The Characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*

SUZUKI Takayasu

1. The Aim of This Paper: A Continuous Verification of the Hypothesis

As has been discussed in the previous studies,¹⁾ the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (*Sūtra of Golden Light; Suv*),²⁾ one of the Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures which has collected and demonstrated various doctrines and rites of both mundane and supermundane levels, and has had wide influence over the way of thinking and living of Asians, seems to have been paid rather scant attention by the modern scholarly world partly because the intention of the compilers of the *Suv* has long remained unknown. In this relation, supported by some archeological results,³⁾ the present author, focusing attention on the complicated structure of the *Suv* and in particular on the description in the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta*,⁴⁾ has already proposed the following hypothesis on the intentions of the compilers of the *Suv*:

〈**The Hypothesis**〉 Owing to the account of the *Suv* which has, through the several stages of its formation, collected and demonstrated the various kinds of doctrines and rites of both mundane and supermundane levels expounded previously in the treatises either of Mahāyāna, of non-Mahāyāna, or of non-Buddhism (i.e., of Hinduism), the compilers and the proponents of the *Suv* became more able to lead their daily religious lives, including their practice of various rites and their attainment of various religious merits, in accordance with “the teaching of the *Suv*,” that is, “the teaching of [Mahāyāna] Buddhism.” We can therefore interpret the features appearing in the *Suv* not as a token of “the assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism” or “the depravity of Buddhism,” but as an attempt of Buddhists to survive in the Indian religious world by emphasizing the value, the usefulness, and the completeness of [Mahāyāna] Buddhism under the circumstances where Hinduism had become more and more dominant over Buddhism (during and after the Gupta period). Moreover, if one of the intentions of the compilers of the *Suv* lies in this attempt by collecting as many doctrines and rites as possible, however of mundane or supermundane levels, or of Buddhism or non-Buddhism they might be, from the stage of the formation of the *Suv*_{CI} to that of the *Suv*_{C3} consistently, we can suppose that the intention of the compilers has remained unchanged all through the stages of the formation of the *Suv*. Furthermore, it may turn out that the *Suv* is not “a mere miscellaneous med-

ley of doctrines and rites,” but a collection of them which is intrinsic to the value of the *Suv*.

This paper continues to verify this hypothesis by examining the characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses.”⁵⁾ Since the examination of four chapters among the five has been made in a series of previous studies (see Suzuki [2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007]), we will begin with a brief survey of the *Samjñāya-parivarta* (Chapter on the great Yakṣa general Samjñāya; Chapter 19⁶⁾ of the *Suv*), which is the fifth and final chapter in “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses.”

2. A Brief Survey of the *Samjñāya-parivarta* (Chapter on the great Yakṣa general Samjñāya; Chapter 19)

The *Samjñāya-parivarta* can be divided into three sections (from § 1 to § 3) as follows:

§ 1: The great general of the Yakṣas called Samjñāya (僧慎爾耶藥叉大將), together with the twenty-eight great Yakṣa generals, vows to the Lord Śākyamuni that he shall approach any place wherever the *Suv* goes forth, and with invisible body give protection, help, peace, and welfare to the clergyperson who preaches the *Suv*. He shall also give protection, help, peace and welfare to all those laypersons whoever should hear even one four-verse stanza or even one verse from the *Suv*, should hear even the name of the *Suv* and accept it. Their dwelling places shall be also given protection, help, peace and welfare by him.

Next, the great Yakṣa general Samjñāya gives the following explanation of why he has been named Samjñāya.

By him, all things are fully known, fully examined, fully comprehended, fully surveyed, and fully perceived. All things are apparent to him. The splendor, the extent, the quantity, and the sphere of his knowledge are inconceivable. For this reason, he has been given the name Samjñāya. (Summarized; *Suv*_s 129.13-130.8. See Emmerick [1996: 58-59].)

