

Ruriko Sakuma, *Sādhanamālā: Avalokiteśvara Section: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts*, Asian Iconography Series 3, Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2002, 279 Pp. Rs. 750.

The *Sādhanamālā* is a collection of procedures for evoking deities (*sādhana*), compiled no later than the twelfth century. It is best known for its detailed iconographic descriptions, which in some cases provide our only means of identifying a religious icon or image and the tradition from which it arose. Sakuma's book provides critical editions of those *sādhana*s dealing with the Buddhist deity of compassion and benevolence, Avalokiteśvara. Based in part on the author's D.Lit. dissertation submitted to Nagoya University, it is intended to partially replace an edition published by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya in 1925 and 1928.

The presentation of the material is straightforward. We are briefly introduced to the *Sādhanamālā* and previous studies on the text. For each edition, Sanskrit and Tibetan, there is a survey of sources consulted, followed by a list of the witnesses used. A concordance of the witnesses with individual *sādhana*s is also provided. This is particularly useful given that the contents of the various *sādhana* collections fluctuate considerably. At this point, perhaps, there could have been some explanation of these divergences — particularly since Bhattacharyya seems to have conflated different *sādhana* collections and published them under the title *Sādhanamālā*; the title *Sādhanamālā* is clearly to be used with caution.

We are then presented with the edited *sādhana*s proper, which are grouped by the form of the deity concerned: Lokanātha (1.1-1.3), Khasarpaṇa (2.1-2.6) and so on. Individual *sādhana* names have been dropped in this new nomenclature, but are still available in the edited colophons. The editions are supported by a critical apparatus which is readily understood, and records variants in punctuation as well as in spelling (although readings from the manuscript should not be called "misprints"). The addition of numbered paragraphs facilitates the comparison of Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. Although the majority of variants are more or less insignificant, in the semantic sense, there is nonetheless a pressing need for a critical edition of the material, incorporating both Sanskrit and Tibetan sources. As Sakuma points out, "all the [Sanskrit] manuscripts have many scribal mistakes; we provide correct, different or alternative renderings in comparison with the Bhattacharyya edition" (p. 7). The main systematic errors in the orthography of the Nepalese MSS are described (p. 20). As for the Tibetan sources, the apparatus reveals problems with legibility (primarily in the sDe dge version) and omission; the Peking version sometimes misses vast swathes of text (e.g., p. 220, n. 3; p. 266, n. 7).

Sakuma's search for suitable Sanskrit manuscripts has been thorough: fully thirty-eight manuscripts are listed, of which nine were collated for the edition. The list of MSS provides basic information such as titles and numbers of folia (though not dates, for the most part), along with references to full codicological descriptions. To this list might also be added a handful of individually circulated

*sādhana*s (e.g., *Māyājālakrama āryāvalokiteśvarasādhana*, Bendall Add. 1648; and *Halāhala[sic]lokeśvara sādhanā*, cited in *Dhīḥ* No. 12) and an MS of the *Sādhanaśamuccaya* (Āśā Archives 3953). These manuscripts, however, are presumably of limited philological value. Sakuma has evidently employed the best available witnesses, including the oldest known Sanskrit MS. In editing the Tibetan versions, three editions were used — the Peking, sDe dge (‘Nyingma edition’) and Taipei — each containing three *sādhana* (*sGrub thabs*) collections.

As might be expected, Sakuma brings greater coherence to a number of *sādhana*s. To give a couple of examples: in a *sādhana* of Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara (2.2), *sarvadharmāikarasarūpaṃ* is preferable to Bhattacharyya’s *sarvadharmeṇa rasarūpaṃ*; and a Padmanarteśvara *sādhana* (8.2), which in Bhattacharyya’s MS Durbar 603 was “full of mistakes and omissions” (*Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. 43), is somewhat tidier in Sakuma’s text (e.g., ... *dviṭīyadaḥṣiṇabhujena hr̥dī vikāśayantaṃ sūcīmudrām*). For ‘backward compatibility’, Sakuma also reproduces two *sādhana*s edited by Bhattacharyya (16, 17) which do not appear in the witnesses.

