An Intention of the Compilers of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa
Expressed and Intimated in the Drdhā-parivarta

Suzuki Takayasu

I. The Aim of This Paper: A Continuous Verification of the Hypothesis

As has been already illustrated in a series of previous studies,1) the Suvarṇaprabhāsa (Sūtra of Golden Light; Suv),2) one of the Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures which has collected and demonstrated various doctrines and rites of both mundane and supermundane levels, and has long had wide influence over the way of thinking and living of Asians, seems to have been underestimated in some cases by the modern scholarly world with remarks such as "the Suv is a mere miscellaneous medley of doctrines and rites" or "the features appearing in the Suv represent either a token of the assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism or a token of the depravity of Buddhism."

In relation to this, the present author focusing attention on the complicated structure of the Suv and on the description in the Caturmahārāja-parivarta,3) has, partly supported by some archeological results,4) already proposed the following hypothesis on one of the intentions of the compilers of the Suv:

(The Hypothesis) Owing to the account of the Suv which has, through the several stages of its formation, collected and demonstrated various doctrines and rites of both mundane and supermundane levels already expounded in the treatises either of Mahāyāna, of non-Mahāyāna, or of non-Buddhism (i.e., of Hinduism) before, the compilers and the proponents of the Suv became more able to lead their daily religious lives, including their practice of various rites and their attainment of various religious merits, in accordance with "the teaching of the Suv," that is, "the teaching of [Mahāyāna] Buddhism." We can therefore interpret the features appearing in the Suv not as a token of "the assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism" or "the depravity of Buddhism," but as an attempt of Buddhists to survive in the Indian religious world by emphasizing the value, the usefulness, and the completeness of [Mahāyāna] Buddhism to the proponents under circumstances where Hin-
An Intention of the Compilers of the Suvarnaprabhāsa
Expressed and Intimated in the Drdhā-parivarta (T. SUZUKI) (65)

Duism had become more and more dominant over Buddhism (during and after the Gupta period). Moreover, if one of the intentions of the compilers of the Suv lies in this attempt by collecting as many doctrines and rites as possible, however mundane or supermundane they might be, from the stage of the formation of the Suvc1 to that of the Suvc3 consistently, we might be able to suppose that the intention of the compilers has remained unchanged all through the stages of the formation of the Suv. Furthermore, it might turn out that the Suv is not "a mere miscellaneous medley of doctrines and rites," but a collection of them which is intrinsic to the value of the Suv.

This paper continuously verifies this hypothesis by examining the Drdhā-parivarta (Chapter on the Earth-goddess Drdhā; Chapter 18) of the Suv), which is the fourth chapter in "the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses."(6)

2. A Brief Survey of the Drdhā-parivarta (Chapter on the Earth-goddess Drdhā; Chapter 18)

We will begin with a brief survey of the Drdhā-parivarta by dividing it approximately into five sections (from §1 to §5).

§1: The earth-goddess Drdhā makes an address in the presence of the Lord Śākyamuni as follows:

When the Suv is being expounded, the earth-goddess Drdhā, together with her retinue, will become stronger and more powerful. In their bodies there will be produced great power, fortitude, and strength. Having gone up to the seat of the Law with invisible body, she will lean with her head upon the soles of the feet of the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen who are preaching the Suv. After having been satisfied with the nectar juice of the Suv and having obtained great brilliance and strength, she will cause to increase the savor of the earth and make the earth stronger so that the various fruits and crops will be stronger, more tasty and greater. All those beings that are dependent upon the earth will find increase and become great. Having become great, they will enjoy the various enjoyments and pleasures on earth such as various foods, drinks, and nourishment, these and similar varieties of blessings existing on the earth and dependent upon the earth. For this reason, all beings should show gratitude to her by means of listening to respectfully, honoring, and worshipping the Suv. By the hearing of the Suv they will have escaped from evil states such as hell and will have gained rebirth among gods and men in future time.

