ORIGIN OF THE AVALOKITESVARA OF POTALA

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I INTRODUCTION

Hsuan-tsang refers to Avalokiteśvara on the Potala in the following words (Beal 1884:2.233): "To the east of the Malaya mountains is Mount Po-ta-lo-kia (Potalaka). The passes of this mountain are very dangerous; its sides are precipitous, and its valleys rugged. On the top of the mountain is a lake; its waters are clear as a mirror. From a hollow proceeds a great river which encircles the mountain as it flows down twenty times and then enters the southern sea. By the side of the lake is a rock-palace of the Devas. Here Avalokiteśvara in coming and going takes his abode. Those who strongly desire to see this Bodhisattva do not regard their lives, but, crossing the water (fording the streams), climb the mountain forgetful of its difficulties and dangers: of those who make the attempt there are very few who reach the summit. But even of those who dwell below the mountain, if they earnestly pray and beg to behold the god, sometimes he appears as Tsz'-tsai-t'ien (Īśvara-deva), sometimes under the form of a yogī (a Pāṁśu-pata); he addresses them with benevolent words and then they obtain their wishes according to their desires".

Watters (1905:2.229) summarises the above passage as follows: "In the south of the country near the sea was the Mo-lo-ya (Malaya) mountain, with lofty cliffs and ridges and
deep valleys and gullies, on which were sandal, camphor and other trees. To the east of this was Pu-ta-lo-ka (Patalaka) mountain with steep narrow paths over its cliffs and gorges in irregular confusion; on the top was a lake of clear water, whence issued a river which, on its way to the sea, flowed twenty times round the mountain. By the side of the lake was a stone Deva-palace frequented by Kuan-tzu-tsaí P'usa. Devotees, risking life, brave water and mountain to see the P'usa, but only a few succeed in reaching the shrine. To the people at the foot of the mountain who pray for a sight of the P'usa he appears sometimes as a Pāśupata Tīrthika, or as Mahesvara, and consoles the supplicant with this (śiśa) answer:

Hsuan-tsang must have read in the Avatamsaka-sūtra about the earthly paradise of Avalokitesvara: "Patalaka is on the sea-side in the south, it has woods, and streams, and tanks, and is in fact a sort of earthly paradise. Buddhabhadra (A.D. 420) calls Kuanyin's mountain Kuang-ming or 'Brilliance', which is usually given as the rendering for Malaya, but a later translator, Śikṣānanda, transcribes the name Patalaka" (Watters 1905:2.231). Buddhabhadra's rendering of Patala is "Brilliance". It refers to its etymology: Tamil pottu (potti-) 'to light (as a fire)', Kota pot- (poty-) id., Kannada pottu n. 'flaming', pottige 'flaming, flame', Tulu potta 'hot, burning' (Burrow/Emeneau 1961:298 no. 3691). In Kannada analogous words are: pottige 'flaming, flame', pottisu 'to cause to burn with flame, to kindle, to light' pottu 'to begin to burn with flame, to be kindled, to catch fire, to flame', pottu 'l. flaming, 2. the sun, 3. time' (Kittel 1894:1020). In ancient times the magnificence of the temple of Avalokitesvara must have been resplendent and dazzling to the devotees who reached it after negotiating inaccessible cliffs and ravines: a transcendence beyond forbidding barriers.
In the above passage Avalokiteśvara at Potala sometimes take the form of Īsvara (Śiva) and sometimes that of a Pāśupata yogin. In fact Śiva was metamorphosed into Avalokiteśvara. This is corroborated by the Nīlakaṇṭhaka and Nīlakanṭha-dhāraṇī where Nīlakanṭha Lokesvara is an apotheosis of Śiva and Viṣṇu (Hari-Hāra). The Nīlakaṇṭhaka was translated into Chinese by three masters in the seventh and early eighth century: by Chih-t'ung twice during A.D. 627–649 (T. 1057a and T. 1057b = Nj. 318), by Bhagavaddharma during A.D. 650–660 (T. 1059 and T. 1060 = Nj. 320), and by Bodhiruci in A.D. 709 (T. 1058 = Nj. 319).

