The Compilers of the *Bhaiṣajyārājaṇapūrvavoyoga-parivarta* Who Did Not Know the Rigid Distinction between *Stūpa* and *Caitya* in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*

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1. The Aim of This Paper

It is widely known that the *Bhaiṣajyārājaṇapūrvavoyoga-parivarta* (Chapter on the Former Life of the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyāraja; *SP* 22) in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (*Lotus Sūtra, SP*) has accounts praising the worship of both the Buddha and the *SP* through burning one’s own body. Previous studies on this subject have seemed satisfied with presenting the idea that such praise in the *SP* 22 is not to encourage Buddhists to engage in self-immolation but is a metaphor to emphasize the value of the *SP*. 3)

But there has arisen an inevitable question on that interpretation. Let us look at the following quotation from the *SP* 22 which expresses that the Buddhas in the various worlds praise the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana. He is the former life of the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyāraja, and burnt his own body in order to worship both the Buddha named Candrasūryavimalaprabhāśāri and the *SP*: 4)

Well done, well done, son of good family, that [self-sacrifice by burning your own body] is the real practice which bodhisattvas should develop; that is the real worship of both the Buddha and the *SP*. No worshipping with flowers, incense, fragrant wreaths, ointment, powder, cloth, umbrellas, flags, banners; no worshipping with material gifts or with uragasāra sandalwood equals to it. Son of good family, this is the most sublime gift, higher than the abandoning of royalty, the abandoning of beloved children and wife. Son of good family, sacrificing one’s own body is the most distinguished, the chief, the very best, the most sublime worship of the *SP*. 5)

Here it is clearly declared that self-sacrifice by burning one’s own body is the real practice of bodhisattvas and the real worship of both the Buddha and the *SP*. Therefore self-immolation seems not peculiar to the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana only, but an essential practice of all Buddhists who want to worship both the Buddha and the *SP*. Does the *SP* really encourage the Buddhists to burn their own bodies? In examining this question, on the other hand, another question has arisen as to the process of the formation of the
The aim of this paper is to make the following two reconsiderrations:

1) Reconsidering the meaning of self-sacrifice by burning one’s own body in the SP.

2) Reconsidering the process of the formation of the SP.

2. The Construction of the SP 22

The construction of the SP 22 is as follows:

SP 22.1: A Question to the Lord by the Bodhisattva Nakṣatrarājasanaṃkṣumitaḥbhiṣṇu about the Bodhisattva Bhaisajyajñā (SP 404.2–8, SP 170b3–8, SP 53a5–10)

SP 22.2: A Story on the Former Life of the Bodhisattva Bhaisajyajñā (SP 404.9–414.4, SP 170b8–176a1, SP 53a10–54a9)

SP 22.2.1: Description of the Land (SP 404.9–405.12, SP 170b8–171b4, SP 53a10–23)

SP 22.2.2: The Practice and the Worship Performed by the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana under the Instruction of the Buddha Candrasūryavimalaprabhāsaśri (SP 405.12–408.9, SP 171b4–173a3, SP 53a23–b18)

SP 22.2.2.1: The Attainment of the Samādhi Called Sarvarūpasamādārśana by the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana (SP 405.12–406.6, SP 171b4–172a2, SP 53a23–29)

SP 22.2.2.2: The Worship through the Samādhi Sarvarūpasamādārśana (SP 406.6–10, SP 172a2–4, SP 53a29–b3)

SP 22.2.2.3: The Worship through Self-Immolation by the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana (SP 406.11–408.9, SP 172a4–173a3, SP 53b4–18)

SP 22.2.3: The Reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana and the Buddha Candrasūryavimalaprabhāsaśri’s Entering into His Perfect Peacefulness (SP 408.9–411.5, SP 173a3–174b3, SP 53b18–c17)

SP 22.2.4: Erecting Tathāgata-relic-shrines (stūpas) and Self-Immolation by the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana after the Buddha Candrasūryavimalaprabhāsaśri Had Entered into His Perfect Peacefulness (SP 411.6–414.4, SP 174b3–176a1, SP 53c17–54a9)

