

ཕྱི་ལྷ་གསུམ་ལྷ་བསྟོན་པ།

In Praise of the Livestock Deity

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KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

phyugs lha bstod pa

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Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
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CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION	1
IN PRAISE OF THE LIVESTOCK DEITY	3
NOTES	5
BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
GLOSSARY	9

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

This short ritual work is a manual on how to propitiate the deity or deities of livestock. The livestock deity is mentioned in the earliest Tibetan literature available to us. In a Dunhuang text on divination,¹ it is advised that if one wants fortune to befall one's livestock, one should supplicate the livestock deity and the Lord of Clouds. Nowadays, the livestock deity is still propitiated in Tibetan and Himalayan communities.²

This text can be seen as part of a cycle of three works by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo in which local and domestic deities play a vital role.³ This manual is the shortest of the three and provides relatively few details about the deity in question.

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In Praise of the Livestock Deity

*Namo guru deva dākīnyai.*⁴

If one wants to praise the deity residing at the feeding trough of one's horses and livestock, one should construct a small palace-like shrine on top of each of their enclosures. One then decorates that with resin and colored yarn and the like. It is good if extensive rituals can be carried out, such as a wide-ranging collection of smoke offerings, offerings of good food in the four directions, the purification of obstacle-creating demons, and cleansing with smoke offerings. However, if this is not possible, one should sprinkle cleansing water accompanied by the mantras of Vajravidāraṇa,⁵ Bhurkumkūṭa,⁶ and so on.

OM

I perform the cleansing ritual with mantra water—

Ritual nectar water, which has been cleaned and purified,

Blessed through profound dhāraṇīs and mantras.

And so I have purified the violent obstacle-creating demons in this place—

I have purified the defilements and the impurities that have accumulated

By performing the cleansing ritual for the deities and protectors

Who lead the horses and the livestock.

All the defilements of incestuous and murderous pollution⁷ and impurities [56]

Are now pure, like polished crystal;

They are pure and brilliant, glowing in radiance

Like when rays of sun hit the snow.

May the appearance of good fortune spread everywhere!

OM ŚUDDHE ŚUDDHE SVĀDHANA YE SVĀHĀ⁸

One recites this and sprinkles water all around the enclosures. Then, with regard to the water vessel for the smoke offerings:

Hey!

Where did the smoke offering originate from?
A slight drizzle⁹ of rain fell from the sky
And warmth and wetness encompassed the earth.
Through the auspicious coincidence of combined heat and moisture,
There in the middle region grew a fragrant medicinal tree.
With dewdrops of wisdom nectar,
It was enchanting to look at and very radiant.
The mere experience of its scent cleared the realms and fields
Of the torment of defilements and impurities.
Such a marvelous great tree
We burn in a blazing fire.
We add the best of all kinds of white and sweet foods.
It has the essence of precious grains and medicines,
And because it has been blessed by mantras and mudrās,
Oceans of sensory objects arise
From each of the plumes of smoke.

Then recite NAMAḤ SARVATATHĀGATABHYO VIŚVĀ *three times along with* mudrās. *Then increase this further with* VAJRA SPHARAṆA KHAM.

Hey!

You whose unimpeded physical bodies
Arise from the state of the natural dharmadhātu—
The Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha,
The Guru, Yidam, and Ḍākinī, [57]
The dharma protectors, protectors, and assembly of cattle deities—
On account of your compassion, please come to this place!
Please partake in the offerings of smoke and peace!
I make an offering with a libation, the best kind of nectar.
Please make the great blessings of supreme wisdom
Descend on this corral with horses and livestock!

NOTES

1. *Pelliot tibétain* 1051.
2. On the occurrence of *chuk lha* (*phyugs lha*) and *nor lha* (*nor lha*) livestock deities in Bhutan, see Huber, “Source of Life,” 85, 100.
3. See Khyentse Vision Project translations *In Praise of the Domestic Deity* and *In Praise of the Hearth Deity*.
4. “Homage to the Guru, Deva, and Ḍākinī.” Amended from the erroneous *dhākiṇīyai* of the 2014 edition and *dhākiṇīye* of the 1919 edition.
5. For English versions of this dhāraṇī (Toh. 750) found in the Kangyur collection (*gzungs ’dus*), see *The Dhāraṇī “Vajra Conqueror”* translated by 84000 and *The Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* translated by Stephen Mang.
6. For the dhāraṇī associated with the wrathful King Bhurkumkūṭa, see the *Krodhabhurkumkūṭarājastotramantra* (*khro bo’i rgyal po sme brtsegs la bstod pa’i sngags*). See also <https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=564>.
7. On this concept, see Berounský, “Burning the incestuous fox,” 16. In the context of this work, the term *mé nöl* (*dme mnol*) may also simply refer to serious (ritual) pollution.
8. Amended from *śvadhanaye* in the 2014 edition.
9. The 2014 and 1977 versions read *thim bur*, whereas the 1919 version has the more plausible *zim bur*.

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GLOSSARY

Bhurkuṃkūṭa

སྤྱེ་བརྟེན་པ། • *sme brtsegs* • bhurkuṃkūṭa

King Bhurkuṃkūṭa is a wrathful form of Vajrapāṇi connected to the purification of defilements and broken vows.

cattle deity

ནོར་ལྷ། • *nor lha*

This term that should not be confused with deities of wealth, who are named the same. Here, the Tibetan word *nor*, which usually denotes wealth, here refers to its older and “original” meaning of livestock.

colored yarn

བལ་ཚྭ། • *bal tshon*

Tibetan tradition includes offerings of wool or thread of five colors.

livestock deity

ཕུགས་ལྷ། • *phyugs lha*

The deity associated with various types of livestock, such as horses and cattle.

Lord of Clouds

ཁ་རྩ། • *kha rje*

A powerful god known for bringing good fortune.

pollution

དམེ་མཛོལ། • *dme mnol*

This concept consists of *mé* (*dme*), which can refer to murder (specifically of blood relations), and *nöl* (*mnol*), which has to do with incestuous relations.

shrine

གསལ་མཁའ་མཁར། • *gsas mkhar*

A shrine in which local gods may dwell.

Vajravidāraṇa

རྣམ་འཛིན་སེལ། • *rnam 'joms* • vajravidāraṇa

Vajravidāraṇa is a semi-wrathful form of Vajrapāṇi.

white and sweet foods

དྭགས་མངར་བས། • *dkar mngar zas*

The three white and three sweet foods are milk, curd, and butter, and honey, sugar, and molasses, respectively.