

༄༅། །སེང་གེ་སྐྱའི་རྒྱུད།

The Siṃhanāda Tantra

Siṃhanādatantra

སང་གེ་སྒྲའི་རྒྱུད་ཅེས་བྲ་བ།

seng ge sgra'i rgyud ces bya ba

Siṃhanādatantranāma

· Toh 702 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 93 (rgyud, rtsa), folios 163.b–164.b



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co.

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SUMMARY

s.1 *The Siṃhanāda Tantra* is a short tantra that teaches the long mantra and a short practice of the form of Avalokiteśvara called Siṃhanāda, “Lion’s Roar.”

ac.

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ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Catherine Dalton produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Ryan Damron edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *The Siṃhanāda Tantra* opens in Vajrāsana where the Buddha is residing in the form of Padmeśvara. Vajrapāṇi asks him how to train on the path, and Padmeśvara replies that one should recall the practice of Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda. The story of Avalokiteśvara’s Siṃhanāda form is recounted in detail in *The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda*, Toh 703.¹ There we learn how, during a past-life adventure with his friend who became the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara came to take this particular form. In this form, he obtained the power to tame the nāgas and his famed curative powers. *The Siṃhanāda Tantra* features the latter. After speaking Siṃhanāda’s secret mantra and teaching a short practice to accompany it, Padmeśvara concludes his discourse by describing the benefits of respecting and upholding the tantra and the detriments of deprecating it.

i.2 In addition to *The Siṃhanāda Tantra*, there are two short dhāraṇī texts associated with Siṃhanāda in the Kangyur and numerous practice manuals, praises, and ritual texts dedicated to him in the Tengyur, attesting to the importance of this particular form of Avalokiteśvara. Siṃhanāda was especially popular in Sri Lanka.² An image of Siṃhanāda was found at the Mahābodhi temple in Bodh Gaya prior to the temple’s nineteenth-century renovation.³ A tenth-century Nepalese miniature painting kept at Cambridge depicts Siṃhanāda and includes a caption reading, “Lokeśvara of the hospital on the island of Siṃhala,” referencing his curative abilities.⁴

i.3 Siṃhanāda’s iconography is generally consistent across textual and artistic sources, though not all of the details are clearly elaborated in this text. Siṃhanāda is white in color, has two legs and two arms, is dressed as an ascetic (*tapasvin*, *dka’ thub ldan pa*) and sits on a lion. In most descriptions, a skull-adorned trident rests at his right side, but in some, he holds it in his right hand. This trident is also frequently depicted with a white snake coiled around the shaft. With his left hand, he holds the end of a lotus stalk that rises upward and has a sword standing on the open lotus blossom. Nearby

and to the left sits what is variously described as a cup (*karoṭaka*), pot (*bhājana*, *snod*), or skull cup (*kapāla*, *thod pa*) filled with fragrant flowers. This vessel often sits on a lotus or water lily.⁵ The iconography described in the present text largely conforms with this depiction, but a lack of clarity in the Tibetan translation and its Sanskrit sources leaves a number of specific points ambiguous.

i.4 The *Siṃhanāda* form of Avalokiteśvara continues to be practiced in contemporary Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Two arrangements of practices centered on Lokeśvara *Siṃhanāda* are found in the Compendium of *Sādhanas* (*sgrub thabs kun btus*) compiled by Jamyang Loter Wangpo,⁶ and the nineteenth-century scholar Mipham Gyatso wrote a short summary of the story of *The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda*.⁷

i.5 *The Siṃhanāda Tantra* does not appear to be extant in Sanskrit or Chinese translation. It was translated into Tibetan by the Indian master Prajñākara and the Tibetan translator Gö Khukpa Lhetse in the eleventh century.

i.6 The present English translation of *The Siṃhanāda Tantra* was made on the basis of the Degé Kangyur recension of this work, with additional reference to the notes from the Comparative Edition (*dpe sdur ma*) of the Kangyur, the Stok Palace (*stog pho brag*) Kangyur, and the Phukdrak (*phug brag*) Kangyur recensions of the text. We also consulted the Sanskrit *Siṃhanādadhāraṇī* from the *Sādhanamālā*.

The Siṃhanāda Tantra

1.

The Translation

[F.164.b]

1.1 Homage to the blessed Lotus Lord of Speech.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One, transformed into Padmeśvara, was residing at Vajrāsana. The Lord of Guhyakas said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, how does one train in the accumulation of merit and wisdom, and in the path?”

1.2 The Blessed One answered, “Amazing! There is someone called Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda, who has supreme love and compassion for beings. One should contemplate how he previously⁸ trained on the path and gathered the accumulations of merit and wisdom.”

