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## In Praise of the Domestic Deity

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION  
PROJECT

*khyim lha bstod pa*

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## INTRODUCTION

This short work is a ritual text for propitiating the domestic deity.<sup>1</sup> This deity is thought to live inside the home, often within the central pillar of the house. Rituals connected to this domestic god likely existed prior to the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet. These rites were—and still are—carried out by local tantric practitioners belonging to either the Bön or Buddhist traditions. This particular work by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo is likely a pastiche of previously existing rituals, which may or may not have been written down at the time.<sup>2</sup> One occasion in the past when such a ritual may have been carried out was during a wedding ceremony, as it served to prevent the domestic deity from becoming offended at the new bride's arrival in the house.<sup>3</sup>

# བྱིམ་ལྷ་བསྟོད་པ།

## In Praise of the Domestic Deity

I bow to the guru, the tutelary deities, and the assembly of ḍākinīs.

*Regarding the praise of the domestic deity, also known as the inner deity, one attaches to the pillar of the inner part of the home the white and red drops and all kinds of new, good-quality resin decorated with colored wool. In front of that, one makes a fire out of all kinds of nectar-containing wood<sup>4</sup> and sprinkles into it all sorts of offering substances, such as ground flour, boiled milk, and grains.*

*To start, there is the cleansing ritual. Having recited over clean water either the long or short version of the dhāraṇīs of the wrathful Vajravidāraṇa<sup>5</sup> or Bhurkumkūṭa<sup>6</sup> and so on, one sprinkles with the white tail of a shugu<sup>7</sup> and then recites:*

Hey!

From the four directions—east, south, west, and north— [47]

The water of the white tiger, the blue dragon, the red bird, and the brown tortoise  
Has been blessed as wisdom nectar.

Thereby, it ritually cleanses the deity of the inner section.

May the impure stains become clean!

It ritually cleanses the personal deities.<sup>8</sup>

May the impure stains become clean!

It ritually cleanses the paternal deities.

May the impure stains become clean!

It ritually cleanses the warrior deities.

May the impure stains become clean!

It ritually cleanses the domestic deities.  
 May the impure stains become clean!  
 It ritually cleanses the deity of the hearth.  
 May the impure stains become clean!  
 It ritually cleanses the deities above and the nāgas below  
 And the *nyen* spirits in between.<sup>9</sup>  
 May the impure stains become clean!  
 Just as the gods cleansed the Buddha  
 Right after he was born,  
 In the same way, I now cleanse  
 With pure, divine water.

OM SARVATATHĀGATA ABHIṢĒKATE SAMAYA ŚRIYE HŪM<sup>10</sup>

*Alternatively, recite whichever cleansing mantras you know, such as those of Vajravidāraṇa or Bhurkumkūṭa. After this comes the main part.*

RAM YAṀ KHAM

On an expansive bejeweled vessel that arises  
 From the syllable BHRŪM, which appears from an empty state,  
 Having been blessed by the six syllables,  
 A smoke offering becomes a gift of sensory enjoyments.

OM ĀḤ HŪM HA HO HRĪḤ

Hey!  
 In this divine house full of auspiciousness and virtue  
 Has been lit a clean and pure fire  
 Containing different kinds of nectar-containing wood.  
 Precious food and drink, grains, and medicine have been sprinkled into it.  
 By means of this smoke offering—an ocean of sensory enjoyments— [48]  
 Blessed by meditative concentration and mantra,  
 All those that have become guests at the offering ceremony  
 Have mended their samaya and confessed their transgressions.  
 To the guests who honor the Three Jewels,  
 I make this offering of nectar-containing smoke.  
 I respectfully praise and bow to them.  
 Please bless this divine house!  
 To the guests, the glorious protectors with good qualities,  
 I make this offering of nectar-containing smoke.

I respectfully praise and bow to them.  
Please support this divine house!  
To the guests, the obstructing spirits who are karma's creditors,  
I offer the sensory enjoyments through this nectar-containing smoke.  
Please avoid harming<sup>11</sup> this divine house  
And create peace and auspicious goodness  
For the compassionate guests, the six families!<sup>12</sup>  
I augment the feast of the nectar-containing smoke.  
Bring forth joy to this divine house  
And produce benefit, well-being, and supreme bodhicitta!

Hey!

O owner of this divine house,  
Who is called the domestic deity Geltung,<sup>13</sup>  
Whose body is radiantly golden in color,  
Whose turquoise jewelry jingles,  
Whose silken clothing flutters,  
Who holds a pillar made of shell in his hand,  
Please come here today out of joy  
And partake in the nectar-containing smoke offering!  
I respectfully praise and bow to you!  
O owner and sponsors,  
Please protect this divine house! [49]  
Do not let the golden pillar collapse!  
Do not let the turquoise beams break!  
Protect this residence from fire's harm!  
O sponsors, please be a friend to this place.  
Be on guard all day long  
And be on watch all night;  
Fulfill wishes accordingly,  
And prevent disrupting conditions.  
Please protect it as if it were your dearest child.  
Please create peace and auspiciousness.

Hey!

Furthermore, to the deities and the nāgas,  
To the *sadak*, *gyal*, and *tsen* spirits, and the *mamos* and so on<sup>14</sup>  
Ever-present in and attached to this divine house itself,  
And to all of the *genyen* mountain deities and the assembly of *yamas*,<sup>15</sup>  
I offer nectar-containing juniper smoke.  
I dedicate to them an ocean full of the qualities of the sensory pleasures.

May their wishes be fulfilled and their aspirations be achieved!  
Please put an end to sudden obstacles!<sup>16</sup>  
With a peaceful and helpful mind  
And without being aggressive or jealous,  
Please be a close friend to this sponsor.  
Do not forget to be a guard and a night watch.  
Please create peace and auspiciousness.

