



Sectarian Thoughts Alternations among Different Versions of the Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya, the Heart Sūtra, until the Time of the Yogācāra School

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Abstract

By the variants found in the textual expression among different versions of the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*, the *Heart Sūtra*, this article tried to ask and answer the questions which nobody has asked before in the academic field: Why the extant Sanskrit texts are treated as the original form? If they are something that have been altered, in what sense that they can be used as the base of comparison? Simply speaking, how do we know that they are the most primitive appearance? By some basic arguments and the study of the two crucial differences among different versions of the *Sūtra*, the researcher discovered that the scripture had been undergoing a chain of alternations due to sectarian thoughts differences between schools. The earlier version consists of thoughts of the Mādhyamika school was later altered into a form which is correlated to the doctrinal ideas of the Yogācāra school. These ideas involved the concept of seeds, Ālayavijñāna, its related aspects as well as the Three-natures. All of these ideas are the core doctrines of the Yogācārian teachings which gave them no choice but to delete the Mādhyamikan sole acceptable sentences in the original *Sūtra*. The extant Sanskrit text also shows such alternations which means it is without doubt belong to the product of the later stage of Buddhism development.

Keywords: Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya, Heart Sūtra, sectarian thoughts alternations, extant Sanskrit texts, Yogācāra school.

1. Introduction

The *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*, mostly referred to as the *Heart Sūtra*, could be said as the most well known and religiously utilized scripture in the Mahāyāna tradition. In China, although it has various translated versions, the most popular one should be the version translated by Xuan Zang (玄奘) in the mid seventh century. Recently, by the knowledge in the language of Sanskrit, scholars have been drawn with their attentions in studying the preciseness of different versions. From these, which version is more accurate and close to the so-called original extant Sanskrit text is determined. Some studies even go further in debating about the origin of the *Sūtra*. For example, Nattier (1992), based on the textual differences and other queries, suggested that the version of Xuan Zang was not translated from Sanskrit. But instead, it was the work of him who translated the Chinese version he had already have back to the Sanskrit.

However, why the extant Sanskrit texts are treated as the original form? If they are something that have been altered, in what sense that they can be used as the base of comparison? Simply speaking, how do we know that they are the most primitive appearance? This research would like to answer these questions, but from another point of view which the researcher believes many scholars might have overlooked. This viewpoint is regarding the sectarian thoughts alternations due to the differences in ideas of different schools. These alternations might have changed the wordings of the *Sūtra*. This could be seen by comparing between the textual expression among different versions of the Chinese translations; and only the Chinese Canon can provide such possibility of studying as there are different versions within. The point is, by what reasons these alternations were made? What doctrinal ideas involved in the changes? This paper would try to examine the related scriptures of different schools in order to make clear to the questions.

2. Translated Versions of the Heart Sūtra and The Basic Arguments

In record, the *Heart Sūtra* has at least eleven Chinese translated versions in ancient China. Eight of them were the works being done during the Tang Dynasty (唐朝, 618 to 907 CE). Other three, one is known only by its title of *Mo he bore boluomi zhou jing* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜咒經》, which was supposed to be the translation of Zhi Qian (支謙) during the time of 222 to 253 CE (吳, Wu Kingdom). The next one was rendered by Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什) during the time of 408 CE (後秦, Hou Qin). The third one was the work of Dānapāla (施護) which was translated after 980 CE (宋朝, Song Dynasty). Within these eleven versions, three had already lost; one was not recorded in the *Taishō*

Tripitaka 《大正藏》. For convenience, this section will only analyse those seven versions inside the *Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》 which are:

(i) Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什), *Mo he bore boluomi daming zhou jing* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜大明咒經》, T0250. It was supposed to be rendered at the time of 408 CE (後秦, Hou Qin). Some scholars, like Kazuaki Tanahashi (棚橋一晃), believed that this version was not the work of Kumārajīva.¹ Their argument was mainly due to it was not recorded in the catalogs until the Tang Dynasty at 730 CE where the 《開元釋教錄》 (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu*) has it first on the list. However, this is a very weak argument. For the whole content of the extant Kumārajīva's version, especially important is the specific sentences that other versions do not have, that is, the lines “色空故無惱壞相，受空故無受相，想空故無知相，行空故無作相，識空故無覺相” and “是空法，非過去、非未來、非現在” (references and meanings will be discussed later) are both presented exactly the same inside the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》 (*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 8, T0223, p. 223) as well as its commentary *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* 《大智度論》 (*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 25, T1509, p. 327). These two works were also attributed to Kumārajīva. Therefore, since the whole content were there already confirmed as the translations of Kumārajīva, why not is the *Mo he bore boluomi daming zhou jing* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜大明咒經》? 智昇 (Zhi Sheng), the editor of 《開元釋教錄》 (*Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu*), and his colleagues should also had carefully examined this most important point and attributed this version to Kumārajīva too. As in the record of *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, it stated clearly: “經題第一譯，拾遺編入。” (meaning: This is the first translation of this title which is picked up from what has been lost and re-edited into the tripitaka) (*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 55, T2154, p. 584).

Some arguments, like Nattier (1992) has mentioned, directed to the word “咒” (zhou), mantra, in the extant Sanskrit text, which means magic or spell. Since most of the scriptures recorded the Buddha's opposition against the usage of spells, these arguments queried that mantras should not be somethings that would exist in the early Buddhism, even the Mahāyāna, but mostly in the later tantric sūtras. However, this is also a very weak argument.

