



Martin J. Boord

# A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue

The vast commentary on Vajrakīla  
that clearly defines the essential points



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## A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue

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# A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue

*The vast commentary on Vajrakīla  
that clearly defines the essential points*

annotated translations  
by Martin J. Boord

including  
*Phur 'grel 'bum nag*  
as transmitted to  
Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal



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# Contents

## Translator's preface

Dramatis personae	xiii
Indian origins	xvii
Arrangement of the Hundred Thousand Words	xxii
Subsequent spread of the doctrines	xxvii
Doctrinal themes in the 'Bum nag	xxix
India and Tibet	xxxvii
Sources & Acknowledgements	xxxxi

## EPISODE I

### Sanskrit sources for the study of *kīlanavidhi*

Kauṭilya, <i>Arthaśāstra</i>	3
<i>Sudhanakumārāvadāna</i>	3
Kuladatta, <i>Kriyāsamgrahapañjikā</i>	5
<i>Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa</i>	18
<i>Ḍāmara-tantra</i>	19
<i>Siddhaikavira-mahātantra</i>	20
<i>Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa-tantra</i>	21
<i>Mahāsukhavajrapāda, Padmini</i>	24
<i>Herukābhidāna-tantra</i>	25
<i>Samvarodaya-tantra</i>	25
<i>Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha</i>	26
<i>Guhyasamāja-tantra</i>	26
<i>Candrakīrti, Pradīpodyotana</i>	28
<i>Nāgārjuna, Pañcakrama</i>	46
<i>Muniśrībhadra, Yogīmanoharā</i>	49
<i>Vajrapāṇi (commenting on Herukābhidāna-tantra)</i>	54
<i>Śubhākaragupta, Abhisamayamañjari</i>	55
<i>Kumārakalahaṃsa, Samvararahasyasādhana</i>	57
<i>Paramarahasya-tantra</i>	58
<i>Ānandagarbha, Sarvavajrodaya</i>	59
<i>Laghukālacakra-tantra</i>	61
<i>Śrī Puṇḍarīka, Vimalaprabhā</i>	62
<i>Dharmākaraśānti, Kālacakrabhagavatsādhanaavidhi</i>	63
<i>(Laghukālacakra-tantra)</i>	67
<i>(Śrī Puṇḍarīka, Vimalaprabhā)</i>	67
<i>Padmaśrimitra, Maṇḍalopāyikā</i>	70
<i>Durjayacandra, Mitapadā</i>	70
<i>Abhayākaragupta, Vajrāvali</i>	71

## EPISODE II

*rDo rje phur pa rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi dum bu*, Fragment of the Root Tantra 79

## EPISODE III

*dPal rdo rje phur pa spu gri nag po'i rgyud*, The Black Razor Tantra 93

## EPISODE IV

Translated text of the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*

vi

### INTRODUCTION

General overview of the Vajrakīla doctrines

contents

(1) The way of summarizing <i>tantra</i> into two	110
(a) root <i>tantra</i>	110
(b) explanatory <i>tantra</i>	110
(2) The three methods of tantric exegesis	110
(a) explanation of the Kīla doctrines in accordance with <i>mahāyoga tantra</i>	110
(b) explanation of the Kīla doctrines in accordance with <i>anuyoga āgama</i>	110
(c) explanation of the Kīla doctrines in accordance with <i>atiyoga upadeśa</i>	111
(3) The six hidden precepts (six bindings) of <i>tantra</i>	111
(4) The ten steps of tantric engagement	111
(5) The twelvefold list of the essential points of <i>tantra</i>	111
(6) The twenty-one <i>tantra</i> possessing the key to the life force	112
(7) The fifty-one fundamental Kīla deities	112
(8) The two thousand six hundred and one auxiliary gods	112

Special presentation of the practice lineage

(1) The <i>nidāna</i> that introduces the <i>guru</i>	113
(a) his lineage of birth	113
(i) womb birth and miraculous emanation	113
(ii) worldly and supramundane families	113
(iii) four kinds of greatness	113
(iv) four degrees of <i>vidyādhara</i>	113
(v) eight secret code names	113



(b) his deeds and activities	118
(i) attainment of worldly power and <i>siddhi</i>	119
(ii) subjugation of dangerous beings of the eight classes	120
(iii) consecration of bSam-yas <i>vihāra</i>	123
(c) the transmission of his tradition	124
(i) <i>siddha</i> lineage	124
(ii) lineage of ordinary folk	128
(2) The <i>nidāna</i> that introduces the teacher	129
(a) the special object to be tamed	129
(b) the special being who tamed him	131
(c) the special method of taming	132
(3) The <i>nidāna</i> that introduces the <i>tantra</i>	135
(a) the time when the <i>vajra</i> vehicle of secret <i>mantra</i> arose	135
(i) the circumstances in which the <i>tantra</i> were taught	135
(ii) the period during which they appeared in the human realm	135
(b) classification of the Dharma within nine <i>yāna</i>	138
(i) the explanation that accords with the <i>trikāya</i>	138
(ii) explaining the series of nine <i>yāna</i>	138
(c) classification of the <i>tantra</i> of Vajrakīla	141
(i) from the standpoint of relative truth	141
(ii) from the standpoint of absolute truth	141

vii

contents

## DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE VAJRAKĪLA DOCTRINES

The six bindings (*chings*) or hidden precepts (*khog don*) of *tantra*

### PART ONE the higher rites:

#### Attainment of unsurpassed awakening

(1) To hold to the foundation of actions, attaining success by means of the five excellences	143
(a) the excellent person	143
(b) the excellent place	144
(c) the excellent retinue	146
(d) the excellent time	146
(e) the excellent engagement	148
(i) provisions of food for sustenance	148
(ii) provisions of antidotes to avert misfortune	148
(iii) provisions for the divine attainments	149
(iv) provisions for the fulfilment of vows	151
(v) provisions for the destruction of enemies and obstructors	151

(2) Establishing the essential layout of the triple <i>maṇḍala</i> , together with the preparatory methods of its prior approach	154
(a) seven stages of the approach ( <i>sngon 'gro</i> , preliminary practices)	154
(i) establishing the boundaries ( <i>simābandha</i> )	154
(ii) opening the symbolic door	156
(iii) paying homage to the symbols	156
(iv) adopting the sect-marks ( <i>rtags gdab pa</i> )	156
(v) confession of sins	157
(vi) the descent of blessings	158
(vii) sanctifying the three articles	158
(b) three stages of generating the reality of the triple <i>maṇḍala</i>	163
(i) generating the triple <i>samādhi</i> of the basis	163
the <i>samādhi</i> of thusness	164
the all-illuminating <i>samādhi</i>	167
the <i>samādhi</i> of cause	169
(ii) generating the <i>maṇḍala</i> palace of residence	171
(iii) generating the deities who reside there	177
the fundamental <i>dharmakāya maṇḍala</i> of the primordial state	177
the <i>sambhogakāya maṇḍala</i> of wrathful kings	185
the <i>nirmāṇakāya maṇḍala</i> of material <i>kīla</i>	194
(3) With regard to the empowerment of long life by the triple world, one empowers the life force of the wisdom gods by means of the life force	203
(4) Invoking the wisdom deities of the <i>maṇḍala</i> , one takes the essence of <i>siddhi</i> through offerings and ritual service	205
(a) invitation of the wisdom deities	205
(i) prayers of supplication	205
(ii) the actual invitation	205
(b) presenting them with eight kinds of offerings	206
(i) offerings made with the hands to the <i>maṇḍala</i> in the sky	206
(ii) the absorption [of the wisdom beings] and offerings of embrace made by four goddesses	206
(iii) offering the <i>bali</i> cake ( <i>gtor ma</i> )	209
(iv) offering the nectar medicine ( <i>bdud rtsi sman</i> )	211
(v) offering the blood of the three terminations ( <i>tshar gsum</i> )	212
(vi) offering union and slaughter ( <i>sbyor sgrol</i> )	214
(vii) praying for what we want	216
(viii) offerings to the assembly and hymns of praise	218
(c) performing the ritual service ( <i>sevā</i> )	220
(d) taking <i>siddhi</i> at the time of the offerings	221

PART TWO the lower rites:  
Annihilation of enemies and obstructors

(5) Endowed with the transmitted precepts ( <i>āgama</i> ) of cleansing ablution, the transmitted precepts of longevity and the six techniques of hidden <i>mantra</i> , one performs the rite of implantation	223
(a) the six techniques of hidden <i>mantra</i>	223
(b) the transmitted precepts of cleansing ablution and of longevity	228
(c) the genuine rite of implantation	231
(6) The final three activities of pressing down, burning and hurling	234
(a) pressing down	234
(b) burning	240
pacification <i>homa</i>	240
enriching <i>homa</i>	240
overpowering <i>homa</i>	240
fierce <i>homa</i>	240
(c) hurling	244

ix

PART THREE  
Further analysis

The ten steps of tantric engagement

(1) The general points are covered by three kinds of <i>nidāna</i> or introduction	251
(2) The meaning is made clear by the threefold definition ( <i>lakṣaṇatā</i> )	251
(a) defining the <i>maṇḍala</i>	251
(b) defining the <i>mantra</i>	254
(c) defining the materials required in the rite	257
(3) <i>Kīla</i> of four materials that penetrate the four extremes	259
(a) the <i>kīla</i> of wisdom awareness	259
(b) the <i>kīla</i> of emanated compassion	260
(c) the <i>kīla</i> of secret <i>bodhicitta</i>	261
(d) the material <i>kīla</i> with signs	263
(4) Straightening out the rules of the activities by three great traditions of practice	266
(5) The wisdom deities are caused to enter the vital point by means of the all-encompassing <i>mantra</i>	267
(6) The <i>ḍākinī</i> are really incited by means of malign spells of 18 assembled syllables in three groups of six	268
(7) The vital essence of the three visualizations is expressed in accordance with the three meanings of 'life force'	269
(8) Black deeds are performed by means of 18 great traditions of liberation	270
(9) Ritual activity is supplemented by eight masteries	271
(10) All rites are discharged by the three extreme subjugations	272

contents

## The twelvefold list of the essential points of *tantra*

	(1) If one does not know the six far-reaching lines of liturgical verse, the higher activities cannot be distinguished from the lower	273
	(2) If one does not know the six techniques of hidden <i>mantra</i> , the fierce <i>mantra</i> nail cannot wound the enemy	273
	(3) If one does not know the six hidden connections, the concealed secrets cannot be understood	274
	(4) If one does not know the scissors which are the life force of the oral instructions, the life force of the enemies and obstructors will not be severed	275
	(5) If one does not know the rite of the great billowing wings, the soul of the enemies and obstructors will not be drawn forth	276
x	(6) If one does not know the ritual of the secret <i>kila</i> which is a lion's roar of argumentation, the <i>yogin</i> has no method of liberation from internal dispute	277
	(7) If one does not know the method of determining the central point, engaging in activities will only rebound	279
contents	(8) If one does not know the method of turning the wheel, one's activities will not be accomplished	279
	(9) If one does not know the method of equipping the effigy, the focal point of the visualizations will be worthless	280
	(10) If one does not know the true nature of the fundamental ground, the implantation will be meaningless	280
	(11) If one does not know the deeper intention of the precepts of longevity and the ablution water, there will be mere malign <i>mantra</i>	280
	(12) If one does not know the rites of elevating to a higher plane, one will be merely a butcher	281

