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**The Rite for the Protocols Associated with
Carrying the Ringing Staff**



Toh 336
Degé Kangyur, vol. 72 (mdo sde, sa), folios 274.a–275.a

Translated by the Sarasvatī Translation Team
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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff* is a short text that deals with the practical matters relating to the use of the mendicant's staff known in Sanskrit as a *khakkhara*, or "rattling staff." It begins with a simple ritual during which a Buddhist monk ceremoniously takes up the ringing staff in front of his monastic teacher. The text then provides a list of twenty-five rules governing the proper use of the staff. The rules stipulate how a Buddhist monk should or should not handle it in his daily life, especially when he goes on alms rounds and when he travels.

ac.

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The renunciant's staff is a religious implement shared by the ascetic cultures of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism, and other Indian traditions.¹ The practice of ascetics carrying a staff when they wander about must be very old. Pāṇini's Sanskrit grammar (ca. fourth century BCE) already mentions *maskarin*, a staff bearer, as a name for a renunciant. Makkhali Gosāla, the founder of the Ājīvikas and a contemporary of the Buddha, is known by the epithet *maskarin*.² The Buddhist saṅghas in India developed a staff, called a *khakkhara*³ in Buddhist Sanskrit texts, that, as far as we know, is unique in conception and design. Consisting of a metallic head, a long shaft, and a lower tip, it is included among the eighteen requisites of a Buddhist monastic.⁴ The canonical Vinaya texts of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, such as the *Vinayavastu* and the *Vinayasūtra* of Guṇaprabha, mention the ringing staff in passing as one of the regular items in a Buddhist monk's possession.⁵ These texts provide neither a focused discussion of the staff nor a list of rules governing its use.

i.2

Two sūtras in the General Sūtra section of the Kangyur are focused on the single subject of the ringing staff. The *Sūtra on the Ringing Staff* (Toh 335) is the longer of the two and concerns itself with the religious significance of the staff and the benefits to be gained from its use. It also describes the staff's symbolism and its constituent parts. *The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff* (Toh 336), which is translated in the following pages, sets forth a simple ritual for a monk to receive a ringing staff along with twenty-five dharmas (*chos*), or rules, stipulating how the staff is to be properly utilized.

i.3

In most modern Buddhist cultures, the ringing staff has been reduced to a mere ritual artifact. From the contents of the twenty-five rules, it appears that the use of the staff was once associated with several practical purposes: (A) protection against animals (no. 1), (B) a walking aid (no. 2), (C) collecting alms (nos. 3, 6, 13, 14, 15, and 20), and (D) travel (nos. 21, 23, and 24). The

predominance of alms collection and, to a lesser extent, travel in the list perhaps indicates the ringing staff's main functions. Many of the twenty-five rules, therefore, show the occasions of the staff's use. In addition, many items in the list are rules prescribing how the staff should and should not be used. We find in these rules a concern for the positive image of the Buddhist saṅgha, as they also define proper behavior surrounding a religious instrument that is recognized as symbolically powerful.

i.4 *The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff* does not contain the common framework expected of a text belonging to the sūtra genre. Rather, it looks like a supplementary text dealing with practical matters. One single text in the Taishō edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka includes materials found in both Toh 335 and Toh 336. The *De daoti cheng xizhang jing* (得道梯橙錫杖經, Taishō 785) was translated in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420 CE). It contains a Chinese version of the *Sūtra on the Rattling Staff* that concludes with the rejoicing of the teaching's audience.⁶ It then proceeds to present additional materials, among which a list of twenty-five rules related to the way of carrying the ringing staff is found. For the purpose of clarity, we will call this "the list in the Chinese sūtra." After the end of the sūtra, the translator adds an appendix that gives a second list of twenty-five rules. We will call this "the list in the Chinese appendix." The list of twenty-five rules in the appendix is said to be "translated based on the Indian Tripiṭaka to make the future reader aware of its origin."⁷ The Chinese translation indicates that there was an opinion that regarded the twenty-five rules and the *Sūtra on the Rattling Staff* as belonging to the same text. At the same time, the translator of the Chinese version also tells us that an independently circulated version of the twenty-five rules enjoyed canonical status.

