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A Possible Citation of Candragomin's Lost **Kāyatrayāvātāra*

by Peter Skilling

Introduction

Candragomin is a well-known—and, as is so often the case, somewhat obscure—figure in the history of Indian Buddhist literature. As the traditional accounts of his life are readily available and have been much discussed, I will not deal with them here. The most recent detailed and scholarly treatment of Candragomin and his works that I know of is given by Michael Hahn in the introduction to his *Candragomins Lokānandanāṭaka* (Wiesbaden, 1974, pp. 1–13), which also furnishes comprehensive bibliographical references.

Since the publication of Hahn's work, Candragomin has come somewhat more into the limelight with the English translation of the Tibetan versions of a number of his works lost in the original Sanskrit. In *Difficult Beginnings: Three Works on the Bodhisattva Path* (Boston and London, 1985) Mark Tatz translates three of Candragomin's most important and characteristic works—the *Candragomīpranidhāna*, *Bodhisattvasaṃvaraviṃśaka*, and *Deśanāstava*—and provides some useful introductory and commentarial material. While Tatz's book focuses more on the ethical or practical side of Candragomin, another set of translations is more concerned with his devotional nature: the four hymns (*stotra*) to Tārā translated by Martin Willson in his *In Praise of Tārā: Songs to the Saviouress* (London, 1986, pp. 222–237). Candragomin was also renowned as a dramatist, and Michael Hahn has now provided an English translation of the *Lokānandanāṭaka* under the title *Joy for the World* (Berkeley, 1987), based on his edition of Tibetan and Sanskrit sources with German translation, referred to above.

In addition, A.K. Warder has devoted a section of his *Indian Kāvya Literature* (vol. 3, Delhi, 1977, pp. 66–77) to Candragomin, in particular to the *Lokānanda*, and A.G.S. Kariyawasam has contributed an entry on Candragomin to the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* (vol. iii, fascicle 4, Colombo 1977, pp. 646–648).

Michael Hahn (1974, pp. 9–12) lists 63 works attributed to Candragomin in the Peking edition of the *bsTan 'gyur*. The bulk of these are short *sādhanas* and *stotras*, and it is by no means certain that all of them are correctly attributed, or that they are all by one and the same author. Tāranātha reports a tradition that Candragomin composed a total of 432 separate works: 108 “hymns” (*bstod pa, stotra*), 108 treatises on “inner science” (*nang rig pa'i bstan bcos, adhyātma-vidyā-śāstra*), 108 treatises on “outer science” (*phyi rol gyi bstan bcos, bahirdhā-śāstra*), and 108 on “fine arts” (*bzo gnas, śilpa-sthāna*).¹

The present paper hopes to throw further light on Candragomin’s literary career by investigating the possibility that he composed a work on the three “bodies” (*trikāya, kāyatraya*) of a Buddha, and that this work is partially preserved in Tibetan translation. The evidence for this will be presented in two sections:

(I) the attribution to Candragomin of a text entitled **Kāyatrayāvātāra* by the Tibetan historians Bu ston and Tāranātha. Although this evidence is based on Tibetan tradition, I assume that the two authors base their statements on Indian sources.

(II) a citation of seven verses on the *trikāya* by Daśabalaśrīmitra in his *Saṃskṛtāsamskṛta-viniścaya*, a Northern Indian source preserved only in Tibetan translation. Although Daśabalaśrīmitra does not give the title of the text from which he has drawn the verses, he ascribes them to a **Mahā-upāsaka Candra*.

The presentation of evidence is followed by (III), an attempt to reconcile the evidence of the Tibetan historians with that of the Indian Daśabalaśrīmitra, in the form of a discussion of whether **Mahā-upāsaka Candra* is Candragomin, and whether the verses cited by Daśabalaśrīmitra could be from the **Kāyatrayāvātāra*.

