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## Some Observations on the Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching

Biswadeb Mukherjee  
Visiting Professor, Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies

### Summary

The text of Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching (《衆許摩訶帝經》) translated in the later Sung Dynasty (A. D. 960~1127) by Fa-hsien (A. D. 982~100) seems to have gained some importance in the Yuan Dynasty. Paszepa or Vāṣpa, the teacher of Kublai Khan (1260~94) in his work entitled Chang-sū-chih-lun (Nanjio No. 1320) explains the name of the king as given in the title of the sutra as Ta-san-mo-to. Nanjio takes both the terms 'Chung-hsü' given in the title of the sutra and 'san-Nmo-Nto' to stand for 'Samadatta'.

It has been shown in the present article that this restoration of both Chung-hsü and San-Nmo-Nto as Samadatta is wrong. The terms Chung-hsü and Ta-san-mo-to should be correctly restored as Mahāsammata. The name of the original Indian text should have been Mahāsammata-mahārāja-sūtra.

This sutra begins with an account of the origin of the world and ends with an account of the Buddha's visit to his father after his enlightenment. It appears that the traditions that have come down to us are silent about the Buddhist school to which this sutra belonged. By comparing and contrasting the youth legends of the Buddha narrated in this sutra with the accounts given in other texts belonging to different Buddhist schools including that of the Mūlasarvāstivāda, we have come to the conclusion that the youth legends as given in this sutra belonged to the Mūlasarvāstivāda school and the text of Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching could be held to have originated within the Mūlasarvāstivāda circle.

**Keywords:** 1.Chung 2.mahāsammata 3.Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition

The Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching (《衆許摩訶帝經》) [1] is one of the late Buddha biography to be translated into Chinese. It was translated by Fa-hsien (A. D. 982~1001) of the later Sung Dynasty (A. D. 960~1127). The sutra commences with an account of the origin of the world and a list of the ancestors of the Buddha beginning with the first king in the world, and ending with the Buddha's visit to his father after enlightenment and the story of a former king of Vārāṅṣī, Brahmaṃyaś by name.

## I

Paszepa (Skt. Vāṣpa), the teacher of Kublai Khan, the emperor of China (A. D. 1260~94) throws interesting light on the title of the text. In his work entitled Chang-so-chih-lun (《彰所知論》) [2] he states that the ruler was called Ta-san-mo-to-wang (大三末多王) because he was chosen to become king by the multitude. It is apparent that Paszepa reproduces the title of the text in a slightly different way. Wang (rājā) in the text's name as given by Paszepa is a substitute for mo-ho-ti (mahārāja) of the original sutra while Ta-san-mo-to stands for chung-hsü.

Nanjio thinks that both chung-hsü and ta-san-mo-to stands for the original name Mahā-samadatta. It is difficult to accept this interpretation. Phonetically the restoration of chung-hsü as Mahā-samadatta and that of san-mo-to as 'samadatta' cannot be supported.

Again the meaning of the Chinese term chung-hsü is quite different from that of 'samadatta'. Chung (衆) means multitude, numerous etc. and hsü (許) means to agree, consent to, permit etc. Samadatta can be rendered as "equally given". It should also be noted that there is no detail in the Chinese text that would justify the name 'samadatta'.

Moreover the tradition preserved in the Indian texts is not aware of any first ruler in the world whose name or epithet was Samadatta. The Buddhist texts in India unanimously hold that the name of the elected king was Mahāsammatā.

On the other hand the term chung-hsü (衆許) can be restored as Mahāsammatā i. e. agreed upon or elected or accepted by the multitude or people. The Chinese word 'chung' means, as already noted, multitude etc. and thus can be used to translate the Sanskrit word 'mahā' while the other word 'hsü' of the term 'chung-hsü' meaning 'to agree' etc. can be equated with "sammatā". Moreover the name Mahāsammatā is in harmony with the statement of the text that the first king was elected by the people.

It is to be noted that the word 'mahā' has been interpreted in two different ways. Paszepa takes 'mahā' to mean great. In case of the title of the sutra the word 'mahā' is understood in the sense of 'numerous', and has been accordingly rendered as 'chung' (衆). The second interpretation is earlier and tallies with the original Indian tradition. The original Indian name of the sutra thus can be restored as Mahāsammata-mahārāja-sūtra.

