

## Chinese Versions of the Buddha's Biography

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Previously I studied a part of the *Lalitavistara*, making reference to Chinese versions, and encountered several problems with them. As a biography of the Buddha the Sanskrit texts and Tibetan versions of the *Lalitavistara* end at the first sermon at Mṛgadāva in Benares. But the two extant Chinese versions, the 普曜經 (*Pu-yao-jing*), the older one, and the 方廣大莊嚴經 (*Fang-guang-da-zhuang-yan-jing*), the later one, both include stories of the later teaching activities of the Buddha<sup>1)</sup>, although the two texts were translated 380 years apart and are different in length. However, these accounts of the Buddha's later teaching career are more similar to each other than any other parts, not only in regard to length but also in contents<sup>2)</sup>. Moreover, as demonstrated by Tokiwa<sup>3)</sup>, D., the 普曜經 contains some sections that are exactly the same as passages in the 修行本起經 (*Xiu-xing-ben-qi-jing*)<sup>4)</sup> and the 太子瑞應本起經 (*Tai-zi-rui-ying-ben-qi-jing*)<sup>5)</sup>.

Chinese versions sometimes reflect earlier stages of development than do extant Sanskrit texts, and, needless to say, they are very important for the study of Indian Buddhism as well as Chinese Buddhism. At the same time, they have difficult problems too, as stated above; some Chinese versions have sections that are not found in Sanskrit or Tibetan versions; sometimes a Chinese version contains identical passages as in other Chinese versions. Therefore we cannot simply compare Sanskrit texts with Chinese versions. We must recognize the problems and resolve them as much as possible, so that we may trace the development of the Buddhist text on the basis of comparisons between Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese texts.

Keeping all of the above issues in mind, we shall examine the 普曜經, which is the older version of the *Lalitavistara* and plays an important part in the study of the *Lalitavistara*. In this paper I will take up the

太子瑞應本起經 as an essential aspect of the study of the 普曜經. We find a reference to the 太子瑞應本起經 in the Vinaya of the Mahīśāsaka 五分律 (*Wu-fen-lü*)<sup>6)</sup>, which immediately sparks our interest.

Although several scholars have expressed opinions<sup>7)</sup> about the relationship between the several versions of the Buddha's biography, they offer mainly guesses, without any convincing proof. I wish to research concretely which sections of the texts are in accordance and what it means.

First, I shall examine the identical passages, the order of the stories and their contents in the 太子瑞應本起經 (See figure 1)<sup>8)</sup>. The 太子瑞應本起經 consists of two volumes corresponding to diagrams A1 and A2, in which the numbers refer to the page number in the *Taishodaizokyo*, vol. 3. Sections that have exact parallels in the 修行本起經 are represented by diagonal lines going up to the right; portions that are exactly the same as in the 普曜經 are represented by lines going down to the right;<sup>9)</sup> sections that are the same in all three texts are represented by crossed lines. The sections that are not same in any of them are left blank. The figure is in proportion to the lengths of the passages. Having examined those blank parts of the figure, I found that they are very similar to the 異出菩薩本起經 (*Yi-chu-pu-sa-ben-qi-jing*) in regard to the length, the order and the contents of stories<sup>10)</sup>. In the figure, the whole 異出菩薩本起經 is divided into sections labeled 'a' through 'n', and in this order they are compared to the corresponding sections in the 太子瑞應本起經<sup>11)</sup>, although the wording in the two texts is not the same. On the contrary, the orders in the 修行本起經, the 普曜經 and the 太子瑞應本起經 are all different, even in the sections with the exact same passages. This fact indicates the closer resemblance between the 異出菩薩本起經 and the blank parts in the 太子瑞應本起經 in fig. 1 than between the 修行本起經, the 普曜經 and the 太子瑞應本起經. Moreover, there are stories or a unique order of stories that can be found only in the 異出菩薩本起經 and in the blank parts in the 太子瑞應本起經, not in other texts. Some of them are discussed below.

In the 異出菩薩本起經 and the 太子瑞應本起經, prince Siddhārtha's parents go to the mountain hermit Asita. In other texts, Asita comes to

them, having heard or felt that a great man was born.

The first three of the four sights which make the prince aware of the pain of life are told in this order: (1) a sick man, (2) an old man and (3) a dead man. The usual order is: (1) an old man, (2) a sick man and (3) a dead man<sup>12</sup>).

According to a promise he had made in a previous life, the prince married 俱夷 or 瞿夷. But he never touched her, putting beautiful flowers or a nice blanket between them on their bed, pleading that if she came up to him, they would be spoiled<sup>13</sup>).

