ānanda imāṃ ṣaḍakṣarīvidyāṃ dhāraya vācaya  
paryavāpnuhi | ātmano hitāya sukhāya bhikṣūṇaṃ bhikṣuṇīnāṃ  
upāsakānāṃ upāsikānāṃ hitāya sukhāya | iyam ānanda ṣaḍakṣarīvidyā  
ṣaḍbhiḥ samyaksambuddhair bhāṣitā caturbhiś ca mahārājaiḥ śakreṇa  
devānāṃ indreṇa brahmaṇā ca sahāpatinā | mayā caitarhi śākyamuninā  
samyaksambuddhena bhāṣitā | tvam apy etarhy ānanda tām dhāraya  
vācaya paryavāpnuhi |*

(Mukhopadhyaya 1954: 4)

<sup>65</sup> For an investigation of the Tibetan version of the *Ṣaḍakṣara-vidyā* (the six-syllables spell) extracted from the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*, see Holz 2017: 237–241.

Take up, Ānanda, this six-syllables spell, hold it, speak it, master it for your benefit and happiness and for the benefit and happiness of monks, nuns, lay men, and lay women. Ānanda, this six-syllable spell was spoken by the six completely Awakened Ones, and by the Four Great Kings, and by Śakra, the king of the gods, and by Brahma, the Lord of the World. And now it is spoken by me, Śākyamuni, the completely Awakened One. Now you, Ānanda, also hold it, speak it, and master it.

The six-syllables spell strings together a variety of isolated and alinguistic phonemes and words whose sources cannot easily be traced:

*tadyathā | aṇḍare paṇḍare karaṇḍe keyūre 'rcihaste kharagrīve bandhumati  
vīramati dhara vidha cilimile vilōḍaya viṣāni loke | viṣā cala cala | golamati  
gaṇḍavile cilimile sātinimne yathāsaṃvibhakta golamati gaṇḍavilāyai svāhā |*

(Mukhopadhyaya 1954: 4–5)

The *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* (henceforth: DKP) represents the second example for the early use of *mantras*. This *sūtra*, which can well be ascribed to *rakṣā* literature, is the hitherto oldest extant representative of the genre of mantric scriptures in Chinese. The first of two Chinese versions of this text (Taishō 624: *Dun zhentuoluo souwen rulai sanmei jing* 侖真陀羅所問如來三昧經) was translated into Chinese in the late second century CE by Lokakṣema (Zhi Loujiachen 支婁迦讖),<sup>66</sup> and is thereby one of the earliest datable Mahāyāna *sūtras*. In their study of the DKP *mantra* passage, Harrison and Coblin give a rather firm date for the Chinese translation of the text, and therefore the emergence of *mantras* in apotropaic texts:

Since Lokakṣema's predecessor, An Shigao, is not known to have translated any Mainstream Buddhist *sūtras* containing *mantras* or *dhāraṇīs*, the DKP *mantra* as it appears in L {Taishō 624} is probably the oldest extant example of the genre in Chinese, and may even be the first Buddhist *mantra* or *dhāraṇī* text to which we can assign a reasonably firm date (i.e., ca. 170-190 CE).<sup>67</sup>

The *mantra* occurs in the final chapter of the text. Even though we have with the second Chinese translation produced by Kumārajīva some 200 years later than the

<sup>66</sup> On Lokakṣema's life and work as translator in the time of the Emperor Ling, and in the period from 178–189 CE, see Nattier 2008: 73–89.

<sup>67</sup> Harrison/Coblin 2012: 68.

Lokakṣema translation (Taishō 625 *Dashu jinnaluowang suowen jing* 大樹緊那羅王所問), and an early ninth century Tibetan version of the text,<sup>68</sup> the best starting point for a comparative study, the *mantra* section remains highly problematic. The *mantra* of both Chinese versions begins with the discourse marker *tadyathā*; the closing marker *svāhā* is, however, missing. As a result, it seems that both translators came to a different conclusion as to where the *mantra* section ends. In both cases the *mantra* starts with a transcription of the Indic sound values, but continues in the second part with a translation. Kumārajīva's text maintains Indic phonetic transcription longer.

The Tibetan language renders the Indic phonemes with greater accuracy than the Chinese language, and so it is a more reliable basis for the reconstruction of the underlying Sanskrit wording of the *mantra*. Even though the *mantra* is not closed by a discourse marker either, the translators, who again must have guessed where the *mantra* ends, remained in transcription mode longest before switching to a translation. On a comparative basis, Harrison and Coblin gave a partial reconstruction of the original Sanskrit wording. Due to the many variant readings between the different Kangyur editions the reconstruction should be considered as a highly tentative attempt, especially for the unintelligible syllables of the first part of the *mantra*. The second part consists of intelligible words, which facilitated the selection of readings to a great extent. The Sanskrit version of the DKP *mantra* reads thus:

*tarabe arabe anobe sarabe hulu mahāhulu hulu hulu āvaṭṭe vikaṭṭe* [emend to *vivaṭṭe?*] *paricchedani nigrhṇati praghātani iṭṭi iṭṭi viṭṭi acche gacche māra-nigrahaṇa sarva-parapravādi-nigrahaṇa sarva-mithyā-prayātāna(n)-nigrahaṇa sarva-bhūta-nigrahaṇa sarva buddha-varṇitā dharma-niyataśaya aya[m] bhūtan* [or: *buddhana?*] *buddha-varṇitan catur-mahārāja-nirdeśana mantra-balān avatāra-prekṣiṇā-nigrahāya*.

(Harrison/Coblin 2012: 71)

Other references, which point to the early use of *mantras*, can be found in the Vinayas of various Śrāvakayāna schools whose scriptures, or at least parts of them, were not transmitted and are to some extent now lost. Moreover, some Buddhist philosophers and Chinese travellers, in their works and reports, hint to the existence

<sup>68</sup> A critical edition of the Tibetan version of the DKP is available in Harrison 1992.

of an independent *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka* or *Mantra-piṭaka*, which was often called *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*,<sup>69</sup> a collection of a multitude of mantric scriptures. According to these sources this *piṭaka* was composed together with the other still known canonical *piṭakas* immediately after the death of the Buddha.

The earliest reference, which mentions *mantras* as integral part of the canon is Saṅghavarman's Chinese translation of the *Sarvāstivādinaya-māṭṛkā* in 435 CE:

復有如來四境界。謂智境界。法境界。人境界。神足境界。此四境界中如來制戒。謂智法人神足境界如是制毘尼。制波羅提木叉。修多羅。阿毘曇。呪術究竟。毘尼集。毘尼發露罪。

(Taishō 1441.23:608b2–6)

Moreover, here are the four domains (*\*viśaya*) of the Tathāgata, which are the domains of insight, of Dharma, of persons, and of miraculous powers (*ṛddhipāda*). With reference to these four domains, the Tathāgata institutes discipline. That is to say, insight, Dharma, persons, and miraculous powers institute the Vinaya, institute the *Prātimokṣa*, the Sūtra, the Abhidharma, the conclusion of mantras (? *\*mantra-niṣṭhā*), the *Vinayasamgraha*, the Vinaya confession ... (a lengthy list of other monastic texts follows).

(tr. Davidson 2014b: 123f.)

The term *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* can be found in the works of the two philosophers Bhā(va)viveka, also called Bhavya (500–570 CE), and Candrakīrti (600–650 CE) belonging to the Mādhyamaka school of Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>70</sup> Bhā(va)viveka refers to a passage from the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* of the Siddhārthas in his *Tarkajvālā*.<sup>71</sup> Candrakīrti lists in his work *Triśaraṇasaptati* a *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* as one of the seven *piṭakas* of the Pūrvaśailas and Aparāśailas. This passage runs as follows:

[57] | 'phags pa nub kyi rir bshad dang |  
| shar gyi ri pa 'i nyan thos kyis |

<sup>69</sup> The following discussion is based on references given in Skilling 1992: 114f. See also Kariyawasam 1989: 519, and Davidson 2014b: 123–126.

