

སྐྱུན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་སྣང་ལོ།

The Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara

འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་སྣང་པོ།

'phags pa spyan ras gzigs kyi snying po

The Noble Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara

· Toh 911 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 100 (gzungs 'dus, e), folio 242.a



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Summary

- s.1 *The Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara* is a very short text that teaches a sacred mantra (*vidyā*) that is identified as the essence-mantra of Avalokiteśvara, along with its benefits. It promises that reciting this mantra enables remembrance of past lives and ensures rebirth in the pure realm of Sukhāvati after death.

Acknowledgements

- ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.
- ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Catherine Dalton produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Nathaniel Rich edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

Introduction

- i.1 *The Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara* is a very short text in which the unidentified first-person speaker pronounces a *vidyā* that is identified as the essence-mantra of Avalokiteśvara, which appears to propitiate Avalokiteśvara using his epithet Padmahasta (“Lotus in Hand”). The benefits of reciting the *vidyā* are also proclaimed: the practitioner who recites it will remember a hundred thousand former lives and, when they die, they will be reborn in Sukhāvati.

i.2 This short work is one of several canonical works focused on *Avalokiteśvara*, the *bodhisattva* who embodies compassion. Like the other such texts listed in the canon as *kriyā tantras*, it focuses on the ritual recitation of a *mantra* or *dhāraṇī* to bring about desired outcomes. The *mantra* here is referred to in the title of the text as an *essence-mantra*, whereas in the text itself it is called a *vidyā*, a term that is here used interchangeably with *mantra*. In the *kriyā tantras*, there are a wide range of terms used, often interchangeably, to describe such utterances, believed efficacious when employed ritually to bring about a desired outcome. Examples of such terms include “*mantra*, *essence-mantra*, *vidyā*, *vidyāmantra*, *essential vidyāmantra* (*snying po'i rig sngags*), *dhāraṇī*, and *dhāraṇī-mantra*.” At times the texts distinguish between these different types of utterances and at other times they do not. A Sanskrit witness of *The Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara* does not appear to be extant, nor does it appear to have been translated into Chinese. The text does not appear in the imperial catalogs or at Dunhuang. The Dunhuang work IOL Tib J 338/5 does introduce an “*essence-mantra of Avalokiteśvara*,” but it differs from the *essence-mantra* found in the present work.¹ There is no translator’s colophon at the end of *The Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara*. In the absence of such a colophon, and because of its absence from any of the imperial catalogs or at Dunhuang, we are unable to date the text or its Tibetan translation.

i.3 Like many *dhāraṇī* texts, *The Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara* is found in the Tantra section of both the Tshalpa and Thempangma lineage Kangyurs, listed as a *kriyā tantra*. In the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa lineage Kangyurs that have a *Dhāraṇī* section, it is additionally found there. The text as found in the Tantra section of the Degé Kangyur (Toh 695) and the one found in the *Dhāraṇī* section (Toh 911)^{2,3} are the same, except that the *dhāraṇī* itself is punctuated slightly differently.

- i.4 This English translation was made on the basis of the two recensions of the text found in the Degé Kangyur, with reference also to the Stok Palace Kangyur and the notes from the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur. The vidyāmantra itself is rendered exactly as it appears in the Degé Kangyur recension from the Tantra section (Toh 695).

The Translation

1.

The Noble Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara

- 1.1 Homage to the Buddha.
- 1.2 Homage to the Dharma.
- 1.3 Homage to the Saṅgha.
- 1.4 Homage to the bodhisattva great being noble Avalokiteśvara.
- 1.5 Having begun with this homage, I will now utter this vidyā. May this vidyā bring me success.
- 1.6 *tadyathā | haha hasa neni pasane tapa tapane jala jvalane cala calene pūrvayoga smara padmahastāya svāhā |*
- 1.7 Whoever recites this vidyā will remember one hundred thousand previous lives. Then, at the time of death they will be reborn in the realm of Sukhāvati.
- 1.8 This completes *The Noble Essence-Mantra of Avalokiteśvara*.

Notes

1. Dalton and Van Schaik 2006, p. 67.
2. This text, Toh 911, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs, e*), are listed as being located in volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). However, several other Kangyur databases—including the eKangyur that supplies the digital input version displayed by the 84000 Reading Room—list this work as being located in volume 101. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the two volumes of the *gzungs 'dus* section are an added supplement not mentioned in the original catalog, and also hinges on the fact that the compilers of the Tōhoku catalog placed another text—which forms a whole, very large volume—the *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantraṭkā* (*dus 'khor 'grel bshad dri med 'od*, Toh 845), before the volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur, numbering it as vol. 100, although it is almost certainly intended to come right at the end of the Degé Kangyur texts as volume 102; indeed its final fifth chapter is often carried over and wrapped in the same volume as the Kangyur dkar chags (catalog). Please note this discrepancy when using the eKangyur viewer in this translation.
3. [note b491f0f5...]

Glossary

Avalokiteśvara

spyān ras gzigs kyi dbang po

spyān ras gzigs kyi dbang po

avalokiteśvara

avalokiteśvara

bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa'

byang chub sems dpa'

bodhisattva

bodhisattva

Buddha

sangs rgyas

sangs rgyas

buddha

buddha

Dharma

chos

chos

dharma

dharma

dhāraṇī

gzungs

gzungs

dhāraṇī

dhāraṇī

dhāraṇī-mantra*gzungs kyi sngags**gzungs kyi sngags**dhāraṇīmantra**dhāraṇīmantra***essence-mantra***snying po**snying po**hṛdaya**hṛdaya***kriyā tantra***bya rgyud**bya rgyud**kriyātantra**kriyātantra*

A class of tantric scripture that generally features elaborate rites directed toward both mundane goals—such as health, prosperity, and protection—and the ultimate goal of liberation. In this class of tantra, the practitioners do not identify themselves with the deity as in other classes of tantra, but rather seek their power, assistance, and intervention in pursuit of their goals. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and *Amoghapāśakalparāja* exemplify this class of tantra.

mantra*sngags**sngags**mantra**mantra*

Saṅgha

dge 'dun

dge 'dun

saṅgha

saṅgha

Sukhāvati

bde ba can

bde ba can

sukhāvati

sukhāvati

vidyā

rig pa

rig pa

vidyā

vidyā

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