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The Dhāraṇī of Vajrapāṇi, the Yakṣa Lord



Toh 953
Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, waṃ), folios 46.a–46.b

Translated by Catherine Dalton under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating
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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Vajrapāṇi, the Yakṣa Lord* is a short work that teaches a vidyāmantra of Vajrakumāra, which is said to repel and avert illness, as well as other malevolent actions perpetrated by a variety of spirits and enemies, and to grant protection to the individual who recites or wears it.

ac.

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ac.1 This text was translated by Catherine Dalton and edited by members of the 84000 editorial team.

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Vajrapāṇi, the Yakṣa Lord* is a short scripture that teaches a vidyāmantra of Vajrakumāra. The mantra is given to repel and avert illness, preempt malevolent actions perpetrated by a variety of spirits and enemies, and grant protection to the individual who recites or wears it. While the title of the text identifies the work as a dhāraṇī of Vajrapāṇi, the contents are entirely related to a protective vidyāmantra of Vajrakumāra (“The Youthful Vajra”), and aside from the homage at the beginning there is no further mention of Vajrapāṇi in the text itself.¹

i.2 Following the opening homage, the text begins with a brief statement announcing that the teaching of the vidyāmantra will be given by “the vajra holder.” It then proceeds directly to the mantra, with no further narrative content. The mantra consists of a mixture of sentences in Tibetan, such as requests for protection and statements about the effectiveness of the mantra, interspersed with Sanskrit words and syllables. The malevolent beings that this vidyāmantra offers protection from include grahas, spirits that cause illness, and malevolent female spirits.²

i.3 The text does not appear to be extant in Sanskrit, nor does it exist in Chinese. The Tibetan text also lacks a translator’s colophon, and it does not appear in either of the surviving imperial catalogs, nor among the manuscripts discovered at Dunhuang. Little therefore can be surmised about its textual history in Tibet up until its inclusion in the Kangyur.³

i.4 It is included in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section of the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa lineage Kangyurs that have a separate Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section, and in the equivalent part of the Tantra section in those that do not label it as such,⁴ but is not included in any Thempangma lineage Kangyurs.

i.5 Notably, the dhāraṇī is one of only twelve works in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section that is not duplicated in other sections of the Kangyur. It appears that these twelve texts found their way into the Tshalpa lineage

Kangyurs specifically because of their inclusion in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs, which was likely compiled on the basis of earlier collections of dhāraṇīs and associated ritual texts.⁵ These collections, known in Sanskrit as *dhāraṇīsamgraha*, circulated throughout South Asia and Tibet—including at Dunhuang—as extracanonical dhāraṇī collections.⁶

i.6 The present English translation of *The Dhāraṇī of Vajrapāṇi, the Yakṣa Lord* was made from the Tibetan text as found in the Degé Kangyur, with reference to the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*). The Sanskrit words and syllables of the mantra are rendered in the translation exactly as they appear in the Degé recension of the work, while the Tibetan sentences that appear interspersed with them have been translated into English.

The Dhāraṇī of Vajrapāṇi, the Yakṣa Lord

1.

The Translation

[F.46.a]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels.

Homage to Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Yakṣas.

At that point, the vidyāmantra of Vajrakumāra was taught. The vajra holder taught this vidyāmantra that brings accomplishment, protects against any form of untimely death, tames all grahas, protects at all times, and averts.