## II

Nanjio is silent about the position of the Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching in the Buddhist literature. We are left in the dark about its possible relationship with the other Buddhist texts, or concerning the particular Buddhist school to which it might have belonged.

In order to throw some light on these problems it is necessary to compare the Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching with other Buddhist texts. Within the limited scope of an article it is not possible to make a comparative study of the entire text of the Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching. For the sake of convenience we will confine our study to the youth legends of the Buddha only.

The youth legends have been mentioned in numerous texts such as Mahāvastu,[3] Lalitavistara,[4] Fu-yao-ching (《普曜經》),[5] Hsiu-hsing-pen-ch'i-ching (《修行本起經》),[6] T'ai-tzu-sui-ying-pen-ch'i-ching (《太子瑞應本起經》),[7] Kuo-chü-hsien-tsai-yin-kuo-ching (《過去現在因果經》),[8] Tibetan translation of the

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Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya,[9] Chinese translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (《根本說一切有部律》),[10] Eine Tibetische Lebensbeschreibung Sākyamuni's,[11] Fo-pen-hsing-ch'i-ching (《佛說本起經》). [12]

We will next give an account of the relevant legends as recorded in the Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching in order to compare it with the accounts of the other texts.

## III

Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching (Taisho, Vol. 3, pp. 942a14~943b4)

### The legend of the elephant

At that time there was a big elephant in the city of Vaiśālī. He was of noble appearance and possessed great strength. Siddhodana, the great king of Kapilāvastu had a son called Siddhārtha. The soothsayers saw in him the signs indicating the position of a rājacakravartin. So the elephant was sent to him as an offering. Decorated in many ways with pearls, gems and other precious objects the elephant came to Kapilāvastu up to the gate of the king's palace. At that time Deva-datta

came out of the gate, and seeing the elephant he asked the gatekeepers: "Wherefrom has this elephant come ? "The gatekeepers answered: "As it has been predicted that Siddhārtha would be a rājacakravartin, the inhabitants of Vaiśālī have offered this elephant to him." Having heard this news Deva-datta grew jealous in

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his heart and told the gatekeepers: "How Siddhārtha could have the kingship ? " Then with a weapon he killed the elephant. Afterwards Nanda saw the elephant, and came to know that Devadatta had killed the elephant out of anger. In order to show his manly strength Nanda, thereupon, with his hand caught hold of the elephant by the tail, and pulled it seven paces away from the place where it originally was. Now Siddhārtha saw the elephant was at a distance from the place where it originally was. He knew that Nanda in order to show his strength caught hold of the elephant's tail with one hand and moved it away from the original place. Then Siddhārtha in order to show his extraordinary power with one hand held the elephant by its tail, tossed it in the air beyond the seven walls of the city just as one throws away a lump of earth. Now the people of Vaiśālī who had offered the elephant saw that Siddhārtha had great power and strength.

### **Skill in archery**

Once Devadatta taking a bow and arrow in hand went out of the city of Kapilāvastu in order to practise shooting. Having known this the prince Siddhārtha also went out of the city walls to practise shooting.

Then Devadatta holding the bow and arrow shot at a tree from a distance. The arrow hit at the middle of the tree, resounded like a string, and then turned upside down.

Siddhārtha also shot at the tree with great force. Though the tree was cut into two, it remained as before without showing any movement. Seeing the tree in this position Devadatta thought that the arrow had not hit the tree at all. He told the prince: "I have heard that the prince had learnt rules about five different arts of shooting. How is it that you shot at the tree but could not hit it ? " Having heard this Sakra, the king of the gods, thought:

To-day I must reveal the strength of the supernatural powers of the Bodhisattva. If it is not done, how the people could know him to be a Bodhisattva who is capable of thorough mastery over all matters.

Then he magically created a great storm which blew against the middle of the tree. The tree which was pierced by the arrow suddenly toppled down on the

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ground. Now Devadatta became extremely afraid and heaved a sigh.

