Preliminary Notes on the Extended Heart Sutra in Chinese.

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Abstract

This article offers an introductory overview of the attribution and dating of the versions of the extended Heart Sutra preserved in the Chinese Tripitaka and some preliminary assessments of the reliability of these sources. It includes some observations about the interesting features of each version and a stemma showing how they relate to the wider world of Heart Sutra versions. Finally, a conjecture is made about the language in which the extension was made. The Heart Sutra appears to have been extended twice in the early eighth century, leaving us with two different versions of the extended text. It appears that the first extended text, like the standard Heart Sutra, may have been composed in Chinese, while the second extended text appears to have been composed in Sanskrit.

1. Introduction

The English title—Heart Sutra—translates the abbreviated Chinese title, i.e. Xīnjīng «心經».¹ The full title in Chinese is Bānrěbōluómìduō xīnjīng «般若波羅蜜多心經» (Heart of Perfection of Paragnosis Sutra).² The standard Sanskrit title is Prajñāpāramitāḥṛdaya (Heart of Perfection of Paragnosis). Prajñā refers to knowledge that comes from beyond the sensorium, comes in point of fact, only from the unique circumstances that obtain when the withdrawal of attention from the sensorium means that it ceases to consciously register. I translate this as “paragnosis” (knowledge from beyond) if only to make a clean break from Conze and his “perfection of wisdom” or “wisdom gone beyond”.

The Heart Sutra exists in two main versions: the standard text epitomised by the Xīnjīng (T 251) and the extended text, in which the first sentence of the standard text is much expanded and a colophon is added. The extended text is preserved in many Sanskrit documents from Nepal, as well as a few from China, and Japan. The Tibetan Kanjur contains two versions of an extended text [47] and eight Pala Dynasty (ca 750-1162 CE) commentaries in Tibetan translation [34, 35]. There are five versions of the extended text in Chinese, which I will refer to by their Taishō running number, i.e. T 252, 253, 254, 255, and 257. Various versions in Chinese and Tibetan were found amidst the Dunhuang cache; although there is no published study of these yet, a standard text in Tibetan translation has been published in facsimile [55: 61-4]. Preliminary work on the Dunhuang Heart Sutra manuscripts by Ben Nourse [43] shows at least two hybrid versions combining elements of both standard and extended texts.

The additional elements in the extended text supply the missing apparatus of a genuine sutra. In the opening paragraph this includes:

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¹ All the major British and American English dictionaries treat “sutra” as an Anglicised word; so there is no need to translate jīng 经 into the Sanskrit sūtra.
² Authorities vary on the word breaks in the Pinyin transcription. I am persuaded by the arguments of Zacchetti [54: 3, n.5] and others for transcribing 般 using the standard Pinyin bān rather than as bō per Chinese Buddhists.
The implied presence of the narrator, Ānanda, via the phrase “Thus have I heard” (rú shì wǒ wén 如是我聞; evam mayā śrutam).

The occasion and place of the preaching in the form “At one time the Bhagavan was staying at…” (yīshí fō zài 一時佛在; ekasmin samaye bhagavān…viharati sma).

The presence of an audience.

And in the closing paragraph:

- Endorsement of the teaching by the Buddha.
- Rejoicing of the audience and commitment to practice the teaching.

Comparative analysis of the language of the standard *Heart Sutra* text has shown that it was composed in Chinese and then translated into Sanskrit by someone who had little or no familiarity with the Sanskrit Prajñāpāramitā idiom [9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 28, 34, 39].

Following this brief introduction, four loosely connected sections follow. In Section Two, I outline the traditional attributions and dates for the various extended texts and note that some of them are problematic or remain vague. It seems likely that “translators” were more like redactors in some cases. In Section Three, I compare the extensions as they occur in T 252 and T 253 to illustrate the differences between T 252 and other *Heart Sutra* texts. I argue that these differences amount to two distinct recensions of the extended text: Recension One, of which T 252 appears to be the only representative, and Recension Two—i.e. T 253, 254, 255, 257, as well as the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions—all of which are variations on the same text. Section Four contains notes on the language of the texts, noting lexical and syntactic idiosyncrasies and variations that contribute, in Section Five, to a discussion of the language of composition of the extensions based on the language. While the evidence is circumstantial it seems likely that Recension Two was extended in Sanskrit and translated into Chinese and Tibetan. However, T 252 has no Indo-Tibetan counterparts and may well have been composed in Chinese.

In this essay, I do not give much attention to Tibetan texts. This is mainly because I do not know any Tibetan. However, having studied the Sanskrit and Chinese texts and their attributions, my working hypothesis is that the *Heart Sutra* went to Tibet directly from China, where the text was composed ca 654-6 CE [15]. If the Tibetans had a Sanskrit text at all (which is not obvious), it most likely came from China, not from India. There is no evidence whatever of an “Indian tradition” of the *Heart Sutra*. Moreover, although there is no consensus, at least some of the “Indian” commentaries appear to have been composed in Tibetan and may well have been based on a Tibetan *Heart Sutra* text [28: 56]. Experience has shown that we cannot take attributions of Buddhist texts at face value.

Note that I prefer the Buddhist Sanskrit spelling bodhisatva as commonly found in Buddhist manuscripts. The classical spelling, bodhisattva, has been tacitly imposed on Buddhist literature by editors without any argumentation or justification.4

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3 Also yīshí báojiāfàn zhù 一時薄伽梵住 (T 255) and yīshí shizūn zài 一時世尊在 (T 257)
2. The Five Extended Heart Sutra Versions in Chinese

Establishing the provenance and date of these translations relies mainly on Chinese bibliographies or catalogues of Buddhist translations prepared during the Tang and Song Dynasties. There are few studies of these catalogues in English, the most important being Storch [49] and Tokuno [50]. Below I list such bibliographic metadata as I have been able to discern, although as we will see, there is a good deal of work yet to be done on the provenance of these texts.

