Tales of Householder Ghosita, a Man Who Was a Dog Once Before: The *Udenavatthu* and Parallel Stories in Northern Buddhism

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1. The Aim of This Paper and the Relevant Texts

The *Udenavatthu* (hereinafter, UVt) is contained in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* (a commentary on the *Dhammapada*), and is an omnibus-style story of King Udena—a contemporary of the Buddha—the ruler of Vaṃsa,¹⁾ and his attendants. It comprises six short stories arranged as follows:²⁾ (1) Udenassa Uppati, (2) Ghosakaseṭṭhino Uppati, (3) Sāmāvatīyā Vatthu, (4) Vāsuladattāya Vatthu, (5) Māgandiyā-Vatthu, and (6) Sāmāvatīyā Māgandiyāya ca Maraṇaparidīpaka-Udenavatthu.

The second story speaks of a householder named Ghosita,³⁾ a very wealthy man in the city of Kosambī and the father-in-law of King Udena.⁴⁾ The first half of this story mentions Ghosita's three previous incarnations, in which he was first a man named Kotūhalaka, then born as a dog, and then reborn as an inhabitant of the heavenly world. In this paper, I will address the story of his second incarnation, namely, the story about the time when he was born a dog.

An outline of the story is like so: there was a herdsman who worshipped a paccekabuddha (one enlightened by himself) and offered meals to the holy one every day. He had a dog, the previous being of Ghosita. The dog sometimes helped its owner in making the offerings and was very attached to the holy one.

In Northern Buddhism, there are some stories that tell us that Ghosita was a dog in his previous incarnation. They go like this: there was a wealthy householder named Saṃdhāna in the city of Bārāṇasī. For twelve years, during which the city was suffering from famine, he was able to support a number of paccekabuddhas with meals. He had some helpful employees, such as a warehouseman, as well as an usher who called on the holy ones with his dog whenever the meals were ready. That dog is thought to be the previous incarnation of Ghosita.

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When comparing the stories in UVt and Northern Buddhism, one notices that there are some differences. Here, I examine the two most convincing examples of the distinct differences between these texts: the characters in the stories and the themes of the stories. I will focus on these points and show the sentences in each text.

Here are the texts to be compared and their abbreviation marks. Except for UVt, all belong to Northern Buddhism.

Udenavatthu (UVt)

Mūlasarvāstivādinaya (MSV):

1. Classical Chinese version ⁵⁾ (MSV-C)
2. Classical Tibetan version ⁶⁾ (MSV-T)
3. Classical Mongolian version ⁷⁾ (MSV-M)

Xianyujiing 賢愚經 (XJ): ⁸⁾

1. Classical Chinese version ⁹⁾ (XJ-C)
2. Classical Tibetan version ¹⁰⁾ (XJ-T)
3. Classical Mongolian version ¹¹⁾ (XJ-M)

Üliger-ün dalai ¹²⁾ (ÜD):

1. A wood block print at the Osaka University Library ¹³⁾ 〈ÜD (A)〉
2. A hand written copy at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Library ¹⁴⁾ 〈ÜD (B)〉
3. A wood block print at the Osaka University Library ¹⁵⁾ 〈ÜD (C)〉

2. Comparison of the Topics in Each Text

UVt tells us that the almsgiver was a herdsman, who had a dog, and that the receiver of these alms was a paccekabuddha. There are no other characters in this story.

gopālako pi nibaddhaṃ dve vāre paccekabuddhassa upaṭṭhānaṃ yāti, . . . sunako pi tena saddhiṃ gacchati. [171.18–23]

The dog was very attached to the holy one. One day, it was shocked by its parting from the holy one and barked until its heart broke, and it died. After that, the dog was reborn into a heavenly world (Tāvatiṃsa), and then was reborn again as a boy in Kosambī city—this is the birth of Ghosita.

sunakhassa taṃ ākāseṇa gacchantam disvā huṅkaritvā . . . kālaṃ katvā tāvatiṃsa-bhavane

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nibbatto accharāsahassa-parivuto mahāsampattiṃ anubhoti. [172.22–173.8]

The texts of MSV tell of a householder, named Saṃdhāna, who offered meals to a thousand paccekabuddhas, and tell us that he had good employees. One of them was the dog's owner, an usher, who called the holy ones whenever the meals were ready. (I will show only the sentences in MSV-C, for want of space. The sentences in MSV-T and MSV-M would be shown if they had any variation.)

有一長者。名曰善合 (Saṃdhāna). ¹⁶⁾ 處分一人為掌庫者常出賜物。於日日中以上妙飲食供養一千獨覺聖者其當食人每旦恒將一狗往白時至…… [883c7–10]

Furthermore, these texts also mention the following incarnations of the characters in the story: Saṃdhāna became the Buddha, the warehouseman became householder Anāthapiṇḍada, the usher became King Udena, and the dog became householder Ghosita.