¹Kazuaki Tanahashi (棚橋一晃), *The Heart Sutra: A Comprehensive Guide to the Classic of Mahayana Buddhism*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2014), p. 103: “The earliest extant version of the Heart Sutra attributed to Kumarajiva is not found in the earliest catalogs of his work. Indeed, the first attribution to Kumarajiva is in the *Kaiyuan Era Catalog of Shakyamuni's Teachings* (Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu) completed in 730.”

First of all, the title of this Kumārajīva's version carries the words “大明咒” (daming zhou) which is completely different from the later versions of using the word “心” instead. 大明咒 itself has three meanings: 大 means great; 明 means brightness which indicates no ignorance; 咒 means spell. Although the original base Sanskrit text that had been used by Kumārajīva could never be found, from the meaning of this title, one generally used Sanskrit word could actually include all these meanings: “dhāraṇī”. According to Hidas (Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol. I Literature and Languages, 2015):

Dhāraṇī is an exclusively Buddhist term, the primary literary meaning of which is not completely clear. In the extended sense, dhāraṇī has most often been interpreted as “spell.” However, its semantic range is wider than the sphere of incantations, with a further principal interpretation as “memory” or “mnemonic device.” Especially in earlier sources, dhāraṇī was a mnemonics-related term in most cases, a use that appears to have faded away with the course of time. At least synchronically speaking, dhāraṇī is decidedly polysemic and context sensitive. In the present literary context, the “spell” interpretation of dhāraṇī as used here describes a reasonably distinct scriptural body. However, dhāraṇī is often appositional or interchangeable with two other closely related words – mantra and vidyā, which also refer to a spell.

In such sense, dhāraṇī is a word with a wider coverage. Both mantra (咒, spell) and vidyā (明, brightness) are included. In Chinese, the Sanskrit word dhāraṇī is translated as “陀羅尼” with the meaning of “總攝憶持”. It gives a rough meaning of gathering all the teachings of the Buddha; memorizing and grasping them altogether as one. This is the same meaning with the explanation of Hidas. Here, the object that serves this function for memorizing and grasping is the Prajñāpāramitā, the great wisdom. Therefore, Prajñāpāramitā carries the meaning of great; vidyā carries the meaning of brightness; mantra means spell. All the components needed as a dhāraṇī are satisfied. It is very obvious that 大明咒 is a translation from the Sanskrit word dhāraṇī. Similar supportive argument actually has been examined carefully about thirty years before by Japanese scholar Fukui Fumimasa (福井文雅, 1987).

Also do not be mistaken by some superficial beliefs, dhāraṇī is not a rare word at all in the time of the early Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* 《大智度論》 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 25, T1509, pp. 95-101; pp. 268-269), Nāgārjuna has explained very thoroughly about many kinds of dhāraṇī. In addition, in the record of 《出三藏記集》 (*Collection of records concerning the Chinese Buddhist*

Canon) which was edited by 僧祐 (Seng You, 445 to 518 CE), at least nine pieces of scriptures with the name of dhāraṇī, 陀羅尼, had been translated into Chinese.² Therefore, the term should have itself a very long history. Besides, the meaning of spells that it carries might have an even longer history of the approval or acceptance personally by the Buddha himself, even though as what Nattier has argued, mostly the Buddha tended to oppose its usage. In the Theravada, the Buddha himself had taught about the usage of self-guiding spell which has the usage to avoid being hurt by snake:

Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, imāni cattāri ahirājakulāni mettena cittena pharituṃ, attaguttiyā attarakkhāya attaparittaṃ kātuṃ. Evañca pana, bhikkhave, kātabbam—
‘Virūpakkhehi me mettaṃ..... (Vin.ii.110)

Translated as:

Monks, I allow you to suffuse with loving-kindness of mind these four royal snake families, (and) to *make a charm* for the self-protection, for self-guarding. And thus, monks, should it be made:

“Love from me for the Virūpakkhas,.....(I.B. Horner [tr.], *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka)*, Vol. V (*Cullavagga*), 1997, p. 148)

The Pāli word used here is “paritta” which means charm, magic or spell. “Attaparittaṃ kātuṃ” means the spell for self-guarding. The spell itself is not just meaningless sounds, but also could be translated into understandable languages just like the one in the above reference. Same as the mantra inside the *Heart Sūtra* which actually has its meaning of: “Gone, gone, gone to the opposite shore, gone altogether to the opposite shore, O such an awakening!” This is certainly a self-guarding or self-reminding spell for the Mahāyānists. Why? For this spell emphasizes on the helping of the sentient beings to the opposite shore which has been talked about in the beginning of the text by the words “度一切苦厄”³! Textually in the Kumārajīva’s version, this spell is a short mantra which indicated

²僧祐 (Seng You) (ed.), 《出三藏記集》 (**Collection of records concerning the Chinese Buddhist Canon**), Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》, Vol. 25, T1509, recorded with titles of: 《方等檀陀羅尼經》 (p. 12); 《破魔陀羅尼經》 (p. 13); 《佛說陀羅尼法門六種動經》 (p. 22); 《請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼呪經》 (p. 22); 《陀羅尼偈》 (p. 31); 《陀羅尼句經》 (p. 31); 《華積陀羅尼神呪》 (p. 31); 《阿難陀目佉尼呵離陀羅尼》 (p. 52) and 《方廣陀羅尼七眾悔法緣記第十二(出彼經)》 (p. 55).

