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The Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava

Vajrabhairavadhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་རྗེ་འཇིགས་བྱེད་ཀྱི་གཟུངས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ།

'phags pa rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi gzungs zhes bya ba

The Noble Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava

Āryavajrabhairavadhāraṇīnāma

· Toh 605 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 91 (rgyud, ba), folios 36.a–37.a

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

· Amoghavajra · Kyo Öjung ·



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co.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ti. Title
- im. Imprint
- co. Contents
- s. Summary
- ac. Acknowledgements
- i. Introduction
- tr. The Translation
 - 1. Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava
- c. Colophon
- ab. Abbreviations
- n. Notes
- b. Bibliography
- g. Glossary

SUMMARY

s.

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava* is a short text presenting both a series of “vajra statements” (Tib. *rdo rje tshig*), which it calls the “essence of all vidyā and mantra,” and a dhāraṇī, followed by instructions for the dhāraṇī's associated rites. These include rites for countering and repelling enemies, subjugating nāgas and preventing hail, curing illness, and even protecting liquor from spoilage.

ac.

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ac.1 Translated and introduced by David Mellins and Kaia Fischer under the auspices of the Tibetan Classics Translators Guild of New York.

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. Nathaniel Rich edited the translation and the introduction, and Laura Goetz copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava is a short text presenting a series of “vajra statements” followed by a dhāraṇī, both in transliterated Sanskrit, and instructions for the rites associated with the dhāraṇī. The series of vajra statements is generalized as being “for the accomplishment of all aims,” and the dhāraṇī targets a range of specialized ritual applications, from repelling enemy armies to protecting liquor from spoilage. Vajrabhairava’s name appears in the text’s title, in the dhāraṇī itself, and in the colophon, where he is identified as the speaker of the dhāraṇī. The colophon also states that this dhāraṇī is “the supreme dhāraṇī endowed with the seven protective acts” and “the most extraordinary yoga.”

i.2

A Sanskrit version of the text is to our knowledge no longer extant, and there are no associated commentaries in the Tengyur. The first part of the dhāraṇī appears as a portion of a larger mantra in the tantra *Orderly Arrangement of the Three Commitments (Trisamayavyūha, Toh 502)*.

i.3

The Phangthangma imperial catalog lists a text in twenty-two ślokas called *The Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava*, while the Denkarma contains a text, likewise in twenty-two ślokas, called *The Essence Mantra of Vajrabhairava*.¹ These different entries probably refer to the same text, but it is uncertain whether they refer to the text presented in translation here. If they are the same, the two texts mentioned in the royal catalogs would have to be an earlier version, since the colophon to *The Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava*, which we have translated here, mentions that the Tibetan translation was produced by the eleventh-century Indian translator and lineage holder Amoghavajra and the Tibetan monk Kyo Öjung.² Amoghavajra was instrumental in the introduction of tantric practices such as those associated with Vajrabhairava (Yamāntaka). Kyo Öjung is likely the eleventh-century Tibetan Kyo Lotsawa, who was an important figure in the transmission of those practices and whose lineage has been transmitted within the Sakya school down to the present day.³

i.4 This English translation is based on the Degé Kangyur version of the text found in the Tantra section (Toh 605), in consultation with the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace version. In addition, we have compared Toh 605 to Toh 956, its reiteration within the Dhāraṇī section of the Degé Kangyur.

**The Noble
Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava**

1.

The Translation

[F.36.a]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

The victors and their heirs are stainless and remove all stain. They are infinite, unbounded, beneficent, and vast. May they all kindly⁴ and constantly grant me the most supreme and illimitable boon.⁵

These are my vajra statements.

1.2 *arara asama samatā anantadharmmatre⁶ khaṇā khaṇā mahāvire⁷ calesa mama āsahā⁸
mahābale kaṇa kaṇa mahābala āgrihe⁹ ha ha vajrā¹⁰ vajrahāye¹¹ dhara dhara hūṃ
hūṃ maṇḍala samapara-akravikrame kuru kuru turu turu sarvathā¹² sarva hi jvala
jvala akriṇi phaṭ svāhā¹³*

1.3 When this essence of all vidyās and mantras has been recited a thousand times in the presence of the tathāgatas, all vidyās and mantras will have been recited a hundred thousand times.

1.4 It accomplishes all other ritual actions unflinchingly and without obstacle, for this, among all the vidyās, mantras, heart mantras, and dhāraṇīs originating from *The Ritual of the Three Commitments*,¹⁴ is the one that accomplishes all ritual actions.