I. *Bu ston and Tāranātha on Candragomin's *Kāyatrayāvatāra*

In their well-known histories of Buddhism, Bu ston (1290–1364) and Tāranātha (born 1575)² describe the life, legends, and literary activity of Candragomin. Both authorities attribute to him a work entitled *sKu gsum la'jug pa*, **Kāyatrayāvatāra*. The references are as follows:

(i) Bu ston³

rje btsun 'jig rten dbang phyug gi zhal nas / theg chen gyi bstan
bcos mang du rtsoms shig gsungs nas zla ba sgron ma'i 'grel pa
dang / sku gsum la 'jug pa la sogs pa mang du mdzad /

When holy Lokeśvara had commanded [Candragomin] to “compose many treatises on the Great Vehicle!” (*mahāyāna-śāstra*), he wrote many works such as the Commentary on the *Candraṣradīpa[-sūtra]*, the **Kāyatrayāvatāra*, etc.

(ii) Tāranātha (120.22 / /207)

sdom nyi shu pa dang / sku gsum la 'jug pa ni / theg chen
paṇḍita phyis byon pa thams cad kyis slob par byed pa byung
ngo /

All the later authorities (*paṇḍita*) of the Great Vehicle studied and taught the [*Bodhisattva-*] *saṃvaraviṃśaka* and the **Kāyatrayāvatāra*.

The first work mentioned by Bu ston, a commentary on the well-known *Candraṣradīpa-* or *Samādhirāja-sūtra*, has not been preserved. Tāranātha (120.12f / /206-207) also implies that such a work was composed by Candragomin, since he includes the *Candraṣradīpa-* (*Zla ba sgron me*) in a list of five “marvelous” (*rmad du byung ba, adbhuta*) *sūtras* which Candragomin, at the behest of Arya Tārā, “expounded constantly and without interruption to others, and recited daily,” and states that he composed treatises that summarized the essential meaning (*don bsdu'i bstan bcos*) of such *sūtras*.

The first work mentioned by Tāranātha, the *Bodhisattva-saṃvaraviṃśaka*, is extant in Tibetan and has been translated into English by M. Tatz (see above). Tāranātha's estimation of

the importance and popularity of this text in India is corroborated by the fact that at least two Indian commentaries, both available in Tibetan translation, are known: one by the great *paṇḍita* Śāntarakṣita, and another by Bodhibhadra.⁴ The *Bodhisattvasaṃvaraviṃśaka* played a significant role in the history of Tibetan Buddhism as a manual of *bodhisattva* practice; a commentary on it was composed by the Sa skya scholar Grags pa rGyal mtshan, and it is frequently referred to in Tibetan literature.⁵

Despite the fact that it was singled out for attention by both Bu ston and Tāranātha, the second text mentioned by the two authorities, the **Kāyatrayāvatāra*, does not seem ever to have been translated into Tibetan; nor is it extant in the original Sanskrit or in Chinese translation. While the *bsTan 'gyur* does contain a number of short texts devoted to the subject of *trikāya*, none of them are attributed to Candragomin.⁶

In the citations given above Bu ston and Tāranātha mention the **Kāyatrayāvatāra* in quite different contexts and couple it with different works. Furthermore, their treatment of Candragomin's life and works differs in that each deals with events ignored by the other, Tāranātha's account being much longer, and in that even events common to both accounts differ in details. From this I conclude that the two authors derived their knowledge of the **Kāyatrayāvatāra* from different sources: Bu ston from a hagiographical tradition, and Tāranātha from a scholastic tradition that perhaps reflects the curriculum of the universities of Northern India.

II. *Daśabalaśrīmitra and the Verses of *Mahā-upāsaka Candra*

A possible citation of the lost **Kāyatrayāvatāra* is given by Daśabalaśrīmitra in his *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*.⁷ In an earlier paper I have attempted to demonstrate that the author of this text most probably lived in North-eastern India during the Sena period, in about the second half of the 12th century A.C.⁸ In the 27th chapter, the **Bodhisattvanaya-prajñāpāramitār-thabhāvanā-viniścaya*,⁹ Daśabalaśrīmitra cites seven verses of seven syllables per line on the subject of the *trikāya*, which he attributes to a **Mahā-upāsaka Candra*. A transcription of these verses (1) follows, along with (2) a translation of verses 1 to 4

on the *dharmakāya* and verse 7 on the *nirmāṇakāya*. In the absence of a commentary or a wider context, I have been unable to understand verses 5 and 6 or to relate them to the *sambhogakāya*, and therefore leave them untranslated.