SP 22.3: Connecting the Former Life with the Present Life (SP 414.4–10, SP 176a1–5, SP 54a9–12)

SP 22.4: The Best Practice of Bodhisattvas after the Buddha’s Entry into His Perfect Peacefulness

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Peacefulness (SPs 414.10–415.9, SPf 176a5–b6, SCP 54a12–19)  
SP 22.4.1: The Best Worship of the Tathāgata-shrines through Self-Immolation (SPs 414.10–415.2, SPf 176a5–b1, SCP 54a12–16)  
SP 22.4.2: The Best Offering through Keeping the SP in One’s Mind (SPs 415.2–9, SPf 176b1–6, SCP 54a16–19)  
SP 22.5: Nine Similes Showing the SP Is the Best (SPs 415.10–417.7, SPf 176b6–178a2, SCP 54a19–b11)  
SP 22.5.1: A Simile of the Great Ocean (SPs 415.10–416.1, SPf 176b6–8, SCP 54a19–21)  
SP 22.5.2: A Simile of the Mount Sumeru (SPs 416.1–4, SPf 176b8–177a2, SCP 54a21–24)  
SP 22.5.3: A Simile of the Moon (SPs 416.4–7, SPf 177a2–5, SCP 54a24–26)  
SP 22.5.4: A Simile of the Son (SPs 416.7–9, SPf 177a5–6, SCP 54a26–28)  
SP 22.5.5: A Simile of Śakra (SPs 416.9–11, SPf 177a6–8, SCP 54a29–b2)  
SP 22.5.6: A Simile of Brahmā (SPs 416.11–14, SPf 177a8–b2, SCP 54b2–4)  
SP 22.5.7: A Simile of the Four Kinds of Saints and Pratyekabuddha (SPs 416.14–417.2, SPf 177b2–6, SCP 54b4–8)  
SP 22.5.8: A Simile of Bodhisattva (SPs 417.2–4, SPf 177b6–7, SCP 54b8–10)  
SP 22.5.9: A Simile of Tathāgata (SPs 417.4–7, SPf 177b8–178a2, SCP 54b10–11)  
SP 22.6: The Merits of the SP (SPs 417.4–418.6, SPf 178a2–b4, SCP 54b11–26)  
SP 22.6.1: The Effects of the SP (SPs 417.7–13, SPf 178a2–7, SCP 54b11–19)  
SP 22.6.2: The Merits Obtained through the Hearing and the Copying of the SP (SPs 417.13–418.1, SPf 178a7– (indistinct), SCP 54b19–21)  
SP 22.6.3: The Merits Obtained through the Worship of the SP (SPs 418.1–6, SPf 178b4 (indistinct), SCP 54b21–26)  
SP 22.7: The Merits of the SP 22 (SPs 418.7–421.11, SPf 178b4–180a6, SCP 54b26–55a3)  
SP 22.7.1: The Merits Obtained by a Son or a Daughter of Good Family Who Keeps, Hears, and Copies the SP 22 (SPs 418.7–9, SPf 178b4–5, SCP 54b26–27)  
SP 22.7.2: The Merits Obtained by a Lady Who Hears and Keeps the SP 22 (SPs 418.9–420.8, SPf 178b6–179b3, SCP 54b27–c17)  
SP 22.7.3: The Merits Obtained through the Hearing and the Praising of the SP 22 (SPs — 1187 —
420.9–12, \(SP_T\) 179b3–5, \(SP_{C2}\) 54c17–20)

**SP 22.7.4:** Entrusting the Bodhisattva Nakṣatrarājaśavakusumitābhijña with the **SP 22**
(\(SP_S\) 420.12–421.2, \(SP_T\) 179b5–7, \(SP_{C2}\) 54c20–23)

**SP 22.7.5:** The **SP 22** as a Medicine (\(SP_S\) 421.2–4, \(SP_T\) 179b7–180a1, \(SP_{C2}\) 54c23–26)

**SP 22.7.6:** The Merits Obtained through the Honoring of a Monk Who Keeps the **SP 22**
(\(SP_S\) 421.4–11, \(SP_T\) 180a1–6, \(SP_{C2}\) 54c26–55a3)

**SP 22.8:** Obtaining Dhāraṇī by the Bodhisattvas and the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna’s Admiration (\(SP_S\) 421.12–26, \(SP_T\) 180a6–8, \(SP_{C2}\) 55a3–8)

**SP 22. Colophon** (\(SP_S\) 422.1–2, \(SP_T\) 180a8–b1)

The accounts on burning one’s body appear in the **SP 22.2.2.3**, the **SP 22.2.4**, and the **SP 22.4.1**.

