

༄༅། །སྤྲོད་པོ་རྒྱན་གྱི་མཚོག་གི་གཟུངས།

**The Dhāraṇī of the Supreme Stem
Ornament**

Gaṇyālaṃkāragradhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་སྣང་པོ་རྒྱན་གྱི་མཚོག་ཅེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

'phags pa sdong po rgyan gyi mchog ces bya ba'i gzungs

The Noble Dhāraṇī “The Supreme Stem Ornament”

Āryagaṇyālaṃkāṛāgranāmadhāraṇī



Toh 1066
Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, wam), folios 236.a–236.b

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co.

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SUMMARY

s.1 *The Dhāraṇī of the Supreme Stem Ornament* is a short work that includes several prayers for protection, each of which is followed by an essence-mantra.

ac.

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

The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Catherine Dalton produced the translation and wrote the introduction. John Canti 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 *The Dhāraṇī of the Supreme Stem Ornament* is a short text that includes several prayers for protection, each of which is followed by an essence-mantra (*hṛdaya*). The prayers pay homage to the Three Jewels and a number of deities, requesting protection from astrologically inauspicious years, days, times, conjunctions, and the like, as well as from ghosts, bad dreams, malevolent spirits, enemies, and ill health. The final prayer requests protection from broken vows and samayas.

i.2 *The Dhāraṇī of the Supreme Stem Ornament* does not appear to be extant in Sanskrit or in Chinese. It lacks a translator's colophon and does not appear either in the Denkarma or the Phangthangma imperial catalogs, or among the manuscripts found in Dunhuang.

i.3 It is included in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section of the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs that have a separate Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section, and in the equivalent part of the Tantra section in those that do not label it as such,¹ but is not included in any Thempangma-lineage Kangyurs.

i.4 Notably, the dhāraṇī is one of only twelve works in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section that is not duplicated in other sections of the Kangyur. It therefore appears that these twelve texts found their way into the Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs specifically because they were included in a Compendium of Dhāraṇīs that had been compiled on the basis of earlier collections of dhāraṇīs and associated ritual texts.² These collections, known in Sanskrit as *dhāraṇīsamgraha*, circulated throughout South Asia and Tibet—including in Dunhuang—as extracanonical dhāraṇī collections.³

i.5 There are several factors that suggest the possibility (though it is by no means a certainty) that this particular work may have been translated into Tibetan from Chinese, rather than from Sanskrit. The first is a reference to an inauspicious divination result specific to a Chinese style of divination.⁴ But there are other factors, as well: the work's immediate proximity in the

Kangyur to a text that was certainly translated from Chinese (Toh 1067), the absence of a translator's colophon, the incorrect/incoherent Sanskrit title given at the beginning of all of extant versions of the work, and the presence of at least one feature indicative of the older "Chinese" translation lexicon and style described by Stein (i.e., the vocabulary and style used to translate Buddhist texts from a variety of languages, including Chinese, prior to the lexical standardization imposed by the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* in 814 CE).⁵

i.6 The Sanskrit title and its variants do not seem to match the Tibetan title in meaning, and the relationship between the title in either language and the contents of the text remains puzzling. The transliterated Sanskrit title in the Degé and most Kangyurs reads *ga Nu a laM ka ra a gra*, while the Yongle and Qianlong Kangyurs have the slightly more plausible variant *ga Nya* in place of *ga Nu*. The Sanskrit *gaṇ* or *gaṇya* ("calculate" or "compute") might conceivably relate to the theme of astrology present in the text, or refer to the "metrical" lines of verse that it contains, but both possibilities are quite unlikely. The Tibetan title, even by itself without reference to the Sanskrit, is difficult to account for, as there is no mention of a "tree" or "stem" (the most literal meaning of the Tibetan *sdong po*, Skt. *gaṇḍa*) in the text itself. Elsewhere in the Kangyur the phrase *sdong pos brgyan pa* is found in the chapter colophon of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (the final chapter of the *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*, Toh 44-45) as one of several versions of that text's title,⁶ but there is no obvious connection between this dhāraṇī and the themes of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.⁷ On the one hand, to assume that the Tibetan *sdong po* translates the Sanskrit *gaṇḍa*, but in its less literal meaning of "chief" or "excellent," could corroborate the interpretation of the dhāraṇī being a supreme ornament. On the other hand, if instead of *gaṇḍa-* one takes the *gaṇya-* of the Sanskrit title found in the Yongle and Qianlong—*ga Nya a laM ka ra a gra* (*gaṇyālaṃkāragra*)—as part of a back-reconstruction from the Tibetan that could reasonably be rearranged with the word *agra* (Tib. *mchog*) at the beginning, the resulting *agragāṇyālaṃkāra* would make sense. *Agragāṇya*, literally "to be counted as the foremost," simply means "best," "principal," or "supreme," and the title *agragāṇyālaṃkāradhāraṇī* would thus mean "The Dhāraṇī That Is a Supreme Ornament." Overall, however, we can only remain circumspect about how the titles of this text as they have been preserved in different Kangyurs can be understood.