i.5 Between the two lists of twenty-five rules in the Chinese, the list in the appendix is closer to the list in the Tibetan translation. Although significant differences remain, the list in the Chinese appendix and the list in the Tibetan translation follow the same order with just one exception.⁸ There is a Dunhuang Tibetan manuscript that contains a portion of *The Sūtra on the Rattling Staff* and *The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff*.⁹ The colophon of this manuscript states that these two Tibetan texts were translated from the Chinese by the chief editor-translator Bandé Chödrup.¹⁰ This information indicates that both texts may have been translated from the relevant portions of *De daoti cheng xizhang jing* (Taishō 785),¹¹ with *The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff* most likely based on the list in the Chinese appendix. More research on the

available Tibetan textual witnesses is required before we can speak more conclusively about the nature of that dependence and the transmission of the Tibetan text.

i.6 Indeed, a different perspective comes from an inventory of early translations compiled by the thirteenth century Tibetan scholar Chomden Rikpai Raltri (*bcom ldan rig pa'i ral gri*, 1227–1305), who lists the present text and Toh 335, which he calls “the longer and shorter ringing staff sūtras” (*'khar sil gyi mdo che chung gnyis*) among twenty-one canonical texts translated from Khotanese.¹² This seems to contradict the evidence from the Dunhuang colophon, and may possibly be a reference to alternative translations that have not been preserved. Whatever the case, the general notion that these texts may have evolved in Khotan from earlier material brought from India, before being transmitted to both China and Tibet, seems by no means unlikely.

i.7 The list in the Chinese sūtra has an order and a structure of its own,¹³ and several of its rules are different in substance from the other two lists. Our translation only records the significant differences between the list in the Chinese appendix and the list in the Tibetan translation by providing the Chinese and its English translation when an item in the Chinese appendix differs in its sense from its Tibetan parallel.¹⁴ The list in the Chinese sūtra is discussed only when it sheds light on the interpretation of the items in the other two lists.

i.8 The present translation is based on the Degé Kangyur, with reference to variants in other versions noted in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*).

**The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying
the Ringing Staff**

1.

The Translation

[F.274.a]

1.1 One who wishes to take up the ringing staff [F.274.b] should kneel before an honorable one and say three times, “Honorable one, I request your attention. Today, I, named so-and-so, request you, honorable one, to be my teacher for carrying the ringing staff.”

1.2 The honorable one then says, “Pay attention. Venerable one, after generating the mind aspiring for unsurpassed awakening, will you take up the ringing staff and utilize it properly?”

1.3 “Do not hold it with dirty hands. When entering a dwelling of the saṅgha, do not rest it with its head and lower tip removed.¹⁵ When entering the homes of householders, point the lower tip behind you.

1.4 “In the morning, when conditions are right for you to go to the home of a householder to beg for alms, rattle the staff three times at their door. If no one responds when you rattle it three times, you should rattle it five times. If no one responds when you rattle it five times, you should rattle it seven times. If no one responds when you rattle it seven times, you should proceed to another household and rattle it seven times. If you are satisfied after having gone to seven households, then in that case say three times, ‘I shall eat.’

1.5 “There are twenty-five rules associated with carrying the rattling staff:

1. “Carry it to guard against snakes on the ground.

2. “Carry it because you are elderly.¹⁶

3. “Carry it to collect alms.