Then the great Yakṣa general Samjñāya makes a vow in the presence of the Lord Śākyamuni to offer both mundane and supermundane merits to those who preach or hear the *Suv*, a few examples of which are to have happy senses, to be full of joy, or to experience inconceivable divine and human pleasures (mundane merits), and to awaken to supreme and perfect enlightenment in future time (supermundane merit). The preachers of the *Suv* shall be granted eloquence, great energy, strength, prowess, and the inconceivable splendor of knowledge.

With the end of his vow, the first Chinese version *Suv*_{CI} rendered by Dharmakṣema (曇無讖) in the 5th century (412-421), the second Chinese version *Suv*_{C2} combined by Bǎo-guī

(68) The Characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (T. SUZUKI)

(寶貴) in 597, the Sanskrit text *Suv_S*, and the smaller Tibetan version *Suv_{T1}* conclude this Chapter 19.

§ 2: This § 2 and the next § 3 only exist in the larger Tibetan version *Suv_{T2}* and the third Chinese version *Suv_{C3}* rendered by Yì-jìng (義淨) in the year 703.

The great Yakṣa general Saṃjñāya states that he holds a spell (*gzugs śnags*, **dhāraṇī*; *śnags*, **mantra*; *rig śnags*, **vidyā*) which can bring about the welfare and blessing to all sentient beings, and he gives instructions how to employ it involving drawing the image (*gzugs*, **pratimā*) of Saṃjñāya, making an altar (*dkyil 'khor*, **maṇḍala*), and practicing burnt-offering (*sbyin sreg*, **homa*). The holders of this spell can be blessed with the supply of human blessing such as foods, cloths, flowers, fruits, fortunes, and jewels. According to their wishes, they are also granted sons, daughters, servants, gold, silver, and other ornaments. In the presence of those who have employed it one hundred and eight times, the great Yakṣa general Saṃjñāya shall make his appearance (i.e. become visible) and grant whatever wishes of them such as being replete with gold, silver, and acquiring six supernatural powers. Moreover all sentient beings shall be able to attain the deliverance (*rnam par grol ba*, **vimokṣa*, *vimukti*) from every affliction (*ñon moṅs pa thams cad*, **sarvakleśa*).

§ 3: The Lord offers congratulations to the great Yakṣa general Saṃjñāya who has instructed how to employ the spell in order to benefit all sentient beings and protect the *Suv*, and prophesies that he will obtain immeasurable merits.

The structure of Chapter 19 can be tabled as follows:

Table 1. The structure of the *Saṃjñāya-parivarta* (Chapter 19)

	<i>Suv_{C1}</i>	<i>Suv_S</i>	<i>Suv_{T1}</i>	<i>Suv_{C2}</i> (= <i>Suv_{C1}</i>)	<i>Suv_{T2}</i>	<i>Suv_{C3}</i>
§ 1	346b16-c18	128.4-131.8	100.1-102.21	389b22-c22	= <i>Suv_{T1}</i>	441a27-b29
§ 2	—	—	—	—	306.2-307.17	441c1-442a10
§ 3	—	—	—	—	307.18-24	442a11-13

We can see from Table 1 that the content of the *Saṃjñāya-parivarta* was enlarged through the two stages of formation.

Chapter 19: *Suv_{C1}* (= *Suv_{C2}*), *Suv_S*, *Suv_{T1}* (the first stage) → *Suv_{T2}*, *Suv_{C3}* (the second and last stage)

3. The Characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses”

What has to be noted first is that all the Gods and Goddesses in “the Five Chapters” have been beforehand listed twice in the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta* which is the first chapter of them all.

[Caturmahārājas said thus to the Lord:] “[By the hearing of the *Suv*] there will arise umbrellas of vines of various perfumes and fragrances, arriving at that instant, moment, second, in the sky above the several palaces, dear Lord, of Sarasvatī, the great goddess, of Dr̥dhā, the great goddess, of Śrī, the great goddess, of Saṃjñāya, the great general of the Yakṣas, and of the twenty-eight great generals of the Yakṣas, ...” (*Suv*_s 84.13-85.7. See Emmerick [1996: 34].)

