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## Recollecting the Name of Moonlight

*zla ba'i 'od kyi mtshan rjes su dran pa*

· Toh 868 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 100 (gzungs, e), folios 88.b–89.a



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## SUMMARY

- s.1 *Recollecting the Name of Moonlight* contains the dhāraṇī of the Buddha Moonlight. The benefits of recollecting the Buddha Moonlight's name every morning after rising are that one will remember all one's lives of the past forty thousand kalpas, one will not fall into the lower realms after death, and one will attain the attributes of awakening.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Bruno Galasek-Hul produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Nathaniel Rich edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

## INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *Recollecting the Name of Moonlight* is a short dhāraṇī preserved in the Degé Kangyur in two nearly identical versions, one in the Tantra section and the other in the Dhāraṇī section.

i.2 *Recollecting the Name of Moonlight* opens with a brief homage to the buddha named Moonlight. It lacks the customary title (in Sanskrit and Tibetan) at the beginning and has no narrative frame or interlocutors. The dhāraṇī concludes with an enumeration of the benefits that accrue from reciting the dhāraṇī: a son or a daughter of good family who recites this invocation of the Buddha Moonlight every morning after rising will remember all their past lives during forty thousand kalpas. Furthermore, they will not fall into the lower realms after death and will attain the attributes of awakening.

i.3 *Recollecting the Name of Moonlight* also lacks a translators' colophon. Therefore, we do not know who the translators were or when it was translated. To our knowledge, no Sanskrit text of this dhāraṇī is extant and it does not appear to have been translated into Chinese. The catalogs of the early imperial translations, the Denkarma and Phangthangma, do not list it, but it is listed under the title *zla 'od kyi mtshan rjes su dran pa* in the catalog of translated works in the Kangyur that is included in Butön's monumental fourteenth-century *History of Buddhism*.<sup>1</sup> This gives us a very wide time frame for a possible date of its translation, namely, sometime between the ninth century and the first quarter of the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

i.4 Texts like *Recollecting the Name of Moonlight* can be understood in the context of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the parallel existence of countless buddhas in different universes, and the idea that hearing, remembering, and reciting the names of these buddhas can become a condition for attaining awakening.<sup>3</sup> A buddha named Candraprabha ("Moonlight") is mentioned in several important Mahāyāna sūtras, and that might be the figure intended here.<sup>4</sup>



i.5        This English translation was prepared based on the two witnesses in the Degé Kangyur (Toh 535<sup>5</sup> and Toh 868<sup>6</sup>), in consultation with the versions in the Narthang Kangyur, the Stok Palace Kangyur, and the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur.

## **Recollecting the Name of Moonlight**

1.

## The Translation

[F.88.b]

1.1 Homage to the thus-gone, worthy , fully and perfectly awakened Moonlight!

1.2 *tadyathā | candre candre | sucandre | maticandra candrakiraṇa | siri siri |  
buddhādhiṣṭhite | kili kili | dharmādhiṣṭhite | kili kili | saṃghādhiṣṭhite svāhā.*

1.3 A son or daughter of good family who, [F.89.a] every morning after rising, recollects the name of the tathāgata Moonlight, will remember all their former lives during forty thousand kalpas and will not fall into the lower realms. By recollecting Moonlight's name, one will attain those attributes.

1.4 *Recollecting the Name of Moonlight is complete.*

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 Butön Rinchen Drup, folio 175.a/ 980.
- n.2 Most scholars consider the Denkarma to have been completed sometime in the first half of the ninth century (for a discussion of the different possible dates, see Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, xvii–xxii). Bu ston completed his *History of Buddhism* sometime before the year 1326 (for a detailed discussion, see van der Kuijp 2016, pp. 227–35).
- n.3 See the introduction to *Bouquet of Flowers* (*Kusumasañcaya*, Toh 266), [i.1–i.9](#), for a discussion of this. Other sūtras that similarly teach the efficacy of hearing, remembering, and reciting the names of various buddhas include *The Questions of Guṇaratnasāṅkusumita* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh78.html>) (*Guṇaratnasāṅkusumitaparipṛchā*, Toh 78), *The Questions of Ratnajālin* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh163.html>) (*Ratnajāliparipṛchā*, Toh 163), *The Eight Buddhas* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh271.html>) (*Aṣṭabuddhaka*, Toh 271), and *The Twelve Buddhas* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh273.html>) (*Dvādaśabuddhaka*, Toh 273).
- n.4 See, e.g., *Bouquet of Flowers* (*me tog gi tshogs*, Toh 266), [1.45](#), [1.111](#) and *Calling Witness with a Hundred Prostrations* (*dpang skong phyag brgya pa*, Toh 267), [1.11](#).
- n.5 In the Toh 535 version of the text there is a slight discrepancy in the folio numbering between the 1737 *par phud* printings and the late (post *par phud*) printings of the Degé Kangyur. Although the discrepancy is irrelevant here, further details concerning this may be found in [n.5](#) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh535.html#UT22084-088-029-89>) of the Toh 535 version of this text.
- n.6 This text, Toh 868, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs, e*), are listed as being located in volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). However, several other Kangyur

databases—including the eKangyur that supplies the digital input version displayed by the 84000 Reading Room—list this work as being located in volume 101. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the two volumes of the *gzungs 'dus* section are an added supplement not mentioned in the original catalog, and also hinges on the fact that the compilers of the Tōhoku catalog placed another text—which forms a whole, very large volume—the *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantṛāṭīkā* (*dus 'khor 'grel bshad dri med 'od*, Toh 845), before the volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur, numbering it as vol. 100, although it is almost certainly intended to come right at the end of the Degé Kangyur texts as volume 102; indeed its final fifth chapter is often carried over and wrapped in the same volume as the Kangyur *dkar chags* (catalog). Please note this discrepancy when using the eKangyur viewer in this translation.

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 Daughter of good family

*rigs kyi bu mo*

རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ་མོ།

*kuladuhitṛ*

The female equivalent of the term Son of good family.

g.2 kalpa

*bskal pa*

བསྐྱལ་པ།

*kalpa*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A cosmic period of time, sometimes equivalent to the time when a world system appears, exists, and disappears. According to the traditional Abhidharma understanding of cyclical time, a great eon (*mahākalpa*) is divided into eighty lesser eons. In the course of one great eon, the universe takes form and later disappears. During the first twenty of the lesser eons, the universe is in the process of creation and expansion; during the next twenty it remains; during the third twenty, it is in the process of destruction; and during the last quarter of the cycle, it remains in a state of empty stasis. A fortunate, or good, eon (*bhadrakalpa*) refers to any eon in which more than one buddha appears.

g.3 Lower realms

*ngan song*

ངན་སོང།

*apāya*<sup>AO</sup> . *durgati*<sup>AO</sup>

Rebirth in one of the three lower states of existence, namely, the hell realm, the realm of hungry ghosts, or the animal realm.

g.4 Son of good family

*rigs kyi bu*

རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ།

*kulaputra*<sup>AD</sup>

While this is usually a characteristic pertaining to Brahmins (i.e., born in the Brahmin caste to seven generations of Brahmin parents), the Buddha redefined noble birth as determined by an individual's ethical conduct and integrity. Thus, someone who enters the Buddha's Saṅgha is called a "son or daughter of noble family" and is in this sense "good" or "noble" and considered born again (*dvija*, or "twice born").

g.5 tathāgata

*de bzhin gshegs pa*

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

*tathāgata*<sup>AD</sup>

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.