(1) Text

dge bsnyen chen po zla ba'i zhal nas / chos kyi sku'i dbang du
byas nas gsungs pa /

1. 'di yi chos sku de bzhin nyid /
rnam rtog rnams kyi spyod yul min /
sems can rnams dang don rnams kyi /
rang bzhin de dag gnyis su med /
2. sna tshogs ngo bo'i sku rnams dang /
'gro rnams de nyid ngo bo rnams /
gang du ro gcig 'gro 'gyur ba /
rgya mtshor 'bab pa'i chu bo bzhin /
3. rnam pa 'di 'dra'i sku de ni /
skyob pa rnams kyi chos sku ste /
rnam pa thams cad rnam dag pa /
rdzogs byang chub kyi spyod yul nyid /
4. de yi¹⁰ nus pa rang ngang gis /
dus rnams kun tu¹¹ 'jig rten du /
mtha' yas don rnams byed pa ni /
nyi ma'i 'od zer lta bu'o' /

longs spyod rdzogs pa'i dbang du byas pa ni /

5. dmus long lta bus bdag spangs nas /
rang nyid bsod nams bsags can gyis /
de ni gcig pu gcig¹² car du /
nyi ma lta bur kun gyis mthong /
6. 'on pa lta bu bdag spangs nas /
bsod nams nor bsags snyan rnams kyis /
dam chos bdud rtsi'i bcud len ni /
de la de ring yang ldan¹³ nyid / ces¹⁴ so /

sprul pa'i sku'i dbang du byas pa ni/

7. mtha' yas phyogs su mtha' med pa'i/
 sems can theg pa gsum gyis 'dir/
 yang dang yang du rnam dag byed/
 sa bon ci bzhin bsam ji¹⁵ bzhin/ zhes so/ /

(2) Translation of verses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7

With reference to the *dharmakāya*, the Great *Upāsaka* Candra has taught:

1. His [the Buddha's] *dharmakāya* is Suchness (*tathatā*), beyond the sphere of discrimination (*avikalpa-gocara*), not separate (*advaya*) from the true nature (*svabhāva*) of sentient beings (*sattva*) and phenomena (*artha*).
2. The manifold "essential bodies" (*svabhāvakāya*) and all realms of existence (*gati*) are precisely it wherein all phenomena take on a single taste (*ekarasa*) like the rivers that merge with the sea.
3. A body of such a nature is the *dharmakāya* of the Protectors: perfectly pure (*viśuddha*) in every respect, the very sphere of perfect awakening (*sambodhi*).
4. Quite naturally (*svarasena*) it has the ability to effect limitless benefits (*artha*) throughout all time, throughout the world, just like the rays of the sun.

With reference to the *nirmāṇakāya*:

7. Here [in this world], by means of the three vehicles (*yāna*) again and again it purifies limitless sentient beings in limitless directions according to their potential (*bīja*) and aspirations (*āśaya*).

The *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya* is an erudite and eclectic work that draws on a wide range of sources of both the *śrāvaka*- and *bodhisattva-yānas*. All named sources that I have been able

to trace are correctly attributed; furthermore, the translation (by unknown hands) is smooth and clear, and, when compared with the original Sanskrit of the texts cited when such are available, is up to the best standards of Tibetan translation. Thus there cannot be much doubt that in the original Sanskrit text of the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya* Daśabalaśrīmitra cited the verses accurately and correctly attributed them to **Mahā-upāsaka* Candra, according to the tradition that he had received, or that the verses were accurately rendered into Tibetan.

III. Discussion of Sources

The question that I now wish to consider is whether **Mahā-upāsaka* Candra can be identified with Candragomin, and whether the source of the verses can be the latter's lost **Kāyatrayāvatāra*.

