A Reconstruction of the Sanskrit Title of Candrakīrti’s

_Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa:_

With Special Attention to the Term “rab tu byed pa”

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1. Introduction

The _Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa_, written by Candrakiriti and preserved only in its Tibetan translation, is one of the most important sources for investigating the Madhyamaka school’s understanding of Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. The Tibetan text, based on the Peking and sNar thān editions, was published by Ch. Lindtner in 1979, but in the years since there have been no translations and few studies devoted to it. The author of this paper is currently in the process of preparing a critical Tibetan text, based on the five editions, and an annotated Japanese translation. In the course of these projects, the author has found it necessary to consider the Sanskrit title of this text. In previous studies, it has been called “Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa” (_Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa_), adopting the title that is shown at the beginning of the Tibetan translation. However, on the basis of the titles shown in the colophon and mentioned in other texts, we can posit that it was originally called “Pañcaskandhaka.”

Recently, the Sanskrit text of Vasubandhu’s work on _pañcaskandha_ and its commentary by Sthiramati have been published, providing new sources of evidence to support this alternate title. In this paper, we would like to investigate the term “rab tu byed pa” (prakaraṇa) in the Tibetan title, and to consider the possibility that it was appended in order to show its belonging to the genre of concise doctrinal summaries.

2. Evidence for the Sanskrit Title of Candrakīrti’s _Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa_

The Tibetan translation of Candrakīrti’s text begins with the title “Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa” (_Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa_) (p. 95, ll. 2–3). However, in the colophon, which is considered to have been present in the Sanskrit text as well, there is a closing remark: [we have] finished [the explanation of] _rab tu byed pa_ named “Phuñ po lña pa” (_Phuñ po lña_...
pa žes bya ba’i rab tu byed pa) which was made by Master Candrakīrtī (p. 145, ll. 19–20). According to this remark, the title is “Phuñ po lña pa,” which can be reconstructed as “Pañcaskandha” in Sanskrit. The point is that the title is a derivative of pañcaskandha and that it does not include the term “rab tu byed pa.” This remark shows that the title and the term “rab tu byed pa” possess a Karmadhārāya compound relationship. When the Madhyamakaratantrapradīpa (D 266b3–4, P 335b3) and the Bodhimārgapradiṇapapañjikā (D 280b5–6, P 324a8) mention Candrakīrtī’s text, they refers to it as “dBu ma phun po lña pa,” As for the term “dbu ma” (*madhyamaka) in the front of the title, IKEDA 1985 points out that it was added in a later period in order to emphasize its belonging to the Madhyamaka school and to differentiate it from Vasubandhu’s text. His assessment seems highly plausible. In this paper, we would like focus on the latter part of this title: “phuñ po lña pa.” This part corresponds to the title in the colophon. The title, with “dbu ma” added, is also found in the catalogue (dKar chag) of the Peking edition (P 112a5). However, the title in the catalogue of the sDe dge edition (P 437a1) is identical to that in the Tibetan translation, and, in the catalogue in Bu ston’s Chos ’byun, the “dbu ma” is added as follows: “dBu ma phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa” (p. 52, no. 577).1) Synthesizing this evidence, we can presume that Candrakīrtī’s text was originally called “Pañcaskandha” (Phuñ po lña pa) and that the title including the phrase “rab tu byed pa” was a Tibetan innovation.

3. The Sanskrit Title of Vasubandhu’s Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa

We can see the same the textual developments in the case of Vasubandhu’s work on pañcaskandha. While the Tibetan translation has the same title as Candrakīrtī’s text, Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa, Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa (D 11b4–5, P 12b6–7), the title of Sthiramatī’s commentary on this text is “Pañcaskandhakavibhāṣā” (p. 133, l. 8), and in the Trimśikāvijñaptibhāṣya, Sthiramatī calls his PSkV “Pañcaskandhakopanibandhana” (p. 120, l. 20). Yaśomitra also referred to Vasubandhu’s text as “Pañcaskandha” in his commentary on the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya (p. 64, l. 25; p. 127, l. 21; p. 309, l. 7, l. 13). However, the Tibetan catalogues, such as the lDan dkar ma (P 334, no. 638) and ’Phan thaṅ ma (p. 28, no. 567), as well as the catalogues of the Peking and sDe dge edition (P 124a7, D 446b1), and the catalogue in Bu ston’s Chos ’byun (p. 57, no. 712), show the same Tibetan title, which includes the phrase “rab tu byed pa”: “Phuñ po lña’i rab tu byed pa.” On the basis of this evidence, we can posit that the Sanskrit title of Vasubandhu’s text
was “Pañcasaskandhaka” and that the term “rab tu byed pa” was appended in Tibet. Since this presents perfect parallel with Candrakīrti’s text, it can serve as evidence for reconstructing the latter text’s Sanskrit title. Being aware that Candrakīrti’s text was originally called “Pañcasaskandhaka,” we should conventionally refer to it as “Madhyamakapañcasaskandhaka,” which is the title in the MRP and so forth, in order to avoid confusing it with Vasubandhu’s PSk.