Wherever the various beings in various regions on the earth tell one another even a

-1093-
single chapter or a single birth-story, even the name of a single Bodhisattva or Tathāgata, even a four-verse stanza or a single verse, or even the mere name of the *Suv*, all those regions of the earth will become stronger and more moist. The various savors of the earth will increase for all the beings in those regions of the earth. All those beings will be blessed and will have great wealth and enjoyment. They will be devoted to liberality (*dānādhimuktāni ca bhavisyanti*). They will have faith in the Three Jewels of Buddhism (*trisu rāneysv abhiprasannāni bhavisyanti*). (See Emmerick [1996: 53-56])

§2: The Lord Śākyamuni tells the earth-goddess Drdha the merits of hearing and honoring the *Suv*: Whatever beings may hear even a single verse from the *Suv*, they will transmigrate from this world of men and will be reborn among the groups of gods. Whatever beings may honor the *Suv* by adorning their houses and covering them with even a single umbrella or a flag, those adorned houses will become divine palaces made of the seven jewels. And when those beings transmigrate from this world of men, they will be reborn in those divine palaces seven times and will experience inconceivable divine blessings. (See Emmerick [1996: 56-57])

§3: The earth-goddess Drdhā makes a vow to protect the preachers of the *Suv*: She will dwell in those regions of the earth where the preachers of the *Suv* have sat upon the seat of the Law, and with invisible body she will lean her head upon the soles of the feet of them so that the *Suv*, for the welfare of all beings, may long go forth in this world, so that beings may hear the *Suv*, so that they may in future time experience inconceivable divine and human pleasures (*anāgate 'dhvany ... acintyāni divyamānusyakāni sukhāni pratyanubhaveyuh*), so that they may meet Tathāgatas (*tathāgatasamavadhānāgataś ca bhaveyuh*), so that they may in future time awaken to supreme and perfect enlightenment (*anāgate 'dhvany anuttarāṁ samyaksambodhim abhisambudheran*), and so that all the woes of hells and so on may be wholly cut off (*sarvanaraka-tiryagyoni-yamalokadukkhāni cātyantena samucchinnāni bhaveyur*). (See Emmerick [1996: 57])

The first Chinese version *SuvC1* rendered by Dharmakṣema (晉無識) in the 5th century (412-421), the second Chinese version *SuvC2* combined by Bāo-gui (寶貴) in 597, the Sanskrit text *SuvS*, and the smaller Tibetan version *SuvT1* conclude Chapter 18 with the end of this section.

§4: This §4 and the next §5 only exist in the larger Tibetan version *SuvT2* and the
third Chinese version Suvc3 rendered by Yi-jing (義淨) in the year 703.

The earth-goddess Drdhā states that she holds a spell (snags, *mantra; gzuns snags, *dhāraṇī) which can bring about the welfare and blessing to all the divine and human beings, and she gives instructions how to employ it involving the worship of those images (sku gzugs, *pratimā) and stupas (mchod rten, *stūpa or caitya7)) in which the relics (rin bsrel, *śarīra or dhātu) of the Buddha are deposited. Then she adds instructions in another two spells that enable the beings to meet her and to be blessed by her. After these instructions she concludes her address insisting that her power of protection and blessing originates in the Three Jewels of Buddhism (sāṅs rgyas dkon mchog dañ chos dkon mchog dañ dge 'dun dkon mchog, *buddharatna-dharmaratna-samgharatna).

§5: The Lord offers congratulations to the earth-goddess Drdhā who protects the Suv together with its preachers, and prophesies that she will obtain inconceivable merits by her act of protection.

The structure of Chapter 18 can be tabled as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Suvc1</th>
<th>Suvs</th>
<th>Suvt1</th>
<th>Suvc2 (=Suvc1)</th>
<th>Suvt2</th>
<th>Suvc3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§1</td>
<td>345e8-346a21</td>
<td>121.2-126.11</td>
<td>93.5-97.15</td>
<td>388c21-389b3</td>
<td>= Suvt1</td>
<td>440a18-c4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§2</td>
<td>346a22-29</td>
<td>126.12-127.6</td>
<td>97.16-98.10</td>
<td>389b4-11</td>
<td>= Suvt1</td>
<td>440c4-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§3</td>
<td>346a29-b8</td>
<td>127.7-128.2</td>
<td>98.11-99.4</td>
<td>389b12-19</td>
<td>= Suvt1</td>
<td>440c12-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>304.2-305.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§5</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>305.9-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see from Table 1 that the content of the Drdhā-parivarta was enlarged through the two stages of formation.

