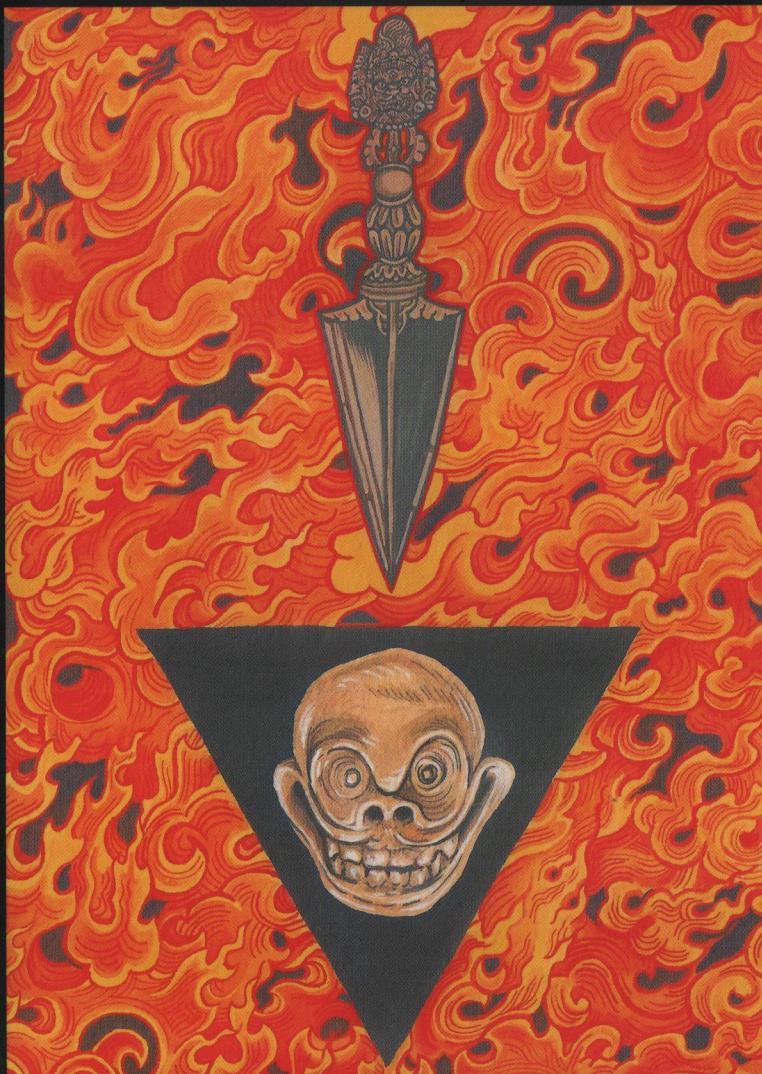


SHARP PRACTICE

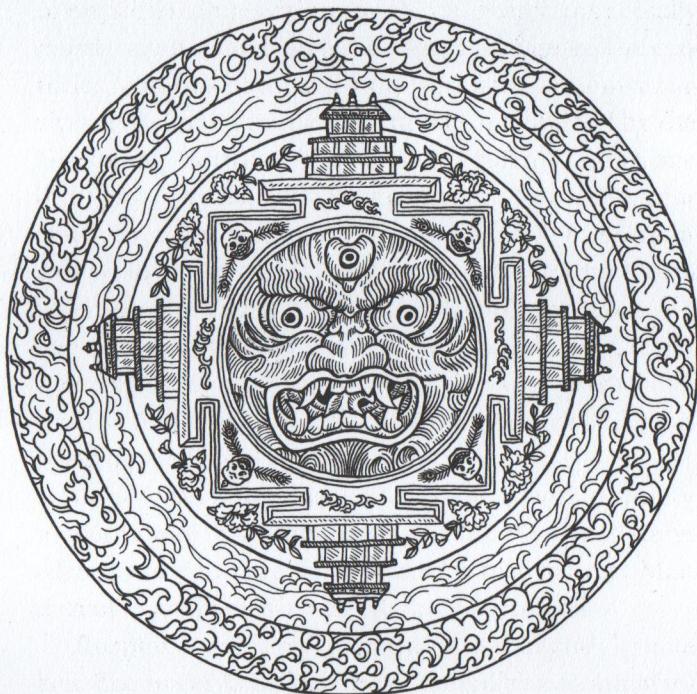


The Ritual Dagger in Bön Sorcery
and Vajrayana Buddhism

ROBERT FITZGERALD



ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣମାତ୍ର



SHARP PRACTICE

*The Ritual Dagger in Bön Sorcery
and Vajrayana Buddhism*

Robert Fitzgerald

Three Hands Press
2019

This work is dedicated to
the Three Jewels, my teachers:

Shri Trisulkalanath Maharaj,
For revealing Enlightened Conduct

Ngakben Tsèdrub Tharchin Rinpoche,
For demonstrating the Practice

Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche,
For transmitting the View

In the Golden Expanse of the Fortunate
Æon, we thrive.
May Auspiciousness prevail.

Contents

First Three Hands Press edition 2019.

© copyright 2019 Three Hands Press, all rights reserved.

Cover and Interior Images by Johnny Decker Miller.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the Publisher.

Book design by Joseph Uccello.

Printed in the United States of America.

www.threethandspress.com

Praises	viii
Aspiration Prayer	ix
Introduction	1
The Shapes of Wrath: <i>Kila and Phurba Iconography in Bön and Nyingma Buddhism</i>	13
The Depths: <i>Dagger Sorcery and Malefic Magic</i>	38
The Heights: <i>Deities of Phurba Cosmology and Mandala</i>	49
Afterword: The Blazing-Point Blessing of Annihilation, containing the practice called <i>Red Nail of Vajra-Wrath</i>	59
Acknowledgments	63
Bibliography	65

Praises

Tonpa Shenrab Miwoche
Golden Double Swastika Vajra!

Om Ah Hung Vajra Guru Pema Siddhi Hung
Phurba Drugse Chenpo!

Om Ah Hung Vajra Guru Pema Siddhi Hung
Heruka Pal Dorje T'hö T'hreng Tsal!

Glorious Vajra Skull-Garlanded Master,
Pema T'hö T'hreng Tsal!

Yangdak Heruka!
Sol wa deb so t'hrin lay t'har chhyin shok
I supplicate you, bring your activity to perfection.

Vajrakumara, Victorious Son!
Become Kila!
P'hur bu pal chhen dorje zhön nu yum dang
chay pa'i kur gyur

Om Vajra Kili Kilaya Sarwa Bighnan Bam Hung P'het!

Om Vajra Kili Kilaya Dza Hung Bam Ho Ma
Rakmo Yakmo Kala Rupa Nying Tsala Yam Yam
Sokla Yam Yam Nyingla T'hril T'hril Sokla Chhüm
Chhüm Tsitta Sokla Dung Dung Nying T'hrak
Sokla Shed Dza T'humri Li Li Nying Tsek Tsek Ür

Ür Shik Shik Gül Gül Nyak Nyak Söd Söd Dhati
Ma Ma Karma Shigharam Karaye Mara Sena
Pramar Dhana Ye Hung P'het

Blazing Wisdom Wrath, destroy!

Guru Drakpo, liberate the Six Realms!

Hung Hung Hung

Aspiration Prayer

Rising as Dorje Phurba, the miraculous and supreme Mandala opens like a lotus flower within Dharmadhatu. May I accomplish the work of Vajra Wrath! May the Victorious Sons fly forth and strike at the heart of all maras! May Kilaya ripen in Body, Speech and Mind and guide the hand that writes these words. May they be pure in content and expression, and may they serve the origin-less Path of Phur-bu! May Virtue abide herein!

INTRODUCTION



Origins

The Phurba is a stylized dagger used by practitioners of the ancient Bön religion and Tibetan Buddhism in rites of exorcism, subjugation of demonic forces and the achievement of enlightened liberation from dualistic thought. It is typically made of brass, bronze, wood, or other materials and is triangular in cross-section, adorned with the wrathful countenance of Vajrakilaya.

Like clouds covering the sun, the origins of Phurba and its resulting beliefs and practices are shrouded in the mists of primordial time. Even the correct etymology and meaning of the name is disputed. In one of the oldest extant Phurba texts, found in the Dunhuang cache of documents and ritual *sadhanas*, the word is spelled *phur bu*, relating solely to the dagger itself, whilst *phur pa* is the spelling for the dagger as itself and as deity. Buddhist scholars Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer write:

In some of the Dunhuang materials *phur pa* takes the form *phur ba*. This does not generally occur nowadays at all except as an error, but in the Amdo area, the grammatical particle *pa* is some-

times written as *ba*. So in this context, it may be considered acceptable by regional conventions.¹

The meaning of the Tibetan word, *Phur ba* is, quite literally, 'dagger' or 'pointed'. Its practice in Vajrayana Buddhism is called *Kilaya*, which means the same thing. In Sanskrit it is called *Vajra* and *Kila*. In Bön the teachings of Phurba are called *Dbal-'bar*, which means 'blazing point'. The etymologies and meanings are quite similar. Phurba literature, lore and teachings are as vast as the materials used in the dagger's construction throughout the myriad worlds of its manifestation. The present study then, is merely a basic introduction to a subject whose Western studies remain in their infancy. The higher tantras containing Phurba sadhanas number in total well over 100,000 pages for Nyingma Buddhism alone. It is one of the oldest extant bodies of spiritual teachings containing lineages unbroken since their beginnings. The Phurba is a multiplicity unto itself: at its most sublime it is the manifest nature of mind, or Buddha-nature. It is also the nail of exorcism that frees a plot of land of noxious spirits and penetrates the vile body of the Enemy, the maras² of the Demon Rudra. It is perhaps, as both the Stone and World Tree, the most ancient symbol of deity known to humanity.

¹ Early Tibetan Documents on Phur Pa from Dunhuang, p. 5, n 14. While this may be the case, the spelling *Phur ba* is now in common usage throughout the Western world, and will be utilized within the present study.

² Maras are demonic entities that harass and cause illness in human beings. They are a spirituous manifestation of samsara (sorrow).

