On *manojalpa* in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*

MOTOMURA Taiki

1. Introduction

The Yogācāra School is well known for its idealism. They assert that objects in the outer world arise from *ālayavijñāna* or the mind and do not exist as real objects. Nevertheless, that does not mean that they are nihilists. In the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, it is said that objects in the outer world do not exist, but the mind that creates these objects exists as real. However, the earliest work of this school, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, asserts the real existence of the outer world, that is, *vastu* (true existence) or *tathatā* (true reality). The “Tattvārtha” chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* emphasizes that when *vastu* is the locus of *prajñapti* (designation), the world appears as various things. However, when *vastu* is not the locus of *prajñapti*, the world appears as inexpressive. In other words, *vastu* has two aspects: one is the base of verbal designation, and the other is real existence as an inexpressive essence. In terms of what exists as real, this thought of the early Yogācāra School is completely different from the theory of *ālayavijñāna*, which appears in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. It seems that the Yogācāra School changed its thought from the theory of *vastu*, that is, the theory of object in the outer world, to the theory of *ālayavijñāna*, that is, the theory of mind as our inner world. Although this fact is already well known, it has not been clarified how the Yogācāra School transformed its thought. The concept of *manojalpa* is key to finding an answer to this. In the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, *manojalpa* is stated in the context of spiritual practice, such as the cause of the manifestation of images during meditation. And in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, *manojalpa* is mentioned as an important concept to connect spiritual practice and philosophical theory.¹⁾ The present paper, therefore, aims at clarifying how the Yogācāra School transformed its thought through the investigation of *manojalpa* in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*.

2. *Vastu* (true existence) and *prajñapti* (designation) in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*

In the “Tattvārtha,” chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the real existence of *vastu* or *tathatā* is presented as an inexpressive essence. In the first part of this chapter, *tattva* (truth) is categorized by two and four ways. In one of these categories, it is stated that *bodhisattvas* and the *Buddha-Bhagavans* recognize that all *dharma*s have the inexpressive essential nature (*nirabhilāpyasvabhāvatā*).

What is [the truth, that is, the domain of knowledge completely purified of obscurations to the object (*jñeyāvaranaviśuddhijñānatattva*)] ? This domain (*gocara-viśaya*), for *bodhisattvas* and the *Buddha-Bhagavans*, is to enter into the selflessness of *dharma* (*dharmanairātmya*). This is achieved through knowledge after having gained [enlightenment] and being purified. It begins with obtaining the inexpressive essential nature (*nirabhilāpyasvabhāvatā*) of all *dharma*s and the knowledge corresponding to the perception of the object without any verbal designation (*prajñaptivādasvabhāva*). This is true reality, there being nothing higher, the extreme limit of knowables, [and] from which correct analyses of all *dharma*s are accomplished and are not necessary to surpass.²⁾

After this statement, *tathatā* is regarded as *vastu*, and the relationship between *vastu* and *prajñaptivāda* is described as follows:

The one who denies (*apavadamāna*) *vastu* that is *nimitta* as the foundation for verbal designation destructs [everything, saying] that nothing does exist in all respects. The *vastu* is *nimitta*, the basis for verbal designation, and exists as an absolute reality (*paramārthasadbhūta*) of its inexpressible nature (*nirabhilāpyātmaka*).³⁾

From this statement, it can be understood that *vastu* is the locus of *prajñaptivāda* and *prajñaptivāda* itself exists on *vastu*; furthermore, *vastu* exists as an absolute reality.

3. *Manojalpa* (mental verbalization) in the context of *yoga*

In the “Dharmaparyeṣṭi,” the eleventh chapter of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, *manojalpa* is mentioned in the context of *yoga*, i.e., spiritual practice.

Through the error of perceiving the [image of] skeleton in mind, duality is mentioned. As such, despite the fact that there is no duality, duality is perceived [as perceiving the image of skeleton in mind]. (MSA XI.26)⁴⁾

Through the *yoga* stabilizing in their own realm (*svadhātu*), [conceptualizations (*vikalpāḥ*)] attain the special object (*ālambanaviśeṣa*). They (conceptualizations) do appear as non-duality. It is like

skin (*carma*) and bone (*kāṇḍa*). (MSA XI.33)⁵⁾

In this verse, it is stated that conceptualizations attain the special object (*ālambanaviśeṣa*). Vasubandhu comments that the special object refers to an object as *dharma* (*dharmāmbana*). The meaning of *dharmāmbana* is explained in verse 5.

