

**[Untitled Dhāraṇī of Buddhas and
Bodhisattvas]**

· Toh 865 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 100 (gzungs, e), folio 87.a



Translated by Catherine Dalton under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating
the Words of the Buddha

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co.

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SUMMARY

s.1 This short untitled text teaches a dhāraṇī and a rite for its practice.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

- i.1 This short untitled¹ work begins with an homage to the Three Jewels, to the Buddha Vairocana, and to Ākāśagarbha. It then provides a short dhāraṇī and brief instructions in its rite. Through this, the practitioner will be unharmed by negative influences and will see Amitābha and other buddhas and bodhisattvas at the time of death.
- i.2 The text is included in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section of the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa lineage Kangyurs that include a separate Dhāraṇī section.² In Tshalpa lineage Kangyurs that lack a section so named, the text is only found in the equivalent but unnamed dhāraṇī collection comprising part of the Tantra section. It is not included in any Thempangma lineage Kangyurs.³
- i.3 Notably, the dhāraṇī is one of only twelve works in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section that, because they are not duplicated in other sections of the Kangyur, are likely to have found their way into the Tshalpa lineage Kangyurs as a result of having been included in earlier collections of dhāraṇīs and associated ritual texts from which the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs seems to have been compiled.⁴ These collections, known in Sanskrit as *dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas*, circulated throughout South Asia and Tibet—including at Dunhuang—as extracanonical dhāraṇī collections.⁵
- i.4 Since the text lacks a translator's colophon, we do not know when it was translated into Tibetan. Furthermore, the absence of a title makes it difficult to determine whether the text is extant in Sanskrit, or whether it was ever translated into Chinese.
- i.5 The present English translation was made based on the Degé Kangyur with additional reference to the notes from the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), as well as to the two recensions of the work in the Namgyal Collection.⁶ The text is stable across all recensions consulted, with some

slight variation in a single alternative recension found in the Sūtra section of the Namgyal Collection.⁷ The dhāraṇī itself has been rendered in this translation according to the Degé Kangyur recension.

[Untitled Dhāraṇī of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas]

1.

The Translation

[F.88.a]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels.

Homage to the thus-gone, worthy, completely perfect Buddha Vairocana, the King.⁸

Homage to the bodhisattva, the great being, the one with great compassion, noble Ākāśagarbha.

1.2 *tadyathā vajramabu vajramabubuddhaje vajramabubuddhaje śūnyatāpraveśe
vairocanagarbhe pañcendriya avabodhane svāhā*

1.3 The rite is like this. If one recites this constantly, one will be able to abide within the perfection of wisdom. All māras, enemies, and vināyakas will be unable to cause harm. At the time of death, one will see noble Amitābha. One will likewise see all tathāgatas and all bodhisattvas. One will take rebirth in accordance with the aspirations that one makes.

This completes the dhāraṇī.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 This text does not contain a title either in the incipit or the explicit, nor does it contain a translator's colophon. The Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) lists this text under the title *The Dhāraṇī for Seeing Amitābha* ('od dpag med mthong bar 'gyur ba'i gzungs) by drawing on a line from the middle of the text. However, seeing Amitābha is only one of the benefits mentioned in the text. For ease of identification, in this English translation we have given the text the title [*Untitled Dhāraṇī of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas*].
- n.2 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, and in the latter group of Kangyurs many dhāraṇī texts therefore appear twice in different parts of the Tantra section.
- n.3 The Qianlong, Choné, and Lithang Kangyurs contain two recensions of this text, with identical titles, both included in the tantra (*rgyud*) section of these Kangyurs. The two recensions in the Qianlong Kangyur (Q 268 and Q 684) are identical apart from two minor orthographic differences in the mantra. Presumably the same is the case with the recensions in the Choné and Lithang Kangyurs, but we have not verified this.
- n.4 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.5 See J. Dalton 2016, and J. Dalton and S. van Schaik 2006, on the *dhāraṇī-saṃgraha* collections preserved at Dunhuang. Like the canonical collection, these contain praises and prayers as well as dhāraṇīs. See Hidas 2021 for the catalogs of eighteen *dhāraṇī-saṃgraha* collections surviving in Sanskrit.
- n.6 This text, Toh 865, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs 'dus*, *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 *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantṛāṭikā* (*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.7 This alternative recension, however, was important in solving a textual problem in the homage of the text. See [n.8](#).
- n.8 Here we follow the reading in the recension of this *dhāraṇī* found in the Sūtra section of the Namgyal Collection (see bibliography for details), which reads *rnam par snang mdzad rgyal po*. The Degé reads *rnam par snang mdzad kyi rgyal po*. The recension of the text in the Sūtra section of the Namgyal Collection differs in several places from the more commonly circulated recension found the Degé and other Kangyurs, to which a second recension in the Namgyal Collection (in the Dhāraṇī section) also belongs. We presume that an error was introduced into the more commonly circulating recension, which was then replicated throughout the Kangyurs in which it was included, and that this alternative version preserved in the Namgyal Collection contains the better, more coherent reading.