³度一切苦厄 means helping all sufferings to cross to the opposite shore.

the brightness route for Bodhisattvas. It is collected together with the verbal teaching of the Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva who represents the great compassion, and combined altogether which become a dhāraṇī as a whole.

For all these reasons, this version should be attributed to Kumārajīva.

(ii) Xuan Zang (玄奘), *Bore boluomiduo xinjing* 《般若波羅蜜多心經》, T0251. Several pieces of records similarly stated that “心經是唐朝玄奘三藏貞觀年譯。”⁴ (meaning: the *Heart Sūtra* was the translation of Xuan Zang Tripitaka during the era of Zhenguan in the Tang Dynasty) (神清 (Shen Qing), 慧寶 (Hui Bao), 《北山錄》 (*Bei shan lu*), *Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 52, T2113, p. 611). Zhenguan (627 to 649 CE) was the era of the Emperor Tai Zong (唐太宗). Xuan Zang came back to China four years before the death of the Emperor, therefore, it could be believed that, the Xuan Zang’ version was being translated during the time between 645 to 649 CE (唐朝, Tang Dynasty).

As that has been mentioned, scholars like Nattier (1992), based on the textual differences and other queries, suggested that this version was not translated from Sanskrit. But instead, it was the work of Xuan Zang who translated the Chinese version he had already have back to the Sanskrit. Her arguments consist of: there is no “thus as I heard” in the beginning; no appearance of Buddha and Subbuti; no audience reaction at the end; a mantra that rarely exists and the sudden entrance of Avalokiteśvara. She even claimed that Xuan Zang had done this back-translation in another Mahāyāna scripture 《大乘起信論》 (*Dacheng qi xin lun*), therefore, doing the same in the *Heart Sūtra* is in her opinion highly possible.

Regarding Nattier’s argument, first of all, everyone knows that the *Heart Sūtra* is just a small portion drawn out from the greater *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*. It does not carry the items that Nattier herself obstinately requires should be generally acceptable to most users of the *Heart Sūtra*, including scholars. On the other hand, if the Theravada scripture is referred to, for example, the Bhikkhuṇī Saṃyutta of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, it could be seen that only in the *Āḷavikāsutta* (S.I.128), the first sutta, the line “Evaṃ me sutam” could be seen. Starting from the second sutta of *Somāsutta* (S.I.129), the line “Evaṃ me sutam” has been omitted. If someone drew out only the second sutta as a booklet for Buddhist teaching or promotion and printed out many copies of it, would Nattier after received one copy of it and then said that this sutta is a back-translation from anyone?

⁴神清 (Shen Qing), 慧寶 (Hui Bao), 《北山錄》 (*Bei shan lu*), *Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 52, T2113, p. 611.

Same as regarding the people involved, *Āḷavikāsutta* involves a person called Āḷavikā but *Somāsutta* involves only Soma. Would Nattier also claim that the *Somāsutta* were the back-translation from someone because this Soma came unexpectedly into the sutta? How weak such supposition and logic this argument has!

Regarding Xuan Zang's back-translation of the *Dacheng qi xin lun* 《大乘起信論》 from Chinese to Sanskrit, yes, that was a highly trustworthy record of Dao Xuan (道宣) in his book *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 《續高僧傳》 (Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》, Vol. 50, T2060, p. 458) which states:

《起信》一論，文出馬鳴。彼土諸僧思承其本，奘乃譯唐為梵，通布五天。

Meaning: *Dacheng qi xin lun* was the work of Aśvaghōṣa. India monks hoped to inherit its original, therefore, Xuan Zang translated it from Chinese to Sanskrit and announced it to the five regions of India

Dao Xuan (道宣, 596-667 CE) was living in the same era of Xuan Zang. Some other records show that he had even worked together with Xuan Zang in translation.⁵ That means they should have known to each other. Dao Xuan himself was also well known for his straight following to the precepts. Therefore, Dao Xuan's record about Xuan Zang must be precisely true.

But just because of this trueness, it must be asked on behalf of Nattier that, why Xuan Zang so honestly disclosed to Dao Xuan about his back-translation of the *Dacheng qi xin lun* 《大乘起信論》 but not in the same way telling him as per Nattier's supposition that the *Heart Sūtra* had also been back-translated? What made the difference of disclosing one but not the other? From the intention wise, Nattier's hypothesis is quite untenable.

Lastly, if Xuan Zang had already have a version in Chinese before he started heading for India, then, that should mostly be the one rendered by Kumārajīva. So, why in his translation, the two lines “色空故無惱壞相，受空故無受相，想空故無知相，行空故無作相，識空故無覺相” and “是空法，非過去、非未來、非現在” were omitted? Since they were omitted, therefore, it could be sure that this version of *Heart Sūtra* rendered by Xuan Zang is another version different from the one he saw in China. Particularly

⁵ 志磐 (Zhi Pan), 《佛祖統紀》 (Fozu tong ji): “(貞觀) 十九年正月，玄奘三藏自西天還……詔就弘福寺，同沙門道宣等翻譯。” (Meaning: In the first month of the nineteenth year of Zhenguan, Xuan Zang Tripiṭaka came back from India……imperial ordered him to state and translate in Hong Fu Monastery together with Dao Xuan and other sangha.” Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》, Vol. 49, T2035, p. 366.

remarkable is, the similar meaning of these two lines do appear in the main body *MahāPrajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《大般若波羅蜜多經》 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 7, T0220, p. 14), which was also the translation of Xuan Zang! So, what was the intension that Xuan Zang had to delete these two lines personally where they were both appeared in the versions of *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》 rendered by Kumārajīva as well as *MahāPrajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《大般若波羅蜜多經》 rendered by himself? Since they were only deleted in the *Heart Sūtra* of Xuan Zang's version and thereafter, there must be some reasons originated from India but not China or Xuan Zang himself.