## The four *kila*

(1) The sky-like practitioner nails the <i>kila</i> of wisdom awareness into the ground of the <i>dharmadhātu</i>	282
(2) The mountain-like practitioner nails the <i>kila</i> of the rope of embracing compassion into the ground of all sentient beings in the triple world	284
(3) The practitioner who is like a <i>kalantaka</i> bird nails the <i>kila</i> of secret <i>bodhicitta</i> into the mother's sky	286
(4) The practitioner who is like the trunk of a sandalwood tree nails the material <i>kila</i> into the enemies and obstructors	289

### Three groups of malign *mantra*

The outer system of the DHADDHI <i>mantra</i>	294
The inner system of the assembly (' <i>dus pa</i> )	295
The secret system of combination ( <i>bsdu yig</i> )	297
Implantation of the <i>kila</i> in accordance with the traditions of slaughter	299

### *Tantra, āgama and upadeśa*

#### Root texts, transmitted precepts and oral instructions

The arousal of <i>bodhicitta</i>	301
An explanation of the empowerments	
(a) the instructions	303
(b) the practice	
the vase empowerment	305
the secret empowerment	307
the wisdom knowledge empowerment	308
the fourth empowerment	309
The method of deity generation and its seals (outer <i>utpattikrama</i> )	310
<i>samādhi</i> of creative meditation	
the <i>yoga</i> of the generation stage, which is skilful method	311
the <i>yoga</i> of the completion stage, which is wisdom	311
the <i>yoga</i> of both together, which is non-dual	312
Accepting the accomplishments ( <i>siddhi</i> )	
generating accomplishments by means of <i>sādhana</i>	313
absorbing the accomplishments	315
developing the accomplishments	
(inner <i>utpattikrama</i> )	318
(secret <i>utpattikrama</i> )	320
The view of infallible perception	321
The code of conduct that reaches the ultimate goal	322
Sacred oaths that are not to be transgressed	324
The rite of implantation	326
The seven-day observance for the dead	328
The rite of cremation ('inner <i>homa</i> rite')	332
Preparation of votary or reliquary <i>sāccha</i>	336
Installation of the deity	336
Regulations of the ritual service	
ordinary recitation	339
special recitation	342
three deeds of refreshing sustenance	343

## EPISODE V

Verses of aspiration for success in the practice of Vajrakīla	347
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## APPENDIX

Bibliography	353
Index	359





## PREFACE

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### Dramatis personae

The main text presented in this volume is the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, *The Black One Hundred Thousand [words] Commentary on the Kila*. The title 'Black One Hundred Thousand' indicates a complete cycle of teachings ('bum), vast in its scope, that is clearly defined and precise (*nag po*) in its methodological application. This 'unambiguous and clear set of teachings from which nothing has been omitted' has at its heart the deliberations of three *ācārya*, Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and the Nepali Śilamañju, who extensively revised and commented upon all that they had heard of *kila* lore whilst cloistered away together in a religious retreat at Yang-le-shod (present-day Pharping, Nepal).

This work is of seminal importance for it clearly witnesses the very origin of the cult of Vajrakila. It was precisely during this retreat that the many strands of *kila* lore were finally woven together into a coherent masterpiece of tantric Buddhism and thus it helps to illuminate the process by which tantric methods were being related to soteriology at this time. Beautifully codified in terms of both theory and practice, this divine scheme of meditation and magic was subsequently transmitted to Tibet and became established there as one of the major modes of religious engagement. So much so, in fact, that many previous writers on Tibet have actually assumed the *kila* cult to be of Tibetan origin.

According to traditional accounts, the doctrines of Vajrakila were first taught among the gods and *nāga* before being transmitted to the human realm. They were subsequently propagated in India by Indrabhūti, Dhanasaṃskṛta, Śrisimha, Prabhasthi and an unnamed *kāpālīka* brahmin. *Kila* chronicles, such as the *Concise History*<sup>1</sup> written by gTsang mkhan-chen and the *gNam lcags spu gri lo rgyus chos 'byung* by bDud-'joms rinpoche, say that these Vajrakila doctrines were taught by Indrabhūti to Dhanasaṃskṛta who then passed them on to Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra and Śilamañju. These three companions addition-

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1 The *Phur pa'i chos 'byung bsdus pa* is to be found in gTsang mkhan-chen, *rDo rje phur pa'i chos 'byung* pp.161-196. Published by Taklung Tsetrul, Darjeeling, 1979.

ally received teachings from Prabhahasti. Furthermore, the doctrines of Vajrakīla are said to have been taught in Khotan by Vairocana, who studied in India under Śrisimha.

Unfortunately, no pertinent Indic text survives from this period and we know only very little of the masters who were responsible for the transmission of the *kīla* doctrines during that far-off epoch. The essentially hagiographical accounts that are available tell us that the teacher Prabhahasti was born in Zahor, in western India. He studied *vinaya* with the master Puṇyakīrti and went for ordination into the *bhikṣu saṅgha* with Śāntiprabha who gave him the name Śākyaprabha. Becoming learned in the entire *tripiṭaka*, he studied the path of esoteric *tantra* with the masters Vajrahāsyā (who studied under dGa'-rab rdo-rje) and so on, and accomplished the final stage of great bliss. His name as a follower of *guhyamantra* was Prabhahasti. With regard to the *mahāyogatantra*, at the time of the *ḍākinī*'s revelation of the eight transmitted precepts (*bka' brgyad*) from the great *stūpa* in Śītavana,<sup>2</sup> Prabhahasti received the section on Vajrakīla which he sent to Padmasambhava in Yang-le-shod as a means of subduing the obstacles to his practice. It was from Prabhahasti also that Padmasambhava received ordination. The *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* says that, on that occasion, Padmasambhava was given the name Śākya bshes-gnyen. Other texts say that the name was Śākyasimha. Padmasambhava is said to have received teachings on Vajrakīla from Prabhahasti on eighteen separate occasions. It is also recorded that Buddhaguhya was one of Prabhahasti's students.

Concerning Padmasambhava himself, the *'Bum nag* has a whole chapter devoted to his biography and it would therefore be superfluous to say anything more here.

Vimalamitra was born in Hastivana (Hastithala), also in western India.<sup>3</sup> It is said that he studied the entire *tripiṭaka* of *sūtra* and *tantra*, becoming a most erudite scholar. Then Vajrasattva appeared before him and said, "For 500 lifetimes you have been a great *paṇḍita* and you have studied the true Dharma, but still you have not attained its fruit. Therefore you must go to the temple of the Bodhi Tree in China." When he reached that place he encountered Śrisimha, the master of *atiyoga* (*rdzogs chen*, great perfection), from whom he received aural instructions for twenty years. Later he received the *atiyoga* texts from Jñānasūtra. Vimalamitra was also particularly learned in the *Māyājāla* cycle which he learned from Buddhaguhya and, at the time of the *ḍākinī*'s revelation of the eight transmitted precepts from the great *stūpa* in Śītavana, Vimalamitra received the section on Vajrāmṛta. For twenty years he resided in Kāmarūpa as the priest and *guru* of king Haribhadra. He also remained for seven years in the great charnel ground of Prabhāskara, where he taught hordes of untamed creatures and left a concealed legacy of Treasure Dharma (*gter chos*). At the invitation of Nyang Ting-nge-'dzin bzang-po, one of the ministers of Khri Srong-

2 For details, see my *Cult of the Deity Vajrakīla*, Chapter IV.

3 Kashmir, according to Yeshe Tsoygal, *The Lotus-Born*, Shambhala, 1993, p.113.







lde'u-btsan, he subsequently went to Tibet and at that time Vimalamitra was said to have been 200 years old. Teaching the highest doctrines of *atiyoga*, assisting with the work of translation, and concealing Treasure texts for future revelation, Vimalamitra remained in Tibet for thirteen years. We are most interested here to note his involvement in the translation of the *Kilanirvāṇa-tantra*, a work often quoted in the '*Bum nag*, as well as the *Phur pa 'phrin las phun sum tshogs pa* in 15 chapters and the *Phur pa bcu gnyis 'byung ba'i rgyud chung bsdan pa*, all of which are to be found in the various 'Collections of Ancient Tantras' (*rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*). It is believed that the rainbow body ('*ja' lus*) of Vimalamitra now resides upon mount Wu-tai-shan, the five-peaked abode of Mañjuśrī in China, from whence he sends emanations to Tibet once every hundred years in order to propagate the *Vima snying-thig*, the innermost essence of his instructions on *atiyoga*.<sup>4</sup>

Very little seems to have been recorded concerning the life of Śīlamañju. Our text refers to him throughout simply as *bal po*, 'the Newar,' 'the Nepalese.' bDud-'joms rinpoche, in his *History of the Nyingma School*, follows Bu-ston in saying that Śīlamañju was one of four foreign scholars invited to Tibet by Khri Srong-btsan sgam-po, in the early half of the seventh century, for whom he worked as a translator of sacred texts. This cannot be the same Śīlamañju who, with a flourish of his *kila* one hundred years later, caused the white rock face of mount Gong-po to crumble. Only slightly more plausible is the report in the *Padma bka' thang* that Śīlamañju was invited to Tibet by Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan.<sup>5</sup> Among his other deeds at that time, he is supposed to have worked with Vasudhara (another Newar) and the native scholar Sangs-rgyas ye-shes in the translation of a *tantra* of Yamāntaka. There is, however, no such translation to be found either in the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum* or in the revised *bKa' 'gyur*. Our present text, the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, makes no mention of Śīlamañju in Tibet although it does associate him very closely with Padmasambhava in both India and Nepal. Indeed, according to this source, the three scholars responsible for its compilation were ordained together by the master Buddhaguhya in the great charnel ground Śītavana, in the holy land of Magadha (southern Bihar). Also in India they practised *sādhana* together at rGya-mtsho'i-gling (\*Sāgaradvīpa or Jalendradvīpa, location unknown) and thereafter travelled together to the master Prabhahasti, from whom they received teachings on the deity Vajrakīla. At the end of his life, Śīlamañju attained the rainbow body of great transference (*mahāvīyutkrāntikāya*), leaving no corporeal remains behind.<sup>6</sup>

4 For a more detailed biography of Vimalamitra see: Tulku Thondup, *Masters of Meditation and Miracles*, Shambhala, 1996, pp.68-73.

For details of his activities in Tibet see the *Padma bka' thang* LXXX, LXXXI & *passim*: Douglas & Bays, *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, pp.480 ff.

5 Douglas & Bays, *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, p.488.

6 NSTB p.38.



xvi

preface

Another of the historical personages mentioned in the preamble of our text is the master Buddhaguhya. Born in central India and ordained at Nālandā, Buddhaguhya is reputed to have studied the esoteric *tantra* under such luminary scholars as Buddhajñānapāda and Prabhahasti. Attaining *siddhi*, he moved to Oḍḍiyāna where he mastered the *Māyājāla* cycle under Līlāvajra. Buddhaguhya transmitted the precepts of the *Māyājāla* cycle to both Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava and, according to the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, it was Buddhaguhya who recommended that Padmasambhava be invited to Tibet to assist in the foundation of bSam-yas monastery. It is said that, on many occasions he met deities in the flesh. On a visit to Potala mountain he saw Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, who exhorted him to go to Tibet. During his lifetime in Tibet, Buddhaguhya supervised the translation of many important and authoritative treatises and transmitted the precepts of the *Māyājāla* cycle to a number of disciples in the region of mount Kailash. Even after his death, it is believed that he continues to emanate teaching forms in order to instruct disciples of later ages.