1.3 Then the blessed Padmeśvara rose and pronounced this secret mantra:

1.4 *namo ratna trayāya | nama āryāvalokiteśvarāya bodhisattvāya mahasattoāya
mahākāruṇikāya | |*

1.5 *tadyathā | om akaṭe vikaṭe nikaṭe kaṭaṃkaṭe karoṭe karokaṃṭe vīryai svāhā | om āḥ
hrīḥ siṃhanāda hūm | brum ām jrīm kham hūm | om āḥ hūm | om balīn⁹ bhuñja
jīva puṣpe dhūpe hūm | sarvāmṛte hūm | om vatali mahāvatali [F.165.a] hūm hūm
hūm jaḥ svāhā | om bhakṣa bhakṣa samaya tiṣṭha jaṇi hūm phaṭ svāhā | om
taprati¹⁰ hūm phaṭ | sritikara hūm phaṭ | om varuṇa āgacchaya āgacchaya
mahānāga gisati sarve bhuraḥ¹¹ phuh phuh phuh svāhā | om bhagavati śrutismṛti-
samavati saramati siddhi svāhā | om āḥ hrīḥ hūm svāhā | phuh hrīḥ | om
siṃhanāda hūm phaṭ phaṭ | nāgadupali¹² māraya phaṭ | jvāla jvāla hūm phaṭ | om
āḥ¹³vighnāntakṛt hūm | om agnaye atīvya abhisamayaviśa mahāśriye haṃyakaṃyam
ahanīya¹⁴ svāhā | om bhavaka agnaye sāntim¹⁵ kuru¹⁶ svāhā | om hrīḥ siṃhanāda
vajracakraṃvartalokika brum brum brum | lokottarāṇi siṃhanāda brum brum brum
hūm na hūm na siṃhanāda brum brum brum hūm hūm hūm svāhā | |*

- 1.6 “Lord of Guhyakas, this is called the *accomplishment of the maṇḍala*. It includes the ritual actions of killing, averting, summoning, binding, and pacifying. In the morning, make a maṇḍala with cow dung that has not fallen to the ground. Please the nāgas by holding the three sweet substances in the palm of your hand. This pacifies the anger of the nāgas.
- 1.7 “Called a leader of nāgas,
He is seated in the posture of royal ease
On a moon disc atop a lion.
At his right is a skull-bearing trident,
Which brings hostile kṣatriyas under his control.
Atop a lotus sits a skull cup,
A water lily imbued with the four activities,
And a sword infused with wisdom.¹⁷
- 1.8 “His body, in the guise of an ascetic,
Is adorned by the five families.¹⁸
The three and five hang down in front,¹⁹
And his crown is adorned with Amitābha.
He has arisen from the qualities of a lion.
- 1.9 “There are two-petaled red lotuses
And four lotuses with four mantras.²⁰
Your own body stands below with palms joined,
Bowing to his body and performing the activities.
- 1.10 “The mantra emits light from the heart
Of Akṣobhya who sits at the vajra seat.
You should recite twenty-one times
The mantra endowed with the three joys.²¹
- 1.11 “Lord of Guhyakas, whoever deprecates this tantra deprecates all buddhas and bodhisattvas. [F.165.b] Lords of Guhyakas, the gods of the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, the brahmaputras, and the great brahmas will protect, guard, conceal, and always accompany any being who hears this tantra, thinks of it, worships it, upholds it, or even just takes an interest in it. All the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who are greatly superior to those gods, will protect such beings just as a mother protects her child and the māras will never be able to obstruct them. When they die, they will take birth in lotuses in the western realm of Sukhāvātī, freed from the pain of the womb. In this life, they will be

freed from any fear of fire or water. Here I have only briefly stated the benefits, but apart from these all that is wished for will be fulfilled exactly as desired.

1.12 “If someone damages this tantra, is hostile toward it, or thinks about it improperly, you gods and nāgas must protect it!”

1.13 The Lord of Guhyakas along with the gods of the Realm of Brahma were delighted and agreed to this.

1.14 Additionally, in order to protect others, if one incants white earth many times, all obstacles will be pacified.

1.15 *This concludes “The Siṃhanāda Tantra.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 It was edited, translated, and finalized by the Indian preceptor Prajñākāra and the Tibetan translator Gö Khukpa Lhetse.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda*
(<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh703.html>) (translated 2024).
- n.2 Holt 1991, p. 41.
- n.3 Losty 2021, p. 17.
- n.4 Holt 1991, p. 79.
- n.5 The iconographic details of Siṃhanāda are described with some variation and differing degrees of detail in Toh 2858, 2859, 3155, 3157, 3329, 3414, 3417, 3418, 3419, and 3650. Descriptions in Sanskrit can be found in sādhana nos. 17, 20, 22, and 25 in volume one of the *Sāadhanamālā*. For a survey of Indo-Tibetan artistic depictions of Siṃhanāda, see the deity's main page at Himalayan Art Resources: <https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=472&page=1> (<https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=472&page=1>).
- n.6 See *sgrub thabs kun btus* vol. 6, folios 252.a–297.b.
- n.7 See *seng ge sgra'i gzungs kyi lo rgyus*.
- n.8 This translation follows C, F, L, and Y, which read *sngon lam*. D reads *smon lam*, “aspirations.”
- n.9 Emended. D reads *ba li na*.
- n.10 Following F, K, N, S, and Y. D reads *a ta pra ti*.
- n.11 Following H, N, and S. D reads *bhur*.
- n.12 Following C, F, J, K, S, and Y. D reads *du pa la*.

