



Illuminating Sunshine: Buddhist Funeral Rituals of Avalokiteshvara

Martin J. Boord, Rig-'Dzin Rdo-Rje

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According to our author Padma 'phrin-las (1641-1718), disciple of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama and fourth incarnation of the gter-ston Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem, there are three main stages in the care of those who have come to the end of their lives. These consist of facilitating the transference of consciousness ('pho ba) at the moment of death, performing postmortem rituals in order to guide the deceased along pathways of escape from the six modes of unhappy rebirth in samsara, and cremating the corpse with due dignity. Associated rites include prayers of good wishes for the deceased to be reborn in the pureland of Amitabha's Blissful Paradise (Sukhavati), and the casting of small votive images (tsha tsha) from any fragments of bone that may remain after the cremation has been completed. Taken as a whole, such rites are designed to ensure that the good karma of the deceased is used to maximum effect so that he or she may be liberated from bondage to an endless cycle of confusion and pain, obtaining instead the three kaya of an awakened being. All the relevant texts have been gathered together in the present volume, which thus contains a full set of instructions for those who find themselves called upon to care for the Buddhist dead. Together with the Tibetan texts and English translations, this book contains transliterated prayers that may be chanted with greater ease on such solemn occasions, with full explanations of how to perform a full Buddhist funeral ceremony, by either burial or cremation. May this work bring happiness and comfort to the living, as well as blissful liberation to the deceased!

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