The Nīlakaṇṭha-dhāraṇī was translated into Chinese by Vajrabodhi (worked A.D. 719–741, T. 1112), twice by his disciple Amoghavajra (worked A.D. 723–774, T. 1111, 1113b, and in the fourteenth century by Dhyānabhadra (worked A.D. 1326–1363, T. 1113a).

Twelve scrolls of Nīlakaṇṭha Lokesvara texts in Chinese have been found at Tun-huang (Giles 1957:105–106). Manuscript 3793 of the Stein Collection of Chinese scrolls from Tun-huang adds a note at the end: 'Translated at Khotan by the sramana Bhagavaddharma of Western India'. Here West means 'South India' as we have already pointed out in our article on Oḍḍiyāna (in print). It is notable that Bhagavaddharma accomplished the translation at Khotan. Nīlakandi for Nīlakantha in Amoghavajra's translation (T. 1113b), is a Central Asian form: Uigur nominative singular ending in i.

II AMOGHAVAJRA'S VERSION

The version of Amoghavajra (T. 1113b) has been the most wide spread ever since it was written in the eighth century.
Its popularity has not waned to this day. Suzuki (1950:22-23) includes its English rendering as an essential part of the Zen repertoire of *sūtras*, "what the Zen monk reads before the Buddha in his daily service, where his thoughts move in his leisure hours" (*ibid.* 11):

Suzuki's Translation

**DHĀRANĪ OF THE GREAT COMPASSIONATE ONE**

Adoration to the Triple, Treasure!
Adoration to Avalokitesvara the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva
who is the great compassionate one!
Om, to the one who performs a leap beyond all fears!
Having adored him, may I enter into the heart of the blue-necked
one known as the noble adorable Avalokiteśvara. It means the
completing of all meaning, it is pure, it is that which makes-
all beings victorious and cleanses the path of existence.
Thus:
Om, the seer, the world-transcending one!.
O Hari the Mahābodhisattva!.
All, all!
Defilement, defilement!
The earth, the earth!
It is the heart!
Do, do the work!
Hold fast, hold fast!
O great victor!
Hold on, hold on!
I hold on!
To Indra the creator!
Move, move, my defilement-free seal!
Come, come!
Hear, hear!
A joy springs up in me!
Speak, speak! Directing!
Hulu, hulu, mala, hulu, hulu, hile!
Sara, sara! siri, siri! suru, suru!
Be awakened, be awakened!
Have awakened, have awakened!
O merciful one, blue-necked one:
Of daring ones, to the joyous, hail!
To the successful one, hail!
To the great successful one, hail!
To the one who has attained mastery in the discipline, hail!
To the blue-necked one, hail!
To the boar-faced one, hail!
To the one with a lion's head and face, hail!
To the one who holds a weapon in his hand, hail!
To the one who holds a wheel in his hand, hail!
To the one who holds a lotus in his hand, hail!
To the blue-necked far-causing one, hail!
To the beneficent one referred to in this Dhāraṇī beginning
with "namah", hail!
Adoration to the triple Treasure!
Adoration to Avalokiteśvara!
Hail!
May these [prayers] be successful!
To this magical formula, hail!

Suzuki has used the Sanskrit text in Siddham script given alongside the Chinese transcription, as the basis for his translation. The Sanskrit is corrupt beyond recognition in certain cases: dhava nāmo narakidhi herima. Suzuki has taken 'O Hari' from another version. Sarva sarva 'all, all', is in fact sarpa sarpa 'descend descend'. Mala mala translated by Suzuki as 'defilement, defilement' should be smara smara 'bear in mind, bear in mind'. Dhārinī-rāja is rendered as 'I hold on. To Indra the creator'. Its correct Sanskrit is dhārinī-rāja 'O Lore of the dhāraṇī (namely, Nilakaṇṭha Lokesvara)'. Vaṣa-vaṣam prasāya is done into English as 'Speak! speak! Directing'. Its Sanskrit reconstruction is viṣam viṣam prasāya 'destroy every poison (of the senses)'. Dhaśīṇa paṃamaṃ svāhā is interpreted as 'of daring one, to the joyous, hail'. Its correct text would be [dehi me] darśanaṃ/praharanaṇaṇa svāhā appear [unto me]. To the over-looking Lord, hail'. Suzuki has missed not only the words of the dhāraṇī, but also its structure. The dhāraṇī can be divided into five parts: 1. initial salutation, 2. name of the Avalokiteśvara, 3. śloka enunciating merits of the hṛdaya-dhāraṇī, 4. dhāraṇī commencing with the classical phrase tādyathā, 5. final salutation. It escaped the attention of Suzuki that the third part is a śloka.

