IMPERATIVES IN THE BUDDHIST TANTRA MANTRAS

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The Buddhist tantric works contain an enormous amount of mantras, recognized by being kept in transcription when those works were translated into Tibetan and Chinese. Bu-ston, editor of the Tibetan canon, collected a great many of these mantras in a large volume. Also in the original Sanskrit works, mantras were recognizable by the context and their form. Here I shall not deal with the use of mantras in religious practice, or with the dispute over whether they do or do not have meaning in our usual sense of meaning. I am concerned with what is essentially a grammatical problem of the imperative forms; and this type of meaning must be admitted, otherwise how could they be labelled imperatives and their type of imperative discussed?

From time to time in my studies of the Buddhist Tantras I have noticed mantras in certain contexts which help to explain them. I shall restrict myself to these more enlightening contexts, rather than simply present a long list which could easily be done. Since the great majority of such imperatives are addressed to the deity in the singular number of the second person, these will be my examples, which in my observation regularly adopt the Prasnaipada option of the Present Tense. These forms are generally recognizable by doublets for emphasis, the form repeated, e.g. hana hana. We shall find that sometimes these mantras obey rules of Classical Sanskrit, and sometimes they must be construed as Middle Indic. The imperatives are classifiable in four types, 1. those for appeasing (śāntika), 2. those for prosperity (paustika), 3. those for controlling (vaśīkara), and 4. those for destruction (abhi-cāra). Besides, the Vairocanābhisambodhi-tantra, Chap. II, k. 180, in the Tibetan Kanjur, and its commentary by Buddhaguhya in the Tibetan Tanjur, distinguishes between imperative mantras directed to the minor deities called 'attendants' and those directed to the furious deities (Krodha). Mantras to be translated "Remembert", "Consume!", and "Conquer!" are directed to the attendants, a group that also includes the 'messengers'; and those translated "Stab!", "Kill!", and "Tear to pieces!" are directed to the Krodha deities. 2

The repetition of the root vowel in such forms as kiri is doubtless due to the injunction to repeat the mantra many times, since the repetition of the vowel apparently assists this multiplication of the mantra. Since the semantic value of kiri is not evidenced, this does suggest that the mantra was more intended to be repeated many times than to be understood. We shall observe that to be understood one must read this form as kira, the imperative. There are suggestions in this tantric literature that the 'meaning' (artha) is the 'goal' (artha) of the recitation.

1) The first example is from the mantra transcription in an Acala Tantra of the Tibetan canon:

vīghnāṇa māraya māraya | duṣṭāṇa rakṣa rakṣa | satvāṃ kuru kuru | kiri kiri |

Here the first doublet of imperatives is in causative form, and I render the command "Kill the demons!" Next, there is, "Ward off the wicked!" Third, "Lead the strong!" (As for translating the imperative kuru by "Lead!" the Monier-Williams dictionary cites this meaning for the root kr from Pāṇini 1,4,77). Finally, this kiri kiri represents an imperative of kir 'to
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scatter' (6th conjugation class in classical Sanskrit), so we would expect kira; but here there is repetition of the root vowel -- a frequent feature of these mantra imperatives; and it means, "Scatter (or disperse)!" namely, the evil forces.

2) From the Trisamayarājasādhana, first work of the Sādhana-mālā. This is the form in which it is edited:

arara asama sama samantatānanta dharma te khaṇa khaṇa mahā-virācāle sama sama asahamahābale kaṇa kaṇa mahāvāraṅgīre
haha haha vajrayājāvavyaye dharā dhara hūṃ hūṃ maṇḍalaṃ sama-balāgravikrame kurukuru turu turu sarvatāḥ sarvaṃ hi jvala
jvala agre agriṇi hūṃ Phaṭ Śvāhā ṭ.