By all these points, the researcher would still determine that this version was the translation of Xuan Zang from the Sanskrit text he brought back from India. In fact, once the doctrinal differences were examined, more evidences might be found to support this view.

(iii) Dharmacandra (法月, 653 to 743 CE), *Pubian zhicang bore boluomiduo xinjing* 《普遍智藏般若波羅蜜多心經》, T0252. Dharmacandra was a monk from the eastern India or Magadha. He entered China in the year 732 CE (唐朝, Tang Dynasty) and started his translation work thereafter. His version is the first one that have the beginning of “As what I heard” as well as an introduction and the ending with the final application. After that, all next versions carried the same format.

(iv) Prajñā (般若, age unknown), *Bore boluomiduo xinjing* 《般若波羅蜜多心經》, T0523. Prajñā was a monk from Kopen (罽賓). He had learnt in the Nālandā. Then, he came to China at the year of 781 CE (唐朝, Tang Dynasty). Record shows that this version was translated by him with the help of Ly Yan (利言) in the year 788 CE.

(v) Prajñācakra (智慧輪, age unknown), *Bore boluomiduo xinjing* 《般若波羅蜜多心經》, T0254. Chinese record only shows that Prajñācakra was a baptised ācārya (a guru or teacher of the Vajrayāna) from the western region (西域, nowadays Xinjiang, China). The exact year this version was translated is not known. There is only information that this was done in between the year 847 to 860 CE (唐朝, Tang Dynasty).

(vi) Chosgrub (法成), *Bore boluomiduo xinjing* 《般若波羅蜜多心經》, T0255. Chosgrub was a Tibetan (ancient: 吐蕃人, people of Tobo) who had long time been staying in Dunhuang (敦煌, ancient: Shazhou沙州, in nowadays Gansu province). Most of his translation works had been finished there. He had also contributed a lot in translating many scriptures from Chinese into the Tibetan language. His active period was from the early ninth century until 856 CE when he died more or less after that. This version has no clear record of its finishing time but should be around the time before 842 to 856 CE when

Chosgrub moved to Zhangye (張掖, ancient: Ganzhou 甘州, in nowadays Gansu province) and did mainly on preaching thereafter.

(vii) Dānapāla (施護), Foshuo shengfumu bore boluomiduo jing 《佛說聖佛母般若波羅蜜多經》, T0257. Dānapāla came from Udyāna, northern India. He has translated more than a hundred works. This work was completed in 1009 CE.

Recently, the *Heart Sūtra* has been a very hit topic within the academe. The main issue is regarding that whether it was a back-translation of Xuan Zang to Sanskrit or not. By reviewing the debate between scholars involved, no one has pay any attention to the sectarian thoughts alternations resulted to the textual differences between the version of Kumārajīva with the later translations, particularly the Xuan Zang's version. In the following, the important variances of the *Heart Sūtra* will be examined so that a better possible picture might be revealed. For comparison purpose, Edward Conze's English version of the *Sūtra* will be used as a reference.

3. The Lost of Conceptions (相, Nimitta or Lakṣaṇa)

As that has been mentioned, there were two lines in the Kumārajīva's version which had been omitted in all other later versions. In this section, the first line is going to be talked about.

This line is:

色空故無惱壞相, 受空故無受相, 想空故無知相, 行空故無作相, 識空故無覺相。 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 8, T0250, p. 847)

Meaning: Form is empty and therefore no *conception* of ill will towards its destruction. Sensation is empty and therefore no *conception* of sensation. Perception is empty and therefore no *conception* of recognizing. Mental formations is empty and therefore no *conception* of conducting. Consciousness is empty and therefore no *conception* of discriminating.

As that has been explained earlier, this line appears exactly the same form in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》 as well as its commentary *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* 《大智度論》, both rendered by Kumārajīva. It was also inside the *MahāPrajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《大般若波羅蜜多經》 translated by Xuan Zang but with a certain extent of textual transformation which stated:

諸色空，彼非變礙相；諸受空，彼非領納相；諸想空，彼非取像相；諸行空，彼非造作相；諸識空，彼非了別相。(Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 7, T0220h, p. 14)

Meaning: The emptiness of all forms, that is not a changing and hindering conception. The emptiness of all kinds of sensation, that is not a receiving and accepting conception. The emptiness of all kinds of perception, that is not a grasping of image conception. The emptiness of all mental formations, that is not a creating and acting conception. The emptiness of all consciousnesses, that is not a differentiating conception.