Transcription 1: Siddham script of Chinese Tripiṭaka
The text as written in Siddham script in the Chinese Tripiṭaka (T. 1113b, 20.498-501) is transcribed below:

Namo Ratna-trayāya

1. Namo āryāvalokitesvarāya, bodhisatvāya mahāsatvāya mahākāruṇikāya.
2. Om sarva-rabhyā-śudhana dasya namoskṛta imo aryāvarukitesivaram dhava namo narakidhi.
3. Herima vadhaśame sarva athādu subham / ajeyaṃ sarva-bhūtanama va-gama-vadudu //
4. Tadyathā /
5. Namo raratna-trayāya/ Namo āryāvarokitesvarāya bodhi svāhā //

The above text can be corrected by a comparison with the version of Chih-t'ung (worked A.D. 627-649); which we find in the Ming edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. All the Sanskrit texts occurring in the Ming Tripitaka were collected together by Rol-paḥi-rdo-rje and his assistants in 8+2 volumes of the quadrilingual collection of dharaṇīs which bears the Chinese
title:  Yu chih man han măng-ku hsi - fan ho-pi ta-tsang oh’ian chou  
(edited by the author in 22 volumes under the title Sanskrit Texts from the Imperial Palace at Peking, abbreviated to STP). The prime objective of the redactors of the quadrilingual dhāraṇī-collection was to restore the Sanskrit text to its appropriate accuracy with the help of Tibetan texts. It proved to be a remarkable effort at textual reconstruction undertaken as early as the first half of the 18th century.

Transcription 2: Reconstructed Sanskrit Text

Herebelow is the reconstituted Sanskrit text with variant readings from STP. 5.1290-6.1304 which have been used for emendations:

/Namo Ratna-trayāya/

Nama āryāvalokiteśvarāya bodhisattvāya mahāsattvāya
mahākāruṇikāya/
Om/ sarva-bhaya-śodhanāya tasya namaskṛtvā imu Āryāva-
lokiteśvara tava namo Nīlakaṇṭha/
hrdayam vartayiṣyāmi¹ sarvārtha-sādhanām śubhaṁ/
avjeyam sarva-bhūtānāṁ bhava-mārga-visodhakam²//
Tadyāthā/
Om/ Ālokādhāpi³ lokātikrānta/ ehy-[ehi] mahābodhisattvā
sarpa-sarpa/ smara/smara⁴ hṛdayam/ kuru-kuru karma/
dhuru-dhuru vijayate mahāvijayate/ dhara-dhara dhāriṇī-
rāja⁵/ cala-cala mama vimala-mūrtte⁶, ehi-ehi/ chinda-
chinda/ ārsa pracali/ viṣam-viṣam⁷ praṇāśaya/ hulu-hulu
smara hulu-hulu/ sara-sara siri-siri suru-suru/ bodhiya-
bodhiya bodhaya-bodhaya/ maitriya Nīlakaṇṭha⁸ [dehi me]
darsanam⁸/
Praharāyamāṇāya svaha/ siddhāya svāhā/ mahāsiddhāya svāhā/
12 Origin

siddhayogīśvarāya svāhā/ Nilakaṇṭhāya svāhā/
varāha-mukhāyā9 svāhā/ narasimha-mukhāyā10 svāhā/
gadā-hastāyā11 svāhā/ cakra-hastāyā12 svāhā/ padma-
hastāyā svāhā/
Nīlakaṇṭha-pāṇḍarāya13 svāhā/ Mahātali-Saṅkarāyā svāhā,
5. Namo ratna-trayāyā/
Nama āryāvalokiteśvarāya bodhisattvāya svāhā/

