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The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Blessed Mother

Bhagavatīprajñāpāramitāhṛdaya

· Toh 21 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 34 (sher phyin, ka), folios 144b–146a
For referencing Tibetan sources, please see our Scholar's Edition

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

Gelo · Namkha · Rinchen Dé · Vimalamitra

First published 2022

Current version v 1.0.16

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Summary

s.1 In this famous scripture, known popularly as *The Heart Sūtra*, the Buddha Śākyamuni inspires his senior monk Śāriputra to request instructions from the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara on the way to practice the perfection of wisdom. Avalokiteśvara then describes how an aspiring practitioner of the perfection of wisdom must first understand how all phenomena lack an intrinsic nature, which amounts to the realization of emptiness. Next, Avalokiteśvara reveals a brief mantra that the practitioner can recite as a method for engendering this understanding experientially. Following Avalokiteśvara's teaching, the Buddha offers his endorsement and confirms that this is the foremost way to practice the perfection of wisdom.

Acknowledgments

ac.1 Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the guidance of Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche. The translation was produced by Catherine Dalton and Andreas Doctor, who also wrote the introduction. Wiesiek Mical compared the translation against the Sanskrit. The translators also wish to thank Jeffrey Kotyk, Jayarava Attwood, and Joshua Capitanio for their helpful comments and advice.

The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

Introduction

i.1 *The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Blessed Mother*,[1] which today is popularly known simply as *The Heart Sūtra*,[2] has been cherished, read, and recited by Mahāyāna Buddhists in East and Central Asia for well over a millennium. Over the centuries, scholars and practitioners have continued to find deep meaning in this short scripture and vigorously debated its purpose and practice—and even whether to classify it as a sūtra or a tantra. Still today, *The Heart Sūtra* continues to be recited around the world in monasteries, temples, and meditation centers in a variety of Buddhist traditions. As a result of its popularity, in more recent times the sūtra has been translated into a wide variety of modern languages that are available in print and online.

i.2 The sūtra takes place on Vulture Peak Mountain near Rājagṛha. Here the Buddha inspires his senior monk Śāriputra to request instructions from the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara regarding the practice of the perfection of wisdom.[3] Prompted in this way, Avalokiteśvara describes how an aspiring practitioner of the perfection of wisdom must first understand that all phenomena lack an intrinsic nature and therefore are empty. To manifest this realization in the practitioner, Avalokiteśvara reveals a brief mantra to be recited: *tadyathā gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā.* Following Avalokiteśvara's teaching, the Buddha offers his endorsement of what has been said and confirms that this is indeed the foremost way to practice the perfection of wisdom.

i.3 In English we speak of *The Heart Sūtra* in the singular, but this obscures the fact that—more than most Buddhist canonical scriptures—this short teaching exists in a variety of versions, recensions, and redactions in multiple canonical languages. Most importantly, *The Heart Sūtra* exists in both a short and a long version (although the long version is also very brief) in Chinese, Sanskrit, and Tibetan. In East Asia the shorter version, which is also the older one in terms of

textual history, became the most popular, while in Tibet the longer version was favored.

The Short Sūtra

i.4 The short version of *The Heart Sūtra* was first compiled—most likely as an abstract of longer Prajñāpāramitā sūtras—in China sometime in the middle of the seventh century CE.[4] Shortly thereafter, it appears that the sūtra was translated from Chinese into Sanskrit. The material used to compile the sūtra was extracted from key passages in Prajñāpāramitā scriptures in Chinese translation, especially Kumārajīva's (344–413 CE) translation of *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines* (Taishō 223). These central statements were then framed by an introduction describing the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's role as the teacher, and then a concluding mantra, which functioned to encapsulate the blessings of the Prajñāpāramitā teachings.[5] In this way, the short version of *The Heart Sūtra* combines established Buddhist Prajñāpāramitā scripture with *dhāraṇī* practice in an abridged format that is eminently suited for recitation. Notably, at that time in China such scriptural digests summarizing the words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*) were common, and *The Heart Sūtra* is certainly not unique in this way.[6] What is remarkable, however, is the immense importance and popularity the short version of *The Heart Sūtra* came to enjoy in China and the rest of East Asia. When viewed from the perspective of its roots in Prajñāpāramitā literature and its transformative and liberating efficacy in the perception of its many devotees, *The Heart Sūtra* does fulfill important criteria for being a genuine Buddhist scripture. For example, the Mahāyāna sūtra *Inspiring Determination* (*Adhyāśayasañcodana*, Toh 69) defines authentic buddhavacana as any discourse[7] that fulfils the following four criteria: (1) it must be meaningful, (2) it has to be consistent with the Dharma, (3) it should reduce mental defilements, and (4) it should present the qualities of nirvāṇa as opposed to saṃsāra.[8] In this sense *The Heart Sūtra* is perhaps not so different from many other Mahāyāna scriptures, in particular those of the Prajñāpāramitā family, that likewise were transmitted across a variety of time periods, re-

gions, cultures, and languages—constantly in flux, yet ever encapsulating the transcendent aspects of authentic buddhavacana.