4. “Should you see a buddha image when entering or exiting, make some sound with it.¹⁷

5. "Do not go among the saṅgha while carrying a rattling staff.
6. "Do not walk about carrying a ringing staff after noon.
7. "Do not rest it on your shoulders hanging on to its two ends.
8. "Do not carry it on your shoulders.¹⁸
9. "Do not turn it around with your hands.¹⁹
10. "Do not go into toilets carrying a rattling staff.
11. "Do not follow the preceptor or other ordination masters when they are carrying ringing staffs.²⁰
12. "Do not take up a ringing staff and then follow a group of four or more persons carrying ringing staffs.²¹ [F.275.a]
13. "Do not let your ringing staff be away from your body when visiting the home of a patron.
14. "Go to the door of a patron and rattle the staff three times. If no one responds, you should rattle it five times. If no one responds when you rattle it five times, you should rattle it seven times. If no one responds when you rattle it seven times, you should proceed to another household and rattle the staff there.²²
15. "When the patron answers the door, lean the rattling staff against your right arm and rest it there.²³
16. "Do not let it touch the ground when put in a dwelling.
17. "Always put it by your bed.
18. "Clean it from time to time.
19. "Keep the head of the ringing staff straight.
20. "During alms rounds, do not allow it to be taken away from you by novice monks or householders.²⁴
21. "Take the ringing staff with you when spending the night in a place of sick people.
22. "Take the ringing staff with you when you go to see someone off on a long journey.

23. "Take the ringing staff with you when you go off to welcome someone from a long journey and you might need to go and stay there with them."²⁵

24. "Take the ringing staff with you when you need to go to places unknown.

25. "In order to draw another person close to you, touch that person with it and make designs on the ground."²⁶

1.6 *This completes "The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff."*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 For references and a survey of the renunciant's staff in the Brahmanical tradition, see Olivelle (2011), pp. 231–48.
- n.2 Olivelle (2011), p. 231.
- n.3 Franklin Edgerton provides the alternative spellings of *khakhara*, *khakharaka*, *khañkhara*, and *khañkharaka*. See Edgerton (1953), vol. 2, pp. 201–2.
- n.4 See Yijing's account of the ringing staff at Taishō 2125 LIV 230b22–27. See also Buswell and Lopez (2014), s.v. “khakkhara”; Beer (2003), pp. 184–85; and Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>), accessed June 10, 2016, s.v. “khakkhara”/“錫杖,” where references to Japanese and Chinese dictionaries of Buddhism are provided.
- n.5 See, for example, in the *Vinayavastu* (Toh 1): Miller (2018), *The Chapter on Going Forth*, 6.6 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-2210>).
- n.6 Taishō 785 XVII 725a14.
- n.7 Taishō 785 XVII 725c6: 依天竺藏經重出, 使後人看閱知其源流也.
- n.8 The order of items 23 and 24 is reversed between the Tibetan and the Chinese.
- n.9 IOL Tib J 205 is recorded in Louis de la Vallée Poussin (1962), p. 74. Online images of the manuscript are available through The International Dunhuang Project: The Silk Road Online (IOL Tib J 205 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL Tib J 205;img=1)).
- n.10 *khar sil gyi mdo dang // cho ga 'di zhu chen gyi lo tsa pa ban de chos grub kyis rgya'i dpe las bsgyur cing zhus te/ gtan la phab pa//*.