The archaic and shamanic religion of Bön originated from the pre-historical country of Zhang Zhung, a geographical area that once included Tibet. It went through several successive historical epochs, culminating in near-obliteration by Tibetan Buddhism. However, Bön survives, and today has many thousands of adherents in Tibet, India and the West.³

In Bön, which was the original spiritual source of the Phurba, the following account is told of its origins. In ancient Takzig, lived two sons of the king and queen. One, Takla Mebar, was pleasant, and the other, Dhashagriva, was evil. Dhashagriva murdered his parents and living in the Cave of the Wrathful Black Hog, became king of all demons. He kidnapped Takla and imprisoned him in the Cave. There, Takla practiced Phurpa, and was visited by Thurje Jamma, Mother of Compassion, in dream. She told him to murder his brother, which he did, becoming Welbön Takla Mebar, the 'Tiger Who Blazes Fire'. Thereafter he became Wrathful Black Phurpa, the protector of Eternal Bön.⁴

In the myriad centuries that followed, the Indian yogi known as Padmasambhava, the venerable 'Second Buddha', Guru Rinpoche, was believed to have brought the

³ For a thorough overview see the works by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche: *A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet, Volume One, The Early Period. The Light of Kailash, Volume Two, The Intermediate Period. The Light of Kailash, Volume Three, The Later Period*. For explication of the Bön religion and its practices, see: *Drung, Deu and Bon: Narrations, Symbolic Languages and the Bon Tradition in Ancient Tibet*.

⁴ Jean-Luc Achard, 'La naissance de Takla Mebar ou l'origine de la pratique de Phurpa dans la Tradition du Bön Eternel'. *Dzogchen Journal* #14, April 1998.

Phurba and its practice into Tibet in the 7th or 8th century CE. According to the legends surrounding this Master, he adopted and transformed what was largely a heathen practice of nail-sorcery⁵ and exorcism native to India, known as *Kilaka*, into one of the most elevated systems of spiritual attainment, along with his consort, Yeshe Tsogyal, and the two Masters, Vimalamitra and Silamanju.⁶ What Guru Rinpoche and his companions (and later his thousands of disciples and mind-emanations) generated became known as the practice of Vajrakila, or Vajrakilaya.⁷ Within the Nyingma lineages of Vajrayana Buddhism, Vajrakilaya is the supreme *Yidam* (deity), not only of Padmasambhava, but as the manifest expression of Wisdom Emptiness known as the *Dharmakaya*, out

⁵ A practice whereby nails or daggers are used to curse and pin down enemies.

⁶ This 'system' was based on talks and teachings between the three yogis and transcribed for posterity by Yeshe Tsogyal. It was called the *Phur 'grel bum nag*, or, *The Black One Hundred Thousand Words Commentary on Vajrakila* that clearly defines the Essential Points. This text was later secreted away by Yeshe Tsogyal as a *terma*, a hidden treasure text, to be discovered at a future auspicious time. The first English translation was made by Martin J. Boord and published by Edition Khordong in Berlin, 2002, as *A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue*.

⁷ The specific etymology of both the practice and the deity is disputed by scholars. For a thorough overview of the terms and their history within the context of Vajrayana Buddhism, see the works of Boord, namely *Cult of the Deity Vajrakila* (Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring, UK 1993), which was recently revised and re-published as *Gathering the Elements* (Edition Khordong, Berlin 2013). Boord favors the term *Vajrakila* for both practice and deity, and for this provides a strong argument. However, in relation to the practice as a whole, which combines dagger, sadhanas and deity, *Vajrakilaya* retains an apposite and clearly defined meaning. Both are Sanskrit nominatives.

of which all forms arise. Vajrakilaya is the highest of the Ancient Tantras, according to which, the entire universe is the Primordial Phurba itself.

Survey of Beliefs

To understand the spiritual milieu in which the Phurba obtains its conceptual context requires some elaboration. The Bön religion predates Buddhism, according to Bön historical chronicles and mythology by many millennia. Bön, as an active religion and system of beliefs and practices, came into full existence about one hundred years after the birth of the Bön 'buddha' Mura Tehen, more widely recognized as Tonpa Shenrab Miwo, who was born in the archaic country Tagzig in 1917 BC, thus vastly predating the birth of the first Buddha, Sakyamuni.⁸ As in Tibetan Buddhism, there are Nine Ways or Nine Vehicles of Bön. They are:

The Four Ways of Cause: The Way of the Shen of the Cha, being sorcery, divination, astrology and medicine.

The Way of the Shen of the Visual World, being invocation of gods, exorcism rites, suppression rites, ransom rituals and practices for summoning and communing with the spirits of place.

⁸ Dmitry Ermakov, *Bo and Bon*, p. 3.

The Way of the Shen of Magical Power, being destructive rites to liberate the mind-streams of demons (the Bön Phurpa tantras).

The Way of the Shen of Existence, being funeral rites and observances.⁹

The Five Ways of Fruit: The Way of the Virtuous Lay Practitioners, being rules of conduct.

The Way of the Ascetics, being rules of monastic discipline.

The Way of the White A, being the lower tantric teachings.

The Way of the Primordial Shen, being the higher tantric teachings.

The Supreme Way, containing the teachings of Dzogchen.

The word, 'shen' means the Clan to which Shenrab Miwo belonged to, according to Namkhai Norbu.¹⁰ These Nine Ways are governed by, what in Tibetan Buddhism is called the Three Jewels, Contemplation, Compassion and Devotion, otherwise characterized by Body, Speech and Mind, and the Three Kayas, to which we now turn,

⁹ Ibid., pp. 139–140.

¹⁰ Namkhai Norbu, *Drung, Deu and Bön*, p. xv.

known respectively as the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya.

The teachings known as the Three Jewels, or the Three Gems, were brought to sophistication by the 'second' Buddha, Padmasambhava. From them were emanated the Nine Yanas, or Vehicles of Tibetan Buddhism. They are:

The Three Body Yanas: the Vehicles of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist schools. They are concerned with study, discipline and the basic yogas.

The Three Speech Yanas and the Three Mind Yanas: the Vehicles of Vajrayana, dealing with Mantra yoga and the higher tantric system known as Dzogchen, or, the Great Perfection teachings.

It is primarily within the Vajrayana vehicles that the tantras of Dorje Phurba and Vajrakilaya are to be found and practiced, though there are Phurba teachings observed in both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism as well. The chief differences between Bön and Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism lies in both the overarching 'shamanic' aspect of Bön and the lack of the Three *Kayas* within their teachings (though apposite ideas are present, especially in the teachings known as the New Bön, for which see the works of Yongzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Geshe Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche and John Reynolds). For a deeper grasp of these concepts, the *Kayas* and what they mean must be understood.

The word 'Kaya' is defined as truth itself, or rather the true nature of mind. In Vajrayana Buddhism, the Kayas are the three 'bodies' of the Buddha. The inner essence of Mind, and all that exists, which ultimately is emptiness, is the *Dharmakaya*, also known as the state of Dharmadhatu. In the Tantras belonging to the Kilaya Cycles of practice, the Dharmakaya is pure Vajra Wrath. It is the vital Truth of Wisdom-Mind. The *Sambhogakaya* is the next 'level', as it were, of this Truth, which is its Manifestation. It is the Wisdom Body of Truth, all the forms and ornamentation of all the Buddhas and their emanations. The *Nirmanakaya* is the Light of the Truth, as manifest in the sacred seed syllables and mantras of the Buddhas. Thus, the trinity of Body, Speech and Mind, and their experiential transpositions, are unified within the totality of the Kayas.

Ultimately there exists no difference between the states of the Kayas: they are all one and the same. From this tripartite unity arise all trinities within the Tantric Corpus of Vajrayana Buddhism. As will be shown, it is through the practice of Phurba and Vajrakilaya that the Kayas are most potently revealed and made manifest within the Body, Speech and Mind of its practitioners.

Vajrayana, which means 'the Swift Path' comprises the way of the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. It was expounded and brought to fruition by Padmasambhava in Tibet in the 8th century CE. Padmasambhava taught Secret Mantra, which, in its essence, is the entirety of Vajrayana teachings. Through Secret Mantra one may achieve enlightenment and liberation over the course of a single incarnation. These teachings radi-

eally diverge from the more standard and conservative view of the Hinayana and Mahayana schools of Tibetan Buddhism, which both dogmatically assert that it takes thousands, if not millions, of lifetimes to achieve freedom from the Wheel of Samsara, or the innate suffering of physical existence. Secret Mantra was taught to Padmasambhava and demonstrated by Vajrayogini, or Pure Wisdom Mind, and it was taught via the teachings of Vajrakilaya. Thus the Swift Path itself is none other than Dorje Phurba, the deified Nail of Primordial Existence.

The teachings were elaborated upon by the dakinis—the emanations of Vajrayogini—over time, and then reified and perfected by Padmasambhava, his Wisdom Consort (who, of course, was an emanation of Vajrayogini) Yeshe Tsogyal, and the two masters, Vimalamitra and Silamanju. Together with the loyal retinue of 'Heart-Sons', his twenty-five chief disciples, the teachings of Kilaya were secreted away as termas, or hidden treasures, to be later discovered by tertons, or treasure-revealers, at a more spiritually auspicious time. The Terma Tradition has a long and complex history, both in Bön and Vajrayana Buddhism.¹¹ However it is intrinsic to an understanding of both, and of Phurba, for at the heart of this very esoteric lore, is the on-going manifestation of the Kila and its practice. Yeshe Tsogyal hid many thousands of these termas concerning Vajrakilaya

¹¹ A comprehensive study of the subject can be found in *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, by Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, Wisdom Publications, London, 1986. A more recent study detailing the life of terton Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa, and containing translated Vajrakilaya terma-teachings, is *Tibetan Treasure Literature*, by Andreas Doctor, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 2005.

at certain places in the earth throughout Tibet and Bhutan (in rocks, caves and trees), in the mind-streams of tertons not yet born, within the sky, and throughout the elements of the Six realms of Being. Thus, while a great many have been re-discovered, revealed, published and translated, they comprise a tiny fraction of the entirety of teachings. Luckily for Bön, Vajrayana, and those who possess a heart-connection to Guru Rinpoche or to the Dharma, the teachings which have been discovered and disseminated now throughout both East and West, continue to be preserved, taught and practiced around the globe, now more than ever before.

The Crystalline Dagger

How is it possible there exist different but similar Phurba deities and practices across the spectrum of Bön and Nyingma lineages? The temporal explanation requires an immense textual substantiation. But the spatial and experiential explanation is simple: It is the nature of self-arising wisdom in the emanant field of Dharmadhatu to manifest in the mind-streams of sentient beings based on need, circumstance and collective karma. To give an example of their relation, two stories should serve about how the Phurba initiated early practitioners into its Mandala, both of which reveal the original Phurba to be formed of crystal.

The Bön terton Gshen-chen reveals how he discovered a specific terma. At a mountain monastery four Sman-mo-bzhi, or miraculous women (essentially the

Bön equivalent of dakinis) came upon him out of the sky riding a dragon, a garuda, a lion and a tiger.