Here, the difference of the Kumārajīva's version with the Xuan Zang's is, the former one of Kumārajīva tells the relationship between the emptiness of every aggregate with its conception. For example, in the sentence of "form is empty and therefore no conception of ill will towards its destruction", it tells the reason of why there would be no conception of ill will towards its destruction which is because of the emptiness of form. This is exactly what Nāgārjuna has explained.⁶

But in the later interpretation of Xuan Zang, it keeps focusing on the subject: the emptiness of each aggregate, and tells that such emptiness is not its corresponding conception. In another words, it gave a meaning that the emptiness does not consist of any worldly conception, which also implied that it can have other unworldly conception, especially the conception of the True-suchness, which is a non-dual conception (無二相) and is obtainable.⁷ From this, it could be known that the Sanskrit wordings in the *MahāPrajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《大般若波羅蜜多經》 rendered by Xuan Zang must have been altered by the Yogācārian. Why? Because the Mādhyamikan would not describe their idea like that in reverse as everything is empty in nature.

Back to the *Heart Sūtra*, starting from the Xuan Zang's version, the subject statement has completely been disappeared from all the versions of the *Heart Sūtra*. This also means that all Sanskrit texts being brought to China for translation purposes had these line totally been eliminated forever. This could be shown from Conze's translation and the Sanskrit text he provided. Both of them do not contain this line. Also, all later

⁶Nāgārjuna (龍樹), Kumārajīva (tr.), *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* 《大智度論》: "今是中說其因緣。" (Meaning: This is here to tell their relationship.) Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 25, T1509, p. 327.

⁷Maitreya (彌勒), Xuan Zang (tr.), *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* 《瑜伽師地論》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 30, T1579, p. 745: "真如相可得故，是無二相。" (Meaning: The conception of the True-suchness could be obtained which is a non-dual conception.)

Chinese versions do not have this line too.

On one hand, due to the Yogācārian has to hold the doctrine of Ālayavijñāna, they could not accept the concept of “no nimitta”; as the nimitta is one aspect of the Ālayavijñāna. These five lines in the Kumārajīva’s version contain such concept of no nimitta, therefore, they were deleted forever should be easy to be understood.

However, could these five lines be maintained with a slightly change? For example, by changing the words nimitta into saṃjñā as it might have been done in the *Diamond Sūtra*? From the result, the answer should be no. The reason is simple. It is because these five sentences have entirely violated their whole teaching.

Only by a simple knowledge, if the fifth aggregate, the consciousness, was not exist any more, how could the Yogācārian hold and explain the eighth consciousness, the Ālayavijñāna? Such big issue could have already made them to delete the fifth sentence “識空故無覺相” (consciousness is empty and therefore no conception of discriminating) at all cost. If one of the five aggregates was deleted from the statement, how could not the other four? This is the core reason of deleting the whole line.

Specifically speaking, the Yogācārian practicing methods also requires the conceptions of different aspects of the five aggregates which means they could not be absent. For example, the school emphasizes:

於受正見，應當了知……諸有所受皆苦道理，應當了知……於受觀察一切受相，應當了知……如是於受所生正見，能隨悟入諸有所受皆悉是苦。(Yogācārabhūmiśāstra 《瑜伽師地論》，*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 30, T1579, p. 851)

Meaning: It should be clear about the right view towards the sensation…… It should be clear about the meaning of all sensations are sufferings……It should be clear about the observation towards all conceptions of the sensation……such right view produced from the sensation can lead one from realizing that all sensations are sufferings.

From this statement, it is very clear that the Yogācārian highly requires the sensation and the conceptions it produced as the means to realizing the truth of suffering. Especially the term “觀察” (observation), this has the same meaning that when practicing insight meditation, the vipassanā (Pāli) or vipaśyanā (Sanskrit), observing the conceptions of the sensation is a must.

In another scripture of the school, Asaṅga has elaborated the idea:

依三受相差別故建立三苦相，謂苦苦相、壞苦相、行苦相……於不苦不樂受及順此受處法，當知建立第三苦相。由不了知此第三相能為常等顛倒生因；若不了知，為無常等無倒生因，及能發起涅槃樂欲。(Prakaraṇāryavācāśāstra 《顯揚聖教論》，*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 31, T1602, p. 551)

Meaning: Bases on the three conceptions of sensation, the three conceptions of suffering is established. They are the *duḥkha duḥkhatā* (the suffering of being suffered), *vipariṇāma duḥkhatā* (the suffering of decay) and *saṃskāra duḥkhatā* (the suffering inevitably consequent on karma)……From the *upekṣā vedanā* (sensations free from pain and pleasure) and the dharmas following this sensation aspect, it should be known that the third conception of suffering (the *saṃskāra duḥkhatā*) is established. And due to one was not clear about this third conception, it would become the reason of producing (the ideas of) permanence and other kinds of inversions. If one could be clear about this, it would then be the reason of producing (the ideas of) impermanence and other kinds of non-inversions, and would initiate the desire and happiness towards the *nirvāṇa*.

It could be seen that, according to such a practical idea of the Yogācārian, *upekṣā vedanā* (sensations free from pain and pleasure) is the sensation being used to discover the third conception of suffering, the *saṃskāra duḥkhatā*. Common beings do not clear about this and therefore, all kinds of wrong views (inversions) come up to their mind and force them to stay within the reincarnation. If sentient beings could be clear about this third conception of suffering, then, the right views could be built up in their mind and they will eager to attain the *nirvāṇa*.

After this, Sthiramati (安慧) further told the key:

由淨、不淨業感得異熟阿賴耶識，恒與捨受相應。唯此捨受是實異熟體。(Abhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā 《大乘阿毘達磨雜集論》，*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 31, T1606, p. 695)

Meaning: The *Ālayavijñāna*, the *vipāka* (fruition) of the pure and impure karma, always correlates to the *upekṣā vedanā*. Only this *upekṣā vedanā* is the real substance of the *vipāka*.