1.2

*tadyathā vajre vajre sara sara amoghavajre vajrakalakala ācitavajreni rakṣa rakṣara
namaḥ sarvagrahosupatravebhyeḥ kata kata hana hana sarva duṣṭanān
karamanitanāya prasara prasara damadara śama śama ghuma ghuma ghume ghume
vajra maladari cchinda cchinda cakre hrīdaya niramite nīlavasene somakasāya
vicindra sananti sakalarastri kriśanpaṃgali vikritravetali rakṣa rakṣa man sarvata
sarvata bhyayebhyaḥ sarvapalāya bhyisasasya sarvādatra rakṣa kuru kuru
varivaparigrāmalaṇaṃ śānting svasyayanaṃ danarapariharaṃ śastathariharaṃ
viśatuśanan sarva amṛtaniparanan tadyathā vajre vajre mahāvajre vajre māladhari
vajranidani*

1.3

Protect me and all sentient beings! Protect us! Bring an end to all malevolent ones! *hada ha ha hada*. To all grahas! *hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ phaṭ phaṭ dhaka dhaka kada ugkarupini paca paca*. Drive away all malevolent female spirits! Avert them! *apé pé* Vajrakumāra, Vajrakumāra, expeller,⁷ destroyer of all epidemics, conqueror of all grahas! *bhaṃja bhaṃja tama tama*. Whoever slanders me. *tadyathā sara sara daraya daraya*. Those who transgress this averting vidyāmantra of Vajrakumāra, which impedes all grahas, [F.46.b] blazing Vajrakumāra will split their head into seven pieces! *sphoṭaya sphoṭaya grasa cchinda cchinda*.

- 1.4 Should anyone else use a vidyāmantra on me, or curse me, or make someone else do so, it will be returned upon their body, and they will be the ones who burn! *gagate acale ripe ripe prahara stambhani prahara saṅkamani*. Protect my lifeforce! Protect it! Whoever hinders me will be brought to suffer in all the hells by means of the words of this vidyāmantra.⁸ *sara sara sureṇaḍe sureṇaḍe*. Female vajra messengers, restrain all opposing factions, restrain them! *tadyathā mohani jambhani stambhani*. If anyone transgresses this vidyāmantra that banishes all illness, it will become a poisonous snake.
- 1.5 Whoever wears this vidyāmantra on their body, or recites it, will never be poisoned. Not even a single malevolent graha will transgress it. Not even a malevolent female spirit will transgress it. Merely by seeing it, they will be brought under control. All disputes and arguments will be won. The power of this vidyāmantra will liberate all! *amṛte saṁbhava svāhā*. Protect me! Protect me! Whether I am amidst all my enemies, or facing harm, or at a cemetery, or in a prison—may I never transgress this queen of vidyāmantras that banishes all dangers!
- 1.6 When even the gods, together with worldly beings, the armies of māras, and Brahmā do not transgress this, what need even to speak of the evil spirits and grahas!
- 1.7 *This completes “The Dhāraṇī of Vajrapāṇi, the Yakṣa Lord.”*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 It is of course possible that Vajrakumāra is employed in this text as an epithet of Vajrapāṇi, but this is not, to our knowledge, a common epithet. *The Tantra of the Empowerment of Vajrapāṇi* (*'phags pa lag na rdo rje dbang bskur ba'i rgyud chen po*, Toh 496) does contain a mantra for Vajrakumāra, who in that tantra is a member of Vajrapāṇi's retinue, but that mantra does not resemble the one in the present text. Moreover, in later Tibetan literature Vajrakumāra is commonly used as an epithet of Vajrakīlaya.
- n.2 Tib. *phra men ma*. The term is translated in this text as "malevolent female spirits." When encountered in a malevolent role, the Sanskrit term *ḍākiṇī* was sometimes translated into Tibetan with the term *phra men ma*, rather than the more familiar term *mkha' 'gro ma* that commonly refers to the wisdom *ḍākinīs* found in the higher tantras. See the glossary entry for further details.
- n.3 The absence of a Sanskrit title at the beginning of the text and the lack of a translator's colophon at the end suggest the possibility that this work may have been compiled in Tibet. This conjecture seems further supported by the mantra's mixture of Tibetan and Sanskrit words, which is a common feature of indigenous Tibetan liturgical texts, especially those related to protection and protective deities.
- n.4 An explicitly named Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section is found in the Degé and Urga Kangyurs as well as in the peripheral Kangyurs of the Tshalpa lineage (Dodedrak, Phajoding, and Ragya). In contrast, the Berlin, Choné, Lithang, and Peking Qianlong Kangyurs include the same collection of dhāraṇīs in a separate part of their Tantra sections that has no distinct label. With or without the label, these collections of dhāraṇīs contain many duplicates of texts also found in the General Sūtra or Tantra sections. Therefore, in the latter group of Kangyurs many dhāraṇī texts appear twice in different parts of the Tantra section.