Next the prince caused seven palm trees, seven iron drums and seven iron boars to be set up, and he asked everybody to shoot at them. Then Devadatta to show his might

seized the bow, advanced and shot through one palm tree. Next to him Nanda pierced two palm trees. Following them Siddhārtha shot through the seven palm trees, seven iron drums and seven iron boars. Having pierced through all of them his arrow passed through the earth as far as the palace of the Nāga king. At that time the Nāga king saw the arrow of the Bodhisattva, and took it with both hands. At that place where the arrow had entered the earth, water bubbling gushed upward and flowed. The Brahmins and the elders who were faithful erected a caitya there and offered worship. The monks often came there to visit and worship. Then Siddhārtha mounted on a precious chariot, returned to the palace. The soothsayers predicted about the prince: "On the 12th year from now if he does not enter the houseless state, he would become a rājacakravarti."

### **Legends of the tree and the goose**

Not far from the city of Kapilāvastu there was a large river called Rohita on the bank of which was a big tree, born on the same day as the prince. This tree was known as Sālakāyāṇa. In a short time it grew to the height of 100 hands. Subsequently the tree was overflowed and was immersed in the stream of the river, and the roots of the tree were destroyed. It fell across the river whose flow was stopped, and the land became dry. As the river ceased to flow on account of the tree and the people of the country suffered due to the lack of water, the king Supra-buddha sent a messenger to the king Suddhodana telling him about the obstruction of the flow of the water, and the great suffering of the people. He further expressed the wish that the prince might remove the tree with his supernatural power and make the river flow again. Then the king Suddhodana remained silent without giving his assent, ( thinking that ) if the prince goes, he should go at his own free will.

There was a minister called Channa who knowing the mind of the king planned accordingly, and told the prince earnestly: "On the bank of the River Rohita there is a garden with pavilions and terraces etc. We may go there for a walk." Hearing this the prince told: "Together with the relatives and ministers we may go out of

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Kapilāvastu to go to that park and enjoy sports at one's will. "

At that time Devadatta saw a goose flying through the sky. He took the bow and looking upward shot an arrow at the goose which fell down before the prince. The prince seeing it sighed and thought about violence. He pulled out the arrow and let the bird fly away. Devadatta sent a man to fetch the goose. The prince told:

I have developed bodhicitta, and I have devoted myself to the exercise of friendliness towards living beings. I love all beings and do not like to see injury being done to others. I took away the arrow from the goose and let it go so that it may fly away to safety. You should now change your heart, and should not cherish anger and hatred.

When Devadatta heard these words, he kept quiet but did not agree with it.

The king Suprabuddha came to know that the prince had entered the park. There upon the king sent the people of country there. They went to the river and approached the tree. They made great noise and exerted their strength. That noise sounded like thunder in the open space. Having heard the noise the prince asked his attendants about it. The attending officials answered that these were the people who were sent by the king Suprabuddha to go to the tree. Having heard this the prince told: "I shall myself go"

Then the prince went to the bank of the river. He first allowed Devadatta to approach the tree. Devadatta exerted his strength to the utmost but could not lift the tree. Next came Nanda who pulled the tree away to a little distance on the land. Then the prince used his supernatural power. With his hand he caught hold of the tree, broke it into two pieces and threw them upward in the sky. On each side of the river fell down a piece. He told the people:

This Śālakalyāṇa tree is excellent as medicine. Fire cannot burn it. If you have a boil or any swelling, you should smear it (with paste made from the tree), and it will be cured.

Saying this the prince mounted a chariot and went back to the city. The

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soothsayers told: "If after seven years the prince does not go forth, he would become a rājacakravartī."

## IV

The Chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching like the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya and the Tibetan account translated by Schiefner has recorded the different adventures of the Bodhisattva as separate incidents. Any of these legends excepting the story of the goose is not connected with any other legend and none of these is associated with the marriage of the Bodhisattva. These three texts also show great similarities concerning the details of the legends and the sequence in which these legends are recorded. In all these texts, henceforth abbreviated as Mu, Chung-hsü and Schiefner respectively, the adventures of the Bodhisattva occur in the following sequence:

- 1) The elephant episode mentioned in Mu, Chung-hsü, and Schiefner.
  - 1a) The wrestling episode mentioned only in Schiefner but not in Mu and Chung-hsü.
- 2) The archery episode mentioned in Mu and Chung-hsü only.
- 3) The episodes of the tree and the goose mentioned in Mu, Chung-hsü, Schiefner. In all three works the goose story is encased in between the story of the lifting of the tree.