[Caturmahārājas spoke thus to the Lord:] “Sarasvatī, the great goddess, Śrī, the great goddess, Dr̥dhā, the great goddess, Saṃjñāya, the great general of the Yakṣas, and the twenty-eight great generals of the Yakṣas, ..., with invisible bodies [will approach for the hearing of the *Suv*].” (*Suv*_s 91.15-92.4. See Emmerick [1996: 38].)

Having examined them, what is more, we find that “the Five Chapters” and the Gods and Goddesses appearing in them have the following seven remarkable characteristics (from [C-1] to [C-7]) in common:

- [C-1] All of the Gods and Goddesses in “the Five Chapters,” that is, Caturmahārājas, Sarasvatī, Śrī, the Earth-goddess, and Yakṣas, are very popular deities in Indian tradition.
- [C-2] When the *Suv* is expounded, these deities become powerful and vigorous enough to benefit and protect the sentient beings and their dwellings, villages, cities, forest-retreats, palaces, countries, and regions.⁷⁾ Therefore the necessity for honoring the *Suv* and its preachers is much emphasized.⁸⁾
- [C-3] The acts of benefit and protection by these deities are carried out with invisible bodies.⁹⁾
- [C-4] The merits granted by these deities are of both mundane and supermundane levels, that is, not only the ones peculiar to Buddhism but also those merits which are mundane and popular in India.
- [C-5] Different kinds of hearers or proponents are expected in every chapter:
 - Caturmahārāja-parivarta*: The kings or the rulers, the greater part of whom might have been non-Buddhists during and after the Gupta period. (See Sanderson [2004a, 2004b, and 2005] and Suzuki [2005: 20-23].)
 - Sarasvatī-parivarta*: Those who are concerned with the ability of speech, extensive knowledge of all the textbooks (e.g. Brahmins), and success in the performance of various arts, and those who exercise the act of ritual bathing, that is, the greatest part of Indian people.¹⁰⁾
 - Śrī-parivarta*: Those who are interested in increasing their fortune or wealth (e.g. householders or merchants. See Suzuki [2006: 43-45]).

(70) The Characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (T. SUZUKI)

Dr̥dhā-parivarta: Those who were engaged in agriculture, that is, the farmers in India, the greater part of whom might have not been Buddhists at that time. (See Suzuki [2007: 65-70].)

Samjñāya-parivarta: Those who have belief in Yakṣas which had been widely spread and accepted in Indian culture.¹¹⁾

[C-6] Rites for both mundane and supermundane merits, which involve employing magic spells (*mantra*, *dhāraṇī*, or *vidyā*), are taught in the developed stages of formation.¹²⁾

[C-7] The characteristics listed from [C-1] to [C-5] remain unchanged all through their variegated process of compilation. (See Suzuki [2005: 25-26].)

Taking these two factors (having the names of the deities listed in advance and sharing the seven characteristics among the chapters) into consideration, we can say in the first place that “the Five Chapters” have been compiled under a unified editorial policy.

Secondly, [C-5] indicates that the expected hearers or proponents of “the Five Chapters” can include people of the various classes in Indian society. Moreover the exercise of ritual bathing and the belief in Yakṣas had widely spread beyond the classes or their religions in a narrow sense, and it may not be too much to say that having interest in the acquisition of and the increase in wealth is more or less one of the intrinsic tendencies of the ordinary people. Therefore it seems reasonable to suppose that the compilers of the *Suv*, in preparing “the Five Chapters,” might have intended to attract various kinds of people whether they were Buddhists or not.