They descended, saying, ‘Gshen-sgur klu-dga, shall we give you the spiritual powers of Bön? If you study, will you become knowledgeable? If taught, will you be able to meditate?’ Gshen answered, ‘If I study, I will become knowledgeable. If taught, I will be able to meditate. Grant me the spiritual powers of Bön.’ ‘Since you are an emanation embodiment, take this eight finger-width crystal phurba and keep it secret for a cycle of twelve years,’ they said. Then they traveled into space and vanished. When I examined it, the phurba had what are called the nine grades of Vehicles, the Six Doors of Bön. If you descended down the nine ladder notches of crystal, it had something like a spiral on its trunk. At its head was a square boulder. On the neck was a clear swastika of crystal. Upon examination of the site, it turned out to be just like that.¹²

The phurba was secreted away by Gshen and it was later re-discovered as both an earth and mind treasure, the phurba itself comprising Deity and Teaching. This particular phurba, it is told, caused the Nine Vehicles of Bön to spread.

¹² Dan Martin, *Unearting Bön Treasures: Life and Contested Legacy of a Tibetan Scripture Revealer, with a General Bibliography of Bön*, pp 61-62.

The second story concerns the initiation of Padmasabhava, the venerable Guru Rinpoche himself. At a certain point in his training the supreme dakini, Vajrayogini, came to him. Without speaking she gave him a crystal phurba and told him to slice her open with it. Reluctantly he did so and cut open her chest to reveal glowing chakras and nadi channels. Upon seeing them, Padmasambhava's entire body and awareness was reordered. Vajrayogini smiled, took the phurba from him and sliced his own chest open. She placed the crystal dagger inside him and sealed the flesh. She then vanished. Shortly after this event, Padmasambhava realized Vajrakilaya and made preparations to enter Tibet and spread its teachings there.

The Phurba represents the ultimate crystalline nature of wrath and emptiness, and thus of the Mind itself.



THE SHAPES OF WRATH

KILA AND PHURBA ICONOGRAPHY IN
BÖN AND NYINGMA BUDDHISM

The Kila

The iconography of the Phurba finds its origin and physical constituents with the Vedic *kila*. In the mythology of the *Rig-veda* (composed between 1700–1100 BC) the first God-Head, Indra, before he could create the world had to slay the Universal Serpent Vitra in order to free the Waters of Life. He did this with a giant dagger, which he later used to create the earth's axis and to connect it to the heavens. From the start the *kila* is thus an instrument of both destruction and creation, severance and unity.

Later, both wooden and iron stakes, known as *indrakilas* were used to demarcate sacred space and to lay the groundwork for the geomantically derived architecture of temples and stupas. With the rise of Vajrayana Buddhism many centuries later, these *indrakilas* became transmogrified into the ten nails driven into the boundary area of tantric working to serve as the ten *Krodha* kings of the Kilaya mandala, as well as the slayers of the ten Vedic deities, now relegated to mere demons. The *kila*, much like its eventual incarnation as the Phurba, became a tool for the highest meditational states to the lowest instrument of the subjugation of local earth

spirits, and a murderous weapon used for the slaying of enemies.

The influence of *kila* upon the architecture of Buddhist temples has a long and rich history. Dalton writes:

It is related in the Sayings of Ba that Tibet's first monastery, Samye, was surrounded by four stupas in the four directions. These were in the shape of kilas in order to subjugate the local spirits and demons. Other texts explain that a grid pattern is overlaid upon the site of a stupa or monastery, made with stretched thread attached to sandalwood kilas in the center and in the directions.¹³

This gridwork laid the literal foundation or blueprint for what would, over time, become the three-dimensional Palace and Mandala of the deity Vajrakilaya and his entire retinue of phurba protectors. The stretched thread evolved into the blood and intestines of defeated *mara* demons, and the sandalwood *kilas* became the animal-headed guardians of the inner and outer palaces of the Kilaya Mandala.

Within *The Black Razor* tantra the syllables of the name, *Kila*, are attributed to a series of mystical ideas, which reveal the level of sophistication surrounding the nail's spiritual evolution and apotheosis.

'Ki' implies that all and everything is the mind of enlightenment.

'La' means that the enlightened mind pervades all things.

'Ki' indicates the supreme lord of all phenomena.

'La' shows that all beings are within his retinue.

'Ki' indicates that all dharmas are unoriginated.

'La' shows the unceasing nature of playful creativity (*lila*)

'Ki' indicates unity within the enlightened mind.

'La' shows the attainment of multiplicity within that.¹⁴

According to the Dudjom Tersar lineage Vajrakilaya sadhanas, the syllable *Ki* represents the ten wrathful kings surrounding the main deity and his consort. The *La* syllable comprises the kings' consorts. *Kila* also expresses the bodily ornamentation of the deity's fangs and wings respectively, all of which are described as different types of *kila* daggers. Thus the very name of the ritual dagger and its syllables contains the deity, consort, and immediate group of Phurba protectors.

The origin of the very first Kilaya Mandala (according to ancient Vedic authors) originates within the Vajrakila Root Tantra, of which only a fragment has survived (and was believed to be the root text that Padmasambhava brought with him to Tibet), known as the *Vajrakilayamulatantrakhandah*. In it are described all of the animal-headed Phurba protectors, along with their summoning mantras. By the 7th century CE, the *Kila* had already

¹³ Jacob P. Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 68.

¹⁴ Martin J. Boord, *A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue*, The Black Razor Tantra, p. 105.

been transformed from a mere nail to a mandalic deity, complete with retinue.

The Phurba

The exact age of the oldest Phurba teachings is not known, though many dates have been suggested by the various lineages within Bön and Nyingma Buddhist sects, and by scholars. It is believed by the Bön that they emerged from the Dharmakaya aeons ago, but historically the earliest accounts suggest the 6th or 7th centuries CE. Regardless of the truth of its age and provenance, the most ancient reference on record remains the *Bön Phur-pa Compendium of Practice*, comprising the Nine-fold Tantra of Phur Pa, and its commentary, the Tenth. These were transmitted by Stag la me'bar, a disciple of Ston pa gshen rab, the mystical originator of Bön in the ancient country of Zhang Zhung.¹⁵ This 'compendium' contains three complete systems of Phurba teachings known as the Black Phurpa, the Revealed Phurpa and the Archaic Treasure Transmissions. All of them are termas, which were first recovered during the initial persecutions of the Bön-pos in the 7th century. Within the corpus of these works the Phurba is described as being composed of seven lineage cycles, as follows:

- 1 Phurpa Lower Robe of Tagla. Rites of malefic sorcery and subjugation of enemies.
- 2 Phurpa of Dechen Lingpa, a lineage holder.
- 3 Fierce Phurpa of the Three Bodies. A devotional praxis unto the Deity as Teacher.
- 4 Canopy of Phurpa. The Mandala of Black Phurpa.
- 5 Cycle of Dge Khod Phurpa.
- 6 Cycle of Meri Phur, containing Phurpa of Za and Phurpa of the Eight Life-Sap. Longevity practices.
- 7 Black Tantra of Phurpa.

The latter contains the whole and was 'recovered at a cave in Paro, Bhutan in 1038. The tantra is made of nine texts with a commentary, altogether comprising ten volumes. The Root-Tantra itself consists of thirty-nine chapters.'¹⁶ These cycles describe ritual instructions, vows and commitments, the mandalas of deities manifesting as Phurpa, methods to control nagas and local spirits, the immolation of corpses, both human and animal, fire offering rites (homa) and the preparation of offering cakes (torma). The Phurpa rites themselves invoke wrathful male deities known as the *Five Supreme Ones of the Citadel*. The 'Citadel' in question is very similar in composition as the Kilaya Mandala in the Nyingma traditions, the chief difference being that in the Kilaya Mandala there are ten 'Sons' of the manifest deity, Vajrakila. Due to the detailed and exhaustive complexity of its ritual

¹⁵ J. F. Marc des Jardins. *The Records of Tshul khrims mchog rgyal on the Black Phur pa Cycle of the Tibetan Bön-pos*.

exaction the Black Phurpa rites are rarely performed by Bön-pos today.¹⁷

In Bön, as in Nyingma Buddhism, transmission of a cycle of teachings is usually exacted via differing modes of empowerment. Universally, this involves the use of ritual cards portraying the deities and lineage masters of the particular empowerment being transmitted.

For the Black Phurpa transmission there are thirty-three cards, of which follows a few descriptions of deities and ritual weaponry. The perfected King Mkha'gying is described as living

...in the fierce fortress of Ogmin. He has a dark blue body and shines majestic light; his hair curls in an ornament of black expanse; he brandishes in his hand a dagger of meteoric iron whose indestructible metal subjugates the Five Poisons of affliction.¹⁸

It should be noted that this bears a very close resemblance to the Victorious Youth, Vajrakumara, within Vedic and Nyingma cosmology. Vajrakumara, or Vajrakilya, after defeating the demon Rudra, took over his cannibal palace, which is here cognate to the fortress of Ogmin.

The Great Mother Compassionate Byams Ma is the primordial dakini. She sits

...in the expanse of the Blanket of Delight. Her white body emanates green majestic light with her green hair gathering and swirling around turquoise; she carries a vase of ambrosia which holds compassion for all poisoned sentient beings.¹⁹

She is very much like Yeshe Tsogyal, the consort of Guru Rinpoche, who is the emanated human form of the dakini, Vajrayogini, and is similar in some aspects to White Tara, out of whom all the other Taras arise.

The description of the emanated teacher Gshen Rab described as standing "in the Canopy of Lapis of the fierce Gsas palace. His blue-colored body radiates light and emanations. His hair is a topknot of lapis with a turquoise in the center." So far, as in Vajrayana Buddhism, we have Deity (Yidam), Consort and Teacher (Guru).

Another deific form of importance is The Gshen of Power, who is described as

the fierce Stag la me'bar, resides in the fierce Gsas palace in the cave of Rong Chen. His body is red and blue, majestic in countenance; his hair is green and ornamented with thousands of small poisonous daggers; his body is covered with the mane of a tiger and ornamented with the hundred thousand small bells of existence; he holds

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

high a curved iron dagger and liberates demons and devouring fiends.²⁰

This description is almost exactly that of the Fierce Guru, Dorje Drolö, the wrathful form utilized by Padmasambhava when he entered Tibet. This prompts consideration of whether or not Padmasambhava knowingly appropriated the deities and symbols of the Bön religion, or whether the resonant similarities between form and practice are merely a matter of transmission and re-transmission of the gnosis of Phurba. It is a difficult question to answer and most likely doesn't matter as the Phurba is a universal matrix of power that manifests in the forms relevant to sentient beings occupying the various worlds blessed with the seeds of the Dharma. Regardless, all of these deities are cognate, and perhaps were hypostatic precursors to the Yidam, Guru and Consort so central to later Vajrayana tantric practice.

