

The Commentaries on Pañcarakṣā in the Tibetan Tripitaka

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1. Commentaries on Pañcarakṣā Within esoteric Indian Buddhism, Pañcarakṣā is a compilation of five types of early Buddhist tantric texts, including the *Mahāmantrā-nusāriṇī* (MN). Although the Tibetan and Chinese language translation consists of the five sutras separately translated, the catalogs known as the “dKar chag lDan (/lHan) dkar ma” and the “dKar chag ’Phang thang ma” that were edited in Tibet during the first half of the 9th century contain five types of dhāraṇī sutras included in the category of the *gzungs chen po lnga*. The contents of the Pañcarakṣā can be said to contain two major lineages based on the organization of each sutra it contains. In this paper, I refer to the Pañcarakṣā texts that are common to both the Sanskrit texts and the Chinese translations as the “Sanskrit lineage” and those whose organization includes sutras with only a Tibetan language translation as the “Tibetan lineage.”¹⁾

The MN discussed in this paper is an important sutra to identify the organization of the two lineages of the Pañcarakṣā. Previous studies have pointed out that the Sanskrit lineage MN (MN-A) is similar to the contents of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (the “Chapter on Medicine”) in the *Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya* and the *Vaiśālīpraveśa* (VŚP).²⁾ A comparison of each sutra indicates that although there are differences in the quantity of sutras, all of them contain a narrative of Buddha warding off an epidemic that occurred in the city of Vaiśālī. In contrast, the Tibetan lineage MN (*Mahāmantra-anudhāri-sūtra*: MN-B) has no such content corresponding to that in the MN-A.

The commentary on this sutra is the *Mahāmantra-anudhāri-sūtra-śatasahasraṭīkā* (MNŚS). A previous study (Okuyama 1998) compared the MNŚS, the two types of MN, the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, and the VŚP. In addition to analyzing the narrative of the plague in Vaiśālī, Okuyama also compared the related sutras. Over the course of this comparison, Okuyama pointed out that the title of the original text in the VŚP is used as the chapter title of Chapter 2 of the MNŚS. The above study does not mention any titles in the MNŚS

other than that of Chapter 2, nor does it mention the overall organization of the commentary. Using the findings of previous studies as a base, this study mainly focuses on the internal organization of the MNŚS (sDe dge) to identify the relationships between the early Buddhist tantric sutras and the Vaiśālī epidemic narrative by comparing the MNŚS (sDe dge) commentary, the two versions of the MN (MN-A and -B), and the Vaiśālī epidemic narrative (the 3rd Uddāna of the Bhaiṣajyavastu and the VŚP).

2. Commentaries on the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* and the Vaiśālī Epidemic Narrative

2.1. An overview of the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* (MN-A) and related sutras

The MN-A, which is one of the sutras recognized as MN, contains the Vaiśālī epidemic narrative, as does the 3rd Uddāna³⁾ of the Bhaiṣajyavastu, which is included in the *Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya*. At the beginning of MN-A, Buddha is said to reside in the city of Rājagṛha. However, in the revised edition by Skilling⁴⁾ this specific place is described as Kalaṇḍakanivāpa,⁵⁾ while in the Sanskrit manuscript located in the collection of Kyoto University⁶⁾ it is described as “śmaśāna” (the crematorium) of “śītavana,” thus indicating that the two works are not in agreement on this point. On the other hand, the Bhaiṣajyavastu suggests that he lives in a place known as Kuṇḍikāvasatha in the village of Nāḍikā before he sets out for Vaiśālī.⁷⁾ In the VŚP, he is said to be living in a “house of confusion and disorder among the reeds.”⁸⁾ This place is assumed by Okuyama (1998, 78–79) to be the same nāḍikāyāṃ viharati guṇḍikāvasathe (or, kuṇḍikāvasathe) that was mentioned in the Bhaiṣajyavastu.

In the MN-A and the VŚP, there is no mention of the circumstances leading up to Buddha setting out for Vaiśālī, as they simply indicate that he, who had been living in Rājagṛha, set out for Vaiśālī rather abruptly. However, the entire 3rd Uddāna of the Bhaiṣajyavastu is devoted to a narrative that explains that Buddha traveled to many locations prior to setting out for Vaiśālī. The detailed narrative covers how Buddha, who was living in Rājagṛha, traveled to Vaiśālī via Nāḍikā.