- n.13 Emended. D reads *a*. The word *aviḡhnāntakṛt* also seems implausible. In his *Vajrāvalī* (Mori 1997, p. 126), Abhayākaragupta gives a *kuṇḍalin* mantra as *om āḥ viḡhnāntakṛt hūm phaṭ*.
- n.14 Emended. D reads *havyakavyam ahāniya* (*ha bya ka bya ma hA ni ya*).
- n.15 This follows F, H, N, K, S, and Y. D reads *śānti* (shAn+ti).
- n.16 This follows H, N, and S. D reads *kuruya*.
- n.17 In most depictions of Siṃhanāda, the stalk of the lotus rises from his left hand to the level of his shoulder and has a blazing sword standing in its blossom. A skull cup or other vessel rests on a lotus flower nearby to his left, and is filled with fragrant flowers. Here, a lotus, skull cup, water lily, and sword are described together, but their location in relation to Siṃhanāda and their orientation to each other are not specified.
- n.18 *rigs lnga*. N and S read *rig sngags* (*vidyāmantra*).
- n.19 *gsum dang lnga ni mdun du 'phyang*. The Tibetan is ambiguous here, thus this translation is tentative. A sense of what is meant here is provided by a phrase from the *Siṃhanādasādhana*, sādhana no. 17 of the *Sāadhanamālā* (Bhattacharyya 1925, pp. 47–8). In this work, attributed to Advayavajra, we find the compound *aṃsalulitapañcacīra*, “five locks hang from his shoulders.” The phrase “five locks” (*pañcacīra*) is commonly used to describe deities whose hair hangs loose over their shoulders. It should be noted that the Tibetan translation of this sādhana—Toh 3414—translates this phrase with *rol pa'i dpa' bo lnga*, “the five playful heroes,” which would indicate the Sanskrit compound *lalitapañcavīra* (*aṃsa*, “shoulder,” is omitted). Thus it would appear that variants in the Sanskrit manuscript tradition or translator error resulted in reading *lalita* (“playful”) in place of *lulita* (“hang”), and *pañcavīra* (“five heroes”) in place of *pañcacīra*.
- n.20 *'dam skyes dmar po'i lo ma gnyis / padma bzhi la sngas bzhi ldan*. This translation is tentative.
- n.21 *spro ba gsum*. This translation is tentative.

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for names and terms of the corresponding ·
source language

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where the relationship between the Tibetan and source language is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

g.1 Akṣobhya

mi bskyod pa

མི་བསྐྱོད་པ།

akṣobhya^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Lit. “Not Disturbed” or “Immovable One.” The buddha in the eastern realm of Abhirati. A well-known buddha in Mahāyāna, regarded in the higher tantras as the head of one of the five buddha families, the vajra family in the east.

g.2 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

amitābha^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The buddha of the western buddhafiield of Sukhāvātī, where fortunate beings are reborn to make further progress toward spiritual maturity. Amitābha made his great vows to create such a realm when he was a bodhisattva called Dharmākara. In the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, popular in East Asia, aspiring to be reborn in his buddha realm is the main emphasis; in other Mahāyāna traditions, too, it is a widespread practice. For a detailed description of the realm, see *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī*, Toh 115. In some tantras that make reference to the five families he is the tathāgata associated with the lotus family.

Amitābha, “Infinite Light,” is also known in many Indian Buddhist works as Amitāyus, “Infinite Life.” In both East Asian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions he is often conflated with another buddha named “Infinite Life,” Aparimitāyus, or “Infinite Life and Wisdom,” Aparimitāyurjñāna, the shorter version of whose name has also been back-translated from Tibetan into Sanskrit as Amitāyus but who presides over a realm in the zenith. For details on the relation between these buddhas and their names, see *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) Toh 674, i.9.

g.3 Avalokiteśvara

spyan ras gzigs

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།

avalokiteśvara^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the “eight close sons of the Buddha,” he is also known as the bodhisattva who embodies compassion. In certain tantras, he is also the lord of the three families, where he embodies the compassion of the buddhas. In Tibet, he attained great significance as a special protector of Tibet, and in China, in female form, as Guanyin, the most important bodhisattva in all of East Asia.