i.7 The present English translation of *The Dhāraṇī of the Supreme Stem Ornament* was made from the Tibetan as found in the Degé Kangyur recension of the work, in consultation with the notes in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*).

**The Noble
Dhāraṇī of the Supreme Stem Ornament**

1.

The Translation

[F.236.a]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels.

1.2 May all buddhas grant their protection!
I pay homage to supreme awakening;
May all noble ones grant their protection!
I pay homage to the supreme vajra;
May all knowledge granters grant their protection!
I pay homage to all the gods of the pure god realms;
May all protectors grant their protection!
I pay homage to the gods in the heavens;
May the lords of the three worlds grant their protection!
To all those who rule over the three realms of existence
I pay homage and offer worship;
Grant your compassionate blessings
To my five aggregates and limbs!

1.3 The essence-mantra of that is said to be:

1.4 *om̐ kara kara svāhā kuru kuru svāhā bhara bhara svāhā bhuru bhuru svāhā dhara
dhara svāhā dhuru dhuru svāhā cara cara svāhā curu curu svāhā*

1.5 Protect my five aggregates and limbs
From inauspicious years and inauspicious months,
Inauspicious days and inauspicious days of the week,⁸
Inauspicious planets and inauspicious stars,
Inauspicious daytimes and inauspicious nighttimes,
Inauspicious middays,
Inauspicious mornings and inauspicious evenings,
Inauspicious cardinal directions and inauspicious intermediary directions,

Possession by the five ghosts,⁹ and inauspicious divinations.¹⁰
Grant protection from all of these!

1.6 The essence-mantra of that is said to be:

1.7 *om prajñe prajñe prajñe avalokiradhāti maṇi susiddhi ārya jwala nāma mañjuyē
svāhā*

1.8 May my five aggregates and limbs,
Despite being subjected to darkness
From violence¹¹ and malevolent female spirits;¹²
From the onset of coughs and difficult illnesses;
From obstacle years, obstacle months, obstacle days,
Obstacle days of the week and the like; [F.236.b]
And from bad dreams, enemies, and hindrances,
Be protected by the directional guardians
Who are said to radiate light, like the sun and moon,
That illuminates from the farthest reaches.

1.9 The essence-mantra of that is said to be:

1.10 *om haku hūm hūm du hūm hūm na hūm hūm yaṁ hūm hūm ke hūm hūm ki hūm
hūm kī hūm hūm ti hūm hūm tī hūm hūm dū hūm hūm ve hūm*

1.11 From beginningless time
Until being born in this life and body,
I have written incorrectly, recited incorrectly,
Listened incorrectly, explained incorrectly,
Meditated incorrectly, and trained incorrectly.
Protect my five aggregates and limbs
From all such broken rules, broken vows,
And broken samayas!

1.12 The essence-mantra of that is:

1.13 *namo bhagavata sarva dhuyē duṣṭāna svāhā*

1.14 *This concludes "The Noble Dhāraṇī Called the Supreme Stem Ornament."*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 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.2 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.3 See J. Dalton 2016 and J. Dalton and S. van Schaik 2006 on the *dhāraṇīsamgraha* collections preserved in Dunhuang, which, like the canonical collection, contain praises and prayers as well as dhāraṇīs. See Hidas 2021 for the catalogs of eighteen *dhāraṇīsamgraha* collections surviving in Sanskrit.
- n.4 This is the term *bdud gcod*. See the note on this term in the translation below for more details.
- n.5 This feature is the spelling of the terminating particle at the end of the work: *rdzogs sho* rather than the later standard *rdzogs so*. See Stein 2010, pp. 15–16. For further details on these two distinctive lexicons see Stein’s *Tibetica Antiqua*, especially the chapter on “The Two Vocabularies in the Dunhuang Manuscripts.” We would also note the presence in our text of the term *phra men* to refer to a sort of malevolent female spirit. This term also occurs in

other manuscripts from Dunhuang that use the older vocabulary. See Stein 2010, p.54. In the context of one such manuscript, Stein translates *'phra men ma* it as “witch-goddess,” and notes an association with “Bon and Yol.” We have rendered the term in the present text as “malevolent female spirits,” though we do think that Stein’s translation captures its intended sense. This term *phra men ma* was also used to translate the Sanskrit *ḍākinī*, usually in the sense of *ḍākinīs* as malevolent female entities, not as the “wisdom *ḍākinīs*” found in the higher tantras, where the term is usually translated as *mkha' 'gro (ma)*. See also the note to this term below in the translation and the glossary entry on *phra men ma* for further details.