<sup>70</sup> Ruegg (1981) gives an outline of the philosophical literature of the Indian Mādhyamaka school and its philosophers. For the dates of the two scholars Bhā(va)viveka and Candrakīrti, see Ruegg 1981: 61, 71.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Skilling 1992: 114.

| *byang chub sems dpa'i dbang byas pa* |  
 | *sde snod bdun du bshad pa yin* |

- [58] | *byang chub sems dpa'i sde snod dang* |  
 | *de bzhin rig 'dzin zhes bya dang* |  
 | *mdo sde chos mngon 'dul ba dang* |  
 | *rgyas dang de bzhin skyes pa'i rabs* |

(TSS 50.9–12, 52.1–4)

- [57] The advocates of Aparāśaila and  
 the Śrāvakas of Pūrvaśaila  
 maintain [the existence of] seven baskets (*saptapitaka*)  
 authorizing (*\*adhikṛta, adhikāra*) a Bodhisattva:

- [58] The basket of a Bodhisattva as well as (*tathā*)  
 the so-called [basket of] 'Science-masters' (*vidyādhara*),  
 [the basket of] Sermons (*sūtranta*), Dogmatism (*abhidharma*) and  
 Discipline (*vinaya*),  
 [the basket of] Extensive (*vaipulya*) [Sūtras] as well as (*tathā*) Birth-  
 stories (*jātaka*).

(tr. Sørensen 1986: 51, 53)

The Chinese Buddhist monk Jizang (吉藏, 549–623 CE) pointed to the existence of five *piṭakas* of the Dharmaguptakas, the three standard *piṭakas* together with a *Bodhisattva-piṭaka* and a *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka* devoted to *mantras* or magical formulas. He based his argumentation on a passage from Paramārtha's now missing commentary (mid-sixth century CE) on Vasumitra's work *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* on the origin and doctrines of early Indian Buddhist schools (first two centuries CE), extant in Chinese and Tibetan translation. Demiéville reconstructed the relevant passage of Paramārtha's commentary on the history and development of the Dharmaguptaka school on the basis of citations in other works, and gives the following translation:

Après le Nirvāṇa de Maudgalyāyana, il le repassa dans sa mémoire et en fit les cinq Corbeilles suivantes : Sūtra, Vinaya, Abhidharma, Formules magiques et Bodhisattvas.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Demiéville 1932: 61.

The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (玄奘, 602–664 CE), who travelled through India in the first half of the seventh century, gives a similar list of five *piṭakas* of the Mahāsāṃghikas of which one was a *Dhāraṇī-* or *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*. In his travel reports<sup>73</sup> he writes that immediately after the death of the Buddha, five *piṭakas* were compiled – again the three canonical ones and a *Samyukta-piṭaka* and a *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka*. La Vallée Poussin translates Kern’s summary of the relevant passage in his article on the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* as follows:

In Hiouen Thsang [Xuanzang] we find a very important statement. He tells us that at the Council of Rājagṛha, immediately after the death of the Buddha, five Piṭakas were composed, that is to say, the three official or canonical ones, and besides them the Samyukta Piṭaka and the Piṭaka of Dhāraṇī’s, which he elsewhere mentions under the title of Vidyādhara Piṭaka. This statement of the Chinese pilgrim is quite true, if only its true meaning be grasped. There is not the smallest ground to suppose that the charms were younger than the Suttas, the Vinaya, or the Abhidharma. Whether the collection of them, as we now have it, is as old as that of the three Piṭakas can neither be proved nor disproved till it has been edited.<sup>74</sup>

Lamotte, however, suggests translating the respective passage in Xuanzang’s reports with *Mantra-piṭaka* rather than *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka*:

Au témoignage, malheureusement tardif, de Hiuan-tsang, les Mahāsāṃghika possédaient un canon en cinq corbeilles comprenant, outre des quatre piṭaka traditionnels – Sūtra, Vinaya, Abhidharma et Kṣudraka –, un Kin-tcheou-tsang [...] ou *mantrapiṭaka*, et non pas *dhāraṇīpiṭaka* comme on traduit généralement.<sup>75</sup>

In the late seventh century the Chinese pilgrim monk Yijing (義淨, 635–713 CE) spent more than ten years in India, most of the time in the then flourishing Buddhist site of Nālandā in North India (present-day Bihar). From India he returned to China with more than 400 Sanskrit texts, which were then gradually translated. In his compilation of the biographies of 60 Buddhist, mostly Chinese, monks where he describes their works and pilgrimages he also mentions a *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* in 100.000 *ślokas*. This compilation dealing with the cultural and socio-political environment of India and China in the seventh and early eighth centuries became an

<sup>73</sup> Xuanzang’s travelogues are available in translation with Beal 1973, and Julien 1853.

<sup>74</sup> Kern 1882: 510f., translated by de La Vallée Poussin 1895: 434f.

<sup>75</sup> Lamotte 1944–80, IV: 1862.

outstanding source for the history of Buddhism in those countries. At the time of Yijing most of the Sanskrit original texts were already lost, and only a few were still accessible. The French translation of Yijing's work entitled *Da tang xiyu qiufa gaoseng chuan* (大唐西域求法高僧傳) “Mémoires composé à l'époque de la grande dynastie T'ang sur les religieux éminents qui allèrent chercher la loi dans les pays d'occident” reads as follows:

Il se tint debout de nouveau sur l'autel surnaturel ; il {le maître de la Loi, *Tao-lin*} reçut de nouveau les prières magiques. Voici comment j'essaierai d'expliquer cette expression : les prières magiques se disent en sanscrit pidi tuoluo bidejia (vidyā-dhara-ṭāka). La traduction de pidi (vidyā) est prières magiques; tuoluo (dhara) signifie tenir dans les mains; bidejia (ṭāka) signifie recueil. Il faut donc dire : le recueil des porteurs des prières magiques. Cependant on dit que ce recueil des prières magiques comprenait, dans le texte sanscrit, cent mille stances : la traduction chinoise formerait bien trois cents rouleaux. Or maintenant, si on recherche ces textes, on voit que beaucoup sont perdus et que peu sont intacts.<sup>76</sup>

A verse of a *Vidyādhara-ṭāka* is also cited in the tantric treatise *Ādikarmapradīpa*. The colophon gives the name of the author with Anupamavajra. Since we do not know the content of this *ṭāka* it is at present not possible to definitely decide whether the *Ādikarmapradīpa* refers to the same work as the Chinese pilgrims. The verse runs:

*na mandacittena sarvadā muditacittena nāpy anyacittena | tathā cokta[m]  
Vidyādharaṭāke*

*japās tapāmsi sarvāṇi dīrghakālakṛtāny api |  
anyacittena mandena sarvaṃ bhavati niṣphalam || iti*

(AKP 203.6–8)

Avec une pensée joyeuse, dit le Mūlasūtra, c'est-à-dire avec une pensée non paresseuse, toujours satisfaite (mudita, comp. anumodanā), non distraite de son objet ; et il est dit dans le *Vidyādharaṭāka* : « Les prières, les austérités, nombreuses, longtemps prolongées, mais accomplies avec une pensée distraite, paresseuse, sont sans aucune utilité. »

(tr. La Vallée Poussin 1898: 229)

<sup>76</sup> Chavannes 1894: 101f.

In his early eighth century *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Śāntideva gives a citation of a *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*, which contains a protective *mantra*:

*imām api vidyām anantajātismarahetuṃ mahāprabhāvām sapta-  
pañcāśadaḥsarām vidyādharaṭṭakopanibaddhām sarvabhayarakṣārtham  
prayuñjīta | tadyathā | aṭṭe | baṭṭe | naṭṭe | kunaṭṭe | ṭake || ṭhake | ṭharake |  
urumati | rurumati | turuhili mili | sarvajñodupadagga | namo sabbasamma-  
saṃbuddhānaṃ | sījhantu me mantapadāḥ svāhā ||*

(Śikṣ 142.12–15)

The following spell he should add, remembering the infinity of births; a spell most mighty, with fifty-seven syllables, written in the *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*, with the purpose of guarding against all dangers; thus: ‘Aṭṭe baṭṭe naṭṭe kumaṭṭe, ṭake ṭhake ṭharake, urumati rurumati, turu, hili mili, sarvajñodupadagga. Glory to all supreme Buddhas, may my spell be effective: hail!’

