## On Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra VII.1\*

- I. The seventh chapter of the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra (edited by Sylvain Lévi, Paris 1907, pp. 25–27) deals with the concept of supranormal power (*prabhāva*) and thus corresponds to the fifth chapter of (the first section of) the Bodhisattvabhūmi. Its structure is based on a kind of standard pattern of six categories, viz. *lakṣaṇa* (or *svabhāva*, cf. 25,11), *hetu*, *phala*, *karman*, *yoga*, and *vṛtti*, followed by a concluding verse in the *puṣpitāgrā* metre extolling the greatness (*māhātmya*) of the *prabhāva* of *bodhisattvas*.
- **2.** The first verse ( $indravajr\bar{a}$  metre: --------), describing the essential characteristic (lakṣaṇa) of the supranormal power of bodhisattvas, runs thus:

utpattivākcitta<br/>śubhāśubhādhitatsthānaniḥsārapadāparokṣam  $|^2$ jñānam hi sarvatragasa<br/>prabhēdeṣv avyāhatam dhīragataḥ prabhāvaḥ  $\|$ 

VII.1

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\*I am deeply indebted to Professor Yūshō Wakahara and the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra study group at Ryūkoku University for sharing their materials with me (especially for a CD containing mss N2, N3 and NS, for which see n. 12), and to Professor Oskar von Hinüber for valuable suggestions.!

<sup>1</sup>For this pattern, cf., e.g., also Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra(-Bhāṣya) IX.56–59 (verse 57b should probably be read as °bhāvanā-samudāgamaḥ, and 57d emended to °sarvathā-'kṣayatā-phalaḥ: bahuvrīhis as in 56, 58ab and 59ab); Ratnagotravibhāga (ed. E.H. Johnston, Patna, 1950) I.30, 35, 42, and 45 as well as II.3, 8–9, 18–20, 29, and 38–41 (and the prose lines introducing these verses; read °phalaḥ in I.35 and °tathatābhinnavṛttitaḥ or even °kaḥ in I.45 [cf. WZKS 15/197, p. 147], and perhaps °yuktaḥ sva° in I.42); Yogācārabhūmi, Śrutamayī Bhūmi (T 30.1579) 361a17–20 (Śrāvakabhūmi ms fol. 23a8–b1); Abhidharmasamuccaya (ed. P. Pradhan, Santiniketan 1950) 103,1–8 (reconstructed, but terminology confirmed by Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya (ed. N. Tatia, Patna, 1976), p. 141).

<sup>2</sup>The edition by S. Bagchi (Darbhanga, 1970) reads °ādhi tat...padā parokṣam, which does not make sense.

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Sylvain Lévi<sup>3</sup> translates:

La connaissance qui n'a pas en dehors de sa portée les Points suivants: naissance, langage, pensée, dépôt de bien et de mal, situation, Évasion, avec leurs subdivisions, qui est universelle, sans entrave, c'est là le Pouvoir qui appartient au Sage.

In the translation edited by Robert Thurman,<sup>4</sup> the verse runs as follows:

Direct knowledge of birth, speech, mind, the deposit of good and evil, place, and escape is unobstructed toward these everywhere with all varieties; and it is the power of the brave.

- 3. None of the translators<sup>5</sup> indicates any difficulties he may have had with the syntax of the text, but it is obvious that  $sarvatraga^{\circ}$  does not construe well. Lévi translates it as an attribute of  $j\bar{n}\bar{a}nam$ , but this is impossible if we keep to the printed text where it is compounded with saprabhedesv. Nor is Thurman's rendering convincing since it ignores  ${}^{\circ}ga^{\circ}$  and translates as if there were only sarvatra, as a separate word, as in the commentary (sarvatra lokadhātau saprabhedesv ...). But the omission of  ${}^{\circ}ga^{\circ}$  in the verse would spoil the metre. For the same reason, a reading sarvatragam, which would fit in with Lévi's translation and make good sense, is excluded as well.
- **4.** Now, there is a similar case at Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra IX.9a (metre *mālinī*: ••••••):

śaranam anupamam tac chresthabuddhatvam istam ...