- n.11 See also Silk (2019), p. 235.
- n.12 Chomden Rikpai Raltri (1) F.26.b, (2) F.28.a; see also Schaeffer and van der Kuijp 2009, p. 161.
- n.13 The list in the Chinese sūtra groups its items into a list of ten, which is then followed by three lists of five items.
- n.14 Difference in wording alone is ignored. Because they are difficult to interpret, items 3 and 19 of the list in the Chinese sūtra are not discussed.
- n.15 The Tibetan text permits more than one reading. It can also be read, “When entering the dwelling of the saṅgha, do not leave it with its head and lower tip sticking out.”
- n.16 Translated in accordance with the Yongle, Kangxi, and Choné editions, reading *rgas pa* instead of *rgal ba*.
- n.17 Taishō 785 XVII 725c10–11: 為出入見佛像不得使頭有聲. “Do not make any sound with its head when you see a buddha image at the time of exiting and entering.” The version in the Phukdrak Kangyur agrees with the Chinese here. It reads, “Should you see a buddha image when entering or exiting, do not make any sound with it.”
- n.18 Taishō 725c13: 不得橫著膝上以懸兩頭. “Do not place it across your knees and hang things from its two ends.”
- n.19 Translated in accordance with the Lithang, Narthang, Choné, and Zhol editions, reading *skyog pa* instead of *dkyog pa*.
- n.20 Taishō 725c14–15: 不得復持在三師前後, 已杖出不得復杖隨. “Do not carry the rattling staff in front of or behind the three masters of an ordination ceremony. When they leave with ringing staffs, do not carry your ringing staff and follow them.”
- n.21 Taishō 725c16–17: 若四人俱行, 一人已持, 不得復持隨. “If four people are traveling together and one is already holding a ringing staff, do not follow them while carrying a ringing staff.” The list in the Chinese sūtra adds a specific point to this rule (Taishō 725b19–20): 四人共行除上座不得普持. “When four persons travel together, it is not permissible for anyone but the elder to hold the ringing staff.”
- n.22 Taishō 725c18–19: 至人門戶時, 當三抖擻, 不出應當更至餘家. “Rattle it three times at the door. If no one responds, you should proceed to another household.”

- n.23 Taishō 725c19–20: 主人出, 應當杖著左肘挾之. “When the patron answers the door, you should clasp it in the crook of your left arm.”
- n.24 The Tibetan text permits more than one reading. It can also be read as, “When going for alms rounds, do not be parted from a novice monk or a householder.” The two Chinese versions agree with each other on this rule. Taishō 725c22–23: 欲行當從沙彌若白衣受. “If you wish to go somewhere, receive it from novice monks or householders.” The item in the list found in the Chinese sūtra states the preference for receiving the ringing staff from a novice monk if a novice monk is available. Taishō 725c25–26: 杖欲出時當從沙彌邊受, 若無沙彌白衣亦得.
- n.25 Items 23 and 24 are presented in reverse order in the Chinese. Taishō 726a1–2: 二十三者遠請行宿應得暮杖。二十四者遠迎來者應得暮杖.
- n.26 Taishō 726a2–3: 常當自近不得指人若畫地作字. “Always keep it close to you; neither point it at others nor use it to draw on the ground or write syllables.” See the corresponding item in the list in the Chinese sūtra at Taishō 725b17–18. The two Chinese versions agree with each other and present no problem to interpretation. The version in the Phukdrak Kangyur is closer to the Chinese here, insofar as it preserves the negation of the verb and therefore the prohibition on using the staff to “touch another person or make designs on the ground” (*gzhal [sic] la reg cing sa la ri mo bri bar mi bya’o*).

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for Sanskrit names and terms ·

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in the Sanskrit manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other Sanskrit manuscripts of the Kangyur or Tengyur.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where Tibetan-Sanskrit relationship 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 honorable one

btsun pa

བཙུན་པ།

bhadanta

An honorific term for an ordained person.

g.2 novice monk

dge tshul

དགེ་ཚུལ།

śrāmaṇera

g.3 preceptor

mkhan po

མཁན་པོ།

upādhyāya

An abbot or a principal ordination master.

g.4 protocol

kun tu spyod pa

ཀུན་ཏུ་སྟོན་པ།

ācāra

g.5 ringing staff

khar gsil

ཁར་གསེན།

khakkhara

g.6 rite

cho ga

ཚོགས།

vidhi

g.7 teacher

slob dpon

སློབ་དཔོན།

ācārya

A spiritual teacher.

g.8 Venerable one

tshe dang ldan pa

ཚོ་དང་ལྷན་པ།

āyusmat

An honorific title, literally meaning "life possessing," that is applied especially to royal personages and Buddhist monks.