4. The Term “rab tu byed pa” in the Tibetan Titles

We would also like to investigate the usage of the term “rab tu byed pa” in the titles of Tibetan translations. The beginning part of the PSkV gives us the following important information:

[Now we explain] the establishment of this concise treatise (prakaraṇa) beginning with the passage “pañca skandhā . . .” This [treatise] aims to teach the general and specific characteristics of the dharmas. (Objection:) Because [we have already] explained the characteristics of the dharmas in the treatises such as the Yogācāraabhūmi and so forth, it would be useless effort to explain them again. (Answer:) No, it would not be useless. Because it is for the benefit of the wise disciples. The wise ones think much of a summarized [treatise], not a detailed one, because they can perfectly understand the detailed arguments derived from these [characteristics of the dharmas] only with examples. Thus this concise treatise is established for the sake of the sentient beings who want the summarized [texts]. (p. 1, ll. 4–10)

According to this passage, it is certain that the PSk had been categorized as “prakaraṇa” in India. Thus, we suggest the possibility that the term “prakaraṇa” was added in Tibet on the basis of this traditional Indian classification. Among Tibetan translations, there are also other cases where this term has been added to the front of their titles, such as “Prakaraṇābhidharmāvatāra” (D no. 4097, P no. 5599). Now, we have to examine the significance of adding the term “prakaraṇa” to these titles. As a translation of “prakaraṇa,” “monograph” would be most common rendering, though it can also mean “chapter.” When we see the titles of the Buddhist Tibetan translations that include this term, however, we note that they tend to be short, concise treatises. As the previous quoted passage demonstrates, the PSk, in its summary of the characteristics of the dharmas, can be seen as just such a text. Thus, we can make the general presumption that, in this context, the term “prakaraṇa” refers to particularly short, concise treatises in the Buddhist tradition, which means that it was appended to the Tibetan titles of these texts in order to highlight this quality. For in-
stance, the opening and closing verses of the MPSk shows that it aims to summarize the Sarvāstivāda doctrine of the categories for those who are not familiar with it:

(Opening verse:) Because the classification is an entrance to the wisdom for those who have unclear intelligence, [I will] explain the summarized correct definitions of skandha, āyatana and dhātu. (p. 95, ll. 4–7)

(Closing verse:) For the sake of the worldly people, who do not make efforts, Candrakīrti made this treatise which explains the summarized correct meaning of skandha. (p. 145, ll. 16–17)

Thus, in the case of the MPSk, it is possible to presume that the term “rab tu byed pa” was appended in Tibet in order to demonstrate that it belonged to this genre of concise doctrinal summaries.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have proved that the Sanskrit title of Candrakīrti’s text is best considered to be “Pañcaskandhaka,” and have proposed to refer to it conventionally as “Madhyamakapañcaskandhaka” to avoid the confusion with Vasubandhu’s PSk. As for the term “rab tu byed pa,” we have pointed out the possibility that it was appended to Tibetan titles in order to show that they belonged to a genre of concise doctrinal summaries. However, we are aware of limitation of this argument, given that this present paper only consider this issue in light of the PSk and MPSk. In order to make the argument more compelling, it would be necessary to consider a wider range of the texts, including non-Buddhist sources.

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(Notes)

1) According to the colophon, it was Dipamkaraśrīśāna, or Atiśa (A.D. 982–1054), who translated the MPSk. Thus, we cannot find its name in the IDan dkar ma (A.D. 824) and ‘Phan thaṅ ma (ca. middle of the 9c).

2) LI and STEINKELLNER 2008 points out a difficulty in adopting the phrase “pañca skandhāḥ” from the colophon as the text’s title (p. vii, note 1).

3) As for the term “prakarana” in the title of the AA, see YOKOYAMA 2014.

4) I also discussed these matters in YOKOYAMA 2014.

5) See pp. 13–14, note 21 in YOKOYAMA 2014.

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