There are four texts within the Black Phurpa Tantra which concern the transmission. Each relates, as in the Nyingma lineages, to one of the Four Phurbas. They are, in order:

- 1 The Great Pledge; the Unravelling of the Extensive Array and the Steering Four Notes. These make up the Vow of Commitment to practice Black Phurpa, the generation of the Black Phurpa Citadel (the Array) and the four methods of approach.
- 2 The General Points in regards to the Profound Per-

²⁰ Ibid.

fection of the Twenty-Five Lore. These make up the teachings upon the ritual practice itself.

- 3 The Purification of the Peaceful Deities and Mothers, and the Accomplishment of the Root of the Great Sphere. These are supplicatory rites, which are sealed by the visualization of the great drop of *bindu* which contains the Black Phurpa Citadel and all its occupants. In other words, the arising of the Deity within the great expanse of Dharmakaya.
- 4 The Great Ritual of the Black Phurpa, which includes the Blessings upon the Lineage Holders, the Retinue of the Citadel and the Wrathful Mantra Recitation.

These teachings are deeply detailed and specialized and collectively can be compared to the highest Abhidharma texts within the Vajrayana canon as a whole. However, there is as well a great deal of sorcery and rites of black magic contained in these texts and most of them and their subsequent chapters unveil a typology of demon-hierarchies, the raising and implementing of nails and daggers, exorcism, curses, and most anomalously, the '*purification of the demons of the falcon-wolves*'.²¹

Finally, as with Vajrayogini and Guru Rinpoche, it was the Great Mother Compassionate Byams Ma who originally transmitted the Black Phurpa Tantra to Gshen Rab, when he dwelled within his Peacock emanation body.

Cantwell and Mayer reckon that the earliest record of a Bön phurba being discovered was in the 11th cen-

²¹ Ibid.

tury.²² However, both the practice and manufacture of Phurba originates much earlier.

Phur Pa is the Superior Deed Manifestation of Tonpa Shenrab Miwo. The dagger itself is the entirety of his *activity*, what in Vajrayana Buddhism would be called his Sambhogakaya body. This activity has five aspects or manifestations: The Body, Speech, Mind, Superior Quality and Superior Deed of Buddha-nature. The Body is the incarnative vessel of the Master. The Speech is his Mantra vehicle. The Mind is both and contains the Superior Quality, or the teaching thereupon, and the Superior Deed, which is its ritual exaction.

The archetypal Bön Phurba possesses a crown that usually takes the form of an intricate knot. This knot is the Citadel of Wrathful Father Deities. The mid-section of the phurba is a second intricate knot resembling a series of flames, and is home to the Wrathful Mother Deities. The center part just below it has eight sides, is hollow, and symbolizes the nature of emptiness and the clear light of Wisdom-Mind. In order to destroy demons and subdue negative emotions, the phurba terminates in a sharp point that is usually three-sided, though wooden phurbas of this type are single sided. Though not consistent in this design, I have personally found most wooden phurbas of Bön provenance to be both single pointed and sided. They also differ in regards to the above described configurations. I have in my possession a requisite example. It is single pointed and topped merely with a crown of sorts. Other wooden phurbas

²² Early Tibetan Documents on Phur Pa from Dunhuang, P. 15.

in my collection follow the structural guidelines above, though are less elaborate. One has a three-sided point. Decorating each side are double-entwined Naga serpents, an attribute that is unusual on most wooden Bön phurbas I have seen. This particular phurba came with a knotted cord tied around its middle, out of which was stuck a raven's feather. This is in keeping with most Phurba and Kilaya sadhanas, for raven and owl feathers are used during the ceremony to bless the dagger-as-deity, and to disperse incense offerings. This is one feature of a shamanic aspect of the original Bön Phurpa teachings that was later adopted and/or absorbed by the early Buddhist sects which practiced Kilaya.

In Bön, as in very early Vajrayana, the Phurba was initially used in sorcery and earth-subduing rituals of magic. They were the tool of the exorcist and geomancer, who banished or annihilated troublesome spirits, and cleared the land to aid in the construction of temples and stupas dedicated to proliferation of the Dharma.

It was also utilized in spiritual warfare, an example of which is told in the story of Rig'dzin Palden Tashi. After extensive Dzungar Mongol massacres throughout Tibet in the early 18th century, Tashi revoked his Gelug Buddhist commitments and took Bön Ngakpa vows at Mindrolling. He gathered a small army of Ngakpa practitioners, and during a three week retreat passed out amongst them nineteen hundred wooden phurbas, of his own make and design. These were carved with the attributes of both Black Phurpa and Guru Drakpo, a later manifestation of the same, whose practice remains strong to the present day (essentially a wrathful hypostate of

Guru Rinpoche, similar to Dorje Drolö, but possessing a dagger for his lower body). These '1900 phurba wielding Ngakpas', as they came to be known, collectively summoned the wrathful Bön deity, Phurba Chenpo to repel the invading Mongol hordes. They were successful, and the slaughter was unprecedented; one of but a few tales of physical manifestations of phurba protectors actually murdering human beings. The success spanned the centuries, and this particular Bön Ngakpa community survives in Rekpong to the present day, maintained by the Ngakmang Institute. The story of Palden Tashi is one of the more remarkable in the history of Bön. His root teacher was the terton, Nyima Drakpo, said to be an incarnation of both Avalokiteshvara (whose wrathful form is the Lord of Death, Yamantaka/Vajrabhairava, who occupies the cardinal direction of the South in the Greater Mandala of Vajrakilaya) and Guru Drakpo. As such, he was the literal *vajra speech* of all the Buddhas, fully embodying the Sambhogakaya realm.²³

In Vajrayana Buddhism, most notably within the Nyingma school, the iconography of the Phurba is somewhat elaborate, for it is taught that the very Mandala of Vajrakilaya is a massive three-sided nail.

The point of this nail penetrates to the tenth level of hell. The lower knot just above the point encompasses the Realm of Desire, thus that of Gods and Men. The bottom half of its octahedral handle subsumes the Realm of Form. The upper half, the Formless Realm and the Four Infinitudes—Space, Consciousness, Nothing-

²³ Paraphrased from the Drala Jong blogspot, May 6, 2012.

ness and Unity. The uppermost knot is the Mandala Palace of the Buddhas, usually decahedron in shape. This iconography is mostly universal in appearance and application, though I have seen a copper Hayagriva phurba which possesses a cube above and below the double-lotus handle. On each side of each cube are six open petalled lotuses, making a total of forty-eight. These comprise the basic Phurba retinue of deities, and combined with Vajrakumara, Consort and Secret Hayagriva, they make up the entire Kilaya Mandala of deities, fifty-one in number.

These decahedrons and/or cubes are representative of the twin states of Samsara and Nirvana. Upon the Phurba, they are united as one by the lotus handle. Below the lowest decahedron/cube lies the head of the *Makara*, or sea dragon. From its open mouth depends the actual three-sided blade or nail of the Phurba. The *Makara* has a strange historical connection with *Kila* cosmology. It is a Sanskrit word meaning 'sea monster' or 'crocodile'. It was adopted by Vajrayana Buddhists because of its strong teeth and jaws, symbolizing the weapons of Vajra-Wrath—hook, katvanga, scythe, vajra, dorje, axe and phurba. All, according to the Tantras, originally emerged from the *Makara*'s mouth.

In India, *Makara* was the offspring of the river goddess, *Ganga* (Ganges), and the sea deity, *Varuna*. He wards temples, shrines and watches over pilgrims to the great river. The *Makara* symbolizes compassion (as do most of the elements making up phurba attributes) through devouring and the destructive penetration of its *Kila* blade. There is a secret teaching that reveals

Makara to be the composite mouths of all the Kilaya deities' collective mouths.

Also emerging from the Makara's mouth are two, sometimes three, Naga serpents, which hang upon the sides of the edge of the triple blade. As two, they are the King and Queen of the Nagas, who were converted and bound by Padmasambhava to serve and protect the Dharma. As three, they represent their own Three Realms, now ruled over by the teachings of the Dharma.

The three sides of the Phurba represent a variety of trinities within the higher Vajrayana tantras. They are, at the most elevated level, the Three Kayas. They make up the three Realms of Deity, the Formed, the Formless and the Human. When the blade strikes it opens the Three Doors of Liberation, those of no Aspect, no Expectation and Emptiness. They are the Three Types of Compassion, for sentient beings, for the alleviation of ignorance and for the generation of bodhicitta, the 'grace of the formless'. In the Tantras they combine the View, Meditation and Realization. They are the Base, the Path and the Fruit, or the Result of the practice. They are Essence, Nature and Energy, Body, Speech and Mind. The three sides are intrinsically the Three Poisons which are transmuted by the blade's point, which is *rigpa*, or, non-dual awareness.

At the top of the Phurba are generally three faces, representing the Three Poisons to be overcome. They are crowned with ten skulls representative of the ten major Phurba deities surrounding Vajrakilaya and his consort, Diptachakra. These are: Vajrahumkara, Krodhavijaya, Niladanda, Yamantaka, Arya-acala, Hayagriva, Aparajita,

Amrtakundalin, Trailokyavijaya, and Mahabala. These deities will be further examined below, as they pertain specifically to the Kilaya Mandala.

Some phurbas possess only a single face, usually wrathful in countenance. These phurbas are used for suppression rites alone, and as ritual pegs to demarcate working space. They also represent the unity of the Three Realms in apotheosis.

In the Tantra known as the *Clear Elucidation of the Essences* the Phurba is further described in much the same manner as above, but is compared to Mt. Meru, of which it is one of the original symbols for:

"Mt. Meru itself is embedded like a *kila* into the elemental ground, the upper vast knot of the *kila* being the splendid castle of the gods above the summit of the mountain, and within this upper vast knot one should meditate upon the divine palace and the deities of the *Triple Mandala*."

An extremely vital and encompassing description of the Phurba/Kila dagger and its practice in terms of the visualization aspect is outlined in the Tantra known as the *Bum Nag*:

the mandala palace is generated from the syllable *Bhrüm*, and there one meditates upon the Lord and his Consort. Reciting the *Mulamantra* which is the mantra of generation, one generates the Ten Wrathful Kings and their Consorts, together with their animal-headed emanations, in

the cardinal and intermediate directions around the eight-sided handle. Humkara and his consort and their emanations fill the upper vast knot with their eyes looking down from above like the head of the *garuda*. Mahabala and his consort are generated within the lower vast knot at the bottom of the handle in the proud and haughty posture of a champion. The guardians of the Four Gates are generated on the four sides. The twelve kila protectresses are generated in the neck of the sharp blade. On the sides of the upper vast knot, the Lords of the Five Families are generated as the crown ornament of Vajrakumara. As it is written in the *Guhya-tantra*, all *mandala* are perfected within the sphere of a single *kaya*. The nature of the eight sides is eight Wrathful Kings, and eight Wrathful Queens are born from the four corners. Above and below also have the nature of gods.²⁴

The knots of the Phurba gain even greater significance when it is realized that they each are manifest forms of the Three Kaya.

