

Avalokiteśvara in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*

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PREAMBLE: POINTS AT ISSUE

There exists a large body of research on Avalokiteśvara, chiefly in the fields of Buddhist studies and art history. In this essay, taking into account my earlier study of the connections between Avalokiteśvara and Brahmā's entreaty,¹⁾ I wish to focus on an enigma that has remained unresolved in past research. This concerns the content of one of the oldest texts pertaining to Avalokiteśvara, namely, chapter 24 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*Lotus Sūtra*), "Samantamukha-parivarta," or "Chapter on [the Bodhisattva] Who Faces All Directions," which describes the transformations of Avalokiteśvara and has since early times circulated as an independent sūtra in East Asia under the title *Kuan-yin ching* 觀音經.

The points at issue may be broadly divided into four. The first, which is also shared with the Sanskrit text, is the question of the meaning of Avalokiteśvara's name and the reason that he bears this name. The second issue, related to the first, is the question of how Īśvara is treated in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* as a whole. The third issue pertains to Kumārajīva's Chinese translation (*Miao-fa lien-hua ching* 妙法蓮華經), completed in 406, and concerns the question of why it includes a sentence that lends support to the Chinese translation of Avalokiteśvara's name as Kuan-yin 觀音 (He Who Observes Sounds) rather than Kuan-tzu-tsai 觀自在 (He Who Is Masterful at Observing). The fourth issue, related to the third, is why Kumārajīva adopted the Chinese translation Kuan-shih-yin 觀世音 (He Who Observes the Sounds of the World) with the addition of the word *shih* 世 ("world"), as in Kuang-shih-yin 光世音, used earlier by Dharmarakṣa in his translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*Cheng-fa hua ching* 正法華經) in 286. Since I have already discussed this fourth point elsewhere,²⁾ in the following I wish to focus on the first three questions.

1) Saitō 2011.

2) Saitō 2011: 4–7.

I. THE STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHAPTER 24 OF THE
SADDHARMAPUṆḌARĪKA-SŪTRA

In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, Avalokiteśvara is mentioned in the introductory first chapter (“Nidāna-parivarta”; “Kuang-jui p’in” 光瑞品 in the *Cheng-fa hua ching*, “Hsü-p’in” 序品 in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*), and in chapter 24, which corresponds to the *Kuan-yin ching* (chapter 23, “Kuang-shih-yin p’u-men p’in” 光世音普門品 in the *Cheng-fa hua ching*; chapter 25, “Kuan-shih-yin p’u-sa p’u-men p’in” 觀世音菩薩普門品 in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*). Fuse Kōgaku, in his study of the history of the formation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*,³⁾ divides the text into two strata, the old stratum consisting of the first twenty chapters (chapters 1–11 and 13–21 in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*), which are further subdivided into two groups, and chapter 1 belongs to group 1, while chapter 24 belongs to the new stratum, consisting of the remaining seven chapters (chapters 22–28 in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*). As for their estimated dates of composition, chapter 1 belongs to Fuse’s stage 2 (first century A.D.) and chapter 24 to stage 4 (ca. 150 A.D.).

In chapter 1, Avalokiteśvara (Kuang-shih-yin in the *Cheng-fa hua ching*, Kuan-shih-yin in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*) is mentioned after Mañjuśrī as one of the leading bodhisattvas in the assembly of *śrāvakas* and bodhisattvas who have gathered on Vulture Peak (Gṛdhrakūṭa) in Rājagṛha to listen to the Buddha expound the “White Lotus of the True Dharma,” or *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka(-sūtra)*. Avalokiteśvara’s name is followed by that of Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and it is worth noting that the two bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, who later came to be regarded as the two attendants of Amitābha, appear one after another in chapter 1 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, thought to date from about the first century A.D.⁴⁾

Apart from this mention in chapter 1, Avalokiteśvara figures only in chapter 24, which broadly has the following structure.

- 1) The bodhisattva Akṣayamati asks the Buddha why Avalokiteśvara is called “Avalokiteśvara,” whereupon the Buddha explains the reason for Avalokiteśvara’s name and goes on to describe the merits that accrue from paying homage to Avalokiteśvara and keeping his name in mind.

3) Fuse 1934. Itō Zuiei (2007) surveys a total of twenty-eight theories concerning the history of the genesis and formation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* that have been presented by both Japanese and overseas scholars, each of which he comments on or critiques in detail.

4) The two bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are also mentioned in K’ang Seng-kai’s 康僧鎧 translation of the *Larger Sukhāvativyūha* in 252 as two bodhisattvas who are born in Amitābha’s Pure Land and illuminate the trimegachilocosm with their rays of light (T. no. 360, vol. 12, 273b23–27). On the corresponding passage in the Sanskrit text, see Fujita 2011: 59.7–14.