Thurman (p. 78) translates:

Supreme Buddhahood is the refuge without compare....

Yet, a karmadhāraya śreṣṭhabuddhatva would seem to indicate a specific form of Buddhahood that is superior to another one (e.g., better

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- <sup>3</sup>Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra, edited and translated by Sylvain Lévi, Vol. II (Paris, 1911), p. 55.
- <sup>4</sup>Maitreyanātha's Ornament of the Scriptures of the Universal Vehicle, Recorded by Āryāsaṅga, Explained by Vasubandhu, English translation by Lobsang Jamspal et al., edited by Robert A. F. Thurman (American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1979), p. 57.
- <sup>5</sup>The unpublished translation by Peter Oldmeadow (Canberra, mentioned by J.W. de Jong in IIJ 30 (1987), pp. 154 ff.) remains inaccessible.

than pratyekabuddhatva).<sup>6</sup> This, however, would be somewhat surprising since in the preceding as well as in the following verses buddhatva (and also buddhatā) is, without any qualification, consistently used for Buddhahood proper, i.e., the state of highest, perfect Awakening. Actually, in the following verse (IX.10) śreṣṭha clearly qualifies not buddhatva but śaraṇa,<sup>7</sup> and the same is true of a quasi-synonym of śreṣṭha, viz. uttama, in the preceding pair of verses (IX.7–8)<sup>8</sup> of which IX.9 is a more artistic rephrasing.<sup>9</sup> In both cases, the purport is that Buddhahood is the supreme refuge. This doubtless makes better sense. At any rate, the commentary on verse IX.9 does construe śreṣṭha with śaraṇa and not with buddhatva:

By this third [verse the author] shows that ... precisely this refuge status [of Buddhahood] is unsurpassed because it (= the refuge status of Buddhahood) is incomparable and supreme (tasyaiva śaranatvasyânupamaśresthatvenânuttaryam<sup>10</sup> ... darśayati).

Accordingly, Lévi (p. 71) translates the verse as follows:

Cette Bouddhaté est le Refuge excellent, incomparable....

The Tibetan translation, too, supports this interpretation:

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- <sup>6</sup>Cf. XIX.62d *bodhiḥ śreṣṭḥā* (Bhāṣya: *śreṣṭḥā bodhiḥ*), but in contrast to *buddhatva* the term *bodhi* is traditionally applied to Śrāvakas (and Pratyekabuddhas) as well and hence requires specification when referring to a Buddha, i.e., when used in the sense of *anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi*.
- <sup>7</sup>"[T]his Buddhahood is regarded here as the best of [all] refuges" (... tad buddhatvaṃ śreṣṭham iheṣṭaṃ śaraṇānāṃ; text follows Naoya Funahashi, Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra [Chapters I, II, III, IX, X] (Tokyo: Kokushokankokai, 1985), p. 27).
- 8"Buddhahood protects from ...; therefore, [it] is the best refuge" (paritrāṇaṃ hi buddhatvaṃ ... tasmāc charaṇam uttamaṃ).
- <sup>9</sup>The same pattern is also found in the preceding verses, the *anuṣṭubh* lines IX.1–2 and IX.4–5 being rephrased by IX.3 (śārdūlavikrīdita) and IX.6 (srag-dharā), respectively. This pattern is, by the way, also found in the poetical rephrasing of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra at Ratnagotravibhāga I, 96–126.
- <sup>10</sup>Thus to be read with Tibetan *mchog nyid kyis*, against Lévi's °*śreṣṭhasya cânu*°. Among the mss accessible to me (see n. 12), mss B, N2, N3 and NS read °*ṣṭhasvanānu*°, whereas ms A has °*ṣṭa·svanānu*°, with a dot between *ṣṭa* (*sic*) and *sva*. A misreading of *tve* as *sa* seems quite possible from a script where the *e*-sign is a downward hook on the upper left side of the akṣara. See A 34b²; B 36b5; N2 37b4, N3 29b7; NS 31a6.