### 3. A Clue: Whether the Buddha is Still in This World or Not

In the **SP 22.2.2.3**, the Bodhisattva Sarvalokapriyadarśana burnt his own body because that was the best worship of both the Buddha Candrasūryavimalaprabhāsaśrī who was still in this world and the **SP**. Therefore while the Buddha is still in this world self-immolation becomes the best form of worship of both the Buddha and the **SP**. On the other hand, self-immolation in the **SP 22.2.4** is performed after the Buddha had entered into his perfect peacefulness (parinirvāṇa) and left this world. This burning of one’s own body in the **SP 22.2.4** is only the best form of worship of the Buddha’s relic-shrine (śūpā), that is, a material body (rūpakāya) of the Buddha, and not the worship of the **SP**. Moreover the **SP 22.4** whose stage is also after the Buddha had entered into his perfect peacefulness says that, based on the **SP 22.2.4**, burning of one’s own body is the best form of worship of the Buddha’s shrine (śūpā) and that keeping the **SP** in one’s mind is the best offering (**SP 22.4**). Thus the best worship of the Buddha’s material body is burning one’s own body whether the Buddha is still in this world or not, But after the Buddha has entered into his perfect peacefulness keeping the **SP** becomes the best offering and worship.

Needless to say, all the Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures including the **SP** were compiled after the Buddha Śākyamuni had entered into his perfect peacefulness. Among those scriptures the **SP** is particularly conscious that “now is the time when the Buddha Śākyamuni had already entered into his perfect peacefulness.” Besides the early Mahāyāna Buddhist
scriptures represented by the \(SP\) have the strong intention to shift the central object of Buddhist worship from stūpa (the Buddha's relic-shrine) to dharma (the Law)\(^8\).

Taking these into consideration, we can say that the \(SP\) 22 declares as follows:

While the Buddha is in this world, it is true that burning one's own body is the best worship of both the Buddha and the \(SP\). But the Buddha already left this world, Oh? Do you really want to worship the Buddha's relic-shrine? If so, you must burn your body because self-immolation is the best worship of the Buddha's relic-shrine. But are you serious? You must be hurt or even die. Ha-ha, Don't worry. If you keep the \(SP\), you don't have to burn your body. Because keeping the \(SP\) is the best offering and worship.

This assertion completely corresponds to the results of previous studies that the compilers of the \(SP\) attempted to shift the central value of Buddhist from the worship of stūpa to the practice according to the teaching of the \(SP\). This study would have finished with presenting this conclusion, But one great problem has been discovered:

4. A Problem: Stūpa or Caitya?

The following is a quotation from the \(SP\) 22.4.1:

Now, the Bodhisattva Naksatrarājasanikumāthā, a son or a daughter of good family striving in the Bodhisattva vehicle for attaining supreme enlightenment, who at the Tathāgata-shrines (ta-thāgata-caitya) shall burn a big toe, a finger, a toe, or a whole limb, such a son or a daughter of good family, I assure you, shall produce far more pious merit, far more than results from giving up kingship, sons, daughters, and wives, the whole triple thousand worlds with their woods, oceans, mountains, springs, streams, tanks, wells, and gardens.\(^9\)

In this quotation, the original word for the Tathāgata-shrine is tathāgata-caitya, not ta-thāgata-stūpa.\(^10\) Now we are going to see why this is a great problem.