T 252

T 252 is titled Pūbiànzhìzáng bānřébōluómìduō xīnjīng «普遍智藏般若波羅蜜多心經» (Universal Treasury of Knowledge, Heart of the Perfection of Paragonisit Sutra). This text only exists in Chinese. The attribution of T 252 reads Mójiétíguó sānzàng shāmén fǎyuè chóngyì 摩竭提國三藏沙門法月重譯 “Retranslated by the Trepiṭaka from Magadha," Monk Fǎyuè 法月.” Fǎyuè (653–743), literally “Dharma moon”, has been reconstructed as Dharmacandra, and is also attested as Dámózhàn’nièluó 達摩戰涅羅 (T 2156: 55.766c.1). This is the only translation attributed to Fǎyuè.

Lancaster and Park [32] credit this information to the Great Tang, Zhenyuan Period Supplementary Catalogue of Teachings from the Kaiyuan Period (Táng zhēnyuán xù kāiyuán shìjiào lù. «大唐貞元續開元釋教錄» T 2156: 55.748c.3-7; hereafter Zhēnyuán Catalogue) compiled by Yuánzhào 圓照 (794 CE) [3]. The Revised List of Canonical Buddhist Texts of the Zhenyuan Era (Zhēnyuán xīndìng shìjiào mù lù Zhenyuan «貞元新定釋教目錄». T 2157; hereafter Revised Zhēnyuán Catalogue) states, “Monk Liyán recorded the translated Sanskrit words” (shāmén Liyán yì fànyǔ bǐ shòu 沙門利言譯梵語筆受. T 2157; 55.748c05).

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4 This issue has been discussed at length by Gouriswar Bhattacharya [18]. Stefano Zacchetti describes -satva as “common and indeed well-known” and notes that satva is the “normal form” used through the Gilgit manuscript of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā [54: 24]. Richard Salomon notes that, in epigraphic Sanskrit, “notation of doubled consonants is often inconsistent… satva is very commonly written satva.” [45: 96].

5 Reference to entries in catalogues can be found in Lancaster and Park [32], where their items K 20, 21, 1267, 1383, 1427 correspond to T 251, 250, 252, 253, 257.

6 That is Mójiétíguó 摩竭提國. The Zhēnyuán Catalogue says he is from dōng ttiānzhú guó 東天竺國 (T 2156: 55.748c4) – i.e. “Eastern Sindu-deśa” or Eastern India. Magadha was centred on the eastern end of the central Ganges Valley.

7 Taishō notes: 重【大】， 奉詔【宮】

8 This attestation of the name was pointed out to me by Jeffrey Kotyk.
T 253

T 253 is simply called *Bānrěbōluómiduō xīnjīng* "般若波羅蜜多心經" *Heart of the Perfection of Paragnosis Sutra* and is the earliest translation that corresponds to the extant Sanskrit and Tibetan translations. The attribution of T 253 reads *Jìbīnguó sānzàng Bānruò gòng Lìyán děng yì* (罽賓國三藏般若共利言等譯) i.e. “Translated by the Trepiṭaka, Bānruò 般若 (Prajñā) from Kapiśā,9 with Lìyán 利言 and others.”10 The traditional date of this translation is 788 CE, but it’s not clear where this date comes from.

In an undated entry of the *Chinese Buddhist Canonical Attributions* (CBCA) database, Atsushi Iseki [6] summarises an article published in Japanese:

> “Tsukinowa [51] believes that almost all other titles ascribed to Prajñā were his own compositions, because 1) no original texts of his works have been found; 2) no alternate translations have been found in Chinese nor in Tibetan; 3) none of those works are cited in Indian texts; and 4) the contents and style of those works of his are too peculiar to be proper translation[s].”

Atsushi then says that Tsukinowa considered *only* T 253 to be a genuine translation. Given what we now know about the provenance of the *Xīnjīng* (T 251) we have to wonder if Prajñā also composed (rather than translated) the extended *Heart Sutra*. Moreover, Tsukinowa’s criteria could also be applied to T 252 suggesting that Fāyuè might have composed that version. Citing work in Japanese by Funayama Tōru, Eric Greene notes that

> “That these texts have nonetheless been labelled in traditional records as ‘translations’ is by no means unusual. Many texts that early records describe as compositions or compilations carried out by Indian monks in China were eventually remembered simply as ‘translations’.” [27: 42 n. 115]

Lìyán 利言 appears to be the same person that assisted Fāyuè, still active forty-seven years later. Lìyán has his own entry in the *Sòng gāosēng zhuàn* «宋高僧傳» “Biographies of eminent monks compiled during the Song period” (T 2061, 50:804b17 ff.). He was originally from Kucha. He was ordained in 726 CE and is said to have mastered a wide range of Buddhist texts and the Chinese classics. Not much else is known about him. He also appears in the biography of the later monk Prajñācakra, in the *Sòng gāosēng zhuàn*, i.e.

*Jì-bīn Sānzàng Bōrě kāi shì fānběn. Hānlín dàižhào Guāngzhái sì Shāmēn Lìyán dù yǔ* 墟賓三藏般若開釋梵本。翰林待詔光宅寺沙門利言度語。(T 2061, 50:716b17-8)

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9 Jìbīn guó 墟賓國 refers variably to Gandhāra, Kashmir, or even to Samarkand depending on who is using it and in what time period. In the Tang it refers to Kapiśā in what is now Afghanistan [24].
10 Paul Copp has summarised of the life of Prajñā [22: 360-2].
Kapiśā Trepiṭaka, Prajñā, explained and translated the Sanskrit text. Academician awaiting orders\textsuperscript{11} at Guāngzhái Temple, Shāmén Liyán, conveyed the speech in Chinese.

\textbf{T 254}

This version is also called Bānrebōluōmìduō xīnjīng «般若波羅蜜多心經». The attribution of T 254 says

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Táng shàng dū Dàxīngshàn sì sānzāng shāmén Zhìhuì lún fèng zhào yì
唐上都大興善寺三藏沙門智慧輪 諭譯 (8.850a08)
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Tang, Upper Capital, Dàxīngshàn Temple, Trepiṭaka Shāmén Zhìhuì lún translated with Imperial authority.

