The Symbolism of “Hokke Proper”:
—Morphological studies on Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra by a Private Scholar—

Yukio KOTANI

I

This theme concerns the accomplishment of a Japanese private scholar, Hanjirō Tominaga (1883-1965), who attempted, since ca 1923, on the basis of a Sanscrit text, to bring out an original text consisting of only 5 or 6 chapters, each in a more abridged form, from the traditional 28 chapters of the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sutra.

In 『国體の信念』 (Firm Belief in the National Constitution), delivered in 20 lectures from 1933 to 1934, among which Tominaga nominated 10 titles about “Lotus Sutra” (including 5 titles treating its relation with other classics or personages such as Zen, Viṃalakīrti, King Aśoka, Prince Shōtoku and I. Kant). Having been taken down by Colonel Yokozawa, it was published with an appendix of 『根本法華』 (Fundamental form of Lotus Sutra) in Chinese translation consisting of only 5 chapters, which the author composed, following that of Kumāra-jīva for the most part, but revised partially, by replacing multivocal key-words in his own way.

In the initial number of the magazine 『一』 (Whole-Oneness/Feb.1937), he expressed his radical attitude as a person of 『宗教』 (self-help), not as a usually interpreted ‘religious’ man, since the ‘religion’ presupposes the salvation by belief in the Supreme. The Chinese word of 『宗』 (tsung, shū), synonym of 『要』 (yao, yō) designates a practical method and that of 『教』 (chiao, kyō) explains chiefly a theory, says he. The “Hokke-Preper” presupposes the attainment of ‘a complete being from cosmic stand-point of each itself’, while the 『宗教』 (shūkyō) of Śakamuni is also entirely oriented to a self-completion in relation to the cosmos, not the salvation by faith in the Absolute.

After 30 articles about “Lotus Sutra” in vol. 67 (1937-1944) of above-mentioned monthly magazine, and through the mention of it in the work 『正覚に就いて』 (On
The Symbolism of "Hokke Proper" (Y. KOTANI)

Sambodhi), the study of Tominaga develops finally into a fruit as "Saddharmapuṇḍarikadharma paryaya": 『蓮華展方——原述作者の法華経』 (Development of ‘puṇḍarika’ (excellent mind) through ingenious devices) (Skt.—Jap. /1952)

II.

The ‘symbolism’ in the title has nothing to do with the traditionally called ‘Seven Parables of Hokke’. We will only take up two main ones:

1. Outer phenomena crowned with the number ‘5’ correspond symbolically to inner ones, i.e. five skandha: i. Exeunt of haughty 5,000 bhikkhu and bhikkhuni → Withdrawal of the arrogance of each participant as an arranging and maturing process of one’s 5 skandha. ii. Appearance of a Stupa 500 yojana in height → Occurrence to each mind (5 skandha): What is Buddha? iii. Repletion of 60,000 Ākāśa-Bodhisattva amid the assembly in the Middle Heaven during 50 inner Kalpa → Neither active nor passive view works in 5 skandha of both Buddha and self, enveloped with a limpid atmosphere, which gives occasion for right judgments. iv. Dropping of 500 minute-atoms kalpas to measure the Tathāgata’s duration of life → Description of the effects of recognizing judgements which a living Buddha, whose 5 skandha work perfectly, accomplished or accomplishes, by means of a temporal form. The idea of dropping minute atoms derives from those of purusha’s purification through the removal of prakriti in the Saṃkhya philosophy, and that reversely, with a positive appreciation of prakṛti as element of 5 skandha as well as of ākāśa with a non-metaphysical element in a biocentric sense.

2. The idea of 60,000 Bodhisattva derives from the 60,000 princes of King Sagara in the aśva-meda section of Rāmāyana, as well as from 60 tantra as man’s recognizing functions in the Saṃkhya philosophy. Here also we must remark a wonderful display of talents of 法華子, who had a free command of sources, not only buddhist one: ‘saddharma’ employed by King Aśoka, but also non-buddhist, indigenous one: ‘puṇḍarika’ in the Chandogya Upaniṣad VIII., which he, utilizing indeed the traditional course of association: puṇḍarika → ākāśa → ātman, replaces, however, the ‘bodhisattva’ in place of the ‘ātman’. Precisely these delicate devices have led to extraordinary difficulties to understand this sutra, which has mainly become, with the praṇa-idea of Mahāyāna and Kumāra-jiva’s translation
filled with mystic terms (神通力, etc) the means of deification.