In Tibetan texts, the name Candragomin is generally transliterated rather than translated; such is the case with most of the colophons of the works attributed to him, and with the Tibetan historians Bu ston and Tāranātha, who preface the name with *ācārya* (*slob dpon*). Three of the *bs Tan 'gyur* texts listed by Hahn (1974, p. 12) are ascribed to *btsun pa Zla ba*, which is given in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*¹⁶ as equivalent to Candragomin. *Zla ba* is the standard Tibetan equivalent of *candra*, while *btsun pa*, normally representing *bhadanta*,¹⁷ would seem here to represent *-gomin*. Tibetan tradition is unanimous in asserting that Candragomin was a layman; I-Ching (in English translation) simply calls him "Mahāsattva Candra, a learned man."¹⁸ Tāranātha (117.6 / 202) explains the name as follows: "At the instance of Ārya Avalokiteśvara, he became a *gomi-upāsaka* (*go mi'i dge bsnyen*); since his name was Candra, he was known thereafter as Candragomin (Tsandra go mi)." Further on (204.17 / 337) Tāranātha uses the phrase *go mi'i dge bsnyen* to describe Kumārananda, who taught the *Prajñāpāramitā* in South India at an unknown date. An Amaragomin (Go mi 'chi med) collaborated with bLo ldan shes rab on the translation of Maitreya's *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*¹⁹ and Ārya Vimuktisena's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitopadeśasāstra-abhisamayālaṅkāravṛtti*²⁰ around 1100; according to Bu ston, he was a resident of Kashmir.²¹

Instances of the use of *gomin* in the same sense as described by Tāranātha also occur outside of India. In Tibet, 'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal (1392–1481), writing in his *Blue Annals*, states that the Abbot Rinpoche gLang lung pa “took up the vows of an *upāsaka*” at the age of eighteen. Roerich gives the Tibetan for “vows of an *upāsaka*” as *go mi'i sdom pa* [*gomi-samvara*], and explains the phrase thus: “‘vows of Gomi’; abstaining from sexual life. Some say that the term means the ‘vows taken by Candragomin.’”²²

In Śrī Laṅkā, an important literary figure of the latter part of the 12th century was Guruḷugōmī [Garuḍa-gomin], whose name is explained by C. E. Godakumbura as follows: “In the name Guruḷu-gōmin the latter part -gōmin means a Buddhist lay-follower [footnote: *gōmin* = *bauddha-bhikṣu śiṣyaḥ*, with no source given]. The same title was suffixed to the name of Candra, the grammarian and author of the *Śiṣyalekha*. Both these names Guruḷugōmī and Saṅdagōmī [= Candragomin] are cited as examples of *nipātana* by the author of the Sinhalese Grammar, the *Sidatsaṅgarā*, which was composed somewhere in the thirteenth century.”²³

I may note here that Candragomin's *Śiṣyalekha* and his grammar were well-known in Śrī Laṅkā and exerted a considerable influence upon its literature.²⁴ Tāranātha (117.8 / 202) reports that Candragomin visited that country, where he spread the knowledge of secular subjects, taught the Mahāyāna as appropriate, and built many *dharma*-centres.

In standard Sanskrit *gomin* literally means “lord or owner of cattle.” This definition is given, for example, by two South Indian commentaries on the *Amarakośa*, explaining the verse *dvau gavīśvare gomān gomī* of the root-text: *gavām-iśvare svāmini gavīśvare, gāvaḥ santy-asya gomān gomī ca gosvāmi-nāmanī*, and *gavādhyakṣa-nāmanī*.²⁵ Monier-Williams adds the definition “a layman adhering to the Buddha's faith,” which he ascribes to “lexicographers” without giving an exact reference.²⁶

From “owner of cattle” to “Buddhist layman” is something of a quantum leap, and it is obvious that the meaning of the Buddhist usage of *gomin* is not to be sought in orthodox etymology. I have not come across any other examples of the technical usage of *gomin* for a type of *upāsaka*, or been able to find a more specific definition of the term. Thus I am unable to state exactly what type of *upāsaka* vows *gomin* implies. But the agree-

ment of Tibetan and Sinhalese sources is quite remarkable, and certainly establishes the definition of *gomin* as an unspecified type of *upāsaka*.