Zhihuì lún 智慧輪 “Wisdom Wheel” is a translation of the name Prajñācakra, elsewhere transliterated as Bānruò rējiéluó 般若惹羯羅 or Bānruò zhuójiéluō 般若斫羯囉 (fl. 847–882). The translation was undertaken at Dàxīngshàn Temple in Luòyáng 洛陽. The date of translation is usually given as 861 CE, however, no date is given in the text itself and there is no date given in the Chinese Buddhist Canonical Attributions database entry for T 254.

Dàxīngshàn Temple is famously where the three important early esoteric Buddhist translators—Subhakarasimha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra—were housed. However, we also know that Dàxīngshàn Temple was destroyed by the anti-Buddhist purge under Emperor Wǔzōng 武宗 (840–846). Since this is twenty years before the supposed translation, we may need to revise the commonly cited translation date.

Prajñācakra has a biography in the Sòng gāosēng zhuàn (T 2061, 50: 722c21 ff.), though this does not mention the Heart Sutra. Notably, there is no entry for T 254 in Lancaster and Park’s catalogue of the Korean Buddhist canon (1979).

\textbf{T 255}

The title, again, is simply Bānrebōluōmìduō xīnjīng «般若波羅蜜多心經». After which Taishō records: Dūnhuáng shíshì běn 燉煌石室本, indicating that the original was found in the library cave in Dunhuang along with about 180 manuscripts of the Heart Sutra in many different versions. The attribution is “Translated by the Trepiṭaka Dharmamaster Fāchéng” (guó dà dé sānzāng fǎshī shāmén Fāchéng yì 國大德三藏法師沙門法成譯) However, it’s not clear what the source for this attribution is.

Fāchéng 法成 is the Tibetan monk Chos grub or 'gos chos grub (fl. 820–840s; pronounced like Chodrub). Chos grub also translated Woncheuk’s Ćāndhinirmocanasūtra commentary which was subsequently known in Tibet as The Great Chinese Commentary on the Ārya Ćāndhinirmocanasūtra (’phags pa dgon pa zab mo nges par ’grel pa’i mdo’i rgya

\textsuperscript{11} Hánlín dàižào 輯林待詔 [29: 222 s.v. hàn-lín tài ckào (sic, i.e. chào)].
cher 'grel pa; Derge Ed. 4016). The appearance of this text in Tibetan catalogues gives us approximate dates for the translator [26]. Chos grub appears to have been based at Xiūduō Monastery (Xiūduō sì 修多寺), in Dunhuang, during the Tibetan occupation of Gansu, ca 755–850 [33: 157-8]. The usual date given for T 255 is 865 CE. While we know that Chos grub continued working as a translator this date might be a little late.

T 257

The last version is titled Fóshuō shèng fóm bānrebōluómìduō jīng «佛說聖佛母般若波羅蜜多經» corresponding to *Buddhabhāśa-bhagavatī-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra. 12 Note the absence of xīn 心 or heart in the title.

T 257 is attributed to Shīhù 施護 (Skt *Dānapāla; fl. 980–1017 CE), originally from Udyāna (Wū zhàng nà guó 烏仗那國) he was active as a translator during the Northern Song 北宋 (960–1127 CE). The attribution in full reads:

Xītiān yì jīng sānzàng cháofèng dàfū shì guāng lù qīng chuánfā dāshī cì zì chén
Shīhù fèng zhào yì

Xītiān yì jīng 西天譯經 sānzàng 三藏 cháofèng 大奉 dàfū 奉 shì guāng lù 試光祿卿 qīng 羣 chuánfā 傳法 dāshī 大師 cì zì 賜紫 chén 臣 yì 奕

Unpacking this: we discover his origin in India (xītiān 西天) and role as sutra translator (yì jīng 譯經), his name, Shīhù 施護, his Buddhist title “Trepiṭaka” sānzàng 三藏, and honorary titles bestowed by the emperor, i.e. “Grand Master for court service” (cháofèng dàfū 朝奉大夫) [29: 118] and “Acting Chief Minister of the Court of Imperial Entertainment” (shì guāng lù 試光祿卿) [46: 128], “Dharma-spreading great teacher” (chuánfā dāshī 傳法大師), and “favoured purple-robed subject” (cì zì chén 賜紫臣) 13 followed by the imprimatur “translated with imperial approval” (or “by imperial decree”) fèng zhào yì 奉 詔譯.

This attribution is based on an entry in the Dàzhōng xiángfú fǎbǎo lù «大中祥符法寶録» Catalogue of the Dharma Treasure During the Dàzhōng xiángfú Reign 14 Compiled by Yáng Yì 楊億 and monk Wéi jīng 唯淨 in 1013 CE [32: s.v. K 1427]. Unfortunately, I don’t have access to this source.15

Provenance notes

Some of the attributions seem doubtful and as noted it may be that “translators” may have been redactors responsible for extending the text, especially in the cases of T 252 and T 253.

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12 This reconstruction is partly based on notes in Dreitlein [23: 24]. Lancaster and Park give the title as Shèngfùmǔ bānrebōluómìduō jīng «聖佛母般若波羅蜜多經» which is reconstructed as *Bhagavatī-prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra [32: s.v. K 1427].

13 The bestowing of a purple robe as a sign of high office was begun during the reign of Empress Wǔ Zétiān (r. 690–705 CE) [19: 320-1].

14 Lancaster and Park refer to this text throughout as Ta-chung-lu.

15 According to Worldcat there is no copy in the UK.
This is one of those issues that we would not be surprised to find had been covered in detail in Japanese or Chinese but the result never translated into English. In any case, if Buddhologists are to understand this text and the processes of textual production in China during this period, we need a Sinologist to excavate the dates and attributions of these texts and critically assess them, preferably in English. Ideally, this would be done in connection with studies of the Dunhuang Heart Sutra texts as well.\textsuperscript{16}

We can take a closer look at the content of the extensions to the Heart Sutra, and in particular I hope to show that there are two very different extensions amongst the canonical Chinese texts.