i.5 Traditionally, the earliest version of *The Heart Sūtra* in Chinese was thought to be Taishō 250, which in traditional sources is described as a translation of Kumārajīva. However, this attribution is generally no longer accepted, and some scholars have placed it later in time—some even in the beginning of the eighth century CE.[9] Apart from Taishō 250, the earliest witness for *The Heart Sūtra's* existence is a famous stone stele, which was discovered in the early twentieth century at the Yunju Temple in the Fangshan region near Beijing. The inscription on this stele is a rendering of the short version of *The Heart Sūtra*, and the colophon is dated to 661. The colophon further states that this is the translation prepared by Xuanzang (i.e., an equivalent of Taishō 251).[10] Of the three shorter versions of the text in Chinese,[11] this is the one that has been commonly read and recited across East Asia down to the present day.

i.6 In terms of Sanskrit sources, the first rendering of the short sūtra in Sanskrit was likely produced shortly after the compilation of *The Heart Sūtra* in Chinese in the middle of the seventh century. However, the earliest witness we have of a Sanskrit text is not an actual Sanskrit manuscript, but rather a version with the Sanskrit transliterated into Chinese characters (Taishō 256). This text was likely produced by the famous translator and teacher Amoghavajra (705–74) and can therefore be dated to the eighth century.[12] While multiple Sanskrit manuscripts of the shorter version of *The Heart Sūtra* exist, any dating of such manuscripts is typically fraught with much uncertainty.[13] Scholars have, however, dated a Sanskrit manuscript of the short version (currently kept in Tokyo National Museum) to the ninth or tenth century, and this appears to be the earliest extant Sanskrit manuscript.[14] Tibetan translations of the short sūtra were never included in any of the Kangyurs, but several have been identified among the Dunhuang manuscripts.[15]

i.7 In sum, we can conclude that the Chinese version of the short sūtra must have been compiled sometime between 404 (when Kumārajīva completed his translation of Taishō 223) and 661 CE (the date on the stone stele), and that the Sanskrit translation was produced soon thereafter.[16] However, in addition to these mutually distant historical markers, we also have data that place the likely time of compilation much more precisely within just a two-year period from 654–56 CE. First, 654 CE marks the year when the *Dhāraṇīsamuccaya* (Taishō 901), which is the likely source of the mantra in *The Heart Sūtra*, was translated into Chinese.[17] Second, in Xuanzang's biography (Taishō 2053, written in the late seventh century) it is mentioned that in 656 Xuanzang offered a gold-lettered version of *The Heart Sūtra* to the imperial family as a gift. Although the biography is a later source than the stone stele, the date provided in the biography is the earliest placement of *The Heart Sūtra* in the historical record and this may possibly be the very occasion on which *The Heart Sūtra* was first compiled in Chinese.[18]

The Long Sūtra

i.8 The history of the longer version of *The Heart Sūtra* presents us with an equally complex picture of textual transmission. Notably, there are at least two distinct longer versions of *The Heart Sūtra*. Both longer versions add to the short sūtra by presenting a more extensive, traditional introduction (beginning with the statement "Thus did I hear at one time") and a conventional concluding section as we generally know them from the Mahāyāna sūtras. As a result, the longer versions appear much more like a typical sūtra than does the short version.

i.9 The earliest version of the long sūtra, traditionally dated to 738 CE, is a text that only exists in Chinese (Taishō 252). While the text presents itself as a translation from Sanskrit, it is most likely an early attempt to present the short sūtra in a traditional literary format by adding an introduction and a concluding section, which appear to have been composed directly in Chinese. This version

does not seem to have gained much popularity, as its unique introduction was never replicated or copied in other sources.[19]

i.10 The four remaining Chinese versions of the long sūtra (Taishō 253, 254, 255, and 257) are all translations that were produced either from Sanskrit or Tibetan manuscripts.[20] Although they each feature certain idiosyncratic elements, all of them clearly belong to the same family in text-historical terms. Unfortunately, there are no surviving Sanskrit manuscripts from the period when these four translations were produced, from the late eighth to the early eleventh century.[21] The earliest Sanskrit witnesses we have of the longer version of *The Heart Sūtra* are Nepalese manuscripts that were produced several centuries later.

