On the Works on the Ritual of Oblation Attributed to Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna

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Introduction

In the esoteric section of the Tangyur there are seven works on the ritual of oblation\(^1\) (Skt. *bali*, Tib. *gtor ma*) attributed to Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna.\(^2\) These are six writings, the *Balividhi*,\(^3\) *Mahākālabali*,\(^4\) *Amṛtodayabalividhi*,\(^5\) *Jalabalivimalagrantha*,\(^6\) *Nāgabalividhi*,\(^7\) *Balipūjavidhi*,\(^8\) and one translation, the *Caturmahārājabali*.\(^9\) Although each of them is a small work on a manual of this ritual, the *Amṛtodayabalividhi* is a little bit longer than other works because it is a commentary on some manual of the ritual of oblation.\(^10\) Therefore I will introduce the contents of the shorter six works in this paper and will discuss this commentary in another paper.\(^11\)

The ritual of oblation is one of the rituals to offer foods to some specific guests like deities and is well known as a ritual of Torma in Tibet. We know another ritual of offering (*pūjā*) in which they give some materials like flowers, incenses, lamps, and foods in India, but the ritual of oblation apparently differs from that of offering.\(^12\) As Abhayākaragupta explains this ritual in his *Vajrāvalī*, it is performed for the specific guests for a special purpose. It is said in the beginning of the explanation on the forty-eighth ritual of oblation:

> In the beginning and the ending of other rituals in this work or others, oblations should be given to harmful spirits in order to soothe them.\(^13\)

Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna also writes about some of his ritual with the same purpose. The titles of the *Mahākālabali*, *Nāgabalividhi*, and *Caturmahārājabali* apparently indicate their objects of oblations.\(^14\)

1. *Balividhi*

Firstly I will analyze the contents of the *Balividhi* of Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna shortly. Although
the title of this text is simply named “a ritual on oblation,” we can know its purpose from the passage in its beginning and the end. In the first verse of the text it is said:

In order to relieve harm of obstructing evil spirits and accomplish your actions, I will write a ritual of oblation for harmful spirits (byung po) in the right way.\(^{(5)}\)

And in the verse of the ending it is said:

This is an explanation of an oblation for all the harmful spirits which a bhikṣu from Bengal, Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna, obtained after having made his teacher pleased.\(^{(6)}\)

Although this verse could not be written by the author himself, it indicates that guests of the ritual are apparently harmful spirits who have evil powers and they are ordinary guests in the ritual of oblation.

The actual manual of the ritual begins with a meditative practice of emptiness with svabhāva mantra. Then the deity of the person doing the ritual, some protectors, the eight great nāgas, and so on are invited to the center of a triangular dharmodaya through the visualization. And these deities are said to have the lineage of Vairocana, Akṣobhya and Amitābha. Then the oblations are empowered through the seeds of the five kinds of Tathāgata with five letters of nectars and ā-kāro mantra and so on. The text ends with a request for deities to make a benefit for beings, bestow a suitable accomplishment, and approach the field of Buddha. Although the author explains the manual of visualization of deities and the empowerment of oblations in detail, he does not refer to the specific oblations or specific guests of the oblations. Therefore this text seems to be an ordinary manual of the ritual of oblations.

2. Mahākālabali

As the title of the text indicates the name of guest of the ritual, the specific guest of this oblation is the Lord (mahākāla, mgon po). The suitable place for the oblation is also said to be a charnel ground (dur’khrod). The contents consist of the three specialties in this ritual related in its beginning:

The points of the ritual of oblation are classified into three. They are a specific [performance] for oneself, a specific oblation, and a specific guest.
The specific performance is related in short and the same as the performance done previously to the oblation in other rituals of the oblation in which one should imagine Bhagavan and empower three secret actions, that is to say, one’s actions of body, word, and mind.