(tr. Bendall, Rouse 1971: 140)

Buddhaguhya also mentions a *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* in his *Commentary on the Concentration Continuation* as preserved in the Tibetan Canon (Q 3495 Vol. 78, 70.5.1–4 *Bsam gtan phyi ma rim par phye ba rgya cher bshad pa*; Skt. *Dhyānottaraṭṭalaṭṭikā*). Hopkins translates the Tibetan expression for *Vidyādhara-piṭaka*, *Rig ’dzin gyi sde snod*, with “The Scriptural Division of the Bearers of Knowledge”:

The activities to be done during the concentration of secret mantra repetition are set forth in the *Susiddhi Tantra* (*Susiddhi*), the *Questions of Subahu* (*Subāhuparipṛchchā*), the *Compendium of Imaginations* [?], and so forth, which are compendiums of the general rites of all Action Tantras. These [activities] are also described in tantras of specific [lineages and deities] such as the *Vairochanabhisambodhi: the Empowerment of Emanations*, the *Vajrapani Initiation Tantra*, the *Essence of Enlightenment* [?], the *Scriptural Division of the Knowledge Bearers* (*Vidyādharaṭṭika* [?]), and so forth.<sup>77</sup>

All the above-mentioned examples show that the term *Vidyādhara-* or *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka* is well attested in both Sanskrit and Tibetan sources. All of these notices were, however, only compiled in the late sixth or seventh centuries CE. On this account, it is impossible to trace the existence of such a *piṭaka* back to the centuries

<sup>77</sup> Hopkins 1987: 50.

following the Buddha's death. Furthermore, we can only speculate whether an independent *piṭaka* dedicated to *mantras* and spells has ever been in use, since most of the Sanskrit original texts were already lost in the late seventh century, the time when the literary evidence that speaks in favour of the existence of a *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* originated. Recent research even declares a *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* to be an "imaginary construct of a container that never existed".<sup>78</sup> In his *Study on Dhāraṇī Literature III*, Davidson discusses, whether there ever existed a canon of *dhāraṇī* texts, a basket exclusively containing mantric scriptures. According to him, the *Dhāraṇī-saṃgrahas*, compendia of *dhāraṇīs*, which existed much earlier than any reference of a *piṭaka* of spells, must have served as basis for this invention:

[T]he indistinct parameters of this *piṭaka* appear in some measure a reflection of actual *dhāraṇī* collections, the various compendia generally known by the designation *Dhāraṇī-saṃgraha*; these collections preceded *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka* statements and seem to have provided a prototype for the new *piṭaka*.<sup>79</sup>

To conclude, with the discovery of the Gāndhārī \**Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra*, the hitherto oldest *rakṣā* text containing *mantras*, we are now in a position to date the beginning of Buddhist spell practice to the first two centuries of the Common Era. Further evidence for the early use of *mantras* can be found in the late second to third centuries Chinese translations of the *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* and the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*. References to a *Vidyādhara-*, *Dhāraṇī-* or *Mantra-piṭaka* of the Pūrva- and Aparāśailas, Dharmaguptakas, and Mahāsāṃghikas frequently appear in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims and in philosophical works. These treatises, and travelogues were, however, only composed in the sixth or seventh century, and it is at the moment not possible to trace back the existence of such a *piṭaka* to the time when the other standard *piṭakas* were compiled, and we, therefore, cannot definitely decide whether a distinct *piṭaka* dedicated to *mantras* existed as such.

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<sup>78</sup> Davidson 2104b: 157.

<sup>79</sup> Davidson 2014b: 120.

## 1.4 The spread of *rakṣā mantras*

Due to its favourable climatic conditions the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent preserved the earliest Indic manuscripts and it is therefore not surprising that the earliest texts known to us containing *mantras* evolved in North India by the beginning of the Common Era. As we have seen above, the Gāndhārī \**Manasvi-nāgarāja-sūtra* (first two centuries CE) discovered in Gandhāra in Northwest India represents the oldest preserved example of post-canonical Buddhist *rakṣā* texts that used *mantras* in order to attain protection and other benefits. There is only one more Gāndhārī text of the Bajaur Collection, though poorly preserved (reverse of fragment 1), which can tentatively be ascribed to *rakṣā* literature. According to palaeographic features these two texts of the Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī Manuscripts can be dated to the first two centuries CE. This is exactly the period when Buddhist practices expanded from South Asia to Central and East Asia.

This crucial period marks the beginning of the expansion of Buddhism, the rise of trade networks, and with them the transmission of Buddhist scriptures. Numismatic and epigraphic sources,<sup>80</sup> as well as archaeological remains and other artefacts reflect an economic trade and an exchange of religious ideas between Gandhāra, Gilgit, and Khotan from the first century onwards.<sup>81</sup> With the distribution of manuscripts, *rakṣā mantras* also disseminated and found their way into new compilations of protective texts. Most of the *rakṣā* manuscripts written on birchbark, palm leaf, and paper almost exclusively survived in the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent, that is Gandhāra, Gilgit, and Nepal. Innumerable manuscripts have also been found beyond South Asia in the ancient oasis towns along the Silk Road in Central Asia.

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<sup>80</sup> A few bilingual coins of the Indo-Scythian and Kuṣāṇa rulers issued by Khotanese kings bearing inscriptions in both Chinese characters and Kharoṣṭhī script have been discovered in the ancient area of Khotan, the major city on the southern Silk Road. This find stresses a close economic contact between Khotan and Gandhāra. Cribb identified 13 groups of Sino-Kharoṣṭhī copper coins from Khotan datable to the first two centuries CE. For an examination of these coins and an illustration of the political, economic, and cultural background, see Cribb 1984–5.

<sup>81</sup> For the early Buddhist expansion to the Central Asian Silk Road, particularly to Kashgar and Khotan, see Neelis 2011: 289–297.

One important provenance of numerous *rakṣā* manuscripts containing *mantras* is the ancient library of Naupur near Gilgit.<sup>82</sup> Some of the texts mention in the colophons as donors of the manuscripts four of the Palola Śāhis, who ruled in the seventh century.<sup>83</sup> It is, however, important to bear in mind that the library must have grown over a longer period of about a century.<sup>84</sup> Two of the most evidenced protective scriptures from Gilgit are the *Mahāpratisarā* and the *Mahāmāyūrī*, both belonging to the *Pañcarakṣā* collection.<sup>85</sup> The Gilgit *rakṣā* manuscripts are of special relevance. As von Hinüber highlighted, the *mantras* have been dedicated to certain persons, including the local rulers, who sought protection:

Die Bedeutung der Texte liegt auch darin, daß es sich um persönliche dhāraṇīs handelt. Während sonst die Pañcarakṣā ohne Bezug auf bestimmte Personen überliefert ist, wird hier die Mahāmāyūrī sogar so umformuliert, daß der Name eines Herrschers an die Stelle des Namen Svāti tritt, also des Mönches, für den der Buddha ursprünglich diese dhāraṇī spricht.<sup>86</sup>

Von Hinüber then concludes that these texts were not meant for recitation. The short formulas suggest instead that the manuscripts are destined to be deposited in *stūpas* in order to protect certain persons named in the texts throughout their life. These names predominantly are local names, so that most of the manuscripts seem to be local productions, copied from a prototype imported to the area of Gilgit and adapted in Gilgit.

The most popular discovery location of *rakṣā* manuscripts was, however, the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal with the exceptional number of more than 300

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<sup>82</sup> Both Fussman (2004: 134), and Schopen (2009: 204) stressed the prominence of manuscripts produced for the use in healing, apotropaic or death rituals among the Gilgit finds. For a list of *rakṣā* texts found in Gilgit, see *Bibliographical Guide to Identifications and Editions of the Gilgit Manuscripts* in von Hinüber 2014: 91–118.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. von Hinüber 2004: 6f.

<sup>84</sup> This can easily be judged from the span of the reign of the four Palola Śāhis rulers mentioned in the colophons, which expands of more than a century, even if the suggested dates are tentative: Vajrādityanandi (\*585–\*605), Vikramādityanandi (\*605–\*625), Surendravikramādityanandi (\*625–644/\*655), and Navasurendrādityanandi (\*644/\*655– died before 706/7) (cf. von Hinüber 2014: 84).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. von Hinüber 1981: 163.