Chapter 18: Suvc1 (=Suvc2), Suvs, Suvt1 (the first stage) → Suvt2, Suvc3 (the second and last stage)
3. The Intention of the Compilers of the Suvarnaprabhāsā Expressed and Intimated in the Drdhā-parivarta

Having taken a brief overview, let us now return to the successive verification of the above-mentioned hypothesis by examining this Drdhā-parivarta, paying careful attention not to overlook the intention of the compilers of the Suv expressed and intimated in this chapter.

First, almost all of the religious merits this Chapter 18 refers to are not the ones peculiar to Buddhism but nothing other than those merits which are mundane and popular in India. The merits of hearing and honoring the Suv are, for example, to increase the savor of the earth, to make this circle of the earth moist with the moist savor of the earth, to make the earth stronger so that the various plants and trees will grow stronger, to make all the various fruits and crops grow stronger, more fragrant, more tasty and greater so that those beings who have enjoyed those various drinks and foods will increase their longevity, strength, complexion, and senses, to have great wealth and enjoyment, to escape from hell, the region of animals and the world of ghosts, and in future time to gain rebirth among gods and men. In contrast, only a few of the supermundane merits regarded as intrinsic to Buddhism are listed. The minority exceptions in this Chapter 18 should be at the most to meet Tathāgatas and to awaken in future time to supreme and perfect enlightenment. This tendency remains unchanged in the second and last stage since the merits attained by employing the several spells are such as to obtain prosperity, health, and longevity, and to be protected against enemies.

Second, suggested by the description in §1, there is high possibility that the hearers or the proponents of this chapter the compilers of the Suv had expected are those who were engaged in agriculture. To take some examples that reinforce this assumption, the beings who should be blessed by the earth-goddess Drdhā are described as “those beings who are dependent upon the earth (sattvāni prthivīsamniśritāni, Suvs 124.4),” as those beings who “will perform the various numerous hundreds of thousands of activities on earth (nānāvidhāni prthivigatāny anekāni nānāvidhāni kāryaśatasahasrāṇi karisyanti, Suvs 122.13-14),” and as those beings who “will do acts that have to be done with power (balakaraṇīyāni karmāṇi karisyanti, Suvs 123.1).” On top of that, belief in “the earth-goddess” or “the spirit of the earth” that
brings about fertility is in general a very common one any time and anywhere among farmers. There seems thus considerable validity for this assumption.

Agricultural areas in India are said to have been very concerned about conventionalities, and the same is true of religious tradition; that is, in agricultural areas in India Hinduism has been predominant over Buddhism. If one of the intentions of the compilers of the Suvarnaprabhāsa, as proposed in the hypothesis, lies in an attempt to survive in the religious world of India by emphasizing the value and the usefulness of Mahāyāna Buddhism to these proponents, this Chapter 18 (Chapter on the Earth-goddess Drdhā) may have been compiled for emphasizing the value and the usefulness of the Suvarnaprabhāsa to those farmers in India who might have not been Buddhists at that time. This attempt was therefore, as it were, "to open up a new market." As well as the characteristics pointed out above that almost all of the religious merits this Chapter 18 refers to are not peculiar to Buddhism but popular and mundane, a description in §4 suggesting that those people who should employ the spell for the welfare and blessing do not necessarily need to be Buddhists,° may also serve to strengthen this assumption and consequently the hypothesis.

