Examining the Sanskritization of the
Saddharmapuṇḍarīka:

A Study of Synonyms in the Text

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1. Introduction

The Sanskrit Lotus Sutra, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (SP) is regarded as one of the earliest examples of Mahayana Buddhist texts. There are three classical Chinese translations of the Lotus Sutra in existence, including Kumārajīva's translation, *Myōhō-renge-kyō* (鳩摩羅什 『妙法蓮華経』), which is one of the most important sutras in East Asia. It has had a major influence on the formation and development of other sutras, ideas and cultures. Where literary problems and issues arise in relation to the SP and the Chinese translations of the Lotus Sutra,[1] in particular with regard to the correct interpretation of the *Myōhō-renge-kyō*, it is vital to study the SP in its original language.

The original SP is a sutra of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS) texts and contains frequent usage of Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) word forms and language. MIA is a language which incorporates both Pāli and BHS. Edgerton classified Mahayana texts broadly into three classes.[2] Edgerton calls the unique vocabulary, word forms and syntax that appear in Mahayana sutras BHS.[3]

The extant SP manuscripts can be broadly divided into the Central Asia tradition (CA) and the Gilgit-Nepal tradition (G-N).[4] Kern and Edgerton advocated that in its prototype form, the SP was compiled in MIA and was converted to Sanskrit as it was passed down over the years (Kern-Edgerton's hypothesis[5]). Tsuji studied SP in detail, and pointed out the following:[6] (1) The BHS forms frequently appear in the verse texts, and Skt forms in the prose texts, but some BHS forms are found in the prose texts. (2) Various degrees of Sanskritization occurred during the tradition, which caused some differences in hybridity, and it is considered that manuscripts that still exist were made.

In a previous study, I noted the following two examples of synonyms in relation to this

discussion: (1) A set of two synonyms: MIA *krīḍāpanaka-* (BHS), Skt *krīḍanaka-*,[7] and (2) a set of three synonyms: MIA *sāntika-* (BHS), MIA *santika-* (Pāli), Skt *antika-*.[8] The results of this study support the points made by Tsuji. There is another example of the use of synonyms that can be highlighted. This is a set of three synonyms:[9] MIA *acintika-*[10] (BHS), MIA *acintiya-*[11] (Pāli), Skt *acintya-*.[12] For the purposes of this paper, 16 SP recensions have been used (5 manuscripts and 11 fragments).[13] Using the Kern-Nanjo (KN) revision as a reference, passages in the individual SP recensions that clearly correspond to KN have been identified. Based on this, the corresponding passages in each of the manuscripts and fragments have been identified. The methods used for identifying the three sets of synonyms highlighted above are discussed in another paper.[14] This paper looks in detail at the third set of synonyms in the context of Kern-Edgerton's hypothesis and Tsuji's points.

2. Manuscripts and fragments, an example of the use of synonyms: MIA *acintika-* (BHS), MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli), Skt *acintya-*

These three synonyms appear in 201 places in the 16 SP recensions. In this paper, however, the focus is on the following five typical examples. In each of the examples below, words other than the three synonyms can be deciphered based on the way in which each manuscript is transcribed and on the BHS, Skt vocabulary, word forms and syntax used. The bold underlinings are additions for this paper.

2.1. Example I. MIA *acintika-* (BHS) in the CA and MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli) in the G-N:

There is only one verse example of this extant. ⟨CA⟩ SLC: [H12 Kha.i.214, 2]*tasyā(ś)* [ca] *caryāya cīrṇā-*[3]*yāḥ kalpakoṭyo hy* **acintikāḥ** *phalaṃ me bodhimaṇḍasmi(ṃ) dṛṣṭaṃ yādṛśakaṃ hi tat* 4. O(Th): [38a5]*ta-*[6]*syā(ś)* [ca] *caryā(ya) cīrṇāyāḥ kalpakoṭī hy* **acintikā** · *phalaṃ me bodhimaṇḍasmi(ṃ) dṛṣṭaṃ yādṛśakaṃ hi tat* (4). ⟨G-N⟩ D1: [13a]*tasyāṃ cīrṇāyā caryā kalpakoṭyo hy* **acintiyā** [/] *phalaṃ me bodhimaṇḍesmin dṛṣṭaṃ yādṛśakaṃ hi tat* // [4]. C5: [10a3]/// {*yā*}*yāṃ kalpakoṭyo acintiyā* | *phalaṃ me bodhimaṇḍasmiṃ dṛṣṭaṃ yādṛśakaṃ hi tat* |(4). KN: [II 30, 15]*tasyāṃ cīrṇāya caryāyāṃ kalpakoṭyo* **acintiyā** | [16]*phalaṃ me bodhimaṇḍasmin dṛṣṭaṃ yādṛśakaṃ hi tat* ‖4‖. B: [14a1]*tasyāṃ cīrṇāya caryāyāṃ kalpāṃ koṭyo* **acintiyā** | [16]*phalaṃ me bodhimaṇḍasmin dṛṣṭāṃ yādṛśakaṃ hi tat* |(4).