2.2. An overview of the *Mahāmantra-anudhāri-sūtra* (MN-B)

Next, we discuss the MN-B text. There are multiple variations in the phonetic renderings of the Sanskrit sutra titles in each edition of the Tibetan language translations: (1) *Mahāmantra-anudhāra-sūtra* (sNar thang), (2) *Mahāmantra-anudhāraṇi-sūtra* (sDe dge, Lha sa), and (3) *Mahāmantra-anudhāri-sūtra* (Shel mkhar bris ma, Pe cing) are three such variations in existence. The portions that include the title of the MNŚS are as

follows: (4) *Mahāmantra-nuphāraṇi-sūtrāṃ-* (sDe dge), and (5) *Mahāmantra-anudhāraṇi-sūtrāṃ-* (Pe cing, sNar thang). Variations (4) and (5) above are assumed to be typographical errors of *Mahāmantra-anudhāraṇi-*, in which case they would correspond to (2). On the other hand, in Tohoku catalog,⁹⁾ it is rendered as *Mahāmantrānudhārisūtra-*, which is the same as (3). The Tibetan language translation “rjes su ‘dzin pa” becomes “anudhāri” when back-translated into Sanskrit. I will utilize *Mahāmantra-anudhāri-sūtra* for the purposes of this paper.

Since issues such as the contents and organization of the MN-B have already been discussed by Sonoda 2018, I will provide an overview here. The MN-B describes a scene in which Buddha gives a dharani known as *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* to Ānanda in a place known as Jetavana in Śrāvastī. As was the case in the Sanskrit lineage mentioned above, the fact that Buddha gives the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* to Ānanda is something both texts have in common, but here it was not given to Ānanda for the purpose of warding off the epidemic in Vaiśālī. Instead, the text states that Buddha informed Ānanda of the events that took place when Brahma visited Buddha and of the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī*, which possesses the power to protect the sick. Unlike the Sanskrit lineage, in which the dialogue between Buddha and Ānanda takes a central role, bhikkhus other than Ānanda are present, while Brahma and other gods also appear in the narrative of the Tibetan lineage. Regarding the relationship between MN-A and MN-B, one point the two have in common is the fact that the dharani known as *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* protects against all kinds of epidemics, as well as mental and physical encumbrances. However, due to the gaps in the organizational structure of the sutras’ content, it cannot be confirmed whether one of them was augmented with content from the other or that the content of one was abridged.

2.3. The structure of the *Mahāmantra-anudhāri-sūtra-śatasahasraṭīkā* (MNŚS)

The MNŚS, which is a commentary on the MN that was written by Karmavajra in the early 11th century,¹⁰⁾ contains nine chapters (gnas skabs) and includes commentaries on the contents of the MN-A and -B. Chapter 1 “The Chapter on the time that Places and retinue of perfect” and Chapter 2 “The Chapter of the Entry into Vaiśālī (*Vaiśālī-praveśa*)” roughly correspond to the contents of the MN-A. As mentioned in the previous section (2.1), there is a scene in which Buddha gives Ānanda a dharani and performs a rite, which is designed to ward off the epidemic spreading in Vaiśālī.

Chapters 3 through 8 correspond to the content in MN-B. In Chapter 3, “The Chapter

in which Brahma and others request the Mantra,” Brahma and his household visit Buddha and recite a gatha to him. In Chapter 4, “The Chapter in which the nature of Bhūta and others are described,” there is a claim that knowledge of Rākṣasī, Yakṣa, and other members of the demon-god clan will lead to the disappearance of a variety of fears. In Chapter 5, “The Chapter describing the ripening of actions (karma-vipāka),” there is a description of how the Mahāmantrānusāriṇī can protect people from, destroy, and disperse other people and a variety of non-human demons and gods, and eradicate poison. Chapter 6, “The Chapter on the True Verses,” there is a narrative of how those who intend to do harm, the Vaiśravaṇa, and demon-gods are all intoxicated, thereby protecting people from paralysis and idleness, as well as their hands, feet, heart, and tongue. In Chapter 7, “The Chapter Describing Mandala and the Guardian Wheel,” there is a description of how true words can protect everyone, whether they have no feet or many feet, and whether they are knowledgeable or not. Chapter 8, “The Chapter on How Illness is Cured by True Words,” there is a description of how every type of disease are eradicated by true words .

The final chapter, Chapter 9 “The Chapter on How the VŚP is given to Bhūta upon Entry into Vaiśālī” once again corresponds to the MN-A. In this chapter, Ānanda, as taught by Buddha, goes to the place of the gate, places his feet by the gate, and recites a dhāraṇī. The same scene is recorded in MN-A.¹¹⁾ Based on the above instances, this commentary considers the MN contents of both lineages. In terms of the specific contents and organization, the beginning includes the MN-A, the middle section includes the MN-B, while the final section once again includes the contents of MN-A.