Just after Siddhārtha left home, he went to a royal farm and meditated under a tree. His father found him but was persuaded to go back to the palace alone. Then the prince watched farmers plowing and birds eating insects, which made him sad. In other texts, these incidents happen before Siddhārtha leaves home.

After leaving the farm, the prince met a demon named 賁識 and asked him which way he should take. Other texts have different versions of this incident.

In this way the 異出菩薩本起經 and the blank sections in the 太子瑞應本起經 show a close resemblance in regard to length, order and contents.

The dates of the translations and of the translators is the next question to be considered. Since the 出三藏記集 (*Chu-san-cang-ji-ji*) in the 梁 (Liang) dynasty (502-557), the oldest extant catalogue of the Chinese Buddhist canon, the 太子瑞應本起經 has been said to be translated by 支謙 (Zhi-qian) of the 吳 (Wu) dynasty (222-280)<sup>14</sup>), and the 普曜經 by 竺法護 (Zhu-fa-hu) in the 西晉 (Western Jin) dynasty (265-316)<sup>15</sup>). On the other hand, this catalogue says that it is uncertain who translated the 修業本起經 and the 異出菩薩本起經<sup>16</sup>). As to the 異出菩薩本起經 later records all say that the translator is 聶道真 (Nie-dao-Zhen) of the 西晉 dynasty and that he helped 竺法護<sup>17</sup>). In later records, the translator of the 修行本起經 is variously given as 曇果 (Tan-guo), 竺大力 (Zhu-da-li) or 康孟詳 (Kang-yu-xiang), all of whom are of the 後漢 (Later Han) dynasty (25-220)<sup>18</sup>). Although Chinese records need to be examined further,

we have no means to determine the translators or the dates of translations other than the records. For the present, we are obliged to rely on the records, but we must recognize the problems.

According to the records, the texts were translated in the following order: (1) the 修行本起經, (2) the 太子瑞應本起經, (3) the 普曜經 or the 異出菩薩本起經. The 太子瑞應本起經 has the exact same passages as in the 修行本起經 and the 普曜經. Because of the dates of translation, the composer of the 太子瑞應本起經 could refer to the 修行本起經, but not to the 普曜經. These identical sections in the 普曜經 are different from corresponding parts or do not exist in the 方廣大莊嚴經 and in the *Lalitavistara*. Considering that the 普曜經 is the older version of them, these sections seem not to be part of the original text. As to the similar sections in the 太子瑞應本起經 and the 普曜經, in some cases the former is more detailed but in other cases the latter is more detailed<sup>19)</sup>. Moreover, in the 太子瑞應本起經 there are a few exceptional blank sections in the figure which do not correspond to the 異出菩薩本起經.

From the above investigation, I posit an unknown text, labeled 'Y'. This text should have identical or similar passages as in the 普曜經 and the exceptional blank sections in the figure. The 太子瑞應本起經, and probably the 普曜經, borrowed from it.

Next, the 太子瑞應本起經 could not refer to the 異出菩薩本起經. 聶道真, the translator of the latter, would have seen the former, because he helped 竺法護, the translator of the 普曜經. But it is difficult to think that 聶道真 abridged the 太子瑞應本起經, having very accidentally removed the exact same or similar passages as in other texts, and retranslated the remaining portion. If this was done purposefully and consciously, what would be the point? So it is more reasonable to assume an original text labeled 'X' which is a prototype of the 異出菩薩本起經 and the blank sections in the 太子瑞應本起經 in the figure<sup>20)</sup>.

Summing up the above, the 太子瑞應本起經 itself is made up, as a frame, of the same source (X) as the 異出菩薩本起經, with the addition of the exact same passages as in the 修行本起經 and the 普曜經, namely as in

'Y'. That is to say, the 太子瑞應本起經 is a Chinese patchwork, and it is doubtful that there was ever a Sanskrit text in the same format as the 太子瑞應本起經<sup>21)</sup>.

I have tried to illustrate the relationship between these four texts, the two lost sources 'X' and 'Y', and an older (now not extant) Sanskrit text of the *Lalitavistara* in figure 2. Solid lines show original relation, and dotted lines show partial borrowing. Although there must have been lost versions at intermediate stages, and we need to do further research on the position of the 修業本起經, I present this analysis as a touchstone for future study.

