

The Translation of *The Single Stanza* (Toh 323) and *The Four Stanzas* (Toh 324)

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The translated texts *Ekagāthā* (Tib. *tshigs su bcad pa gcig pa*)¹ and *Caturgāthā* (Tib. *tshigs su bcad pa bzhi pa*)² belong to the General Sutra Collection (*mdo sde*). The basis for translation is the Degé edition with consultation of the Degé Pedurma (*dpe bsdur ma*) comparative edition and *bka' gyur stog pho brang bris ma*. As one can infer from the names, the texts belong to one of the Twelve Branches of Excellent Speech (Skr. *dvādaśāṅgapravacana*, Tib. *gsungs rab yan lag bcu nyis*), namely to the so called poetic verses (Skr. *gāthā*, Tib. *tshigs su bcad pa'i sde*). The texts do not have a Pāli parallel or any colophon indicating the translator.

Caturgāthā appears in the Gondhla proto-kanjur (cf. Tauscher 2008). *Ekagāthā* does appear also in the Tenjur, in the works of Vasubandhu, namely in his *Gāthāsaṃgrahaśāstra* (*bstan bcos tshigs su bcad pa bsdus pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos*) [Toh 4102] and in his autocommentary *Gāthāsaṃgrahaśāstrārthanāma* (*tshigs su bcad pa'i don bsdus pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos*) [Toh 4103]. In both cases the text starts with *Ekagāthā* and has the same variant

¹ Location of the text in the Degé Kangyur: vol. 72 (mdo sde, sa), f.204r.

² Location of the text in the Degé Kangyur: vol. 72 (mdo sde, sa), ff.204a6-204b3.

reading.³ Bcom ldan rig pa'i ral gri lists it among twenty texts accepted by Sautrāntika followers.⁴

Recently, the Sanskrit versions of both texts were discovered in Nepal, included into *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* (the manuscript is located presently in Cambridge University Library).⁵ The texts were edited and translated into Japanese by Kanō Kazuo (2011).

Both texts belong to the set of sutras that were included in the daily recitations of Buddhist monks in India before the 13th century. As was established by Kanō, they were often recited together with two other texts: *Gāthādvayadhāraṇī*, *Ṣaṇmukhīdhāraṇī*, *Bhadracaryā* (as indicated in the *Kudrṣṭinirghātana* by Advayavajra and in *Muktāvalī* by Ratnākaraśānti).

Except “*Ekagāthā*, *Caturgāthā*, *Gāthādvayadhāraṇī* – A Set of Recitation Sūtras in the 11th century India” by Kanō Kazuo the texts so far do not have any history of exegesis.

Ekagāthā is a simple formula of praising the Buddha, who is addressed as the incomparable practitioner in the universe. Since it refers to Buddhist practice and sets the historical Buddha as an exemplary practitioner, it was most probably convenient to include it into other practices, which was also done in Tibet. Even recently we found an example of such a procedure in *byang sdom blang chog dpal sprul gsung rgyun ltar bkod pa* (Ritual of the Bodhisattva Vow according to the Tradition of Patrul) by Bya bral sangs rgyas rdo rje (1913–2015).⁶

Caturgāthā is a simple formula of praising the places connected with the activities of Buddha. The places, however, are not named directly. Thus there are references to Lumbinī, Bodhgayā, Vārāṇasī, Kuśinagar, Śravastī, etc. It ends with the statement of the merit gained by praising Buddha with *The Four Stanzas*.

Ekagāthā is simple and has repetitive structure. From a grammatical point of view it is pretty straightforward. Between the version of *Ekagāthā* from Kanjur and its versions in the above-mentioned texts by Vasubandhu from Tenjur there is only one difference in reading. On the first one the last line of the texts is as follows: *ri dang nags su bcas pa'i steng rgyas pa kun tu yul zhis ga la yod*, while in Vasubandhu it reads: *ri dang nags su bcas pa'i steng rgyas pa kun tu bskor kyang ga la yod*, which however does not change the meaning significantly.

