The Story of Upagupta's Victory over Māra in the  
Aśokāvadānamālā  

YAMASAKI Kazuho  

1. Introduction  

The Aśokāvadānamālā (AAv-m) is a collection of Buddhist narrative stories, belonging to the category of Avadānamālās.¹ The work is thought to have been composed after the late eleventh century. The first six chapters of the AAv-m narrate the legend of king Aśoka and three of them (1–3) are devoted to narrating the stories of the elder Upagupta.² The story of Upagupta's victory over Māra, composed of 244 verses, is found in the second chapter, parallel to those in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Divyāvadāna (Divy)³ and the seventy-second chapter of Kṣemendra's Avadānakalpalatā (Av-klp).⁴ OKANO [2005: 371] has shown that twenty-seven verses to tell the story in question in the AAv-m are borrowed from the Av-klp.⁵ In this paper I shall show that there are also verses borrowed from the Divy and consider the style in which the story is written, language used there, and the contents of the story. This consideration has not so far been made. Since the work is unpublished, my discussion will be based on manuscripts, in particular, two manuscripts of the AAv-m (N₁ = NGMPP #B94/7; T₁ = MatsuNAMI Cat New #37).  

2. Extracts  

Below is the table to show folio numbers, the number of verses (in parentheses), and parallels.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N₁, folio range</th>
<th>T₁, folio range</th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Parallel(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13b1–14b2; 23b8–25b6 (56)</td>
<td>No parallel</td>
<td>N₁,14b2–4; T₂,25b6–10 (4)</td>
<td>Av-klp vv. 42–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14b4–13; 25b10–26a11 (16)</td>
<td>No parallel</td>
<td>N₁,14b13–14; T₂,26a11–26b1 (2)</td>
<td>Av-klp vv. 47–48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14b14–15; 26b1–3 (2)</td>
<td>No parallel</td>
<td>N₁,14b15–15a2; T₂,26b3–5 (2)</td>
<td>Divy 358.3–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a2–3; 26b5–6 (2)</td>
<td>No parallel</td>
<td>N₁,15a3; T₂,26b6–7 (1)</td>
<td>Divy 358.9–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a3–4; 26b7–8 (1)</td>
<td>No parallel</td>
<td>N₁,15a4–5; T₂,26b8–9 (1)</td>
<td>Divy 358.12–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a5; 26b9–10 (1/2)</td>
<td>No parallel</td>
<td>N₁,15a5; T₂,26b9–10 (1/2)</td>
<td>Av-klp v. 49cd, N₁,15a5–7; T₂,26b10–12 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a7–8; 27a1–2 (2)</td>
<td>Divy 358.17–20</td>
<td>N₁,15a8–11; T₂,27a2–6 (5)</td>
<td>No parallel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(79)


Forty-seven verses are extracted from the Divy and twenty-seven verses from the Av-klp.

One hundred out of the remaining one hundred seventy verses are metrical paraphrases of the prose part of the Divy.

3. Language

The AA-v-m is composed in a particular variety of Sanskrit, Newari Buddhist Sanskrit. Tatelman [1999] and Straube [2007] have shown that the Bhadrakalpavādāna, which was composed by anonymous Newar author(s) in medieval Nepal, has departures from classical Sanskrit. The former points out twenty-three kinds of departures and the latter adds nine kinds of departures to them. In the text of the story of Upagupta’s victory over Māra in the AA-v-m are found seven kinds of departures pointed out by them in their stud-
ies of the *Bhadra kalpa vadāna* and the kind of departure which has not been pointed out by them.

(1) Second and third syllables of ślokapāda both short: *iti vilokamaṇaḥ sa* (N,14b11; T,26a9).

(2) Substitution of one long syllable for two short syllables: *kimartham mayālokya saddharmavighnakārakaḥ* (N,14b9; T,26a6).

(3) Double samādi: *krodhārunekṣaṇeva ca krodhārunekṣaṇa iva ca* (N,15b3; T,27b4).

(4) Stem-form of noun, usually metri causa: śrutvā sa mara nirmadāḥ < śrutvā sa māraḥ nirmadāḥ (N,15b4; T,27b7); viniya saugatādharmah < viniya saugatādharmah (N,18a5; T,32a11).