The specific oblation begins with a special bowl of the oblation which is made of a skull-cup with human flesh or blood. If a man cannot prepare it, another bowl ornamented with butter should be prepared. This impure bowl should be purified through a visualization of a skull after a meditation of emptiness with svabhāva mantra. Then five kinds of nectars (bdud rtsi) will arise from hearts of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Tathagatas through their visualizations with the a-kāro mantra.

The specific guest, the Lord, is invited through its visualization in front of oblations. The author describes its visual characteristics in detail. And the goddess of knowledge (ye shes kyi lha mo) is also invited with her attendants through the visualization in order to supplicate her for the purpose. And the text is concluded with the verses of supplication to her for purifying the ground with oblation and escorting the ground.

3. *Jalabalivimalagrantha*

In this work there is no reference to a specific guest of the oblation but the oblation is clearly water. The reason why water is offered in this ritual is related in the colophon.

The work of oblation which averts all conditions [of harm] and obstacles and gathers all virtues by ācārya Dipaṃkaraśrījñāna is accomplished.\(^{[17]}\)

Of course it is the word of the compiler, but we can also find a metaphor in the verse of aspiration in the text itself:

All beings who are suffering from fire exploding with defilements should always pacify this suffering with this cold taste which is taught by those who know the nectar of the sacred teachings.\(^{[18]}\)

Although the word “water” is not found in the verse, this “cold taste” seems to be water, which puts out a fire from defilements. The manual of the ritual begins with the meditative practice and empowerment of one’s body, word and mind like an ordinary ritual and the purification of oblation through various visualizations comes next. In the end the purpose of the ritual is related in the above-mentioned verse.
4. Nāgabalividhi

The Nāgabalividhi is, as its title indicates, a ritual of oblation to nāga written in the verse style with the mantra of nāga in the middle. The eight verses of the first part explain how to visualize the eight great nāgas and to invite them and the eight verses of the second part explain the purpose of the oblation. The specific guests of this oblation are of course the eight great nāgas. The offerings are the three white oblations: (1) milk, (2) curd, and (3) butter, and the three sweet oblations: (1) molasses, (2) sugar, and (3) honey. The purpose of the ritual is said to be protection from the harm of nāgas which is caused from their three poisons: (1) poison of illness, (2) poison of food, and (3) poison of mind.

5. *Balipūjavidhi

The title of the text means the ritual of offering by oblations (gtor mas mchod pa) and the author relates its contents in the beginnings:

As for the outer offerings there is an empowerment of alcohol and offering by alcohol, an empowerment of hands and offering by hands, an empowerment of mandala and offering by mandala, an empowerment of [bodily] mandala and offering by [bodily] mandala, an empowerment of oblations and offering by oblations, and an empowerment of feast and offering by feast.

He explains these six classifications of offerings with empowerment and offering. Empowerment of alcohol is performed through the visualization of nectar after pouring the alcohol into a skull. Then this alcohol is scattered in order to empower the dwelling house, offerings, heroic beings, and the Yoginī.

The empowerment of hands is performed through visualizing five leaves of lotus and one’s navel in the palms, three letters, phat phat ham, in the five fingers, and twenty-four heroic beings on the other side of the hands. The offerings by hands consist of flowers, incense, lamps, food, and perfume.

The empowerment of mandala is performed through visualizing Mt. Sumeru and the four islands with the guests like three jewels and the protectors of teachings, and offering flowers to each island. Offering by mandala is performed through offering three inner and three outer secret actions.

The empowerment of bodily mandala is performed through visualizing the nature of the
twenty-four locations in one’s own body. Purifying the body through grasping that there is a three-thousand-fold universe in it, the person offering oblations should offer flowers to his head, incense to his nose, lamps to his face, foods to his mouth, and perfume to his heart. These five kinds of offerings are also offered to a goddess.