<sup>86</sup> Von Hinüber 1981: 169.

manuscripts only of the *Pañcarakṣā* collection,<sup>87</sup> and a multitude of other compendiums and individual texts. Most of them remain, however, unpublished. On the basis of catalogues, Hidas estimated the total number of surviving manuscripts to be over 1300.<sup>88</sup> The hitherto oldest Sanskrit edition of the *Pañcarakṣā* collection found in Nepal is the Calcutta Asutosh Museum manuscript illustrating the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses. It was produced in 1105 CE during the reign of Sihadeva, King of Nepal.<sup>89</sup>

*Rakṣā mantras* not only figured prominently in the scriptures of Buddhist schools based in the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. There is no doubt that the scriptures of the Pāli *paritta* collection of the Theravādin school were and still are among the most copied and most popular texts in Śrī Laṅkā, which one can still find in every household. As we have already seen above, canonical *parittas* do not contain any *mantras*. That mantric scriptures nevertheless found their way into the tradition of the Theravādins is well-attested by para-canonical *parittas*, among them the *Mahādibba-manta*,<sup>90</sup> *Dhāraṇa-paritta*, *Gini-paritta*,<sup>91</sup> *Sut Catuvik*, and *Yot brahkaṇḍatraipīṭaka*, which do bear *mantras*.<sup>92</sup> The *paritta* collection, including those para-canonical *parittas* containing *mantras*, are, however, not exclusive to the Buddhist community of Śrī Laṅkā, but vernacular translations from Śrī Laṅkā spread to other countries where the Theravāda tradition is the predominant school.<sup>93</sup> *Paritta* texts are among the most commonly used texts in the Southeast Asian

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<sup>87</sup> The modern Newari translation of the Sanskrit version of the five *Pañcarakṣā* texts are up to the present day held in high esteem by Newari Buddhists based in the Kathmandu Valley and are still today recited for specific purposes (cf. Lewis 2000: 124).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Hidas 2015: 131.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Bhattacharya 1972: 91.

<sup>90</sup> Jaini (1965) studied the only extant palm leaf manuscript of the *Mahādibba-manta* from Cambodia kept in the National Museum of Bangkok.

<sup>91</sup> For a short summary of the *Gini-paritta*, and a quotation of its *mantra*, see De Silva 1981: 10.

<sup>92</sup> This short list of extra-canonical *parittas* is extracted from Skilling 1992: 157.

<sup>93</sup> The affiliation of the early Buddhist tradition in Southeast Asia to the Theravāda school is supported by Pāli inscriptions found in Burma (datable between the fifth and seventh centuries CE), and Thailand (datable between the sixth and eighth centuries CE). Besides the content of the inscriptions, which clearly points to the Theravāda school, the use of the Pāli language is another strong indicator for the school affiliation. Since different schools transmitted their canons in different Indic dialects, Skilling (1997b: 97) convincingly concludes that it is unlikely that another school but the Theravādins would have used the Pāli language for their inscriptions in this region.

countries Cambodia, Thailand,<sup>94</sup> Laos,<sup>95</sup> and Burma,<sup>96</sup> and are an important part of monastic and secular life.

Buddhist mantric scriptures expanded over almost all regions where Buddhism flourished in the course of centuries and remained in use in some regions up to the present day. It is, therefore, not surprising that *rakṣā mantras* also spread beyond South Asia, not only to Central Asia where they still used the Sanskrit language to transmit Buddhist scriptures, but also to China, Tibet, and East Asia where the texts have been translated into local languages. Protective *mantras* also found their way into later *dhāraṇī* scriptures. Hidas already noted that *mantras* were phonetically transcribed in order to keep the Indic sound substance of the mantric syllables. Oftentimes the Indic Siddham script was employed,<sup>97</sup> which enabled the translator to exactly display the original sound value:

Both individual dhāraṇīs and complete dhāraṇī scriptures gained remarkable influence in Buddhist lands of Asia from the early centuries of the Common Era onwards. The incantations were usually adopted in the original Sanskrit, often transcribed phonetically into Chinese or Tibetan characters for example, and in East Asia many times the Indic Siddham script was used to represent the mantric syllables. The sūtras themselves were translated into local languages, sometimes rewritten and transformed.<sup>98</sup>

*Rakṣā mantras* were not only preserved in manuscript form within the frame of larger apotropaic texts or *dhāraṇīs*, they have also been found as isolated *mantras* inscribed on archaeological artefacts outside of their narrative context and without ritual instructions on their use. A number of so-called *dhāraṇī* stones, pillars, seals, and stamps inscribed with *mantras* have been unearthed on the Indian subcontinent, in Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia.

These objects bearing inscribed *mantras* help to understand the context in which these texts they are extracted from were used in actual Buddhist practices. After identification of these *mantras* with their source texts, it is evident that most of them

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<sup>94</sup> For the most popular extra-canonical *paritta* in Thailand, the *Jinapañjara*, though it does not contain any *mantras*, see McDaniel 2011: 77–85, and Kieffer-Pülz 2018.

<sup>95</sup> For an outline of the *paritta* collection from Laos, see Finot 1917: 53–60. Finot also briefly describes the above-mentioned *Sut Catuvik* (cf. Finot 1917: 59).

<sup>96</sup> Fragments of three Pāli *parittas*, the *Maṅgala-sutta*, the *Ratana-sutta*, and the *Mora-sutta*, inscribed on a stone slab were found in Śrīkṣetra in Burma (cf. Skilling 1997c: 152–156).

<sup>97</sup> For the use of the Siddham script in Central Asia, China, and Japan, see Salomon 2016: 26–46.

<sup>98</sup> Hidas 2015: 135.

were taken from four *dhāraṇīs*, the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya*, the *Vimaloṣṇīṣa*, the *Guhyadhātukaraṇḍa*, and the *Bodhigarbhālamkāralakṣa*, along with the verse of Interdependent Origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*), which give explicit instructions to ritually deposit the entire text or their *mantra* in *stūpas* what will bring about blessings, merit, and apotropaic benefits.

Eight granite tablets were found southeast of a *stūpa* at the ancient site of Abhayagiriya (Śrī Laṅkā) inscribed in northeastern Devanāgarī of the ninth century CE. Six of these *dhāraṇī* stones give fragments of one and the same *mantra* taken from a Mahāyāna *sūtra*. Even though it seems that the Sanskrit text is now lost, on the basis of Chinese and Tibetan parallels Schopen was able to identify the *mantra* on the *dhāraṇī* stones with a text entitled, according to the transliterated Sanskrit title at the beginning of the Tibetan translation, *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna-hṛdayaguhyadhātukaraṇḍamudra-nāma-dhāraṇī-mahāyāna-sūtra* (henceforth: *Guhyadhātukaraṇḍa*).<sup>99</sup> According to epigraphical and archaeological finds this text not only circulated in Śrī Laṅkā, but had a widespread distribution throughout the Buddhist world. The same text was deposited in *stūpas* in Hangchow and Chekiang (China) in the tenth century.

Another text of the same genre, the *\*Raśmivimalaviśuddhaprabhā-dhāraṇī*, was deposited in a *stūpa* in Korea (751 CE) and all over Japan (eighth century). Yet, another example is the *Samantamukhapraveśara-vimaloṣṇīṣaprabhāsa-sarvatathāgatahṛdaya-samayavilokita-dhāraṇī* (henceforth: *Vimaloṣṇīṣa*) in the polyglot inscription of Juyongguan.<sup>100</sup> The *Vimaloṣṇīṣa* circulated at Gilgit, written on separate strips of birchbark inside one of the *stūpas*, and was also discovered inscribed on seals in India at Bodhgayā, Nālandā, Ratnagiri, Paharpur, and Udayagiri.<sup>101</sup>

Two of the hundreds of terracotta tablets found in votive *stūpas* at Nālandā each bear an inscription in early medieval Nāgarī, which was in use from the sixth to ninth centuries CE, with the *Bodhigarbhālamkāralakṣa-dhāraṇī* (henceforth: *Bodhi*).<sup>102</sup> The same text is found in the Cuttack stone inscription now in the Provincial Museum of Orissa.<sup>103</sup> Lawson presented eleven seals kept in British

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Schopen 1982: 102.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Schopen 1982: 106.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Schopen 2005: 332–336, and 2012: 284.