2.2. Example II. MIA *acintika-* (BHS) in the CA and MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli) in the G-N:

There is only one verse example of this extant. ⟨CA⟩ SH: [H188 Kha.i.311a3]/// *lpāna koṭyair bahubhir* **acint(i)kair** *na kadācid etā*( ) *śrūya*[n]*te* · *bu* ///. O(Th): [371b1]*kalpakoṭyar bahubhir*

__acintikair__ *na kadācid etādṛśa dharma śrū-*[2](*yate buddhā*)*na 'pi koṭiśatāni bhonti na ca tāva sūtram ida deśayaṃti* 11. ⟨G-N⟩ D1: [139b]*kalpāna koṭyair bahubhir* __acintyair__ *na kadācid etādṛśu dharmu śrūyate* / *buddhāna koṭīśata tehi bhonti na ca te imaṃ sūtra prakāśayanti* // [11]. C5: [125b6]*kalpāna koṭī bahubhīr* __ucintyaiḥ__ ‖ *na kadācid evādṛsu dharma srūyate* | *buddhāna pī koṭīśatā hi bhonti* | *na ca tāv' imaṃ sūtra prakāsayanti* (11). KN: [XIX 385, 3] *kalpāna koṭyo bahubhīr* __acintyair__ *na kadācid etādṛśa dharma śrūyate* | [4]*buddhāna koṭīśata caiva bhonti na ca te p' imaṃ sūtra prakāśayanti* ‖11‖. B: [139a4]*kalpāna koṭī bahubhīr* __acintyair__ *na kadācid etādṛśu dharma śrūyate* | *buddhāna pī koṭīśatāhi bhonti na ca tāv' imaṃ sūtra prakāśayanti* ‖(11).

2.3. Example III.MIA *acintika-* (BHS) changes to Skt *acintya-* in the CA and Skt *acintya-* appears in the G-N: There are two extant prose examples of this, of which one is shown here. ⟨CA⟩ Lüshun: [B-2 (Recto), 10]*aham hi imeṣāṃ satvānāṃ pitā mayā ca et(e)* /// [B-2 (Verso), 1] __acintikam__ [buddhajñāna]*su(khaṃ) dātavya(ṃ) yena ete satvāḥ ram*[i]*yu krrīḍeyu vi-*[krrī]*ḍanīyāni* ///. SHC: [III fols. 79, 78, 77–5](__a__)__cintyam__ *anupama(ṃ) buddhayānasu(khaṃ)* ///. O(Th): [84b4]*ahaṃ khalv imeṣāṃ satvānāṃ* [5]*pitā mayā caitāni satvāni asmād evarūpān mahāduḥkhaskandhā(t) parimocayitavya-*[6]*ni mayā cemeṣāṃ satvānām aprameya(m* __a__) __cintyam__ *anupamam buddhayānasukhaṃ dātavyaṃ yenaite sa-*[7]*tvāḥ krrīḍeyu rameyu(ḥ) paricārayeyu · vikrrī(ḍā)panakāni ca kuryu.* ⟨G-N⟩ D1: [31b]*ahaṃ khalv eṣāṃ sattvānāṃ pitā mayāpy ete sattvā asmād evaṃrūpān mahato duḥkhaskandhāt parimocayitavyā: mayā caiṣāṃ sattvānām aprameyam* __acintyaṃ__ *buddhajñānasukhaṃ dātavyaṃ* [/] *yenaite sattvāḥ krīḍiṣyanti ramiṣyanti paricārayiṣyanti* / *vikrīḍitāni ca kariṣyanti* /. C5: [25a5]*aha(ṃ) khalv eṣāṃ satvānāṃ pitā mayā hy ete satvā asmād evaṃrūpān mahato duḥkhaskandhā-*[6]*t parimocayitavyā* | *mayā caiṣāṃ satvānām aprameyam* __acintya(ṃ)__ *buddhajñānasukhaṃ dātavyaṃ* ‖ *yenaite satvāḥ krīḍiṣyanti ramiṣyanti paricārayiṣyanti vikrīḍitāni ca kariṣyanti* |. KN: [III 78, 6]*ahaṃ khalv eṣāṃ sattvānāṃ pitā* | *mayā hy ete sattvā* [7]*asmād evaṃrūpān mahato duḥkhaskandhāt parimocayitavyā mayā caiṣāṃ sattvānām aprameyam* __acintyaṃ__ [8] *buddhajñānasukhaṃ dātavyaṃ yenaite sattvāḥ krīḍiṣyanti ramiṣyanti paricārayiṣyanti vikrīḍitā-*[9]*ni ca kariṣyanti* ‖. B: [34a5]*ahaṃ khalv eṣāṃ satvānāṃ pitā mayā hy ete satvā asmād eva(ṃ)rūpānyahato duḥkhaskaṃdhāt pari-*[6]*mocayitavyāḥ* | *mayā cebhyaḥ satvebhya aprameyam* __acintyaṃ__ *buddhajñānas(u)khaṃ* [ta]*dā(ta)vyaṃ yenaite satvāḥ krīḍiṣyanti ramiṣyanti paricāra(yiṣ)yaṃti vikrīḍitāni ca kariṣyanti* |.