Lastly, from one of the earliest Phurba texts we find this simple description of the Dagger:

For the perfection of form, it should be rendered in the shape of the heart mudra, for the occasion of the Wrathful Phurpa, five types of iron/metal or sandalwood or thorny wood. You make the

²⁴ *A Bolt of Lightning From The Blue*, pp. 195–6.

phurpa eight inches or twelve inches, and without muddling the top and the bottom, make the head towards the roots of the wood and make the knot one inch in size. At the waist is another one inch knot; the upper part has eight facets, the lower is made with a three-sided blade, and being imposing like Mt. Meru, it is the perfection of form.²⁵

Thus are described the compositional aspects of the Phurba, which make up both its metaphysical as well as physical attributes in terms of both practice and ritual tool.

The Four Phurbas

Throughout the tantras dedicated to Phurba and Vajrakilaya practice are delineated four different types of phurbas, each of which have their own nature and function within the rubric of Phurba teachings.

The Immeasurable Compassion Phurba. In a sense all forms of the Phurba are based on the idea of universal compassion, for while Vajrakilaya is the supreme wrathful deity, his wrath is not the same as anger. His wrath is *vajra wrath*, and as it says in nearly all of the Kilaya tantras, *vajra wrath subdues anger*. The nature of this wrath is compassion for the miserable state of most sen-

²⁵ *Early Tibetan Documents on Phur Pa from Dunhuang*. Dunhuang Text III, pp. 92–93.

tient beings. And since anger is one of the Three Poisons to be transmuted, it is the Immeasurable Compassion Phurba that exacts the transmutation of anger and mind delusion into Vajra Wrath and Wisdom Awareness of the original Primordial Awareness. When one arises in the practice as the great Vajra Youth, the Victorious Son, Vajrakumara, one wields the Immeasurable Compassion Phurba. It serves to sever false attachment to base emotions which prevent one from abiding in the pure state of Wisdom Mind. It is thus the ultimate form of Phurba, whether it be generated in Mind as such, or whether it becomes whatever physical phurba one is using during the practice. Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche write of this phurba that its use serves to, "...liberate all sentient beings into the wisdom of enlightenment. This aspect of Vajrakilaya practice is called 'the phurba of infinite compassion'".²⁶ All forms of the dagger find their genesis in this phurba and so it is often also called the *One Phurba*.

The Symbolic Substantial Phurba. According to the tantras, all of material existence and all of the universe is simply a manifestation of this phurba. It is also known as the *Teaching Phurba* because by it the entire symbolism of the phurba dagger and the Kilaya Mandala are contained in its make-up. In its substance Samsara and

²⁶ *The Dark Red Amulet: Oral Instructions on the Practice of Vajrakilaya*, p. 109. This seminal book translates a terma text revealed by Tsasum Lingpa in the 17th century in Tibet. It is an invaluable source upon the practice of Vajrakilaya and the lore of the Phurba.

Nirvana are inseparable. Its essence is the embodiment of the teaching that Supreme Wisdom Awareness is that state of compassion which arises within Dharmakaya. The Symbolic Substantial Phurba collects all physically made phurbas into itself; it is their very form and nature. Because of this it is the phurba that governs all wrathful activity. It is the essence of the materials which go into its design and manufacture. The *Bum Nag* gives six characteristics of this phurba, which it calls the *Material Kila*. As these reveal a great wealth of knowledge concerning the Phurba, they are here related directly:

The Material Kila

- 1 Materials. (this section lists four different types of phurba and what they are fashioned from)
 The Kila of Pacification. Silver and/or white wood.
 The Kila of Increasing Virtue. Gold and/or yellow wood.
 The Kila of Supreme Speech. Copper and/or red wood.
 The Kila of Wrathful Rites. Iron and/or black wood.

2 Definition.

Non-dual nirvana, transcending suffering, the mental essence of mind itself is the kila, the very truth of truth itself is the kila, kila is the essential characteristic of the sky. If one meditates with clarity, generation is achieved. If it is non-dual, union is achieved. If the realization is resplendent, success is achieved. If all mental factors are under control, slaying is achieved.

3 Measurement.

Four inches represent the four elements. Eight inches represent the eight consciousnesses. Twelve inches represent the twelve faculties of sense. Eighteen inches represent the eighteen sensory realms.

4 Classification.

Absolute Kila is the Dharmakaya. Relative Kila are made of five metals: earth-iron, sky-iron, molten bronze, metal that has killed a man or horse, and ordinary metal.

5 Symbolism.

The upper vast knot is the Dharmakaya. The lower vast knot is the Sambhogakaya. The tip is the Nirmanakaya.

6 Function.

White Sandalwood pacifies illness. Yellow Barberry increases life and enjoyment. Red Acacia brings all things under control. Gold/Acacia increases bodhicitta. Red Sandalwood subjugates women. Horn/Bone controls officials. Copper subjugates the King. All woods subdue demons.²⁷

Many kilas and phurbas have been found in terma caches or have themselves *been* the terma. Most of these were fashioned from 'sky-metal' or meteoric iron. These are reputedly the most potent and efficacious of all phurbas constructed as they are believed to have the blessings of the dakinis upon them. I had the op-

²⁷ *A Bolt of Lightning From The Blue*, pp. 200–202. Paraphrased for brevity.

portunity several years ago of handling a meteoric iron phurba that supposedly once belonged to the eminent 'wild yogi' Dudjom Lingpa, who was a famous terton who operated within the Nyingma lineage. His reincarnation was the world renowned Lama, Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje Rinpoche (1904–1987), from whom many Vajrakilaya termas were recovered, and may be found in the Dudjom Tersar corpus of extant sadhana texts, and who was largely responsible for bringing them out of Tibet to India and later to the West, prior to the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959. It was surprisingly light in heft, but charged with the obvious numina of ritual use and blessing.

A spectroscopic analysis of six different meteoric iron phurbas was made by the author Thomas Marcotty and the results published in his book, *Dagger Blessing*.²⁸ In nearly every example very similar amounts of exactly the same minerals and metals were found, namely: Carbon, Manganese, Molybdenite, Vanadium, Aluminum, Silicon, Chromium, Nickel, Tungsten, Lead and Iron. Marcotty concludes, based on this analysis that there was actually very little meteoric iron in the daggers, mainly due to the minimal traces of Nickel within them. He writes that the daggers would require at least five percent of Nickel in them to conclude they were actually fashioned from meteoric iron. The point however,

²⁸ *Dagger Blessing: The Tibetan Phurpa Cult: Reflections and Materials*, p. 26. The worth of Marcotty's 'ground-breaking' work (in the sense of being one of the first Western studies of its time) lies not so much in his sensationalistic prose, but in the remarkable photographs included, and some of the first English translations of actual Phurba texts.

is moot, as the fact remains that it would take an inordinate amount of meteoric iron to make a single dagger therefrom. Most likely these daggers all possessed varying amounts of meteoric iron, or that which was available at the time of their manufacture. The amount doesn't matter as much as the *intention* of the maker, and the blessings of the spirits native to the foundry in which it was forged. Sherab and Dongyal write:

The terma phurbas are very famous and very blessed. It is known that if you keep one on your body it will protect you from obstacles, even bullets. This is not just a fairy tale. People experienced this when the Chinese Communists invaded Tibet, and this happened previously many times as well.²⁹

The Bodhicitta Phurba. There are three aspects to the Bodhicitta Phurba: outer, inner and secret. It is possessed of the innate power of Wisdom Awareness. Its outer ability is the transmission of compassion. Its inner ability is pure empathy for the plight of all sentient beings. The juxtaposition of identity is achieved, and one takes on their karmas in order to liberate them. The secret ability of the Bodhicitta Phurba is the generation of the Vajra Vase, or Body. This entails the transformation of one's normal, profane flesh into a vehicle suitable for achieving enlightenment in a single lifetime. The practice of the secret ability involves extensive yogas which

²⁹ *The Dark Red Amulet*, p. 113.

grant control over one's chakras and nadis, to bring the 'pure drop' of *bindu* (life essence) into the central channel of one's nervous system. When this occurs, one has fully achieved and manifested within one's own body the Bodhicitta Phurba. In this sense, the Vajra Vase is the Bodhicitta Phurba. The subject is extremely difficult to adequately explain, especially to Westerners. Both the practice and the phurba are profound, and it can take decades, if indeed not lifetimes, to actually perfect. The Bodhicitta Phurba is also known as the Secret Hayagriva Phurba, whose teaching is extant in but three (out of hundreds of thousands) Vajrakilaya Tantric Cycles. It deals with the mystery of the Horse-Neck deity, Hayagriva, who dwells not only within the Mandala Palace of Kilaya, but also atop the crown of the Phurba, and inside its *heart*. This is the ultimate secret of Vajra Dagger, that Hayagriva is its bodhicitta heart. The secret originated with the earliest Bön daggers, which always possessed horse-heads upon their crown. Those who have some experience of this deity will understand, at least from an *outer* point of view. Realization of its truth is beyond all conceptual, thus, *dualistic* thought.

Hayagriva is the wrathful manifestation of the thousand-headed deity of ultimate Compassion, Avalokiteshvara. In the separate practice of Hayagriva one exacts what is called the 'Play of the Three Realms' or the three Kayas. Through tantric generation and visualization, mantra and ritual gesture involving mudras, one goes through the transformations of the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya vajra-bodies. Once this is actualized Hayagriva enters one's heart, where he

takes the form of the mysterious blood frog (*khrag gi sbal pa*, in Tibetan). The blood frog, according to the *Bam Nag*, is the size of one's thumb-tip and dwells within the heart of all sentient beings at the juncture of 'virtue and vice', or somewhere within the nexus of one's heart arteries and vital breath—the exact location is never really pin-pointed. The heart is the location of the Dharmachakra, a three-sided jewel. What is fascinating about this is that frogs all possess three-chambered hearts, which allow them to have a higher metabolic rate. In this mystery is the reality of the blood frog—namely, that it is a physical counterpart to the Three Jewels of the Dharma. Once Hayagriva has taken up residence in one's heart as the blood frog, the Five Qualities are duly summoned as the deities of the Kagye Mandala. These are Yamantaka (Body), Hayagriva (Speech), Yangdak Heruka (Mind), Chemchok (Qualities) and Vajrakilaya (Activity).