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This Buddhahood is considered to be the incomparable, supreme refuge (Peking Phi 10a1-2: sangs rgyas nyid de skyabs ni dpe med mchog tu 'dod).<sup>11</sup>

However, such an interpretation is clearly impossible if śresthabuddhatvam is read as a compound. To conjecture a reading śrestham is out of the question because it would violate the metre. The only way out of the difficulty occurring to me is to suggest that we should probably separate śrestha from buddhatvam and take it as a BHS form of the nom. sg. neuter (cf. F. Edgerton, BHSG § 8.3 I-34). Possibly what the  $mss^{12}$  write as  $^{\circ}a$  was actually pronounced  $^{\circ}a$ , i.e., a short nasal for which the Brāhmī script has no sign, so that the scribes had only two options: either to indicate the nasalization by means of an  $anusv\bar{a}ra$  to the effect of obscuring the metre, or to give precedence to the metre and leave the nasalization unexpressed (as they actually do). If my argument is correct, the line should be read (and was at any rate read by the commentary) as

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11Likewise the Tibetan translation of the pāda in Sthiramati's commentary (P Mi 125b6-7): sangs rgyas skyabs ni dpe med mchog yin te. Cf. also P Mi 125b5 (skyabs de nyid dpe med pa dang / mchog tu gyur pa'i phyir) and 126a1 (skyabs 'di dam pa yin pas na mchog ces bya ste). The Chinese translation, too, seems to take śrestha with śaraṇa but construes anupama with Buddha-(hood) when paraphrasing the commentary: "Verse: The Buddha is the supreme refuge; because [he] is incomparable, [it?] is unsurpassed. ... Commentary: This verse elucidates the supremeness of refuge. Because the Buddha is incomparable, [as a refuge he] is unsurpassed" (T 31.1604: 602c4 and 6: 偈曰。佛為勝歸處 無比故無上 ... 釋曰。此偈顯歸依勝。由佛無譬喻故 為無上。).

<sup>12</sup>Five mss are accessible to me, viz. mss A and B published in Syôkô Takeuchi et al. 1995 and mss N2 (NGMPP E 1923/5), N3 (NGMPP E 1367/11) and NS (NGMPP A 114/1). According to Wakahara 2003, p. (34), NS is dated Nepal samvat 796 (= 1675/6 C.E.), N2 Vikrama samvat 1957 (= 1900 C.E), and N3 Nepal samvat 1025 (= 1904/5 C.E). Cf. also Wakahara's articles in *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 51.2 (2003), pp. (157)–(163) and 52.2 (2004), pp. (157)–(162).

<sup>13</sup>For cases of am to be read as  $\tilde{a}$  for metrical reasons in Pāli verses, cf. Alsdorf 1967, p. 17, verses  $7c = \text{Sn } 921c \ patipad\tilde{a}$  (but cf. Norman 1992, 342!) and  $16b = \text{Sn } 930b \ payutt\tilde{a}$ ; p. 26 ( $J\bar{a}taka$  no. 479) verse 2b  $K\bar{a}ling\tilde{a}$ ; p. 29 ( $J\bar{a}taka$  no. 485) verse 6a  $im\tilde{a}$   $mayh\tilde{a}$ ; etc.

 $^{14}$ All mss available to me read  $^{\circ}a$ , as does S. Lévi's edition. See A 34b<sub>1</sub>; B 36b<sub>3</sub>; N2 37b<sub>2</sub>; N3 29b<sub>6</sub>; NS 31a<sub>5</sub>.

śaranam anupamam tac chrestha (or chrestha) buddhatvam istam ...