Thirdly, the account that draws our attention most is that all those deities who accomplish with invisible bodies the act of benefit and protection to the people ([C-3]) have been encouraged by the nectar juice of the *Suv*, or to put it more directly, by the “grace” of the Buddhist monks (or nuns) who preach the *Suv* ([C-2]). On this assumption, it necessarily follows that the peace and security of a region, the stable sovereignty, the proper movement of the heavenly bodies (in the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta*), the eloquence in speech, the skillfulness in arts, the merits attained by the act of ritual bathing (in the *Sarasvatī-parivarta*), the acquisition of and the increase in wealth (in the *Śrī-parivarta*), the increase in the moisture and the savor of the earth, the health and the longevity of the people who take the various tasty fruits and crops that have grown well in the strong earth (in the *Dr̥dhā-parivarta*), and that the much greater merits of both mundane and supermundane levels can be attained by the belief in Caturmahārājas, in Sarasvatī, in Śrī, in the Earth-goddess, and in Yakṣas than by the traditional belief before the *Suv* (all through “the Five Chapters”), all these “merits” have already been, whether people may recognize the “grounds” or not, brought about in

The Characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (T. SUZUKI)

(71)

secret by the invisible deities encouraged by the Buddhist monks who had been “well honored.” If any misfortune or inconvenience occurs, it is to be attributed for the same reason to the lack or the insufficiency of honoring the *Suv* and its preachers. Therefore those who wish themselves well and to avoid any misfortune or inconvenience (see n.8), must pay homage to and make offerings to the Buddhist monks who hold and preach the *Suv*.¹³⁾ All these factors considered, it is highly probable that the unified editorial policy under which “the Five Chapters” have been compiled should be associated with the intentions described in **〈the Hypothesis〉**.

Finally, we must discuss the reason why “the Five Chapters” conclude with the *Samjñāya-parivarta*. Let us remember here the description in the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta* cited in n.4. This description insists upon the superiority of Buddhism over Hinduism on the grounds of the usefulness and the completeness of the *Suv* which comprehends the various kinds of doctrines and rites of both mundane and supermundane levels, and of both Buddhism and non-Buddhism. In addition, the expected hearers of this chapter must be those who belong to royal families. Having associated with **〈the Hypothesis〉**, this *Caturmahārāja-parivarta* is supposed to be compiled to induce the people belonging to the class of kings to become the proponents of the *Suv* in order to obtain their aid for the sake of accomplishing the transmission of the Law and religious practice for the supreme enlightenment.

In the *Samjñāya-parivarta*, on the other hand, the main character is a Yakṣa general who has been given name Samjñāya. As illustrated in Chapter 2 of this paper, “by him, all things are fully known, fully examined, fully comprehended, fully surveyed, and fully perceived. All things are apparent to him.” He is also described as the head of the twenty-eight great Yakṣa generals (*Suv*_s 128.4-5, etc.). These twenty-eight great Yakṣa generals are furthermore explained in the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta* as the chief retinues of Caturmahārājas (*Suv*_s 66.1-2, etc.).

To take all these factors into account, it can be said that all things Samjñāya fully knows must include the various kinds of doctrines and rites of both mundane and supermundane levels, and of both Buddhism and non-Buddhism, and that the existence or the faculty of the Yakṣa general Samjñāya, who knows “all things,” must be one of the main grounds that enables Caturmahārājas to emphasize the completeness of the *Suv* to the members of royal families. Involving three intermediate chapters, that is, the *Sarasvatī-parivarta*, the *Śrī-*

(72)

The Characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (T. SUZUKI)

parivarta, and the *Dṛḍhā-parivarta*, by which the compilers of the *Suv* attempt to attract the various kinds of people who can be governed by the kings, “the Five Chapters” begin with the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta* and conclude with the *Samjñāya-parivarta*, the former of which has been compiled for converting royal families to Buddhism, and the latter of which can reinforce the discourse of the former.

From the examination of “the Five Chapters” we can recognize the deep consideration of the compilers of the *Suv* how to induce the kings to become their proponents. It would be untrue to presume the expressions of this consideration confined only within “the Five Chapters.” After “the Five Chapters,” in fact, follows directly the *Devendrasamaya-parivarta* (Chapter on Instruction Concerning Divine Kings; Chapter 20 of the *Suv*), which instructs what a king should be who has to rule various people and exercise his kingship in order to realize the welfare of the people.