During many years of both collecting phurbas and having them come to me through auspicious circumstance I have only come across one phurba that I can state without reservation *was* a Bodhicitta Phurba. I had

wandered into an antique dealers shop in London with a close friend, and propped up on a wooden stand in a glass case was the most remarkable phurba I've ever seen. It was carved from white conch-shell and stained red (which had faded somewhat to an almost-pink) with an unknown dye and it was perfect in every detail. Essentially it possessed every attribute discussed in this chapter and was rendered without blemish or flaw to the tiniest detail. It exuded a potent aura which affected the entirety of my subtle anatomy, so much so, that I had to leave the shop for a few minutes. Returning I stood before it again and closed my eyes. Without thought or desire the countenance of Vajrakilaya manifested in my awareness, in as graphic detail as the phurba itself which was emanating the vision. The experience of the artifact remains with me today, as fresh as if it had just occurred and I count meeting with such an object a blessing of the utmost magnitude. I say that this was a Bodhicitta Phurba, not simply because of the vision it gifted me, but because it was this experience which led me to the practice of Vajrakilaya, and even more importantly, the *need* to practice it.

The Awareness Wisdom Phurba. This phurba actualizes Vajra Wrath, or the Primordial Wisdom Mind. One *becomes* Dorje Phurba; there is no separation. All is resolved into the original non-dual state of existence, which is the Kilaya Mandala in its entirety.

THE DEPTHS

DAGGER SORCERY AND MALEFIC MAGIC

Before its deification the Dagger, in its forms of the Indian *kila* and the Tibetan *phurba*, was, without doubt, a weapon of murder, exorcism and cursing. It was also used with great frequency to stab effigies of one's enemies. The stabbing of effigies has a long and brutal history in ancient India, where human bone kilas were used. These kilas were known as *yupas*. They were used originally in Vedic times to sacrifice animals, but were later adopted by sorcerers for ritual murder and curse rites. In both cases the bone kilas were stabbed into the victim in various designated areas, whether upon human body or effigy, to effect total subjugation and outright destruction.

The *Vajrabhairava-tantra*, dedicated to the rites and Mandala of Yamantaka, describe several of these rituals. In one, the sorcerer uses funeral pyre charcoal from the cremation of a holy man and a shroud from the corpse of a criminal. A plot is laid out demarcated by wooden kilas and red thread.³⁰ An effigy is traced upon the ground and the shroud laid into it. The effigy is then stabbed throughout what would be the major organs with a kila of human bone made from the left femur.

³⁰ A similar practice of creating ritual space is found in some types of British magic, where penetration of the ground with stakes and the use of red thread derives from apotropaic charms found in early modern folk magic and witchcraft.

This effects both a pinning down of the victim in question, sequestering them in the material world, and then an annihilation of their soul so it may not transmigrate. As with the lower rites of Kilaya, the Vajrabhairava rituals of sorcery and necromancy are quite gruesome, no doubt given the special powers the deity is supposed to possess over death and the realms of the dead.

Other rituals using human bone kilas were very popular in India, in Vedic times, and no doubt in secret up to the present day, but especially ones in which the effigy (or in some cases an actual human victim) is pinned down and stabbed repeatedly in the groin and throat. The purpose of such barbarity is clear, for within these two physical locale are vital chakric centers of power, without which the victim becomes powerless, and in the case of a living human being, inevitably dies of pain and blood loss.

Bones used as kilas were amongst the most favored by sorcerers from these times. Monkey bones slivered into sharpened kilas were used to torture victims and effigies, but not outright murder them. These rites gained favor amongst sorcerers and heretics from Nepal to India to Java, and many of these bloodstained kilas may be seen today in certain private collections.

Bone and wood kilas (the most efficacious being red acacia) were used to aid in the reanimation of corpses, and the origin of such black magical rites originates with Vajrabhairava/Yamantaka. Boord writes:

...Yamantaka is said to have as his queen the mistress of these un-dead monsters called...Vetali.

Vetali is said to have appeared in person to Kantali, a stitcher of rags, after he pierced his finger with a spike, and she became his guru. Kantali's success in following her instructions quickly elevated him to the rank of mahasiddha.³¹

Such elevated purpose was usually not the goal for most practitioners, however, instead reanimation of the dead served to generate a coterie of zombie (*vetala*) slaves, which were used to terrify their victims. A cult dedicated to Vetali was popular in the 13th century in India by a group similar in approach to modern day *aghori*, and retinues of *vetala* were also fashionable amongst the Saivites of Kashmir. Despite such low and pernicious goals, many siddhas (holy men) only practiced such rites with extreme caution, and to the service of enlightenment, resurrecting corpses to receive auguries of the dead, to aid in memorization of sutras, and to give fealty and obeisance to Vetali, Kali, Siva and other related deities and goddesses. In most of these types of ritual observances, the corpse was thoroughly pinned down by kilas made of acacia or juniper wood, which, due to their innate apotropaic properties, kept the body from moving or rising until the allotted time once it was under the control of the sadhaka (practitioner).

A most perverse practice amongst Indian and Indonesian sorcerers was the making of a magical kila out of the severed tongue of a corpse, preferably a victim of the sorcerer. The tongue was pierced with a thorn in

order to keep it straight and elongated and allowed to dry. Once dried, it would be fed once a month on the dark moon with the sorcerer's own blood. After a time, the tongue served as both a curse fetish and an oracular device, often communicating to the sorcerer who was to become its next victim. This rite was perilous, however, as tongues of these necromantic ministrations were more often than not, insatiable in their blood and murder lust. The sorcerer eventually succumbed, becoming his own victim.

Human bone kilas were used to curse a victim's family. It would be charged by the sorcerer and then placed beneath or hidden near the enemy's door. Similar practices were exacted to harm or kill a victim's livestock by burying the kilas in their fields. One particularly nasty example from *Candamaharosana-tantra*:

OM CCHRIM CCHRIM CCHRIM

Dessicate, dessicate!

Bind, bind the support.

OM CANDAMAHAROSANA HUM PHAT.

Having empowered a *kila* of cow bone, seven digits in length, by 108 recitations of this *mantra*, one should bury it in the cow pen. Their milk will not flow."³²

In nearly all of these cases the kilas used were made of human bone, but kilas made of black and red woods effected similar fates. Especially potent were those carved from lightning-struck trees, though mostly wooden ki-

³¹ Martin J. Boord, *Gathering the Elements*, p. 93.

³² *A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue*, p. 23.

las were used for suppression and containment, either of corpses or more malign forces, impinging upon the will and life-force of the sorcerer.

In the Tantric Canon of Vajrakilaya may be found myriads of such rites, and while most served selfish and evil motivations, the underlying purpose of some performances of apparently black magical ritual oblations were to serve a higher cause. A few examples of both will demonstrate this (seeming) paradox.

Along with human bone kilas, human skulls were a favorite tool of malign sorcerers. Skulls, best if those of previous victims, were trepanated and bone kilas inserted into the hole. Mantras of wrath and killing were painted upon the skull in blood and funeral ash and chanted over the skull, including the name of the victim, or his family. More often than not this was done merely to get the victim to flee his home, so the sorcerer could take possession of it, though sometimes it was to cause pain and eventually death.

Sexual slavery was a common desire of these dagger sorcerers and one means to achieve such a servant was to create an effigy using red sandalwood. The victim's name was written in the sorcerer's own blood and placed into its heart. Several types of pepper along with ginger were smeared over the effigy's limbs, which were then pierced with a copper needle. Using a human bone kila, the effigy was then punctured in the heart, navel and sex, while the sorcerer called the victim to come to him in the night and service all his lascivious needs. While on the surface this appears to be wholly debauched and evil, its purpose was not merely to grat-

ify carnal lust: indeed, many of these 'slaves' became valued consorts and wound up channeling oracles and teachings from Vetal and other spirits, and even aiding in the moral reform of the sorcerer' themselves. Such reform led to the use of kilas and kila rites to become more sublime and beneficent, and as time went on, the Dagger gradually became a deified instrument. Rites of slaying transformed from mere sorcerous killing, to the crushing and pinning down of obstructive spirits and the maras of Rudra. Early kila rituals and practices from Indian tantras show the evolution clearly, as Boord has most amply revealed.³³

The kila was used by sorcerers for many reasons and in many locations. But the most favored was, of course, the charnel-ground. It was here that human remains and complete corpses could be easily obtained, and it was herein that rites of necromancy and cursing were effected. The charnel-grounds in India were frightening places. One of the earliest references to the kila and its use in charnel grounds comes from the *Mahasamvarodaya-tantra* and is interesting in that it is the demons who brandish the kila and shout out its accompanying main mantra:

Crows, owls and vultures of many varieties, male and female jackals, male and female hawks, demonesses with fierce and terrifying faces, lion-faced and tiger-faced, snakes with bull heads,

³³ See *A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue*, Episode One, and, *A Roll Of Thunder From The Void*, Chapters 4-7.

two-faced monsters...moving in every direction. There are skeletons impaled upon spears, hanging corpses, half-burned and decapitated. There are skulls, legs, limbless torsos, grimacing heads and scattered bones. There are also some *vidyadharas* and bands of *yogins* and *yoginis* observing their vows, as well as supernatural beings—vicious spirits, zombies, demons with kilas and others screaming, 'KILI! KILI!'³⁴

The atavistic nature of the above description reveals the innate sorcerous paradigm in which these practitioners operated, and it is interesting how from it the kila went on to embody a higher body and function whilst retaining many of these surface base elements.

While the Dagger as Phurba was undoubtedly used by Bön-pos for malefic magical purposes, there is very little information in English on the subject. Like their Indian and Tibetan Buddhist counterparts, the Dagger was used to curse enemies' livestock and families, and rival clans used dagger sorcery in battle, both physically and spiritually, ransoming spirits to deliver 'knives in the dark'.

In the Vajrakilaya Tantric Canon, the so-called 'lower' rites of sorcery are both actual and metaphorical parables. The influence of Bön shamanism is readily apparent, though not specifically infernal. Use of human bone for kilas and animal limbs and feathers is found in many Kilaya ritual texts, even in the highest of tantras. The

³⁴ Quoted in *The Taming of the Demons*, pp. 65–66.

pinning down and outright destruction of the Enemy is described in graphic detail, though it is taught within the commentaries that this refers not to literal murder but to 'liberation' for the sake of all sentient beings. There is much admonition towards not misunderstanding the true purpose behind such symbolism and ritual proscription, and warnings are given repeatedly that the work of the Dagger is fraught with danger and perils to one's soul if one is not properly trained or have the apposite transmission and empowerment to perform such rites. Ultimately, as Cantwell and Mayer relate, "*Libertative murder in Phur Pa Sgrol Ba rites (is exacted so) the consciousness of the evil ones is taken up from the heart of the effigy by the Phur Pa, which has been consecrated as the Deity's emanation.*"³⁵ Their 'consciousness' is then liberated (destroyed into its constituent elements) into the basic space of Dharmakaya.