i.11 Just as with the Sanskrit translation of the short sūtra, we also do not know the circumstances in which the Sanskrit text of the longer version first appeared. It must have taken place, however, prior to 788 CE, when the first Chinese translation from Sanskrit was produced. At around the same time, the two Tibetan translations, which were subsequently included in the Kangyur (see more below), must also have been produced. We can say that with some confidence, since the translation is recorded in the Denkarma catalog of completed translations, which is dated to 812.[22]

i.12 In the Tengyur collections seven commentaries on the long sūtra by Indian scholars and one by a Chinese scholar are included in Tibetan translation. Some of these commentaries were composed by such well-known names in Tibetan history as Kamalaśīla (740–95), Vimalamitra (eighth/ninth c.), and Atīśa (982–1054).[23] The authors of these commentaries were all active from the eighth to the eleventh century and most of them are known to have visited Tibet. Interestingly, the different commentators view *The Heart Sūtra* through very diverse hermeneutical lenses and interpret it variously through the systems of sūtra, tantra, and even ritual practice (*sādhana*). This great variety of interpretations, combined with the fact that there is no mention of *The Heart*

Sūtra in any other source linked to India, makes it seem likely that the commentaries were all composed in Tibet during the sojourns of these Indian masters there.[24]

i.13 It therefore appears that the history of the long sūtra can be told largely as a Sino-Tibetan exchange of ideas and manuscripts, which unfolded during the eighth to the eleventh century. In this regard, there are strong indications that the Dunhuang region was an important center for the exchange of such ideas and manuscripts. Among the scriptural treasures discovered in the Dunhuang caves in the early twentieth century, all of which must date prior to the turn of the eleventh century when the caves at Dunhuang were sealed off, there are numerous manuscripts of *The Heart Sūtra* in both Chinese and Tibetan. In addition to the shorter versions mentioned above, there are a number of longer versions, and apparently even a few "hybrid" manuscripts that are neither of the standard short or long sūtras.[25] Like the Chinese and Sanskrit versions, these Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts provide a variety of readings, but so far no comparative analyses of these texts, or critical editions of the manuscripts, have been published.

The Heart Sūtra in the Kangyur

i.14 In Tibet, only the longer version of *The Heart Sūtra* was included in the various Kangyur collections, where it has been preserved in two recensions, which Jonathan Silk has designated Recension A and Recension B.[26] These two recensions represent individual manuscript traditions and appear to have been translated into Tibetan by different translators, although the exact details remain unknown. [27] The two recensions vary on several significant points, such as the title of the text, the name of the absorption in which the Buddha rests, the mantra that Avalokiteśvara reveals, and the presence or absence of a translator's colophon.

i.15 The fact that *The Heart Sūtra* incorporates elements of both sūtra and tantra, and therefore has been variously classified throughout its history, is evident

from its placement in the different Kangyur collections, where it often appears twice in both the Tantra section and the Perfection of Wisdom section.[28] Generally speaking, all Kangyurs include Recension A in their Tantra sections, whereas some Kangyurs, mostly those of the Thempangma (*them spangs ma*) branch, also include Recension B in the Perfection of Wisdom section.[29] The Kangyurs that belong to the Tshalpa (*tshal pa*) branch mostly include the text only once, in the Tantra section.[30] In the Degé Kangyur, however, the text appears in both the Perfection of Wisdom and the Tantra sections, but, unlike the Thempangma Kangyurs, the Degé Kangyur includes Recension A both times, thus omitting Recension B. [31]

i.16 Our translation is based primarily on the version of Recension A that is included in the Degé Kangyur. We have made Recension A our primary focus in order to present in English one important version of *The Heart Sūtra* as it has been transmitted in Tibet since the early ninth century, rather than attempting to edit this version in search of an elusive urtext. However, to give the reader a taste of the differences between the two Tibetan recensions—differences that the Tibetans found worthy of preservation in their Kangyurs—we have included in the form of notes the most significant variations between the Degé text and the version of Recension B that is included in the Perfection of Wisdom section in the Stok Palace Kangyur.[32] We have also attempted, whenever possible, to let our translation be informed by the published Sanskrit editions of *The Heart Sūtra*, the eight commentaries on the text in the Tengyur collections, and the growing scholarly literature on *The Heart Sūtra*.

The Translation

1. # The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Blessed Mother

1.1 [33]Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom, the Blessed Mother! [34]

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was residing on Vulture Peak Mountain at Rājagṛha together with a great saṅgha of monks and a great saṅgha of bodhisattvas.

1.2 At that time the Blessed One rested in an absorption on the categories of phenomena called *illumination of the profound*.[35]

1.3 At the same time,[36] the bodhisattva great being, noble Avalokiteśvara, while practicing the profound perfection of wisdom, looked and saw that the five aggregates are also[37] empty of an intrinsic nature. [38]

1.4 Then, due to the Buddha's power, venerable Śāriputra[39] asked the bodhisattva great being, noble Avalokiteśvara, "How should sons of noble family or daughters of noble family[40] train if they wish to engage in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom?"