- 2) Akṣayamati asks the Buddha about the way in which Avalokiteśvara roams about this Sahā world and preaches the Dharma for living beings. The Buddha explains that Avalokiteśvara employs skillful means to assume various forms (known as the thirty-three transformations of Avalokiteśvara) in order to preach the Dharma, and for this reason he is known as “Bestower of Fearlessness” (*abhayaṃdada*).
- 3) Akṣayamati then presents Avalokiteśvara with a pearl necklace, which he accepts and then divides into two parts, offering one part to Śākyamuni and the other part to the *stūpa* of the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna.
- 4) Based on the content of the above prose section, there follow thirty-three verses, consisting of twenty-seven verses that describe the benefits of thinking of Avalokiteśvara and six verses pertaining to the monk Dharmākara and Amitābha.

According to the introduction to the *T'ien-p'in miao-fa lien-hua ching* 添品妙法連華經, a revised version of the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* translated in 601 by Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta, the final verse section was missing in both the *Cheng-fa hua ching* and *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* and was supplemented on the basis of an edited text that was circulating at the time. This verse section is present in the extant versions of the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* and *T'ien-p'in miao-fa lien-hua ching*, although only the first twenty-seven verses were added by Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta. It is to be surmised that the final six verses pertaining to the monk Dharmākara and Amitābha, found in extant Sanskrit manuscripts from Nepal and Gilgit⁵⁾ and in the Tibetan translation, were added later, some time between the seventh century and the early ninth century, when the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* was translated into Tibetan by Ye shes sde and others.

II. EXPRESSIONS RELATING TO AVALOKITEŚVARA'S NAME

I now wish to address the questions raised at the start of this essay. It has to be said that the extant Sanskrit text too is rather unclear in regard to the first question, concerning the meaning of Avalokiteśvara's name and the reason for it. In the first part of chapter 24, corresponding to section 1) above, the bodhisattva Akṣayamati asks the Buddha why Avalokiteśvara is called “Avalokiteśvara,” and the Buddha explains the reason for his name. The following is the opening section of their exchange, and in light of the description of the seven perils that follows, this passage has for

5) Among Central Asian manuscripts, the so-called Petrovsky Manuscript, discovered in Khotan and said to have been copied in the ninth or tenth century, has many lacunae but does contain the thirty-three verses of chapter 24, including the final six verses (fols. 428b–431b).

convenience' sake been numbered (0). (Underlines added by the author; the Kern-Nanjio edition of the Sanskrit text [SP] has been used.)

- (0) “For what reason, O Lord, is the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara called ‘Avalokiteśvara’?” Having been addressed in this way, the Lord said this to the bodhisattva and great being Akṣayamati: “Son of good family, howsoever many hundred thousands of *nayutas* of *koṭīs* of living beings here [in this world] may experience sufferings, they will all, if they hear the name of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, be released from that mass of suffering.”⁶⁾

This exchange explains that Avalokiteśvara releases living beings from suffering, and it is followed by seven specific examples of salvation from seven kinds of danger. In this sense, the above exchange may be regarded as a general prefatory comment introducing the seven perils that are then described, i.e., (1) falling into a great fire, (2) being carried away by a river, (3) being cast ashore by a storm on an island of ogresses (*rākṣasī*), (4) being put to death by a sword, (5) being in a world teeming with demonic *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*, (6) being bound in fetters, and (7) a caravan being attacked by brigands. This passage is important in connection with the question concerning Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* to be taken up in section 4 below, but it is also worth noting in particular that what is expected of living beings faced with torment is not that they call out or chant Avalokiteśvara’s name, and they will be released from suffering “if they hear the name” (*nāmadheyam śṛṇuyus*) of Avalokiteśvara.

I shall now present translations of the subsequent sections describing the seven examples of salvation from danger (SP, pp. 438.7–441.6).

- (1) “Again, son of good family, those living beings who hold on to the name (*nāmadheyam dhārayisyanti*) of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara will all, even if they fall into a great fire, be delivered from that great fire by the luster (*tejas*) of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara.”
- (2) “Again, son of good family, if living beings who are being carried off by rivers call out (*ākrandam kuryuḥ*) to the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, all those rivers will afford those living beings a ford.”

6) *kena kāraṇena bhagavann avalokiteśvaro bodhisattvo mahāsattvo ’valokiteśvara ity ucyate/ evam ukte bhagavān akṣayamatim bodhisattvam mahāsattvam etad avocat/ iha kulaputra yāvanti sattvakoṭīnayutaśatasahasrāṇi yāni duḥkhāni pratyanubhavanti tāni saced avolokiteśvarasya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya nāmadheyam śṛṇuyus te sarve tasmād duḥkhaskandhāt parimucyeran/* (SP, p. 438.3–7)