The 'lower' activities of Vajrakilaya, and of phurba practice in general, are explained in detail within the *Bum Nag*, but ambiguity remains as to whether some of the instructions are 'actual' or 'metaphorical.' This is concisely expressed in a section called the 'Five Deeds of Killing'. These are:

- 1 Killing by implantation of the kila.
- 2 Killing by hurling the enchanted articles of sorcery.
- 3 Killing by hurling the magical *Zor*.
- 4 killing by pressing down.
- 5 Killing by burning in the sacrificial fire.

³⁵ Early Tibetan Documents on Phur pa from Dunhuang, p. 9.

In the first deed, a wooden kila is anointed with urine, blood, and poison (usually *Datura* spp.) and fumigated with gugul, or black frankincense, and black mustard seed. These two have a notorious reputation for repelling and even killing demonic spirits as soon as they are burned, and have a long association with these rites. The kila is implanted into the head of the victim/effigy and then ten other kilas are stuck into vital body parts. If the victim is merely paralyzed by such piercing the rite is repeated until expiration occurs.

In the second deed, the skull of a leper is filled with the blood of an imbecile, black mustard seed, black sesame seed, black frankincense, powdered copper, iron and stone. The skull is then hurled at one's enemy, of whom it is written '*will go insane and die*'.

In the third deed the *Zor*, a Rudra-like monster head triangular in design, is covered with powdered copper, iron, black mustard seed, the blood of someone who died by a sword, the blood of a woman who died in childbirth, and the blood of a Buddhist or Bönpo priest who died of an infectious disease. This is consequently hurled at the victim, who, if not crushed to death, will, at some later date, die by the sword. The heretical aspect of this activity cannot be ignored, for it shows a sorcerous disregard for two faiths from which these rites and practices originally developed. It is difficult not to see in the deed an act of supremely malign black magic.

In the fourth deed evil sorcerers are subjugated and pressed down using the skull of someone whose family line is deceased. This is accomplished at a barren site populated by *Dam Sri* demons, to which the sorcerers

are covertly led. Once they are knocked to the ground, the skull is violently pressed down into their faces, chest and groin. Even if not outright effective, this would certainly frighten them to death. The danger implicit in such an action is the fact that *Dam Sri* demons are the very same class of spirits that the rites of Vajrakilaya and Phurba strive to destroy and liberate.

In the fifth and final deed, the effigy is fashioned so that it possesses bodily and ornamental attributes and characteristics of both the Buddha and Rudra. This deed seems to me to be the most potent spiritually as it serves to destroy the dualism of the conceptual and materialistic mind.

The idea of 'pressing down' finds its origin with a race of demons, very similar to the Rudric maras, called the *Dam Sri*. In the Root Text called 'Pressing Down the Sri' their birth is told:

In the beginning, at a time when the world was coming into existence due to the general karmic propensities of sentient beings (who were destined to become its inhabitants), from the centre of the cosmic mountain sprang forth the tree of paradise, and beneath its roots dwelled the Garlanded with Skulls and the Mistress of Lotus Dance. And to every son that was born from the union of these two, they gave a name.³⁶

³⁶ *A Roll Of Thunder From the Void*, p. 289.

The text goes on to name the chief Sri, which were numerous. These beings went on to cause all the ills of the world and so the Primordial Buddha, Samantabhadra, emanated the wrathful Vajrakilaya, to eradicate them. This is a curious take on the story, as the names of the parents of the Sri are names also given to Vajrakilaya and his Consort. These types of inversions and reversals of identity are strangely common in many Kilaya Tantras and origin stories, and goes to show the thin line that exists within the World of Duality and the Realms of the Kayas. In the more drastic cases, and in degenerate times, such as the ones we live in, extreme measures must be taken. Some of these measures, as has been seen, involve murderous rites of sorcery and subjugation.



THE HEIGHTS

DEITIES OF PHURBA COSMOLOGY
AND MANDALA

In nearly all of the extant Phurba and Kilaya ritual texts, there exists a continuity of attribute, power and place: there is a deified nail with a consort, a retinue of phurba protectors and they dwell within palaces or citadels usually situated in a complex mandalic space. As there are far too many examples to choose from, in this chapter I have chosen to describe a 'composite' Vajrakilaya Mandala consisting of the (only) slightly variegated iconography of the separate and individual phurba protectors and deities taken from four practices within the Northern Treasures.

The Northern Treasures contain Phurba termas hidden by Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal and later discovered by a number of tertons over the centuries. The literature on the treasure revealers and their respective biographies is almost as extensive as the Treasures themselves, and those interested in the subject should read the studies written by Boord, Doctor and Thondup. For our composite examination I have chosen the following four Phurba sadhanas:

The Namchak Putri, or, the Blood-Drinkers Feast,
revealed by Dudjom Rinpoche

The Putri Rekphung, or, Annihilator of the Hordes of
Passion,

revealed by Dudjom Rinpoche

The Dark Red Amulet of Unsurpassable Yang-Phur,
revealed by Rigdzin Gödem Rinpoche

The Black Razor Tantra

The Mandala of Vajrakilaya

All four of the chosen ritual texts have several features in common, the most important being that they are all teachings that were originally received by Padmasambhava, The Namchak Putri and the Putri Rekhung are mind-termas received and revealed by Dudjom Rinpoche as one of the Heart-Son tertons of Guru Rinpoche. The Dark Red Amulet, is of the same category, except revealed by Rigdzin Gödem Rinpoche in the 18th century. The Black Razor Tantra is a condensation of A Sharp Weapon which conquers Mara's Unruly Armies, and is the actual Vajrakilaya sadhana that Padmasambhava practiced in the cave at Yangleshod. The purpose of the texts is the same: to subdue the maras, the obstructive demons of the cannibal-rakshasa, Rudra, in order to liberate from samsara all sentient beings.

The Mandala of Vajrakilaya in all cases arises from the seed syllable *Bhrüm*, which appears as a sphere or drop of *bindu* within a dark blue blaze of sharp weapons, the majority of which are phurbas of every conceivable shape and size. All of the basic space of phenomena is saturated by these phurbas. The mandala is embryonic

at this point. It fully manifests via the following emergent seed syllables:

A dark blue PHAT, from which is emanated all of space, and the rich plot that is the foundation of the Mandala in its entirety.

A dark green PHAT, from which pour forth the Vajra winds, visible as they bear upon their celestial airs winged phurbas.

A dark red PHAT, from which blazes an aeon-destroying fire that purifies *alaya*, or, the ground of all being.

A shining red HUNG, from which pour forth an ocean of blood, the *rakta* of all sentient beings.

A dark yellow SUM, from which is born a vast, universal charnel-ground, the eventuality of all sentient beings.

A white LAM, from which grows a mountain of bones.

A maroon black OM, from which now arises in perfect formation, the complete Mandala of Vajrakilaya.

The Mandala is comprised of an Inner Palace, and Outer Palace that are charnel-grounds, and Four Gates around both. Within the Inner Palace upon a giant throne, or lotus (also described as an immense, vajra-knot, hearkening back to the phurba symbolism), stands the deity Vajrakilaya (or, Vajrakumara, the Victorious Son), em-

braced by his consort, Diptachakra. Surrounding them are the ten Krodha Kings, their consorts, and their animal-headed emanations, situated in their own mandalas. They are:

IN THE ZENITH:

Humkara and Resounding Vajra, also known as Hum-Shouter and Sound-Bringer, with Pig and Lizard-head.

IN THE EAST:

Krodhavijaya and Haughty Vajra, also known as Completely-Victorious and Utterly-Arrogant, with Tiger and Vulture-head.

IN THE SOUTHEAST:

Niladanda and Vajra Claw, also known as Blue Mace-Bearer and Vajra-Talon, with Yak and Raven-head.

IN THE SOUTH:

Yamantaka and Lady of the Charnel-ground, also known as Destroyer of Death and Mistress of the Charnel-ground, with Stag and Owl-head.

IN THE SOUTHWEST:

Acala and Vajra Mortar, also known as Unwavering Lord and Vajra-pounding Vessel, with Leopard and Crow-head.

IN THE WEST:

Hayagriva and Fierce Vajra, also known as Horseneck King and Powerful Controller, with Cat and Hoopoe bird-head.

IN THE NORTHWEST:

Aparajita and Haughty-Arrow Vajra, also known as He Whom None Can Conquer and Haughty Arrow, with Wolf and Hawk-head.

IN THE NORTH:

Amrtakundalin and Wind-blowing Vajra, also known as Swirling Nectar and Wind-Bringer, with Lion and Bat-head.

IN THE NORTHEAST:

Trailokyavijara and Vajra-Slayer, also known as Conqueror of the Triple World and Killer, with Hyena and Weasel-head.

IN THE NADIR:

Mahabala and Vajra-Exhortation, also known as Mighty Power and Vajra-Summoner, with Bear and Rat-head.

Thus is the Inner Palace, all residing upon charnel-grounds, and bearing requisite ornamentation and re-

galia. Vajrakilaya and Diptachakra step upon Mahadeva and Mahadevi, to crush out all sense of ego-clinging.

The Outer Palace contains the five Supreme Sons, and it is they who fly out into the world to collect the maras who refuse invitation to the Vajra-Feast which is the penultimate consummation of the ritual. At the four gates of the palace are the Shona Sisters and the Mamos, who are fiendish female spirits who were long ago subdued by Guru Rinpoche and placed in charge as gate-wardens to the Palaces of the Vajrakilaya Mandala. They all bear sharp weapons and ride various animals, and are overall completely frightening in appearance and aspect. They usher in the maras to the charnel-grounds to be destroyed.

All of this is generated within the mind of the practitioner, and once the visualization has stabilized, he/she goes on to decorate the palace, grounds and canopies, which are covered with intestines, blood, skulls, bones, skeletons and emblems of death. Once this is actualized, the practitioner takes up the phurba and rolls it between the palms. He calls upon Rudra and his maras to appear and be destroyed with the Mantra of Great Wrath

OM VAJRA KILI KILAYA SARVA BIGNEN
BAM HUNG P'HET

and offers them a feast of blood and cakes. Once they appear, the mantra and phurba, with the combined weight of the power of the phurba protectors and their animal-headed emanations, slaughters them all. Their life-essence is poured into an effigy, which is a three-

sided demonic head called the *Zor*, and the *Zor* is given further offerings of mantra and torma. It is then removed from the working site and at the culmination of the practice, is ritually immolated. The merit of the practice is then given to all sentient beings, that they too, may achieve liberation from suffering and the demonic onslights of Rudra and his maras.