3. Extensions

Extended Frame

In this section, I present texts and translations\textsuperscript{17} that highlight why we should think of the extended Heart Sutra as having two distinct recensions. T 252 is the sole representative of Recension One (R1) and T 253 stands as a representative of Recension Two (R2). There are layers of further differences within R2 but the texts are obviously related and the differences are localised editorial adjustments or scribal errors. I cite here the extended first paragraph of each, broken into several sections for ease of reading and comparison, and the additional final paragraph, also broken into sections.

\textit{T 252}

I have heard that one time the Buddha was in Rājagṛha on Vulture Peak, together with a great bhikṣu-congregation of 100,000, and 77,000 bodhisatva mahāsatvas in all, whose leaders were Avalokiteśvara bodhisatva, Mañjuśrī bodhisatva, and Maitreya bodhisatva. All had attained samādhi and dhārāṇī, and abided in inconceivable liberation.

At that time, Avalokiteśvara bodhisatva mahāsatva was abiding seated with the others, rising up from his seat amidst the congregation, he went to visit the Bhagavan, on one side he joined his palms, bowed respectfully, gazing respectfully at the honoured face,

\textsuperscript{16} Benjamin Nourse has been working on these texts and hopefully will soon publish something on the variety of texts found at Dunhuang and their relations with other texts.

\textsuperscript{17} I make no pretence of being expert in Buddhist Middle Chinese or a translator per se. One translation each of T 252 [44] and T 253 [42] can be found on the internet (details in the bibliography). I consulted these but wanted to standardise the terminology so produced my own translations. Some technical terms are difficult to translate into English without decontextualisation, e.g. according to Sanskrit vyākaraṇa analysis, bodhisatva is a \textit{bahuvrīhi} compound: one whose \textit{satva} (essence, nature, being) is \textit{bodhi} (awakening, enlightenment). This doesn’t translate into English easily or well.
我欲於此會中，說諸菩薩普遍智藏般若波羅蜜多心。唯願世尊聽我所說，為諸菩薩宣祕法要。

爾時，世尊以妙梵音告觀自在菩薩摩訶薩言：「善哉，善哉！具大悲者。聽汝所說，與諸眾生作大光明。」

於是觀自在菩薩摩訶薩蒙佛聽許，佛所護念，入於慧光三昧正受。入此定已，以三昧力行深般若波羅蜜多時，照見五蘊自性皆空。彼了知五蘊自性皆空，從彼三昧安詳而起。即告毘首利弗言：「善男子！菩薩有般若波羅蜜多心，名普遍智藏。汝今諦聽，善思念之。吾當為汝分別解說。」

作是語已。慧命舍利弗白觀自在菩薩摩訶薩言：「唯，大淨者！願為說之。今正是時。」

如是我聞：一時佛在王舍城耆闍崛山中，與大比丘眾及菩薩眾俱。時佛世尊即入三昧，名廣大甚深。爾時眾中有菩薩摩訶薩，名觀自在。行深般若波羅蜜多時，照見五蘊皆空，離諸苦厄。

I have heard that one time the Buddha was in Rājagaha on Vulture Peak, along with a great congregation of bhikṣus and a congregation of bodhisatvas. At that time, the Buddha, the Bhagavān, entered the samādhi named “Vast and Extremely Profound”. Moreover, at that time, in that congregation, there was a bodhisatva-mahāsattva named Avalokiteśvara. When he practised the profound prajñāpāramitā he clearly saw the five skandhas were empty and he was apart from all suffering and misery.

18 Mì 祕 usually means “secret” but Prajñāpāramitā is not secret or esoteric so the secondary meaning of “exceptional” or “rare” must apply here.
19 Jù dà bēi zhě 具大悲者 “Endowed with great compassion”.
20 huì mìng 慧命 “Elder”; Skt. ayuṣmat.
Then Śāriputra, due to the prestigious force of the Buddha, joined palms respectfully and addressed Avalokiteśvara bodhisatva mahāsatva, saying:

"Kulaputra, if there is a practitioner who wants to learn the profound *prajñāpāramitā*, how should they practice?"

When this was said, at that time, bodhisatva mahāsatva addressed Elder Śāriputra, saying, "When a *kulaputra* or *kuladuhitṛ* practices the profound *prajñāpāramitā*, they should observe that the five skandhas are empty in nature."

These passages replace the first paragraph of the standard *Heart Sutra* and after this, the standard and extended texts are identical until after the *dhāraṇī*.

**Extended Endorsement and Rejoicing**

*T252*

After the Buddha preached this sutra, all the bhikṣus and the bodhisatva congregation, all the world—the devas, humans, asuras, gandharvas, etc—heard what the Buddha said, they were all greatly pleased, faithfully accepted and respectfully put it into practice.

*T253*

Therefore, Śāriputra, all bodhisatva mahāsatvas who study the genuine and deep *Prajñāpāramitā* practice, should practice it in this way.

After this was said, at that time, the Bhagavān arose from the vast and extremely profound *samādhi*, he praised Avalokiteśvara bodhisatva mahāsatva, saying, "Good. Good, kulaputra. That is it. That is it. Just as you said. Genuine practice of the deep *Prajñāpāramitā* should be practised in that way. When practising that way all the Tathagatas respond to everyone with delight." At that time, after the Bhagavān had spoken, Elder Śāriputra overflowed with great joy, Avalokiteśvara bodhisatva mahāsatva was also greatly pleased. Then, that numerous gathering of devas, humans, asuras, gandharvas, etc heard what the Buddha said, they were all greatly pleased, faithfully
In the following section (Four) I include some notes on idiosyncrasies of the language found in the extensions, and then use these to consider the likely language of composition.