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- **5.** Returning now to the verse VII.1, an analogous solution would seem to be possible: the difficulty sketched in § 3 would vanish if we assume that the  $mss^{15}$  should be transcribed not as *sarvatragasaprabhedeṣv* but as *sarvatraga saprabhedeṣv*, perhaps to be read as *sarvatragã saprabhedeṣv*. In this case, it is no longer problematic to construe *sarvatraga* (or ° $g\tilde{a}$ ) as an attribute with  $j\tilde{n}\bar{a}nam$ , and Lévi's translation can, in this point, be accepted.
- **6.** Still, there is yet another problem. At the end of the first line, Lévi's text reads "niḥsārapadāparokṣaṃ, and in his translation he takes pada to mean "points", referring to the six items enumerated before with regard to which the cognition of bodhisattvas is immediate or perceptual (aparokṣa). In the verse, this works fairly well. In the commentary, however, such an understanding of pada appears to be precluded. There, after the explanation of the six items we have the following sentence:

eşu şaţsv artheşu sarvatra lokadhātau saprabhedeşu padāparokşam avyāhatam jñānam sa prabhāvo bodhisattvānām ... |.

## This is translated by S. Lévi (p. 55) as follows:

Voilà les six catégories en question; la connaissance qui porte sur elles sans que nulle part, dans tous les mondes, avec toutes leurs subdivisions, elles soient en dehors de sa portée, sans rien qui l'entrave, c'est là le Pouvoir des Bodhisattvas....

I cannot find an equivalent for *pada* in this translation, nor in that of Thurman<sup>16</sup> who ignores it also in his translation of the verse (see § 2). Actually, in the commentary I find it altogether impossible to construe *pada*° as a prior member of a compound ending in °*aparokṣa*, let alone in any other way. Thurman may well have ignored it because he could not find an equivalent in the Tibetan translation. But a closer inspection

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<sup>15</sup>All the five mss at my disposal (see n. 12) read *sarvatragasa*°. See A 25b<sub>4</sub>; B 27a6; N2 27b6; N3 22a<sub>1</sub>; NS 23a<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>1666</sup> Such knowledge is directly present without impediment in all universes as regards those six topics and their varieties, this knowledge is the bodhisattva's power ..." (Thurman [see n. 4] p. 57).

of the latter does show the way towards a reasonable solution, and moreover suggests a different reading of the verse as well.

## 7. The Tibetan translation of the commentary passage runs like this:

What is, in this way, a direct, unobstructed cognition with regard to these six items including their subdivisions in every world-system, that is the [supranormal] power of bodhisattvas (P Phi 156b2-3; D Phi 147a3-4: de ltar na 'jig rten gyi<sup>17</sup> khams thams cad du don drug po de dag rab tu dbye ba dang bcas pa la shes pa mngon sum du gyur pa thogs pa med pa gang yin pa de ni byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyi mthu ... yin no //).

It is obvious that the only word which has no equivalent in the Sanskrit text as printed by Lévi is the relative pronoun gang (yin pa), which in connection which the subject  $j\bar{n}\bar{a}nam$  would correspond to yad. Since the akṣaras ya and pa are very similar in the mss, the conclusion suggesting itself is that the disturbing  $pad\bar{a}^{\circ}$  is nothing but a misreading of the relative pronoun yad followed by  $\bar{a}parokṣam$  or rather aparo-kṣam, at least according to the mss available to me. <sup>19</sup> But even a reading  $\bar{a}parokṣam$  could easily be explained as a metrical lengthening taken over from the verse. For there, too, Tibetan, reading as it does, for  $p\bar{a}da$  b.

... de yi gnas dang 'byung ba mngon sum **gang** |,

shows that *padāparokṣaṃ* is rather a miscopying of *yadāparokṣaṃ*, to be resolved into *yad āparokṣaṃ*. This is anyway what one would expect in view of Vasubandhu's commentary, unless we suspect him of having grossly misread the verse.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>gyi D: gyis P.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>This reading is also confirmed by the pratīka in Sthiramati's commentary (P Mi 95b1: *mngon sum gang zhes bya ba ni* ...).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Mss A and N2 *pedapa*°, ms N3 *padapa*°. But ms B clearly reads *yadapa*°, and ms NS either *yadapa*° or *yadaya*°. See A 25b<sub>7</sub>; B 27b<sub>2</sub>; N2 28a<sub>2</sub>; N3 22a<sub>4</sub>; NS 23a<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Mss A, N2 and N3 *padāparokṣaṃ*; ms B *padārokṣaṃ*, like ms NS where °*dā* and *ro*° are, however, separated by a mark indicating the end of the preceding chapter in the preceding line but extending into the line below. See A 25b4; B 27a6; N2 27b5-6; N3 22a1; NS 23a2.