Notes to both Transcriptions

1. STP. hridayam vartayiṣāmi.
2. STP. has the correct text. ādu occurs elsewhere too as an expletive to slur over lacunae when words were forgotten.
3. STP. Āloka-adhipati: this reminds us a Buddhabhadra (A.D. 420) who renders Potala the mountain of Avalokiteśvara as Kuang-ming "Brilliance". The Avalokiteśvara of Potala was Ālokādhipati or the Lord of Effulgence, and this phrase points to the fact that Nīlakaṇṭha Lokesvara and the Avalokiteśvara of Potala are identical
4. STP. 1294 line 1 smvara hridayan.
5. STP. 1295 line 2 dharenadriśvara.
6. STP. 1295 line 3 vimalamūrtte.
7. STP. 1298 line 1 dveṣa-visa-viṣāsanam moha-visa-viṣāsanam.
8. STP. 1300 line 2 dadāhi me darśana-kāmasa darsanām/ praharāyamāna svāhā
9. STP 1300 line 4 parāhamukhāya.
10. STP. 1301 line 1 narasihamukhāya.
11. STP. 1301 line 2 vajrahaṣṭāyā. In the Siddham of the Chinese text it is pama which can equally well be gadā. The dhāraṇī refers to Varāha and Narasimha, the two incarnations of Viṣṇu. The attributes that follow should also pertain to Viṣṇu: mace (gadā), discus
(oakra), lotus (padma) and conch (śāṅkha). In this light "pama" has to be emended to "gada" and not to vajra.

12. STP. 1302 lines 3-4 oakraṇudharāya svāhā/śāṅkha-sābda-nibodhanāya svāhā. The śāṅkha 'conch' is missing in our text.

13. Hsuan-tsang says that Avalokitesvara at Potalakṣa sometimes appears as a yogin smeared with ashes. The word pāndarāya is an allusion to this attribute.

Translation of Reconstructed Sanskrit Text

Adoration the Triple Gem

1. Adoration the noble Avalokitesvara, bodhisatta, mahāsattva, the Great Compassionate One.

2. Om. Having paid adoration to One who Dispels all Fears, O noble Avalokitesvara, to You adoration, O Nīlakaṇṭha.

3. I shall enunciate the 'heart' dhāraṇī which ensures all purposes, is pure and invincible for all beings, and which purifies the path of existence.

4. Thus:
Om. Lord of Effulgence, the World-Transcending One.
Come, come, great bodhisattva, descend, descend. Bear in mind my heart-dhāraṇī. Do do the work. Hold fast, oh Victor, oh Great Victor. Hold on, hold on, oh Lord of the Dhāraṇī. Move, move oh my immaculate image, come come. ... ... ... ... Destroy every poison.
Quick, bear in mind, quick, quick, Descend, descend, descend descend, descend descend. Being enlightened, being enlightened enlighten me, enlighten me. Oh merciful Nīlakaṇṭha appear unto me. To You who eyes us, hail.
To the Great Siddha hail. To the Great Siddha in Yoga hail. To Nīlakaṇṭha hail. To the Boar-faced One hail. To One with the Face of Narasimha hail. To One who bears
the mace in His hand, hail. To the Holder of cakrā in His hand, hail. To One who Sports a Lotus in His hand, hail. To Nīlakanṭha smeared [with ashes], hail. To the mighty Śaṅkara hail.

5. Adoration to the Triple Gem. Adoration to the noble Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva, hail.

III CHIH-T'UNG'S VERSION

Now we shall take up Rol- paṭi-rdo-rje's reconstruction (STP. 5.1290-6.1304) of the Nīlakanṭhaka as transcribed by Chih-t'ung during A.D. 627-649 (Nj. 318, T. 1057b). This version is different and longer than that of Amoghavajra. The words eḥi hare hare is the vocative of Hari) and eḥi hara are of crucial importance, as they are certain indications that the Potala image was a syncretic icon of Hari (Viṣṇu) and Hara (Śiva). Hari-hara Lokeshvara is one of the 108 forms of Avalokiteśvara in the Macchandar Vahal at Kathmandu in Nepal (Bhattacharyya 1958:429 no. 84). The following characteristics allude to Hari: padma-hasta, vajra-hasta, cakrayudhadhara, saṅkha- śabdaniḥghosaṇa. These are the attributes held in the four hands of Viṣṇu, except vajra which replaces gadā. He has the faces of two incarnations of Viṣṇu: Varāha-mukha, MahāVarāha-mukha, Narasimha-mukha, MahāNarasimha-mukha. He has the prowess of Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyana-bala-rūpa). He is Hara-Hari (Hara-hare, vocative) and Māhapaḍma-nābha which is an epithet of Viṣṇu and also one of his 24 aspects (caturvinīśati-mūtī, Liebert 1976:204). He is standing on a lotus (padma-sthita).