We can provide evidence of the probability that some Chinese versions of the Buddha's biography were pieced together from other texts. For example, 僧祐 (Seng you) who edited the 出三藏記集 in the 梁 dynasty, regretted that texts concerning the Buddha's life contradicted each other and were not consistent. Then he selected passages on each portion of the Buddha's life from among the various versions, indicating each source, and composed the 釈迦譜 (*Shi-qia-pu*)<sup>22)</sup>. This shows that there was a tendency to expect a consistent account of the Buddha's biography in those days in China, and probably also in earlier periods. Therefore it is conceivable that, while they were translating a text, the Chinese writers should compose a new version, combining the original text and sections from other works (maybe already translated ones), but without indicating their sources.

Besides, many of the catalogues after the 隋 dynasty (Sui, 581-618) say that the 過去現在因果經 (*Guo-qu-xian-zai-yin-guo-jing*), the 太子瑞應本起經 and the 修行本起經 are different versions of the same text<sup>23)</sup>. Moreover, in the 衆經目錄 and the 大周刊定衆經目錄 twenty-two and seven works, respectively, concerning the Buddha's life are regarded as extracted from one large text<sup>24)</sup>. My above investigation and hypothesis suggest that the true textual history is more complicated than the editors of these catalogues realized.

These descriptions indicate that Chinese Buddhists did not strictly dis-

tinguish among different sources' lineages and regarded each section even in different texts as a part of the Buddha's biography, which should all come together into one consistent biography. Much of the material is later than the texts dealt with in this paper. However, we can suppose that a similar attitude existed in earlier times, because the 太子瑞応本起經 is clearly composed in the manner I have described above. Therefore we should examine Chinese versions, considering the methods of composition in China, for a more exact study of the development of the Buddha's biography.

- 1) T. 187. 530c-536c, T. 188. 611b-616a.

The conversion of the three Kāśyapa brothers, the king Bimbisāra, Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana, and Buddha's coming back to Kapilavastu. Hokazono, Kōichi. "The Development of the *Nigama-parivarta* in the *Lalitavistara*." *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*. 32-1. 1983. 474-477. Having studied the 27th chapter of the *Lalitavistara*, Hokazono concluded that the *Lalitavistara* originally ended at the first sermon and that the Buddha's later teaching career was added later. He does not state if the addition was done in the Chinese versions or in the Sanskrit texts.

- 2) The 普曜經 has eight volumes and the 方廣大莊嚴經 has twelve volumes, and are said to be translated in 308 and in 683, respectively. Because of the problems with which I will deal in this paper, these two texts have some discrepancies. For the present I regard them as texts in the same lineage, as they have unique stories or characteristics found only in them.

- 3) Tokiwa, Daijō. "方廣大莊嚴經解題" 国訳一切經 本縁部 9. 1931.

The same passages as in the 太子瑞応本起經 include the ones in the 修行本起經. So the translator of the 普曜經 seems to have referred mainly to the 太子瑞応本起經 rather than to both.

- 4) T. 184.

- 5) T. 185.

- 6) T. 1421. 102c20. The reference appears in the Buddha's biography in the 受戒法.

- 7) Matsubara, Shūdo. "On the *Lalitavistara*, with Special Reference to Chapter XXIV." *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 30-2. 1981. 661-662. Tokiwa, Daijō, "異出菩薩本起經" in 仏書解説大辞典 vol. 1. 1933. 98d-99a. Terasaki, Shūichi. "修行本起經" *ibid.* vol. 5. 1933. 70c-71a. Yamabe, Shūgaku. "太子瑞応本起經" *ibid.* vol. 7. 1934. 165c-d.

- 8) As to pages and lines, refer to the table. In the figure and the table, I show