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 Ākāśagarbha
 rnam mkha'i snying po
 ཀླམ་མཁའི་སྡིང་པོ།
 $\bar{a}k\bar{a}sagarbha^{AD}$

A bodhisattva. This may refer to the bodhisattva of this name who is counted among the eight main bodhisattvas.

g.2 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

amitābha ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The buddha of the western buddhafiield of Sukhāvatī, where fortunate beings are reborn to make further progress toward spiritual maturity.

Amitābha made his great vows to create such a realm when he was a bodhisattva called Dharmākara. In the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, popular in East Asia, aspiring to be reborn in his buddha realm is the main emphasis; in other Mahāyāna traditions, too, it is a widespread practice. For a detailed description of the realm, see *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī*, Toh 115. In some tantras that make reference to the five families he is the tathāgata associated with the lotus family.

Amitābha, “Infinite Light,” is also known in many Indian Buddhist works as Amitāyus, “Infinite Life.” In both East Asian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions he is often conflated with another buddha named “Infinite Life,” Aparimitāyus, or “Infinite Life and Wisdom,” Aparimitāyurjñāna, the shorter version of whose name has also been back-translated from Tibetan into Sanskrit as Amitāyus but who presides over a realm in the zenith. For details on the relation between these buddhas and their names, see *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra* (1) Toh 674, i.9.

g.3 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.4 māra

bdud

མ་རྩ་

māra^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Māra, literally “death” or “maker of death,” is the name of the deva who tried to prevent the Buddha from achieving awakening, the name given to the class of beings he leads, and also an impersonal term for the destructive forces that keep beings imprisoned in saṃsāra:

(1) As a deva, Māra is said to be the principal deity in the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations (*paranirmitavaśavartin*), the highest paradise in the desire realm. He famously attempted to prevent the Buddha’s awakening under the Bodhi tree—see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 21.1—and later sought many times to thwart the Buddha’s activity. In the sūtras, he often also creates obstacles to the progress of śrāvakas and bodhisattvas. (2) The devas ruled over by Māra are collectively called *mārakāyika* or *mārakāyikadevatā*, the “deities of Māra’s family or class.” In general, these māras too do not wish any being to escape from saṃsāra, but can also change their ways and even end up developing faith in the Buddha, as exemplified by Sārvastivāda; see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 21.14 and 21.43. (3) The term māra can also be understood as personifying four defects that prevent awakening, called (i) the divine māra (*devaputramāra*), which is the distraction of pleasures; (ii) the māra of Death (*mṛtyumāra*), which is having one’s life interrupted; (iii) the māra of the aggregates (*skandhamāra*), which is identifying with the five aggregates; and (iv) the māra of the afflictions (*kleśamāra*), which is being under the sway of the negative emotions of desire, hatred, and ignorance.

g.5 Vairocana

rnam par snang mdzad

ནཱ་པར་སྒྲུང་མཛད།

vairocana^{AD}

The name of a buddha. He is of special importance in the Yoga Tantras, and is at the head of the tathāgata family among the five tathāgata families.

g.6 vināyaka

log 'dren

ལོག་འདྲེན།

vināyaka^{AD}

A class of obstacle-creating beings, their name means “those who lead astray.”