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The Mahākāla Dhāraṇī: A Cure for All Diseases and Illnesses

Translated into Tibetan by
Prajñāvarman · Bande Yeshé Dé

འཕགས་པ་ནག་པོ་ཚེན་པོའི་གཟུངས་རིམས་ནད་གསལ་ཅད་ལས་ཐར་བར་བྱེད་པ།

'phags pa nag po chen po'i gzungs rims nad thams cad las thar bar byed pa

The Noble Mahākāla Dhāraṇī: A Cure for All Diseases and Illnesses



Toh 669
Degé Kangyur, vol. 91 (rgyud 'bum, ba), folio 202.a

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co.

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SUMMARY

s.1 *The Mahākāla Dhāraṇī: A Cure for All Diseases and Illnesses* is a short work that contains a Mahākāla dhāraṇī recitation practice for removing illness from various parts of the body. The dhāraṇī progresses through a list of body parts, invoking Mahākāla to free each region from illness and disease.

ac.

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- ac.1 Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the supervision of Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche. The translation was produced by Adam Krug and then checked against the Tibetan and edited by Andreas Doctor.
- ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *The Mahākāla Dhāraṇī: A Cure for All Diseases and Illnesses* is a short work that contains a Mahākāla dhāraṇī recitation practice for removing illness from various parts of the body. The dhāraṇī progresses through a list of body parts, invoking Mahākāla to free each region from illness and disease.

i.2 There is no known Sanskrit version of this text, nor does it appear as an independent work in the Chinese canon. It is, however, found in the early ninth-century Denkarma royal Tibetan catalog of translated works.¹ The translators' colophon tells us that it was translated by the Indian preceptor Prajñāvarman and the Tibetan translator Yeshé Dé, both of whom were active in the late eighth century.

i.3 This English translation is based on the recensions found in the Tantra Collection (Toh 669) and the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (Toh 1086) in the Degé Kangyur, in consultation with the Comparative Edition of the Kangyur (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur.

**The Noble Mahākāla Dhāraṇī:
A Cure for All Diseases and Illnesses**

1.

The Translation

[F.202.a]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

I will recite the dhāraṇī² of Mahākāla, the great black being with sharp yellow fangs, the great fanged one who cures all diseases and illnesses. Wherever I direct my gaze, may I be free of disease and illness.³

1.2 *tadyathā | hana hana rājadhūtena daha daha rājadhūtena paca paca rājadhūtena
bahuśrave bahuparipāri bahupariśodhane imaṃ jāracaṇḍalaṃ hana hana*

1.3 *oṃ suṃbha nisum̐bha śira muñca cakṣu muñca śrotra muñca ghrāṇa muñca jihvā
muñca kaṇṭha muñca grīva muñca pṛṣṭha muñca⁴ kaṭikā muñca kukṣa muñca ūru
muñca jānu⁵ muñca hasta muñca pādau muñca aṅguli muñca aṅgapratyaṅga
muñca⁶ apasara anyasmiñca gaccha⁷ jvara mukto 'si me⁸ svāhā*

1.4 *oṃ jvala mā aṅguli hūṃ sarvajvarānan⁹ phaṭ |*

1.5 *This concludes “The Noble Mahākāla Dhāraṇī: A Cure for All Diseases and Illnesses.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 This text was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptor
Prajñāvarman and the great editor-translator Bande Yeshé Dé.

ab.

ABBREVIATIONS

- C Choné (*co ne*)
- D Degé (*sde dge bka' 'gyur*)
- H Lhasa (*lha sa/zhol*)
- J Lithang (*li thang*)
- K Kangxi (*kang shi*)
- N Narthang (*snar thang*)
- S Stok Palace (*stog pho 'brang*)
- U Urga (*phyi sog khu re*)
- Y Yongle (*g.yong lo*)

n.