Buddhism had once stood foremost in the religious world of India under the patronage of the great kings such as King Aśoka of the Maurya Empire or King Kaniška of the Kushan Empire. However during and after the Gupta period when the *Suv* was compiled, Buddhism has been already lost its dominant position to Hinduism. Under such circumstances the compilers of the *Suv*, by obtaining various kinds of aid of the kings as well as of their people, must have attempted to survive in the religious world for the sake of accomplishing the duties of the Buddhist clergy.

4. Conclusion

We can say, from what has been discussed above, that the validity of 〈the Hypothesis〉 has been even more strengthened. “The Five Chapters” begin with the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta* which emphasizes the superiority of Buddhism over Hinduism and attempts to convert the people of the class of kings to Buddhism. After the successive attempts in the following three chapters to attract the people of the various classes who are ruled by the kings, “the Five Chapters” conclude with the *Samjñāya-parivarta* in which a Yakṣa general who is the head of the chief retinues of Caturmahārājas and knows all things whether of mundane or supermundane levels, and whether of Buddhism or non-Buddhism, plays an important role to reinforce the discourse of the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta*.

From the examination of “the Five Chapters” we can recognize the deep consideration of the compilers of the *Suv* toward the members of royal families. From this consideration

The Characteristics of “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (T. SUZUKI)

(73)

they have successively compiled the *Devendrasamaya-parivarta* which follows directly after “the Five Chapters.”

- 1) Suzuki, T. [1996] The *Mahāmeghasūtra* as an Origin of an Interpolated Part of the Present *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 89 (45-1), Tokyo, pp. 28-30; Suzuki, T. [2003] *Stūpa* Worship and *Dharma* Evaluation in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 102 (51-2), Tokyo, pp. 32-36; Suzuki, T. [2004] Rites and Buddhism: A Perspective from the *Sarasvatī-parivarta* in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 104 (52-2), Tokyo, pp. 12-17; Suzuki, T. [2005] The Unchanged Intention of the Compilers of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*: An Examination through the Verification of the Hypothesis on “the Independence of [Mahāyāna] Buddhism,” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 106 (53-2), Tokyo, pp. 20-26; Suzuki, T. [2006] The Primary Introduction of the Rites for Good Fortune into the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* Described in the *Śrī-parivarta*, *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 109 (54-3), Tokyo, 2006, pp. 42-50; Suzuki, T. [2007] An Intention of the Compilers of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* Expressed and Intimated in the *Dr̥dhā-parivarta*, *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 112 (55-3), pp. 64-72; and Suzuki [1998a, 1998c, 1999, 2005a and 2005b] in Japanese.

2) 〈Texts and Abbreviations〉

Suv *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* or *Suvarṇa[-pra-]bhāsottamasūtrendrarāja*.

Suv_{C1} 『金光明經』四卷，曇無讖譯。T. No. 663.

Suv_S *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, ed. J. Nobel, Leipzig, 1937.

Suv_{T1} 'phags pa gSer 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbaṅ po'i rgyal po 'zes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, *ārya-Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtrendrarāja-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*, tr. unknown, P No. 176.

Suv_{C2} 『合部金光明經』八卷，寶貴合糅。T. No. 664.

Suv_{T2} 'phags pa gSer 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbaṅ po'i rgyal po 'zes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, *ārya-Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtrendrarāja-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*, tr. Jinamitra, Śīlendrabodhi and Ye šes sde. P No. 175.

Suv_{C3} 『金光明最勝王經』十卷，義淨譯。T. No. 665.

Suv_T *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*, ed. J. Nobel, Leiden, 1944.

(T. Taisho Tripiṭaka; P Peking Kanjur)

The other notes had to be omitted for lack of space.

(This research was partly supported by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), 19520053, 2007.)

〈Key words〉 金光明最勝王經僧慎爾耶藥叉大將品，金光明經散脂鬼神品，
金光明經の編纂意図，〔大乘〕仏教の生き残り策としての金光明經，
インド〔大乘〕仏教の実像理解。

(Professor, Yamaguchi Prefectural University, D.Litt.)