The very title of the dhārāṇi refers to Nīlakanṭha, which is an epithet of Śiva. He is invoked as Hara (eḥi Hara). His diadem is his black matted locks (kroṇa-jaṭā-mukūta). He is the Immutable Lord (niścāreśvara = Sṭhāṇu or Sṭhāṇvīśvara, an
epithet of Śiva). He wears a black serpent as the sacred thread (kṛṣṇa-sarpa-kṛta-yajñopavita). He is the Destroyer of the three cities (Tripuradhana, an epithet of the violent manifestation of Śiva, Liebert 1976:304). He holds the dreadful poison (vīṣadhara) that he swallowed on its emergence from the churning of the ocean of milk that threatened the world with destruction (māhā-halāhala-vīṣa) and in consequence destroys the sinister poisons of passion (Īgga), envy (āvesa), and delusion (moha). The mahāṭṭhāśaṇya of the dhāraṇī refers to the fury of His laughter, which is unique to Him. Siddha-yogīśvara is again an epithet of Śiva.

The full text of Chih-t'ung reads:

नमो रत्नक्र्याय ।

नम ब्राह्मविरोक्तेऽसाराय ब्रह्मसत्ताय महासत्ताय महाकृतिणकाय ।

तथा ॥

उँ सर्व-बन्धन-चोदनक्राय सर्व-भव-समुद्रोक्तेऽसाराय क्राय सर्व-च्याधि-प्रवाहम्
क्राय सर्व-हृदयुपर्व [व] - विनाशक्राय सर्व-भयोत्तरक्राय तस्य नमस्कृतवा हदों
ब्राह्मविरोक्तेऽसाराय तव नीलक्रंठ नाम वर्ष ॥

हृदयं वेर्तित्वषा प्रीती-सारथने शुभम् ॥

कैयं सर्व-मृतान्ति भव-मार्ग-विश्वाषक् ॥

तथा ॥

बालीकार्यपति वौक्तिक्रान्त हदि (यून. क्रान्ते रा) हरे महाबौखिस्त्व, हे
महाबौखिस्त्व, हे प्रीती बौखिस्त्व, हे कृष्णिक, सम हृदयम्। हदि हर ब्राह्मविरोक्तेऽ
साराय || परम-मैत्रि-चित कृतं कर्म कृि। सारय साष्य विषादः।
दहि दहि मे परं। गम्ग गम विनहंगम सिद्य-योगीशव । कृ कृ। विजयान्ति
महाविजयान्ति। यह यह धारणी-श्रवर (न्यून धरणिश्रवर)। बल बल विमलमूत्रे
वायुविलौकिकस्वर जिन कृष्ण-जटा-मुकुटर (न्यून मुकुट)। अक्षुड़ीररे हम्म प्रत-प्रत
विहंम्ब महासिद्धिविशाराद। बल बल महाबल। मल (न्यून मल) मलमल (न्यून
मलमल) महामल (न्यून मल)। बल बल महाक्षु। कृष्ण-वर्तः कृष्णा-प्रसा कृष्णा-पाल
निरंज्ञ। हि पुम्मास्त। चर चर निरङ्गेश्वर। कृष्णा-स [पृ] - कृष्ण-यशोपवीत एहि
हि। महावरा-हमुख त्रिमुर-कलेश्वर नारायण-बल-र [पृ] विष्णुरर (न्यून घनिर)।
हि नीलक्षणं द्वैते हि महा-हल्लह-विष-निर्वित्त लोकय राग-विष-विनाशन देश-विष-
विनाशन मोह-विष-विनाशन निवृत्त्व पुम्मुकुट। राहुला राहुला। हर-हर
(न्यून हल्ला) महाप्रभुनाथ। सर सर चिरि चिरि चूँ चूँ। हुढू कुढू बोधय
बोधय। बोधयांबि ते नीलक्षण। एवेकः पुम्मस्थित (न्यून पाम) नरसिम्हुबु (न्यून
पाम)। हस हस। सून्त मुच महादूतहस्यं। एवेकः पौ भो महासिद्धायकीस्वर।
पण पण वाच। साथ्य साथ्य वरिशालु। स्मर स्मर तातु। महबन्त लोक [रू]
फलोका तातु त्यागतानां। ददर्शिं मे दशनकामां [व] दशनं। प्रहरायणां स्वाहा।
सिद्धाय स्वाहा। सिद्धोगीश्रयां स्वाहा। नीलक्षणाय स्वाहा। वरामुखाय
स्वाहा। महावर[ह] मुखाय स्वाहा। नरसिम्हुबु स्वाहा। महानरसिम्हुबु स्वाहा।
क्रःस्ताय स्वाहा। महाक्रःस्ताय स्वाहा। सिद्धभवार्याय स्वाहा।
पहासिद्ध-विषाणाय स्वाहा। पुम्मास्ताय स्वाहा। महापुम्मास्ताय स्वाहा। कृष्णा-
सर्व-कृष्ण-भागवतीताय स्वाहा। महाप्रणाम (न्यून भाली) मुकुटसराय स्वाहा।
क्रःपुबु[व] राय स्वाहा। शंकर्य निबोधनाय स्वाहा। वाम-[ः]क्रः-देश-स्थित-
कृष्णाजनाय स्वाहा। वाम-हस्त-व्याय क्रम-निबोधनाय स्वाहा। लोकेश्वराय
स्वाहा। महालोकेश्वराय स्वाहा। सर्व-सिद्धार्थाय स्वाहा। रत्न रत्न माँ स्वाहा।