NOTES

- n.1 Denkarma, 303.b.3. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 248–49, no. 435.
- n.2 Toh 669 and Toh 1086: *brjod par bya ste. S: brjod par bya ba ste*. The phrase “the dhāraṇī of” has been added to the English translation for the sake of clarity.
- n.3 D and S: *phyogs gang dang gang du bltas pa der bdag la rims nad med par gyur cig*. The text does not state this in any explicit way here, but the actual content of the dhāraṇī that follows indicates that the “place” or “location” where one might direct one’s gaze refers to any location on the body.
- n.4 This translation follows Toh 1086 and S: *priSh+Tha muny+tsa*. Toh 669: *preSh+Tha muny+tsa*. The Tibetan transliteration *prīṣṭha* is amended to reflect the correct Sanskrit vowel for the term *prīṣṭha*.
- n.5 Toh 669, Toh 1086, and S read *dza nau muny+tsa*. This translation amends the Tibetan transliteration *dza nau* to the proper spelling of the Sanskrit term for the “knee,” or *jānu*. The declension of *jānu* has been dropped in line with the prevailing pattern established in the dhāraṇī.
- n.6 Following Toh 1086, K, N, and H: *aM ga pra tyaM ga muny+tsa*. Toh 669 and S: *oM ga pra tyaM ga muny+tsa*.
- n.7 Toh 669: *a pa sa ra a n+ya sl muny+tsa/ gats+tshaH*. Toh 1086: *a ba sa ra/ a n+ya si maM gats+tsha*. S: *a ba sa ra/ ar+ya swl muny+tsa/ gats+tshaH*. This transliteration corrects the corruption in the Tibetan transliteration to the Sanskrit *apasara anyasmiṅca gaccha*, which translates “depart (*apasara*) and go elsewhere (*anyasmiṅca gaccha*).” We are grateful for Péter-Dániel Szántó for this suggested correction to the Tibetan transliteration of the Sanskrit.
- n.8 Toh 669 and Toh 1086: *dzwa ra mu to si bdag la. S: dzwa ra mu to si/ bdag la*. This translation amends the Tibetan transliteration of this phrase, where the

reading *jvara mutosi bdag la* appears to be a corruption of the Sanskrit *jvara mukto 'si me*, which translates “illness, you are released by me.” The Tibetan translation *bdag la* likely reflects a misinterpretation of the shortened form of the Sanskrit genitive singular first-person pronoun (Skt. *me*) as the shortened form of the dative singular first-person pronoun (Skt. *me*). In this case, the genitive form functions as an instrumental pronoun.

n.9 This transliteration follows Toh 669, Toh 1086: *sarba dzwa rA nan phaT*. S: *sarba dzwA ra nan phaT*. The Tibetan transliteration of this phrase is likely a corruption of the Sanskrit *sarvajvarān hana phaṭ*, but the reading in the Tibetan witnesses has been retained here to reflect the transmission of Mahākāla’s *dharaṇī* in this particular textual tradition.

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 Bande Yeshé Dé

ban+de ye shes sde

བན་པེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

—

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Yeshé Dé (late eighth to early ninth century) was the most prolific translator of sūtras into Tibetan. Altogether he is credited with the translation of more than one hundred sixty sūtra translations and more than one hundred additional translations, mostly on tantric topics. In spite of Yeshé Dé's great importance for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet during the imperial era, only a few biographical details about this figure are known. Later sources describe him as a student of the Indian teacher Padmasambhava, and he is also credited with teaching both sūtra and tantra widely to students of his own. He was also known as Nanam Yeshé Dé, from the Nanam (*sna nam*) clan.

g.2 Mahākāla

nag po chen po · mgon po nag po

ནག་པོ་ཆེན་པོ། · མགོན་པོ་ནག་པོ།

mahākāla

Mahākāla is a wrathful Buddhist protector deity. In Tibetan, the name Mahākāla was mostly translated literally with *nag po chen po* ("Great Black One") but on occasion it was rendered *mgon po nag po* ("Black Lord"). In Toh 440, for which the Sanskrit is extant, we have an attested example of this. Hence we have rendered both Tibetan terms in this text as Mahākāla. Outside the Buddhist tradition, Mahākāla is also a name for a wrathful form of Śiva.

g.3 Prajñāvarman

pradz+nyA barma

པར་ཇ་ཡེ་མཚོ།

**prajñāvarman^{RP}*

A Bengali paṇḍita resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Arriving in Tibet at the invitation of the Tibetan king, he assisted in the translation of numerous canonical scriptures. He is also the author of a few philosophical commentaries contained in the Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*).