<sup>102</sup> See Schopen 2005 for an edition and translation of the Tibetan and Sanskrit text.

<sup>103</sup> First published by Gosh (1941); identified by Schopen (2005: 314–321).

collections, five from Śrāvastī and six of unknown origin (eighth to tenth centuries), bearing the *Bodhi*, though he was not able to identify the inscribed *dhāraṇī*.<sup>104</sup>

On the basis of epigraphical evidence the *dhāraṇī* passage of this text was not only restricted to East India, but was in use in the Northwest of the Subcontinent as well. In an addendum to his edition and translation of this text Schopen added some new information on finds from Qunduz, Afghanistan he had received in a letter from Fussman: “a stamp used to imprint a *dhāraṇī* on a clay bulla. The stamp would have been found in the region of Qunduz, in Bactrian Afghanistan. It is inscribed in Brāhmī of the fifth-sixth centuries.”<sup>105</sup> This stamp was then published by Strauch.<sup>106</sup> In his examination of the *Bodhi*, Strauch provides a list of 20 objects inscribed with the text of the *Bodhi* together with specification of their location (Cuttack museum, Nālandā, Ratnagiri, Śrāvastī, Kashmir, Hund), material, technology of inscribing, and their textual or pictorial context.<sup>107</sup>

Approximately 300 inscribed *dhāraṇī* pillars, dating from 697 to 1285, have been found in the central, eastern, and southern parts of China, originally located in courtyards of Buddhist monasteries, in private cemeteries, near private houses, buried under *stūpas*, or at crossroads or markets. Over nine-tenths of these pillars bear the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī* in Chinese characters. Other inscriptions on these pillars include the *Prājñāpāramita-hṛdaya*, the *Ṣaṅmukhī-dhāraṇī*, the *\*Rāsmivimalaviśuddhaprabhā-dhāraṇī*, and the *Sitātapatrā-dhāraṇī*. Further pillars bearing the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya* are found in Vietnam, Korea, and Japan.<sup>108</sup>

The production of *dhāraṇī* stones and other apotropaic objects bearing *rakṣā mantras* also was popular among Buddhist circles in Southeast Asia. Griffiths recently drew our attention to material from Indonesia, inscriptions on gold or silver foil, stone or clay seals. Here we have evidence concerning *mantras* extracted from the *Mahāpratisarā* (Sambas, West Kalimantan, eighth century), a *dhāraṇī* taken from the *Aparimitāyuh-sūtra* (Sumatra, eighth century), the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-dhāraṇī*, *Bodhi* and *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (Central Java), as well as *mantras* from the *Vimaloṣṇīṣa* (800–1000 CE) and *Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī* (Bali).<sup>109</sup> Some years earlier Gippert presented a Prakrit stone inscription

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Lawson 1985: 709.

<sup>105</sup> Schopen 2005: 338.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Strauch 2009.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Strauch 2009: 38f.

<sup>108</sup> For an intensive study of these *dhāraṇī* pillars, see Kuo 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Griffiths 2014.

(sixth–eighth centuries) bearing protective *mantras* from the island of Landhoo, Maldives, showing that *rakṣā* practices flourished among the inhabitants of the Southeast archipelago. Even though he was not able to identify the source text, he indicated that the *mantras* share much in common with the *mantras* of other classical *rakṣā* texts, such as the *Sitātapatrā-dhāraṇī* and the *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra*.<sup>110</sup>

It is not the aim to present here a systematic survey of the available epigraphical material and archaeological artefacts, but rather to show the engagement with these texts in a large geographical area to better understand their significance and meaning for the history of Buddhism and the spread of Buddhist practices from the historical heartland. It is also important to keep in mind that there always existed several specimens of one and the same text with significant variant readings. The transmission of texts throughout Buddhist Asia cannot be regarded as very uniform and the reading of one *mantra* or inscription may thus considerably differ from the same text found in another part of Asia.

To conclude, most of the *rakṣā* texts survive in manuscript form written on palm leaf, birchbark, or paper from the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent, that is Gandhāra, Gilgit, Bamiyan, and Nepal. With the expansion of Buddhism beyond its homeland, *rakṣā* texts containing *mantras* also spread to Central Asia, and, translated into local languages, to China, Tibet, and East Asia. The distribution of *rakṣā mantras* and their popularity among Buddhists from different traditions in different countries is evident from further epigraphical and archaeological finds. A number of so-called *dhāraṇī* stones, pillars, seals, and stamps inscribed with *rakṣā mantras* have been found on the Indian subcontinent, in Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia giving hints on the actual use of *rakṣā mantras* or texts in ritual practices.

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Gippert 2004.

## 1.5 Means of efficacy

How do protective texts become efficacious? The efficacy of *rakṣā* texts is closely related with the Buddha's capability to provide protection through his mere presence. In Buddhist texts we encounter many episodes, where it is said that people do not have to fear any miseries when the Buddha is present. This idea is expressed in the *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta*<sup>111</sup> of the Pāli *Dīgha-nikāya*:

*samaṇo khalu bho gotamo yasmiṃ gāme vā nigame vā paṭivasati, na tasmim  
gāme vā nigame vā amanussā manusse viheṭhenti.*

(DN I 116.14)

In whatever town or village the *samaṇa* Gotama stays, non-humans do not harm the people of that town or village.

(tr. Skilling 1992: 111)

The Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinaya-vibhaṅga* in Chinese and Tibetan translation references protective measures against *vetāḍas*, a kind of demon or zombie,<sup>112</sup> which emanate from the presence of the Buddha, a *cakravartin*, or a Bodhisattva.<sup>113</sup> The Tibetan version reads as follows:

*gal te de na srung par byed pa 'di lta bu 'di lta ste [...]  
rgyal ba bzhugs pa 'am  
rgyal bas bka' stsal pa 'am  
'khor los sgyur ba 'am  
'khor los sgyur ba 'i ma' i mngal du 'khor los sgyur ba zhugs pa 'am  
byang chub sems dpa' i 'am  
byang chub sems dpa' i ma' i mngal du byang chub sems dpa' zhugs pa 'dug  
pa 'am*

(Skilling 2007: 325f.)

<sup>111</sup> A Sanskrit version of this text, the *Śroṇatāṇḍya-sūtra* of the *Dīrgha-āgama* of the (Mūla-) Sarvāstivādins, is preserved in Central Asian manuscripts. For a description of contents and structure of the Sanskrit *Dīrgha-āgama*, see Hartmann 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. BHSD 508/1: "(Skt. *vetāla*) a kind of demon."

<sup>113</sup> For the context of the respective passage in the *Vinaya-vibhaṅga*, as well as the Tibetan text together with an English translation, see Skilling 2007.

If protective measures are taken, such as: [...]
   
if the Conqueror (Jina) is staying here,
   
or one appointed by the Conqueror [is staying here],
   
if a Wheel-turning Emperor (*cakravartin*) [is staying here],
   
or a Wheel-turning Emperor is entering his mother's womb,
   
if a bodhisattva [is staying here],
   
or a bodhisattva is in the process of entering his mother's womb,

(tr. Skilling 2007: 318f.)

These episodes show that the Buddha's capacity to safeguard human beings through his mere presence is widely accepted among Buddhist communities, and that protection plays an important role in the monastic code. The notion of protection through the Buddha's presence also occurs in *rakṣā* texts. The *Mahāsāhasra-pramardana-sūtra*, just like the *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta*, says that humans do not face any harm by non-humans when the Buddha is present:

*yasyāṃ diśi buddhā bhagavanto viharanti / na tatra manuṣyāmanuṣyān  
viheṭhayitavyān manyate /*

(Iwamoto 1937a: 21.21)

In whatever direction the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones dwell, humans and non-humans are not considered to cause harm there.