往時善合長者。即我身是。掌庫人者即給孤獨是。白時至者即烏陀演那王是。狗者即妙音是。 [883c15–17]

Concerning the characters and their following incarnations, the texts of XJ and ÜD tell almost the same story as the texts of MSV, except for the following two points. First, Saṃdhāna is said to have also employed five hundred cooks to prepare the meal for the holy ones. ¹⁷⁾ (Here I will also only show the sentences in XJ-C, for want of space. The sentences in XJ-T, XJ-M, and ÜD would be shown if they had any variation.)

於時長者。即便請之。差五百使人。供設飯食。 [386c23–24]

Second, the following incarnations of the five hundred cooks were also mentioned—they were the previous incarnations of five hundred arahants, who were the Buddha's disciples.

爾時五百作食之人。今此五百阿羅漢是也。 [387a21–22]

Furthermore, XJ-T, XJ-M, and the texts of ÜD do not correspond to XJ-C with regard to the previous incarnations of the warehouseman. XJ-T, XJ-M, and the text (B) of ÜD tell us that Prince Jeta was the warehouseman, while XJ-C tells us that Anāthapiṇḍada was the warehouseman.

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[XJ-T] bang mdzod srung ba'i [sic: ba]¹⁸⁾ de ni / rgyal bu rgyal byed yin no // [P 252b4]

[XJ-M] tere čay tere ulus [sic: učir]¹⁹⁾-taki sang qatayalayči tere kümün edüge či²⁰⁾ buyu. [355b22–23]

[ÜD (B)] tere učir-taki sang qatayalayči tere kümün edüge či buyu. [208a7–8]

On the other hand, texts (A) and (C) of ÜD say that Udena was the warehouseman.

[ÜD (A), (C)] tere čay tere učir-taki sang qatayalayči tere kümün edüge udiyan-a či buyu. [(A) 162a20–21, (C) 190a8–10]

It has already been pointed out that XJ-T—namely, the extant Tibetan version of XJ—was translated from the old Chinese text, which must be some text other than the extant old Chinese version, XJ-C.²¹⁾ The facts shown above support such an opinion. Furthermore, I found that XJ-M is probably based on XJ-T and that ÜD (B) is very similar to XJ-M, while ÜD (A) and (C) are not.

3. Conclusion

The characters in each text and their previous and following incarnations are summarized in the following table. The mark “-” means that there is no corresponding description. The words in the brackets “[]” are those in text (B) of ÜD.

	UVt	MSV (MSV-C, MSV-T, MSV-M)	XJ (XJ-C)	XJ (XJ-T, XJ-M)	ÜD
Almsgiver (Saṃdhāna)	- ²²⁾	Buddha	Buddha	Buddha	Buddha
Warehouseman	-	Anāthapiṇḍada	Anāthapiṇḍada	Jeta	Udena [Jeta]
Usher	-	Udena	Udena	Udena	Jeta [Udena]
Dog	Ghosita	Ghosita	Ghosita	Ghosita	Ghosita
500 cooks	-	-	500 arahants	500 arahants	500 arahants

Through the comparison of these texts, we can conclude the following. The stories of Ghosita's previous being in UVt and the Northern Buddhist texts have two common points: (1) Ghosita was a dog in his previous existence, and (2) its owner offered meals a holy one or holy people. However, the characters in these stories and the themes of these stories are completely different. UVt tells the story of a herdsman who had a dog and offered meals to the paccekabuddha. With regard to a previous incarnation, it only

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mentions that of Ghosita. On the other hand, in the Northern Buddhist texts, there are many more characters: a householder, named Saṃdhāna and his employees, such as a warehouseman and an usher with his dog.

Furthermore, they not only mention the previous incarnation of Ghosita, but also those of the Buddha, King Udena, Prince Jeta, and so forth. We can therefore regard these stories as the *Jātaka*.

As seen above, the stories in UVt and in the Northern Buddhist texts might share a common source because they have several points of similarity. However, it cannot be argued that they have had a direct influence on each other. The texts of Northern Buddhism do, though, show interesting similarities and variations—they might be related to each other to some degree. Furthermore, the texts of ÜD seem to have been the product of some confusion during the making of the text.

For future research, I propose the following points: (1) comparing other stories in UVt with their parallel texts from Northern Buddhist texts to make clear the transition of the tales, and (2) a comparison and analysis of the stories among the texts of XJ, including the texts of ÜD.

Notes

1) It was one of the Soḷasamahājanapada (the Sixteen Great Kingdoms) and was between Kosala and Magadha. It is called Vatsa in Sanskrit. The capital city was Kosambī. See *Sattaka-nipāta*, *Aṭṭhaka-nipāta*, and *Navaka-nipāta*, ed. E. Hardy, *The Aṅguttara Nikāya*, pt. 4 (London: Pali Text Society, 1958), 252. See also Law 1932, 3.