4. Notes on the Text

General Notes

While I think the differences between T 252 and T 253 should be immediately apparent, let me highlight a few of the most interesting ones. In the opening extension, T 252 gives specific (superlative) numbers of bhikṣus and Bodhisatvas present, but in T 253 there are no numbers. In T 252, Avalokiteśvara seeks and receives permission from Bhagavan to teach the congregation then, after meditating, he directly addresses Śāriputra (per the standard text) although Śāriputra does not ask any questions. By contrast in T 253, the Bhagavan enters samādhi and is afterwards passive. Inspired by the Bhagavan’s anubhāva, Śāriputra, asks the question about how the kulaputra should train themselves and in response Avalokiteśvara preaches the Heart Sutra.

Where details are not forced on the text by the standard Heart Sutra—which, for example, specifies the participants and the subject matter—T 252 is different from T 253. At the same time, T 253 is the same or very similar to T 254, 255, 257, the Sanskrit and the Tibetan texts. Thus there appear to be two distinct and unrelated recensions of the extended Heart Sutra.

Some of these details are diagnostic of language in which the extensions were composed and we now turn to consider this question.

Overcoming Suffering

T 253 and T 254 both included the phrase (at the end of paragraph one above)—“and was apart from all suffering and misery” (lí zhū kǔ è 離諸苦厄). This is similar to the phrase at the end of the first paragraph of the Xīnjīng “and overcame all adversity from suffering” (dù yī qiè kǔ è 度一切苦厄). The phrase 度一切苦厄 only occurs in three places in the Taishō Ed., i.e. in the standard Heart Sutra (T 250, T 251) and in the Dāfāng guǎng shì lún jīng «大方 廣十輪經» (*Dāśacakra-kṣitigarbha-sūtra. T 410; 13.708.a26-7). The name of the translator of the Dāfāng guǎng shì lún jīng is not recorded, but the translation was made during the Northern Liang (Běi Liáng 北涼) Dynasty ca. 397 – 439 CE. The phrase lí zhū kǔ è 離諸苦厄 is also found in the Xiányú jīng «賢愚經» *Damamūka-nidāna-sūtra (T 202; translated 445 by Huìjué 慧覺 et al. at Tianansi 天安寺).²¹

²¹ Some older editions of the Tripiṭaka record the title as Xiányú yīnyuán jīng «賢愚因緣經» (T 202; 4.349a, n.1)
The Five Skandhas

In a key moment for the extended text, Avalokiteśvara inspects the skandhas and finds that they are all empty of self-existence (zì xìng jiē kōng 自性皆空, where zì xìng 自性 translates Sanskrit svabhāva). However, we know that something has gone wrong here because the original passage in Xīnjīng does not mention zì xìng 自性, rather it says: “[Avalokiteśvara] inspected the five skandhas and all were absent.” (zhào jiàn wǔyùn jiē kōng 照見五蘊皆空). All the skandhas were absent because Avalokiteśvara was practising the deep practice of Prajñāpāramitā (…xíng shēn bōrě bōluómì duō shí …行深般若波羅蜜多時). T 251; 8.848c7-8). All the skandhas were absent because Avalokiteśvara was practising the deep practice of Prajñāpāramitā (…xíng shēn bōrě bōluómì duō shí …行深般若波羅蜜多時). T 251; 8.848c07), which the Heart Sutra itself explains involves the yoga of nonapprehension (yǐ wúsuǒ dé guǐ 以無所得故). T 251; 8.848c15) [30: 102]. Attwood has linked this to early Buddhist meditation practices that involve withdrawing attention (amanasikāra) from sensory experience, particularly the practice described in the Pāḷi Cūḷasuññatā Sutta (MN 121) [15]. Without attention, the conditions for the arising of sensory experience are absent, and thus sensory experience does not arise, leaving the meditator in a conscious mental state characterised by the absence of sensory experience (Pāḷi suññatāvihāra). The state of absence of sensory experience occurs when all conditions for sense experience have ceased. Thus absence is a state that has no condition except the absence of other conditions, i.e. it is “without a condition” (asamāskṛta). In other words, absence is tantamount to nirvāṇa, vimokṣa, āsravakṣaya, etc.

T 254, 255, 257 replace the phrase from the standard Heart Sutra with “he examined the five skandhas [and saw they were] all empty of self-existence,” (zhào jiàn wǔyùn zì xìng jiē kōng 照見五蘊自性皆空). All seem to align with the Sanskrit svabhāva-śūnya “absence of independent existence”. The assertion that the skandhas lack svabhāva is a reference to the metaphysics of Madhyamaka in which the absence of sense experience is reified and śūnyatā becomes synonymous with ultimate reality (paramārtha-sat). Reality, in this view, is the absence of sensory experience. This metaphysics is out of place in the prajñāpāramitā context where the focus is on phenomenology and epistemology. The absence of sensory experience is commonly reported amongst mystics of many traditions, but each translates this state into a different system of metaphysics. Prajñāpāramitā is not concerned with the metaphysical implications, but rather with the soteriological implications, i.e. that by undergoing cessation of sensory experience one brings rebirth to a halt also. That the skandhas are absent in the samādhi is the significant aspect rather than any attempt to relate the skandhas to some ontology.

Names

In T 254, Prajñācakra sometimes uses the old spelling, Guānshìyīn 觀世音, where the other Chinese texts use the new spelling introduced by Xuánzàng, Guānzìzài 觀自在. In places Prajñācakra opted for the hybrid, Guānshìyīn zìzài 觀世音自在 (850a13, 850a15, 850a17, 850a17, 850a19, 850a19, 850a19, 850a19).
The difference is not merely a translation preference. Guānshìyīn reflects the Indic name Avalokītesvara (i.e. avalokita-svara) while Guānzìzài reflects the change to Avalokiteśvara (i.e. avalokita-īśvara). This change and other aspects of the name, as well as the timing of the change, are discussed at length by Jan Nattier [41] and by Seishi Karashima [31].

In T 253 we see the older form of Śāriputra’s name: Shèlìfú 利弗言 immediately followed by the form introduced by Xuánzàng: Shèlì zi 舍利子. This change and other aspects of the name, as well as the timing of the change, are discussed at length by Jan Nattier [41] and by Seishi Karashima [31].