Dharma is regarded as object: the internal, the external, and the both. Further, duality is obtained as non-duality⁶⁾ because duality is not apprehended. (MSA XI.5)⁷⁾

According to the comment of Vasubandhu,⁸⁾ “the internal” means subject (*grāhaka*), “the external” means object (*grāhya*), and “the both” refers to true reality (*tathatā*) as the internal and the external get together (*samasta*). Therefore, “the special object” refers to these three: the internal, the external, and the both. These are perceived as *dharma* in the meditation of *yoga*. Further, in verses 6 and 7, *manojalpa* is mentioned:

Object as *dharma* is perceived by the three wisdoms [arising from] hearing (*śruta*) [reflection (*cintā*), practice (*bhāvanā*)], [that is to say,] by keeping clarity of the stated object (*yathoktārthaprasanna*) [in mind] using mental verbalizations (*manojalpa*), by verbalization (*jalpa*) of objective appearance, and by fixing the mind upon the name (*nāman*). And perception of threefold object which is previously mentioned is based upon it (*dharma* which is perceived by the three wisdoms). (MSA XI.6-7)⁹⁾

Vasubandhu comments on this verse as follows:

Moreover, *dharma* is perceived by the three wisdoms arising from hearing (*śruta*) reflection (*cintā*), practice (*bhāvanā*). In these, it (object as *dharma*) is perceived by the wisdom arising from hearing, when one keeps clarity of stated object [in his mind] using mental verbalizations. “Using mental verbalizations” means “using correct conceptualizations (*saṃkalpa*).” “Clarity” (*prasanna*) means “convinced” (*adhimukta*) or “determined” (*niścita*). “Keep” (*pradhāraṇa*) means “investigation” (*pravīcayā*).

It (object as *dharma*) is perceived by the wisdom stemming from reflection, when one keeps the appearance of the object [which appears] from verbalization. When one considers that the object appears solely from mental verbalization, one realizes that there is nothing other than mental verbalization in the cognition of the two stated objects.

It should be understood that it (object as *dharma*) is perceived by the wisdom arising from practice, when one fixes his mind upon the name (*nāman*), since there is no perception of duality in the cognition of two stated objects. Therefore, three objects which have been already explained are based upon the perceiving object as *dharma*.¹⁰⁾

According to Vasubandhu’s comments, especially those that were underlined, the one who practices meditation maintains clarity on the stated object in mind. It is also explained

that “clarity” (*prasanna*) means “convinced” (*adhimukta*) or “determined” (*niścita*). In other words, the *Yogin* keeps the convinced or determined object in his mind.

To understand the meaning of “convinced or determined object,” the passage found in the “Tattvārtha” chapter contains some useful information.

In these [four truths, the first is as follows]; every people shares identical opinion through the knowledge which is laid (in mind) by following acquaintance with [linguistic] signs (*saṃketa*) and conventions (*saṃvṛti*)¹¹⁾ with respect to *vastu*. For example, with respect to earth (*prthivī*), “Earth is just earth, and not fire” In short, “This is this, and not that” or “This is such, and not any other.” *Vastu* is domain (*gocara*) of determined confidence (*niścītādhimuktigocara*), and is accomplished by self-conceptualization (*svavikalpaprasiddha*) through the name (*saṃjñā*) which is inherited by the people, without having been pondered, without having been weighed, and without having been investigated. This is the truth which is accomplished by the people.¹²⁾

This phrase states that a linguistic sign (*saṃketa*) as worldly consent is given on *vastu*, and people get linguistic consensus through it, such as “this is a book, not a pen.” This “linguistic consensus” implies “determined confidence” (*niścītādhimukti*).¹³⁾ It seems that determined confidence or linguistic consensus appears from a linguistic sign (*saṃketa*) on *vastu*. Considering this statement in “Tattvārtha” chapter, the meaning of the statement found in Vasubandhu’s comments on verses 6 and 7, especially those that were underlined, can be made clear as follows; One takes outer-object in the mind converting it to a name or word in the stage of hearing (*śruta*). This name or word in mind is called mental verbalization (*manojalpa*). In the next stage, reflection (*cintā*), the *Yogin* manifests the image from this mental verbalization and he considers that that object appears solely from mental verbalization, and realizes that there is nothing other than mental verbalization. After going through these stages, in the stage of practice (*bhāvanā*), the *Yogin* fixes his mind upon the name, that is, mental verbalization, and perceives true reality (*tathatā*) extinguishing the duality of object. As such, we can say that *manojalpa* is an important concept in the context of *yoga*: it (i.e., *manojalpa*) is the outer-object itself converted to a name or word in the mind and is the cause of the manifestation of images during meditation.