(5) Causative used in the sense of the simple verb: *bandhitam upaguptena kuruṇā varjiitena ca baddham upaguptena karuṇāvarjiitena ca* (N,15b2; T,27b4).

(6) Past passive participle of a transitive root used in the sense of the active verb: *pratyuvācesvaro māraḥ dhig dhig tvām iti ninditaḥ < pratyuvācesvaro māraḥ dhig dhig tvām iti ninditavān* (N,15b3; T,27b4–5).

(7) Amphimacer in the first 2–4 syllables of even ślokapādas: *dṛṣṭādbhäta prabhāvakaḥ* (N,15a15; T,27a12); *bhavanti bodhicārināḥ* (N,18a6; T,32b1–2); śṛṇvanta dharmam ādarāt (N,18a6; T,32b2).

(8) Perfect suffixes added to present stems: *samīchire < samaicchanta* (N,14a12; T,25a11); *icchire < aicchanta* (N,18a7; T,32b3).

It is to be noted, in passing, that TATELMAN [1999] places the approximate date of the *Bhadra kalpa vadāna* at about the sixteenth or early seventeenth century.

4. Style

The verses which are composed by the authors AAav-m to narrate the story of Upagupta’s victory over Māra have a fairly consistent metrical pattern. All but one of the verses are in śloka; one verse in sārdūlavirkṛḍita (N,15b3–4; T,27b5–7). In addition the author(s) does/do not employ no flowery rhetoric; on the contrary, rhetorical defects, from the point of view of Indian poetics, may be detected. See the following verse (N,14b8–9; T,26a3–5):

```text
  tad ślokyopagupto sa samādheḥ sahasrotthitaḥ |
  kena me mastake mālā pratibaddhety apasyata ||
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tathā so rhan samālokyā māreṇa pratibadhyaite |
iti sattvam samādhāya dhyātvā caivam vyacintayat ||

“Upagupta, perceiving (ālokya) that (a garland had been tied around his head), was instantly awaken from his profound meditation. He considered who had tied (pratibaddhā) the garland around his head. Thus the arhat, seeing (samālokya) that it had been tied by Māra, concentrating his mind (sattvam samādhāya), and contemplating (dhyātvā), thought that . . . .”

In this pair of verses, the verbs lok ‘see, perceive’ and bandh ‘tie’ are repeatedly used (sabdapunarukti ‘repetition of the same word’); and, the phrase sattvam samādāya and the absolutive dhyātvā are used to express the same meaning ‘after contemplating’ (arthapunarukti ‘the same statement in other words’). These rhetorical defects are rarely found in works such as Kṣemendra’s Av-kūpa which is typical of the Buddhist kāvya. The authors of the AA-v-m could have composed the verses without due consideration for the Sanskrit poetic tradition. It is likely that the story of Upagupta’s victory over Māra in the AA-v-m was written in a popular style with a view to edifying its uneducated hearers.

5. Superiority over Hinduism

In the Divy version of the story of Upagupta’s victory over Māra, Māra, to whose body are attached the corpses of a dog, a snake, and a man, seeks help from seven gods beginning with Brahman (358,1–28). In the AA-v-m version, besides these gods, Māra asks two Hindu gods, namely, Śiva and Viśṇu for help (N,15a12–15b4; T,27a9–27b7) but both of them, saying the following, decline the request (N,15b1, 3–4; T,27b1–2, 5–7):

nāsya tejobalāṁ hartum śakyaṁ na hi kadācana ||
khadyotakaprabhāsena *paurṇacandraprabhām6) iva ||

[1 = Viṣṇu] cannot take his dignity or his power away from him, just as sunshine cannot take light away from a full moon.”

*kṛtām tvayā munigurau śrisṛighane *bhikṣuke8) pāpiṣṭhena aho ‘pakāram aniṣṭam durmedhasā vandya ||

naitan me pratimocane balavato ’yā śakya evāsti hi
	
tasmāt tvam śaṇaṁ vrajyasva *karunākārasya9) tasyaiva tu ||

“Ah! You were so wicked and stupid that you incessantly committed a wrong, from impulse, against the venerable monk, the auspicious Śrīghana, the lord of saints. Although I am mighty, I indeed never can exercise the power to detach (the corpses from your body) on this occasion. Thus you should seek refuge with him because he feels compassion (for you).”