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In the Prajñāpāramitā tradition that these texts draw on, the teachings are given by the Buddha and through his anubhāva (power) by Elder Subhūti, designated a sthavira or senior bhikṣu. In the Aṣṭasāhasrikā, for example, the Buddha asks Subhūti to “make clear how the bodhisatvas went forth in Prajñāpāramitā” and can be read as implying that Subhūti is a bodhisatva. 23 It is perhaps a measure of the distance in time between the Prajñāpāramitā sutras and the Heart Sutras that this relationship is changed. In the Heart Sutra, it is Avalokiteśvara bodhisatva mahāsatva who gives the teaching to Elder Śāriputra.

The presence of Avalokiteśvara has been problematised but he is the bodhisatva par-excellence in Tang China, and strongly associated with Xuánzàng, the likely composer of the text [17, 39]. His presence has been construed as incongruous only because of the presuppositions that the text is pre-Tang and Indian.

Note that in T 252 it is Avalokiteśvara who preaches the text, but the endorsement section attributes it to the Buddha: “After the Buddha preached this sutra [everyone] heard what the Buddha said…” (佛說是經已，聞佛所說。T 252, 8: 849b16-18). It appears that the redactor took a standard Buddhist sutra ending and tacked it onto the text without paying attention to who was speaking in the text they were redacting.

Kulaputra

There is an anomaly in T 253: Śāriputra says “Kulaputra, if there is a practitioner who wants to learn the profound prajñāpāramitā, how should they practice?” (善男子! 若有欲學甚深般若波羅蜜多行者，云何修行?) In T 252, Avalokiteśvara addresses Śāriputra as kulaputra, but the other Recension Two texts follow the Sanskrit: “How should a kulaputra or kuladuhitr train?” (yāḥ kaścit kulaputro vā kuladuhitr... katham śikṣitavaṇ? Note also that the Sanskrit text

23 In Vaidya’s edition: tatra khalu bhagavān āyuṣmantām subhātim sthavirām āmantrayate sma - pratibhātu te subhāte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām prajñāpāramitām ārahbyāḥ yathā bodhisattvāḥ prajñāpāramitā nirāyur iti // [2: 2]. Mitra’s edition ends... prajñāpāramitām nirāyur iti [1: 3].
asks and answers the question with respect to both *kulaputra* and *kuladuhitṛ*. The other versions ask the question only in terms of *kulaputra* but answer it for both.

What do *kulaputra* and *kuladuhitṛ* mean in this context? *Putra* and *duhitṛ* mean “son” and “daughter” respectively. Since *kula* can mean any group of animals or humans and has no built-in implication of status, I am unconvinced by translations such as “son or daughter of good family” [20], “gentlemen and ladies” [25, 40], or any of the other variants indicating high social status such as “noble-born son/daughter”. That said, the common Chinese translations—*shàn nánzǐ* 善男子 and *shàn nürén* 善女人—translate *kula* with the character *shàn* 善 “good, excellent, benevolent, etc”, which is also routinely used to translate *kuśala* “good, moral, skilful, etc”.

It appears that translators and commentators have wrongly conflated *kulaputra* with *sujāta* in such sources as the Pāli *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* (DN 3). The two terms are used there as complimentary descriptions of the arrogant Brahmin novice, Ambaṭṭha, but they are *not* synonyms. The Pāli commentaries, e.g. *Papañcasūdanī* (MA I.111), speak of two kinds of *kulaputta*: 1) one who is born to it (*jāti-kulaputta*), usually a Brahmin, of whom Ambaṭṭha is a perfect example; and 2) the one who comes to it by way of good conduct (*ācāra-kulaputta*). The commentator says that this second case refers to anyone who “has gone forth from home into the homeless life out of faith” (*saddhā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajitā*). In other words, the non-congenital *kulaputra* is simply a *bhikṣu* and the *kula* in question is the *bhikṣuṇaṃgha*.

The word *kulaputra* is used very frequently in *Āśāsāhasrikā* and its descendents texts. Scanning the digitised version of Vaidya’s edition of *Āśāsāhasrikā* [2], I cannot see anyone being directly addressed as *kulaputra*. The vocative case is used in hypothetical situations, such as the one found here, in which *kulaputra* seems to stand for an aspirant to awakening. This suggests that the term *kulaputra* and *kuladuhitṛ* were primarily a literary device in *Prajñāpāramitā* and used to refer to male and female members of the monastic *saṅgha*.

**Samādhi**

Apart from T 252, all the texts agree that the Buddha entered a *samādhi* but they disagree on what it was called.\(^{25}\)

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\(^{24}\) “Sir, Master Ambaṭṭha is well born, is *kulaputta*, is learned, a beautiful speechmaker, clever, capable of speaking with the honourable Gotama.” (Sujāto *ca, bho gotama ambaṭṭha māṇavo, kulaputto ca ambaṭṭho māṇavo, bahuṣusto ca ambaṭṭho māṇavo, kalyāṇavākkaraṇo ca ambaṭṭho māṇavo, pañḍito ca ambaṭṭho māṇavo, paḥotti ca ambaṭṭho māṇavo bhūtā gotamena sadāhiṃ asmiṃ vacane paṭimantarī tī. DN I.95)

\(^{25}\) Tibetan text and translations are from Silk’s critical edition [47: 172-3]; the Sanskrit text is from Conze’s 1967 revised edition [21].
The Bhagavān entered the samadhi of profound illumination (甚深光明) and preaching the true Dharma (宣説正法).