Third, in spite of the lack of laying stress of the merits intrinsic to Buddhism, the value of the Three Jewels (i.e. the value of Buddhism) is much emphasized and enhanced both in the first stage and in the second and last stage. What draw our attention here are the contexts in which the descriptions on the Three Jewels appear. In §1 (in the first stage) the description appears in the context that the beings will have faith in the Three Jewels and will be devoted to offering, since they have become blessed and had great wealth and enjoyment through the power of the earth-goddess Drdhā who was encouraged by one of the Buddhist sutras named Suvarnaprabhāsa.° And in §4 (in the second stage) the description appears in the context that those beings who employ the several spells taught by the earth-goddess Drdhā will be blessed and protected since she is always watched over by the Three Jewels so that she can grant the beings blessing and protection.°° It must be also noted that in these contexts Chapter 18 refers to the Three Jewels, that is, Buddhist monks and nuns as well as the Buddha and the Law.

From these descriptions in the particular contexts, we can comprehend the intention of the compilers of the Suvarnaprabhāsa as follows: "Since the beings will be blessed, will
have great wealth and enjoyment, and will be protected by the power of the earth-
goddess Drdhā who is encouraged by one of the Buddhist scriptures named Suv,
and is always watched over by the Three Jewels of Buddhism, it is highly expected
that they will be willing to make a lot of offerings to the Buddha1) or Buddhist
monasteries, not to the Hindu gods or brahmins.”

As has been pointed out in Suzuki [2006], Buddhist monks and nuns who have
transmitted the Law of the Buddha and practiced for the supreme enlightenment,
cannot accomplish their duty without any assistance, especially financial assistance
of lay people. Thus the hypothesis proposed by the present author appears quite
reasonable, that one of the intentions of the compilers of the Suv lies in their attempt
to survive in the religious world of India by emphasizing the value and the
usefulness of [Mahāyāna] Buddhism to the proponents, by consistently collecting
many doctrines and rites all through the stage of the formation.

4. A Tentative Conclusion

It is tentatively concluded here, from what has been said above, that with the
compilation of Chapter 18 referring to those religious merits which are mundane
and popular in India, the compilers of the Suv must have attempted to emphasize
the value and the usefulness of the Suv to the proponents, especially to those
farmers in India who might have not been Buddhists at that time, and also attempted
to attain financial aid from the proponents for the sake of accomplishing their
transmittion of the Law and religious practice for the supreme enlightenment.

We can therefore say that the validity of the hypothesis has been strengthened
through the examination in this paper. However, its verification still needs to be
studied in further research.

1) Suzuki, T. [1996] The Mahāmeghasūtra as an Origin of an Interpolated Part of the
Present Suvarṇaprabhāsa, Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies 89 (45-1), Tokyo, pp.
28-30; Suzuki, T. [2003] Stūpa Worship and Dharma Evaluation in the Suvarṇaprab-
ḥāsa, Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies 102 (51-2), Tokyo, pp. 32-36; Suzuki,
T. [2004] Rites and Buddhism: A Perspective from the Sarasvati-parivarta in the
Suvarṇaprabhāsa, Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies 104 (52-2), Tokyo, pp. 12-17;
Suzuki, T. [2005] The Unchanged Intention of the Compilers of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa:
An Intention of the Compilers of the *Suvarnaprabhaśa* Expressed and Intimated in the *Drdhā-parivarta* (T. Suzuki) (71)


2) <Texts and Abbreviations>

**Suv** Suvarnaprabhaśa or Suvarṇa[-pra-]bhāsottamasūtreṇdrarāja.

**SuvC1** 『金光明経』四巻, 曼無識譯. T. No. 663.


**SuvT1** 'phags pa gSer 'od pa mdo sde'i dban po'i rgyal po žes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, ārya-Suvarṇaprabhaśottamasūtreṇdrarāja-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra, tr. unknown. P No. 176.

**SuvC2** 『合部金光明経』八巻, 寶貴合糅. T. No. 664.

**SuvT2** 'phags pa gSer 'od pa mdo sde'i dban po'i rgyal po žes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, ārya-Suvarṇaprabhaśottamasūtreṇdrarāja-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra, tr. Jina-mitra, Śilendra-bodhi and Ye žes sde. P No. 175.