The edition also includes two *sādhana*s not recorded in Bhattacharyya’s MSS. Prior to their publication by Sakuma, these *sādhana*s remained unedited and largely unknown. The first, composed by the pundit Śūnyasamādhivajrapāda, focuses on a deity called Trailokyavaśaṅkarabhugma Lokeśvara (10.3, p. 134ff). Here the visualization procedure is relatively convoluted. It elaborates upon a “transmission” (*āmnāya*) that reveals the “cosmos-subduing” (*trailokya-vaśaṅkara* / *’jig rten gsum po dbaṅ du byed pa*) form of Lokeśvara. In due course, the visualization yields a standing (*parisamsthitaṃ*), two-armed figure, who is wide-eyed (*viśālanetrayugalaṃ* / *spyān gñis yaṅs pa*), graced with nice raised eyebrows (*subhrūlatālaṅkṛtaṃ* / *ziṅ smin ’khyug mdzes pas brgyan gyur pa*), is a brilliant red (lit. “like lightning & coral”, *vidyudvidrumasaṃnibhaṃ* / *glog daṅ byu ru lta*), holds an open lotus in the left hand and “lavishes boons and favours of all kinds” with the opposite (right) hand.¹ On reading this description, I was struck the deity’s strong resemblance to the ancient Nepalese Lokeśvara icon known as Buṅgadyaḥ, aka. Karuṇāmaya. Certainly the curious appellation *bhugma* suggests that this is precisely the figure embodied in the *sādhana*.² If this reading proves to be correct, our *sādhana* should be evaluated as one of the earliest, most detailed sources for a deity that is crucial to Nepalese religious life.

¹ Namely, *varada-mudrā*; lit. *vibhrāṇaṃ pravikāśipadmam aruṇaṃ vāmena hastalaśan* | *sarvākāravaraḥprasadacaturam savyadaḥṣiṇasanasad* ... etc. (text based upon Sakuma’s conjectures and notes, 10.3.5.2, pp. 136-7). The preceding appears to belong to a set of verses in the Śārdūlavikrīḍita metre, beginning with *nīlambhoja* ... *alaṅkṛtaṃ* (5.2d, p. 136); however the metrical character of the text is not clear in the edition.

² On *bhugma* as a synonym for Buṅga(°mati), the Newar village associated with Buṅgadyaḥ, see, for example, Gautama V. Vajracharya in P. Pal (ed.), *Himalayas: An Aesthetic Adventure*, Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2003, p. 284. Significantly, the Tibetan translation refers to the deity only as ‘Noble *Bhugma*’ (*’phags pa bhug ma*; p. 262). As for the Sanskrit name Karuṇāmaya, now generically applied to the major Lokeśvara icons of the Kathmandu Valley, this appears in *sādhana*s of the white, two-armed Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara (e.g., 2.2.3.3.3, p. 28; 2.3.6.6, p. 42) - and so is perhaps more apt for the traditionally white-hued Janabāhāḍyaḥ of Kathmandu.

I should emphasise, however, that the identification of this form of Lokeśvara with Buṅgadyaḥ is highly tentative, and derives from a more or less cursory reading of the *sādhana* texts.³

The second newly edited *sādhana*, concerning Sukhāvati Lokeśvara (17, p. 155), is the only work in the collection to describe this deity. It is attested in just two of the nine witnesses — appearing as a marginal note in one MS — and was not translated into Tibetan. In comparison with the previous work, this is an anonymous, prosaic composition that dispenses with all visualisation procedure, save for a closing *bhāvayet*. It describes a yellow (*pīta*) figure with ten arms and four faces, accompanied by a consort. This form is quite different to the white, six-armed, three-faced form located by Bhattacharyya in the Nepalese *Dharmasaṅgraha*. Given that the latter form is locally improvised (apparently from a *sādhana* of Hālāhala Lokeśvara), again there is the possibility that the form of Sakuma's *sādhana*, if not the deity itself, is a Nepalese innovation. The date of composition would seem to be late, from a period of declining literacy, as indicated by the terse style and unsophisticated vocabulary (e.g., *svaśakti*) as well as the lack of early witnesses. There may have been a need to depict a form for which no Sanskrit standard could be found, perhaps arising from faith in the Sukhāvati 'heaven' among the bereaved.⁴ The primary source for this belief, the *Sukhāvativyūha* — the larger version being well-known to Newars — portrays at length the dominion of an enlightened being by the name of Lokeśvara (*lokeśvararājo nama tathāgato*). But as a non-tantric work, it does not give a clear-cut visualization of the deity's form, and so presumably such a form would need to be invented, even on an *ad hoc* basis.