- n.6 See Roberts, Peter Alan. trans., *The Stem Array* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh44-45.html>), Toh 44-45 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2021).
- n.7 It therefore seems unlikely that this *dhāraṇī* could have been considered a condensed essence or other adjunct of that influential text—as one finds with other *dhāraṇīs* that have an explicit relationship to *sūtras*, a genre found in the groups Toh 583–589 and Toh 939–945. Indeed, such a possibility is made even less likely by the existence of another *dhāraṇī* that fulfills the “condensed essence” function, *sdong po bkod pa'i snying po*, Toh 941.
- n.8 “Days of the week” would more commonly be *gza'*, rather than the reading here, *za*, but *gza'* is used in the next line where it seems to indicate the planets (another meaning of the word). Our translation here is tentative.
- n.9 Here the Degé, and most of the other Kangyurs consulted in the Pedurma edition, read *'dre lnga sdod* (“the five ghosts remaining”), which we understand to mean possession by the ghosts. The Yongle and Kangxi Kangyurs read *'dre lnga gdon* (“the demonic five ghosts” or “the demons/spirits who are the five ghosts”), which is also a plausible reading. Given two plausible readings, we simply chose the one that is predominant.
- n.10 *bdud gcod*. This is the name of an inauspicious divination result in the trigram divinations according to the Chinese elemental divination system.
- n.11 *dmar kyi mthun*. Here we follow the Yongle and Kangxi Kangyurs which read *dmar kyi mthun*, thus taking the phrase to mean “violence” (lit. “that which accords with violence”), rather than the Degé, which reads *dmar kyi thun* (this might possibly be translated as “violent incanted substances” or “violent practices”). While we believe we can make most sense of the Kangxi and Yongle reading, we nonetheless remain unsure about the meaning of this phrase, and suspect that the passage may be corrupt.

n.12 The term *phra men* is one of two Tibetan translations of the word *ḍākinī*, the other being the more familiar *mkha' 'gro (ma)*. It seems the term *phra men (ma)* was used more frequently to render the idea of *ḍākinīs* as a class of potentially malevolent female spirits, while the term *mkha' 'gro (ma)*, while also used to refer to such worldly spirits, was preferred for the “wisdom” *ḍākinīs* in the higher tantras, in which context the term *ḍākinī* is better known to English-speaking audiences. To avoid such confusion (and also because we speculate that this text may have been translated from Chinese rather than from Sanskrit), we have chosen to translate the word *phra men* here as “malevolent female spirit,” since what *is* clear is that its referent here is a class of potentially harmful entities. See the glossary entry on *phra men* for further uses of the term.

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 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.2 essence-mantra

snying po

སློང་པོ།

hṛdaya^{AD}

A short mantra.

g.3 malevolent female spirit

phra men ma

ཕ་མེན་མ།

ḍākinī^{AD}

The term *phra men ma* (also spelled *phra man ma* in some texts) is one of the two translations of the word *ḍākinī* found in canonical works. In this case—as in many of the cases where *phra men ma* rather than the other Tibetan translation of *ḍākinī*, *mkha' 'gro ma* is employed—it refers to a class of malevolent female spirits. The higher tantras of the Nyingma tradition feature *phra men (ma)* as a class of protective deities on the periphery of the maṇḍala of wrathful deities in the Shitro (*zhi khro*) maṇḍala of peaceful and wrathful deities. They have female bodies, animal heads, and often appear as a set of eight.

g.4 samaya

dam tshig

དམ་ཚིག།

samaya^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Literally, in Sanskrit, “coming together.” *Samaya* refers to precepts given by the teacher, the corresponding commitment by the pupil, and the bond that results, which can also be the bond between the practitioner and the deity or a spirit. It can also mean a special juncture or circumstance, or an ordinary time or season.

g.5 Three Jewels
dkon mchog gsum
དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ།
triratna^{AD}