1.5 The violent rite is like a cast vajra
That cannot be destroyed by the Thirty-Three gods,
The nāgas, gods, or rākṣasas—

1.6 Due to its wrath even Śakra himself,
Who is worshiped by the very gods, trembles.
No bhūta would disparage it.
It is the most excellent of protections.

1.7 In the world with its gods,

There is no teacher like the Buddha—

By these words of truth may all beings be protected!

1.8 *tadyathā | om vajraprākāra vajraprākāra vajradamṣṭā¹⁵ bhayābhahā curu curu paricumbike culutele namo ratnatrayāya namo vajrabhairavasya [F.36.b] mahāgaṇapatisya vajraśakti parśupāśahastāya vajrakanka vajravaidūrya alaṅkṛtaśarīrāya vajrapāṇir anupālāya tadyathā bhuru bhuru ānayā ānayā mahāgaṇapati laghu laghu ehi ehi ākrama ākrama śarīraṃ gṛhītam graṇhītam¹⁶ damṣṭāmā¹⁷ damṣṭrīmāvā¹⁸ attra viśatu śarīraṃ kiñ cirāyasi¹⁹ vidhuna vadhana paṭa paṭa kampa kampa raṅga raṅga moda moda dhama dhama vijṛmabā vijṛmabā²⁰ pūra pūra ghūrṇṇa ghūrṇṇa āviśa āviśa²¹ śīghraṃ śīghraṃ mahāvajrabhairabhe²² gaṇapatir ājñāvayati svāhā²³*

1.9 As for the rite, to paralyze all one's enemies and counter all kākḥordas, after a square maṇḍala has been prepared on cow dung and a weapon incanted seven times in a wrathful state of mind, all kākḥordas will be disrupted the moment the weapon is stabbed into the ground.

1.10 When, wishing to repel an enemy army, one incants a rod seven times and hurls it in the army's direction, all the enemy soldiers will fall into a stupor.

1.11 If one wishes to subjugate nāgas, one should wrathfully incant a vajra seven times and thrust it at them. This will bring the nāgas under one's control.

1.12 When, wishing to repel hail, one spins a vajra in utter absence of forcefulness while reciting the words at low pitch and in utter secrecy, the nāgas will refrain from sending down hail.

1.13 When, wishing to preserve liquor, one incants the ingredients and mustard seeds seven times, they will endure.

1.14 When, wishing to allay an illness, one incants the medicines appropriate to the illness seven times mixed in water and then drinks or applies it, one will be freed from illness.

1.15 When, wishing to perform any rite, one recites the dhāraṇī²⁴ seven times, one's intention will be accomplished.

1.16 *This completes "The Noble Dhāraṇī of Vajrabhairava," which repels malevolence.*

1.17 Though there are many dhāraṇīs that were spoken by the noble ones,
[F.37.a]

This dhāraṇī was spoken directly by Vajrabhairava.

It is the supreme dhāraṇī endowed with the seven protective acts,²⁵

The holiest dhāraṇī that is the most extraordinary yoga.

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated in the presence of the great lord of yogins Amoghavajra and given²⁶ to the Tibetan monk Kyo Öjung.

ab.

ABBREVIATIONS

C Choné Kangyur

H Lhasa (Zhol) Kangyur

J Lithang Kangyur

K Kangxi Kangyur

N Narthang Kangyur

U Urga Kangyur

Y Yongle Kangyur

n.

NOTES

- n.1 Denkarma, folio 303.a; see also Hermann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 227–28.
Phangthangma 2003, p. 28.
- n.2 The exact wording of the colophon, in which the text is said to have been translated “in the presence” (*zhal snga nas*) of Amoghavajra, appears to indicate the collaboration of the Indian master and his Tibetan disciple in producing the present Tibetan translation. For his part, Butön Rinchen Drup (1290–1364) identifies Amoghavajra as the translator in his *History*, and in his *Catalog of the Tantras* (*rgyud ’bum gyi dkar chag*) he lists both Amoghavajra and Kyo Öjung as the translators. See Hermann-Pfandt 2008, p. 227.
- n.3 See, for example, Dhongthog Rinpoche and van Schaik 2016, p. 175.
- n.4 Tib. *mthun par*.
- n.5 It may seem odd that Vajrabhairava would beseech the buddhas “and their heirs” for the supreme boon. Perhaps we are meant to read this line as an homage that is not part of the discourse proper spoken by Vajrabhairava, which would begin with the line that follows.
- n.6 K, Y, N *anantadharmatre*; H *anantadharmetre*; J, C *anantadharmma*.
- n.7 Y and K add *mahāvāra*.
- n.8 K, Y *asahā*; H: *āsaha*.
- n.9 K, Y, N, H *aggrihe*; C, J *akrihe*.
- n.10 K *ha ha vajrai*; H, N *ha ha vajra*.
- n.11 K, Y *vajrāhāye*.
- n.12 H, N *sarvaṃthā*.