- (3) “Again, son of good family, even if a ship of many hundred thousands of *nayutas* of *koṭīs* of living beings who have boarded a vessel in search of gold bullion, gold, gems, pearls, diamonds, lapis lazuli, conch shells, crystal, coral, agate, amber, red pearls, and so on is, when in the middle of the ocean, cast onto an island of *rākṣasīs*, if on that [ship] a single living being calls out (*ākraṇḍaṃ kuryāt*) to the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, they will all be saved from that island of *rākṣasīs*. Indeed, for this reason, son of good family, the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara is called (*saṃjñāyate*) ‘Avalokiteśvara’.”
- (4) “If, son of good family, someone who is about to be executed calls out (*ākraṇḍaṃ kuryāt*) to the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, the swords of the executioners will snap asunder.”
- (5) “Again, son of good family, even if this trimegachiliocosm were teeming with *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*, those evil-minded [*yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*] would be unable even to see [anyone] on account of [his] uttering of the name (*nāmadheyagrahaṇena*) of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara.”
- (6) “Again, son of good family, even if some living being were bound by wooden or iron fetters and shackles, be he guilty or innocent, those wooden and iron fetters and shackles would promptly provide an opening on account of [his] uttering of the name (*nāmadheyagrahaṇena*) of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara. Such indeed, son of good family, is the power (*prabhāva*) of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara.”
- (7) “Suppose, son of good family, that this trimegachiliocosm were teeming with rogues, enemies, and robbers armed with swords and in this [trimegachiliocosm] a caravan leader were proceeding with a large caravan immeasurably laden with jewels, and as they were proceeding they saw the robbers, rogues, and foes armed with swords, and further, having seen them, frightened and terrified, realized that they were without refuge; and suppose that the caravan leader spoke thus to the caravan: ‘Be not afraid, sons of good families! Be not afraid! Call out together, all of you, with one voice (*ekasvareṇa ... samākrandadhvam*) to the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, who bestows fearlessness. Then you will be promptly delivered from this fear of robbers and fear of enemies.’ Suppose that then the entire caravan were indeed to call out with one voice (*ekasvareṇa ... ākrandet*) to Avalokiteśvara, saying, ‘Homage, homage to the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, who bestows fearlessness!’ As soon as they uttered [his] name (*nāmagrahaṇena*), the caravan would be released from all fears. Such, son of good family, is the power of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara.”

The eight passages quoted above, from (0) to (7), describe how people facing some danger or another are saved by Avalokiteśvara. In these passages, the actions expected of people seeking rescue from danger are “to hear the name” (*nāmadheyam* √*śru*) of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, “to hold on to [his] name” (*nāmadheyam* √*dhāraya*), “to call out [to him]” (*ākrandam* √*kr*), “uttering [his] name” (*nāma-dheya-grahaṇa*), and “to call out [to him] (together) with one voice” (*ekasvareṇa [sam]ā√krand*). Passage (0) presents the general statement that one is released from a mass of suffering by “hearing the name” of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, and this is followed by seven specific examples in which the actions expected of people in actual danger who have heard Avalokiteśvara’s name are described.

In this case, the act of “hearing his name” does not mean simply to passively hear Avalokiteśvara’s name. Rather, as is implied by the Sanskrit verb √*śru*, which means “to hear; to learn; to be attentive, be obedient,” it means to respectfully hear and learn about Avalokiteśvara’s “luster” (*tejas*) and “power” (*prabhāva*) through chapter 24 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*. It could be said, in other words, to overlap in meaning with the act of “listening to” or “learning” (*śruta*) the Buddhist teachings among the three modes of wisdom that consist of listening, thinking, and meditative practice.

However, the action expected of people who, having heard, accepted, and learnt Avalokiteśvara’s name, are faced with danger is not reflective thinking or meditative practice but, depending on the character of the danger, “holding on to (√*dhāraya*) his name,” “calling out” to him, or “uttering his name,” and by virtue of these actions Avalokiteśvara, “who faces all directions,” is said to save people from seven kinds of danger. Further, as is mentioned at the end of passage (7), this is due to the “power” of Avalokiteśvara. As well, according to passage (7), calling out to Avalokiteśvara or uttering his name means in fact to pay homage to him by saying “Homage, homage to the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, who bestows fearlessness!”⁷⁾ which in Kumārajīva’s translation is rendered as “Homage to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Kuan-shih-yin)” (南無觀世音菩薩). It means, in other words, to invoke the name of Avalokiteśvara.

Thus, salvation by Avalokiteśvara has a basic structure such that it is realized when people who have heard, accepted, and learnt Avalokiteśvara’s name hold on to it, call it out, or utter it when they find themselves in danger. Further, as is stated at the end of passage (3), “Indeed, for this reason, son of good family, the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara is called ‘Avalokiteśvara’.” In Kumārajīva’s transla-

7) *namo namas tasmai* abhayamdadāyāvalokiteśvarāya bodhisattvāya mahāsattvāyeti* (SP, p. 441.5–6; **tasma* NK, *tasmai* Mss. A.Cb.K.W. [see loc. cit., n. 8]).

tion,⁸⁾ and also in the Sanskrit text and Tibetan translation, this sentence appears only at the end of passage (3), describing the instance of being cast ashore on an island of *rākṣasīs*. Contentwise, it should be possible to add this statement by the Buddha, about the meaning of Avalokiteśvara's name and the reason for it, at the end of each of the passages from (0) to (7) in the manner of the *Cheng-fa hua ching*, in which passages (0), (3), (6) and (7) end with the statement "Therefore, he is called Avalokiteśvara (Kuang-shih-yin)."⁹⁾