³ In this case, however, there is a slight change in the last verse. Instead of *ri dang nags su bcas pa'i steng rgyas pa kun tu yul zhis ga la yod* it reads: *ri dang nags su bcas pa'i steng rgyas pa kun tu bskor kyang ga la yod*, which does not change the meaning significantly.

⁴ Cf. *Science and Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics* (2022), p. 452, note 437.

⁵ Cf. the webpage of Digital Library of University of Cambridge. Accessed: January 26, 2023. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01680-00008-00002/1>. More on this kind of collections cf. Hidas 2021.

⁶ The version included here follows the reading in Vasubandhu's texts mentioned before.



Caturgāthā is simple and has repetitive structure. From a grammatical point of view it is pretty straightforward. There is one misspelling (indicated in the first footnote in the translation) and there are no important variant readings.

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The One Stanza

[F 204a]

Homage to the Three Jewels!

The foremost of men, there is no great practitioner like you in the land of god realms;

neither is there in this world [and] neither is there in the abode of Vaiśravaṇa⁷;

neither is there in the gods' palaces and highest abodes, neither is there in all directions and sub-directions.

In all the wide regions of the earth with [its] forests and mountains, how could there be even one [like you]?

*One stanza*⁸ is complete.

The Four Stanzas

[F 204a]

Homage to the Three Jewels!

Homage to all Venerable Ones⁹ who have thirty-two major marks¹⁰

⁷ Vaiśravaṇa [Tib. *rnam thos sras* or *rnam thos bu*] – one of the gods of the four classes of Great Kings (Tib. *rgyal chen rigs bzhi'i lha*) who resides in the northern direction. His abode is located on the terrace of Mount Meru.

⁸ The term from Indian poetics signifying a sentence composed of 32 syllables. In Tibetan tradition it was translated with 28 syllables. The Sanskrit term *gāthā* signifies also one of the so-called Twelve Branches of Excellent Speech [Skr. *dvādaśāṅgapravacana*, Tib. *gsungs rab yan lag bcu nyis*].

⁹ Misspelling: instead of *skur gyur* it should read *bkur gyur*.

¹⁰ Thirty-two major marks of a superior man that the tathāgatas possess [*de bzhin gshegs pa'i skyes bu chen po'i mtshan sum cu rtsa gnyis*, *tathāgatadvātriṃśanmahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*]. These are the major physical marks that identify the buddha body of emanation, and which, in some sources and traditions, portend the advent of a universal monarch.



and are all the Victors¹¹ famous as perfect Buddhas!

I pay homage to the places where the perfect Buddha was born and where he reached enlightenment,

where the wheel of peace was turned, where the unstained [F 204b] nirvana was reached, where the Tathāgata dwelled, wherever he wandered, wherever he stayed, where he laid down to sleep like a lion.

I pay homage to the stupas with statues and without statues in all directions and subdirections, up, down and in between.

The noble man residing in the Eastern and Western directions, a Victorious One called Tenkal spoke these stanzas. Whoever praises the Tathāgata with these four stanzas, in one thousand lives will not go to lower realms.

The four stanzas¹² are complete.

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As well as being listed in this and other Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, they are to be found detailed in the *Lalitavistara*, *Mahāyānopadeśa*, *Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchā*, *Ratnagoṭravibhāgotataratantraśāstra*, *Mahāvastu*, and in the Pali *Lakkhaṇasutta*.

¹¹ Victor [*rgyal ba, jina*] – epithet of Buddha.

¹² A term from Indian poetics signifying a sentence composed of 32 syllables. In Tibetan tradition it was translated with 28 syllables. The Sanskrit term *gāthā* signifies also one of the so-called Twelve Branches of Excellent Speech [Skr. *dvādaśāṅgapravacana*, Tib. *gsungs rab yan lag bcu nyis*].



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