The editor has erroneously separated the words asama and sama; they should be compounded as a tatpurūṣa; "the equal to what is without equal". Now, I take the expression arara and asamasama, in the form of vocatives, to be in apposition to the term dharma: "Oh, the dharma universal without end — the gate (arara) and the equal of what is without equal, of thee (te)," namely the deity Trisamayarāja. And the genitive te goes as well with the following locative absolutes. First, "when (of thee) there is the great unsawing heroism" KHAṆA KHAṆA, which has nothing to do with digging. This is a Middle Indic imperative, and the retroflex p is due to a presumed retroflex sibilant of an equivalent Sanskrit, namely kṣaṇa, "Wound!" (i.e. the opponent). Next, "when (of thee) there is the great strength which one cannot withstand," SAMA SAMA. Again, Middle Indic for Sanskrit sama sama, "Be appeased!" (reminding of the fierce Vedic Rudra appeased with the name Śiva). Next, "when (of thee) there is the chief of great boons," KHAṆA KHAṆA. And as I learned from Helmer Smith, this goes with Sanskrit kvāp, thus KVAṆA KVAṆA, "Sound out!" (i.e. make it known). Next, "when (of thee) the name of a diamond is 'diamond'," HAHA HAHA. This form HAHA is another example of the repetition of root vowel, where in Middle Indic HĀH stands for the second person imperative, present tense; which is parallel with the imperative using the present stem in the manner of the first conjugational class of Classical Sanskrit. The meaning of the imperative HAHA HAHA depends on the associated locative absolute phrase, containing the hva- root, suggesting that the equivalent Sanskrit to this, ḫa- is hva-, in the dictionary as hva-; although admittedly my reference works do not supply this Sanskrit equivalence to the Middle Indic ha-. But the context does support this association of hva- root, whereby, "when the name of a diamond is 'diamond'," the imperative is rendered, "Call it by name!" The passage continues: DHARA DHARA, "Be steadfast!" HŪṂ HŪṂ (untranslatable, but signifying the fierce side of the deity; in Tibetan transcription, always ḫuṃ). Then, "when there is the best forward step of strength equal to it," "Construct [make it work] the maṇḍala" Next, TURU TURU, for Sanskrit TURA, but, as previously, repeating the vowel; and to be rendered, "Be quick!". Then, JVALA JVALA, "Radiate!" -- everything in every way. Now correct the editor's agrini to agreṇi, vocative of agreṇi, the masculine; thus, "O, leader!" -- at the summit (agre). Finally, HŪṂ PHAṬ SVĀHĀ.

3) From the Guhyasamājatantra, Chap. XIV, with the help of commentary:

ru ru sphuru jvala tiṣṭha.
ghuṭṭa ghuṭṭa ghuṭṭānī.

The first imperative sequence has some features well worth mentioning. There is no doubt of the repetition RU RU as edited, and that the following terms are imperatives even though not re-
peated. According to the commentator Ratnakaraśānti, the imperatives are to be rendered, "Speak!" "Fill up!" "Radiate" and "Remain". The JVALA and TIŚṬHA are obvious. SPHURU exhibits the repetition of root vowel as was shown with previous examples. As to the expression RU RU, the meaning "Speak!" (i.e. asking the silent to speak) appears to take ru as the present stem of the verb ru- 'to cry out', etc. in the 2nd class of conjugation might have as the equivalent imperative the form ruhi; and the present tense example is raunti or raviti. This example of RU as an imperative is therefore a further evidence of Middle Indic imperative forms in these mantras.

The next mantra, GITUṬA ... in this GUHYASAMĀJATANTRA, Chap. XIV, addressed, according to the commentary, to the goddess Māmaki, contains another instructive example, signifying according to Ratnakaraśānti, "Protect! 0, protectress!". This root GITUṬ- is found neither in the Böhtlingk-Roth nor the Monier-Williams Sanskrit dictionaries. Of the twelve DHAṬUPĀṬHA sources in Pāṇini, A CONCORDANCE OF SANSKRIT DHĀṬUPĀṬHAS, the root is entered in only one, the KAŚAŚKRTSA. But the GUHYASAMĀJATANTRA supplies both an imperative and a vocative form. Notice also in this example that there is no repetition of the root vowel, as in some of the previous examples, and that here the imperative agrees with Classical Sanskrit.

4) From the VAJRA-VIDĀRĀPA-NĀMA-DHĀRAPI, its long mantra. In the course of my investigations, long ago, of the Tanjur commentaries, I found one that explained the mantra, but only by bringing in magical rites and specifying which parts go with the chief deity (Vajrapāṇi) and which go with its four inner retinue deities, Vajrakīla, etc., and with the ten directional deities. I shall treat this part specified for Vajrapāṇi’s magical acts (karma) of appeasing (śāntika), etc.

he phullu luni ru phullu | grha kuṇe luni mili cuṇu kuṇu kulu | vajravijayayā svāhā | kilikilāya svāhā | kaṇa kaṇā | maṇa maṇa | raṭa raṭa | moṭana-paṭanaṇāya svāhā | cara nicara | hara hara | sara sara | māraya vajravidāraṇāya svāhā | chinda chinda | bhinda bhinda | mahākiliṣṭa svāhā | bandha bandha | krodha vajravidāraṇāya svāhā |