The question, then, is why Avalokiteśvara is called "Avalokiteśvara." Setting aside the difficulty entailed in the act *per se* of "observing sounds,"¹⁰⁾ the interpretation that would hold that Avalokiteśvara is so called because he is characterized by the act of "observing the sounds (of the world)" is difficult to uphold in light of the above analysis of the context of chapter 24. What Avalokiteśvara expects of living beings is first to hear, accept, and learn his name and then, in times of danger, to hold on to it and, if circumstances permit, to call out and utter his name. Avalokiteśvara, "who faces all directions," is able to see this series of actions by people in danger, extends a helping hand, and grants them fearlessness.¹¹⁾

The epithet "he who faces all directions" (*samantamukha*) used in the title of chapter 24 may be understood to indicate that Avalokiteśvara possesses the characteristic of being able to look in all directions, a characteristic that later came to be symbolized by Eleven-faced (*Ekādaśamukha*) Avalokiteśvara. The following verse (v. 17), among those added, as noted earlier, to the revised Chinese translation in 601 (*T'ien-p'in miao-fa lien-hua ching*), could be said to give apt expression to the characteristics of Avalokiteśvara, who freely observes living beings and so becomes their savior.

Seeing (*drṣṭvā*) living beings oppressed by hundreds of many sufferings and
 afflicted by many sufferings,
 He (Avalokiteśvara) carefully observes (*vilokiyā*) [them] with his pure power of
 knowledge and is thereby a savior in the world, including the gods.¹²⁾

8) "For this reason he is called Kuan-shih-yin" (以是因緣，名觀世音 [T. no. 262, vol. 9, 56c15–16]).

9) 故名光世音 (T. no. 263, vol. 9, 128c27, 129a9–10, 19), 故號光世音 (129a21), 故曰光世音 (129b3–4).

10) See Karashima 1999: 60; Saitō 2011: 7–8.

11) This is reminiscent of the images of Avalokiteśvara rescuing people from eight (or seven) perils in the Ajantā Caves (cave 26) and the Aurangabad Caves (cave 7), in both of which Avalokiteśvara holds a lotus in his left hand, while his right hand displays the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*), with the palm turned outwards, possibly towards people in danger.

Thus, judging from the title of chapter 24 and its context, it is difficult, it has to be said, to find corroboration for the Chinese translation of Avalokiteśvara as “He Who Observes Sounds” (Kuan-yin) or “He Who Observes the Sounds of the World” (Kuan-shih-yin) or for an interpretation that understands his name in this way. As I argued in my earlier article, it is to be surmised that “Avalokiteśvara” means “he who is freely capable of observing,” and the roots of this designation in Buddhist scriptures can be sought in the Buddha’s observation of the world that was prompted by Brahmā’s entreaty after the Buddha’s enlightenment. The title and context of chapter 24 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* considered in the above may also be considered to illustrate, albeit not explicitly, the meaning of the name of Avalokiteśvara, who gives concrete expression to the Buddha himself as he observed the world and is often represented by statues that have on their head a small figure of the Buddha with his hands forming the gesture of meditation (*dhyāna-mudrā*), of whom Avalokiteśvara is considered to be a manifestation.

In this sense, as is pointed out by Hsüan-tsang 玄奘 and his disciple Hsüan-ying 玄應,¹³⁾ the Chinese rendering Kuan-tzu-tsai could, properly speaking, be said to be fitting as a translation of “Avalokiteśvara.” Further, it should also be permissible to add “(people of the) world” (*loka*) as the object of Avalokiteśvara’s observation and translate his name as “Kuan-shih-tzu-tsai” 觀世自在, or “He Who Is Masterful at Observing the World.”¹⁴⁾

III. The *SADDHARMAPUṆḌARĪKA-SŪTRA* AND *ĪŚVARA*

It is a well-known fact that the name Avalokiteśvara is a compound formed of the past participle *avalokita* from the verb *ava-√lok*, meaning “to observe, look upon, look down,” and *īśvara*, an adjective or noun meaning “(one who is) capable,” etc. According to the story of Brahmā’s entreaty, the Buddha, able to freely observe the

12) *bahuduhkhaśatair upadrutān sattva dṛṣṭvā bahuduhkhopāditān/*
śubhajñānabalo vilokiyā tena trātāru jage sadevake! (SP, p. 451.3–4)

13) Saitō 2011: n. 7.

14) According to Hsüan-tsang, only Kuan-tzu-tsai is suitable as a Chinese translation, and Kuang-shih-yin, Kuan-shih-yin, and Kuan-shih-tzu-tsai are all wrong. Cf. *Ta-T'ang hsi-yü chi* 大唐西域記, fasc. 3: 中有阿縛廬枳低濕伐羅菩薩像。唐言觀自在。合字連聲。梵語如上。分文散音。即阿縛廬枳多。譯曰觀。伊濕伐羅。譯曰自在。舊譯爲光世音。或云觀世音。或觀世自在皆訛謬也。(T. no. 2087, vol. 51, 883b21–24)