Hey!  
High praise to the precious Jewels!  
High praise to the qualities of the glorious protectors!  
High praise to the fierce domestic deity!  
High praise to the personal deities!  
High praise to all those who do good!  
Praise to the deities and protectors high above!  
You will expel the obstacle-creating spirits and malicious ghosts<sup>17</sup> down below!  
All the white deities and protectors [50]  
Shine bright light, like the sun and moon!  
They are majestic and great, like a mountain!  
They are gloriously assembled, like jewels!  
Their voices are loud, like the turquoise dragon's!  
They inspire joy in everyone's minds.  
May the sponsors have a long life without illnesses,  
And may there be auspiciousness so that all goals be achieved!

Hey!  
May the gurus give their blessings!  
May the tutelary deities grant spiritual attainments!  
May the Dharma protectors bring about enlightened activity!  
May the fierce domestic deity always protect us!  
May the personal deities and the nāgas increase well-being!  
May they be victorious in combat against the dark-colored, obstacle-causing spirits!  
May they raise the banners of the white-colored and virtuous!  
Even the evil spirits will be loving, like to their own children.  
Life, power, and merit will be increased.  
Fortune, luck,<sup>18</sup> and material wealth will gather like clouds.  
Days will be auspicious and nights will be auspicious;  
All night and all day there will be well-being.  
May there be auspiciousness and happiness in abundance!  
*Ki so!* Fortune! May the gods be victorious!<sup>19</sup>



SVĀSTI SVĀSTI BHRŪṂ BHRŪṂ SVĀHĀ

*The owners of the house call upon the deities and scatter the different kinds of grains. The tantric practitioner spreads flowers and utters whatever auspicious words they know. Then follows a feast, and auspicious and happy divine dances and so on should be performed.*

*Maṅgalam.*<sup>20</sup>

## NOTES

1. This term (*khyim lha*) can also be translated as “deity of the house” or “house god”; alternatively, it is also known as the inner deity (*phug lha*, *nang lha*).
2. Some earlier ritual works that propitiate the domestic deity are: *skyes lha yul lha khyim lha sgo thab lha phyugs lha bzhi po'i gsol mchod bkra shis char 'bebs*; *khyim lha gso thabs phywa g.yang dkor mdzod rin chen bde legs*; Karma Chagme (gnas mdo karma chags med), *khyim lha bstod pa rin po che'i legs tshogs*.
3. See Jansen, “A Tibetan Nuptial Oratorical Tradition,” 58–59.
4. The 2014 edition reads *shing sna las ga ra*, while the 1919 edition has the more understandable *shing sna la me sbar* (21b3).
5. Vajravīdāraṇa is a semi-wrathful form of Vajrapāṇi. For translations of this dhāraṇī as found in the Kangyur collection (*gzungs 'dus*), see the *Vajravīdāraṇānāmadhāraṇī*.
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. *shug gu rting dkar*. Here, it can be seen as an alternative spelling for *shog bu* (“paper”). The word also appears in a Bön ritual text from Mustang, and it has been conjectured that it is some sort of bird species. See Drangsong No. 2.
8. *'go ba'i lha*. In Tibet, one is believed to have been born with these five protective deities, which are associated with different parts of the body. See also Berounský, “Iconography and Texts of the Tibetan Five Protecting Deities,” 331–40.
9. The *nyen* (*gnyan*) are earth spirits commonly associated with trees. See <https://rywiki.tsadra.org/index.php/gnyan>.
10. “OM. All tathagātas consecrate in a blessed assembly. HŪM.” For the Sanskrit mantra *om āḥ sarvatathāgatābhīṣekasamayāsriye hūṃ*, see <http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/351/1414>.
11. The 2014 edition reads *gongs*, while the 1919 edition has *spongs* (22b1). The former is clearly a mistake.
12. *rigs drug*. Presumably these are the six buddha families.

13. According to L.A. Waddell, the domestic deity moves around the house based on the lunar calendar. In the first and second months, this deity resides in the center of the house and is then called Geltung (gel thung, also spelled ge'u thung and ge thung). See Waddell, "The Tibetan House-Demon," 39–41. While not stating his sources, this information is partially corroborated by sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *bai DUr+ya dkar po*, 400b. On the *khyim lha* and its iconography as found in the latter work, see Schuh, "Die sa-bdag (Erdherrengeister) und die Schwierigkeiten der Interpretation illuminierter Manuskripte," 8, 86.
14. Included among the local spirits are *sa bdag*, *rgyal*, and *btsan*. For a useful overview of these beings, see Gelle, "Spirits of the Soil, Land, and Locality in Tibet (*sa bdag*, *gzhi bdag*, *yul lha*)," 1226–32. The *ma mo* (*mātrkā*) is a wrathful female spirit seen long ago as maleficent but then included in the retinue of Ekajaṭī.
15. For a description of the *dge bsnjen* and a mention of the twelve *ya ma* goddesses, see Rikhey, "The Nature-Deities of Tibet," 127, 135.
16. *'gegs rigs*. This term also signifies a class of obstacle-causing spirits.
17. *'byung po* (*bbūta*).
18. The concepts of *phywa* ("fortune") and *g.yang* ("luck") can be difficult to translate; for a discussion, see Berounský, "Tibetan Myths on 'Good Fortune' (*phywa*) and 'Well-Being' (*g.yang*)," 55–77.
19. The cry *ki bswo* is a victory chant shouted during purification ceremonies or when topping a mountain pass. It is followed by *cha'o*, a call for an increase in the *phywa* mentioned above, being a mixture of personal fortune energy and the fortune of the surrounding environment; see Norbu, *Drung, Deu, and Bön*, 72.
20. "Auspiciousness."

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