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The *Heart Sūtra*: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?

by Jan Nattier

Introduction

The *Heart Sūtra*¹ is surely one of the best loved Buddhist scriptures in all of East Asia. Esteemed both as a concise summary of some of the key doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism and as a *dhāraṇī* of immense supernatural power, it has been revered by lay people and clerics alike as one of the pinnacles of Buddhist teaching. It has been valued by monastic scholars of a variety of sectarian persuasions, as attested by the wealth of commentaries on the text from such diverse perspectives as Yogācāra, Mādhyamika, and Ch'an. And the tenacity of the mass appeal of this *sūtra* is attested by the fact that in contemporary Japan the *Heart Sūtra* has been printed on more teacups, hand towels and neckties than has any other Buddhist scripture.

Nor has the *Heart Sūtra* been overlooked by modern Buddhist scholars. Considerable attention has been devoted to the Sanskrit versions of the *sūtra* by Edward Conze,² while the Chinese versions of the text have been the object of a vast number of studies by Japanese scholars, most recently (and most notably) by FUKUI Fumimasa.³ Likewise the canonical Tibetan version of the text and the importance of the Indian and Tibetan commentaries have been brought into the purview of modern scholarship by the recent work of Donald Lopez,⁴ while Indian and Chinese commentaries on the *sūtra* have been the subject of studies by David Eckel and John McRae, respectively.⁵

Finally, it would be fair to say that few students enrolled in introductory courses on Buddhism in American universities have escaped without some encounter with the *Heart Sūtra*, for its pithy undermining of all previous categories of Buddhist analysis ("form is emptiness, emptiness is form" and so on) has earned it a place in

virtually every anthology of Buddhist literature. This text is, in short, one of the most familiar pieces of Buddhist writing both in traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist societies and in modern academic circles.

Yet it may be our very familiarity with this scripture that has inhibited our ability to gain a clear picture of its ancestry. Modern scholars and modern Buddhists have read, heard and chanted the *sūtra* so frequently that its form and content no longer seem strange to us. Yet this brief scripture contains a number of peculiar features (to be examined in detail below) that can provide us with important clues to the circumstances of its origin.

But it is not only such overexposure to its content that has prevented modern scholars from undertaking a thorough re-evaluation of this important text. An additional factor has been the understandable propensity of Buddhist specialists to approach the text either in its Sanskrit versions (with occasional reference to the recensions preserved in Chinese) or in its Chinese editions (with more or less adequate references to the corresponding passages in the Sanskrit). There have been, in other words, numerous intra-Sanskrit and intra-Chinese studies of the *sūtra*, but no rigorously comparative – and cross-lingual – analysis of the text.

The present study is intended to remedy both of these deficiencies, first by approaching the *Heart Sūtra* within its literary setting (both as a member of the category of Mahāyāna *sūtras* in general and, more specifically, as a text belonging to the Prajñāpāramitā class), and second by engaging in a thorough comparative examination of all the earliest versions of the text, both in Chinese and in Sanskrit. By doing so we will be able to bring into focus not only the peculiar features of this all-too-familiar text, but also the clues it contains – all plainly visible in retrospect – to the time and the place of its composition.

The Heart Sūtra: The Short Recension

The *Heart Sūtra* exists in two recensions: a shorter (and earlier) recension, which will be the main object of our attention here, and a longer recension, known in Indian and Tibetan versions as well as in several relatively late Chinese translations. The relative dating of

these texts will be discussed in detail below; for the moment, our main concern is to gain an overview of the form and content of the text.

The shorter *Heart Sūtra* consists of three sections: (1) a brief introduction, in which the perspective of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara on the emptiness of the five *skandhas* (based on his practice of the Perfection of Wisdom) is introduced; (2) a core, in which Avalokiteśvara (the implied speaker, though his name does not appear in this section) addresses a series of observations to the elder (*sthavira*) Śāriputra, beginning with the well-known affirmation of the non-difference between form and emptiness and culminating in a series of negations countering virtually all the most basic categories of Buddhist analysis of the person, the nature of causality, and the path; and (3) a conclusion, in which the *bodhisattva* who relies on the Perfection of Wisdom is described, the Perfection of Wisdom is touted as the basis for the enlightenment of all *buddhas*, and the well-known mantra (*gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā*) is recommended as a means to eliminating all suffering. The *sūtra* concludes with the mantra itself, which in all non-Sanskrit versions of the text is maintained in its Indian form (that is, it is transliterated rather than translated).