Hsüan-ying, on the other hand, gives Kuan-shih-tzu-tsai as the Chinese equivalent of Avalokiteśvara and regards Kuang-shih-yin and Kuan-shih-yin as wrong. Cf. *I-ch'ieh ching yin-i* 一切經音義, fasc. 5: 觀世音。梵言阿婆廬吉低舍婆羅。此譯云觀世自在。舊譯云觀世音。或言光世音並訛也。又尋天竺多羅葉本。皆云舍婆羅(*śvara)。則譯爲自在。雪山已來經本皆云娑婆羅(*svara)。則譯爲音。當以舍(*ś)婆(read 娑)(*s)兩聲相近。遂到訛失也。(Taipei: Hsin-wen-feng Ch'u-pan 新文豐出版, 1973, p. 180)

world, saw with the eye of an awakened one that there were in the world people who could be classified into three categories on account of the extent of their defilements, mental faculties, etc., and so decided to begin preaching the Dharma. The conclusion of my earlier article was that in origin Avalokiteśvara was a bodhisattva who embodied the Buddha's ability to freely observe the world. Why, then, does the term *īśvara* form part of Avalokiteśvara's name? Next, I wish to consider this question with reference to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* as a whole.

The word *īśvara* and the related words *īśa* and *īśāna* are frequently used as epithets of the supreme principle Brahman or its personification in the form of the god Śiva (or Rudra) in the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, regarded as the textual source of the god Śiva (or Rudra).¹⁵⁾ In Buddhist texts too one finds from early times critical references to the thesis positing *issara* (Skt. *īśvara*) as the cause of recompense for actions or the cause of the arising of things.¹⁶⁾ Later, as is well-known, in various schools of Indian philosophy such as Yoga, Nyāya, and Vedānta the notion of or belief in *Īśvara* came to have an enormous influence on the doctrines of each of these schools. There can be no doubt that a background factor in the use of the designation Avalokiteśvara (i.e., Avalokita-īśvara) was the cult of *Īśvara* that arose throughout India with the expansion of the *kṣatriyas*, or ruling class.

In the current *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* expressions in which *īśvara* appears alone or in the first part of a compound are found in six chapters. These are chapters 1, 2, 4, 18, 23, and 24 in the Sanskrit text, corresponding to chapters 1, 2, 4, 19, 24, and 25 in Kumārajīva's translation.

(1) In chapter 1 it is stated that the gods who assembled on Vulture Peak included "the god *Īśvara* and the god Maheśvara with thirty thousand gods as attendants" (SP, p. 4.7–8).

(2) The example in chapter 2, in the verse section (v. 115), draws on Brahmā's entreaty: "At that time Brahmā entreated me, and so did Śakra, the four protectors of the world, Maheśvara, *Īśvara*, and thousands of *koṭīs* of hosts of Maruts" (SP, p. 55.3–4). The fact that here not only Brahmā but also *Īśvara* and other gods implore the Buddha to preach the Dharma cannot be overlooked when considering the meaning of Avalokiteśvara's name.

15) Cf. Gonda 1976: 16–24.

16) "Monks, there are some ascetics and brahmins who teach thus and hold this view: 'Whatever this person experiences—whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pain-nor-pleasure—all that is caused by *Īśvara*'s creative activity (*issaranimmānahetu*).'" (AN, I, p. 173.20–23)

"As is said in the [*Śālistambhaka*]-*sūtra*, 'When this sprout caused by a seed arises, it is not self-produced, not produced by another, not produced by both, nor arisen without cause, nor born of *Īśvara*, time, atoms, primordial matter, or nature.'" (*yathoktaṃ sūtre, sa cāyaṃ bījahetuko 'ṅkura utpadyamāno na svayaṃkṛto na parakṛto nobhayakṛto nāpy ahetusamutpanno naiśvarakālāṇuprakṛtisvabhāvasaṃbhūta itī* [*Prasannapadā*, La Vallée Poussin ed., p. 26.5–6])

(3) Chapter 4, which includes an example other than a proper noun, will be discussed below.

(4) In chapter 18, in a description of the benefits received by a preacher of the teachings of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* in the verse section (v. 59), it is stated that “even Brahmā becomes his servant, and Maheśvara, Īśvara, [their attendant] gods, Śakra, and other gods too, as well as many gods’ daughters, approach [that preacher]” (SP, p. 369.7–8).

(5) The example from chapter 23 is interesting in that it is similar to the example in chapter 24. It appears in a section in which the Buddha describes how the bodhisattva Gadgadasvara assumes various forms when preaching the teachings of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* for beings in the Sahā world: “This bodhisattva and great being Gadgadasvara preached the teaching of the White Lotus of the True Dharma with many forms. That is to say, in one place with the form of Brahmā, in another place with the form of Rudra, in another place with the form of Śakra, in another place with the form of Īśvara, in another place with the form of Senāpati (lit. “General”; Śiva’s son Kārttikeya),... and in another place with the form of a brahmin he preached this teaching of the White Lotus of the True Dharma.” (SP, p. 433.1–5)

(6) The example from chapter 24 is similar to this and occurs in a passage describing how Avalokiteśvara assumes various forms when preaching the Dharma. In later times it became the textual basis for the thirty-three transformations of Avalokiteśvara. Following on from the Buddha’s explanation of the reason for Avalokiteśvara’s name considered in the previous section, the bodhisattva Akṣayamati asks how Avalokiteśvara preaches the Dharma. Akṣayamati’s question and the Buddha’s answer read as follows:

“How, O Lord, does the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara roam about this Sahā world? How does he preach the Dharma to living beings? And what is the range of the skillful means of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara?”