1.5 The bodhisattva great being, noble Avalokiteśvara, replied to venerable Śāradvatīputra,[41] "Śāriputra, sons of noble family or daughters of noble family who wish to engage in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom should see things in this way: they should correctly observe the five aggregates to be empty of an intrinsic nature.[42]

1.6 "Form is empty.[43] Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form, and form is also not other than emptiness.[44] In the same way, feeling, perception, formation, [45] and consciousness are empty.

1.7 “Śāriputra, therefore, all phenomena are emptiness; they are without characteristics, unborn, unceasing, without stains, without absence of stains,[46] not deficient, and not complete.

1.8 “Śāriputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no perception, no formations, no consciousness, no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no texture, and no mental object.

1.9 “There is no element of the eye, up to no element of the mind, and further up to no element of the mind consciousness.[47]

1.10 “There is no ignorance and no exhaustion of ignorance, up to no aging and death and no exhaustion of aging and death.

1.11 “There is no suffering, no origin of suffering, no cessation of suffering, no path, no wisdom,[48] no attainment, and no nonattainment. [49]

1.12 “Śāriputra, therefore, since bodhisattvas have no attainment, they rely upon and dwell in the perfection of wisdom.[50] Because their minds have no veils, they have no fear. Having utterly[51] gone beyond error, they reach the culmination of nirvāṇa.

1.13 “All the buddhas who reside in the three times have likewise fully awakened to unsurpassed and perfect awakening by relying upon the perfection of wisdom.

1.14 “Therefore,[52] the mantra[53] of the perfection of wisdom is the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra that is equal to the unequaled, and the mantra that utterly pacifies all suffering. Since it is not false, it should be known to be true.

1.15 “The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is stated thus:[54]

tadyathā[55] *gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā*[56]

1.16 "Śāriputra, this is the way a bodhisattva great being should train in the profound perfection of wisdom."

1.17 Then the Blessed One arose from that absorption and gave his approval to the bodhisattva great being, noble Avalokiteśvara, saying, "Excellent![57] Excellent! Son of noble family, it is like that. Son of noble family, it is like that. The profound perfection of wisdom should be practiced just as you have taught, and even the thus-gone ones will rejoice."

1.18 When the Blessed One had said this, venerable Śāradvatīputra,[58] the bodhisattva great being, noble Avalokiteśvara, and the entire assembly, as well as the world with its devas, humans, asuras, and gandharvas, rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.

1.19 *This completes The Great Vehicle Sūtra "The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Blessed Mother."*

Colophon

c.1 This was translated by the Indian preceptor Vimalamitra and the translator monk Rinchen Dé, and then edited and finalized by the editor-translators Gelo, Namkha, and others. It was then carefully proofed against the writing on the wall of the Gegye Jema Ling Temple[59] at glorious Samye—the spontaneously accomplished temple. [60]

Notes

1. The title given in Stok (our representative of Recension B, as explained below) is *The Noble Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*'phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po, Āryaprajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*). However, the title that is included at the end of the text in Stok is *The Noble Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Blessed Mother* (*'phags pa bcom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po, Āryabhagavatīprajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*).

2. "*Heart Sūtra*" is a translation of the last two words of the Chinese title (心經).

3. In Prajñāpāramitā literature in general, the presence of Avalokiteśvara as an interlocutor is unique to *The Heart Sūtra*. Usually, this role is performed by other disciples of the Buddha, such as the elder Subhūti.

4. *The Heart Sūtra*'s Chinese origins were first pointed out in English by Jan Nattier (1992), who argued that the short version of *The Heart Sūtra* was originally compiled in China rather than India. Nattier further suggested that *The Heart Sūtra* was transmitted to the famous Chinese translator Xuanzang (600/602–64), who edited the Chinese text and subsequently translated it into Sanskrit. Some elements in Nattier's study, such as the role of Xuanzang in producing the Sanskrit translation and subsequently transmitting the sūtra within China, have since been challenged by other scholars, such as Dan Lusthaus (2003, pp. 81–87) and Kōsei Ishii (2015). For a critique of Lusthaus's arguments, see Attwood 2020. Jeffrey Kotyk (2019, pp. 538–40) also argues that Xuanzang is unlikely to have received *The Heart Sūtra* prior to his journey to India but suggests that he may have compiled it in Chinese after his return to China. Nevertheless, Nattier's main thesis—that the short version of *The Heart Sūtra* was originally compiled in China based on existing sources in Chinese—still appears the most compelling account of events. Notably, Shi (2014) was the first scholar to apply Nattier's methods to other parts of the text. Over the last decade, Jayarava Attwood has written extensively on this topic (e.g., 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021) and provided many new insights in favor of the Chinese origin of *The Heart Sūtra*. Besides adding weight to the argument that the sūtra was compiled in China, Attwood's writings have also contributed much to our general knowledge of *The Heart Sūtra*, in particular the history and linguistic nature of the Chinese and Sanskrit sources. Besides the articles by Attwood included in this bibliography, links to his other published articles on *The Heart Sūtra* can be found at his blog: http://jayarava.blogspot.com.