It is obvious that the Chung-hsü and the Mu have followed an identical sequence of events while Schiefner has modified the same sequence by the addition of the legend no. 1a and by the omission of the legend no. 2.

When we analyze the stories individually we notice the same close relationship existing between these three versions. In the narration of the elephant story all the three texts hold that the people of Vaiśālī knowing that the Bodhisattva would become the rājacakravartii presented this elephant to him. The part played by Nanda and Devadatta after the elephant had been killed by Bodhisattva has been omitted in the Tibetan account of Schiefner. However the Mu and the Chung-hsü show close similarities in this portion of the narration also. In both of them Nanda removes the elephant seven paces. This is similar to the account in the verse portion of the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya but differs from the Chinese translation of the same Vinaya which states that the elephant was removed 21 paces. The

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Chung-hsü appears to have recorded a version earlier than that recorded in the prose portion of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya. Again both the Chung-hsü and the Mu note that the Bodhisattva threw the carcass of the elephant across the seven walls, though the Mu account is more detailed, as the elephant in this account was not only tossed across the seven walls but also across the seven ditches. However the chung-hsü betrays a later element when it differs from the Mu Vinaya and other works, and states that Devadatta killed the elephant with a weapon.

Again both the chung-hsü and the Mu Vinaya omit the wrestling episode. The account of the archery contest in the Chung-hsü actually consists of two different episodes. The first story narrates how the Bodhisattva cut a tree into two parts with an arrow while the second episode relates the other shooting contest where the Bodhisattva pierced different targets of palm trees etc. The second episode, as we shall see, is narrated in a slightly different way in the Mu Vinaya; the first episode, however, occurs in a slightly different version only in the work of Schiefner which represents a later version. In the narration of the first event the Tibetan text of Schiefner states that the tree was cut by the Bodhisattva with a 'sheermesser' and not with an arrow, as it has been described in the Chung-hsü. Again Devadatta is not at all mentioned in the work of Schiefner. On the other hand both in Schiefner and the chung-hsü we find that the tree stood as before even though it was cut into two by the Bodhisattva, and the people thought that the tree was not hit at all. Moreover in both the accounts a god (Sakra in the Chung-hsü or the God of wind in Schiefner) revealed to the people that the tree was really cut into two parts.

The second story, as already pointed out, is that of the archery contest, and in this case the Mu Vinaya has preserved a similar account. In both the Chung-hsü and the Mu the targets placed are seven palmtrees, seven drums and seven boars. According to the Mu Vinaya Devadatta pierced one of each of these targets, while Nanda two from each group and the Bodhisattva all of them. Further the arrow of the Bodhisattva entered the earth, and was received by the Nāga king. A caitya was built at the place where the arrow entered the earth. Again in both the Chung-hsü and the Mu Vinaya a prophecy is made that after twelve years the prince will become a rājacakravartī, if he remains a householder.

An analysis of the last two events as given in the Mu Vinaya, Chung-hsü, and the Tibetan work translated by Schiefner provides us with the following sequence of events:

Mu Vinaya	Chung-hsü	Schiefner
1)Description and location of the tree which has the same birthday as the Bodhisattva	1)Same	1)Same
2)Suprabuddha asked for the Bodhisattva to remove the tree and Chandaka brought the prince to the right place	2)Same	2)Same
3)The people raised a hue and cry which attracted the attention of the Bodhisattva	4)Same	4)Same
4)The story of the goose	3)Same	3)Same
5)The Bodhisattva lifts the tree	5)Same	5)Same

So we find that the three works are very close to each other. Moreover the chung-hsü and Schiefner have recorded the same sequence of events. Both these texts mention that the Bodhisattva first asked Devadatta to lift the tree, and only when the latter failed, himself removed the tree. This detail is not found in the Mu Vinaya. On the other hand we may point out the following traditions which are common to these three texts but different from the traditions mentioned in the other works:

- 1) The Chung-hsü, like the Mu Vinaya and the account given by Schiefner, has recorded the different episodes as separate incidents unconnected with the marriage of the Bodhisattva. On the other hand, the Mahāvastu, Laslitavistara and the Hsiu-hsing-pen-ch'i-ching narrate them in connection with the marriage of the Bodhisattva.
- 2) In the T'ai-tzu-sui-ying-pen-ch'i-ching also these stories occur as independent events, but here the sequence of events ( archery-wrestling the story of the elephant ) is quite different from that recorded in the three texts.
- 3) Again in case of the Kuo-ch'u-hsien-tsai-yin-Kuo-ching though these stories are not connected with the marriage, they are connected with each other in-as-much as all of them occur in an unbroken sequence, and seem to take place on the same day in connection with the display of martial arts. In the three texts, on the other hand, each of them is happening as an independent incident, each being separated from the other by a gap of several years.
- 4) Moreover the story of the wonderful tree and that of the goose find mention only in the Chung-hsü, Mu Vinaya and the Tibetan work of Schiefner but not in any

other text.

From the above discussion it is quite clear that all these three works, as far as the youth legends of the Bodhisattva are concerned, belonged to the same stream of



tradition, and that the Chung-hsü has recorded with some additions and alterations a later version of the same tradition whose earlier version has been preserved in the Mu Vinaya. Moreover the Chung-hsü version of the legends shows quite a marked difference from the other accounts recorded in the works not belonging to the Mūlasarvāstivāda.

The Chung-hsü, so far we can judge from the legends studied here, belonged to the Mālasarvāstivādins. The later additions and alterations found for the first time in the chung-hsü, afterward find mention in the work of Schiefner, and therefore the influence of the former on the latter can be reasonably suggested.

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## 《衆許摩訶帝經》的幾點考察

穆克紀

中華佛學研究所客座教授

### 提要

由法賢（A. D. 982～1001）譯於宋朝（A. D. 960～1127）的《衆許摩訶帝經》，似乎在元朝獲得了某種重視。忽必烈汗（Kublai Khan 1260～94）的帝師巴思八（Pazzepa 或 Vāṣpa）在他所著的《彰所知論》（Nanjio No. 1320）中，將經題中的王名解為「大三末多」，南條文雄即以「衆許」加上「三末多」共同來表示 "Samadatta"。

本文認為以「衆許」和「三末多」共同來還原 "Samadatta" 是有問題的。「衆許」和「大三末多」都應還原為 "Mahāsammata"，印度原本的經題應為 Mahāsammata-mahārāja-sūtra。此經內容始於對世界起源的說明，經於佛陀證悟後去見訪他的父親。經文中並未告訴他們本經的部派所屬。透過比較本經中所述佛陀青年時期的傳說與其他分屬不同佛教部派之典籍的相關內容，其中包括根本說一切有（Mūlasarvāstivāda），我們所得的結論判定見於本經中的青年時期傳說屬於根本說一切有，因而《衆許摩訶帝經》可視為發源於根本說一切有部傳承。

**關鍵詞：**1.衆 2.衆許（大三末多） 3.根本說一切有部傳承

[1] B. Nanjio, A Catalogue of the Chinese Tripitaka, No. 859, p. 195 ( Classical IndiaPublication, Delhi, 1989 ) .

[2] Ibidem, No. 1320.

[3] E. Senart, Mahāvastu, Vol. II, pp. 74~76 ( Paris, 1882~97 ) .

[4] S. Lefmann ( Halle, 1908 ) , pp. 140~45.

[5] Nanjio, No. 60. Tsiaho, 3, pp. 501a~502a. P'u-yao-ching was translated in A. D. 308 by Dharmaraksa of the Western Chin dynasty.

[6] Nanjio, No. 664. This text was translated in A. D. 197 by an western monk Mahābalain collaboration with a monk of Tibetan descent called Kang Man-sian ; for the relevant legends see, Taisho, 3, pp. 465b~466c.

[7] Nanjio No. 665. Taisho, 3, p. 474b. This work was translated in the Wu dynasty ( A. D. 222~80 )

[8] Nanjio No. 666. Taisho, 3, pp. 628b~629a. This work was translated by Guṇabhadra of the earlier Sui Dynasty.

[9] Rockhill, The Life of the Buddha, pp. 19~21.

[10] Taisho, 24. pp. 112a~112c.

[11] Schiefner, Eine Tibetische Lebensbeschreibung Sakyamuni's, 237~38.

[12] Nanjio, No. 630. Taisho, 3, pp. 710b~712c; 713c~714c. This text was translated by Jñānagupta, A. D. 587, of the Sui dynasty.