Having been addressed in this way, the Lord said to the bodhisattva and great being Akṣayamati, “There are, son of good family, world systems in which the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara preaches the Dharma to living beings in the form of a Buddha; there are world systems in which the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara preaches the Dharma to living beings in the form of a bodhisattva. To some living beings the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara preaches the Dharma in the form of a *pratyekabuddha*, ... in the form of a *śrāvaka*, ... in the form of Brahmā, ... in the form of Śakra, ... in the form of a *gandharva*. To living beings who are to be converted by a *yakṣa* he preaches the Dharma in the form of a *yakṣa*; to living beings who are to be

converted by Īśvara he preaches the Dharma in the form of Īśvara; to living beings who are to be converted by Maheśvara he preaches the Dharma in the form of Maheśvara; to living beings who are to be converted by a wheel-turning king (*cakravartirāja*)...; ... to living beings who are to be converted by Vajrapāṇi he preaches the Dharma in the form of Vajrapāṇi. In this way, son of good family, the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara is endowed with inconceivable qualities. Therefore, son of good family, honor now the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara! Son of good family, this bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara bestows fearlessness on living beings who are frightened. For this reason he is known as ‘Bestower of Fearlessness’ in this Sahā world.” (SP, pp. 444.3–445.10)

What is notable about the above five examples is that in each case Īśvara makes an appearance in connection with preaching by either the Buddha ((1) and (2)), a preacher ((4)), or bodhisattvas (Gadgadasvara and Avalokiteśvara) ((5) and (6)). He is mentioned along with Brahmā and Śakra as a leading member of the gods (*deva*) among the eight kinds of divine and semidivine beings, and in four of the examples (other than (5)) he is mentioned alongside Maheśvara. In later times both Maheśvara and Īśvara came to be regarded as alternative names of especially the god Śiva.

In the above five examples Īśvara joins the assembly ((1)), together with Brahmā implores the Buddha to preach the Dharma ((2)), becomes an attendant of a preacher ((4)), and is one of the forms (*rūpa*) assumed by the bodhisattvas Gadgadasvara and Avalokiteśvara when they preach the Dharma to particular people ((5) and (6)). In the overall structure of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* Īśvara figures in the introductory section ((1)), in the main part of the sūtra ((2) and (3)), and in the concluding section ((4), (5) and (6)), and in each case Īśvara could be said to play an appropriate role.

In example (3) in chapter 4, details of which were omitted above, the elder Mahākāśyapa states that the Buddha, who, cognizant of the diverse inclinations of living beings, expounds various teachings (i.e., the Three Vehicles) while adhering to the position of the One Vehicle, is lord (*īśvara*) of the Dharma in the world. In the verse section of chapter 4 (v. 60) we read:

Again, [the Buddha] always adapts [to the world] and preaches the Dharma for those who act in accordance with superficial signs.

He is īśvara of the Dharma, īśvara in the whole world, great īśvara (*maheśvara*), and chief (*indra*) among leaders of the world. (SP, p. 120.3–4)

Unlike the other five examples, here īśvara is not a proper name referring to a

god, but is used in the sense of a “lord” or “master” of the teachings, albeit with underlying nuances of the gods Īśvara and Maheśvara. In this example too Īśvara, who had at the time already risen to prominence alongside Brahmā and Śakra, could be said to have been deliberately invoked in the context of preaching the Dharma, specifically the White Lotus of the True Dharma.

When considered in light of the instantiations of Īśvara/īśvara in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* as a whole, the presence of the word *īśvara* in the latter part of Avalokiteśvara’s name does not seem out of place. The various versions of the episode of Brahmā’s entreaty state more or less stereotypically that after having received Brahmā’s entreaty the Buddha observed the world with the eye of an awakened one and saw that there were differences in people’s capabilities,¹⁷⁾ and immediately afterwards he began preaching the Dharma. If Avalokiteśvara represents a concrete embodiment of the Buddha who began preaching in response to Brahmā’s entreaty, then the reason for the presence of the word *īśvara* in the latter part of his name is eloquently explained by example (2) from chapter 2 and example (3) from chapter 4 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*.

IV. QUESTIONS CONCERNING KUMĀRAJĪVA’S TRANSLATION

In this final section I wish to consider the question of why Kumārajīva included in his translation a sentence that lends support to the Chinese translation of Avalokiteśvara’s name as Kuan-yin (He Who Observes Sounds) rather than Kuan-tzu-tsai (He Who Is Masterful at Observing).

Ever since Mironov (1927) reported that the form “Avalokita-svara” appears in manuscripts from Central Asia, this has attracted the attention of many scholars, and it has been argued that Avalokita-svara was the original form of this bodhisattva’s name and that in this sense the Chinese translation Kuan-yin conveys its original meaning. Many scholars who take this view maintain that the form Avalokita-svara later changed to Avalokita-īśvara, i.e., the present form Avalokiteśvara, under the influence of the Hindu cult of Īśvara.¹⁸⁾ My conclusions concerning this issue, set out in my earlier article, are as follows.