The empowerment of oblations are performed through visualizing five kinds of nectar from the five letters, bi, mu, ra, sū, and ma and five kinds of meat from the letters, gho, ku, da, ha and na and filling the red skull with these oblations. And the oblations are offered to eight kinds of charnel grounds or protectors of a mother’s land and regions by reciting mantras. And the ritual of oblations ends with eight verses for blessing some kinds of guests and two verses for aspirations to give bliss to all beings and to liberate them.

The text ends with an explanation of oblations and there is no explanation of the empowerment of feast and offering by feast in it. Therefore the text seems to suddenly end and may be incomplete.

6. *Caturmahārājabali*

There is no reference to the author of this text in the colophon and Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna is referred to as its translator, along with dGe bshes sTon pa. Because the text is quite short, it does not seem to have been a text written by some scholars but a short manual of the ritual which Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna had transmitted into Tibet. As the title of the text indicates the specific guest as the four great kings, the contents of the text consist of the explanations of the specific oblation for them and of these specific guests, just like he explains in his Mahākālabali.

The ritual begins with meditative practice for the four immeasurable minds of bodhisattva. Then the specific oblations come next with visualizing one’s own deity and empowering one’s three secret performances, practicing the emptiness with svabhāva mantra, and visualizing the rain of nectar dropping down only on an old person with ā-kāro mantra. The specific guests, the four great kings, are invited after visualizing Tārā. And the prayer of protection is given also to the four kinds of Mārā who follow the four great kings, the eighteen great Mārā, and eighty thousand obstructing spirits. And the text is concluded with the phrase of purifying the ground and escorting the ground, just like Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna concludes his Mahākālabali with it.
Conclusion

At the very least, we can conclude the analysis of the works on the oblation attributed to Dīpankaraśrījñāna. The Balividhi is a general introduction of the ritual with the manual of the visualization of deities and the empowerment of oblations. The Mahākālabali, Nāgalividhi, and Caturmahārājabali are introductions of the rituals for specific guests and the *Jalabalivimalagrantha is an introduction of the ritual by specific oblations. The Amṛtodayabalividhi is a commentary on a manual of ritual. The *Balipūjavidhi is a commentary on the offering by oblations from the viewpoint of the six categories.

In the end I will relate the relationship between the seven works on the basis of their translators. The Mahākālabali and the Caturmahārājabali are translated by ’Brom ston pa and the Nāgalividhi and the *Balipūjavidhi are translated by Rin chen bzang po, therefore each of them were translated at the same time and the former group may be later than the latter. *Jalabalivimalagrantha is said to have been written at Mang yul in its colophon, therefore it may have been written in Tibet. As for the other two writings, the Balividhi and Amṛtodayabalividhi, we have no information to judge their date of writing.

Notes

1) Wayman 1973: 71. He translates the Sanskrit words convening offering like this: (1) “offering” for pūjā, (2) “food offering” for bali, and (3) “burnt offering” for homa.

2) In the Tangyur we can find over sixty works of which the titles have the word “gtor ma (bali).” Among seven works attributed to Dīpankaraśrījñāna, only the *Balipūjavidhi is lacking in the Cone and Derge editions. As for the previous studies on the Bali literature, Miyasaka 1967 edits the Sanskrit edition of the Balimālikā of *Sumatisimha (Blo bzang seng ge) on the basis of its transliteration in the Tangyur (D nos. 3771, 4456). Mori 1994 (Mori 2011: 138–166) analyzes the section of oblation in the Vajrāvalī of Abhayākaragupta. Yamaguchi 2005 studies the ritual of oblation in Newār Buddhism with the Sanskrit editions of the Gurumāntalārcanavidhi, Cakrasaṃvarasaādhi, and Balimālā their Japanese translations. Moreover Beyer 1978 reports the ritual of oblation in Tibetan Buddhism and Katayama 1974 and 1975 reports the same ritual in ancient India and Ceylon.

3) Tib. gTor ma’i cho ga. C. Ta 189a7–191a5, D. no. 1295, Ta 185b1–187a5, G. Zha 692b1–695a5, N. no. 418, Zha 520b7–523a6, P. no. 2418, Zha 585a4–587a7.


