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The Dhāraṇī of Glorious Mahākāla

Śrīmahākālanāmadhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་དཔལ་མགོན་པོ་ནག་པོ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

’phags pa dpal mgon po nag po zhes bya ba’i gzungs

The Noble Dhāraṇī of Glorious Mahākāla

Āryaśrīmahākālanāmadhāraṇī

· Toh 1085 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs ’dus, waM), folios 252.a–252.b



Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

First published 2023

Current version v 1.0.5 (2025)

Generated by 84000 Reading Room v2.26.1

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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Glorious Mahākāla* opens at the Vajra Seat under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgayā shortly after the Buddha Śākyamuni has defeated Māra and his demonic horde and attained awakening. As Śākyamuni sits under the Bodhi tree, Mahākāla approaches him, prostrates at his feet, sits to one side, and offers to give him a *vidyā*, or “spell,” as a gift. Mahākāla then pronounces his *vidyā* and tells Śākyamuni that it can be used to prevent diseases and ward off potentially harmful spirit beings. The text then concludes with Mahākāla’s promise to Śākyamuni to act as a guardian of temples and maṇḍalas and to protect the Three Jewels.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Dhāraṇī of Glorious Mahākāla opens at the Vajra Seat under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgayā shortly after the Buddha Śākyamuni has defeated Māra and his demonic horde and attained awakening. As Śākyamuni sits under the Bodhi tree, Mahākāla approaches him, prostrates at his feet, sits to one side, and offers to give him a *vidyā*, or “spell,” as a gift. Mahākāla then pronounces his *vidyā* and tells Śākyamuni that it can be used to prevent diseases and ward off potentially harmful spirit beings. The text then concludes with Mahākāla’s promise to Śākyamuni to act as a guardian of temples and maṇḍalas and to protect the Three Jewels.

i.2

A Sanskrit version of this text has yet to come to light, and it does not appear as an independent work in the Chinese canon. It also does not appear in the Denkarma or Phangthangma royal Tibetan catalogs of translated works. The text lacks a translators’ colophon, so the historical circumstances surrounding its transmission into Tibet remain unclear.

i.3

This English translation is based on the recensions found in the Tantra Collection (Toh 668) and the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (Toh 1085) in the Degé Kangyur,¹ in consultation the Comparative Edition of the Kangyur (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur.

**The Noble
Dhāraṇī of Glorious Mahākāla**

1.

The Translation

[F.252.a]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was seated upon the Vajra Seat at the base of the Bodhi tree shortly after subduing Māra and becoming a perfect buddha. The great general of the gods, the lord of the gaṇas, Mahākāla, glorious lord Mahākāla who has dominion over the lords of the desire realm, approached the Blessed One, prostrated at the Blessed One's feet, sat to one side, and addressed him, saying, "Honorable Blessed One, please accept my vidyā as a gift:

1.2 *oṃ śrīmahākāla gaṇagutī² svāhā*
 namaḥ śrīmahākāla gaṇe gutīśāya
 namo yoginaṇīna
 tadyathā | oṃ hile hile kite kiteni cite citeni svāhā |

1.3 "Chanting this vidyā will bind all beings who cause illness and diseases, all grahas, all beings who cause plague, all bhūtas, evil magic, and the evil eye upward through the Heaven of Controlling the Emanations of Others. It will bind them downward [F.252.b] through the hell realms. It will bind them outward to the surrounding mountains.³

1.4 "Moreover, I promise and vow to be a guardian of temples and maṇḍalas, to be a physician who treats the illness of the three poisons, to be the vital support⁴ of all vidyā holders, to be the warrior spirit of all yogins, and to be the sovereign lord of those who subdue Māra, as well as to completely destroy the rākṣasa city of Laṅkāpūrī, to reduce to dust the yakṣa daughters and rākṣasīs who flash like lightning, and to protect the teaching of the Three Jewels."

1.5 *This concludes "The Noble Dhāraṇī of Glorious Mahākāla."*

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 This text, Toh 1085, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs 'dus, waM*), are listed as being located in volume 101 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 102. 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 *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratāṇṭikā* (*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.
- n.2 Following Toh 668: *ga Na gu ti*. Toh 1085: *gha Na gha Na Ti*. N, H: *gA Na gu ti*. S: *gA Na gu te*.
- n.3 D and S: *ri la thug pa yan chad*. This phrase most likely refers to the ring of mountains that surrounds the world according to the classical Buddhist cosmogram.
- n.4 D and S: *yongs kyi srog shing*. The translation of this term remains tentative.

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 beings who cause plague

mi ngas

མི་ངས།

—

A class of potentially harmful spirit being associated with plague.

- g.2 **bhūta**
'byung po
 འབྱུང་པོ།
bhūta ^{AO}
 A class of potentially harmful spirit beings associated with various states of possession and mental illness.
- g.3 **Bodhi tree**
byang chub kyi shing
 བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་ཤིང་།
bodhiṣṭṛkṣa ^{AO}
- g.4 **graha**
gdon
 གདོན།
graha ^{AO}
 A class of potentially harmful spirit beings associated with various states of possession and mental illness.
- g.5 **Heaven of Controlling the Emanations of Others**
gzhan 'phrul dbang byed
 གཞན་འཕྱུལ་དབང་བྱེད།
paranirmitavaśavartin ^{AO}
- g.6 **Laṅkāpūrī**
lang ka pu ri
 ལང་ཀ་པུ་རི།
laṅkāpūrī
 The name of the city of Laṅkā, which is mythologized as the ancient capital of Śrī Laṅkā.
- g.7 **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.8 rākṣasa

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa ^{AO}

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.9 rākṣasīs who flash like lightning

nam mkha'i glog ma srin

ནམ་མཁའི་གློག་མ་སྲིན།

—

A class of demonic female beings.

g.10 Vajra Seat

rdo rje'i gdan

རྡོ་རྗེ་གནད།

vajrāsana ^{AO}

g.11 vidyā

rig pa

རིག་པ།

vidyā ^{AO}

A term for a class of spell and the female beings or goddesses who embody the power of that spell and carry out the action for which that spell is employed.

g.12 warrior spirit

dgra bla

དག་བླ།

—

A class of nonhuman being.

g.13 yakṣa daughter

gnod sbyin gyi bu mo

གནོད་སྦྱིན་གྱི་བུ་མོ།

—

A young female yakṣa, a class of potentially harmful nonhuman beings.