**SuvC3** 『金光明最勝王経』十巻, 義浄譯. T. No. 665.

**SuvT** Suvarṇaprabhaśottamasūtra, ed. J. Nobel, Leiden, 1944.

(2) Taishō Tripiṭaka; P Peking Kanjur)

3) “Whatever mundane and supermundane (laukikalokottara) treatises have gone forth in the whole of Jambudvīpa, by which these beings will be blessed, all those have been revealed, expounded, and set forth here in the excellent Suv, king of sūtras, which is superior and more outstanding, by the Lord, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully enlightened one.” (SuvS 97.10-98.1) See Suzuki [2005 and 2006].

4) The report that the first inscription supposed to belong to Mahāyāna can date back to no earlier than the 5-6th century C.E. might suggest that Mahāyāna Buddhism had became popular or known after that period. See Suzuki [2004].

5) 堅牢地神品第十八. The way of numbering the chapters in this paper follows the way in the SuvC3.

6) The present author calls the five successive chapters consisting of the Caturmahā-rāja-parivarta (see Suzuki [2005]), the Sarasvatī-parivarta (see Suzuki [2004]), the Śrī-parivarta (see Suzuki [2006]), the Drdhā-parivarta, and the Sāṃjñāya-parivarta, “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses,” which tell the various merits granted to the proponents of the Suv by the various gods and goddesses.

7) 制底 (SuvC3 440c28). This, however, does not follow that the original Sanskrit word for mchod rten here is caitya since there are several cases where “制底” in the SuvC3 corresponds to stūpa in the SuvS (SuvC3 445a19 and SuvS 156.6; SuvC3 445c9 and SuvS 159.8; SuvC3 451a10 and SuvS 204.5, and so on).

—1099—
8) skyes pa'am bud med dam 'khor bzi po gaṅ la la žig gis ... gzuns snags 'di bzlas pas spyan draṅ bar 'gyur te (Suvr 304.4-15).

Since all the Buddhists can be represented by “Buddhist monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen (khor bzi po, 四衆),” it may follow that “men (skyes pa, 男子)” and “women (bud med, 女人)” here refer to non-Buddhists.

9) yatra yatra bhadanta bhagavams tāni nānāvidhāni sattvāni nānāvidhēsu prthivipradesēsu imāny ēvaṁrūpāṇi nānāvidhāni sūtrāntahētūni paraspareṇārocayeran saṃśrāvayeran vā kathāsaṃbandham vā kuryān/ sarve te bhadanta bhagavan prthivipradesā ojasvitarāś ca bhaviṣyanti snigdhatarāś ca bhaviṣyanti/ sarvēm sattvānām teṣu teṣu prthivipradesēsu nānāvidhāni prthiṇirāṇi sarvopakaranāṇi bhūyīṣṭhataram utpatsyante vivardhāyīṣyante vaipulyatām gamiṣyanti/ sarvāni tāni sattvāni sukhitāni bhaviṣyanti/ mahādhanāni mahābhogāni ca dānādhimuktāni ca bhaviṣyanti/ triṣu ratnesv abhiprasannāṇi bhaviṣyanti// (SuvS 126.2-11)

10) sems mi g-yen bar snags 'di bzlas na/ bsam pa thams cad 'grub par 'gyur te/ bdag gi tshig 'di mi slu bar ni saṅs rgyas dkon mchog dān/ chos dkon mchog dān/ dge 'dun dkon mchog rnams bdag la mNON du gzigs šIN dgoṅs par gsol// (Suvr 305.4-8)

Since the Buddha Śākyamuni has already entered into his perfect peacefulness (parinirvṛta), these offerings are to be made to those stupas or images of the Buddha that represent the Buddha and are recognized as none other than the Buddha himself.

(Key words) 金光明経堅牢地神品, 金光明経の編纂意図, [大乗] 仏教の生き残り策としての金光明経, インド [大乗] 仏教の実像理解.

(Professor, Yamaguchi Prefectural University, D.Litt.)