g.4 Blessed One

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavan ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhist literature, is an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root $\sqrt{bhañj}$ (“to break”).

g.5 Brahmaputra

tshangs pa'i bu

ཚངས་པའི་བུ།

brahmaputra ^{AD}

A term used to refer to gods in the Brahma Realm.

g.6 Gö Khukpa Lhetse

'gos khug pa lhas btsas

འགོས་ཁུག་པ་ལྷས་བཅོས།

—

A Tibetan translator active in the eleventh century.

g.7 Gods of the Realm of Brahma

tshangs ris kyi lha

ཚངས་རིས་ཀྱི་ལྷ།

brahmakāyikadeva ^{AD}

Gods living in the Brahma Realm.

g.8 great brahmas

tshangs chen

ཚངས་ཚེན།

mahābrahma ^{AD}

A term used to refer to gods in the Great Brahma Realm.

g.9 Heaven of the Four Great Kings

rgyal chen bzhi'i ris

སྐལ་ཆེན་བཞིའི་རིས།

cāturmahārājakāyika ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology, lowest among the six heavens of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*, 'dod kham). Dwelling place of the Four Great Kings (*caturmahārāja*, *rgyal chen bzhi*), traditionally located on a terrace of Sumeru, just below the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. Each cardinal direction is ruled by one of the Four Great Kings and inhabited by a different class of nonhuman beings as their subjects: in the east, Dhṛtarāṣṭra rules the gandharvas; in the south, Virūḍhaka rules the kumbhāṇḍas; in the west, Virūpākṣa rules the nāgas; and in the north, Vaiśravaṇa rules the yakṣas.

g.10 Heaven of the Thirty-Three

sum cu rtsa gsum

སུམ་རུ་སྐུ་གསུམ།

trayatrīṃśa ^{AD}

The second heaven of the desire realm located above Mount Meru and reigned over by Śakra/Indra and thirty-two other gods.

g.11 Jamyang Loter Wangpo

'jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po

འཇམ་དབྱངས་བློ་གཏོར་དབང་པོ།

—

1847-1914. A master of the Sakya tradition.

g.12 kṣatriya

rgyal rigs

སྐལ་རིགས།

kṣatriya ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The ruling caste in the traditional four-caste hierarchy of India, associated with warriors, the aristocracy, and kings.

g.13 Lord of Guhyakas

gsang ba'i bdag po

གསང་བའི་བདག་པོ།

guhya-kādhipati ^{AD}

An epithet for Vajrapāṇi. *Guhyaka* is another name for a yakṣa.

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Vajrapāṇi means “Wielder of the Vajra.” In the Pali canon, he appears as a yakṣa guardian in the retinue of the Buddha. In the Mahāyāna scriptures he is a bodhisattva and one of the “eight close sons of the Buddha.” In the tantras, he is also regarded as an important Buddhist deity and instrumental in the transmission of tantric scriptures.

g.14 maṇḍala

maN+Da la

མཎྟལ།

**maṇḍala* ^{RP}

Literally a “disk” or “circle,” in the ritual context maṇḍala is a sacred space on the ground or a raised platform, arranged according to a pattern that varies from rite to rite.

g.15 Mipham Gyatso

mi pham rgya mtsho

མི་ཕམ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

—

1846–1912. A famous polymath of the Nyingma (*rnying ma*) tradition.

g.16 Padmeśvara

pad+ma'i dbang phyug

པདྨའི་དབང་ཕྱུག

padmeśvara ^{AD}

“Lotus Lord;” an epithet of Avalokiteśvara.

g.17 Prajñākāra

pradz+nyA kA ra

པརྩ་ལྷ་ར།

—

The Indian preceptor who translated this sūtra in the eleventh century.

g.18 Siṃhanāda

seng ge sgra

སང་གེ་སྒྲ།

siṃhanāda ^{AD}

“The Lion’s Roar,” the name of a form of Avalokiteśvara.

g.19 Sukhāvātī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

sukhāvātī ^{AD}

Sukhāvātī (Blissful) is the buddhafiield to the west inhabited by the buddha Amitābha, who is also known as Amitāyus. It is classically described in *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* (*Sukhāvātīvyūha*).

g.20 three sweet substances

mngar gsum

མངར་གསུམ།

trimadhura ^{AD}

Honey, molasses, and ghee.

g.21 Vajrāsana

rdo rje'i gdan

རོ་རྗེ་གདན།

vajrāsana ^{AD}

The spot on which the Buddha Śākyamuni attained Buddhahood. Also, Vajrāsana refers to the Bodhgayā area.

g.22 water lily

ku mu da

ཀུ་མུ་ད།

**kumuda* ^{RP}

g.23 yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the rule of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.

Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just-mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.