

PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION ANNUAL MEETING AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL  
LITERATURE  
ASIAN AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES  
Saturday, May 14, 2022, 2:00 to 5:45 p.m.

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**Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās:  
Mantras, Mudrās, and Manuscripts"**  
2:00-2:45 p.m.  
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**Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās:  
Mantras, Mudrās, and Manuscripts**

■ This paper explores Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna's system of worshipping the Twenty-One Tārās based on evidence of newly recovered Tibetan manuscripts. No Indian who visited Tibet in the past one thousand years had a greater impact on the Buddhism there than Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054). Atiśa is renowned for his devotion to the goddess Tārā who appeared in his dreams and visions, and bestowed predictions upon him throughout his life. His charismatic devotion to the goddess was the impetus for the faithful worship of Tārā in Tibetan Buddhist culture. Atiśa's lineage tradition of Tārā is the most distinguished among the five teaching traditions of Tārā in Tibet. The entire ritual edifice of worshipping Tārā in Tibet is built upon Atiśa's major works on the goddess. Atiśa's praise of the "Twenty-One Tārās" is iconographically one of the most popular in Tibetan painting, yet the mantras in the ritual evocation of these forms of Tārā have yet to be discussed in publication. This paper presents the mantras for evoking Tārā in Atiśa's system based on recently recovered manuscripts. The paper provides an initial overview of recently recovered manuscripts of Atiśa's system of the twenty-one Tārās. The paper then focuses upon a brief text entitled "The Cycle of Prophecies granted by Tārā to Atiśa". Based on this recently published work, the mantras for evoking the twenty-one Tārās and their accompanying hand gestures (*mudrās*) are described and analyzed for the first time in relation to the iconographic system of Atiśa's Twenty-One Tārās.

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### Overview of Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- Manuscript text predates all extant artwork by 300 years
- Practice begins with Green Tārā (*ljang khu = śyāmā*)
- Atiśa is thinking with the Praises in Sanskrit
- Later Tibetan artistic tradition working with Tibetan language and Tibetan oral tradition
- Names of the Tārās and verses differ from later Tibetan commentaries

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### Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās: Color & Function

Gold	White	Reddish-Gold /Orange	Red	Black
(#3)	(#2)	(#5)	(#1) (#6) (#8)	(#7)
(#4)	(#9) (#15)	(#11)	(#10) (#13)	
(#12)	(#19) (#21)	(#17) (#20)	(#16) (#18)	(#14)
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 1. Noble Tārā, swift and heroic
- Name: Ārya Tārā
- Color: Red
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Subjugation

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 2. Venerable White Tārā
- Name: Sītātārā
- Color: White
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Pacifying

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 3. Venerable Tārā, color of gold
- Name: Kanakavarṇa Tārā
- Color: Gold
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Increasing

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās: Name Example

- 4. Venerable She who is completely victorious, Jewel on the Tathāgata's Crown
- Name: Uṣṇīṣavijaya Tārā
- Color: Gold
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Increasing

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 5. Venerable Tārā who utters hūṃ
- Name: Hūṃsvaranādinī Tārā
- Color: Orange
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Subjugating

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 6. Noble Tārā Victorious Over the Three Worlds
- Skt. Trailokya-Vijaya Tārā
- Color: Dark Red
- Mantra: **To be published**
- Function: Subjugating

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 7. Noble [Tārā] who conquers others
- Name: Vādiṣṭardaka Tārā
- Color: Black
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Subjugation

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 8. Noble [Tārā] who conquers Māras and enemies
- Name: Mārasūdana vaśittamadatārā
- Color: Dark red
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Subjugating

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 9. Noble [Tārā] whose mudrā displays the Three Jewels
- Name: Ārya Tārā Triratnamudrāṅka
- Color: White
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Protection

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 10. Venerable [Tārā] who brings Māras and hindrances under her power
- Name: Māralokavaśaṅkari
- Color: Red
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Subjugation

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 11. Noble [Tārā] who clears away poverty and misfortune
- Name: Ārya Tārā
- Color: Reddish gold
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Increasing

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 12. Venerable [Tārā] who bestows all auspiciousness
- Name: Sarvakalyānada [Tārā]
- Color: Gold
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Increasing

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 13. Venerable [Tārā] who blazes like fire
- Name:
- Color: Red
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Protecting

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 14. Venerable [Tārā] who is wrathfully frowning
- Name: Bhṛkuṭī Tārā
- Color: Black
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Subjugating

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 15. Venerable [Tārā], she of supreme peacefulness
- Name: Mahāśānti Tārā
- Color: White
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Pacifying

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 16. Venerable Tārā who arises from the Hūṃ of Awareness
- Name: Vidyāhūṃkāradīpita [Tārā]
- Color: Red
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Increasing

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 17. Venerable [Tārā] who causes three worlds to tremble
- Name: Bhūvanatrayacālinī [Tārā]
- Color: Reddish gold
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Subjugating

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 18. Venerable [Tārā] who pacifies poison and sickness
- Name: Aśeṣaviṣanāśani
- Color: Red
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Pacifying

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 19. Venerable [Tārā] who clears away all suffering
- Name: Duḥkhadahana Tārā
- Color: White
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Pacifying
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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās

- 20. Tārā who clears away infectious disease
- Name: Viṣamajvaranāśani
- Color: Orange
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Pacifying

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās: Name Example

- 21. Venerable [Tārā] who completes all activities
- Name: Paripuraṇa Tārā
- Color: White
- Mantra: To be published
- Function: Completing

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## Atiśa's System of Twenty-One Tārās, Concluding Points

- **Oldest known commentary and ritual text on Twenty-One Praises**
- **Transmission lineage from Atiśa, Kadampa, then Sakya masters**
- **Manuscript text predates all extant artwork by 300 years**
- **Practic starts with Green Tārā ( *ljang khu = śyāmā* )**
- **Atiśa closely follows the descriptions of Tārās in the Twenty-One Praises (unlike Sūryagupta)**
- **Later Tibetan artistic tradition working with Tibetan and Tibetan oral tradition**

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