

### Groundless Paths: The Prajnaparamita Sutras, The Ornament of Clear Realization, and Its Commentaries in the Tibetan Nyingma Tradition (Tsadra)

By Karl Brunnholzl



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The Abhisamayalamkara summarizes all the topics in the vast body of the prajñaparamita sutras. Resembling a zip-file, it comes to life only through its Indian and Tibetan commentaries. Together, these texts not only discuss the "hidden meaning" of the prajñaparamita sutras—the paths and bhumis of sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas—but also serve as contemplative manuals for the explicit topic of these sutras—emptiness—and how it is to be understood on the progressive levels of realization of bodhisattvas. Thus these texts describe what happens in the mind of a bodhisattva who meditates on emptiness, making it a living experience from the beginner's stage up through buddhahood.

Groundless Paths contains the first in-depth study of the Abhisamayalamkara (the text studied most extensively in higher Tibetan Buddhist education) and its commentaries from the perspective of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. This study consists mainly of translations of Maitreya's famous text and two commentaries on it by Patrul Rinpoche. These are supplemented by three short texts on the paths and bhumis by the same author, as well as extensive excerpts from commentaries by six other Nyingma masters, including Mipham Rinpoche. Thus this book helps close a long-standing gap in the modern scholarship on the prajñaparamita sutras and the literature on paths and bhumis in mahayana Buddhism.

Arya Maitreya's *Ornament of Clear Realization*, with its Indian and Tibetan commentaries, presents the complex dynamics of the path to liberation as a succession of realizations of the empty nature of all phenomena. This presentation is a powerful antidote to whatever two-dimensional views we might hold about spiritual experience and the journey to enlightenment.

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#### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"Groundless Paths completes Karl Brunnhölzl's brilliant three-volume study of Tibetan commentaries on the Ornament of Clear Realization. In this volume, the great nineteenth-century master Patrul Rinpoche adds a Nyingma perspective to the Kagyü viewpoints found in Gone Beyond. Altogether, this collection is a marvelous resource for scholars and practitioners who wish to understand the depth and breadth of the Buddhist path."—Andy Karr, author of Contemplating Reality

"Groundless Paths contains Dza Patrul Rinpoche's brilliant commentaries on the Abhisamayalamkara, masterfully translated and annotated by Karl Brunnhölzl. This third volume completes the presentation of the major Kagyü and Nyingma works on the prajñaparamita literature in English for the first time."—Elizabeth Callahan, translator of *The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Six, Part Three* 

#### From the Back Cover

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#### About the Author

Karl Brunnhölzl, MD, was trained as a physician and also studied Tibetology. He received his systematic training in Tibetan language and Buddhist philosophy and practice at the Marpa Institute for Translators, founded by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche. Since 1989 he has been a translator and interpreter from Tibetan and English. He is presently involved with the Nitartha Institute as a teacher and translator.

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