A Note of the Seventeen Distinctive Names of Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra

Yenshu Kurumiya

Seng hsiang 僧祥 wrote his work "Fa hua ch'uan chi" 『法華傳記』 (10 fascicles), in which he quotes a report of Chen ti 真諦 (Paramārtha). According to Chen ti¹), the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra was very popular in all India formerly and there many upadeśas of it were made—one of them was made by Lung shu 竜樹 (Nāgārjuna) and a commentary was written by Chien i 堅意 (Stiramati) ——, but none of them, excepting one that was made by P'o sou p'an tou 婆薮盤豆 (Vasbandu), introduced into China from India.

Vasbandu's upadeśa is entitled the "Miao fa lien hua ching yu p'o ti shê" 『妙法蓮華經優婆提舍』 in Chinese that maybe correspond with Saddharmapuṇḍarīkapadesa in Sanskrit. Of this upadeśa there are two Chinese recensions: one (1 fascicle) was translated by Lè na mo t'i 勒那摩提 (Ratnamati) and Seng lang 僧朗²), and another (2 fascicles) by P'u t'i liu chih 菩提流支 (Bodhiruci) and T'an lin 橿林³). The original Sanskrit text and any Tibetan versions⁴) are not provided at present time.

According to Enchin円珍⁵), the Upadeśa of Vasbandu is divided into five chapters:

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²) ibid., Vol. 26, pp. 10-20.
³) ibid., pp. 1-10.
⁴) According to Professor Z. Nakamura, only the Tibetan title "Padma dkar po'i 'grel dbyigs gê'en gyis mdas pa" can be found in the catalogue of Bu ston gsun rab rin po che. Z. Nakamura, Ḥphag-pa's Criticism on Tendai Buddhism', Y. Nomura ed., The Lotus Sutra and Religious Realities, Kyoto 1975, p. 200.
Vasbandu says that the first chapter among the discourses of Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra shows the seven sorts of the accomplishment of merits, i.e. Ch'i ch'èng chiu⁶):

A. Hsù fèn ch'èng chiu 序分成就
B. Chung ch'èng chiu 衆成就
C. Ju lai yù shuo fa shih chih ch'èng chiu 如來欲說法時至成就
D. I so shuo fa wei i sui shun chu ch'èng chiu 依所說法隨順成就
E. I chih shuo yin ch'èng chiu 依止說因成就
F. Ta chung hsien ch'ien yú wèn ch'èng chiu 大眾現前欲聞成就
G. Wèn shi shih li p'u sa ta ch'èng shiu 文殊師利菩薩答成就

Under C, Vasbandu gives the seventeen distinctive names of Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra⁷): “that a merit is accomplished when Tathāgatas desire to preach the teachings is because that they declare this Mahāyānasūtra to Bodhisattvas. There are seventeen distinctive names of this Mahāyānasūtra which show the great merits”, etc. Each of their names is as following,

1. Wu liang i ching 無量義經
2. Tsui shèng hsiu to lo 最勝修多羅
3. Ta fang kuang ching 大方広經
4. Chiao p'u sa fa 教菩薩法
5. Fu so hu chin 仏所護念
6. I ch'ieh chu fu pi mi fa 一切諸仏秘密法
7. I ch'ieh chu fu chih ts'ang 一切諸仏之藏
8. I ch'ieh chu fu pi mi ch'u 一切諸仏秘密処
9. Neng sheng i ch'ieh chu fu ching 能生一切諸仏經
10. I ch'ieh chu fu chia tao ch'ang 一切諸仏之道場

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⁷) ibid., p. 2c-3a.
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(11) I ch’ieh chu fu so chuan fa lun 一切諸仏所転法輪
(12) I ch’ieh chu fu chien ku shè li 一切諸仏堅固善利
(13) I ch’ieh chu fu ta ch’iao fang pien ching 一切諸仏大巧方便
(14) Shuo i ch’eng ching 說一乘經
(15) Ti i chu 第一義住
(16) Miaof a lien hua ching 妙法蓮華經
(17) Tsui shang fa mèn 最上法門

Each of these names, according to Professor G. Honda⁸), declaring the importance of the Saddharmapundarikasutra, is distinguished from the Sūtra. According to Professor Y. Sakamoto⁹), these names are those that are found in the Sūtra, or that describe the essence of the Sūtra.