Some of the imperatives are single, and some doublets. I have had to edit the apparently Middle-Indic selection, especially for word isolation; and in the first stretch one must read lūni (the long ū). It starts He ("OI"), Phullu ("Expand!") Ru ("Express!") the sheaf (lūni), Phullu ("Expand it!"). This appears to represent the deity’s appeasing magic (śāntika). Then Grha ("Take prisoner!") and Kulū ("Make small!") Skt. kṣura, apparently controlling magic (vaśiṣṭaka). Then, Mili ("Encounter!"), Kulū ("Exhibit an expression of joy!") Kuri (take it as though Skt. kṣur, "Make furrows"), and Kulū (again "Make small"), which is prosperity magic (paustika). Then, for these three kinds of magic, Vajra-vijayāya ("With the victorious thunderbolt"), Svāhā; and Kiliṣṭa ("With a loud noise"), Svāhā. Now, for the destructive magic, beginning Kaṭa Kaṭa (here, among the many possible meanings, take the ‘rain’ option, by authority of Ratnakaraśānti’s commentary on GUHYASAMĀJ- TANTRA, Chap. XIV); in the drastic or destructive sense "Drop the deluge!" Maṭa Maṭa ("Send a hail storm!"); Raṭa Raṭa ("Roar!"); and Moṭana-paṭanaṇāya ("With the destructive Pramotaṇa"), Svāhā; where Pramotaṇa appears to be an epithet of Vajrapāṇi’s Vajra in its destructive feature. Then Cama Nica ("Hunt!") and Harā Harā ("Seize!"); Sara Sara ("Pursue!") and Māraya ("Kill!"), namely, "With the Vajravidāraṇa", Svāhā. Here, Vajravidāraṇa, occurring as it does
in the title of the work, indicates the prevalent character of the Vajra, i.e., its cleaving ability. Then Chinda Chinda ("Cut through!") and Bhinda Bhinda ("Rend asunder!"); Mahâkâlikîlaya ("With the intense loud noise"), Svâhā. Finally, Bandha Bandha ("Tie up!"), with the loud noise of the fierce thunderbolt (krodha-vajra), Svâhā. The term Svâhā here, does not, as is frequently explained in the Buddhist Tantras, go with a female-type mantra called vidyā, because the main deities here, Vajrapâni and entourage, are all male. Hence, Svâhā as found in the foregoing must simply be the one employed in Vedic rituals, where it signifies the benediction "Hail". And here the term vajra does mean "thunderbolt" rather than the "diamond" sense it usually has in later Buddhist Tantras. The Mantra distinction of four magical rites is somewhat clarified near the end of the long mantra by way of four mantras which the commentary associates with the four inner-retinue deities that surround Vajrapâni.

hulu hulu, tiṣṭha tiṣṭha vajra, bandha bandha, hana hana.

These mantras are called upahṛdaya, meaning the next to shortest ones. First, Hulul Hulul appears to mean: "Shout with joy!" identified as the prosperity upahṛdaya of Vajrakīla. Then Tiṣṭha Vajra ("Stand up, O Vajra"), the appeasing upahṛdaya of Vajrakīla, Bandha Bandha ("Tie up!"), the controlling upahṛdaya of Vajramudgara. Finally, Hana Hana ("Injure!"), the drastic upahṛdaya of Vajradaṇḍa. The mantra Tiṣṭha Tiṣṭha Vajra therefore goes with the previous illustration of appeasing magic by the mantra translated "Express and expand the sheaf (lûni)," suggesting that the sheaf or bundle of grain stalks held by the goddess (and preserved in the figure of the Virga' sign) serves to appease inimical forces.

5) More from the Trisamayārasādhana: The passage sometimes referred to as the '100 syllables' contains some imperative forms worth mentioning, i.e., Hari Hari ("Grasp!"); Smara Smara ("Remember!"); Sara Sara ("Flow on!"); Hasa Hasa ("Laugh!"); Traya Traya ("Rescue!"); Jvala Jvala ("Burn!"). These commands appear to agree with my introduction category from the Vairocanā-bhisambodhi-tantra as the kind directed to the minor deities called 'attendants', rather than to the Krodhas.