The Buddha's presence is, however, not the only protective means that appears in *rakṣā* literature. The attainment of benefits, protection, and well-being through ritual practices and recitation takes up an equally significant position. This paragraph will elaborate on these protective means, which are believed to bring about the desired effect. It will also discuss limitations of the effectiveness of protective texts, as well as warnings to the practitioner who contravenes the spells' instructions.

### 1.5.1 The concept of *maitrī*

By the power of *maitrī* (Skt. for “friendliness, benevolence”)<sup>114</sup> the Buddha tamed a furious elephant,<sup>115</sup> and monks were protected from threats of fire, poison, and weapons. The declaration and cultivation of friendliness towards all sentient beings and even insentient things like fire, water, poison, and weapons functions as a method of self-protection for monks living in dangerous environments.<sup>116</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that the concept of *maitrī* found its way into magical practices, and eventually, due to the strong belief in its protective powers, into *rakṣā* literature as a means of efficacious practice.

The concept of *maitrī* is, however, not an exclusive Buddhist phenomenon and has its historical roots before the rise of Buddhism in the Vedic period. The Buddhists then adopted and adapted this concept according to their own doctrine.<sup>117</sup> Rhys Davids pointed out the different perceptions of the idea of friendliness of Buddhists and other traditions. The main difference lies in the conception of non-violence towards even the most wicked spirits. Unlike in other traditions, no sentient being is seen as condemned in Buddhist view. It is, after all, possible to alleviate their malignancy by the power of love. Rhys Davids expressed this as follows:

This is not altogether because the agencies whose power to harm is deprecated are not, as in other cults, cursed and anathematized, but are blessed with good wishes, and suffused with an outgoing love. [...] even the most malignant spirits and beasts were looked upon, not as hopelessly and eternally damned, but as erring unfortunates upon their agelong upward way, and capable of being doctored and softened by the lovely power of love.<sup>118</sup>

Buddhist *rakṣā* literature takes up the Vedic idea of friendliness towards all sentient beings and insentient things. By cultivating benevolence, dangerous animals and other threats are warded off, and well-being and other advantages are secured. The *Mettānisamsa-sutta*, a text belonging to the collection of canonical Pāli *parittas*, lists eleven benefits, which will occur through the practice of *maitrī*. Any person

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<sup>114</sup> MW 834/2: *maitrī* “friendship, friendliness, benevolence, good will” and PTSD 538: *mettā*: “love, amity, sympathy, friendliness, active interest in others.”

<sup>115</sup> Jā V: 333f.

<sup>116</sup> For more examples on the application of the power of *maitrī*, see Zin 2006.

<sup>117</sup> For the Vedic background of the concept of *maitrī*, see Schmithausen 1997: 25–33.

<sup>118</sup> Rhys Davids 1921: 186.

will be protected and cannot be harmed by fire, poisons, or weapons. The relevant passage of the *Mettānisamsa-sutta* runs as follows:

*sukhaṃ supati, sukhaṃ paṭibujjhati, na pāpakaṃ supinaṃ passati.  
Manussānaṃ piyo hoti, amanussānaṃ piyo hoti, devatā rakkhanti, nāssa  
aggī vā viṣaṃ vā satthaṃ vā kamati, tuvatāṃ cittaṃ samādhiyati,  
mukhavaṇṇo vippasīdati, asammūlho kālaṃ karoti, uttarim appaṭivijjhanto  
brahmalokūpago hoti.*

(AN V 342.6–11)

(1) One sleeps well; (2) one awakens happily; (3) one does not have bad dreams; (4) one is pleasing to human beings; (5) one is pleasing to spirits; (6) deities protect one; (7) fire, poison, and weapons do not injure one; (8) one's mind quickly becomes concentrated; (9) one's facial complexion is serene; (10) one dies unconfused; and (11) if one does not penetrate further, one fares on to the brahmā world.

(tr. Bodhi 2012: 1573)

A similar, though not entirely identical list, appears in the *Megha-sūtra*:

*yaduta maitryā tatva bhujāṅgādhipate maitrīvihāriṇo devamanuṣyāḥ |  
agninā na dahyante | śastreṇa na kṣaṇyante | udakena nohyante | viṣeṇa  
na hanyante | paracakreṇa nābhibhūyante | sukhaṃ svapyanti | sukhaṃ ca  
pratibudhyante svapūnyarakṣatās ca bhavanti | mahāpūnyatejastejitāḥ |  
anavamardanīyās ca bhavanti sadevakena lokena prāsādikās ca  
bhavanti | priyadarśanāḥ sarvatrapratihatagatayaś ca bhavanti  
sarvaduḥkhapratipraśrabdhāḥ sampraharṣitās ca bhavanti  
sarvvasukhasamarppitāḥ ||*

(Bendall 1880: 294,9–15)

Even by charity; therein devas and men, snake-king, living in charity, are not burned by fire, nor hurt by weapons, nor carried away by water, nor slain by poison, nor overcome by a neighbour's host; they shall slumber sweetly, and sweetly they awake and are guarded by their own holiness, being glorified by the glory of great holiness, and are indestructible by this world with the world of devas, and gracious, and fair of countenance, and everywhere unhindered in their goings, with all griefs subsided, gladdened and endowed with all bliss.

(tr. Bendall 1880: 295)

The most prominent function of *maitrī* is protection against snakebites. This idea features in three popular *rakṣā* texts, that is the *Khanda-paritta* of the Theravāda tradition, the *Upasena-sutta* of the *Samyutta-nikāya* or *Upasena-sūtra* of the *Samyukta-āgama* of the Central Asian (Mūla-) Sarvāstivādins, and the *Mahāmāyūrī* of the *Pañcarakṣā* collection.<sup>119</sup> In each of the three texts, the Buddha bestows the same *maitrī* verses, a declaration of friendliness towards or friendship with different royal *nāga* families. While in the *Khanda-paritta* and *Upasena-sūtra* it is explicitly said that the recitation of the *maitrī* verses protects from death through snake poison, the *Mahāmāyūrī* version expands this protection to all sorts of calamities, diseases and pain, possession by all kinds of demons, as well as harm through weapons and human violence. The *maitrī* verses of the *Mahāmāyūrī* are also found in the Bower Manuscript.

The introductory story is similar in all the different texts. A monk has been bitten by a snake and died hereafter. Several monks then approached the Buddha and informed him about this incident. The Buddha replied that the monk would not have been bitten and killed if he would have had a friendly mind towards the different snake families and he then pronounced the *maitrī* verses. The text of the *Khanda-paritta* reads:<sup>120</sup>

*Anujānāmi bhikkhave imāni cattāri ahirājakulāni mettena cittena pharituṃ  
attaguttiyā attaparittāyāti.*

(AN II 72.26–28)

I enjoin you, bhikkhus, to pervade these four royal families of snakes with a mind of loving-kindness, for your own security, safety, and protection.

(tr. Bodhi 2012: 456)

*Virūpakkehi me mettaṃ  
mettaṃ Erāpathehi me  
Chabyaputtehi me mettaṃ  
Kaṇhāgotamakehi ca*

I have loving-kindness for the *virūpakkha* snakes;  
for the *erāpatha* snakes I have loving-kindness.  
I have loving-kindness for the *chabyāputta* snakes;  
for the black *gotamakas* I have loving-kindness.

<sup>119</sup> Waldschmidt (1958: 403–405) refers to some more manuscripts containing *maitrī* verses against snakebites.

<sup>120</sup> This story is told in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* under the title *Ahi(metta)-sutta* (AN II 72) and in the *Cullavagga* (Vin II 110). A similar version can also be found in the *Khanda-paritta* and its parallels, see Schmithausen 1997: 17–23.

*Apādadehi me mettam  
mettam dipādadehi me  
Catuppadehi me mettam  
mettam bahuppadehi me*

I have loving-kindness for footless creatures;  
for those with two feet I have loving-kindness.  
I have loving-kindness for those with four feet;  
for those with many feet I have loving-kindness.

*Mā maṃ apādako hiṃsi  
mā maṃ hiṃsi dipādako  
Mā maṃ catuppado hiṃsi  
mā maṃ hiṃsi bahuppado*

May footless beings not harm me;  
may no harm come to me from those with two feet;  
may four-footed beings not harm me;  
may no harm come to me from those with many feet.