4. *Jalpamātra* (verbalization itself) and *cittamātra* (mind itself)

When he (*bodhisattva*) recognizes objects as verbalizations and dwells in the mind itself which resembles them (objects), [he] reaches direct perception of the ultimate realm (*dharmadhātu*), free from the characteristics of duality. (MSA (L) VI.7)¹⁴⁾

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Reaching the supreme realization that there is nothing apart from the mind, he comes to understand that the mind has no existence. Reaching [the supreme realization that] duality has no existence, genius dwells in the ultimate realm which has no circumstance [of cycle of reincarnation]. (MSA (L) VI.8)¹⁵⁾

These verses remind us of the theories of *abhūtaparikalpa* and *ālayavijñāna*. It should be noted that, in these verses, objects themselves are verbalizations. Considering this statement, it is likely that the theories of *abhūtaparikalpa* and *ālayavijñāna* were originally used in a linguistic context. As we have already seen, the *Yogin* manifests the images from *manojalpa* during meditation: the image, originally, is a name used as a linguistic sign of the outer-object. In other words, the *Yogin* first takes the outer-object converting it to a name in his mind. After that, the *Yogin* manifests the image from the name in his mind, that is, *manojalpa*. Hence, we can say that this theory of *manojalpa* in the context of *yoga* developed into the theories of *abhūtaparikalpa* and *ālayavijñāna*.

5. Conclusion

From the above investigation, we can arrive at the following conclusions: in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, it is stated that the existence of *vastu* is an inexpressive essence in the outer world. When *vastu* is the locus of designation, that is, *prajñapti*, the world appears as various things. However, when *vastu* is not the locus of designation, the world appears as inexpressive. The former is what we call mundane, and the latter is what we call supra-mundane. An investigation on the concept of *manojalpa* in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* reveals that *manojalpa* is outer-object which is converted to the name or word in mind. In other words, it is a designation on *vastu*, which is stated in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. First, the *Yogin* takes the designation (i.e., *prajñapti*) on outer-object (i.e., *vastu*) into his mind; after that, he manifests the images from *manojalpa* during meditation. It seems that this theory of the manifestation from *manojalpa* developed into the theories of *abhūtaparikalpa* and *ālayavijñāna*. And the same time, *manojalpa* itself becomes an important concept to connect spiritual practice and philosophical theory in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*.

Notes:

- 1) About the concept of *manojalpa* in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, see Watanabe [2000].
- 2) BBh 2.2.4.2: *tat punaḥ katamat/ bodhisattvānām buddhānām ca bhagavatām dharmanairāt-myapraveśāya praviṣṭena suviśuddhena ca sarvadharmānām nirabhilāpyasvabhāvatām ārabhya*