According to the *Phur pa che mchog gi lo rgyus*, the *sādhana* at rGya-mtsho'i-gling mentioned above was an *amṛta* practice under the direction of the master Dhanasaṃskṛta, and it was the obstacles encountered by the three *ācārya* at that time that prompted them to search out and study the Kila doctrines.<sup>7</sup> Because the three of them each had a different perception of what had been taught, they then cloistered themselves together in a private seminar in Yang-le-shod where they worked on consolidating their divergent opinions. It therefore seems clear that, before the time of the three *ācārya*, a substantial body of Kila knowledge must already have been in fairly widespread circulation, and this is indeed supported by the Sanskrit literature presented in our opening chapter. The religious chronicles, however, make it clear that this accumulated wealth of knowledge incorporated inconsistencies and was therefore in need of revision. It was in response to this need, then, that the three *vajra* masters held their seminar in Nepal, somewhere around the middle of the eighth century AD, during which they discussed all the teachings that they had collected in India prior to this date. The present text called *The Black One Hundred Thousand Word Commentary on the Kila*, greatly revered in Tibet as an unrivalled masterwork, is the report of that seminar consolidating this body of knowledge, as it has come down to us today.

Having reached a consensus, it is said, the three *ācārya* retired together to the Asura Cave, also in the Kathmandu valley, for a lengthy yogic retreat focussing on Kila.

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7 See my *Cult of the Deity Vajrakila*, pp.111-114.

## Indian origins

All over the world, wherever people practise the art of cursing one another, we find sharp pins (*kila/kilaka*) of one sort or another employed as magical weapons with which to spike the traces or effigy of an enemy whose presence is called to mind. There are many references to such acts of witchcraft to be found in the grimoires of medieval India, and an old rite of this sort is recommended by the non-Buddhist Kauṭilya, a minister in the court of Candragupta, in his Machiavellian treatise *Arthaśāstra*. The notion of being the victim of pinning down is brought forward in the eighth century drama *Mālatīmādhava* in which a certain love-lorn woman lamenting her fate complains “Even breathing for me has become a *vajrakila*.” Commenting on the word *vajrakila*, Harihara in his *ṭikā* explains that anything which does not go away even when one wishes it to go away is a *vajrakila*.<sup>8</sup> Thus it appears common knowledge that whatever is pegged down by the *vajra* spike is immovably fixed.

Such ideas and their concomitant magical practices for the subjugation or destruction of enemies were subsequently incorporated into the tantric texts compiled throughout the following centuries and many similar references are to be found in later sources, both Buddhist and Śaivite.

A more refined type of *kila* ritual is also encountered in our literature, in which the sorcerer strives to gain control over an area of ground, either by subjugating the centre or the periphery. To illustrate this theme I cite an early *avadāna* story in which four spikes joined together with string are used to enclose an area (in this case, a pond) in order to capture its inhabitant (a young *nāga*). This notion of an area of land being held firmly under control by the placement of spikes seems to have become axiomatic for Indian scholars in the eighth-ninth centuries because in an entirely non-tantric commentary on the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* the author Haribhadra describes the site of the Buddha’s enlightenment (*bodhimaṇḍa*) as “a portion of land within which a set of four *vajrakila* are established in the intermediate directions.”<sup>9</sup>

This leads us on to a typical architectural rite from the Kathmandu Valley (below, p.5 ff), in which a plot of land designated to become the site of a monastery is purified and blessed (i.e. taken under control). Employing a ground plan of six by six regular square chambers (the *ugrapīṭha* plan), the master stands in the centre pacifying the innermost four chambers and places a wrathful protective deity in each of the remaining 32. He then presents each wrathful deity with a *kila* in his own likeness and commands them to hammer down any demons that may prove obstructive to the cause of the future monastery. Four of these deities fix their *kila* in the inner corners of the ground, but the remaining 28 deities take their *kila* to the edge of the site and hammer



xvii

preface

8 Text of the *Mālatīmādhava* by Bhavabhūti, together with *ṭikā* by Harihara, published in Pondichery by Institut Français, *Publications du Département d’Indologie* 77, 1999.

9 *vidiksthītavajrakīlacatuṣṭayāntargato bhūmibhāgaḥ* // Haribhadra, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, edited by Unrai Wogihara, Tokyo, 1932, p.206.

them down around the periphery. Having thus rendered the ground pure and free of any impediment, the standing spikes are later connected together by lengths of string which are to be used by the workmen as guide lines for the construction of the monastery walls and so on.

These two models of praxis, bringing harm to an enemy or taking control of a plot of land, are really both dedicated to a single end — the subjugation of evil, either visible (i.e. in human form) or invisible (hostile gods and demons). Thus they are both subsumed by Padmasambhava in his teachings under the rubric ‘material *kila* for the destruction of obstacles.’ This, he says, is the lowest level of *kila* practice, far surpassed by the three higher *kila* of wisdom, compassion and non-dual *bodhicitta*. This analysis of *kīlanavidhi* into four types taught in the ‘*Bum nag* is nowhere found explicitly stated in the Sanskrit texts but all four are implied in the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* (GST), the most comprehensive of all our Indic sources.

The *kila* of wisdom awareness is alluded to in the GST in a passage which states that the rite of nailing down is ‘born of the true condition’ (*tattvasambhava*) (GST XIV,76) This theme is taken up more pointedly by later commentators on the GST, especially by Nāgārjuna in his explication of the preliminary apotropaic rites in which he emphasizes the lack of inherent existence in all such meditation.

Compassionate aspects of the practice of slaughter (*māraṇa*) are also regularly emphasized in the Sanskrit sources. Being transfixed with a *kila* and hammered down, the host of obstacle-creating demons are established in the great bliss of the natural condition in which there is but a single taste, they say.

Certain erotic practices are also encountered here, following an old Indian paradigm of sexual *yoga* in which the *yogin* in union with his consort allows a solitary drop of *bodhicitta* (semen) to move to the ‘jewel’ (tip) of his *vajra* (penis) where it merges with a drop of female sexual fluid. His task is then to withdraw this fertilized seed back into his own body and cause it to enter the central channel (*avadhūti*), via which it ascends until it reaches the crown of his head. As a result of this ‘reabsorption of the aroused Akṣobhya’ the *yogin* achieves great bliss and liberation from all the fetters of *saṃsāra*. In the rites of Vajrakila as taught in the GST, the *yogin* employs his *kila* (penis, referred to by Padmasambhava as the *kila* of *bodhicitta*) to reach the places of his victim’s body, speech and mind while that enemy lies imprisoned within the triangular pit (*yonī*, *dharmodaya*) of the *yoginī* consort. “As soon as he is struck” says the text, the *yogin* must withdraw his seed and cause it to ascend the central channel. On these occasions, however, the purpose of the *yogin* is not his own blissful liberation but the ‘liberation’ (i.e. slaughter) of his enemy, and this is achieved by his capture of the victim’s body, speech and mind which has become merged with the *yogin*’s shining drop of *bodhicitta*.

Both the deity Vajrakila and a great deal of *kila* lore are encountered in the GST. Indeed, this text and such other Indic sources as are known today present us with a considerable amount of scattered information. The *hṛdaya* of the *kila*,



which becomes the personal *mantra* of the deity, is encountered for the first time in the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* (STTS), together with the myth of the subjugation of Rudra which comes to the fore in the subsequent Tibetan tradition. A retinue of ten wrathful kings (*daśakrodharāja*) and much esoteric understanding of *kilaṇavidhi* is taken over from the Indian Guhyasamāja tradition and all of this is incorporated into the meditative system organized by our three *ācārya* which subsequently became widely known throughout Tibet. Their system, however, evidently failed to become popular in the land of its origin, for the heart *mantra* of the deity is acknowledged as such by only one later exegete, Kuladatta of Kathmandu. The later Abhayākara Gupta is quite dismissive of this powerful *mantra* which, by his time, had been accorded the highest status in Tibet. It may also be of interest to note here the transmutations undergone by this *mantra* throughout the course of its history. All Indian traditions address the deity with the vocative VAJRAKĪLA but this is transmitted to Tibet as VAJRAKĪLI. The original *hṛdaya* as found in the STTS includes the imperative BANDHAYA (*you must suppress*) which is shortened to BANDHA in the Kuladatta text and to the seed-syllable BĀM in most of the Tibetan sources. The VKMK uses BĀM in the *hṛdaya* of Vajrakila and BANDHA in the *mantra* of the retinue. Abhayākara Gupta omits this part of the *mantra* completely.

Nor does any Indian Kila source make mention of Rudra's defeat, or place Vajrakila as the lord of his own *maṇḍala*. There is, in fact, not a single text (either root *tantra* or commentary) devoted to this deity currently available in Sanskrit. Tibetan texts, on the other hand, both root *tantra* and commentaries, are very numerous indeed. The Indian sources speak much more of hammering down the *kila*, which in later texts is often described as being in the likeness of the deity who hammers it down. The three *ācārya*, however, transmitted to Tibet an early image reminiscent of the churning of the ocean, for they describe the deity as semi-demonic and 'rolling a *kila* the size of mount Meru between the palms of his hands.' The action of nailing down in this system is more plunging (descending like a bolt of lightning) and twisting (rolling) than the slow hammering of the Sanskrit sources. The *mantra* of Vajranakha (OM̐ GHA GHA GHĀTAYA etc.) that finds a prominent place in the Indian system is generally relegated in the Tibetan to only a minor role that slips beneath the lofty gaze of the *Bum 'nag*.<sup>10</sup> This level of nailing down is primarily related to the earth rituals (*bhūmivīdhi*) of *kriyātantra*, performed as part of the general process of purifying and taking control of a plot of ground in the context of architecture. A wandering Tibetan *yogin*, also, may well invoke such rites as he hammers down the pegs of his dwelling tent at night, for in this type of process the *kila* are generally arrayed around the outer periphery of the sacred space and they do not often

10 An early Tibetan manuscript discovered in Dunhuang, however, utilizes this Vajranakha *mantra* as the activity *mantra* for the rite of slaying. This same MS also uses the *hṛdaya* of Body, Speech and Mind from the GST (see below: pp.39-42) as *mantra* for the consecration of the *kila*. See: Mayer & Cantwell, "A Dunhuang Manuscript on Vajrakilaya."



encroach upon the centre. In India, their function on the liminal borders of the *maṇḍala* is to destroy the demon lords who may hinder the smooth operation of the *maṇḍala*, and to frighten away their minions. In the Tibetan tradition centering upon Vajrakīla, on the other hand, all controlling members of the opposition are enslaved and bound under oath to serve the cause of Buddhist Dharma as 'converts' to the more powerful religion. It is only minor (i.e. personal) enemies that are slaughtered outright and transferred to places of better rebirth.

The extant Sanskrit sources, furthermore, present us with a fluctuating pattern of *kīla* deities, for each text assigns the task of nailing down obstructing demons (*viḥṇakīlana*) to suitable members of its own retinue. The earliest mention of the complete 51-deity Vajrakīla *maṇḍala* as encountered in Tibet is found in a short *tantra*, said to be merely a fragment of the root text, that Padmasambhava himself carried there across the mountains from India. Unfortunately the original is no longer available and we must make do here with its 13th century translation into Tibetan by the Sa-skya *paṇḍita*. This vital document, then, is presented herein as our second chapter.

In its initial summary overview, the 'Bum nag says that the 51 deities of the basic *maṇḍala* are follows:

- (01-20) The ten *krodha* kings together with their ten wrathful wives.
- (21-40) Their twenty animal-headed emanations (*piśāci*).
- (41-45) The five Supreme Sons.
- (46-49) The four goddesses who guard the *maṇḍala* gateways.
- (50-51) The central divine *yuganaddha* couple.