2.4. Example IV. Skt *acintya-* appears in the CA and MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli) changes to

Skt *acintya-* in the G-N: There is only one prose example extant. ⟨CA⟩ O(Th): [150a6]*bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣavo 'tīte 'dhvani asaṃkhyeyeṣu kalpeṣv asaṃkhyeyatareṣv **acintyeṣu*** [7]*vipuleṣv aparimiteṣv apramāṇeṣu.* ⟨G-N⟩ D1: [58a]*bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣavo 'tīte 'dhvany asaṃkhyeyeṣu kalpeṣv asaṃkhyeyatareṣu **acintiyeṣu** aparimiteṣv apramāṇeṣu.* D4: [69b1] *bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣavo tīte dhvany asaṃkhyeye-*[2]*(ṣu kalpeṣv a)saṃkhyeyatare **acintye** aparimite.* C5: [49b1]*bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣave atīte 'dhvani asaṃkhyeyaiḥ kalpair asaṃkhyeyatare **acintya** aparimite apramāṇe.* KN: [VII 156, 1]*bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣavo 'tīte 'dhvany asaṃkhyeyaiḥ kalpair asaṃkhyeyatarair vipulair aprameyair **acintyair** apa-*[2]*rimitair apramāṇais.* B: [62b1]*bhūtapūrva(ṃ) bhikṣavo 'tīte 'dhvani asaṃkhyeyaiḥ kalpair asaṃkhyeyatarair vipu-*[63a1]*lair aprameyair **aciṃtyair** aparimitair apramāṇais.*

2.5. Example V. Skt *acintya-* appears in both the CA and G-N: There are three prose examples, of which one example is as follows. ⟨CA⟩ FB: [33b7]*ye ime ajita bodhisa(tv)ā mahāsatvā : apram(e)yā : asa(ṃ)khyeyā : **a-**[8]***cint(y)ā** atulyā agaṇanīyā : ye ime yuṣmābhir adṛṣṭapūrvā : ye etarhi pṛthivīvivarāntarebhya · .* O(Th): [296a6]*ye (ime) ajita bodhisatvā mahāsatvā aprameyā asaṃkhyeyā **acintyā** atulyā a-*[7]*(ga)ṇanīyā (ye i)me yuṣm(ābh)ir adṛṣṭapūrvā ye etarhi pṛthivīvivarāntarebhya · .* ⟨G-N⟩ D1: [112b]*ya ime ajita bodhisattvā aprameyā* [3]*asaṃkhyeyā **acintyā** atulyā agaṇanīyā ye yuṣmābhir adṛṣṭapūrvā ya etarhi pṛthivīvivare-*[4]*bhyo niṣkrāntāḥ* [/]. C5: [100a3]*ya ime ajita bodhisattvā mahāsatvā* [4] *aprameyā asaṃkhyeyā **acintyā** atulyā agaṇīnāyā ye yuṣmābhir adṛṣṭapūrvāḥ | ya etarhi pṛthivīvivarebhyo niṣkrāntā.* KN: [XVI 309, 2]*ya ime ajita bodhisattvā aprameyā* [3]*asaṃkhyeyā **acintyā** atulyā agaṇanīyā ye yuṣmābhir adṛṣṭapūrvā ya etarhi pṛthivīvivare-*[4]*bhyo niṣkrāntāḥ |.* B: [121b2]*(omission)* [3]*asaṃkhyeyā '**ciṃtyā** 'tulyā 'gaṇanīyā ye yu*[dhy]*(ṣm)ābhir a*[ya]*dṛṣṭapūrvā ye etarhi pṛthivīvivarebhyo niṣkrāntāḥ |.*

3. The distribution of the three synonyms in the source texts: MIA *acintika-* (BHS), MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli), Skt *acintya-*

The findings of the previous chapter are summarized in Table 1.