From here, it could be seen very clearly that the Ālayavijñāna is also highly related to the third conception of suffering, the upekṣā vedanā, which is also one of the three conceptions of sensation. In another way round, if the conception of this upekṣā vedanā could not be observed and cleared about, the vipāka (fruition), the Ālayavijñāna, could not be even known.

Obviously, this doctrine further limited the Yogācārian from accepting the content regarding “受空故無受相” (Sensation is empty and therefore no conception of sensation). From this, it could be imagine that all other four aggregates should have the similar limitation as the sensation. Besides, as the pure and impure karma is mentioned about in the statement of Sthiramati, it could also be known that the aggregate of mental formation is referred to. For this reason, the sentence of “行空故無作相” (Mental formations is empty and therefore no conception of conducting) is also definitely cannot be accepted by the Yogācāra school.

Another example is regarding the aggregate of perception and the characteristic of recognizing. Their scripture says:

謂阿賴耶識，說名所知依體。三種自性：一、依他起自性，二、遍計所執自性，三、圓成實自性，說名所知相體。(Mahāyānasamgrahaśāstra 《攝大乘論本》，*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 31, T1594, p. 133)

Meaning: The Ālayavijñāna is said to be the substance that the recognizing depends on. The three natures (Tri-Svabhāva): Parikalpitasvabhāva, Paratantrasvabhāva and Pariniṣpannasvabhāva, are said to be the substance of the conceptions of recognizing.

This statement indicated that the Ālayavijñāna determines how the recognizing recognizes things. From the above statement, the characteristics of recognizing include the three natures (Tri-Svabhāva) which are also the core doctrine of the school. In such sense, how could the Yogācārian accept the sentences of “想空故無知相” and “識空故無覺相” (“Perception is empty and therefore no conception of recognizing” and “consciousness is empty and therefore no conception of discriminating”)? Surely they could not, since they have to hold these two doctrines of Ālayavijñāna and Tri-Svabhāva firmly.

The third example that could be come across is regarding the explanation by Asaṅga on the aggregate of form:

法與法空俱無二種戲論，故名無分別。云何為二？謂有及無。何以故？色非是有，遍計所執相無故；亦非是無，彼假所依事有故。色空亦非有，遍計所執相無所顯故；亦非是無，諸法無我有所顯故。(Prakaraṇāryavācāśāstra 《顯揚聖教論》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 31, T1602, p. 563)

Meaning: Both the dharma and the emptiness of dharma do not have two kinds of meaningless argument (prapañca), therefore, it is said to be no discrimination. What are these two? They are the so-called existence and non-existence. Why? Form is not an existence, because it is the characteristic of the universally discriminated and attached self-nature (Parikalpitasvabhāva). But it is not a non-existence either, because the thing that a temporary phenomenon relies on is an existence. The emptiness of dharma also is not an existence, because the universally discriminated and attached self-nature (Parikalpitasvabhāva) manifested nothing. But it is not a non-existence either, because all dharmas have no self would be manifested.

It must be mentioned beforehand that this teaching seems to be highly related to the teaching in the *Kaccānagottasutta* (S.II.16) which states:

This world, Kaccana, for the most part depends upon a duality—upon the notion of existence and the notion of nonexistence. But for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of nonexistence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world. (Bhikkhu Bodhi [tr.], *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Saṃyutta Nikāya), Vol. 1, 2000)

This means that such teaching has its proven fundamental origin which can be traced back to the teaching of the Buddha himself. This is also a kind of explanation about the middle path in the core of the Buddha's teaching.

Regarding the statement of Asaṅga, “the thing” that a temporary phenomenon relies on refers to the self-verifying aspect (Samvittibhāga, 自證分). It is not a non-existence because it is an aspect of the Ālayavijñāna and is therefore manifested through the dependent self-nature (Paratantrasvabhāva) which is the worldly truth. Only the temporary phenomenon is not an existence, for it is completely a result from the universally discriminated and attached self-nature (Parikalpitasvabhāva). On the other hand, the emptiness of form is viewed in the same way as stated in the statement. The basic idea here is the non-duality of worldly and unworldly dharmas.

Such thing, the self-verifying aspect (Samvittibhāga, 自證分), needs both the image aspect (Nimittabhāga, 相分) and the perspective aspect (Dṛṣṭi or Darśanabhāga, 見分) so as

to manifest itself. In such a way, how could the Yogācārian accept the sentence “色空故無惱壞相” (Form is empty and therefore no conception of ill will towards its destruction) as stated in the subject line? Especially the nimitta is the vital factor in the whole equation? Of course, they could not.

From all of the above discussion, it could be sure that the subject statement about the five aggregates and their related conceptions, which only appears in the Kumārajīva’s version of the *Heart Sūtra*, is totally unacceptable according to the doctrinal ideas of the Yogācāra school. Just changing the words was not good enough. The whole line must have to be completely deleted. Otherwise, it would create difficulties when the Yogācārian has to explain their own doctrines of Ālayavijñāna, image and other aspects, the three natures as well as their whole set of practicing methods.