5. This mantra was most likely extracted from the Chinese translation of the *Dhāraṇīsamuccaya* (Taishō 901), which was translated into Chinese in 654 CE. This possibility was already mentioned by Nattier, but without providing any details (1992, p. 177). The *Dhāraṇīsamuccaya* does indeed contain the mantra that is included in *The Heart Sūtra* and the passage in question reads: "16. The Great Heart Dhāraṇī of Prajñāpāramitā The incantation goes: Duozhita (1). Jiedi jiedi (2). Boluo jiedi (3). Boluoseng jiedi (4). Puti (5). Shahe (6). For this great heart incantation, use the Great Heart Seal. It can be used comprehensively with all the various altars [i.e., for all different ritual applications]. The Lesser Heart Dhāraṇī of Prajñāpāramitā goes: Duozhita (1). Jiedi jiedi (2). Boluomin jiedi (3). Boluoreta (4). Shahe (5). Use the Lesser Heart Seal for all applications." The Chinese reads:《陀羅尼集經卷〉〈佛說跋折囉功能法相品〉般若大心陀羅尼第十六　呪曰。 跢姪他*(一)*揭帝揭帝*(二)*波羅揭帝*(三)*波囉僧揭 帝*(四)*菩提*(五)*莎訶*(六)* 是大心呪。用大心印。作諸壇處一切通用。 般若小心陀羅尼呪曰。 跢姪他*(一)*揭帝揭帝*(二)*波囉民*(*彌忍反*)*揭帝*(三)*波囉若*(*若冶反*)*他*(四)*莎訶*(五)* 用小心印通一切用。 (CBETA, T18, no. 901, p. 807, b19–26. The incantation

itself is found at 18: 807b20–21.) Interestingly, Taishō 901 includes *tadyathā* (*duozhita*) at the beginning of the incantation, as do the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions, whereas this is not found in the Chinese versions of *The Heart Sūtra*. There are a few additional incantations in this section of Taishō 901 that are also labeled "heart dhāraṇī" or "lesser heart dhāraṇī." We are grateful to Josh Capitanio for locating this passage in Taishō 901 and for providing the above translation.

6. Attwood 2020, pp. 161–64. See also Attwood 2019, pp. 19–23.

7. The actual term used in this sūtra is *pratibhāna* (*spobs pa*), which can also be translated as "inspired speech".

8. See Blazing Wisdom Translation Group, trans., Inspiring Determination, Toh 69 (84000:Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2021), 1.80.

9. For arguments in favor of and against an early dating of this text, see Lusthaus 2003 (pp. 86–87) and Attwood 2020.

10. In spite of the colophon's claim, we now know that Xuanzang could not have translated the sūtra into Chinese, since it was rather translated *from* Chinese into Sanskrit subsequent to its appearance in China. See Attwood 2019 and Kotyk 2019 (pp. 538–40).

11. Besides Taishō 250 and Taishō 251, there is one additional version of the short sūtra: Taishō 256. However, this version is a transliteration into Chinese of the Sanskrit.

12. Silk 2021, p. 103.

13. On the Sanskrit manuscripts, see Conze 1967. Many edited versions of the Sanskrit text have also been published over the last century. For a listing of these, see Attwood 2015, pp. 45–46.

14. Previously, scholars had dated this manuscript to 609 CE, but this dating was not accurate. See Silk 2021, pp. 102–4. See also Attwood 2015, p. 30 (and n.6).

15. On the Tibetan translations of the shorter version, see Attwood 2015, pp. 38–40. Interestingly, in addition to the Tibetan translations found at Dunhuang, one manuscript (Pelliot tibétain 448) consists of a transliteration into Tibetan of the Chinese text (a scan of this manuscript can be viewed at: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b83061587). This manuscript appears to have been produced for recitation of the Chinese text by those Tibetans in the region who could not read the Chinese characters. This could perhaps indicate that the Chinese version enjoyed a privileged status compared to the Tibetan translation, even by those who could only read Tibetan. For a scan of a Dunhuang manuscript with Tibetan translation of the short version, currently held at the British Library (Or. 8212/77), see: http://idp.bl.uk/database/large.a4d?recnum=7852&imageRecnum=122101.