Prior knowledge of this *maṇḍala* is presumed throughout the text and, thus, having shown in the first instance just how the deities are enumerated, they are mentioned by name only when some detail or other of their individual characters is being highlighted. Familiarity with this *maṇḍala* is required for anyone who wishes to comprehend some of the more arcane details encountered in the body of the text which is, after all, a commentary for *yogins* already initiated into the mysteries of the *maṇḍala*. As far as initiates are concerned, such details would be superfluous here because, for them, the source of information on this topic is the devotional liturgy in which the process of generation stage *yoga* is described in full.<sup>11</sup>

The colour scheme of the *maṇḍala* is variously described in the different Tibetan lineages of Kīla practice. As for the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, this states (translation p.189) that, at the time of the ritual service, all the deities in the east are white, the south yellow, west red, and north green. Deities in the intermediate directions combine the colours of the two adjacent cardinal directions. The zenith is the colour of the sky and the nadir is the colour of darkness. Possessed

11 For a listing of the *maṇḍala* deities see my *Cult of the Deity Vajrakīla*, pp.88-89. NB. The 'red bear' (Tib. *dred*) listed as the devourer in the northeast in that study is replaced in the present work by hyena.



of three faces and six arms, the right and left faces of the wrathful kings are like those of the intermediate directions. Each is actively embraced by a consort who has one face and two arms. She may be blue in colour or the same colour as her lord, and it is explained that the animal-headed emanations to the right and left of these couples are the same colour as the faces to the right and left of the *krodha* kings.

Note that the 20 animal-headed emanations that accompany these ten wrathful kings and their wives are in male/female pairs in the '*Bum nag*, the males generated on the right from white *bindu*, and the females on the left from red *bindu*. In both the VKMK and the entire corpus of Northern Treasures literature, however, these emanations are all female.<sup>12</sup>

Of fundamental importance in the layout of the *maṇḍala* is the sequence in which the deities are invoked. When preparing the representational *maṇḍala* of coloured powders, or whatever other medium is employed, actual wooden or metal pegs are hammered into the ground in the positions of these deities. Generally speaking, the '*Bum nag* (in common with both the VKMK and the Northern Treasures tradition) favours the sequence opening out from the centre to the periphery which is pegged down starting with Hūmkāra in the zenith and then moving clockwise around the horizontal from east to southeast and so on around to the northeast, finishing with Mahābala in the nadir. Our text is not perfectly consistent in this respect, however. In the *āgama* section at the end of the '*Bum nag*, for example, the *kīla* of the four cardinal directions are invoked first, followed by those of the intermediate directions beginning with the southeast, and the sequence ends with the zenith and nadir. In our first chapter (Sanskrit sources), we see that later Indian *ācārya* such as Abhayākara Gupta also follow this latter system, except that they begin the circle of intermediate directions with the *kīla* of the northeast, and the tradition of the *Kālacakra-tantra* is different again.

It should be noted also that, despite the way in which the '*Bum nag* enumerates the deities (listing Vajrakumāra and his consort as 50 and 51), the central nail is always the first to be placed in position.

Next are the five Supreme Sons comprising the blue Vajrakīla in the centre encircled by the white Buddhakīla in the east, the yellow Ratnakīla in the south, the red Padmakīla in the west, and the green Karmakīla in the north.

Finally, there are the four goddesses who guard the *maṇḍala* gateways.

Emanated from these 51 deities, it is said, are 2,601 gods. This number is simply 51<sup>2</sup>, derived by taking each deity in turn to stand at the centre of his or her own *maṇḍala* of 51 deities.

The short *tantra* known as the *Black Razor* (BRT) takes this *maṇḍala* with the lord Vajrakīla at its centre and presents it as a peerless means for accomplishing

12 At one point in the present text also (translation p.209), Padmasambhava refers to this group as entirely female.

For the Northern Treasures tradition, see the BRT (below) and bibliography.





‘the unsurpassed *bodhicitta* of utterly stainless purity which cleanses the perceptions of *saṃsāra*.’ This is the point of view assumed by the authors of the *Phur ‘grel ‘bum nag*, and thus the *Black Razor Tantra* is included in its entirety here as our third chapter. The themes of this text are then thoroughly explored and explicated in the following pages which constitute the crux of the present volume, the *Hundred Thousand Words Commentary* of Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra and Śilamañju.



## Arrangement of the Hundred Thousand Words

Beginning with an index or general overview of its contents (*dkar chag, sūcī*), the *Phur ‘grel ‘bum nag* shows from the outset that it contains instructions concerning *kila* practice which operate on the levels of the three highest (inner) *tantra*: *mahāyoga*, *anuyoga* and *atiyoga*. Before explaining the details of ‘the six hidden precepts,’ ‘the ten steps of tantric engagement’ and ‘the twelve essential points’ that it lists, however, the text attempts to place itself within a historical context by presenting the reader with three scene-setting ‘introductions’ (*gleng gzhi, nidāna*).

In the first of these *nidāna* we are introduced to the *guru* Padmasambhava, who brought the teachings of Vajrakīla to Tibet. It has long been noticed that a special feature of the *Kila* doctrines is that they record a biography of the *guru* in which it is stated that he is born of a mother in the usual fashion, in contrast to almost all other Tibetan sources (specifically the many *gter ma* hagiographies) in which it is claimed that he appeared miraculously manifest in the heart of a lotus flower.<sup>13</sup> Having given us brief narrations of both these traditions, this first *nidāna* ends with a short recital of the diverse lineages of his teachings transmitted through his various disciples. These registers take us several centuries beyond the eighth century origin of the text, which was probably kept up to date by interpolations of the early masters who received it. As time went by, however, it would not have been possible to keep a record of the proliferating numbers of recipients of these teachings and the custom of updating the text must have ceased. Of the two editions at my disposal, the later edition (B) by the modern *siddha*/scholar bDud-’joms rinpoche does, indeed, contain more information than the earlier text concerning the names of those involved in the lineal transmission, but I am unable to determine the chronology of the succession.

The second introduction presented in our text is ‘the *nidāna* that introduces the teacher’ where ‘the teacher’ is the deity Vajrakīla (Vajrakumāra) himself. As can be seen from the *Black Razor Tantra*, it is the normal practice for any *tantra* to be ‘taught’ by the lord in the *maṇḍala* centre to an audience consisting of his/her

13 See: A.M. Blondeau, ‘Analysis of the Biographies of Padmasambhava According to Tibetan Tradition: Classification of Sources’ in M. Aris & Aung San Suu Kyi (eds.), *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson*, Warminster, 1979.



own emanated retinue. Thus, once again, our text attempts to place itself within a historical context by introducing the reader to the original teacher of the Vajrakila doctrines and this section describes the nature of the deity and the reason that he came into being.

This section is in itself quite problematic for, it is said, the deity Vajrakila arose in order to destroy the demon Rudra, a historical cognate of the Śaivite supreme deity, who, himself, arose as a result of misapprehending the sacred Buddhist Dharma. The episode centres on teachings given by the master Thub-dka' gzhon-nu, the actual words of which are recorded in several Tibetan texts. The first of these texts to receive any attention from western scholars was the *Padma thang yig shel brag ma*, discovered as a *gter ma* by O-rgyan gling-pa (1329-1367), within which we read:



ཇི་བཞིན་ཉིད་དེ་མ་བཅོས་པར་མེད་པར་  
 དངོས་པོ་བཞི་ལ་གནས་སྤྱད་ཀྱང་མེད་པར་  
 བཅས་མཁའ་ལ་ནི་སྤྱོད་བཞིན་ཏེ་མེད་པར་  
 འདི་ནི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་དམ་པའི་ལམ་མེད་པར་  
 འདི་མ་རྟོགས་པར་ཁམས་གསུམ་ན་མེད་པར་  
 ལྷ་བའི་རིམ་པ་གཞན་མེད་དོ་མེད་པར་

xxiii

preface

In the uncontrived nature of existence, in order that attachment to the four realities may be nothing more than a cloud in the sky, there is the road of holy application. If one does not know it, there is no other order of views in the three worlds. (English translation by K.Douglas & G.Bays after the French of Gustave-Charles Toussaint.)

The readings in the *bKa' thang gser phreng*, Sangs-rgyas gling-pa (1340-1396), and the *Padma bka' thang* are almost identical:

ཇི་བཞིན་ཉིད་དེ་མ་བཅོས་པས་མེད་པར་  
 དངོས་པོ་བཞི་ལ་གནས་སྤྱད་ཀྱང་མེད་པར་  
 བཅས་མཁའ་ལ་ནི་སྤྱོད་དེངས་ཏེ་མེད་པར་  
 འདི་ནི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་དམ་པའི་ལམ་མེད་པར་

འདི་ལས་མ་རྟོགས་ཁམས་གསུམ་ན་མེད་ཅེས་

ལྟ་བུའི་རིམ་པ་གཞན་མེད་དོ་མེད་ཅེས་

Which, following the advice of my *guru* C.R.Lama, should be translated as follows:

The unchanging reality of the way things are (*ji bzhin nyid de, ananyathā*) is non-artificial. Therefore one should act by remaining on the fundamental ground of reality (reading *ngos po gzhi* for *ngos po bzhi*) and thus the clouds (of the afflictions) will melt into the sky. This, itself, is the excellent path of *yoga*. In the triple world there is not to be found any practice of the view (*lta ba'i rim pa*) other than this.



xxiv

preface

Both of these versions, as can be seen, add the syllable *gnas* to the verb *spyod pa* in the second line, giving the meaning ‘abide’ or ‘remain’ (rendered as ‘attachment’ by Douglas & Bays) and this action is to be directed towards the *ngos po bzhi*, ‘four realities.’ In the *Phur ‘grel ‘bum nag*, however, the verb of action has no association with abiding or remaining and thus these *ngos po bzhi* are to be directly performed and not ‘remained within.’ The ‘*Bum nag*’ also agrees with the *Shel brag ma* reading in line three that the situation is ‘like clouds in the sky’ as opposed to saying that ‘the clouds will melt into the sky.’

The crux of the problem lies in the identity of the *ngos po bzhi* or ‘four realities.’ This virtually unknown group in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism drew blank looks from all my learned informants, although a category which comes close to this in Tibetan lexicons is the *bsdu ba'i ngos po bzhi* (*catuḥsaṃgrahavastu*), the four ways of gathering disciples, consisting of generosity, kind speech, meaningful deeds and lack of hypocrisy. In a recent article by Matthew Kapstein,<sup>14</sup> however, it has been pointed out that the four referred to here are the ‘four defeats’ (*catvāraḥ pārājikā dharmāḥ*), the major downfalls for a Buddhist monk that are to be esoterically inverted by a follower of the *guhyamantranaya*. Thus, outwardly, killing is prohibited to all, but the tantric *yogin* is expected to ‘kill’ all sentient beings with his great *samādhi* of no-self emptiness. Similarly, the tantric *yogin* is expected to tell lies when he vows to rescue all beings from *samsāra*. He ‘steals’ when he takes the ungiven bliss of highest realization, and he commits adultery when he unites with Perfect Wisdom, the consort of the buddhas.

Thus, our text reads in version A:<sup>15</sup>

14 M.Kapstein, ‘Samantabhadra and Rudra: Innate Enlightenment and Radical Evil in Tibetan Rnying-ma-pa Buddhism.’ In: Frank Reynolds & David Tracy (eds.), *Discourse and Practice*, SUNY, Albany, 1992.

15 B merely replaces the first two syllables, *ji bzhin*, with the synonym *ji ltar*.

ཇི་བཞིན་དེ་ཉིད་མ་བཅོས་ན།  
 དངོས་པོ་བཞི་ལ་སྤྱད་བྱས་ཀྱང་།  
 མཁ་མཁའ་ལ་ནི་སྤྱོད་བཞིན་ཏེ།  
 འདི་ནི་རྣལ་འབྱེད་དམ་པའི་ལམ།

In the uncontrived actuality of the way things are, even though one acts in accordance with the four defeats, this has no more substance than clouds in the sky. This, itself, is the excellent path of *yoga*.