III.

The ‘morphology’ denotes, according to Goethe, the change of dynamic-totalistic forms of living-organic matters, plants and animals in their development. Its key-words are ‘Urtyp’ (original form) and ‘Metamorphose’ (metamorphosis).

By using this idea we elucidate characteristics of the “Hokke-Proper”:
1. Genèse (source and its growing process) in an unorganic sense of traditional “Lotus Sutra” with 28 chapters, where the “Hokke-Proper” and the remaining parts are combined in an unnatural way. 2. While on one hand accepting the previous two periods, where germinating forms of Introduction, Skillful Means, Predicting Good Fortunes, Measuring of Tathāgata’s Duration of Life and Entrusting were supposed to be, Tominaga presumes the anonymous author of this work (named Hokkeshi by Tominaga provisionally) created in the third period of the genèse two chapters of Contemplation of a Stupa and of Appearance of 60,000 Bodhisattva from the Earth. By respecting the ‘unity of action’ as a total drama, which should have an organic unity and context, Tominaga eliminated the remaining parts written in the fourth and fifth periods from it, as he felt it to be too much complicated annexation. 3. ‘Through what organic mechanisms can ‘saddharma’ be produced from ‘puṇḍarika’? - In short, through the completely right working of 5 skandha, especially of saṃskāra, as its axis. This is precisely what combines Gautama Buddha substantially with his successor, Hokkeshi, after ca 400 years - as is demonstrated in two phrases of ‘vaya-dhammā saṃkhārā’ and ‘ṛddhy-abhisāmsdara’. The Śakya’s state of mind in the Introduction, which is going to manifest itself from infinite potentialities to an unified form (ananta nirdeśa pratiṣṭāna), and Whole-One Vehicle (eka-yāna) in the Skillful Means are an original form and transform itself, adapting to the level or status the counterparts, into various forms of expression (metamorphosis).

IV.

We examine further the dramaturgy, comparing with that of French classicism, the symplifying laws of ‘trois unités’, in order to embosse a psychological process:
1. 'The unity of the action' can be applied, in case of the "Hokke-proper", to stress the consequence of context, through which the author delineates transforming inner incidents of 5 skandha as main theme. 2. 'The unity of the place' is observed to limit the scene in one place: the Grīdramountain and the Middle-Heaven far above it, except a momentary image of the world of ten directions. 3. 'The unity of time' to limit the event in one day, in spite of the supertemporary metaphors. But, in order to emphasize the particularities of this drama, the author introduces originally fantastic dramaturgies, which one could call an anti-classic, indeed, baroque style: ... the appearance both, of the unimaginably colossal stupa, and of 60,000 Bodhisattva from the Earth.

* * *

In conclusion, the doctrine and practice of Gautama Buddha and of the "Hokke-Proper", the author of which was supposed to have attained a high attitude of mind, as near as possible to that of Buddha, were originally those of self-reliance, which have, however, mainly come to be regarded as ones of salvation from without, merciful and willing to give in excess divine boons. Can we not think the cause of the above circumstances as follows?

1. Owing to the overestimation of 'vijñana' as the conscious dharma (law), neither the so-called Hīna-yāna characterized with 'nirvāna-śūnyata' nor the Mahāyāna with 'prajña-śūnyata' could realize rightly the pañca skandha? both of Šakyamuni and of Hokkeshi, the node of which is 'saṃskāra', (parting of the ways of making a right judgement or a wrong one), a judgement forming-function, unconscious itself but produces thorough self-consciousness; so that both schools interpreted the 5s kandha nihilopessimistically or metaphysically.

2. The miracle of "Hokke- Proper" proved, ironically enough, to have, as we introduced above, been never interpreted, except by the Japanese private scholar, Tominaga, but misunderstood by successors, above all, by the Mahā-yāna school, to become with many annexations, the means of deification of Buddha.

(Key Words) saddhāma (Asoka), puṇḍarika (Chandogyay Upaniṣad.), ṛddhyabhī-saṃskāra, ākāśa-bodhisattva; dramaturgy, Hanjirō Tominaga (富永半次郎)

(Professor, Emeritus Risshō University)