1. Avalokiteśvara, or the synonymous Avalokiteśa, may be regarded as the original form, and it means “he who is freely capable of observing.”
2. In this case, the past passive participle *avalokita* can be understood as a nominal usage signifying the act of observing.

17) See Saitō 2011: 4–6.

18) Ever since Honda 1934, many scholars have followed this interpretation, and in recent years it has been set forth in detail by Karashima (1999) and Nattier (2007).

3. Therefore, as was fittingly noted by Hsüan-tsang and Hsüan-ying, in light of its meaning in Indic languages (Sanskrit and related dialects) the appropriate Chinese translation is Kuan-tzu-tsai, not Kuan-yin.
4. The origin of Avalokiteśvara may be assumed to lie in the Buddha's "observation of the world" when, in response to Brahmā's entreaty, he looked at the world with compassion through the eyes of an awakened one. The origins of both the designation "Avalokita" and Avalokiteśvara's distinctive quality of "compassion" can be found in this important episode in the life of the Buddha which became the starting point of his preaching of the Dharma.
5. Therefore, the word *shih*, or "world" (*loka*), seen in Chinese renderings such as Kuang-shih-yin and Kuan-shih-yin signifies the object of the Buddha's observation. Consequently, it is to be surmised that Kuang-shih-yin and Kuan-shih-yin are translations in which the word "world" has been supplemented to indicate the object of the bodhisattva's observation.

In addition to these earlier conclusions of mine, the instantiations of *Īśvara/īśvara* in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* considered in the previous section could also be said to support the assumption that the form Avalokiteśvara is appropriate as the original name of this bodhisattva.

However, a background factor in the persistence of the view that Avalokitasvara (Kuan-yin) is the original form, notwithstanding the difficulties entailed in comprehending its meaning, has been what is surmised to have been the deliberate insertion of an extra sentence by Kumārajīva in his translation. This occurs in the opening exchange between Akṣayamati and the Buddha in chapter 24, quoted in section 2 above.

- (0) "For what reason, O Lord, is the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara called 'Avalokiteśvara'?" Having been addressed in this way, the Lord said this to the bodhisattva and great being Akṣayamati: "Son of good family, howsoever many hundred thousands of *nayutas* of *koṭīs* of living beings here [in this world] may experience sufferings, they will all, if they hear the name of the bodhisattva and great being Avalokiteśvara, be released from that mass of suffering."

The Buddha's response is translated by Kumārajīva as follows:

"Good sir, if there are immeasurable hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of beings experiencing pain and distress and they hear of this bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin and call his name single-mindedly, the bodhisattva

Kuan-shih-yin will immediately observe their voices and [make them] all gain deliverance.”

善男子，若有無量百千萬億衆生受諸苦惱，聞是觀世音菩薩，一心稱名，觀世音菩薩即時觀其音聲皆得解脫。(T. no. 262, vol. 9, 56c5–8)

The underlines indicate the words thought to have been added by Kumārajīva. As well as adding “call his name single-mindedly” (一心稱名), which is the action enjoined upon living beings in the following sections on the seven perils, there has also been inserted the statement that “the bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin will immediately observe their voices” (觀世音菩薩即時觀其音聲), which would seem to lend support to the Chinese translation “Kuan-yin.” Not only is the underlined passage missing in the Sanskrit text and Tibetan translation, but it is also not found in Dharmarakṣa’s translation, where the corresponding section is translated as follows:

“Son of [good] family, if there are living beings who encounter millions of hundreds of thousands of billions of difficulties, hardships, and troubles, immeasurable [in number], and they happen to hear the name of the bodhisattva Kuang-shih-yin, they will immediately gain deliverance and be without afflictions. Therefore, [this bodhisattva] is called Kuang-shih-yin.”

族姓子，若有衆生，遭億百千姪困厄患難苦毒無量，適聞光世音菩薩名者，輒得解脫無有衆惱。故名光世音。(T. no. 263, vol. 9, 128c24–27)

Apart from the addition of the statement “Therefore, [this bodhisattva] is called Kuang-shih-yin” (故名光世音) at the end, mentioned earlier, Dharmarakṣa’s translation basically tallies in content with the extant Sanskrit text and Tibetan translation (although it also differs in that “millions of hundreds of thousands of billions” [億百千姪] qualifies the number of hardships encountered by living beings rather than the number of living beings).

The problems with Kumārajīva’s translation are also reflected in the confusion to be seen in his sentence structure. In the underlined section, the grammatical subject shifts from “living beings” to “the bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin.” Consequently, the final phrase 皆得解脫, corresponding to *parimucyeraṇ* “will be delivered” (third person plural, optative passive), which could be understood straightforwardly as “[living beings] will all gain deliverance” had there been no interpolation, has to be understood in a causative sense as “will make them all gain deliverance.”

It is to be supposed that there were several factors behind Kumārajīva’s interpolation. One was probably that, regardless of whether the appropriate Chinese translation of Avalokiteśvara is Kuan(-shih)-yin or Kuan-tzu-tsai, the explanation given in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* is, as was seen in section 2, by no means clear.