In the Divy, Chinese, and Pāli versions Viṣṇu and Śiva are not mentioned as the gods from whom Māra seeks help. 10) In the Av-kūpa version (72.49), on the other hand, Viṣṇu is men-
tioned as such a god but not depicted as answering a word. The way of depicting Viṣṇu and Śīva in the AAv-m version shows that in this version Upagupta takes rank of Viṣṇu and Śīva. This may account for the fact that the author(s) of the AAv-m, who was/were conscious of the increased prevalence of Hinduism in Nepal, intended to claim the superiority of Buddhism over Hinduism.

6. Pure Land Buddhism

It has been pointed out that elements of Mahayana Buddhism are recognized in the chapters 14–21 of the AAv-m. In the AAv-m version of the story of Upagupta’s victory over Māra also they are found. Upagupta, having a victory over Māra, preaches the law to the eighteen thousand inhabitants of Mathurā. They attain arhatship and throw their sticks in a cave in the Uruñûnda mountain. Then Upagupta tells them the following (N,18a6–7; T,32b2–3):

\[
ye tasya bhajanam kr̥tvā śr̥vanti dharmam ādarā ||
\]

\[
satkr̥tya śraddhayā nityam te vrajantī sukhāvatim |
\]

"Those who, worshipping it (i.e., the law), continuously listen to the law, with eagerness and zeal, on their beliefs, betake themselves to the Amitābha’s world."

This verse expounds the doctrine that those who worship the law of the Buddha betake themselves to the Amitābha’s world. This doctrine, adopted by Pure Land Buddhism, is preached in Mahayana Buddhist sutras such as the Samādhirājasūtra.

7. Conclusion

Concerning the AAv-m version of the story of Upagupta’s victory over Māra, the following points have been made clear:

(1) Verses composed to narrate the story are divided into four groups: (A) verses extracted from the Divy (47); (B) from the Av-klp (27); (C) metrical paraphrases of the prose part of the Divy (100); (D) composed by the author(s) of the AAv-m (70).

(2) Departures from classical Sanskrit are found in verses.

(3) There are verses in which rhetorical defects can be pointed out.

(4) There are verses to express the superiority of Upagupta over Śīva and Viṣṇu.

(5) There is a verse to indicate that the author(s) of the AAv-m is/are acquainted with the doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism.
It is important to note that verses referred to in (2), in (3), in (4) belong to group (D).

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**Notes**

1) The scholar who introduced the AAy-m to us is Mitra [1882]. He [1882: 6–17] provided a summary of the twenty-six chapters of the AAy-m, Feer [1891: xviii–xix] showed that in the chapters 14–21 of the AAy-m are given metrical paraphrases of the first tale of each of the sections (except for the fourth) of the Avadānāsataka.

2) Iwamoto [1967: 179–188] has suggested to divide twenty-seven chapters of the AAy-m into the following six sections:

   (1) Legend of king Aśoka: Chaps. 1–6
   (2) Admiration for the performance of religious observance (vātā): Chaps. 7–10
   (3) Collection of miscellaneous stories: Chaps. 11–13
   (4) Metrical paraphrases of the tales of the Avadānāsataka: Chaps. 14–21
   (5) Collection of miscellaneous stories: Chaps. 22–26
   (6) Tantric work: Chap. 27

Hahn [1990, 1992] attributes the stories of group (3) to Gopadatta.


4) Ed, Sarat Candra Das and Vidyabhūsana (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1918), 564–583.

5) On the extraction from the Av-klp into the AAy-m, see Zinkgraf [1940: 87–117]; Bongard-Levin and Volkova [1963: 120].

6) *paurṇacandra-prabhāṃ* ] Ex conj.; paurṇaś candraprabhāṃ N,Ti.

7) *nirjavaṇema (?) ] Ex conj.; nirjalene N,Ti.

8) *bhikṣuka* ] Ex conj.; bhikṣuka N,Ti.

9) *karaṃkāraṣya* ] Ex conj.; karunākāra N,Ti.


12) Samādhinirājasūtra 18.52.

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(Assistant Professor [Special Appointment], Hiroshima University, Ph.D.)