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- only the broad outline of the identical sections, but there are also lines and short phrases that are the same.
- 9) Similar passages which seem to be abridged or in turn to be the original of the abridged in the 普曜經 are represented by dotted areas.
- 10) In the corresponding sections there are some discrepancies between the 異出菩薩本起經 and the 太子瑞應本起經 particularly in regard to numbers. For example, the twenty-eight heavens through the eighteen hells (the 太子瑞應本起經 473c and 455c) versus the heaven where thirty-three gods live through the sixteen hells (the 異出菩薩本起經 618a and 619b). And as to the age of the prince when he married and when he left home, the 太子瑞應本起經 says that he was seventeen and nineteen years old, respectively, whereas the 異出菩薩本起經 says that his marriage was at twenty years old but does not give his age at leaving home. In the former case it seems to show the difference between the translators' world view. In the latter case the 太子瑞應本起經 seems to be influenced by the 修行本起經, which agrees with it about his age at the above incidents.
- 11) There are a few exceptional blank sections which have no correspondence to the 異出菩薩本起經. As to them, I will give explanation later.
- 12) Strictly speaking, in the 異出菩薩本起經 they are: (1) a sick man, (2) a fevered man, (3) an old man, (4) a dead man, and no mendicant. In the 太子瑞應本起經 they are: (1) a sick man, (2) an old man, (3) a dead man, and, after his marriage, (4) a mendicant. The first three in the latter are similar to (1), (3) and (4) in the former, and the fourth is the same as in the 普曜經.
- 13) Besides in the 太子瑞應本起經, the prince predicts, pointing to his wife's belly, that a son will be born six years later.
- 14) T. 2145. 6c16.
- 15) T. 2145. 14a18.
- 16) T. 2145. 16c18, 22c20, respectively.
- 17) The 大唐內典錄 T. 2149. 337a-b, the 古今訳經図説 T. 2151. 335a, the 大周刊定衆經目錄 T. 2153. 375a, the 開元積經錄 T. 2154. 604b, the 開元積經錄略出 T. 2155. 733b, the 貞元新定積教目錄 T. 2157. 797c.
- 18) The 衆經目錄 T. 2146. 129a, the 衆經目錄 T. 2147. 160a, the 衆經目錄 2148. 194a, the 大唐內典錄 T. 2149. 298a; 曇果 and 竺大力. The 大周刊定衆經目錄 T. 2153. 417a; 曇果 and 康孟詳. The 開元積教錄 T. 2154. 615b, the 開元積經錄略出 T. 2155. 739b, the 貞元新定積教目錄 T. 2157. 948c; 竺大力 and 康孟詳.
- 19) The prince's crossing the river Nairāṇjanā, the offering of a daughter and two merchants are more detailed in the 普曜經 than in the 太子瑞應本起經; in contrast, the three Kāśyapa's conversion is more detailed in the 太子瑞應本起經.

- 20) Winternitz, Maurice. *History of Indian Literature*. vol. 2. Calcutta. 1927. 248. in note 2: "Beal's 'Romantic Legend' is an abridged translation from the Chinese of the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa-Sūtra*, which has not come down in Sanskrit, but was translated into Chinese between 280 and 312 A. D. by Nie Tao-Tchen (s. Bagchi, 1. c. I, p. 128) and in 587 A. D. by Jinagupta." These two versions are namely the 異出菩薩本起經 (T. 188, 1 vol.) and the 仏本行集經 (T. 190, 60 vols.). We cannot regard them as different versions of the same text or in the same lineage, because they are extremely different in length and in contents. Winternitz's misunderstanding seems to originate from Nanjio's catalogue, which gives the same name *Abhiniṣkramaṇa-Sūtra* to both the 異出菩薩本起經 and the 仏本行集經. Nanjio, Bunyiu. *A Catalogue of the Buddhist Tripitaka*. 1883. No. 509, No. 680.
- 21) Accordingly the reference to the 太子瑞応本起經 in the 五分律 is considered as following. First, if the reference was in the Sanskrit text of the 五分律 the 瑞応本起經 mentioned in it would be different from the extant version. Second, the reference is "as it states in the 瑞応本起經" and this appears just after a short description of the process of the future Buddha's attaining enlightenment. And the corresponding section in the 太子瑞応本起經 has exactly the same wording as in the 修行本起經 and the 普曜經. Therefore the reference seems to indicate the extant 太子瑞応本起經 and it did not exist in the original Sanskrit text of the 五分律. Anyway, whether or not the reference was in the original 五分律, we cannot regard the extant 太子瑞応本起經 as the Buddha's biography of the 化地部 (Mahīśāsaka sect), to which the 五分律 belongs.
- 22) T. 2040. The foreword and the table of contents of this work are found also in the twelfth volume of the 出三蔵記集 (T. 2145. 87a-88a). The biography from the list of ancestors of the Śākya through the Buddha's nirvāṇa and the description of the ruin of the dharma are arranged in thirty-four chapters, indicating their sources and variants. This work quotes from the 修行本起經, the 太子瑞応本起經, the 普曜經, which are discussed in this paper, as well as the 中阿含經, the 長阿含經, the 增一阿含經, etc., altogether more than twenty texts.
- 23) Also in Nanjio's catalogue, they are regarded as different versions of the same text (No. 664-666.). It is to be corrected.
- 24) T. 2146. 129a-b, T. 2153. 417a-b.