8. However, if this is correct (and I fail to see how at least in Vasubandhu's commentary a reading padā° or even pada° could be justified syntactically), there arises another problem: how to construe the compound immediately preceding the relative pronoun in the verse? If °niḥsārapadāparokṣam is, following the Tibetan and Vasubandhu's commentary, emended to onihsara yad aparoksam, the compound preceding the relative pronoun would end with a stem form, which is of course impossible in standard Sanskrit. What is required is rather a locative dependent on jñānam, as is confirmed by the commentary explicitly construing the six items of the first line as locatives (visayasaptamī) depending on jñānam (viz. upapattau jñānam, vāci jñānam, citte jñānam, °ādhāne jñānam, and niḥsarane<sup>21</sup> jñānam). But emending onihsāra yad to onihsāre yad is, once again, precluded by the metre requiring a short syllable.<sup>22</sup> In view of the solution found for sarvatraga, I suggest to interpret oniḥsāra, in a similar way, as a BHS form of the loc. sg.<sup>23</sup> (BHSG § 8.11). I wonder if in this case a may not be interpreted as a substitute writing for ĕ, for which, once again, no sign is available in the scripts derived from the Brāhmī alphabet. Among the two available possibilities, viz. to write either e (normally long) or a somehow similar short vowel like a or i,24 the metrically required

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>But all the five mss at my disposal read niḥsaraṇajñānaṃ! In the preceding item, mss B and NS read °gamanajñānamṛddhi°, but mss A, N2 and N3 have °gamanaṛddhi° (omitting °jñāna°). See A 25b6; B 27a9; N2 28a1; N3 22a3; NS 23a3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>The reading °*sāra* is confirmed by all the five mss available to me. See A 25b<sub>4</sub>; B 27a<sub>6</sub>; N<sub>2</sub> 27b<sub>5</sub>; N<sub>3</sub> 22a<sub>1</sub>; NS 23a<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Cf. Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra XXI.48c, where *niḥsāre* occurs in a similar context (six *abhijñās*), albeit as the object not of *jñāna* but of *avavāda*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>It has to be conceded that a for  $\check{e}$  is not usual, the normal representation preserving the quantity being i (cf. Edgerton 1946, pp. 199 § 28 and 204 § 67; cf. also, for Apabhramśa, Ludwig Alsdorf, Harivamśapurāṇa (Hamburg, 1936) [Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien Bd. 5], pp. 142–44). However, in the analogous case of shortened o (i.e.:  $\check{o}$ ), both u and a are attested (Edgerton 1946, pp. 199 § 28 and 204 § 68).

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quantity of the vowel would, in this case too, have taken precedence over the quality.

- 9. It has, however, to be admitted that the interpretation of "niḥsāra" in the first line as a locative singular is odd in view of the fact that we have, in the second line, the locative plural saprabhedeṣu, an adjective which doubtless qualifies the six items to be supplied from the first line (cf. the Bhāṣya: eṣu ṣaṭṣv artheṣu ... saprabhedeṣu). But since the singular in the first line is collective (six items!), a reference to it in the form of a plural ad sensum would not seem to be entirely inexplicable, still less so in view of the constraints of the metre. Anyway, the only alternative solution I for my part could imagine would be to interpret the six-membered dvandva ending with "niḥsāra as a virtual locative plural, to be connected with jñānaṃ as a kind of split compound, interrupted by yad āparokṣaṃ; but I am unable to decide whether such a construction is possible at all.<sup>25</sup>
- 10. My translation of the verse does not differ too much from S. Lévi's:

A knowledge which is perceptual with regard to [the dying and re]birth [of beings], to speech [even in other realms of existence], <sup>26</sup> to the thoughts [of others], to the deposit<sup>27</sup> of good and bad [karma], to [how to go to] the place where the [vineyas dwell], <sup>28</sup> and to [the

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- <sup>25</sup>Anyway, a similar case seems to occur at Jātaka IV 384,14, where the metre requires the reading *app-eva naṃ putta- labhemu -jīvitaṃ*, on which cf. Oberlies 1996, 119 ("compound in tmesis").
- <sup>26</sup>In the Bhāṣya (25,5-6) we should read, with ms A, °bhijñā yām vācam tatra tatropapannā bhāṣante; cf. mss A and N2 vācantatratatropa°, ms N3 vācam tatratatropa° and Tibetan (Peking Phi 156a8) de dang de dag tu skyes pa rnams. Mss B and NS read vācantatragatropa°. In ms NS, some forms of ta are not much different from ga. See A 25b5; B 27a7; N2 27b7; N3 22a2; NS 23a3.
- <sup>27</sup>i.e. the residues ( $v\bar{a}san\bar{a}$ ) accumulated in previous existences (cf. Sthiramati, Peking Mi 95a<sub>3</sub>–5).
- <sup>28</sup>For want of anything better, my interpretation of the telegraphic *tat* (there is no word in the line it might refer to) follows the Bhāṣya (25,7-8: *yatra vineyās tiṣṭhanti tatsthānagamanajñānam ṛddhiviṣayābhijñā*) and Bhāṣya ad XX-XXI.48 (185,13-14: *upetya vineyasakāśam ṛddhyabhijñayā*). According to Sthiramati (Peking Mi 95a6-8), *tatsthāna* means the Buddha-fields where the

means for] escaping [from saṃsāra], and which is universal and unobstructed with regard to [its aforementioned objects] along with their subdivisions: [this] is the [supranormal] power of the bodhisattvas.

II. The grammatical explanation of the verses VII.1 and IX.9a proposed in the preceding paragraphs presupposes that the language of the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra allows for non-standard grammatical features, especially such as are known from Middle Indic, as in many other Buddhist Sanskrit texts. Such features have indeed already been registered by S. Lévi, e.g. in X.14 (janiya), XVII.14 (bahitas), 31 (tāyaka), 45 (arihat), or XIX.69-70 (dharama). Cf. also vā for iva at IX.36. The most interesting case in connection with the present investigation is the shortening of a long vowel at the end of a word at XIX.75, where we find hetuna m.c. for hetunā. There is also a number of non-standard compounds (cf. F. Edgerton, BHSG §23.10) which would deserve special investigation, especially at the beginning of Chapter IX, and significantly in verses composed in fairly demanding metres, viz. 3d: (ratnānām) prabhāva-mahatām; 29 6b: dharma-ratnapratata-sumahataḥ (Bhāṣya: sumahataḥ pratatasya dharmaratnasya!); 6c: śukla-sasya-prasava-sumahatah; 30 6d: dharmâmbu-varsa-pratatasuvihitasya (Bhāṣya: mahataḥ suvihitasya ... dharmâmbu-varṣasya); 12d: viṣaya-sumahataḥ<sup>31</sup> (jñānamārgāt).

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Buddhas live and the world systems where sentient beings live, and the cognition referring to these means the knowledge how to go there by means of supranormal accomplishments (*rddhi*).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Looks like a bahuvrīhi with its members inverted (cf. Oberlies 1996, p. 119 [see n. 25]; Oberlies 1989–1990, pp. 159–60, n. 7; Oberlies 2001, p. 123; Norman 1992, p. 217 ad v. 370). But the compound could perhaps also be understood as a tatpurusa in the sense of "great as regards their power".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Probably in the sense of *sumahataḥ śuklasasyaprasavasya*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>See n. 29.

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