In the rubric of all of the four Kilaya texts under purview, the retinue of the Mandala contains fifty-one manifested deities. Here is the final breakdown:

- 1–20 the ten Krodha Kings and Consorts.
- 21–40 the twenty animal-headed emanations.
- 41–45 the five Supreme Sons.
- 46–49 the four fierce Goddesses who guard the Mandala gates.
- 50–51 the Yidam and Consort

The rite is truncated in the rubric of The Black Razor Tantra, where all is exacted within the sensorium of the practitioner. The performance of Namchak Putri and Putri Rekphung are primarily elaborate rituals, executed in a temple or shrine, where the actual Kilaya Mandala is erected as a three-dimensional, three-tiered mandala containing an icon of Vajrakilaya and consort, and phurba daggers carved as the Supreme Sons, their consorts and all of their animal-headed protectors. These rites can take up to a week to fully perform, and they are quite the spectacle in terms of the beauty and color of the craftsmanship, the talent, the colors and scents and tastes involved. The burning of the *Zor* is something

that can only be experienced, not described, for it is essentially the burning away of all the collective negative emotions and karma of the maras, and of the individuals performing the ritual. Vajrakilaya rites are traditionally performed the week prior to Losar, the Tibetan New Year, in order to remove the detritus of the previous year's negativity and broken *samaya* (vows). It is one of the most potent spiritual ritual dramas in the world.

The last word upon the Vajrakilaya Mandala I leave to the illimitable Guru Rinpoche, from the *Bam Nag*, which states the matter of its reality unequivocably:

HUNG. The fundamental *mandala* of the Primordial State is the *Dharmakaya*, the circle of Wrathful Kings in the Ten Directions is the *Sambhogakaya* and the Supreme Son Kila who embodies all the *vajra* deities is the *Nirmanakaya*.³⁷

The Dark Red Amulet of Unsurpassable Yang-Phur is unique in the Tantric Canon of Phurba texts, as it combines the practice of Yangdak Heruka with Vajrakilaya. Yangdak Heruka is the Wisdom-Mind of all the Buddhas, while Vajrakilaya is the Wrathful Activities of all the Buddhas. In the 'Co-Emergent union of the Vajra hero' from this terma is a singular addition to the main Kilaya mantra, the word 'Trigen', which means 'nail' in Tibetan. It consolidates Yangdak heruka and Vajrakilaya, the result of which is the stabilization of View and Meditation. In

³⁷ *A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue*, p. 156.

this light, the practice is profound, for it is the *actual* 'Nail of Divine Union' which unites the realms.

The two texts contained in The Dark Red Amulet of Unsurpassable Yang-Phur are both short and concise, unlike the more involved Namchak Putri and Putri Rekphung. They are the 'Co-Emergent Union of the Vajra Hero' and 'The Practice of the HUNG of the Powerful Black Phurba'. In neither can be found the Kings, Queens, Sons, Goddesses or animal-headed protectors, at least not *explicitly*. What must be grasped is that within the seed syllable HUNG is contained not only the Mandala of Vajrakilaya, but all of its phurba emanations! This is one of the miraculous things about the practice of Vajrakilaya. Whether the practice is short and takes but an hour or so to perform, or whether it be days long in exaction, the meanings and the overall effect of simply reciting the mantra and visualizing the deity serve to actualize the essence of Phurba in the mind-stream of the practitioner.

The cosmology of the Mandala of Vajrakilya is in-depth and very complex, as it incorporates deities and spirits who possess their own identities and mandalas, in their own right. What is even more remarkable is that the Mandala of Vajrakilaya is just a single component of the Grand Mandala of the Universe, the Kalachakra. What is rarely stated or revealed about these deities, is that while some of them as named in the retinue are not their actual wrathful form-body manifestations, when they are called during the practice of Vajrakilaya, they all assume their wrathful forms. This is, once again, something that can only be experienced to be fully absorbed

and comprehended. A detailed study of each deity occupying the Kilaya Mandala lies outside the present essay, but the earnest student will easily find the necessary works to consult that describe them and their practices in full. Special attention should be given to Yamantaka and Hayagriva, both of which are wrathful emanations (of Manjushrimitra and Avalokiteshvara, respectively), for which the reader should consult *The Vajrabhairava Tantras* by Bulcsu Siklos, and *Hayagriva, the Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse-cult in China and Japan* by R. H. van Gulik, as both works provide ample examples of these deities wrathful activities.



AFTERWORD

THE BLAZING-POINT BLESSING OF
ANNIHILATION, CONTAINING THE PRACTICE
CALLED RED NAIL OF VAJRA-WRATH

The practice of Vajrakilaya is ritually exacted to aid in the liberation of all sentient beings from the throes and maladies of *samsara*. Through constant devotion and generation of the Yidam, the practitioner gradually is subsumed by origin-less Mind and veritably becomes the Wrath of Primordial Wisdom. In other words, Kilaya is achieved and all that may be perceived in one's sensorium or mind-stream, is Phurba itself. This is called 'the Blazing-Point Blessing of Annihilation'.

Over the course of many years I have received the teachings of Kilaya from some of a number of teachers and lamas, and have received many phurbas as well. These are made of varying materials, and of both Bön and Nyingma provenance. I close this work with a practice that was given to me in dream. It is the culmination of my vows, however imperfectly kept, up to the present day. May it serve and may Virtue obtain!

Red Nail of Vajra-Wrath

In this practice the Practitioner his/her self is the Effigy that is pierced, in order that Body, Speech and Mind be purified before the Yidam. The elements of the practice are thus:

The Shrine, upon which is the house-hold Phurba, upright, a bell, incense such as frankincense, flowers of choice and brandy for the *amrita*.

Let the Practitioner sit before the shrine and abide in meditation. Let the breath become even and the mind calm. Strike the bell three times and light the incense. When ready, let the Yidam be summoned through clear visualization as a large Red Nail, and by mantra recitation, as follows:

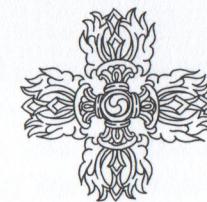
Om Ah Hung!
 Om Vajra Kili Kilaya Tro Chö Ying!
 P'het Hung P'het Hung P'het Hung
 Namo Dorje Phur ba Hung
 Om Ah Hung!
 Hung Hung Hung

Once the Deity is stabilized, generate the Infernal Nail. Imagine it rising from the earth below one and penetrating one's sacrum (Body), tongue (Speech), and crown (Mind). Visualize the nail turning from red to dark blue to indigo and back to red during the piercing. Offer the merit of purity unto all sentient beings.

Next, generate the Celestial Nail. Imagine it descending from the sky and penetrating one's crown (Mind), tongue (Speech), and sacrum (Body). Visualize the nail turning from red to indigo to dark blue and back to red during the piercing. Offer the seal of the practice (bodhicitta) unto all sentient beings. Thus, one becomes

the Red Nail of Vajra-Wrath, which is called the Axis Immortal.

Offer the flowers around the Phurba, and pour brandy over it. Invite the Deity to partake of all offerings, but most especially of one's own purified being.



Acknowledgments

This study would never have been written, nor be of any value, without the kind advice of the venerable Loppon Jigme Rinpoche, who first gave me the *Lung* (permission) to perform Vajrakilaya praxis eleven years ago. Without his guidance and example I would be little more than a knife-handler.

Thanks are due to the entire *sangha* surrounding Lama Tharchin and Lama Sonam Rinpoche at Pema Osel Ling in the Santa Cruz mountains. It was there that I received the full empowerment of Vajrakilaya from Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche, and where I was fortunate enough to attend many an annual observation of both the *Putri Rekphung* and *Namchak Putri* recensions of Kilaya terma rituals within the greater corpus of the Dudjom Tersar.

Many thanks and blessings are extended to Joshua for his aid in vital digital media pertaining to Phurba practice.

Heidi Terbrack was responsible for introducing me to Loppon Jigme Rinpoche and ensuring that my fate was sealed.

My gratitude to my root teacher, Shri Trisulkalanath Maharaj, and fiercest guru of all, remains inexpressible.

Without his example and guidance, and for first introducing me to the possibilities of the Dagger, this work would be bereft of virtue.

Daniel Schulke, as always, provided the opportunity to see this work to fruition, and allowed me the time necessary to make it *serve*. By the Blade, we transcend.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE
WELFARE AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF
ALL SENTIENT BEINGS THROUGHOUT
THE TRICHLIOCOSM.

Bibliography

Achard, Jean-Luc. 'La naissance de Takla Mebar ou l'origine de la pratique de Phurpa dans la Tradition du Bön Eternel.' *Dzogchen Journal* #14, April 1998.

Boord, Martin J. *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakila*. Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring, UK. 1993.

———. *A Bolt Of Lightning From The Blue*. Edition Khordong, Berlin, 2002.

———. *A Roll Of Thunder From The Void*. Edition Khordong, Berlin, 2010.

———. *Gathering the Elements*. Edition Khordong, Wandel Verlag, Berlin, 2013.

Cantwell, Cathy and Mayer, Robert. *Early Tibetan Documents on Phur Pa from Dunhuang*. Österreichische Akademie de Wissenschaften, Wien, 2008.

Dalton, Jacob P. *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*. Yale University Press, 2011.

Doctor, Andreas. *Tibetan Treasure Literature*. Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 2005.

Ermakov, Dmitry. *Bo and Bon*. Vajra Publications. Kathmandu, Nepal, 2008.

des Jardins, J.F. Marc. 'The Records of Tshul khrims mchog rgyal on the Black Phur Pa Cycle of the Tibetan Bön-pos.' *Revue d'études Tibétaines*, No. 23, April 2012.

Marcotty, Thomas. *Dagger Blessing*. B.R. Publishing Corporation. Delhi. 1987.

Martin, Dan. *Unearthing Bön Treasures: Life and Contested Legacy of a Tibetan Scripture Revealer*. Brill, Leiden–Boston–Köln, 2001.

Norbu, Namkhai. *Drung, Deu and Bön*. Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. New Delhi, India. 1995.

———. *A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet, Volume One. The Early Period*. North Atlantic Books, 2009.

———. *The Light of Kailash, Volume Two, The Intermediate Period*. Shang Shung Editions, 2013.

———. *The Light of Kailash, Volume Three, The Later Period*. Shang Shung Editions, 2017.

Sherab, Khenchen Palden and Dongyal, Khenpo Tsewang. *The Dark Red Amulet*. Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 2008.

Thondup, Tulku. *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*. Wisdom Publications, London, 1986.

This first edition of *Sharp Practice* was published 1 August, 2019 by Three Hands Press, comprising 941 impressions in total. Of this are 888 standard hardcover copies bound in white cloth with color wraps; 37 deluxe slipcased copies quarter bound in English Tan goatskin and azure cloth, and 16 special slipcased copies bound in full maroon goatskin with marbled endpapers and signed by the author. An additional three slipcased reserve copies were bound in full black goatskin with gilt vajra knot for private distribution.

SCRIBÆ QUO MYSTERIUM FAMVLATVR

██████████ / 888