16. Attwood 2019, pp. 25–26.

17. See n.5.

18. This time of compilation has been suggested by Jeffrey Kotyk (2019, p. 538–40).

19. For a detailed comparison of the five Chinese versions of the longer sūtra (Taishō 252, 253, 254, 255, and 257), see Attwood 2021. See also Nattier 1992, p. 200, note 1.

20. Of these, Taishō 253, 254, and 257 were translated from Sanskrit, and Taishō 255 from Tibetan.

21. Taishō 253 was translated in 788 CE, Taishō 254 in 861 CE, and Taishō 257 in 1005 CE. Taishō 255 was translated from Tibetan in 856. On these dates see Attwood 2015, p. 38. Note, however, that these dates still require further research.

22. See Denkarma, folio 295.a.6. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 9–10, number 14.

23. Seven of the commentaries are included in the Degé Tengyur (Toh 3818–3823, all in the Perfection of Wisdom section, and Toh 4353, in the Miscellaneous section). The eighth commentary is only included in the Peking (P 5221) and Narthang (3994) Tengyurs. All eight commentaries have been translated into English and commented upon by Donald Lopez (1996).

24. We know that Kamalaśīla, Vimalamitra, Atīśa, Vajrapāṇi (eleventh century), and Mahājana (eleventh century) all visited Tibet. Moreover, according to Toshio Horiuchi (2021), at least the two commentaries by Śrīsiṃha (dates uncertain) and Jñānamitra (dates uncertain) were composed directly in Tibetan. As for Praśāstrasena (dates uncertain), we do not have any biographical details, so it is not clear whether he ever visited Tibet or where his commentary was composed.

25. Attwood 2021, p. 63.

26. See Silk 1994 for editions of these two recensions.

27. Recension A, which we have translated here, contains a translators' colophon specifying that the translation was produced by the Indian scholar Vimalamitra and the Tibetan translator Rinchen Dé. Recension B lacks a translators' colophon.

28. Within the Perfection of Wisdom section, *The Heart Sūtra* is placed in a final volume of miscellaneous Perfection of Wisdom scriptures (*sher phyin sna tshogs*). On *The Heart Sūtra* being classified (and practiced) as dhāraṇī, see Silk 2021.

29. Besides the Thempangma Kangyurs, Narthang (from the "mixed" group of Kangyurs) also includes both recensions.

30. This is the case with the Berlin, Choné, Lithang, Peking, Dragon, and Urga Kangyurs.

31. Besides the Degé Kangyur, Recension A is also included twice in the Ragya Kangyur. In the "mixed" group of Kangyurs, Lhasa and Phukdrak also include Recension A twice.

32. In our notes, "Stok" refers exclusively to this text of the Perfection of Wisdom section, since the other version of the text in the Stok Palace Kangyur belongs to Recension A. Besides the differences that we have noted here, there are numerous minor differences between the two recensions, even within the individual versions of the two recensions. For details, see Silk 1994.

33. In the Toh 531 version of the text there is a slight discrepancy in the folio numbering between the 1737 par phud printings and the late (post par phud) printings of the Degé Kangyur. Although the discrepancy is irrelevant here, further details concerning this may be found in n.333 of the Toh 531 version of this text.

34. Stok: "Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!"

35. This sentence could also be translated: "At that time the Blessed One rested in a Dharma-discourse-absorption called *illumination of the profound*." The Tengyur commentaries are all vague on this point but are united in glossing the term *dharmaparyāya* (*chos kyi rnam grangs*), which is often translated

"Dharma discourse," as a categorization of phenomena, rather than a Dharma teaching. We have therefore opted to follow this in our translation. In recension B, the sentence is quite different. Thus, Stok reads: "At that time the Blessed One rested in the absorption called *illumination of the profound Dharma discourse*."

36. At this point the short version of *The Heart Sūtra* begins. In the long version, the first sentence of the short version is extended into a paragraph that incorporates the original in a new, expanded context. The texts converge at the second sentence of the standard text (beginning with "Form is empty. Emptiness is form").

37. According to Vimalamitra's commentary, the word "also" indicates that Avalokiteśvara also saw that the sense sources and the elements likewise are empty of an intrinsic nature. (Toh 3818, F.271.a)

38. Stok: "and he saw that the five aggregates are empty of an essence." On the variations of this sentence across the Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan sources, see Attwood 2015. Our translation of the Tibetan agrees with Attwood's proposed reading of the Sanskrit. However, unlike Attwood, we also believe that the same reading can be applied to the Tibetan text in both Recension A and Recension B. Besides simply making better sense overall, this reading is also supported by Vimalamitra's commentary on this passage (Toh 3818, F.270.a–F.271.b), and, moreover, it agrees semantically with the shorter version of *The Heart Sūtra* in Chinese, Sanskrit, and Tibetan. Attwood's analysis of the Tibetan (2015, p. 40) therefore misreads the Tibetan, we would argue, as does Jonathan Silk's translation of the same passage (1994, pp. 174–75) on which Attwood's arguments are based. Several other translators, e.g., Donald Lopez (1996, p. vii) and Thupten Jinpa (Dalai Lama 2015, pp. 59–62), translate using the same reading as Silk, though not all (e.g., Nālandā Translation Committee 1980).