This brings us to the first of the questions I raised earlier, whether Daśabalaśrīmitra's **Mahā-upāsaka* Candra can be identified with Candragomin. Since tradition avers that Candragomin was an *upāsaka*, and since his name is interpreted in both Tibet and Śrī Laṅkā as "Candra the *upāsaka*," I feel that it is certain that he and **Mahā-upāsaka* Candra are one and the same. Very few of the Buddhist writers about whom we have any knowledge were laymen: the great masters of both the *śrāvaka* and *bodhisattva* vehicles were *bhikṣus*. Thus, considering the fame and influence of Candragomin, the epithet *Mahā-upāsaka*, "the Great Layman," would have been quite fitting.²⁷

The second question I have raised, whether the verses cited by Daśabalaśrīmitra are taken from the **Kāyatrayāvatāra* cannot, in the absence of that text, be resolved with finality. I can only say that, on the basis of the points listed below, there is a strong likelihood that such was the case:

- the subject of the verses is clearly the *trikāya*, and they are cited by Daśabalaśrīmitra as authoritative in the context of that subject;
- Tāranātha states that "all the later authorities of the Great Vehicle studied and taught ... the **Kāyatrayāvatāra*"; Daśabalaśrīmitra was one such authority;
- since the **Kāyatrayāvatāra* was still known to Tibetan scholars some centuries after the time of Daśabalaśrīmitra (if my dating of the latter is correct), it could still have been extant in India at the time of Daśabalaśrīmitra;
- it is unlikely that Candragomin would have composed two authoritative texts on the subject of *trikāya*.

In conclusion, I must confess that I have not been able to scour the extensive opus attributed to Candragomin in the *bsTan 'gyur* for these verses. However, since the titles of these works indicate that they are *sādhanas* or *stotras* dedicated to various *bodhisattvas* or tantric "deities," none of them are likely candidates. A more promising source for further evidence is the vast corpus of Mahāyāna *sāstra* literature preserved in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese; considering the alleged popu-

larity of the work, it is possible that citations of it exist, which may prove or disprove my thesis.

NOTES

1. Tibetan text ed. A. Schiefner, *Tāranāthae de Doctrinae Buddhicae in India Propagatione*, rep. Tokyo, n.d., p. 120.17. English translation ed. D. Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, Calcutta, 1980, p. 207. References to Tāranātha will hereafter be given in parentheses by Schiefner, page and line, followed by Chattopadhyaya, page, i.e. 00.00 / 00.

2. Dates as given by Hahn, 1974, p. 6.

3. Tibetan text ed. Lokesh Chandra, *Bu-ston's History of Buddhism*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 836.1. English translation by E. Obermiller, *History of Buddhism by Bu-ston*, part ii, Heidelberg, 1932, p. 133.

4. For these commentaries, cf. Hahn, 1974, p. 12, and Tatz, op. cit., pp. 13–16. Tatz incorporates material from both in his own commentary, p. 30ff. He also refers (p. 15) to “a fragment of what constitutes the beginning of a commentary to the *Twenty Verses* which is otherwise unknown” from Tun Huang, which, considering its relatively early date, is more likely to be a translation from Sanskrit than an original Tibetan commentary, and thus may represent a third Indian commentary.

5. Tatz, op. cit., pp. 13–16.

6. These include the following (references here and in the following notes are to the Peking edition of the Tibetan *Tripitaka* reprinted by the Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1958):

— *Kāyatrayāvātāramukha* of Nāgamitra, P 5290, pp. 118.1.1–121.4.7.

This text, composed entirely in verse, does not contain the verses discussed in this article or appear to be related to them in style, arrangement, or in any other way.

