The Mahāmeghasūtra as an Origin of an Interpolated Part of the Present Suvarṇaprabhāsa

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There are several versions of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa (Suv). All of them except Suv_c1, the oldest version of this sūtra, share a later-attached part, which appears in Chapter II Tathāgatāyuhpramāṇanirdesaparivarta. As this part seems to be out of context, J. Nobel has suggested the possibility of its having been added by mistake from some other text.

Three main subjects of this interpolated part are “the eternity of tathāgatadharma-kāya”, “showing nirvāṇa as upāyakauśalya” and “relics (dhātu) of buddha”. It contains quotations from the Jātaka No. 425 (Jā 425). To explicate this part may therefore shed some light on both the thought and the process of formation of the entire sūtra. But no precise examination has been made of this part to date.

Almost parallel phrases corresponding to this interpolated part appear in the Mahāmeghasūtra (MMS). Considering that the translator of MMS_c, Tān-wū Chēn (彌護 385-433), also translated Suv_c1, there is every possibility that the phrases attached to Suv already existed in MMS when Tān-wū Chēn was translating Suv.

The main purpose of MMS is to teach the eternity of tathāgata, while that of Suv is to give instruction on the doctrine of confession (deśanā). “The eternity of tathāgatadharmanakāya”, “showing nirvāṇa as upāyakauśalya” and “relics (dhātu) of buddha” all play a more central roll in MMS than in Suv. Furthermore, the Litsavi youth named Sarvalokapriyadarśana, who appears in Suv only in the interpolated part and has no influence upon the other parts of Suv, is a main character in MMS. We can thus tentatively conclude that MMS is prior to, and indeed one of the origins of this interpolated part.
In this short paper, a comparison of these texts will provide evidence for this claim. Space allows for only two quotations, but a complete examination of the two texts is currently being prepared for publication.

Quot. 1.

Suv \( s \) : yadā srotesu gaṅgāyā roheyuḥ kumudāni ca/
    raktāḥ kākā bhaviṣyanti saṅkhavarṇās ca kokilāḥ//9
    jambus tālaphalam dadyāt kharjūraś cāmramaṇjarīrm/
    tadā sarṣapaphalamātro vyaktaṃ dhātur bhaviṣyati//10(15.1-4)

Suv \( T \) : nam ūg gaṅ gā'ī chu rgyun la// me tog rnam ni skye ba daṅ//
    bya rog dmar por 'gyur ba daṅ// khu byug duṅ mdog 'drar 'gyur daṅ//9
    'dzam bur ta la'i 'bru chags daṅ// 'bra gor a mra'i dog pa chags//
    de yi tshe na yuṅs 'bru tsam// riṅ bsrel du ni gsal bar 'gyur//10(14.4-11)

Both MMS and Ja425 consist of only one verse while Suv consists of two verses. MMST's reading also corresponds to that of Ja425. This we can safely say to be evidence showing MMS to be one of the origins of the interpolated part of Sum And we can restore the reading of the lost MMS's Sanskrit text (MMS') as follows:?

MMS' :  *gaṅgāyāṃ kumudāni syuḥ saṅkhavarrṇaś ca kokilāḥ/
    jambus tālaphalam dadyāt tadā dhātur bhaviṣyati//8*

Quot. 2.

Suv \( s \) : acintyo bhagavān buddho nityakayas tathāgataḥ/
    desati vividhān vyūhān sattvānāṃ hitakāraṇāt//31(19.3-4)

Suv \( T \) : sans rgyas bcom ldan bsam mi khyab// de bzin gšegs pa rtag pa'i sku//

--- 494 ---
The Mahāmeghaśūtra as an Origin (T. SUZUKI)

(17.16-19)

The meter and MMST’s “ston pa mdzad” require that Suvs’s “desati” be “dešeti”.

The restored MMSS’s reading runs as follows:

1) Texts of Suvs concerning this paper: Sanskrit text Suvs (Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra, ed. J. Nobel, Leipzig, 1937); Tibetan versions Suvt1 (P No. 176), Suvt2 (P No. 175), Suvt (Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra, ed. J. Nobel, Leiden, 1944); Chinese versions Suvc1 (T No. 663), Suvc2 (T No. 664), Suvc3 (T No. 665).

2) Suvs 12. 6-19. 4; Suvt1 4b4-6a7; Suvt2. 164b4-166a8; Suvt 12. 13-17. 19; Suvc3 361b25-362c3; Suvc2 406a1-c21.

3) Suvs 18 fn. 25.

4) Texts of MMST: Tibetan version MMST (P No. 898); Chinese version MMSC (T No. 387). The parallel phrases exist in MMST 194b7-196a7, 202b5-7 and MMSC 1096c4-1097a27, 1099a9-14.

5) There can be no denying that there once existed some other text relating Suvs to MMST. But such text hasn’t been found yet.

6) MMST has one more pada between pada a and b to be deleted.

7) Needless to say, the restored MMSS’s reading is not the original one. However, this restoration makes it possible to compare Suvs with MMST in Sanskrit.

8) “tadā dhātūr bhavisyati” is restored from the following verses of Suvs.

9) MMSS’s “如来常不滅”、“為衆方便說” and “如來不思議” correspond to MMSS’s päda b, cd and a respectively. “法僧亦復然” must be an modification by Tăn-wū Chên who had finished the first 10 volumes of the translation of the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra (T No. 374, 『大般涅槃經』40卷) before MMST.

10) Reading of two manuscripts held at Tokyo University Library (No. 482, 483) is “dešeti”. Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra (BST-8) also reads “dešeti”.

(Key Words) 『金光明経』, 『大雲経』, 『涅槃経』, 如来常住, 経典

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