As has been shown in the previous studies,\(^11\) the \(SP\) draws rigid distinction between stūpa and caitya. Stūpa in the \(SP\) is the shrine in which the Buddha's relics (dhātu) or the Buddha's entire body (ātmabhāvavigrha) is deposited, whereas caitya is the shrine without the Buddha's relics or body. In this distinction there is no exception in the \(SP\). And stūpa in the \(SP\), in accordance with a traditional understanding, is nothing other than the Buddha himself who has a material body.

Next we will examine caitya in the \(SP\).

(1) Chapter 21 (Tathāgatadhyabhīsānāsaka-parivarto nāma viṁśatitaman) instructs that a caitya must be erected where the \(SP\) is practiced,\(^12\)

(2) Chapter 10 (Dharmabhāṇaka-parivarto nāma daśamah) instructs, “You must erect
a *caitya* where the *SP* is practiced. But you do not have to deposit the Buddha's relics in it. Even if there are no relics of the Buddha in it, the *caitya* becomes the real *stūpa* because by practicing the *SP* the Buddha's entire reality will enter into it. You must worship it not as a *caitya* but as a *stūpa.*"‌

(3) The instruction on *caitya* in Chapter 16 (*Punyaparyāya-parivarto nāma ṣodāṣamaḥ*) is almost the same as in Chapter 10.

**5. Relationship between the Erection of *Caitya* and the Realization of the Eternal Buddha Śākyamuni in the *SP***

It has been traditionally and academically admitted that one of the main themes of the *SP* is the idea of the eternal Buddha Śākyamuni. This idea is shown in Chapter 15 (*Tathāgatāyuspramāṇa-parivarto nāma pañcadasaṃah*), but Chapter 15 itself does not concretely mention how Buddhists can realize the eternal Buddha Śākyamuni.

The present author has made an examination of this subject previously (in Japanese), so let us take a look at it in English.

The *SP* makes a rigid distinction between *stūpa* and *caitya*, and teaches repeatedly to erect not *stūpa* but *caitya* where the *SP* is practiced. The *SP* asserts that the erection of *stūpa* is unnecessary because through both practicing the *SP* and erecting *caitya* the Buddha's entire reality is to be embodied there, and that just the *caitya* erected where the *SP* is practiced is the real *stūpa*. It is clearly shown here that the compilers of the *SP*, who followed the Buddhist tradition that *stūpa* is the Buddha himself, intended to shift the central value of Buddhism from the *stūpa* worship to the *dharma* evaluation. Therefore we can confirm here the idea of the Buddha in the *SP* that the practice of the *SP* along with erecting *caitya* becomes the construction of the real *stūpa* and the realization of the Buddha. What draws our attention more is that in Chapter 16 the realized Buddha is described as "I," that is, the Buddha Śākyamuni, whereas in Chapter 10 the realized Buddha is described only from a viewpoint of the third party.

While Chapter 15, which advocates the idea of the eternal Buddha Śākyamuni, does not provide a way how Buddhists can realize the eternal Buddha Śākyamuni, Chapter 16, which follows directly after Chapter 15, continues the idea of the eternal Buddha Śākyamuni of Chapter 15, and shows that through both practicing the *SP* and erecting *caitya* the Buddha, none other than the Buddha Śākyamuni himself, becomes manifested.

Taking all these into consideration, it is concluded that the eternal existence of the Buddha Śākyamuni can be realized through both practicing the *SP* and erecting *caitya*. In the *SP* practicing the *SP* and erecting *caitya* are inseparably united and are the indispensable ways to manifest the eternal existence of the Buddha Śākyamuni.
Since the shift from stūpa to dharma and the idea of the eternal Buddha Śākyamuni are the main themes of the SP, the original word for "shrine" in the SP 22.4.1 must be stūpa, not caitya. Therefore we must say that the account of the SP 22.4.1 which uses the word caitya deviates from the chief context of the SP. It turns out here that the compilers of the SP 22 did not know the difference or the rigid distinction between stūpa and caitya in the SP.