3. Conclusion The subject of the commentary of the MNŚS, which only exists in the current Tibetan Tripitaka, is not only the content of the MN-B, which is included in the Tibetan Tripitaka, but also the MN-A, which is not included. Analysis of the content and organization shows that the chapters of the MNŚS can be categorized as follows: Chapters 1, 2 and 9 quote from, and include commentary on MN-A, while Chapters 3 through 8 quote from and include commentary on MN-B. In addition, Chapters 2 and 9 use sutra titles from the VŚP.

A difference that becomes apparent upon comparison of the MNŚS and other sutras is the location where Buddha is said to have been staying prior to setting out for Vaiśālī. In the MNŚS, as is the case in the Bhaiṣajyavastu and the VŚP, this location is a “house of confusion and disorder among the reeds (Kuṇḍikāvasatha in Nāḍikā).” However, in the

MN-A, the location he was living in was Rājagṛha, although there are differences in the detailed place name between manuscripts. This differs from what is recorded in the MNŚS, the Bhaiṣajyavastu, and the VŚP. Although at the beginning of the 3rd Uddāna of the Bhaiṣajyavastu, Rājagṛha is indicated as the location where the Buddha is staying, it also indicates that immediately prior to his visit to Vaiśālī, he was staying at Kuṇḍikāvasatha in Nāḍikā. In the MN-A, Rājagṛha is used in the beginning of the Bhaiṣajyavastu, and it is possible that mention of Kuṇḍikāvasatha in Nāḍikā was left out of the text.

As can be seen from the above, the MNŚS, which is the focus of this paper, contains examples that are closer to the texts of the Bhaiṣajyavastu and the VŚP than to the MN-A, which is recognized as the MN. Based on this, the contents of the MN around the time the MNŚS was written are believed to have been influenced by the Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya and the VŚP.

The *Mahāśītavatī*, which includes in the Pañcarakṣā, is also have two lineage, and the contents of the commentary on the *Mahāśītavatī* contain two lineages, as is the case with the MN. This point is common to MNŚS, which is the commentary on the MN. On the other hands, unlike the MN, which lacks a Tibetan language translation, the *Mahādaṇḍa-dhāraṇī* has been identified as a Tibetan language translation that corresponds to the *Mahāśītavatī* of the Sanskrit lineage. In spite of these differences, the MNŚS is still a commentary that includes sutras from both lineages, as is the commentary on the *Mahāśītavatī*.¹²⁾ The circumstances remain unclear regarding the fact that the Karmavajra commentary contains elements of both, even though they were both collected individually in the Tibetan Tripitaka. One possibility is that when the commentator added notes and commentaries, content from both lineages were circulated. Alternately, perhaps the commentator recognized the sutras containing both lineages as the MN and thus combined the two. Given that there are other possible versions of the MN currently that differ from the sutras that have already been identified, I would like to continue studying the manuscripts with further attention placed on their positioning within the Pañcarakṣā.

Notes

- 1) There are a total of seven types of sutras related to the Pañcarakṣā currently in existence (Iwamoto 1937, Introduction; Skilling 1992, 141–142; Okuyama 1998). 2) Skilling 1992; Okuyama 1998; Yao 2010, 2013. 3) Yao 2013, 81–128. 4) Skilling 1994, 609. 5) In

Okuyama 1998, 77–78, the two types of nidāna in Skilling 1994, C.1.1.a, C.1.1.b were removed as they were not considered authentic. 6) Goshima and Noguchi 1983, no. 63. 7) Okuyama 1998, 79–80. 8) 'dam bu'i khrod na zgigs pa'i 'dug gnas. 9) Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿, Kanakura Yensho 金倉円照, Suzuki Munetada 鈴木宗忠, and Tada Tokan 多田等観, eds. *A Complete Catalog of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons* 西藏大蔵経総目録 (Sendai: Tohoku Imperial University, 1934), p. 99. 10) Hidas 2017, 451. 11) In the MNŚS, the Pañcarakṣā and the actions taken by Ānanda are omitted, and its contents are therefore simplified. 12) Sonoda 2021.

Abbreviations

MN-A *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* → Skilling 1994, 608–622, *Dahuming Datuoluoni jing* 大護明陀羅尼經 (T1048). **MN-B** *Mahāmantrānudhāri-sūtra* → *gSang sngags chen po rjes su 'dzin pa'i mdo* (D No. 563, P No. 181). **MNŚS** *gSang sngags chen mo rje su 'dzin ma'i mdo'i 'bum 'grel* (D No. 2692, P No. 3517). **VŚP** *Vaiśālīpraveśa* → Skilling 1994, 564–605.

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