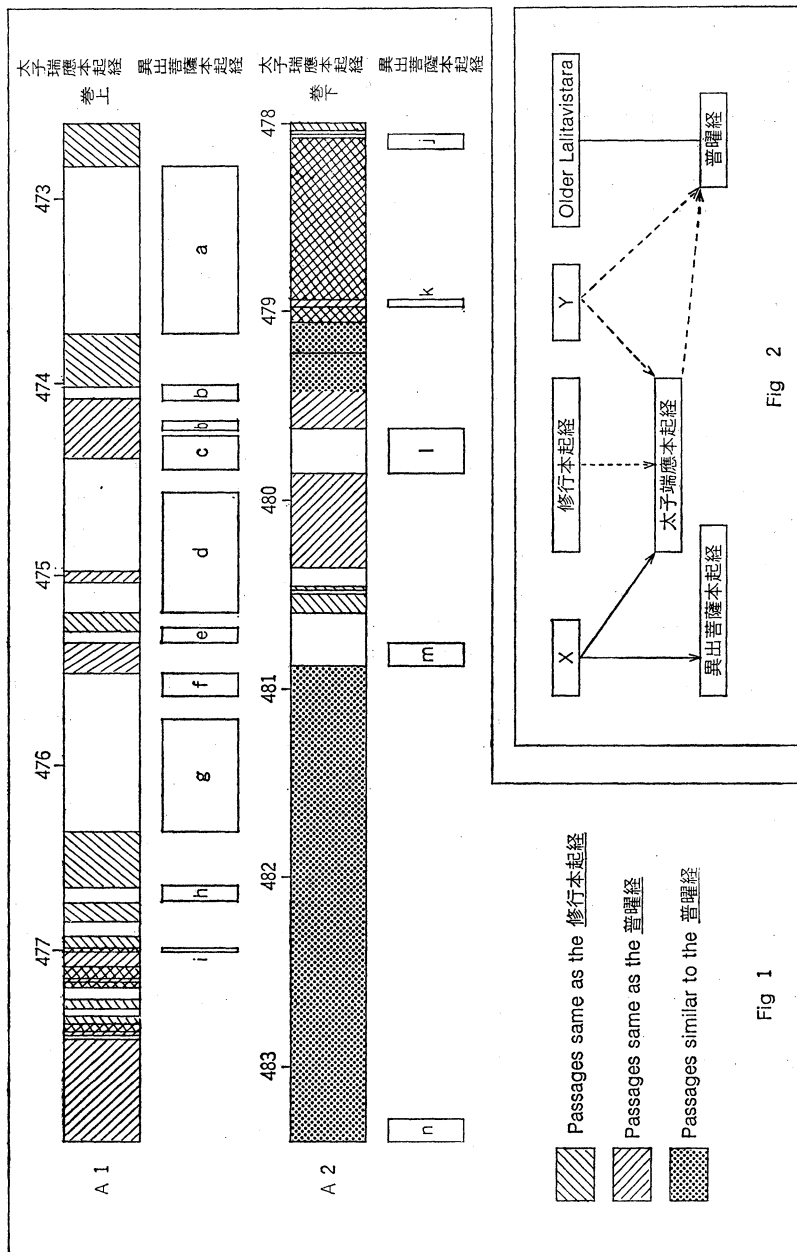


Table. Identical Sections.

太子瑞応本起経	修行本起経	太子瑞応本起経	普曜経
472c4-c17	461b5-b17	474a7-b5	496a18-b15
473c8-474a2	464a3-a27	474c29-475a5	503a28-b4
475a21-475b1	467a27-b5, b11	475b6-b18	504c12-c24
476b5-b29	468b19-b27	476c28-477a16	521c18-522a7
	469a11-a26	477b6-b12	516b24-c1
476c7-c15	469b19-b27	477b13-c26	521a27-c11
476c24-477a1	469c4-c10	478a10-479a4	522a8-b14
477a8-a11	470b18-b21		522c16-c24
477a13-a16	470b21-b25		522b16-c15
477a21-a27	470c13-c19		522c24-523a9
477b2-b10	470c23-471a1	479b9-b23	526c28-527a14
477b13-b18	471a8-a13	479c16-480a1	527a26-c11
477b20-478a5	471a15-b24	Similar Section	
478a8-478c22	471b24-472b6	479a19-b7	526a15-c8
478c27-479a4	472b6-b12	480c20-483a12	530c19-532b6

〈Key Words〉 *Lalitavistara*, 普曜経, 異出菩薩本起経, 太子瑞応本起経, Buddha's biography.

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