39. Stok: "Śāradvatīputra."

40. Stok omits "or daughters of noble family."

41. The names Śāradvatīputra and Śāriputra are used interchangeably in the sūtras to refer to the same person.

42. Stok: "the five aggregates to be empty of an essence."

43. Both recensions A and B in Tibetan read "empty" (*stong pa*) rather than "emptiness" (*stong pa nyid*). Conze's edition of the Sanskrit reads *śūnyatā* ("emptiness"), although several sources read *śūnyam* ("empty") (1967, p. 150, note 10). Taishō 250 and 251 both read "emptiness" (Attwood 2017b, p. 56).

44. On these four sentences, see Attwood 2017b where their origins in earlier Prajñāpāramitā literature are traced. This way of articulating the relationship between emptiness and the phenomena of the five aggregates echoes sets of passages in all three of the long Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. In two passages in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines* (Toh 10, 3.23 and 8.14), two in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines* (Toh 9, 2.112–2.117 and 6.11), and three in *The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines* (Toh 8, 2.191–2.196, 2.238–2.245, and 5.191-5.212) there are similarly statements to the effect that emptiness is not other than form, that form itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is form. Those passages go on to characterize the relationship between emptiness and the other aggregates, and all other phenomena, in the same way. See also n.49.

45. Stok: "formations."

46. Stok: "free from stains, without stains."

47. Stok: “There is no element of the eye and no element of the eye consciousness, up to no element of the mind and no element of the mind consciousness.”

48. Stok: “no cognition.”

49. This series of negations echoes the more extensive series found in passages in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines* (Toh 10, 3.24–3.28), in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines* (Toh 9, 2.113–2.117), and in *The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines* (Toh 8, 2.191–2.193), which also begin by negating each of the five aggregates. The series of negations there is immediately preceded by a passage declaring that each of the aggregates “is not one thing and emptiness another,” since each of the aggregates “is itself emptiness,” and emptiness is each of the aggregates. See also n.44. See also Shi 2014 who analyzes earlier Chinese translations of Prajñāpāramitā literature to argue for a new translation of the terms “no nonattainment” in this sentence and “no attainment” in the following sentence.

50. Stok: “they rely upon the perfection of wisdom.”

51. Stok omits “utterly.”

52. Stok: “Śāriputra, therefore.”

53. Attwood (2017a) has argued that the term *mantra* in *The Heart Sūtra* most likely is a mistranslation of the Chinese rendering of the term *vidyā*, because this is what appears in Sanskrit manuscripts of the *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines* and because of how Kumārajīva phrases it in his translation of that text.

54. Instead of these last two sentences, Stok reads: “The perfection of wisdom, which is without error, should be known as a true mantra and as knowledge.”

55. Most witnesses of Recension A (though not the versions in the Degé Kangyur, nor the versions in Choné, Lhasa, Lithang, or Urga) include the syllable *oṁ* after *tadyathā*. See Silk 1994, p. 138. None of the Chinese sources include *oṁ* whereas some Sanskrit manuscripts do.

56. This mantra can be rendered in English as “Like this: gone, gone, gone beyond, utterly gone beyond. Awakening. *Svāhā*.” At this point the short version of *The Heart Sūtra* ends.

57. Before “Excellent,” Stok inserts “Son of noble family.”

58. Stok: “Śāriputra.”

59. The “writing on the wall of the Gegye Jema Ling Temple” is a reference to a Sanskrit version of *The Heart Sūtra* written on one of the walls in the Gegye Jema Ling (*dge rgyas bye ma gling*) Temple at Samye Monastery. That the writing was in Sanskrit, and that the comparison of the translation to that Sanskrit text took place “at a later time,” is mentioned in the catalogs (*dkar chag*) of the Narthang, Degé, Urga, and Lhasa Kangyurs. The earliest of these is the Narthang catalog, written by the Lelung Jedrung Lobzang Trinlé (1690–1740), which specifies that the version on the wall was the one “with introduction” (*gleng gzhi’i bkod pa dang bcas bris pa*; see Narthang *dkar chag* F.85.b). For the mention in the Degé catalog, see Degé Kangyur vol. 103 (lakṣmī), F.118.b. See also Silk 1994, pp. 48–49.