2) This list follows *The Commentary on the Dhammapada*, ed. H. C. Norman, vol. 1, pt. 2 (London: published for the Pali Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1909).

3) He was called “Ghosaka” until he took over the position of householder from his foster father. After becoming the householder, he called “Ghosita” in UVt, although the title of the chapter says us “Ghosaka-setthi.” I will mention him “Ghosita” in this paper.

4) Ghosita as well as his daughter, Sāmāvatī, were earnest followers of the Buddha and made donations of ārāma.

5) *Genbenshuoyiqieyoubupinaiye* 根本説一切有部毘奈耶, T no. 1442, vol. 23, 883c4–19.

6) *’Dul ba rnam par ’byed pa* (*Vinayavibhaṅga*), P no. 1032, vol. 43, Te 139a4–140a6, D no. 3, vol. 3, Nya 148a5–149a7. I will show the description of the Beijing edition in this paper.

7) *Nomuyadqaui teyin böged ilayayči* (*Vinayavibhaṅga*), MKn, no. 1134 CI Ta 202a29–204b25.

8) It has been pointed out that some stories in XJ have some relationship with those in MSV. See Hiraoka 2005.

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- 9) *Xianyujing* 賢愚經, T no. 202, vol. 4, 386a5–387a26, 30 Santanning pin di ershijiu 散檀寧品第二十九.
- 10) *mDzangs blun zhes bya ba'i mdo*, P no. 1008, vol. 40, Hu 250b2–252b6, D no. 341, vol. 27, A 246a4–248b2, Khyim bdag sdumgs byed kyi le'u ste sum bcu bzhi pa'o (the 34th story). Another critical edition is also available: Takahashi 1970, 416–423. However, I will mainly show the Beijing edition in this paper.
- 11) *Šiluyun onul-tu kemegdekü sudur*, MKn, no. 1103, Hi 352b11–356a7, Indügči ejen-ü yučin tabdayar [sic] jüil (the 35th story).
- 12) This text was translated from Tibetan version of XJ into Mongolian to be a separate text from the Mongolian Kanjur by Širege-tü Gü'üši, who was a high priest of the dGe lugs pa sect and flourished as a famous translator in 16th and 17th centuries. See Cao Dou 1996.
- 13) No. 1 (The call number is temporary because the bibliographical data has not been ready to open), 159a20–162b6, Indügči ger-ün ejen-ü döčin doluduyar [sic] jüil (although, literally, it is said the 47th story should be the 35th one), August, 1714 (Kangxi 53). Approximate size: 21.0 cm × 57.5 cm. I will mainly show the description of this text in this paper.
- 14) G14/180/578091. 203b25–208a27, Indügči ger-ün ejen-ü yučin tabuduyar jüil (the 35th story). Dateless. Approximate size: 11.5 cm × 47.0 cm.
- 15) No. 18 (the call number is temporary because the bibliographical data has not been ready to open), 186b15–190a25, Indügči ger-ün ejen-ü döčin doluduyar [sic] jüil (this also should be the 35th story), April, 1728 (Yongzheng 6). Approximate size: 20.0 cm × 54.0 cm.
- 16) His name is also translated as Shanxu 善續 in the Old Chinese version of MSV [T no. 1442, vol. 23, 892c27]. Cf. Cowell and Neil 1970, 540; Nishimoto 1933, 295, note 14.
- 17) XJ-C tells that there were totally 2000 paccekabuddhas who accepted the foods (長者即請千辟支仏。飯食供養。彼殘千人。復詣其家。亦求供養。 [386c19–20]). Incidentally, the 2000 holy men are mentioned as “drang srong” in XJ-T (P 251b8–252a2) and “arsi” in XJ-M (354b9–26). Both words mean “ascetic,” not paccekabuddha.
- 18) bang mdzad srung ba de ni rgyal bu rgyal byed yin no // [D 248a7]
- 19) Cf. tere čay tere učir-taki indügči bayan gerün ejen kekembesü edüge bi buyu. [355b20–22]
- 20) čī literally means “you.” Here, it refers to Prince Jeta, who was listening to the Buddha's teaching.
- 21) See Ueyama 1967, 174; Mitani 1997.
- 22) In the UVt, the almsgiver is a herdsman, who is anonymous. There is no mention of his following incarnation.

Abbreviations

- D *Tibetan Buddhist Canon: The Nyingma Edition of the sDe-dge bKa'-'gyur and bsTan-'gyur*. 120 vols. Oakland, Calif.: Dharma Publishing, 1981.
- MKn *Mongolian Kanjur*. Ed. Lokesh Chandra. 108 vols. Śatapiṭaka Series: Indo-Asian Literatures, nos. 101–208. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1973–1979.

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Key words *Udenavatthu*, *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, *Genbenshuoyiqieyoubupinaiye*, 根本説一切有部毘奈耶, *Xianyujing*, 賢愚経

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