*Sabbe sattā sabbe pāṇā  
sabbe bhūtā ca kevalā  
Sabbe bhadrāni passantu  
mā kañci pāpam āgamāti.*

May all beings, all living things,  
all creatures, every one,  
meet with good fortune;  
may nothing bad come to anyone.

(AN II 72.29–73.5)

(tr. Bodhi 2012: 456f.)

### 1.5.2 The concept of *saccakiriyā*

Another means of protective efficacy is the concept of *saccakiriyā*,<sup>121</sup> the “Profession of Truth” or an “Act of Truth”.<sup>122</sup> It is believed that protective texts become efficacious through the irresistible power of the expression of truth or truth magic. The power of truth provides well-being for all beings, renders poison ineffective, causes rain to fall, and ensures various other benefits. The *Mahāvastu* tells the story of a *kinṇarī*, who is bound by truth magic and therefore cannot disappear,<sup>123</sup> and of an ascetic boy, who has been killed by a poisoned arrow and who could be revived by a statement of truth.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Cf. BHSD 554/1 for *satyavacana* and *satya-vākya*: “(= Pali *sacca-vacana*, more often *saccakiriyā*), solemn statement of truth as a means of magic control of events.”

<sup>122</sup> The meaning of the word *saccakiriyā*, as well as the effectiveness of *rakṣā* texts through the power of truth have already been discussed in detail by the author elsewhere (cf. Holz 2015: 100–107). Other valuable publications on the concept of *saccakiriyā* in a Hindu and Buddhist tradition include Brown 1968, 1978, Burlingame 1917, Kong 2012, Lüders 1944, and Wayman 1984a.

<sup>123</sup> Mv II 97.8–10: *kathan te manuṣyāṇāṃ kinṇarīyo vaśagatā bhavanti // ṛṣi āha // satyavākyaena etā badhyanti na śaknonti antarahāyituṃ //* “How have the Kinnarīs got into the power of those humans?” The seer replied, “They are bound by a spell [statement of truth], and they cannot disappear” (tr. Jones 1952: 94).

<sup>124</sup> Mv II 218.4–5: *vayan taṃ ṛṣikumāraṃ satyavākyaena upasthāpeṣyāmaḥ satyavākyaena ca taṃ mṛgaviṣaṃ haniṣyāma* “By means of an incantation [statement of truth] we will restore the young seer to life, and by means of an incantation we will destroy the poison that was

In the Buddhist *raṅṣā* literature the concept of *saccakiriya* is always expressed by a certain phraseology. In Pāli texts we find in addition to *saccakiriya* the wording *etena saccena* “by this truth” and *etena saccavajjena* “by this truth-speaking”. Sanskrit scriptures use the corresponding expressions *etena satyena* and (*anena*) *satyavākyena*. The Sanskrit equivalent \**satyakriya* is not attested in any literary genre.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, the term *satyādhiṣṭhānena* “truthful resolve” is employed in a Mahāyāna context.<sup>126</sup> (See table below for *saccakiriya* phrases applied by different schools).

Table 4: *Saccakiriya* phrases in *raṅṣā* literature.

Text	<i>Saccakiriya</i> formula
Theravāda	
<i>Ratana-sutta</i> (Sn II 39.13 etc.)	<i>etena saccena suvatthi hotu</i>
<i>Aṅgulimāla-sutta</i> (MN II 103.15)	<i>tena saccena sotthi te hotu</i>
<i>Vaṭṭaka-paritta</i> (Jā I 214.10)	<i>tena saccena kāhāmi saccakiriyaṃ anuttamaṃ</i>
Mūlasarvāstivāda	
<i>Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna</i> (Divy 613.9)	<i>etena satyavākyena svasti</i>
<i>Upasena-sūtra</i> (Waldschmidt 1967b: 41)	<i>yena me satyavākyena</i>
<i>Prātihārya-sūtra</i> (Divy 154.25)	<i>anena satyena satyavākyena</i>
Lokottaravāda	
<i>Ratana-sutta</i> (Mv I 291.8 etc.)	<i>etena satyena susvasti bhotu</i>
Pañcarakṣā collection	
<i>Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī</i> (Takubo 1972: 15)	<i>anena satyavākena svastir bhotu</i>
<i>Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra</i> (Iwamoto 1937a: 24, 25, 26)	<i>etena satyena ihāstu svasti</i>
Mahāyāna	
<i>Megha-sūtra</i> (Bendall 1880: 300)	<i>satyādhiṣṭhānena</i>

intended for the deer” (tr. Jones 1952: 207). For more examples for the use of *saccakiriya* see Burlingame 1917: 439–466.

<sup>125</sup> The term *satyakriya* is, however, included in the PW 582: “die mystische Kraft der Wahrheit (bei den Buddhisten).”

<sup>126</sup> Cf. BHSD 554/2: “Could also perhaps be rendered, (act of) taking one’s stand on truth.”

In *raṅṣā* texts, *saccakiriyā* phrases are often used alone as means of efficacy, but can also serve as a supportive means to other protective elements, such as the concept of *maitrī*. In the *Upasena-sūtra*, for example, the power of truth is employed as additional protective device. The Buddha first pronounced the *maitrī* verses against snakebites and adds that through friendliness and benevolence towards all sentient beings any kind of poison will be defeated. One will not only be free from snake venom, but also from the three poisons of desire, hatred, and delusion. The protective spell becomes potent through the statement of truth at the end of the incantation. The *saccakiriyā* verse the Buddha has declared subsequent to the *maitrī* verses reads as follows:

*sarpaśaunḍikaprāgbhāre nityaṃ viharato mama |*  
*āśīviṣo ghoraviṣo jīvitam uparundhati ||*  
*yena me satyavākyena śāstā lokeṣv anuttaraḥ |*  
*tena me satyavākyena mā me kāye viṣam kramet ||*  
*rāgo dveṣaś ca mohaś ca ete loke viṣattrayam |*  
*nirvviṣo bhagavā(n) buddhaḥ satyadharmahataṃ viṣam ||*

(Waldschmidt [1957] 1967b: 342f.)

Für die, welche ständig in der Schlangenkopfgrotte weilen, *soll keinerlei Böses nahen und sich sammeln*, (auch nicht) die grausam verletzende, böse Giftschlange, die aller Wesen Leben zu verletzen vermag.

Da dies ein Wort der Wahrheit ist, das der höchste Lehrer verkündet hat, *das ich jetzt rezitiere und anwende*, (werden durch) *des großen Lehrers* Wort der Wahrheit keinerlei böse Gifte meinen Körper zu schädigen vermögen.

Leidenschaft, Haß und Verblendung sind in der Welt die drei Gifte. Wie man diese drei Gifte für immer abtut, (indem) man das Juwel ‚Buddha‘ anruft, *(ebenso) vernichtet das Juwel ‚Lehre‘ alles Gift, (und) für das Juwel ‚Gemeinde‘ ist es auch nicht anders.*<sup>127</sup>

(tr. Waldschmidt [1957] 1967b: 337f.)

<sup>127</sup> The translation is based on the parallel passage in the Chinese *sūtra* Taishō II 252. Italics indicate sections not present in the Sanskrit version.