6) From a commentary on the Buddhist dhārapī of Vimaloṣṇīga: In a published article I pointed out that this commentary cited these 'charms' (vidyā), namely, kṣaṇa kṣaṇa | kṣiṇi kṣiṇi | kṣuṇu kṣuṇu, transcribed into Tibetan and the commentarial explanations were translated into Tibetan, as I rendered respectively, "Guard!", "Rescue!" and "Nourish!". Now, from my previous observations, in order to look up the Sanskrit as root one should disregard the vowel repetitions; and so the roots should be: kṣaṇ-, kṣiṇ-, and kṣuṇ-. However, as Sanskritists know, if the finals of these roots were the dental n, they would have to appear in this retroflex n anyway, due to the preceding retroflex s. Palsule, A Concordance of Sanskrit Dhātupāthas, mentions, p. 26, that "some authorities regard ṇ in kṣap, kṣip etc. as original, others it as a cerebralisation of a dental n." Kale, A Higher Sanskrit Grammar, in his chapter Dhātukosha,8* puts both kṣaṇ and kṣiṇ in the 8th verb class, each defined as himśāyāṃ, i.e. to hurt, to kill; and does not recognize a verb root kṣuṇ. Palsule recognizes two roots kṣap, and two roots kṣiṇ and kṣiṇ; and likewise has no entry for kṣuṇ or kṣuṇ. Hence, the imperative kṣuṇa kṣuṇa should be referred to the verb kṣuṇ, which Kale puts in the 7th verb class, with meaning sampraptāge, to strike against. Clearly, all three root definitions in present lexicons and dictionary are in imperative form in these Tantras is directed to the Krodha deities for fierce action against demons, whether internal or external. And all three of them are in dis.
agreement with the explanations I found and translated from the Tibetan, namely, imperatives directed to the deity attendants to help out sentient beings. The discrepancy can only be resolved if one allows in each case two verb roots. By the suggestion of Pal- sune's compendium, the two in the first instance are kṣap, two such roots; in the second instance are kṣap (the retroflex p) and kṣin (the dental m) and in the third instance kṣud and either a second root kṣud or a theoretical root kṣun which is presently not recognized in the lexicons. In support of this contention, notice in the Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, under kṣunna such meanings as "shattered" but also "exercised" (in body) and "multiplied". These latter meanings are rather consistent with the imperative I rendered from the Tibetan, "Nourish!". And notice this dictionary's entry kṣuda, with the meaning from a lexicon 'flour, meal'. While flour is the result of pulverization (in magic, the drastic type) it is in a state appropriate for nourishing (in magic, the prosperity type).

7) From the text Balimālikā²⁷ An unusual entry in the Tibetan Tanjur is this text Balimālikā which is completely transcribed into Tibetan script from which the original Sanskrit could be readily restored, and accompanied by interlinear Tibetan partially translating it. I originally consulted it in the Derge edition. Here I noticed the mantra Hana Hana (as above "Injure"), but the Tibetan rendition snun snun ("Prick!" or "Stab!") seems to preserve a Vedic meaning of han- "to hurl a dart upon". Therefore, Hana Hana in this case should be counted as Middle Indic, which is recognized to preserve some Vedic words or meanings rare or lost in Classical Sanskrit.

Conclusion

The foregoing examples could be multiplied without end by the abundance of mantras in the Buddhist Tantra texts. Still, the examples already presented enable me to make some conclusions. Notice that in a citation from the Trisamayarājasādhanā, I took Khaṇa as a Middle Indic imperative with equivalent Sanskrit of kṣapa. Later I cited the mantra kṣapa kṣapa from a commentary on the Vimalaṇāya dhāraṇi. But the verb root kṣap in the 8th class of verbs should have in Classical Sanskrit the form kṣapu for the second person single imperative, parasmaipada. The form kṣapa is the generalized imperative using the present stem like the first conjugational class. But kṣapa is not Middle Indic as was the form Khaṇa. Thus, these texts can present three kinds of verb forms. The text, when not giving a mantra, may be written in reasonably good Sanskrit, obeying the grammatical rules. Then in the case of a mantra, the imperatives may be Sanskrit in appearance, but not respecting the differentiated endings for the imperatives according to the ten classes of verbs. Or again, the imperative might be Middle Indic in form. The verb roots found in the Buddhist mantras also have the noteworthy feature of frequently being rare, perhaps the kind of root which modern Sanskrit dictionaries list only as lexical.

Editorial note: The editors deeply regret the following corrections: Page 38, line 1 "in the title the work" to "in the title of the work", and line 51 "others it" to "others regard it".

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NOTES

1. Delivered at the Sixth World Sanskrit Conference, University of Pennsylvania, October 19, 1984, afternoon.

2. This is volume MA, or Tome 16, in the collected works of Bu-ston; cf. A Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works on Buddhism (The Seminary of Indology, Tohoku University, 1953), where the contents of vol. MA are individually listed, pp. 31-65.

3. This information is from A. Wayman, MS. Study of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-tantra.


9. A. Wayman (n. 8, above), also pp. 561-2.


12. Transcription of part of the mantra within the Vajra-vidarṣāpatnā-sāmatātārāpi (basic Vajrapāṇi Tantra of the Kriyā-tantra) from the Derge Kanjur edition.

13. A. Wayman (n. 8, above), also pp. 561-2.

14. B. Bhattacharya, ed. (n. 5, above), also p. 2.

15. Cf. A. Wayman, "The Significance of Mantras, from the Veda Down to Buddhist Tantric Practice", reprinted in Buddhist Insight; Essays by Alex Wayman, ed. by George R. Elder (Delhi, 1984), p. 429.


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