6) Tib. Chu gtor dri ma med pa’i gzhung. Trans. Dīpankaraśrījñāna, Tshul khrims rgyal ba. C. Tshu
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8) Tib. gTor mas mchod pa’i cho ga. Trans. Rin chen bzang po. G. Pu 198a1–204a5, N. 2620, Pu 130a7–134b6, P. no. 4631, Pu 135b1–140b1.

9) Tib. rGyal po chen po bzhi ’i gtor ma. Trans. Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna, dGe bshes sTon pa. C. Tshu 175a5–76a1, D. no. 3772, Tshu 174b6–175b1, G. Nu 467b2–468b4, N. 2584, Nu 383a4–384a3, P. no. 4590, Nu 386b1–387a7.

10) The author explains the passages of the root text by citing the scriptures such as the Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva, Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti, and so on, although I have not been able to identify the root text.

11) I would like to thank Prof. Keiya Noguchi and Dr. Tōru Tomabechi for their valuable comments on my presentation at the conference of IBK.

12) Mori 2011: 136–137.


14) Beyer 1978: 165 classifies the objects described as “guest” into four classes: (1) the major deity, (2) the protectors of the Low, (3) the “lords of the soil,” and (4) beings in the six destinies.

15) D. no. 1295, Ta 185b1–2: bgegs rnams ‘tsho ba zhi bya dang // las rnams thams cad bsgrub pa’i phyir // byiug po thams cad gtor ma daq // sbyin pa’i cho ga yang daq bri //

16) D. no. 1295, Ta 187a4–5: bham ga lar skyes dge slong ni // mar me mdzad dpal ye shes kyis // bka ma mnyes las thob gyur pa // gtor ma’di nyid rab tu bshad //

17) D. no. 3779, Tshu 221b1–2: rkyen dang bar chad thams cad zlog par byed pa yon tan thams cad nye bar sdud par byed pa chu gtor dri ma ma pa’i gzhung slob dpon dpal mar me mdzad ye shes mdzad pa rdzogs so //

18) D. no. 3779, Tshu 221a6–7: dam chos bdud rtsi thams cad mkhyen pa yi // zhal nas gsungs pa bsil ba’i ro’di yis // nyon mongs ’bar ba’i me yis gdungs pa yi //’gro kun rtag tu sdu gsgs zhi byed shog //

19) Beyer 1978: 146 classifies offering visualized in the ritual into three: (1) outer offerings, (2) inner offerings, and (3) secret offerings. The outer offerings are all those things of the external world and the most basic of these are two waters (waters for the face and waters for the feet) and five gifts (flowers, incense, lamps, perfume, and food). The inner gifts consist of five sense gratifications (forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles). The secret offerings are presented, worshiping the deity with sixteen goddesses of sensual enjoyment. Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna does not refer to the secret offerings, but he refers to the inner gift next to the explanation of the offering by hands.

20) Although the mandala of the third topic is written in the transliteration of the Sanskrit, the fourth topic is written using the Tibetan word "dkyil khor” for mandala. I supplement the word “of body (lus kyi)” according to the following explanation. There are two kinds of the mandala related here, that is to say, the first is in Sanskrit and the second in Tibetan. The former means this practical world and the latter means the micro cosmic world as the body.


22) Moreover it is interesting that the author explains two kinds of mandala and oblalations with the teach-

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ing of the seven kinds of offering which he discusses in his Bodhimārgadīpapañjikā.
23) There is a passage paying homage to Bhagavan Cakrasaṃvara between the explanation of bodily mandala and that of oblations and this text is lacking in the Cone edition and Derge edition, therefore there may be some problems in the textual transmission.

Bibliography


(This research was supported in part by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) from JSPS no. 26284008)

Key words Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna, Atiśa, ritual, bali, gtor ma

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