The problem lies in the fact that, again and again, our text warns practitioners of the *vajrayāna* not to make any error of judgement with regard to the sacred teachings, for it was because of just such a mistake that Rudra himself was originally created!

xxv

Following that, the text makes one final bid to place itself within a historical continuum by introducing us to the sacred scriptures (*tantra*) of Vajrakila. This it does by describing the origin of *guhyaamantravajranaya*, “the adamantine way of esoteric formulae,” explaining how this system of practice fits into the overall scheme of Buddhist teachings and, finally, by showing how the *tantra* of the deity Vajrakila in particular are accommodated within the larger corpus of *tantra* in general.

preface

The great importance of the literary tradition of tantric texts should not be underestimated when considering the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*. Although the *'Bum nag* itself belongs to an oral tradition, its subject matter does not. At several points throughout the body of this work, the three *ācārya* responsible for its compilation offer their comments on lines of text, the bulk of which are proved to be of Indian origin by their occurrence in the VKMK, ‘the fragment of the root *tantra* of Vajrakila’ which Padmasambhava himself brought from India. It is indeed a great pity that not one of these cited passages is presently known in any Indian language. Scattered liberally throughout the *'Bum nag*, furthermore, are also to be found illustrative citations from numerous sacred scriptures of the Vajrakila canon, similarly unknown in India, the legendary genesis of which is discussed in this third *nidāna*.

The entire introductory section consisting of these three *nidāna* is seen to comprise a slight historical framework generously interwoven with an elaborate tapestry of legend and religious mythology. It is the only section of the text that appears to have been radically modified by later hands throughout the period of its transmission, but it is possible that even this modification may be limited to the listing of lineage holders. In the absence of any earlier text witnesses, it is impossible to say exactly what changes in the wording may not have occurred during the more than one thousand years of its existence, but the internal evi-

dence of the text as we have it does indeed seem to indicate its great antiquity.

The philosophical and practical instructions that follow, in which the quintessential doctrines of Vajrakīla are illuminated from many vantage points, begin with a series called 'the six bindings (*chings*)' or 'the six hidden precepts (*khog don*).' These six are divided into two groups. The first four explain the higher rites which lead to the attainment of unsurpassed awakening, which is Buddhahood itself, and the final two of the series deal with the lower rites which have as their goal the extirpation of enemies and obstructors. Further analysis of the teachings continues with explanations of 'the ten steps of tantric engagement' and 'the twelve essential points.'

When these topics have been dealt with in concise but comprehensive fashion, the text returns to focus on a selection of them in greater detail. It begins with what is arguably the most important topic of all, the four types of ritual *kīla* and how they are to be employed. This topic was first introduced in our text as the third of the 'ten steps of tantric engagement' series, but here it is explained at length. The text then continues by revealing in full the evil *mantra* of the twelve protective goddesses who dwell at the periphery of the divine *maṇḍala*, the function of which is to awaken these wild spirits of nature, summon them as servants, and instigate them to go forth and drag hither the enemy to be slain. The *mantra* themselves cover almost five pages of text and are in an appallingly corrupt state. Composed of an admixture of Sanskrit, archaic Indian vernaculars (Prākṛit) and Tibetan, their present state of degeneration leaves us with very little hope of ever ascertaining the original formulae. It is, nevertheless, of great interest to note some of the ways in which these words and syllables are to be utilized as magical spells, for these are demonstrated clearly in our text. Thus, by the judicious substitution of a few simple key terms, the *mantra* can become specialized as 'body *mantra*,' 'speech *mantra*,' 'mind *mantra*,' and so on, and these are known as outer *mantra*. Then there are inner *mantra*, made up of the personal names of these wild spirits, and these are infiltrated with specific injunctions and powerfully commanding seed syllables. Used 'secretly,' these *mantra* are associated with arcane details of the cult to which they belong in a series of magical correspondences that will make no sense at all to an outsider. In this section, also, is explained the manner in which the ordered syllables of the *mantra* are to be recited in jumbled and reversed sequence for special effect.<sup>16</sup> Equally obscure is the following section in which long and difficult *mantra* are associated with particular lines of the liturgy employed in the Vajrakīla cult. All of these *mantra* teachings are stated in our text to be the personal instructions of *guru* Padmasambhava, here referred to as Padma rgyal-po (Padmarāja, the Lotus King).

The final section of the text supplements all that has been taught hitherto with a few miscellaneous details, in order to ensure the completeness of the

16 For a further six methods of *mantra* application see: B.Bhattacharya, *Sādhnamālā* Vol.II, Introduction, p.lxxxvii.



teachings. The framework for this section is the division of the higher *tantra* into the three called *mahāyoga*-, *anuyoga*- and *atiyoga-tantra*, traditionally associated with the yogic practices of the generation stage (*utpattikrama*), the completion stage (*niṣpannakrama*) and the stage of great perfection (*mahāsaṃdhi*). Here, however, the key terms are *tantra* (root texts, traditionally associated with the teachings of *mahāyoga*), *āgama* (transmitted precepts, traditionally associated with the teachings of *anuyoga*), and *upadeśa* (oral instructions, traditionally associated with the teachings of *atiyoga*). Of these three, it is the transmitted precepts (*āgama*) of the Vajrakīla cycle that are dealt with here. The tally of these is variously stated in the *'Bum nag* to be either 21 or 64 in number, and at this point it is said that there are 61 of them, but not one of these enumerations can be traced to a meaningful source. Thirteen individual lines are then cited from the root text *rDo rje khros pa rtsa thung* and these are taken as starting points for a series of short essays ('transmitted precepts') on a variety of topics not formerly mentioned or adequately dealt with.

Thus the three masters put forward their ideas.



xxvii

### Subsequent spread of the doctrines

Following their rationalization in this manner, the doctrines of Vajrakīla are said to have been taught in Nepal by Śīlamanju and Śākyadevi. Śīlamanju is said to have taught a prostitute by the name of Śānti who, in her turn, transmitted the doctrines to Guṇapātala (a prince of Nepal) so that they then became widely known in that country, and Śākyadevi is said to have taught them to Dharma-kōśa by whom they were later propagated throughout Oḍḍiyāna.

Various introduced into Tibet by Padmasambhava, Vairocana and Vimalamitra, the Kīla doctrines have proved immensely popular in that country and a large number of instruction lineages continue to flourish among Tibetans right up to the present day.

Our text tells us that the teachings of the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* were orally imparted by Padmasambhava to his yogic consort and disciple Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, who stands at the heart of the reception of these doctrines in Tibet. Padmasambhava inevitably presented the report of this crucial seminar in his own terms and from his own point of view. From the remarks of the other two *ācārya* as we find them reported in this document, it is evident that the three masters were each quite different in character and each one would undoubtedly have presented the material in his own unique style. And we may presume that Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal would also have added her own thoughts on the matters raised in the text when explaining them to her lineal successor.<sup>17</sup> The *'Bum nag*

17 For example, in discussing the 'four masters of confession' (translation p.158): Of these four the *kāpālīka* brahmin alone is earlier than Padmasambhava and it may well be that the remaining three were added to the list by Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal.



itself is rather vague on the matter of its own authorship and lineage of transmission. It has no colophon to tell us who wrote it down, or when or where, but it seems likely that the scribe would have been *ācārya* gSal-le-ba (rGyal-ba byang-chub, known in our text as Ngam-'bre gsal-le). Since our text claims to be a faithful account of 'the teachings received by Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal,' it must be supposed that the transmission line from Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal to scribe was a short one and that subsequent modifications of the text were minimal. On p.125 of the translation, Padmasambhava says to Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, "I have explained it all to you, and you should explain it to Ngam-'bre." And, indeed, according to the *mTsho rgyal snyan brgyud phur pa'i brgyud 'debs*,<sup>18</sup> the recipient of these teachings was A-tsa-ra sa-le, and he passed them on to Padma las-'brel-rtsal.<sup>19</sup> Since *ācārya* gSal-le-ba was the assistant translator of the *Root Tantra of Vajra Wrath*,<sup>20</sup> the scribe for much of mTsho-rgyal's dictation and the compiler of her biography, it seems more than probable that it was he who wrote down the *'Bum nag*, perhaps the most important of mTsho-rgyal's transmissions. Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal died in 817 AD and we may suppose the text to have been set down in something like its present form by about this time. Certainly, from the language and style of the document as we now have it, we may believe the text to belong to this epoch. It is evidently a very early work and thus of enormous historical interest. Written in Tibet on the basis of material collected in India during the eighth century, much of which has since disappeared from the land of its origin, it stands as an invaluable testament to the way in which tantric doctrines were understood and practised at that time.

Of the three *ācārya*, it is clear from all our sources that Padmasambhava is taken to have the highest status, with Vimalamitra second and Śīlamanju in third place. Certainly, Śīlamanju's explanations of the various topics reported in the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* show him to be generally the most straightforward and literal of commentators. Using well-established systems of analysis, he teaches in simple terms such as 'ground, path and result' (*sthāna, mārga, phala*), the *trikāya* and the four rites. His exegesis of the Vajrakila *mantra* (translation p.184) is less encoded with layers of mysticism than those of the other two *ācārya*, and he is, in general, the most prosaic of the three. The only unusual doctrine that he offers us in the present text (translation p.202) is a hitherto unnoticed division of wisdom into three types: self-arising wisdom (*rang byung*), wisdom arising from something else (*gzhan byung*), and wisdom which has become settled (*gnas 'gyur*). Certainly, from other sources, we are aware of *rang byung ye shes* indicating self-existing basic intelligence or natural wisdom. We have also encountered such terms as *gnas lugs don gyi ye shes* (*gnas lugs ji lta ba mkhyen pa'i ye shes dang shes bya ji snyed pa gzigs pa'i ye shes*), 'the ultimate wisdom of the natural state,

18 This brief document, written by Padma las-'brel-rtsal, is found in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa* THA [559] immediately following the *'Bum nag*.

19 Dates uncertain. He is considered to be the reincarnation of princess Lha-lcam padma-gsal, daughter of Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan who died at the age of eight years.

20 gTing-skyes NGB 317, vol.27.

the wisdom that knows all that can be known, just as it is,' and which may be seen to relate to item three of Śīlamanju's set, but the set of three wisdoms proposed by him I have not seen elsewhere.