The situation of the Mādhyamikan is totally a different story. They can accept this line perfectly. It is because the school explained their idea about the characteristics very firmly:

「自相空」者，一切法有二種相：總相，別相。是二相空，故名為相空。
(Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra 《大智度論》，Taishō Tripitaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 25, T1509, p. 293)

Meaning: Individual conception is empty means, for all dharmas have two conceptions: the universal conception and the specific conception; where these two conceptions are empty, that is the so-called individual conception is empty.

Besides the emptiness of nature (性空), the Mādhyamikan also holds the need of the emptiness of conceptions (相空). In such a doctrinal idea, clearly that emptiness of an individual dharma is applied to both the universal conception, for example the characteristic of form itself, as well as to the specific conception, for example the characteristic of ill will towards the destruction of form. But in the Yogācārian doctrinal idea, which nature of the three self-natures being involved in these conceptions should first be determined. Those relatively real should not be treated as empty from such a point of view. This is the main difference that resulted into the deletion of the subject statement from the versions after Kumārajīva.

Such differences could further be proven by the versions translated after Xuan Zang. Starting from the third Chinese translation, the Dharmacandra’s version, which was rendered in the early to the middle of the eighth century, a statement was further altered. For convenience, the different form of this statement in different versions are shown in the following table:

Version	Texts	English Meaning
1. Kumārajīva (408 CE)	照見五陰空 ⁸	Brightened up and saw the five aggregates as empty.
2. Xuan Zang (645-649 CE)	照見五蘊皆空。 ⁹	Brightened up and saw all the five aggregates as empty.
3. Dharmacandra (732 CE or later)	照見五蘊自性皆空。 ¹⁰	Brightened up and saw <u>the self-nature</u> of the five aggregates as empty.
4. Prajñā (788 CE)	應觀五蘊性空。 ¹¹	Should observe <u>the nature</u> of the five aggregates as empty.
5. Prajñācakra (847-860 CE)	應照見五蘊自性皆空。 ¹²	Should brighten up and see <u>the self-nature</u> of all the five aggregates as empty.
6. Chosgrub (842-856 CE)	彼應如是觀察，五蘊體性皆空。 ¹³	They should thus observe that <u>the substantial nature</u> of all the five aggregates as empty.
7. Dānapāla (980 CE)	當觀五蘊自性皆空。 ¹⁴	Should observe <u>the self-nature</u> of the five aggregates as empty.
Conze (1960 CE)	He beheld but five heaps, and he saw that in <u>their own-being</u> they were empty.	
Sanskrit for reference	Panca-skandhās tāmś ca <u>svābhava</u> śūnyān paśyati sma.	

⁸Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什) (tr.), **Mo he bore boluomi daming zhou jing** 《摩訶般若波羅蜜大明咒經》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0250, p. 847.

⁹Xuan Zang (玄奘) (tr.), **Bore boluomiduo xinjing** 《般若波羅蜜多心經》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0251, p. 848.

¹⁰Dharmacandra (法月) (tr.), **Pubian zhicang bore boluomiduo xinjing** 《普遍智藏般若波羅蜜多心經》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0252, p. 849.

¹¹Prajñā (般若) (tr.), **Bore boluomiduo xinjing** 《般若波羅蜜多心經》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0253, p. 849.

¹²Prajñācakra (智慧輪) (tr.), **Bore boluomiduo xinjing** 《般若波羅蜜多心經》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T254, p. 850.

¹³Chosgrub (法成) (tr.), **Bore boluomiduo xinjing** 《般若波羅蜜多心經》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0255, p. 850.

¹⁴Dānapāla (施護) (tr.), **Foshuo shengfumu bore boluomiduo jing** 《佛說聖佛母般若波羅蜜多經》，Taishō Tripiṭaka 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0257, p. 852.

Here, which could be seen that starting from the version of Dharmacandra, the term “self-nature” (自性) or “nature” (性) has been added to the *Heart Sūtra*. This obviously is a special additional remark to remind the readers that only the self-nature of the five aggregates should be observed as empty but NOT their conceptions. The extant Sanskrit text definitely belongs to this kind of version which means it was something produced later than the version that Xuan Zang had gotten back from India.

Modern scholars seemed do not quite understand these kinds of doctrinal differences. Actually, not to mention the additional remark about the self-nature in the later versions, simply by the existence of the five sentences regarding the conceptions of the five aggregates recorded only in the Kumārajīva’s version, it should be aware about the issue. This proved that such version definitely was not the products during the Yogācārian era, but should be much earlier that can be traced back to the idea of the Mādhyamikan. Also, for the benefit on mass producing, transporting and storing that the *Heart Sūtra* could offered, it must have been used as the main tool in promoting Buddhism everywhere. Therefore, as what could be seen, the Yogācāra school had put effort to transform it from just a short portion being taken out from the greater *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*, and gradually changed it into a more complete one when the Indian monk Dharmacandra (法月) first translated such version in around the early eighth century, which has a beginning and an ending stories. Even more important, the wordings within were modified so that they would not create any contradiction towards the Yogācārian own doctrinal explanation.

4. The Omission of the Three Periods

The second statement that was being omitted in all later versions after Kumārajīva is:

是空法，非過去、非未來、非現在。(Kumārajīva, 鳩摩羅什 [tr.], Mo he bore boluomi daming zhou jing 《摩訶般若波羅蜜大明咒經》, *Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》, Vol. 8, T0250, p. 847)

Meaning: Such emptiness of dharma, not the past, not the future, not the present.