- n.13 The above dhāraṇī appears as a portion of a larger mantra (*sngags*) in *Orderly Arrangement of the Three Commitments* (Toh 502) at folio 210.a.
- n.14 Tib. *dam tshig gsum pa'i cho ga*, apparently a reference to or alternative title for Toh 502, *Orderly Arrangement of the Three Commitments*. See [n.13](#).
- n.15 K, Y *damṣṭram*; C, U *damṣṭā*; H, N *damṣṭam*. Note that the Comparative Edition itself appears to read *damṣṭwā*.
- n.16 K and Y omit this. C, J *grhītam*; H, N, U *grihītam*.
- n.17 Here the Comparative Edition appears to read *damṣṭrāmā*.
- n.18 K, Y *damṣṭramā damṣṭra*; C *damṣṭāmā damṣṭrī*; U *damṣṭamā damṣṭri*; H, N *damṣṭama damṣṭa*.
- n.19 Y *adtra viśatu śariraṃ kin cirāyasi*; U *attā viśatu śarīraṃ kiñ cirāyasi*; J *attra viśatu riraṃ kiñ carāyasi*; C *attra viśatu riraṃ kiñ carāyasi*; K *attra viśatu śariraṃ kin cirāyasi*.
- n.20 K, Y *vijrimbā vijrimbā*; C, J *vijrima vijrima*; U *vijraṃma vijraṃma*; H *vajrimbā vajrimbā*. More than likely, *vijrmbha vijrmbha* (“swell, swell”) is consistent with the subsequent imperative pair *pūra pūra* (“fill, fill”).
- n.21 K, Y *ghurṇa ghurṇa aviśa aviśa*; U *ghārṇṇa ghūrṇṇa āviśa āviśa*; H *gurna gurna aviśa aviśa*.
- n.22 H reads *mahāvajrabhairave*, which is vocative. C, J, K, Y, and Toh 956 have *mahāvajrabhairavo*, which is nominative. The present text’s *mahāvajrabhairabhe* is probably a rendering of the Sanskrit *mahāvajrabhairave*.
- n.23 K, Y *gaṇapatir adnyavayati svāhā*; C, J *gaṇapatir ajñāvayati svāhā*; H *gaṇapatir ajñāvayati svāhā*.
- n.24 The Tibetan does not explicitly say “the dhāraṇī” here, but this has been inserted for the sake of clarity.
- n.25 Tib. *bsrung bya'i las bdun*. This term appears to be unique to the present text. It may therefore be assumed to refer to the ritual uses listed above, enumerated as (1) the paralysis of one’s enemies, (2) the countering of sorcery, (3) the repulsion of enemy armies, (4) the subjugation of nāgas, (5) the repulsion of hail, (6) the preservation of liquor, and (7) the allaying of illness, with the subsequent performance of any (other) activity treated separately. Alternatively, one might treat the first two above as they appear in the text, as a single item, in which case they could be enumerated as (1) the paralysis of one’s enemies and the countering of sorcery, (2) the repulsion of enemy

armies, (3) the subjugation of nāgas, (4) the repulsion of hail, (5) the preservation of liquor, (6) the allaying of illness, and (7) the performance of any other such activities.

n.26 Tib. *gnang*.

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 Amoghavajra

don yod rdo rje

དོན་ཡོད་ར་རྩེ།

amoghavajra

An important ca. eleventh-century Indian tantric master and translator. He is also known as Vajrāsana the younger, and is said to have been the abbot of Vajrāsana Monastery in what is now Bodh Gaya. This Amoghavajra should not be confused with the eighth-century translator of the same name, who is renowned for his Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist esoteric works.

g.2 bhūta

'byung po

འབྱུང་པོ།

bhūta

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

This term in its broadest sense can refer to any being, whether human, animal, or nonhuman. However, it is often used to refer to a specific class of nonhuman beings, especially when bhūtas are mentioned alongside rākṣasas, piśācas, or pretas. In common with these other kinds of nonhumans, bhūtas are usually depicted with unattractive and misshapen bodies. Like several other classes of nonhuman beings, bhūtas take spontaneous birth. As their leader is traditionally regarded to be Rudra-Śiva (also known by the name Bhūta), with whom they haunt dangerous and wild places, bhūtas are especially prominent in Śaivism, where large sections of certain tantras concentrate on them.