Concerning the scribe *ācārya* gSal-le-ba: According to the *mTsho rgyal rnam thar* he was born in the village of \*Hiraṇyapura (gSer-gling) in India and, as a child, was stolen from his parents by a wandering Hindu *sādhu*. He was then taken to Nepal and sold as a slave to a wealthy family in the Kathmandu valley, with whom he remained in service for seven years. Acting on the instructions of Padmasambhava, Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal herself travelled to Nepal in order to seek him out, for it was prophesied that *ācārya* gSal-le would make an ideal companion for her in the practice of *yoga*. In order to redeem him from his owners, however, mTsho-rgyal had to obtain a large amount of gold and this she succeeded in doing by restoring a corpse to life, a clear demonstration of her miraculous powers of *siddhi* (*mṛtyuñjaya*). The corpse was that of a youth called Nāga, the 23 year old son of a wealthy household in the valley, who had died of knife wounds sustained in a local feud. Remaining with mTsho-rgyal almost throughout the remainder of her life, *ācārya* gSal-le received all the teachings that were imparted to mTsho-rgyal and he practised them until the results were attained. In the colophon of the Kīla root *tantra* called *Vajra Wrath*, much cited in the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, it is written that he worked with Padmasambhava at dGe-gong (in the district of mChims-phu near bSam-yas) on the translation of that text. He also assisted mTsho-rgyal in her work of concealing Treasure Dharma for the benefit of future generations and, outliving her, he wrote down her biography after she died. It was before she died, however, that I suppose *ācārya* gSal-le-ba to have transcribed the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* from mTsho-rgyal's dictation as a summation of received instruction concerning the *vajra* spike that nails down every impediment to human happiness.



xxix

preface

### Doctrinal themes in the 'bum nag

Reading the text of the the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* we notice that the three *ācārya* who redacted these teachings have managed to saturate their presentation of *kīla* lore with references to all kinds of Buddhist doctrine. In this thoroughly tantric text, the pre-tantric path of purification that closes the door to further rebirth is said to be epitomized by the process of generation of the host of deities so that (translation p.180): "The deities of body, speech and mind purify egg birth (*aṇḍaja*), the wisdom deities purify miraculous birth (*upapāduka*), the deities of adornment arising from melted *bodhicitta* purify womb birth (*jarāyuja*), and the deities of armour purify birth from warmth and moisture (*saṃsvedaja*).” Thus the *yogin* engaged in the practice of these mystical doctrines quickly moves from the condition of stream-enterer (*śrota āpanna*) to become, almost instantly, a once-returner (*sakṛdāgāmin*), non-returner (*anāgāmin*) or realized *arhant*. Following the



ancient axiom that ‘all things arise from causes (*hetu*) and conditions (*pratyaya*),’ the deities each arise from a causal syllable HŪM when the condition for their arising is met in the form of muttered personal *mantra*. Thus, even this magical approach to instant soteriology conforms to the norms of established Buddhist philosophy and, although a ‘quick path’ is shown, nothing of importance is omitted on the way. The supreme deity himself, encapsulating in his nature both path and goal, is also found to comprise a large number of symbols demonstrating his total mastery of lower aspects of the path (pp.180-182).

Our text continues to demonstrate concern for the purity of the lower vehicles in tandem with concern for the purity of the higher. Thus, in listing the sins which are the subject of confession, our text states that there are four of these: The first is any undeclared personal impurity (pertinent to the layperson), and the second is any loss of the vows of monkhood (*prātimokṣa*). These two relate to the *hīnayāna*. The third is any degeneration in the arousal of *bodhicitta* (*pāramitānaya*), and the fourth is any downfall in the *samaya* of secret *mantra* (*mantranaya*), both of which relate to the *mahāyāna*. All of these must be confessed.

With regard to his retinue of ten wrathful kings, also, our text cites the *Guhya-tantra* to tell us:

Idle speech and falsehood, murder, wrong views and slander,  
Taking what is not given, abusive words and a desire to harm,  
Greed and sexual misconduct — these are the ten areas  
Which the wrathful kings and queens arise to purify.

Together with the overthrow of the ten non-virtues, these great beings are further said to embody the ten supremacies of a *bodhisattva* (*daśa bodhisattvānām vaśitāḥ*), whilst their female consorts (‘mothers’) in this scheme are said to embody the ten perfections (*daśa pāramitāḥ*) (pp.189-190). Even the *maṇḍala* palace within which they all live is built up of such philosophical construction materials as the 37 *bodhipākṣikadharmas* and the rest, which are taken to be fundamental components of the palace structure. In common with general descriptions of the *maṇḍala* found elsewhere, the four gateways to the palace are said to be the four boundless minds or ‘stations of Brahmā,’ and thus the *maṇḍala* palace is described in our text as “the perfect representation of all the teachings of cause and effect” (p.176). That is to say, the religious/mystical nature of the *maṇḍala* is that its very form embodies the entire corpus of doctrines taught on the path of *sūtra*, whether they pertain to the greater vehicle (*mahāyāna*) or the lesser (*hīnayāna*). The way in which it functions, however, belongs exclusively to the path of *tantra* — the vehicle of the final result.

Tantric exegetical literature has a wide range of hermeneutical categories at its disposal, a number of which are to be found employed here in the *Phur ’grel ’bum nag*. Thus, the present text seeks to show that the teachings of Vajrakīla pertain to all classes of Buddhist doctrine, that is to say, to all categories of





Buddha-word (*buddhavacana*), to each of the nine ways (*navayāna*) and most especially to each of the three highest classes of *tantra*. The teachings are then explained in terms of hitherto unknown categories of *tantra* such as ‘the six hidden precepts or bindings,’ ‘the ten steps of tantric engagement,’ ‘the twelvefold list of the essential points,’ and others. Within these larger categories are to be found the more familiar exegetical devices such as the simple fourfold division of teachings into outer, inner, secret, and most secret levels of interpretation.

Wisdom and means (*prajñopāya*) or emptiness and compassion (*śūnyatā-karuṇā*), key terms summarising the outlook and goal of the entire *mahāyāna*, remain fundamental within the teachings of *tantra*, but here they are taught with the addition of the tantric elements known as ‘union and slaughter’ (*sbyor sgrol*). Indeed, these four together are discussed at length in our text with regard to the four ‘material bases’ or ‘substances’ of which *kila* are made. According to the tenets of the Vajrakīla cult, the familiar *kila* seen held in the hand of so many icons, both human and divine, are merely those material *kila* employed in the lower rites of slaughter, by means of which enemies and obstructors are destroyed. *Kila* for the higher rites are of three types: wisdom, compassion, and *bodhicitta*, the last of these referring to the rite of union. As it says in the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* XVIII, 37cd: *śūnyatākaruṇābhinnanāṁ bodhicittam iti smṛtam* // The inseparable union of emptiness and compassion is called *bodhicitta*.

In our text (translation p.214), ‘union’ is defined as the sexual union of the male and female wrathful deities, and ‘slaughter’ is explained as the ‘liberation’ of the enemies and obstructors.

Just as wisdom and compassion are to be combined in harmony in the peaceful rites, where they are symbolized by the union of the male and female deities, so, here too, in the wrathful rites of Vajrakīla, the five fingers of the right hand are to be generated as the five males, and the five fingers on the left are to be generated as the five females. Then, in the inconceivable sky of the males appears a HŪM which transforms into a *vajra* with blazing tip. And one should imagine that the inconceivable sky of the females takes on the form of triangular iron mortars, arisen from the syllable E.

Concerning the use of the term ‘sky’ here: In the *Amṛtakaṇikā* (p.57) it is written, *gagananāṁ kamalakuliśasamīyoge varaṭakākāśadeśaḥ*, “‘Sky’ is the space in the centre of the union of *vajra* and lotus.” According to the *Kṛṣṇayāmāritantraṭīkā* (p.54), also, the obscure expression ‘mouth of the bird’ (*khagamukha*) refers to the entrance to the passage of the sky, and this is the birth canal (*bhagamārga*). Thus, the words ‘abiding in the centre of the mouth of the bird’ in that *tantra* means that the *yogin* places himself in the centre of his consort’s vagina.<sup>21</sup> With such technical jargon understood, then, our text continues:

Dragging forth the enemies and obstructors, they are placed within those mortars and, as one recites, “They must be pounded by the blazing *vajra* pestles,” they are rebuked and pressed down by the *vajra* in one’s hand. Reciting

21 *khagamukhāntaḥstham iti sādhyastriyonimadhyastham. Kṛṣṇayāmāritantraṭīkā* p.117.





xxxii

preface

KHAṬAM/KATHAM,<sup>22</sup> the enemies and obstructors are pounded to fine particles.

With regard to what is said here, Padmasambhava explains that the image of a mortar and pestle is used to illustrate the pounding of the enemies and obstructors within the triangular ritual pit (*'brub khung, homakuṇḍa*). In reality they are pounded in the mortar and pestle of the sphere of absolute truth (*dharmadhātu*), but during the rite of union, when wisdom (female) and means (male) are joined together like a mortar and pestle, they are pounded in the female sex organ. Vimalamitra said that, when the rite is performed outwardly, they are beaten with a *vajra* hammer. When the rite is performed inwardly, they are beaten with perfect mental wisdom. And when the rite is performed secretly, they are beaten with the *vajra* penis of the Lord. The secret *vajra* (=penis) is possessed of sharp flames of *bodhicitta* fire (=semen virile) and the symbolic *vajra* held in the hand is possessed of sharp flames of wisdom fire. These burn up the hearts of those who cause trouble. (Translation pp.215-216.)

And elsewhere it is said: "[The lord is referred to as] 'Pounder' (*pramatha*, also a kind of demon) because he has attained mastery over obstructing demons as a result of his having subjugated the hosts of enemies and obstructors such as 'locality' and 'time' by bringing the semen of great bliss under control."<sup>23</sup> Thus the combined rite of union and slaughter brings about the blissful condition of Buddhahood on the basis of yogic self-control (*ūrdhvaretas*). Such instruction has been noted above in the exegesis of the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* and, in its introductory section detailing the biography of Padmasambhava, the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* tells us that, as a result of his engagement in the fearful (*rākṣasa*) practice of union and slaughter — which it explains as slaying the masculine element and uniting with the feminine — Padmasambhava brought all the demonic forces and wild beasts under his command.

How are such teachings to be reconciled with traditional Buddhist precepts? Our text goes on to explain that, with regard to these rites of implantation, nailing with a *kila* is not performed without compassion as if one were using a vicious weapon. Instead, it says, having generated the *kila* as a deity possessing the essence of wisdom and compassion, the place of implantation is the moral defilements of all sentient beings. Striking at ignorance, the obscurations of *karma* and malice are purified and the result of this is liberation from the miseries of *saṃsāra*. Thus this technique possesses the essence of benefit for others which is the greatness of the *mahāyāna*. (Translation p.234.)

The bulk of what the '*Bum nag* has to say, however, is presented as yogic instruction related to the four branches of ritual service and attainment of the

22 Various spelled *khaṭari*, *khaṭhari*, *kathari* (*khatarī* in the VKMK), the nearest equivalent to be found in Sanskrit lexicons is *khaṭari* which can be an axe, hatchet, chisel, a kind of blow, or the closed or doubled fist (as for striking). M.Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. The Pāli-English Dictionary notes *kata* or *kaṭa* as derived from root *kr* and as having the meaning 'ended, finished.'

23 *mahāsukhaśukradāntavaśīkṛtaprādeśīkākṣaṇādivighnagaṇatvena vighnādhipatvāt pramathah. Amṛtakaṇikā* p.91.

deity (*caturāṅgasevāsādhana*). Generally speaking, ritual service (*sevā*) is one-pointed invocation of a visualized deity with the recitation of *mantra*. Subsidiary service (*upasevā*) in the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* consists of further ritual service devoted to the oath-bound protectors of the Vajrakīla *maṇḍala*. Then, praying for the deity's blessings to descend, as one's body, speech and mind take on the forms of *vajra* syllables, accomplishment (*sādhana*) is the actual absorption of mystical powers from the buddhas of the ten directions into oneself as the deity, either in actuality, meditation or dreams. Finally, great accomplishment (*mahāsādhana*) is the ultimate realization of beginningless primordial purity experienced when body, speech and mind are fully identified with the deity. When all of this has been achieved, one may utilize 'the *kila* of four materials that penetrate the extremes.'

According to the detailed instructions of the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, ritual service has three divisions: the preliminary practices, the main practice, and the subsequent practices. The preliminary practices (*purvāṅgama*) are those preparatory activities such as establishing a place for retreat and the confession of sins, etc., by means of which the *yogin* purifies himself for meditation practice, and the main practice begins with the generation of wisdom, compassion, and an understanding of cause-and-effect in the mindstream, referred to as the three *samādhi*. This is followed by the generation of both the *maṇḍala* palace of residence and the deities who reside there. Subsequent practices consist of the invitation of the wisdom deities by means of muttered *mantra*, and presenting them with offerings.