नमः महासे वायुविलौकिकस्वराय बोधित्वाय महासत्वाय महाकालिनाकाय।
सिद्धान्ते मे मनुष्यदानि स्वाहा।
IV CONCLUSIONS

1. Nīlakanṭha Lokesvara and Potalaka Avalokitesvara are both an epiphany of Hari-Hara. In all probability the two are identical.

2. The epithet Ālokātikṛṣṭa 'He who transcends Effulgence' supports the hypothesis that Nīlakanṭha is the Lokesvara at Potalaka. Potalaka is rendered into Chinese by Buddhhabhadra as "Brilliance" (āloka).

3. Nīlakanṭha Lokesvara has the attributes of Śiva and at the end of the dhāraṇī he is lauded as one who holds the four implements carried by Viṣṇu in his four hands: kānka, chakra, gadā and pañcā. It reminds one of the syncretism of Hari-Hara images.

4. The Dalai Lamas, the Rulers of Tibet, are reincarnations of the Avalokiteśvara who resides on the Potala. The palace of the Dalai Lamas at Lhasa is in fact designated Potala. The aspect of Avalokiteśvara as the Sovereign Head of State, stems from Viṣṇu. A King on earth is an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

5. The image at Potalaka symbolised the syncretism of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and in its later development when Buddhism became dominant it became Avalokiteśvara. An important fact for the convergence of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism. A spot once sanctified remained sacrosanct, while externals underwent change.

6. The text of the dhāraṇī in Chih-t'ung's version is longer and has crucial details: kroṣa-sarpa-kṛta-yajnopavītāya svāhā / ... vāma-kandha-deka-sthita-kṛṣṇājīnāya svāhā / (STP.6.1302-3).
So also other versions preserve variations of consequence. A detailed study of all the Chinese translations of the dhāraṇī along with their descriptive text in Chinese giving directions for its use, is essential to trace the impregnation of Buddhism by Śaiva/Vaiśṇava elements and the emergence of syncretic trends in the Tantras. The dates of the Chinese translations can help to define the chronology of philosophical development in India.

7. Nīlakandi in Amoghavajra's version is an Uigur form, which he must have employed by force of habit. This tiny but subtle and crucial nuance is decisive in confirming the view that he hailed from Samarkand.
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APPENDIX

AMOGHVJRA'S TRANSLITERATION, from the Taisho edition of the Chinese Tripitaka (it excludes the Chinese text).