60. This colophon is missing in Stok.

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Glossary

aggregate

phung po

ཕུང་པོ།

skandha

Five “collections” that encompass all apparent physical and mental phenomena: form, feeling, perception, formation(s), and consciousness.

Avalokiteśvara

spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

avalokiteśvara

One of the “eight close sons of the Buddha,” he is also known as the bodhisattva who embodies compassion. In certain tantras, he is also the lord of the three families, where he embodies the compassion of the buddhas. In Tibet, he attained great significance as a special protector of Tibet, and in China, in female form, as Guanyin, the most important bodhisattva in all of East Asia.

element

khams

ཁམས།

dhātu

One way of describing experience and the world in terms of eighteen elements: eye, form, and eye consciousness; ear, sound, and ear consciousness; nose, odor, and nose consciousness; tongue, taste, and tongue consciousness; body, touch, and body consciousness; and mind, mental objects, and mind consciousness.

emptiness

stong pa nyid

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

śūnyatā

Emptiness denotes the ultimate nature of reality, the total absence of inherent existence and self-identity with respect to all phenomena. According to this view, all things and events are devoid of any independent, intrinsic reality that constitutes their essence. Nothing can be said to exist independent of the complex network of factors that gives rise to its origination, nor are phenomena independent of the cognitive processes and mental constructs that make up the conventional framework within which their identity and existence are posited. When all levels of conceptualization dissolve and when all forms of dichotomizing tendencies are quelled through deliberate meditative deconstruction of conceptual elaborations, the ultimate nature of reality will finally become manifest. It is the first of the three gateways to liberation.

Gelo

dge blo

དགེ་བློ།

Eighth-century Tibetan editor of Toh 21.

Namkha

nam mkha'

ནམ་མཁའ།

Eighth-century Tibetan editor of Toh 21.

Rājagṛha

rgyal po'i khab

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།

rājagṛha

The ancient capital of Magadha prior to its relocation to Pāṭaliputra during the Mauryan dynasty, Rājagṛha is one of the most important locations in Buddhist history. The literature tells us that the Buddha and his saṅgha spent a considerable amount of time in residence in and around Rājagṛha—in nearby places, such as the Vulture Peak Mountain (Gṛdhrakūṭaparvata), a major site of the Mahāyāna sūtras, and the Bamboo Grove (Veṇuvana)—enjoying the patronage of King Bimbisāra and then of his son King Ajātaśatru. Rājagṛha is also remembered as the location where the first Buddhist monastic council was held after the Buddha Śākyamuni passed into parinirvāṇa. Now known as Rajgir and located in the modern Indian state of Bihar.

Rinchen Dé

rin chen sde

རིན་ཆེན་སྡེ།

Eighth-century Tibetan translator of Toh 21.

Śāradvatīputra

sha ra dwa ti'i bu

ཤ་ར་དྭ་ཏཱི་བུ།

śāradvatīputra

One of the principal śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha, he was renowned for his discipline and for having been praised by the Buddha as foremost of the wise (often paired with Maudgalyāyana, who was praised as foremost in the capacity for miraculous powers). His father, Tiṣya, to honor Śāriputra's mother, Śārikā, named him Śāradvatīputra, or, in its contracted form, Śāriputra, meaning "Śārikā's Son."

Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤཱ་རིའི་བུ།

śāriputra

Also known as Śāradvatīputra. He was one of the closest disciples of the Buddha, known for his pure discipline and, of the hearer disciples, considered foremost in wisdom.

sense sources

skye mched

སྐྱེ་མཆེད།

āyatana

These can be listed as twelve or as six sense sources (sometimes also called sense fields, bases of cognition, or simply āyatanas).
In the context of epistemology, it is one way of describing experience and the world in terms of twelve sense sources, which can be divided into inner and outer sense sources, namely: (1–2) eye and form, (3–4) ear and sound, (5–6) nose and odor, (7–8) tongue and taste, (9–10) body and touch, (11–12) mind and mental phenomena.
In the context of the twelve links of dependent origination, only six sense sources are mentioned, and they are the inner sense sources (identical to the six faculties) of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Vimalamitra

bi ma la mi tra

བི་མ་ལ་མི་ཏྲ།

vimalamitra

Eighth/ninth-century Indian master important in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet.

Vulture Peak Mountain

bya rgod phung po'i ri

བྱ་རྒོད་ཕུང་པོའི་རི།

gṛdhrakūṭaparvata

The Gṛdhrakūṭa, literally Vulture Peak, was a hill located in the kingdom of Magadha, in the vicinity of the ancient city of Rājagṛha (modern-day Rajgir, in

the state of Bihar, India), where the Buddha bestowed many sūtras, especially the Great Vehicle teachings, such as the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. It continues to be a sacred pilgrimage site for Buddhists to this day.