Skt. bhagavān gambhirāvabhāsāṃ nāma dharmaparyāyāṃ bhāsitvā samādhiṃ samāpannaḥ|26

Tib A de’i tshe bcom ldan ‘das zab mo snang ba zhes bya ba chos kyi rnam grangs kyi ting nge ‘dzin la snyoms par bzhugs so.27

Tib B de’i tshe bcom ldan ‘das zab mo’i (chos kyi rnam grangs) snang ba zhes bya ba’i kyi ting nge ‘dzin la snyoms par zhugs so.28

In T 252 it is Avalokiteśvara who enters a samādhi known as huìguāng sānmèi 慧光三昧 (Skt. *jñāna-prabha-samādhi). Note that only the Sanskrit separates the “teaching” (bhāsitvā) and the “entering” (samāpannaḥ) samādhi. The same elements appear to be present in most of the Recension two texts, but the relationships between them vary and I can see no simple explanation for them. In T 254 the addition of zhàojiàn 照見 to the end of the phrase appears to be a scribal error.

We can now consider the language in which the extensions were made, and relationships between the extended versions and how these fit into the larger picture of the evolution of the Heart Sutra into numerous versions.

5. Comments and Conclusions

Language of Composition

The Buddha’s dharmaparyāya and samādhi are a point of departure for the Recension Two texts. It seems to me that the Sanskrit text which names the dharmaparyāya and leaves the samādhi unnamed is likely to be original. The Chinese texts don’t mention a dharmaparyāya and this would be an odd detail to add to a sutra that was missing it. Or we could say that, since the Chinese R2 texts are in agreement, the work does not feature the Buddha giving a

26 There is considerable variation in the Sanskrit manuscripts. According to Conze [21: 149] the text he adopted occurs in his sources Nabh, Cude; we also see:
   N*: gambhirāyam prajñāpāramitāyā avabhāsaṃ nāma dharmaparyāyāh
   N*: gambhirāyam avapar-bhāsan-nāma
   J*: gambhirāvasambhodāṃ nāma
   N*: gambhirāvabhāsaṃ nāma

27 For the purpose of comparison of Tib A and Tib B, I parse this as: de’i tse (at that time) bcom ldan ’das (bhagavan) zab mo snang ba (profound illumination) zhes bya ba (called) chos kyi rnam grangs kyi (of the dharma teaching) ting nge ’dzin la snyoms par bzhugs so (he entered the samadhi that).

28 For the purpose of comparison of Tib B and Tib A, I parse this as: de’i tse (at that time) bcom ldan ’das (bhagavan) zab mo’i chos kyi (of the profound teachings) rnam grangs (paryāya) snang ba (illumination) zhes bya ba’i kyi (of the so called) ting nge ’dzin la snyoms par zhugs so (he entered the samadhi that).
dharmaparyāya, and the presence of a dharmaparyāya in Sanskrit is the oddity and the principle of lectio difficilior potior applies. The Tibetan texts both have dharmaparyāya (Tib. chos kyi rnam grangs kyi) and samādhi (Tib. tīng nge ’dzin) even if they have different versions of the same sentence [47: 172-3].

As noted, the Chinese extended texts, except for T 253, have zì xìng jiē kōng 自性皆空 (Skt. svabhāvaśūnyan) when Xīnjīng merely has jiē kōng 皆空, which would translate as sarvā śūnyatā. Xīnjīng does not mention svabhāva. If the text of Xīnjīng was extended in Chinese, we would expect to see jiē kōng 皆空 in the extension also. That T 252 has zì xìng jiē kōng 自性皆空 undermines the idea that it was composed in Chinese, although there is some evidence that the Sanskrit translation of Xīnjīng passed off as the “original” influenced the later interpretations.

T 253 treats kulaputra in Śāriputra’s question as a vocative, addressing Avalokiteśvara. Here T 253 is out of step with all the other extant documents pertaining to Recension Two. This makes most sense as a mistranslation from a Sanskrit source or the result of an earlier copying error in Sanskrit, causing a nominative kulaputraḥ to be misread as a vocative kulaputra. Also, only the Sanskrit text is consistent in having the question both asked and answered in terms of kulaputra and kuladuhitr. One might, again, invoke lectio difficilior potior and resist the idea that the omission of kuladuhitr was a translation mistake and counter that the addition of kuladuhitr in the late Sanskrit manuscripts was the result of smoothing over a lacuna in the source too late to prevent the lacuna being copied into all the extant translations. This still does not explain the anomaly in T 253.

Another argument for a Sanskrit original for Recension Two is an awkwardness that occurs because of the use of the verb vyavalokayati. This works well enough in the standard Heart Sutra but when the Redactor tries to recast this verb in the standard form of a Prajñāpāramitā question, i.e. “how should the bodhisatva go about his business”, where the activity is phrased using a future passive participle—often śikṣatavyam—the transitivity of vyavalokayati trips them up. For example, if the bodhisatva was expected to train (śikṣati) in some form of Buddhist practice then the question would be kathaṃ śikṣatavyam “how should he train?” And after the explanation, Avalokiteśvara might say, “for this reason he should practice in this way” (tenaiva śikṣatavyam) as in Conze’s Ce, aka “Feer’s polyglot edition” [21: 150]. Most of the ideas of the Sanskrit manuscripts were finished with “for this reason he should examine in this way” tenaivaṃ vyavalokitavyam. The reason it sounds so awkward is that the verb is transitive (Conze makes this mistake throughout his edition [7]); that is, one cannot simply examine in the absence of something to examine. In this case, the infelicitous Sanskrit might also indicate that the redactor of Recension Two was working with a Sanskrit source.

Based on these observations, my working hypothesis is that the standard Heart Sutra was extended twice. The first extension produced the text T 252 and since there is no evidence of it in any other language, we may conjecture that it was made in Chinese (just like

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29 Although Silk translates both as simple variants, TibB has what appears to be an eyeskip error at this point. The compound chos kyi rnam grangs (Skt. dharmaparyāya) has been shuffled forward into the middle of the compound zab mo snang ba (Skt. gmbhīras avabhāsa). It makes more sense to me to unshuffle them before translating.