- prajñaptivādasvabhāvanirvikalpasamena jñānena yo gocaraviṣayaḥ/ sāsau paramā tathatā niruttarā jñeyaparyantagatā yasyāḥ samyaksarvadharmapravicayā nivartante nātivartante//*
- 3) BBh 5.3.1: *yaś cāpi prajñaptivādanimitādhiṣṭhānaṃ prajñaptivādanimittasamniśrayaṃ nirabhilāpyātmakatayā paramārthasadbhūtaṃ vastv apavadan nāśayati sarveṇa sarvaṃ nāstīti//*
- 4) *bimbasamkalikāgrāhabhrānter dvayam udāhṛtaṃ/ dvayaṃ tatra yathā nāsti dvayaṃ caivopalabhyate//* (MSA XI.26)
- 5) *ālambanaviśeṣāptiḥ svadhātusthānayogataḥ/ ta eva hy advayābhāsā vartante carmakāṇḍavat//* (MSA XI.33)
- 6) MSA reads “*labho dvayor dvayārthena.*” I read “*labho dvayādvayārthena.*” See MSA (A) 50b6, (B) 53a8.
- 7) *ālambanaṃ mato dharmah adhyātmam bāhyakaṃ dvayaṃ/ lābho dvayādvayārthena* dvayoś cānupalambhataḥ//* (MSA XI.5)
- 8) MSABh on MSA XI.5: *dharmālambanaṃ yo deśitaḥ kāyādikam cādhyātmikam bāhyam ādhyātmikabāhyaṃ ca/ tatra grāhakabhūtaṃ kāyādikam ādhyātmikam grāhyabhūtaṃ bāhyam tayor* eva tathatādvayaṃ/ tatra dvayor ādhyātmikabāhyayor ālambanayor dvayārthena lābho yathākramaṃ/ yadi grāhyārthād grāhakārtham abhinnaṃ paśyati grāhakārthāc ca grāhyārtham dvayasya punaḥ samastasyādhyātmikabāhyālambanasya tathatāyā lābhas tayor eva dvayor anupalambhād veditavyaḥ/*
(*I corrected by MSA (L), p. 55. 15)
- 9) *manojalpair yathoktārthaprasannasya pradhāraṇāt/ arthakhyānasya jalpāc ca nāmni sthānāc ca cetasaḥ// dharmālambanalābhaḥ syāt tribhir jñānaiḥ śrūtādibhiḥ/ trividhālambanalābhaś ca pūrvoktas tatsamāśritaḥ//* (MSA XI.6–7)
- 10) MSABh on MSA XI.6–7: *dharmālambanalābhaḥ punar tribhir jñānair bhavati śrutacintābhāvanāmayaḥ/ tatra samāhitena cetasā manojalpair yathoktārthaprasannasya tatpradhāraṇāt śrutamayena jñānena tallābhaḥ/ manojalpair iti samkalpaiḥ/ prasannasyety adhimuktasya niścitasya/ pradhāraṇād iti pravicaṇyāt/ jalpād arthakhyānasya pradhāraṇāc cintāmayena tallābhaḥ/ yadi manojalpād evāyam arthaḥ khyātīti paśyati nānyan manojalpād yathoktaṃ dvayālambanalābhe/ cittasya nāmni sthānāt bhāvanāmayaṇa jñānena tallābho veditavyo dvayānupalambhād yatokutaṃ dvayālambanalābhe/ ata eva ca sa pūrvoktas trividhālambanalābho dharmālambanalābhasamniśrito veditavyaḥ/*
- 11) About the understanding of this compound “*saṃketasamvṛtisaṃstava*” and the meaning of “*saṃstava*,” see Takahashi [2005: 151–152, n.3].
- 12) BBh 2.2.1: *tatra laukikānāṃ sarveṣāṃ yasmim vastuni saṃketasamvṛtisaṃstavānugamapraviṣṭayā buddhyā darśanatulyatā bhavati/ tad yathā pṛthivyāṃ pṛthivy eveyaṃ nāgnir iti// ... samāsata idam idam nedam evam idam nānyateti niścītādhimuktigocarō yad vastu sarveṣāṃ eva laukikānāṃ paramparāgatayā samjñayā svavikalpaprasiddhaṃ na cintayitvā tulayitvopaparīkṣyodgrhītaṃ idam ucyate lokaprasiddhaṃ tattvaṃ//*
- 13) About the meaning of “*adhimukti*,” see Takahashi [2005: 152, n.4].

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- 14) *arthān sa vijñāya ca jalpamātrān saṃtiṣṭhate tannibhacittamātre/
pratyakṣatām eti ca dharmadhātus tasmād viyukto dvayalakṣaṇena//* (MSA (L) VI.7)
- 15) *nāstīti cittāt parametya buddhyā cittasya nāstitvam upaiti tasmāt/
dvayasya nāstitvam upetya dhīmān saṃtiṣṭhate 'tadgatidharmadhātau//* (MSA (L) VI.8)

Abbreviations and Bibliography:

BBh: *Bodhisattvabhūmi*: Takahashi [2005: 83–117].

MSA: *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (-*kārikā*): See MSABh.

MSA (A), (B): See Takeuchi etc.

MSABh: *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (-*bhāṣya*): See Funahashi [2000: 35–69].

MSA (L): *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (-*kārikā*): Lévi [1983].

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〈Key words〉 *manojalpa*, *vastu*, *prajñapti*, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, *Bodhisattvabhūmi*

(Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Nagoya University, Ph.D.)