The likelihood that these two *sādhanas* were composed in the context of Nepalese tantric Buddhist discourse naturally has implications for editorial policy. Clearly, the authors of such works need not have written in a flawless Sanskrit, but rather one of the Newar 'hybrid' forms. A restoration of the text, then, should allow for the possibility of non-standard language in the original. This is presumably why Sakuma has been reluctant to emend the Sanskrit text even where more appropriate readings are noted (particularly in the case of *sādhana*

³ The identification is most plausible in a scenario that has the cult of Buṅgadyaḥ preceding and inspiring the composition of the *Trailokyavaśaṅkarabhugma lokeśvara sādhana*. To propose such a scenario, we need some reliable dates. One of the earliest definite references to Buṅgadyaḥ is the Tibetan pilgrim Dharmasvāmin's account of the deity's procession, which dates from c.1230 CE. However, the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of *sādhana* 10.3 is unclear, since no dates are given for the witnesses used by Sakuma, viz. Kyoto U. 119 (siglum K1), Rāṣṭriya Abhilekhaya 3-387 Reel No. B24/11 (N1), and Takaoka KA 30 (BL2). Nor is a date given for Grags pa rgyal mtshan's translation of the *sGrub thabs rgya mtsho* (Peking 4257; sDe dge 3436; Taipei 3441), though it is presumably no earlier than the thirteenth century.

⁴ One example of this connection may be found in a painting dated 932 Nepāl Samvat, commissioned in memory of the patron's recently departed, which shows a red, eight-armed form of Sukhāvati Lokeśvara inhabiting a pavilion and flanked by Hindu gods (*śrīśukhāvatilokeśvala prativāhāladayakādina jula śubhaḥ* ||; inscription line 1, tentatively transcribed from a photographic reproduction in Hugo Kreijger, *Kathmandu Valley Painting*, Serindia: 1999, p. 78). This depicted form also departs from the known prescriptions, as given in the *Dharmasaṅgraha* and in Sakuma's text, in an apparent confirmation of the highly arbitrary nature of the iconography (or at least of the lack of authoritative iconographic sources).

where more appropriate readings are noted (particularly in the case of *sādhana* 10.3 discussed above).

Sakuma concludes the book with a comprehensive bibliography of studies on the *Sāadhanamālā*, which includes many references to the extensive corpus of Japanese research on tantric Buddhism. A minor omission from the bibliography is the article by Janārdan Pāṇḍey containing extracts from the Lokeśvara *sādhanas* ('Bauddha tantram meṃ devatāṃ ke svarūpa (3)', *Dhīh* 6, 1988), which is barely worth mentioning, however, since Pāṇḍey does little more than reproduce Bhattacharyya's text. The bibliography duly includes most of Sakuma's research on the *Sāadhanamālā*, but curiously absent is the pertinent article by Sakuma, 'Visualization of Avalokiteśvara as the Divinity of Lust' (in *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* No. 86, 1994). Certainly, I would have liked to see more of Sakuma's findings reported here, if only to update Bhattacharyya's occasionally idiosyncratic perspective. It is hoped that the results of this research can be made more widely available in future.

The above comments address merely a few aspects of the edited texts and their presentation. I have not taken the opportunity to evaluate, for example, the fidelity of the Tibetan translations as compared to their Sanskrit originals. These *sādhanas* represent a wealth of information; indeed, Sakuma's book provides a sound basis for further enquiry. The book represents the culmination of over a decade of diligent research, and largely succeeds in its aim to supersede Bhattacharyya's editions. As such, it enables us to more fully understand the iconography of Avalokiteśvara as represented in the *Sāadhanamālā*. Its publication is timely, given the recent worldwide expansion of Tibetan Buddhism — which commonly promotes visualization of Lokeśvara forms — and the consequent need for a proper understanding of tantric practice. By providing improved sources for the appreciation of an essential Mahāyāna deity, Sakuma has made a helpful contribution to tantric studies and to the study of Asian cultural traditions in general.

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