The following observations (i) to (iii) can be made from (1), (2) and (3) in the table above, respectively: (i) MIA *acintika-* (BHS) appears only in the CA while MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli) appears only in the G-N; (ii) In the SP this is written in both MIA and Skt; (iii) The MIA forms in prose texts has been rewritten in the Skt forms.

Table 1. Distribution of the three synonyms MIA *acintika-* (BHS), MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli), Skt *acintya-* between the Central Asia tradition (CA) and the Gilgit-Nepalese tradition (G-N). These are arranged in chronological order of writing for the two traditions. The numbers indicate the number of occurrences of *acintika-*, *acintiya-*, *acintya-*.

			(1) MIA (BHS) *acintika-*	Skt *acintya-*	Skt *acintya-*	(1) MIA(Pāli) *acintiya-*			
(2)									
CA old fragments	Lüshun; FB; Kh; Stein; M; SLC; SH	Verse	7	0	1	13	Verse	D1; D2; D3; D4	G-N old fragments
		Prose	3	3	14	1	Prose		
			(3)			(3)			
CA new manuscript	O[Th]	Verse	18	0	3	52	Verse	C5; T8; KN; B	G-N new manuscripts
		Prose	0	17	56	0	Prose		

4. Conclusion

The distribution of the three synonyms in the 16 source texts of the 16 SP (MIA *acinti-ka-* (BHS), MIA *acintiya-* (Pāli), Skt *acintya*) support the arguments of Kern-Edgerton and Tsᴜᴊɪ according to (ii) and (iii) in the preceding chapter.

The findings of this paper are not sufficient in themselves to support a conclusion about whether the language used for the early version of the SP was solely MIA or Skt, or a mixture of both. Thus far, finding synonyms has involved a process of manually looking for and extracting the synonyms from the text. In the future, drawing up a comprehensive romanized index of SP manuscripts and fragments will make it easier to identify synonyms and will help advance the discussion of the distribution of synonyms in the source texts.

This is likely to shed a new light on our knowledge of the compilation of the Lotus Sutra and the development of its traditions, as well as the correlation between the CA and G-N. Deeper research into the SP enables us to better resolve the problems posed by the SP and the Chinese Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1) There are a number of problems with the source texts of the Chinese translations of the Lotus Sutra, lack of consistency in the terminology and in scholars' translations. Some of these are pointed out in Ōchō 1969; Masuda 1971; Nishi 2014; 2016 etc.　　2) Edgerton, F. "Bibliography and Abbreviations." In BHSG: XXV: "1. The first class consists only of the *Mahāvastu* (Mv) etc. In these works, the prose parts are thoroughly hybridized, showing as many Middle-Indicisms as the verses. In its 'nucleus', at least, Mv seems to be the oldest BHS text we have; and this linguistic type is surely older than the other two. 2. In the second class, the verses are hybridized, as in the first class, but the prose contains rel-

atively few signs of Middle Indic phonology or morphology. However, the vocabulary, at least, stamps even the prose as BHS. In this class belong SP etc. 3. In the third class, even the verses (if any; some of these texts contain few or none; those which have none could be included in the second class) are substantially as Sanskritized as the prose parts; the entire text of these works resembles linguistically the prose parts of the second class. That is, non-Sanskritic forms are not common; the vocabulary is the clearest evidence that they belong to the BHS tradition. These include *the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* etc."　　　3) Edgerton, F. "Bibliography and Abbreviations." In BHSG: XXV and "Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit." In BHSG: §1.33–§1.38.　　　4) Bechert, H. "Foreword." In Chandra 1976: 7ff. ; Hinüber 1982 etc.　　　5) Kern, H. "Additional note." In KN: Vff.; Edgerton, F. "Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit." In BHSG: §1.33ff. etc.　　　6) Tsuji 1970: 3ff. In addition, see Tsuji 1970: 5, n. 5. 7) Nishi 2015.　　　8) Nishi 2017.　　　9) Kern, H. "Additional note." In terms of the synonyms in this paper, there are sources for the different readings "O *acintika-* (in Gatha) / N *acintiya-*" in the two traditions, but no detailed study of these. Tsuji categorized the different readings for SP chapter 3 only in CA (O, M) and G-N (D1, D2, KN), but did not give sources for the synonyms of this paper. 10) BHSD 194, 2: *acintika* (perhaps MIndic for *acintyaka*, q.v.? or hyper-Skt for *acintiya* = Skt *acintya*?). 11) BHSD 196, 2: *acintiya*, adj. (= Pali id., Skt *acintya*).　　　12) PW 61, 1: *acintya*.　　　13) See Abbreviations.　　　14) See Nishi 2018.

Abbreviations: See Nishi and Ousaka 2018.

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Key words　　　*acintika-*, *acintiya-*, *acintya-*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

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