Secondly, prior to Kumārajīva Chinese translations suggestive of *svara* (sound) in the original Sanskrit form had traditionally been common, including K'uei-yin 關音 (He Who Descries Sounds), Hsien-yin-sheng 現音聲 (He Who Manifests Sounds), and Kuang-shih-yin.¹⁹⁾ And thirdly, in the Buddha's description of the seven perils there is explained the need for people, on having heard Avalokiteśvara's name, to hold on to it or to call out or utter it with one voice (*svara*). It would seem appropriate to suppose that Kumārajīva took these points into account and, discovering significance in the act of "observing sound" (*kuan-yin*), inserted the statement that Avalokiteśvara "observes" the sounds uttered single-mindedly by living beings, a statement that was to have an enormous influence in later times.

Furthermore, even if the words in question were inserted by Kumārajīva, the rendition Kuan(-shih)-yin, suggesting a bodhisattva who observes the voices of those who call his name, rather than Kuan-tzu-tsai, implying a bodhisattva "freely capable of observing" and faithful to the original Sanskrit, was a designation aligned with the position of the believer as well as reflecting an acute sense of language, and it was perhaps partly for this reason that the Chinese translation "Kuan-yin" took such a firm hold throughout the world of Buddhism in East Asia.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this essay I have reexamined the meaning of "Avalokiteśvara" in the context of chapter 24 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* and also considered a passage thought to have been inserted by Kumārajīva into his Chinese translation. On the basis of the above investigations we may draw the following three conclusions.

First, judging from the context of chapter 24 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* and the reference to "he who faces all directions" (*samantamukha*) in its title, the designation Avalokiteśvara (or Avalokitasvara) originally had a meaning that is best

19) That the form *avalokita-svara* appears in Central Asian manuscripts was pointed out long ago by Hsüan-ying. However, not only the indiscriminate use of *ś* and *s*, but also the indistinct differentiation of *te* and *ta* can be frequently seen also in Nepalese manuscripts (see Tsukamoto et al. 1977: 16–17). As I argued previously (Saitō 2011: 7), there can be no doubt that the original meaning of this word must be rendered in Sanskrit as *avalokiteśvara*. It is to be surmised that behind the continued use of the word "sound" (*yin* 音) in Chinese translations down to the time of Kumārajīva there lay a tradition in earlier translations prior to him of mechanically translating *svara* as *yin*, partly influenced by the context of chapter 24 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*. It is also possible that the immediately preceding chapter ("Gadgada-*svara*-parivarta" ["Miao-yin p'u-sa p'in" 妙音菩薩品 in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, "Miao-hou p'u-sa p'in" 妙吼菩薩品 in the *Cheng-fa hua ching*) had some influence. Although there is the difference between Gadgadasvara and Avalokiteśvara, both chapters share the motif of a bodhisattva assuming various forms, including that of Īśvara, when preaching the Dharma. Cf. section 3 above.

translated in Chinese as Kuan-tzu-tsai rather than Kuan-yin. What Avalokiteśvara expects of people is first to hear, accept, and learn his name and then, in times of danger, to hold on to it and, if circumstances permit, to call out and utter his name. Avalokiteśvara, “who faces all directions,” is able to see this series of actions by people in danger, extends a helping hand, and grants them fearlessness.

Secondly, the instantiations of Īśvara/*īśvara* in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* confirm the fact that, while reflecting a cognizance of the emergence of the cult of Īśvara at the time, Avalokiteśvara is a bodhisattva who is freely capable of observing the world and people in it and represents an embodiment of the Buddha—“lord (*īśvara*) of the Dharma”—who had commenced preaching the Dharma with observation of the world as his starting point.

Thirdly, it is to be surmised that the words “[if they] call his name single-mindedly, the bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin will immediately observe their voices,” found only in Kumārajīva’s translation, were added by Kumārajīva to justify his rendition of Avalokiteśvara as “Kuan-yin.” However, there were several factors behind this interpolation, and the fact that this designation, aligned with the position of the believer and reflecting an acute sense of language, has become long established in the Buddhism of East Asia bears considerable weight and is not something the significance of which I wish to deny.

*This essay is based on my article “Kannon (Kanjizai) to *Kannon-gyō*—Kumarajū-yaku no nazo o megutte” 觀音(觀自在)と『觀音經』——鳩摩羅什譯の謎をめぐって [Avalokiteśvara and the *Kuan-yin jing*: On the problems of Kumārajīva’s translation], in Itō Zuiei Hakushi Koki Kinen Ronbunshū Kankōkai 伊藤瑞叡博士古稀記念論文集刊行會, ed., *Itō Zuiei hakushi koki kinen ronbunshū: Hokke bunka to kankei shobunka no kenkyū* 伊藤瑞叡博士古稀記念論文集・法華文化と關係諸文化の研究 [Studies of Lotus Sūtra Buddhism and related cultures: Essays in honor of Dr. Itō Zuiei on his seventieth birthday] (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin 山喜房佛書林, 2013); it has, however, been revised and expanded (especially section 3).

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