For the ritual service of the deity, it is said that the *yogin* should gather together nourishing food, medicines to avert misfortune/disease, and the prescribed articles of worship and ritual service. Collecting together *kila* of ritual service, equal in number to the 51 blood-drinking wisdom deities of the *maṇḍala*, he uses these for the ritual service. The chief *kila* of haughty rapture is 18 digits in length and possessed of a wrathful face and *makara* (sea dragon, at its belly). The *kila* of the ten wrathful kings should each be 12 digits tall and be made of material such as acacia wood. And so on.

The recitation of muttered *mantra* consists of three levels — outer, inner and secret — and each of these includes body muttering, speech muttering, mind muttering, virtuous qualities muttering, and enlightened activities muttering. Thus the *yogin* visualizes a white Buddhakīla on the crown of his head, radiating rays of dark maroon light in the form of *kila*, like a downpour of fierce sun rays which obliterate all negative forces. In similar fashion he subsequently visualizes a red Padmakīla in his throat, a blue Vajrakīla in his heart, a yellow Ratnakīla in his navel, and a green Karmakīla in his genitals. Each of these *Kila* radiates rays of light of the appropriate colour whilst the *yogin* mutters the corresponding *mantra*. The association of these five families (*pañcakula*) with the body, speech, mind, virtuous qualities and enlightened activities of the perfected state of Buddhahood is well-attested throughout the entire corpus of tantric literature and their application here is a simple matter of following the established



formula. Indeed, much of what is written in the '*Bum nag* is purely formulaic in character, and it is by such means that these ancient magical practices of village sorcerers have been so successfully brought within the orthodox fold of mainstream Buddhism.

With the completion of the outer recitation, there follows the inner recitation in which the rays of light, having pervaded the insides of whomsoever they strike, burn up the demons of disease. The secret recitation consists of directing the rays of light to diffuse the hollow channels (i.e. fill the *nāḍī* with light and remove all shadows), striking the heart at the junction of virtue and vice.

With regard to the length of the ritual service, the number of *mantra* recitations required to complete the service, and the signs of success, it is said in the *tantra*:

As for the number of *mantra* recitations,  
One should accumulate a total of ten million.  
As for the time, it should be at least one year.  
As for the signs, seeing the face of the deity  
One receives the prediction to full enlightenment.

Theoretically, the *yogin* should then engage himself in the subsidiary ritual service devoted to the oath-bound protectors of the Vajrakīla *maṇḍala*. Reading our text, however, we see that, in a number of cases, the ritual service of deity invocation quickly leads to accomplishment so that the necessity for *upasevā* is dispensed with. Ritual service, when looked at in detail, naturally enlarges to encompass many of the concerns proper to subsidiary service. And accomplishment, too, is often seen to become an end in itself in the '*Bum nag*, so that teachings on the great accomplishment are not given. Interest in the activities of accomplishment (*siddhi*) may then become predominant.

Running parallel to these generation stage instructions, known as 'the method of the upper door' (i.e. the heart/mind), our text also speaks of 'the method of the lower door' (i.e. the sexual centre) in which the entire meditation is to be carried out in union with a partner. As it is said by Candrakīrti: *vajrapadmasamāgamenāpi kilanavidhim āha*, "It is just by the union of *vajra* and lotus that [the lord] speaks of the rite of nailing down."<sup>24</sup> These practices pertain to the fulfillment stage which is marked at first by the experience of heat, and then by the three known as bliss, clarity and the absence of discursive thought. These meditative experiences may easily be attained by a skilful and disciplined *yogin* who utilizes the natural excitement of lovemaking as an extra boost of energy by means of which he manipulates the winds (*prāṇa*) and drops of consciousness (*bindu*) within the subtle channels (*nāḍī*) of his body.

If one meditates with clarity, generation is achieved.  
If mental factors are under control, slaying is achieved.

24 *Guhyasamājatantrapradīpodyotanāṭikā*, p.159.



If it is non-dual, union is achieved.

If the realization is resplendent, success is achieved.

According to the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, for rites of pacification the consort of the ritual service should be white in colour, small in stature and have a moon-like complexion. For rites of increase she should have a square face, like an ox, yellow in colour. For rites of overpowering control she should have a dark, ruddy complexion and a beautiful face, like a half moon. For the ferocious rites she should be of wrathful disposition with a triangular face and her eyes should look quickly all around her. At the time of the subsidiary ritual service, the man should generate himself as Vajrakumāra and his consort should arise as Diptacakra. Concerning the attainment, if the *yogin* is too full of desire the result will not be achieved but, engaging in the rite in a spontaneous and unpremeditated way, unsullied bliss will arise in the mindstream. As for the rite of great attainment, when the stage of heat is attained, there will be trembling and agitation and one will make a lot of noise. The signs will arise in due order and one will experience a feeling of bliss.

Following the general paradigm established in countless texts of Buddhist *tantra*, the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* equates the three *kāya* of Buddhahood with the perfected state of body, speech and mind. In the *nidāna* that introduces the *guru* (translation pp.117-118), for example, Padmasambhava is said to have gained the three *kāya* after meeting with a *ḍākinī* who bestowed upon him the ripening empowerments of body, speech and mind. The picture presented in this interpolated passage is in total conformity with the pattern of other texts and, even in the main body of the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* we are told that, "The body is the absence of self-nature within a manifest appearance of light which is the indivisible unity of clarity and emptiness. This is the seal of the *nirmāṇakāya*. The speech is the quiescent sound of the true teachings which is the indivisible unity of sound and emptiness. This is the seal of the *sambhogakāya*. The mind is great bliss which itself is the indivisible unity of awareness and emptiness. This is the seal of the *dharmakāya*." (p.312) This well-established set of correspondences is maintained in the discussion of the qualities of a *vidyādhara* (pp.192-193) and in the on-going exegesis of the three *samādhi* where the development of wisdom (mind), compassion (speech) and deliberate manifestation (body) are said to give rise to the three *kāya*. Our text also explains that the three *kāya* are symbolized by various aspects of the deity's form, mode of dress and the *maṇḍala* palace within which he dwells. All of this is perfectly standard in tantric texts of this type. What is most unusual in the present text, however, is the association of the three *kāya* with three types of Vajrakīla *maṇḍala* for, according to the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, the *dharmakāya* consists of oneself as the deity Vajrakīla abiding in the centre of the *maṇḍala*, the *sambhogakāya* comprises the retinue of ten wrathful kings and the *nirmāṇakāya* is the material *kīla* held in the hands. Thus, on p.156 of the translation, we read:



xxxv

preface

HŪM The fundamental *maṇḍala* of the primordial state  
 is the *dharmakāya*,  
 The circle of wrathful kings in the ten directions  
 is the *sambhogakāya* and  
 The Supreme Son Kīla who embodies all *vajra* [deities]  
 is the *nirmāṇakāya*.

What is particularly striking about this passage is its use of the term *bdag nyid* (*ātman*), here translated as ‘primordial state.’ Buddhism from its very inception has eschewed the concept of *ātman* or ‘self’ and it is this repudiation of self more than any other factor that has marked it out from the main body of Hinduism from which it arose. The doctrine of ‘no self’ (*anātma*, *nirātma*) is taught in the context of the four noble truths, the subject of the very first sermon, and constitutes a crucial aspect of almost all subsequent Buddhist philosophy. All compounded phenomena, it is consistently argued, are characterized by three qualities: they are impermanent (*anitya*), conducive to misery (*duḥkha*) and lacking any ‘self.’ In the literature of *atiyoga* or *rdzogs chen*, however, as pointed out by John Reynolds in his *The Golden Letters* (New York, 1996), the term is regularly employed with reference to the primordial state. In the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* (translation p.140) we read:

This supreme teaching of Vajrakīla  
 Is the transformation of many states of mind:

Generated in accord with *mahāyogatantra*,  
 One meditates upon him on the path of *anuyoga*  
 As the illusory nature of the mind itself.  
 He is finally perfected as the result of *atiyoga*,  
 Quite effortlessly. Free of origination and cessation.

Indeed, the intensely introverted philosophical system of *atiyoga* thoroughly pervades the whole of *mahāyogatantra* and it is therefore no surprise at all to encounter an *atiyoga* technical term in our text. We should also remember that Buddhist *mahāyoga* developed in India alongside Śaivite *kāpālīka* cults and the two systems share many concepts. In the Pāśupata system that underpins much of this development, the term *ātman* is taken to mean ‘one who is powerful in Dharma’ (*dharmabala*), a usage that Buddhists of the time would have found sympathetic. Indeed, when divorced from the notion of individuality or ‘soul,’ the ‘permanent and unchanging self’ of Hindu philosophy easily merges with the Buddhist concept of *dharmakāya*. According to Prem Lata Sharma (in K. Vatsyayan, ed., *Kalātattvakośa* Vol.I, p.41), “Its primary meaning is the essence or real nature of everything, the principle of unity underlying all diversity, the undifferentiated principle behind all differentiation, the imperishable behind the perishables, the all-pervading, the formless behind all forms, the intangible behind all tangibles.” Described in these terms, the ‘self’ is seen to have quali-



ties recognized by Buddhists as pertaining to *dharmatā* and thus the 'great self' (*mahātman*) or 'one who knows the self' (*ātmavid*) may be used as epithets of the *dharmakāya*. The Lord is described as 'one who knows the self' in *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* X.13 and, commenting on this in his *mahāṭhikā*, Candragomin says that such knowledge is characteristic of the *vajropamasamādhi*. Raviśrijñāna, in his *Amṛtakaṇikā-ṭippaṇi*, explains that one is called a 'knower of the self' when [his understanding] has the nature of the sky by virtue of having gone beyond all mental thought processes.<sup>25</sup> Elsewhere in the same text (commenting on *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* VI.5) Raviśrijñāna defines the self as a mind free of mental events (*acittacittam*), the nature of which is not to rest upon any object (*nirālambasvabhāvam*). Thus we see that this apparently non-Buddhist term does have a home in Buddhist tantric literature, although nowhere have I seen it elevated to such a prominent position as here in the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*.



## India and Tibet

xxxvii

An aspect of the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag* which may be of particular interest to historians and students of comparative religion is the way in which it stands right at the interface of the two ancient cultures of India and Tibet. The majority of Tibetan documents in which the teachings of India are recorded are simply straightforward translations into Tibetan of original Sanskrit texts. The '*Bum nag*, however, stands almost alone among documents of the period in that it was originally composed in the Tibetan language for an audience of Tibetans, to whom it seeks to impart a knowledge and understanding of contemporary tantric praxis from the far side of the great Himalayan divide. Containing as it does, direct references to the Indian situation, such as mention of the four castes and so on, a system quite alien to Tibetan culture, our text rather self-consciously compensates for the foreign nature of much of its subject matter by repeated and specific references to the religious beliefs of Tibet. Thus there are tales relating the conversion or subjugation of many local shamanic landscape gods and spirits told in the introduction. That is to say, Indian *kila* doctrines are introduced in this text as being instrumental in the conversion to Buddhism of local or native deities, and this leads to a reinterpretation of traditional religious beliefs. The list of deities converted and the actual circumstances of their conversion differ somewhat from text to text, for these are widely told tales to be found in the *Padma bka' thang* and the host of other hagiographies of *guru* Padmasambhava. Although these tales are everywhere recounted to the glory of the *guru*, they are mentioned here with the added bonus of glorifying the deity Vajrakīla for, it is said, it was mastery of the *kila* rites alone that empowered the *guru* to perform such prodigious feats.

preface

25 *sarvaprapañcātikrāntatvena gaganarūpatvād ātmavit. Amṛtakaṇikā-ṭippaṇi*, p.93.