When we carefully examine the post colophones recorded in the Sanskrit manuscripts of the Saddharmapundarikasutra, we can find a following passage:

samāptam saddharmapuṇḍarikāṃ dharmaparyayaṃ sūtrāntaṃ mahāvai-pulyaṃ bodhisattvāvavādaṃ sarvabuddhāparigrahaṃ sarvabuddharaḥasyaṃ sarvabuddhanīgūḍaṃ sarvabuddhajāti sarvabuddhaguhyaśānaṃ sarvabuddhābodhinīṃdaṃ sarvabuddhadharmacakrapravarttaṃ sarvabuddhaikagha-naśārīram sarvopayakauśalyam ekayānanīrdeśaṃ paramārthanirhāranīrdeśaṃ iti¹⁰).

Hereon we know that some of the seventeen names of Vasbandu can be identified with some of words mentioned in the post colophone; (2) Tsui shêng hsü to lo identifies with sūtrakta¹¹), (3) Ta fang kuang ching with mahāvai-pulya, (4) Chiao p’u sa fa with bodhisattvāvavāda, (5) Fu so hu chin with buddhāparigraha, (6) I ch’ieh chu fu pi mi fa with sarvabuddharaḥasya, (7) I ch’ieh chu fu chih ts’ang with sarvabuddhanīgūḍa, (8) I ch’ieh chu fu pi mi ch’u with sarvabuddhaguhyaśāna, (9) Nêng sheng I ch’ieh chu fu ching with sarvabuddhajāti, (10) I ch’ieh chu fu chih tao ch’ang with sarvabuddhabodhinīṃda, (11) I ch’ieh chu fu so chuan fa lun with sarvabuddhadharmacakrapravartta, (12) I

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Paramārthaṁnirbhāranirdeśa in the post colophon is rather difficult to understand. But it may mean “instruction providing the highest truth”. Vasbandu’s (1) Wu liang i ching and (15) Ti i i chu literally mean “exposition of infinity” and “standing at the highest truth” respectively. Mahānirdeśa or anantarirdeśa in the Sanskrit text is translated into ‘wu liang i’ in Chinese by Kumārajīva13). And it has been pointed by Honda that this term, mahānirdeśa or anantarirdeśa

11) According to Sir Monier Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford 1899, p. 1242a, sūtrānta is formed like vedānta, siddhānta, etc., and means “a Buddhist Sūtra or the doctrines contained in it.” F. Edgerton in his Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary: Vol. II Dictionary, New Haven 1953, p. 604b, describes sūtrānta as a buddhist sūtra (1) text, that is, discourse, as a type of Buddhist sacred text (pravacana), one of twelve. A Pāli word atta (Skt. anta) is represented as “at the end of a compound in some instances apparently pleonastic (padapūraṇa, Abh 791), but prob. giving a more concret sense including ‘completion, entirety, or system’ of something” in a Critical Pali Dictionary, Vol. I, pt. 6, Copenhagen 1934, p. 237b. These expanations are not very suitable for sūtrānta to be corresponded to ‘Tsui shōng hsiu to lò’, which literally means “the most excellent Sūtra”.


dharmaṁ ca so bhāṣati lokanātha anantarirdeśavaram ti sūtraṁ
nāmena vaipulyaṁ idaṁ pravucyati prakāśayī prāṇisahasrakoṭinām. (p. 23).
This verse can be corresponded to a prose,

sa bhagavān candraśūryadīpaṁ tathāgato rhan samyakṣmbuddho mahānirdeśaṁ
nāma dhammaparyāyaṁ sūtrāntaṁ mahāvaipulyaṁ bodhisattvāvavādaṁ sarvabuddharpigrahayam bhāṣītvā......(p. 19).

In this case, hereby, sūtrānta in the prose stands comparison with vara sūtra in the verse, so that sūtrānta may mean “the (most) excellent Sūtra”.


13) Taishō-shishū Daizōkyō, Vol. 9, pp. 4a and 4b.
rdeśa, corresponds to Vasbandu’s (1) Wu liang i ching\textsuperscript{14}). However, it is neither manānirdeśa nor anantanirdeśa but only nirdeśa that is preserved in the post colophon.

F. Edgerton says, under ‘nirhāra’ in his dictionary, “this entire group of words in Pali needs serious study”\textsuperscript{15}). If nirharati has a meaning of “erhalten” as said by Kern\textsuperscript{16}), paramārthanirhāra “causing to support the highest truth” may show the same sense of (15) Ti i i chu “standing on the highest truth”.

As mentioned above, it is not very easy to identify entirely all of the distinctive names of Vasbandu with the words in the post colophon. It needs more seriously to study whether, nevertheless such difficulties, some relation between the seventeen distinctive names and the passage of the post colophone can be expected or not.

\textsuperscript{14} G. Honda, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 88-90.


\textsuperscript{16} ibid., p. 305.