- n.5 The opening lines of the table of contents (*dkar chag*) of an independent dhāraṇī collection printed in Beijing in 1731, found in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest and transcribed by Orosz, identify the source of all such dhāraṇī collections as the extracanonical collection edited by Tāranātha (Orosz 2010, pp. 67 and 100). This mention is also noted by Hidas 2021, p. 7, n. 56.
- n.6 See J. Dalton 2016, and J. Dalton and S. van Schaik 2006 on the *dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* collections preserved at Dunhuang, which, like the canonical collection, contain praises and prayers as well as dhāraṇīs. See Hidas 2021 for the catalogs of eighteen *dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* collections surviving in Sanskrit.
- n.7 *'then pa*. The use of this word is a bit odd, but we take it to refer to Vajrakumāra as one who expels or draws out negative forces, or perhaps illnesses, from someone who is afflicted.
- n.8 Translation tentative. Here we read *sdig pa* as *sdig yul* as used in the older “Chinese” vocabulary described by Stein in *Tibetica Antiqua*, as a translation of *naraka*, “hell” (Stein 2010, p. 21). We also read *gdung bar byed pa'i rig sngags* as *gdung bar byed pa rig sngags*.

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 dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *dhāraṇī* has the sense of something that “holds” or “retains,” and so it can refer to the special capacity of practitioners to memorize and recall detailed teachings. It can also refer to a verbal expression of the teachings—an incantation, spell, or mnemonic formula that distills and “holds” essential points of the Dharma and is used by practitioners to attain mundane and supramundane goals. The same term is also used to denote texts that contain such formulas.

g.2 graha

gdon

གདོན།

graha ^{AD}

A type of malevolent spirit that is understood to cause illness and harm by a sort of possession, through “grasping” or “taking hold of” the person that the spirit afflicts.

g.3 malevolent female spirits

phra men ma

ཕ་མེན་མ།

ḍākinī ^{AD}

The term *phra men ma* is one of the two translations of the word *ḍākinī* found in canonical works. In this case—as in many of the cases where *phra men ma* rather than the other Tibetan translation of *ḍākinī*, *mkha' 'gro ma*, is employed—it refers to a class of malevolent female spirits. The higher tantras of the Nyingma tradition feature *phra men (ma)* as a class of protective deities on the periphery of the maṇḍala of wrathful deities in the Shitro (*zhi khro*) maṇḍala of peaceful and wrathful deities. They have female bodies, animal heads, and often appear as a set of eight.

g.4 Three Jewels

dkon mchog gsum

དཀོན་མཚོག་གསུམ།

triratna ^{AD}

The Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—the three objects of Buddhist refuge. In the Tibetan rendering, “the three rare and supreme ones.”

g.5 Vajrakumāra

rdo rje gzhon nu

རྡོ་རྗེ་གཙོན་ལུ།

vajrakumāra ^{AD}

“The Youthful Vajra.” It is unclear who the referent of this name is in this text, but given the title of the work, it could perhaps be understood as an epithet of Vajrapāṇi, albeit not a common one. Vajrakumāra is also, at least in later Tibetan literature, quite commonly an epithet of Vajrakīlaya.

g.6 Vajrapāṇi

phyag na rdo rje

ཕྱག་ནོར་རྗེ།

vajrapāṇi ^{AD}

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.7 vidyāmantra

riḡs sngags

རིགས་སྒྲགས།

vidyāmantra ^{AD}

A type of mantra.

g.8 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 jurisdiction 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.