Among those to be converted were the *ging*, a class of warrior-like assistants to the *dharmapālas*, variously described as *dpa' bo* (hero), *las mkhan* (functionary), *pho nya* (messenger), or simply as *ging ka ra* (from Skt: *kiṃkāra*, servant). On his journey into Tibet, Padmasambhava is reported to have been accosted by a demon called sGrol-ging who is stated in our text to be the military commander (*dmag dpon*) of the *bdud*, an indigenous type of demon later homologized with the Indian Māra. Nebesky-Wojkowitz notes a group known as the *sgrol ging chen po brgyad*, the great leaders of eight classes of ferocious *ging*.<sup>26</sup> These, he says, inhabit the eight directions of the compass and are described as having the colours appropriate to the directions, in accordance with standard tantric orthodoxy. Thus we see the process of their 'Indianization' or conversion to Buddhism complete.

Sha-za nag-po, another convert mentioned in the '*Bum nag*, is described in the ritual texts of Mahākāla as having a *bdud* father and *rākṣasa* mother. There he is said to be as black as a raincloud with the ferocious head of a lion that roars like thunder. Dressed in a voluminous cloak of black silk with a bow-case and quiver suspended from a belt of jewels, he holds in his hands a lance and a skull cup containing *bali* offerings.<sup>27</sup>

Gu-lang nag-po is described as the leader of the *mu stegs pa*, sometimes described as dark blue in colour and wielding a trident in his hand. Dressed in human skin, he rides upon a buffalo.<sup>28</sup> And Khu-le lag-dgu is variously described as the leader of either the '*gong po* or the *rgyal po* demons. He is said to be yellow in colour and to brandish a sword. Riding upon either a bull or a vulture, he is the keeper of the northern gate of Pe-har's *maṇḍala*.<sup>29</sup> Then there is the character known in our text as (A:) Re-te mgong-gyag/(B:) Re-sde 'gong-yag, encountered by Nebesky-Wojkowitz with various spellings: Re-ti 'gong-yag, Re-ste mgo-yag, Re-ste 'gong-nyag, and said to be chief of all the *bdud*.<sup>30</sup> Our text (translation p.123) includes him in a rather formulaic manner among a group of four, the constitution of which is unknown. Included among another group of four, the constitution of which is presumed to be the four classes of treasure-guardians, is rDo-rje legs-pa, for this group is said to consist of the twelve brTan-ma goddesses, guardians of the white treasure of conch in the east, rDo-rje legs-pa, guardian of the yellow treasure of gold in the south, gNyan-chen thang-lha, guardian of the red treasure of copper in the west, and sTong-dpon dgra-lha-rgyal, guardian of the black treasure of iron in the north.<sup>31</sup>

The universal nature of the competitive sorcery through which these local deities became converted to Buddhism meant that the *kila* rites could be trans-

26 René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, p.279.

27 *Op. cit.*, p.65.

28 *Op. cit.*, p.282.

29 *Op. cit.*, pp.119 & 285.

30 *Op. cit.*, p.274.

31 *Op. cit.*, p.155.



ferred with only minor changes in their format to foreign soil, from one culture to another. The details of these rites, as presented in the *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, are a shrewd amalgam of all relevant knowledge that had been accumulated up until the time of the text being set down in writing, *circa* 800 AD. Most of the details are undoubtedly of non-Buddhist Indian origin, skilfully adapted for the use of Buddhist *yogins* by the three *vajrācārya* who recast all that they could in the mould of the five family tantric Buddhist *maṇḍala* and reinterpreted the rest along the lines of well-established categories of tantric hermeneutics. But some of the details, also, are surely of Tibetan origin. For example, the recurrent theme of 'the five personal spirits' (*'go ba'i lha lnga*) who take up residence within the human body from the moment of its birth and who thereafter act as its guardian angels. According to the ancient Tibetan shamanic tradition, the home of the Mother Goddess is the left armpit where, mounted upon an ass with a white muzzle, she is imagined to hold a divination mirror and arrow. The God of the Life Force abides in the heart in the guise of a warrior, the God Who Protects One from Enemies has his seat upon the right shoulder, the Father God dwells in the right armpit and the God of one's Native Area sits upon the head. These Tibetan conceptions have been given a prominent place in the Indian story of the subjugation of Rudra in order to make the episode meaningful to Tibetans and, subsequently, they had to be woven into all the *kila* rites based upon this myth.

As for the many details of black magic to be found in the 'lower rites' section of our text, these could have been gathered from almost anywhere in the world, so universal do they appear, and this entire section reveals both Indian and Tibetan influences.

Indian influences include not only the formal Buddhist categories that give shape to the presentation but also specific citations from Buddhist texts. These citations include the isolated lines which are the subject matter of the commentary, as well as canonical verses which are cited in order to illustrate the commentary. Other, informal elements are derived from village cults of witchcraft, even those dealing with human sacrifice. As it is said in our text (p.227): "One tramples upon the head of the effigy, burns the upper portion of his body in fire, smashes up his limbs, and feeds his entrails to the mouths of the deities."

The formal trilogy of 'pressing down, burning and hurling' encountered in the '*Bum nag*' are simple expedients that might just as well have been imported from Haitian schools of voodoo in which the enemy in effigy is trampled underfoot, thrown into a fire and bombarded with noxious substances in an effort to cause him harm by remote control. The 'burning' section of this trilogy follows the general paradigm of developed Indian *homa* rites and thus possesses a number of specifically Buddhist features. The other two sections, however, have their roots deeply embedded in a primitive layer of the human psyche where geographical distinctions in human culture count for nothing. Even the names of many classes of the minor deities encountered in this section are common to both India and Tibet. When references are made to astrological time, also,



although Indian systems of horology are not absent, our text shows a marked preference for the Sino-Tibetan system of the cycle of twelve animals. Wild fauna referred to in the text include beasts from both countries such as lions, tigers, musk deer, wild yaks and the rest.

Whilst such groups as the ‘nine gods of existence’ (*srid pa’i lha dgu*)<sup>32</sup> and the *rgyal po*, *btsan* and *the’u rang* demons mentioned in the translation on p.278, are easily recognized as Tibetan originals, such unknowns as the blood frog remain a mystery. Residing in the centre of the human heart, this tiny creature seems to embody the soul or life principle and thus its subjugation is one of the goals of the black arts listed as ‘lower rites’ in our text. Although the idea of a ‘blood frog’ seems to resonate with the *nāga*-centred cosmology of those animist and shamanic peoples to be encountered in the hills and jungles to the south and east of Tibet, the route it may have taken to become incorporated in our text is a matter of pure conjecture. Similarly, the magical process designated ‘revolving the wheel of the life force’ (*srog ’khor*, see translation p.279) is a procedure that has long been popular on both sides of the Himalaya. Essentially it consists of a diagram of concentric circles, often with a hub, spokes and rim, within which are contained the *mantra* seed syllables embodying the vital force of the entity to be controlled. The *Phur ’grel ’bum nag* employs such devices to command the oath-bound protector spirits that dwell at the periphery of the sacred Vajrakila *maṇḍala*, and also to help gain control over the enemy to be destroyed. Typifying, as they do, the notion of power inherent in the written word, such devices are to be found all over the world and were undoubtedly popular with the sorcerers of both India and Tibet at the time of our text being collated and taught.

This volume closes with a few verses of prayer requesting the blessings of those who have mastered the profound system of Vajrakila praxis. It is extracted from the *Ma rung bdud sde ’joms pa’i mtshon cha*, a typical *sādhana* of Vajrakila by means of which all of the foregoing teachings may be gathered together and perfected in the mindstream of the dedicated *yogin*. Having diligently studied the copious points of the *Hundred Thousand Words*, it is to be hoped that more than a few readers will be inspired to take the teachings to heart and spend time in a closed deity retreat for the welfare of the world. The *Hundred Thousand Words* tells us of some of the many lineages of Kila practice that once flourished in Tibet, most of which are now available worldwide to *yogins* of the present-day since the collapse of Tibetan independence. May all those who strive attain the power of Vajrakila in combatting every obstructing difficulty that arises on the path of Dharma.

Vows. Triple seal.



32 See: Samten Karmay, “The Cult of Mountain Deities and its Political Significance” in *The Arrow and the Spindle*, pp.432-450.



## Sources & Acknowledgements

The present translation is based upon two published recensions of the text:

(A) *Phur pa 'bum nag and Phur pa'i 'grel chen bdud rtsi dri med* pp. 1-229. Published by Gonpo Tseten, Gangtok, 1976. Within the following translation, the beginning of each page of this text is indicated by the numbers [1]-[229].

(B) *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa*, edited by bDud-'joms Rinpoche, Vol. THA pp. 215-557. This was published by Dubjung Lama, Kalimpong, 1982, and within the following translation the beginning of each page of this text is indicated by the numbers [215]-[557].

Throughout the present work, footnote references to these two texts are indicated by the letters A and B.

B is generally the better recension. A has numerous corruptions of spelling and grammar, not always noted in the present translation, but A evidently preserves some older readings not witnessed by B and these are noted with great interest.

A footnote reference VKMK indicates a citation from the *Fragment of the Root Tantra* (*Vajrakīlāmūlakhaṇḍa*: Peking *bKa' 'gyur* 78, sDe-dge *bKa' 'gyur* 439), the full text and English translation of which are to be found as the second chapter of this work. Reference BRT, followed by a chapter number, indicates a citation from the *Black Razor Tantra* (*sPu gri nag po'i rgyud*: from the cycle of Northern Treasures revealed by Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem in 1366), the full text and translation of which are included here as our third chapter. The reference *Sādhana* followed by a page number, indicates that the words cited are also to be found in the *Byang gter phur pa'i 'phrin las rgyas pa dang chos srung bskang gso'i skor*, an extensive ritual practice by 'Phrin-las bdud-'joms, published by Bla-ma Zla-ba & Sherab Gyaltsen, Gangtok, 1983. Most of these citations are also to be found in the *Ma rung bdud sde 'joms pa'i mtshon cha*, more usually known as the *Byang gter phur pa dril sgrub*, to be found in the *Snga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*, Vol.3 pp. 589-636, published by rDo-rje brag e-vaṃ lcog-sgar Monastery in Simla, 1997, and also in the *Phur pa dril sgrub*, Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod Series Vol.75, Leh, 1973, pp. 467-511. Indeed, these seminal words are also to be found in countless other *sādhana* focussing upon the deity Vajrakīla, for the system taught in the *Hundred Thousand Words Commentary* is the very wellspring from which all subsequent lineages arose.

I am very grateful to all those who have given me such generous assistance in the realization of this project, especially my mentors C.R.Lama ('Khor-gdong gter-sprul 'Chi-med rig-'dzin) and Alak Zenkar rinpoche (Thub-bstan nyi-ma) who were kind enough to help me read some of the more difficult passages of the Tibetan text. I would also like to thank Dr Harunaga Isaacson and Richard Williamson, both of whom have my breathless admiration for their skilful expertise, and my friend Robert Beer for the use of his excellent artwork. May benefit spread everywhere.



xxxxi



# A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue

The vast commentary on Vajrakīla that clearly defines the essential points including

“Phur ‘grel ‘bum nag”

as transmitted to Ye-shes mtso-rgyal

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*Chagdud Tulku in his autobiography Lord of the Dance*



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