### 1.5.3 Limitations and warnings

Throughout *rakṣā* literature we find references to limitations of the efficacy of the protective functions of *rakṣā* texts, as well as warnings to those not acting in accordance with the texts' injunctions regarding the realization of the benefits. The texts, thereby, give an explanation in case the effect did not automatically occur by recitation of the protective formulas. In most cases protection fails to appear due to past *karma* of the practitioner. For such a statement Skilling introduced the term "escape clause," which became a common element of apotropaic scriptures. He remarked:

Common also is the 'escape clause' which, after lauding the multiple and powerful effects of *mantra* or other *rakṣā*, notes that it might not succeed 'due to the fruition of past *karma*' (*varjayitvā paurāṇaṃ karmavipākam*, or variants thereof).<sup>128</sup>

Variants of the escape clause are included in the *Mahāmāyūrī* (*sthāpayitvā ānanda paurāṇaṃ karmavipākam*),<sup>129</sup> the *Mahāsāhasrapramardana-sūtra* (*anyatra pūrvakarmavipākena*),<sup>130</sup> the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* (*varjayitvā paurāṇaṃ karmavipākam*),<sup>131</sup> the *Nagaropama-vyākaraṇa* (*anyatra pūrvakeṇa karmaṇā*),<sup>132</sup> the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* (*sthāpayitvā pūrvakarmavipākam*),<sup>133</sup> and the *Ekādaśamukha-hṛdaya* (*sthāpya paurāṇaṃ karma vipacyat(e)*).<sup>134</sup>

The karmic explanation is common to a wide range of texts. A similar statement, though not entirely identical, appears in the *Milindapañha*, in the episode where the King Milinda asks the sage Nāgasena about the efficacy of *parittas*. Nāgasena explains that *parittas* do not work in the same way for all people, and gives three reasons why *parittas* might not be efficacious, that is obstruction of past *karma*, sin, and unbelief. The respective passage on limitations due to one's past *karma* reads:

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<sup>128</sup> Skilling 1992: 148.

<sup>129</sup> Takubo 1972: 59.

<sup>130</sup> Iwamoto 1937a: 41.4.

<sup>131</sup> Mukhopadhyaya 1954: 5.

<sup>132</sup> Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 85.

<sup>133</sup> Vaidya 1960a: 28.24.

<sup>134</sup> GBMFE page 2421.3.

*Parittā ca bhagavatā uddiṭṭhā. Tañca pana sāvasesāyukassa vayasampannassa apetakammāvaraṇassa natthi mahārāja khīṇāyukassa ṭhitiyā kiriyā vā upakkamo vā.*

(Mil 151.15–18)

[The Blessed One sanctioned *paritta*.] But that is only meant for those who have some portion of their life yet to run, who are of full age, and restrain themselves from the evils of past Karma. And there is no ceremony or artificial means for prolonging the life of one whose allotted span of existence has come to an end.

(tr. Rhys Davids 1890: 214)

Another characteristic phraseology are warnings to those not adhering to the spell's injunctions. These warnings are usually expressed through a metaphor with the *arjaka* tree. It is said that when a branch of this tree falls to the ground, it bursts into seven parts, and so may the head of someone who contravenes the ritual practices of *rakṣā* texts split into seven pieces. The warning reads in general:

*saptadhāsya sphalen mūrdhā ārjakasyeva mañjarī*

May his head burst into seven pieces like the cluster of blossoms of an *arjaka* tree.

This warning is known to a variety of *rakṣā* texts, including the *Āṭānāṭiya-sutta*,<sup>135</sup> and *Āṭānāṭika-sūtra*,<sup>136</sup> the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*,<sup>137</sup> and the Tibetan version of the *Ṣaḍakṣara-vidyā*,<sup>138</sup> as well as some manuscripts from Central Asia.<sup>139</sup> A

<sup>135</sup> DN III 203.22–23.: *api ssu naṃ mārisa amanussā sattadhā pi'ssa muddhaṃ phāleyyūṃ.*

<sup>136</sup> Hoffmann [1939: 73] 1987: 57: *saptadhāsya sphalen mūrdhā ārjakasyeva mañjarī*. See also p. 96 n. 34 in the same work for some references.

<sup>137</sup> Vaidya 1960b: 235.10: *saptadhāsya sphuṭen mūrdhā ārjakasyeva mañjarī*.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Holz 2017: 232.

<sup>139</sup> For Sanskrit manuscripts from Turfan, see:

SHT III 900r4f.: *sa[pt](adhāsya sphalen mūrdhā arjakasye)va mañjarī*.

SHT III 903r1: *sapt[ā]rdhāsya sphale m[u]rdhna a(r)[j]*.

SHT III 904v6: *[s](ap)t(a)[dha]sya phale mūrdhna arjukasyaiva māñjarī*.

SHT III 906d v3: *saptadāsya spale mūrdhna ārjukasyaivā maññcari*.

SHT III 906g r6: *saptārdhāsya sphale mūrdhna ārjukasyaiva māñca*.

SHT III 984A1: *(m)[ā]rdhn(ā) ārjuka[sy](eva mañja)[r](ṭ)*.

more elaborate statement can be found in the *Mahāmāyūrī*, where it is said that the protector Vajrapāṇi will break the head into seven pieces like the blossom of an *arjaka* tree. All noble Buddhist beings will intervene and cause calamities with their weapons on the transgressor. The *Mahāmāyūrī* reads:

*Yaś cemām Ānanda Mahā-māyūrī-vidyā-rājñīm atikramet tasya Vajrapāṇiḥ sapta-dhā mūrdhānam Arjakasyeva mañjarīm sphoṭayisyati. sarva-buddha-bodhisatva-pratyekabuddha-śrāvakānāṃ tejasā naṣṭa āloko naṣṭas cetasah. ārya-pudgalās tena viśamvāditā bhavēyuh. catvāraś cainam mahārājānaḥ kṣura-paryantaiḥ śastrair mahāntaṃ vyasanam āpādayeyuh. Śakraś cāsya devānām Indras tri-daśa-gaṇa-parivṛto vajreṇa mūrdhānam abhibhindyāt. Brahma-tejasā cāsya vibhūtir bhasmaṃ gacchet.*

(Takubo 1972: 58.12–17)

And whoever, O Ānanda, might transgress against the Great Peacock Spell, the Queen of Spells, Vajrapāṇi will break his head into seven parts, like the blossom cluster of an *arjaka*. And with the majesty of all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas and Śrāvakas, his light and mind will be destroyed. That is what would be the case for one who has deceived the noble beings. And the four Great Kings would visit enormous calamity on him with their weapons, edges sharp as razors. And Śakra, the Indra of the gods, surrounded by his retinue of [gods of the] thirty[-three], would split his head with his vajra, and by the majesty of Brahma, his wealth will be turned into ashes.

(tr. Davidson 2014a: 32)

Interestingly, a similar statement in the *Mahā-daṇḍadhāraṇī-śītavatī* is used not to warn the person seeking protection, but the *graha* who would not release this person. The stock-phrase, which generally acts as a warning to the recipient is here applied for his protection. The passage reads:

*yo graho na muñcet saptadhāsyā sphuṭen mūrdhā arjakasyeva mañjarī | vajrapāṇiś cāsya mahāyakṣasenāpatir vajreṇādīptena samprajvālītena ekajvālībhūtena dhyāyitvā mūrdhānaṃ sphoṭayet | catvāraś ca mahārājāno*

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SHT III 984B2: [ā]ruka[sy](eva mañja)rī.

SHT VI 1269B1: [mū]rdhnā ā(rj)[u](ka)sy(e)va maṃcari.

SHT VI 1310: (sa)ptadhāsyā sphale [mū](rdhā) [ā](r)ju(kasye)[v](a) m(a)ñjari.

For further examples of this phenomenon in Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist literature, see Witzel 1987.

*‘yomayena cakreṇa kṣuradhārāprahāreṇa vināśayeyuḥ | tasmād yakṣalokāc  
cyavanaṃ bhavet | aḍakavatyāṃ rājadhānyāṃ na labhate vāsam |*

(Hidas 2017: 473f.)

If a Graha does not release, his head will split into seven like the blossom of the Arjaka plant. Vajrāpaṇi, the great leader of the Yakṣas, will attentively break his head with a blazing, burning and single-flamed vajra. The Four Great Kings will destroy him with an iron discus and the stroke of a razor-edge. He will fall from that Yakṣa-world and not gain residence in the capital, Aḍakavatī.

(tr. Hidas 2017: 480f.)

With the introduction of the escape clause into *rakṣā* texts, the failure of the protective effect is shifted from the ritual legitimacy to the practitioner. Further, the texts advise the practitioner to accurately follow their prescriptions, since serious consequences could ensue if someone were to transgress them. The warning, usually expressed by the metaphor with an *arjaka* tree, is expanded in later *rakṣā* texts. In this later stage of development, different powerful beings intervene and threaten harm upon the practitioner who contravenes the ritual instructions.