30 I refer specifically to the reading of yīwúsuódégù 以無所得故 as consistent with Skt. aprāptivād when Kumārajīva coined the term to translate anupalambhayogena. On which see Huifeng [30].
The existence of several different versions of the text as a result of repeated editorial interventions is also consistent with preliminary (though as yet unpublished) results of examining the Dunhuang cache of Heart Sutra manuscripts by Ben Nourse [43]. What we see is repeated tinkering with the text producing several variants. The fact that Buddhists felt so free to change the Heart Sutra text suggests that, as per Kuījī and Woncheuk [15], they knew it was not an Indian Buddhist sutra.

While the minor differences are interesting and may prove diagnostic in comparative studies, the existence of two distinct recensions of the extended Heart Sutra in Chinese forces us to further revise the history of the text. We now know that the standard Heart Sutra is a chāo jīng 抄經 “digest text” and that the Sanskrit text was produced in China and contains several Chinese idioms [9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 30, 39]. Furthermore, Watanabe [53] has shown that Dàmíngzhòujīng 大明呪經 (T 250) is not an earlier translation but another Chinese production created later than the Xīnjīng [See also 15].

If the traditional dates are reliable, then T 252 antedates the other versions but they are not based on it. This is not a matter of simple variation; rather it looks as if the extended Heart Sutra was created twice. Each text was created according to the same criteria for authenticity and drawing on similar sources, but with distinctive results. Scholarship to date has always considered the extended text to be singular and thus needs to be revisited.

We can show the relationships between the extant documents in the form of a stemma diagram. The basic outline was provided by Nattier [39: 198], i.e.

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Sanskrit Large Sutra
↓
Chinese Large Sutra (T 223)
↓
Chinese Heart Sutra (T 251)
↓
Sanskrit Heart Sutra
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The matter of the relation between Xīnjīng and Dàzhìdù lùn 大智度論 (T 1509) was raised by Nattier [39] and discussed by Attwood [15]. The relation of T 250 is based on the conclusions of Watanabe [52]. I have incorporated Ben Nourse’s preliminary findings on the Dunhuang Heart Sutra texts many of which show some degree of hybridisation [43], but the proposed relationships are my conjectures based on ten years of research and my twelve published articles.

This stemma is still provisional and awaits the formal publication of Nourse’s observations and scrutiny of all the recent work by qualified scholars.
Stemma Notes

Solid arrows indicate a direct descent; dashed arrows, minor influences; and dotted arrows, unknown or potential influences that are unclear. There are three notional nodes: Sanskrit Hṛdaya which represents the original translation of the Xīnjīng into Sanskrit. This is no longer extant. Sanskrit Hṛdaya Added Negations is a notional ancestor to those manuscripts that have this feature (see the following paragraph). Similarly, the Sanskrit Hṛdaya Extended is the notional ancestor of all of the extended texts in Sanskrit (and translations of it) and forms a hypothetical ancestor to all Recension Two documents.

By “added negations” I am referring to two interpolations. Firstly in the twelve nidānas, the phrase nāvidyā nāvidyākṣaya “no ignorance, no destruction of ignorance” becomes na vidyā nāvidyā na vidyākṣaya nāvidyākṣaya “no knowledge, no ignorance, no destruction of knowledge, no destruction of ignorance”. The additions here make no sense in
the context of the twelve *nidānas* and apparently reflect a belief that the sutra is solely about negating concepts [14, 16]. Secondly, the final part of the core section—*na jñāṇam na prāptih*—has been augmented to read *na jñāṇam na prāptir nāpāptih* “no knowledge, no attainment, no non-attainment”. Again this makes no sense. As Huifeng [30] and Attwood [13] have shown, this passage has become obscured. The extant Sanskrit Large Sutra manuscripts have *na prāptir na abhisamayaḥ* “no attainment and no realisation”. The other Chinese translations of the Large Sutra by Mokṣala and Xuánzàng appear to reflect this. Attwood argued that the two words stand here for the usual *mārga* and *phala* which are headings for a list of āryapudgala, i.e. the path of stream-entry and the fruit of stream-entry, etc [13]. Early Buddhist lists had eight items, four under each heading, but Mahāyāna Buddhists added several terms to the list.

The “Eun Manuscript” from Japan used by Müller and Nanjio [38] for their diplomatic edition includes the phrase *yad rūpam sā śūnyatā yā śūnyatā tad rūpaṃ*. Nattier noted that the phrase was absent from the majority of Conze’s sources [36: 204 n.19]. She further notes, however, that it is found in the Tibetan translation of the standard text published in facsimile by Zwalf [55].

6. Concluding Remarks

There is a lot more work to do in this vein, which begs the question, if this text is so popular and central to Mahāyāna Buddhism, why has this work not been done before now? The consensus, following D. T. Suzuki and Conze, that the text is illogical cannot have helped attract students to study it. Recent challenges to this consensus [9, 16] and efforts to clear up the grammatical mistakes introduced into the Sanskrit edition by Conze seem not even to have registered [7, 10, 13], nor less efforts to clarify the language of Chinese editions [8, 9, 11, 28]. Another barrier to progress is the ongoing reluctance of Buddhologists, especially in East Asia, to accept the *Heart Sutra* as a Chinese text.

Prajñāpāramitā is widely acknowledged to be central to the emergence of Mahāyāna and all subsequent Buddhism. And yet this importance is not reflected in academic publications. Not only do we have few if any reliable translations, we do not even have reliable editions of the principal texts. Since few scholars do research on Prajñāpāramitā, few can teach about it with any depth or guide others in doing research on it. Thus, the *Heart Sutra* continues to suffer from widespread misunderstanding and neglect even when it does attract scholarly attention. Old myths continue to be placeholders for objective scholarship.
Abbreviations

CBCA  Chinese Buddhist Canonical Attributions https://dazangthings.nz/cbc/
MA  Majjhimanikāya-āṭṭhakathā aka Papañcasūdanī
MN  Majjhimanikāya
DN  Dīghanikāya
R1  Recension One
R2  Recension Two

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All Chinese texts are from CBETA 2020 version of Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新修大藏經. Tōkyō: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1935.

Primary Texts

Secondary Texts