g.3 Butön Rinchen Drup

bu ston rin chen grub

བུ་སྟོན་རིན་ཆེན་གུབ།

—

Butön Rinchen Drup (*bu ston rin chen grub*, 1290–1364), a great scholar at the monastery of Zhalu (*zha lu*) whose compiling of lists of translated works contributed to the emergence of the Kangyur and Tengyur collections.

g.4 dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

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.5 kākhorta

byad stems

བྱད་སྐྱེས་ས།

kākhorta

A class of nonhuman being typically associated with violent sorcery rites.

g.6 Kyo Öjung

skyo 'od 'byung

སྐྱོ་འོད་འབྱུང་།

—

The eleventh century Tibetan translator and adept involved in the translation of the present text and the transmission of Vajrabhairava/Yamāntaka lineages in Tibet.

g.7 mantra

sngags

སྐྱེས་ས།

mantra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A formula of words or syllables that are recited aloud or mentally in order to bring about a magical or soteriological effect or result. The term has been etymologized to mean “that which protects (*trā*) the mind (*man*)”.

g.8 nāga

klu

སྐྱེས་ས།

nāga

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments, where they guard wealth and sometimes also teachings. Nāgas are associated with serpents and have a snakelike appearance. In Buddhist art and in written accounts, they are regularly portrayed as half human and half snake, and they are also said to have the ability to change into human form.

Some nāgas are Dharma protectors, but they can also bring retribution if they are disturbed. They may likewise fight one another, wage war, and destroy the lands of others by causing lightning, hail, and flooding.

g.9 rākṣasa

srin

སྲིན།

rākṣasa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings that are often, but certainly not always, considered demonic in the Buddhist tradition. They are often depicted as flesh-eating monsters who haunt frightening places and are ugly and evil-natured with a yearning for human flesh, and who additionally have miraculous powers, such as being able to change their appearance.

g.10 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱུ་བྱིན།

śakra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The lord of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*trāyastriṃśā*). Alternatively known as Indra, the deity that is called “lord of the gods” dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation *brgya byin* (meaning “one hundred sacrifices”) is based on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śata-kratu*, one who has performed a hundred sacrifices. Each world with a central Sumeru has a Śakra. Also known by other names such as Kauśika, Devendra, and Śacipati.

g.11 tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A frequently used synonym for *buddha*. According to different explanations, it can be read as *tathā-gata*, literally meaning “one who has thus gone,” or as *tathā-āgata*, “one who has thus come.” *Gata*, though literally meaning “gone,” is a past passive participle used to describe a state or condition of existence. *Tatha(tā)*, often rendered as “suchness” or “thusness,” is the quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in

conceptual, dualistic terms. Therefore, this epithet is interpreted in different ways, but in general it implies one who has departed in the wake of the buddhas of the past, or one who has manifested the supreme awakening dependent on the reality that does not abide in the two extremes of existence and quiescence. It is also often used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.12 Thirty-Three gods

sum cu gsum lha

སུམ་ཅུ་གསུམ་ལྷ།

trāyastriṃśa

A class of gods in the desire realm named for Śakra (also known as Indra) and thirty-two other gods, who collectively dwell in what is called the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

g.13 vajra

rdo rje

རྡོ་རྗེ།

—

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

This term generally indicates indestructibility and stability. In the sūtras, *vajra* most often refers to the hardest possible physical substance, said to have divine origins. In some scriptures, it is also the name of the all-powerful weapon of Indra, which in turn is crafted from vajra material. In the tantras, the vajra is sometimes a scepter-like ritual implement, but the term can also take on other esoteric meanings.

g.14 vajra statement

rdo rje'i tshig

རྡོ་རྗེའི་ཚིག།

vajrapada

g.15 Vajrabhairava

rdo rje 'jigs byed

རྡོ་རྗེ་འཇིགས་བྱེད།

vajrabhairava

Generally considered a wrathful form of Mañjuśrī.

g.16 victor

rgyal ba

རྒྱལ་བ།

jina

An epithet for a buddha.

g.17 *vidyā*

rig pa

རིག་པ།

vidyā

This term may, according to context, refer to exoteric or esoteric knowledge, a goddess, her associated dhāraṇī, or some combination of these.