6. Conclusion

The SP 22 does not follow the main idea of the SP. The compilers of the SP 22 were neither the same as those of the chief context of the SP nor did they follow the main idea of the SP. It becomes almost impossible to assume that all of the chapters of the SP except the latter half of Chapter 11 were compiled nearly at the same time and that the compilers of the SP had shared a common view of the SP among themselves before they actually started compiling it.\(^{15}\)

Furthermore another fact has been revealed. Now that the compilers of the SP 22 are shown to be different from those of the main text of the SP, it is clear that the compilers of main text of the SP had already existed before the compilers of the SP 22 started compiling the SP 22. If the compilers of main text of the SP practiced in accordance with the teaching of the SP, they must have erected caityas because erecting caitya was the essential way to realize the eternal Buddha Śākyamuni, and the compilers of the SP 22 had every chance to see them. If they had seen the caityas, there would have been no possibility to use the word caitya instead of stūpa in the SP 22.4.1.

No caitya has ever been discovered in India that was erected in accordance with the teaching of the SP. It might be possible to suppose that there once existed such caityas in India but they have not remained until the present time. But it seems more natural to say that no caityas were erected in India in accordance with the teaching of the SP since even the compilers of the SP 22, who were at the compiling site of the SP, did not see them.

The word caitya in the SP 22.4.1 not only gives us a key as to the process of the formation of the SP but also shows that practically the only practice in accordance with the teaching of the SP in India was to copy the SP and the SP existed as a mere text.\(^{16}\)
Notes:
1) \( SP_5 \) 404.2–422.2, \( SP_T \) 170b3–180b1, \( SP_{C2} \) 53a4–55a8.
2) (Texts and Abbreviations)

- \( SP \) Saddharmapuṇḍarīka.
- \( SP_T \) Tibetan version of the \( SP \), P No. 781. "Dam pa'i chos pad ma dkar po"
- \( SP_{C2} \) Second Chinese version of the \( SP \), T. No. 262 (Miaofa lianhua jing 妙法蓮華經), trans. Kumārajīva.

(T. Taisho Tripiṭaka; P Peking Kanjur)

3) Mochizuki [2009] is one of the typical examples of previous studies, Mochizuki Kaie 望月海慧 [2009], “Shōshin kuyō wa tadashii Bukkyō-teki kōi nanoka” 煻身供養は正しい仏教の行為なのか, Nichiren Bukkyō kenkyū 日蓮仏教研究 3.

4) Translations from the \( SP_5 \) (either full or summarized) are mainly based on H. Kern [1884], The Saddharma-pundarika; or, the Lotus of the True Law (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

5) \( SP_5 \) 407.11–408.5; \( SP_T \) 172b5–173a1; \( SP_{C2} \) 53b12–16. See Kern [1884: 379–380].


7) See Kariya Sadahiko 菱谷定彦 [2009], Hokeyō “Butsumetsugo” no shisō 法華経〈仏滅後〉の思想 (Osaka: Tōhō Shuppan).


9) \( SP_5 \) 414.10–415.2, \( SP_T \) 176a5–b1, \( SP_{C2} \) 54a12–16. See Kern [1884: 385–386].

10) This has attested from the \( SP_{MS} \).

11) Tsukamoto Keishō 塩本啓祥 [1986], Hokeyō no seiritsu to haikei: Indo bunka to Daijō Bukkyō 法華経の成立と背景: インド文化と大乗仏教 (Tokyo: Kōsei Shuppansha), and so on.

12) \( SP_5 \) 391.6–13, \( SP_T \) 166b3–7, \( SP_{C2} \) 52a21–27. The representative practices in the \( SP \) are to keep, to read, to recite, to make known, and to copy the \( SP \).

13) \( SP_5 \) 231.7–232.5, \( SP_T \) 99b8–100a6, \( SP_{C2} \) 31b26–c3.


16) Shimoda Masahiro [2011], “Kyōten o sōshutsu suru: Daijō sekai no shutsugen” 経典を創出する:
The Compilers of the Bhaisajyagarbhasāṃgīyavarga-Parivarta Who Did Not Know the Rigid Distinction between Stūpa and Cātya in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (T. Suzuki) (129)

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(Key words) Miaofa lianhua jing, 妙法蓮華經, Fahua jing, 法華經, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, 薬王菩薩本事品, Bhaisajyagarbhasāṃgīyavarga-parivarta, stūpa and cātya, the process of the formation of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka

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