— *Kāyatrayāvṛtti* of Jñānacandra, P 5291, pp. 121.4.8–136.1.1. This is a prose commentary on the preceding; although it makes a number of citations from Mahāyāna *sūtras*, a cursory examination does not reveal any citation of the verses in question, or any reference to Candragomin and his **Kāyatrayāvātāra*.

— *Kāyatrayastotra*, attributed to Nāgārjuna, P 2015. Christian Lindtner, in his *Nāgārjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna* (Copenhagen, 1982, pp. 15–16) lists this with the texts he considers “most probably not genuine.” Cf. p. 16, note 35, for bibliographical references, to which may be added “*Trikāyastava* in an Inscription at Mahintale,” *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, vol. iv, pp. 242–246. Cf. also D. Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Wiesbaden, 1981, p. 56 and note 163.

The Sanskrit titles given in the Tibetan *Tripitaka* are in some cases reconstructed by its editors. To the best of my knowledge, the original titles of the

texts listed above and of Candragomin's *sKu gsum la jug pa* are not attested in any Sanskrit text. A possible alternative for *Kāyatraya-* is *Trikāya-*; I have retained *Kāyatraya-* since it has been preferred by most scholars to date.

7. sTobs bcu dpal bshes gnyen, 'Dus byas dang 'dus ma byas rnam par nges pa, P 5865, vol. 146.

8. P. Skilling, "The *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta-Viniścaya* of Daśabalaśrīmitra," *Buddhist Studies Review*, London, vol. 4 no. 1, 1987, pp. 3–23.

9. Pp. 90.1.2–99.2.4, *Byang chub sems dpa'i tshul lugs la shes rab pha rol phyin pa'i don sgom pa rnam par nges pa*. The citation is found at *ngo mtshar bstan bcos*, ño, 237a3–237b1 (p. 97.1.3ff). I have also consulted the *Sde-dge Bstan-'gyur Series*: volume 108, "published as a part of the *dgons-rdzogs* of H.H. the Sixteenth Rgyal-dbañ Karma-pa," *dbu ma, ha*, 290b4–291a1 (p. 580.4ff). The few minor variants are given in the following notes.

10. Sde dge: *gis*.

11. Sde dge: *du*.

12. Sde dge: *cig*.

13. Here the Peking edition adds an unnecessary *pa*, which does not fit the metre.

14. Peking: *zhes*.

15. Sde dge: *ci*.

16. *Mahāvvyūṭpatti*, ed. R. Sakaki, Kyoto, 1926, item 3493.

17. *Mahāvvyūṭpatti* 8702, 9220.

18. Translated J. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago*, rep. new Delhi, 1982, p. 164.

19. E. Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, Tokyo, 1978, p. 39; A. Chattopadhyaya, *Catalogue of Indian Buddhist Texts in Tibetan Translation: Tānjur (bsTān 'gyur)*, Calcutta, 1983, p. 17.

20. E. Conze, op. cit., p. 112; A. Chattopadhyaya, op. cit., p. 211; C. Pensa, *L'Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti di Ārya-Vimuktisena*, Rome, 1967, p. 3.

21. E. Obermiller, op. cit., ii 215.

22. G.N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, rep. Delhi, 1976, vol. i, p. 297. Additions in square brackets in this and the following citation are my own.

23. C.E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, Colombo, 1955, p. 49.

24. Cf. A.G.S. Kariyawasam, op. cit., p. 648.

25. A. A. Ramanathan, *Amarakośa with the Unpublished South Indian Commentaries*, vol. i, Madras, 1971, pp. 588–589 (*Dvīṭīyakāṇḍa*, *Vaiśyavarga*, v. 58).

26. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, rep. Delhi, 1976, p. 366.

27. Throughout this paper, I have rendered Daśabalaśrīmitra's *dge bsnyen chen po* Zla ba as *Mahā-upāsaka* Candra. Based on the Tibetan and Sinhalese interpretations that *dge bsnyen* = *upāsaka* = *gomin*, it would also be possible to render it as Candra-mahāgomin or Mahācandragomin. Neither of these seems very likely.