The problem here is not the order of the three periods, but the emptiness which made them become “非” (Not). According to the scripture of the Yogācāra school:

過去、未來非常，非現如空花等，非實有故；又無作用，不可執為因緣性故。若無能持染淨種識，一切因果皆不得成。有執大乘遣相空理為究竟者，依似比量撥無此識及一切法。彼特違害前所引經，智斷、證修、染淨、因果，皆執非實，成大邪見。(Dharmapāla, Xuan Zang (tr.), *Vijñāptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* 《成唯識論》，*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 31, T1585, p. 16)

Meaning: The past and future are not permanence. They are not the same as the present that shows like a flower in the air which is not real. They do not have function either, for they could not be grasped as a causal nature. If there was no such consciousness that can hold all seeds of impure and pure, all kinds of courses and consequences could not be possibly established. There are people who hold the idea of emptiness that dispelling all conceptions as the perfection, and based on such seemingly inferential idea and reject the existence of such consciousness and all dharmas. They violated and damaged the prior referred scriptures, making the cutting off by the wisdom, realization through practicing, impurity and purity, courses and consequences, all of these are grasped as untrue. This resulted into a great wrong view.

It is very clear! The issue here is about the underlined part of the statement which is regarding the Ālayavijñāna. The Yogācārian in a certain extent can accept the emptiness of dharmas. However, they cannot accept the concept of no past and no future that might finally result in no seeds, no Ālayavijñāna and no cutting off by the wisdom, etcetera. That would be a serious problem if they accept that. Therefore, Dharmapāla criticized the “有執大乘遣相空理為究竟者” (people who hold the idea of emptiness that dispelling all conceptions as the perfection), that is, implying a portion of the people (possibly the Prāsaṅgika, 中觀具緣派 or 中觀應成派) or even generally as a whole of the Mādhyamika school at his time, whom Dharmapāla did not exactly mentioned.

When comparing to the greater *MahāPrajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《大般若波羅蜜多經》 rendered by Xuan Zang, the three periods were recorded inside: “非過去，非未來，非現在。” (Xuan Zang, 玄奘 [tr.], *MahāPrajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《大般若波羅蜜多經》，*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 7, T0220, p. 14). Since they are there, it means that only this small version of the *Heart Sūtra* was the one that had been carefully evaluated and adjusted based on the doctrinal requirements of the Yogācārian. From the evidences in the *Sūtra* itself, this alternation together with the former one of section 3 were finished before the arrival of Xuan Zang to India.

5. Conclusion

Within such a short scripture, the *Heart Sūtra* has two very crucial alternations that are closely related to the doctrinal ideas of seeds, Ālayavijñāna, its related aspects as well as the Three-natures. These ideas are the core doctrines of the Yogācārian teachings which gave them no choice but to delete the Mādhyamikan sole acceptable sentences in the original *Sūtra*.

The extant Sanskrit text also shows such alternations. It is without doubt belong to the product of the later stage of Buddhism development. And by comparison, it should be very near to the version of Prajñācakra (智慧輪). Not only because they both have the wordings representing the idea of “self-nature”, but also from the sentences as recorded in the text:

舍利子！色空，空性是色。色不異空，空不異色。是色即空，是空即色。(Bore boluomiduo xinjing 《般若波羅蜜多心經》，*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T254, p. 850)

Conze translated this sentence as:

O Sariputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form.

And the extant Sanskrit text is:

Śāriputra: rūpaṃ śūnyatā śūnyatāiva rūpaṃ; rūpān na pṛthak śūnyatā śūnyatāyā na pṛthag rūpaṃ; yad rūpaṃ sā śūnyatā; ya śūnyatā tad rūpaṃ.

These sentences are exactly lined up in the same order and meaning. Since this version was already a translation based on the text in the year around 847 to 860 CE (唐朝, Tang Dynasty), it might even be a version which had already come across the adjustment of the Vajrayāna sect. In the even later stage, this particular sentence had been gone through another transformation which is marked in the latest two Chinese translated versions:

Version of Chos-grub (法成):

彼應如是觀察，五蘊體性皆空。色即是空，空即是色。色不異空，空不異色。(Bore boluomiduo xinjing 《般若波羅蜜多心經》，*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0255, p. 850)

Meaning: They should thus observe that the substantial nature of all the five aggregates as empty. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Form is no different with emptiness, emptiness is no different with form.

Version of Dānapāla (施護):

當觀五蘊自性皆空。何名五蘊自性空耶？所謂即色是空，即空是色；色無異於空，空無異於色。(Foshuo shengfumu bore boluomiduo jing 《佛說聖佛母般若波羅蜜多經》，*Taishō Tripitaka* 《大正藏》，Vol. 8, T0257, p. 852)

Meaning: Should observe the nature of the five aggregates as empty. How this is called the nature of the five aggregates as empty? That is, form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Form is no different with emptiness, emptiness is no different with form.

These two latest versions took further alternations by moving the last two lines “色即是空，空即是色” (form is emptiness, emptiness is form) to the front and subtly mixed together with the first two lines, “色空，空性是色” (form is emptiness and the nature of emptiness is form) in the Prajñācakra’s version. Making the original two lines “色不異空，空不異色” (form is no different with emptiness, emptiness is no different with form) inevitably being moved to the back. Do these changes have any relationship with the doctrinal ideas of the Vajrayāna Buddhism? This is out of the scope of this study and therefore, it will be left for the future or other scholars to discover the possibility.

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