The brevity of the *sūtra* makes it possible for us to include here a complete English translation of the shorter Sanskrit recension, which will serve as a point of reference for the analysis given below.

INTRODUCTION: The *bodhisattva* Noble Avalokiteśvara, practicing [his] practice in the profound Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), looked down (*vyavalokayati*). [And] he regarded the five *skandhas* as empty.

CORE: Here, Śāriputra, form is empty; emptiness itself is form. Form is not distinct from emptiness; emptiness is not distinct from form.^{5a} And the same goes for sensation (*vedanā*), concept (*saṃjñā*), conditioning force (*saṃskāra*) and consciousness (*vijñāna*).

Here, Śāriputra, all *dharmas* have the mark of emptiness. They are non-originated, non-extinct, non-defiled, non-pure, non-decreasing, non-increasing.

Therefore, Śāriputra, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no concept, no conditioning forces, no consciousness; no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body [or] mind; no form, sound, scent, taste, touch-object [or] mind-object (*dharma*); no eye-realm (*caḥsur-dhātu*) and so on up to no realm of mind-consciousness (*manovijñāna-dhātu*); no ignorance, no destruction of ignorance and so on up to no old-age-and-death and no destruction of old-age-and-death. There is no suffering, arising [of suffering], extinction [of suffering], or path; no knowledge (*jñāna*) and no attainment (*prāpti*).

CONCLUSION: Therefore, Śāriputra, because there is no attainment the *bodhisattva* dwells in reliance on the Perfection of Wisdom, without mental obstruction (*cittāvaraṇa*). Because there is no mental obstruction he is unafraid, has passed beyond error, and [his] destination is *nirvāṇa* (*niṣṭhā-nirvāṇa*).

All the Buddhas of the three times have awakened (*abhisambuddha*) to unexcelled perfect enlightenment (*anuttara-samyaksambodhi*) by relying on the Perfection of Wisdom.

Therefore the great mantra of the Perfection of Wisdom is to be known: the great spell (*vidyā*) mantra, the supreme mantra, the mantra which is equal to the unequalled, the mantra which appeases all suffering. Because it is true, not false (*satyam amithyatvāt* [sic]), the mantra is spoken in the Perfection of Wisdom.

It goes as follows (*tadyathā*): *gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā*.

Viewing this brief *sūtra* within its literary context – that is, as a member of the Mahāyāna *sūtra* category and, more specifically, as a Prajñāpāramitā text – one immediately observes a number of peculiar features. First, of course, is the very fact of its brevity: as compared with Mahāyāna scriptures in general the *Heart Sūtra* is an extremely short text. This feature is not, however, unique, as there are a few other Mahāyāna texts of comparable length, particularly within the Prajñāpāramitā category, where Conze has labeled a whole group of such *sūtras* (virtually all of relatively late composition) as “abbreviations” of earlier texts.⁶

More important for our purposes are two further features which are far more unexpected in a Mahāyāna scripture: first, that the *sūtra* lacks a proper opening (that is, the requisite formula “Thus have I heard at one time. The Lord was staying at ...,” specifying the location and circumstances of its preaching)⁷ and second, that it lacks a proper conclusion (in which some reference to the reaction of the audience is generally made). A third and most unexpected peculiarity is the fact that the Buddha himself makes no appearance whatsoever in this *sūtra* – a defect that is perfunctorily remedied in the longer recension of the text, but appeared not to concern the compilers of the shorter version.

When we approach the *Heart Sūtra* not merely as a representative of the Mahāyāna class of *sūtras*, but more specifically as a Prajñāpāramitā text, a fourth peculiar feature comes into focus. For the main (and indeed only) speaker in this *sūtra* is the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, who generally plays no role at all in the Prajñāpāramitā literature.⁸ Conversely, completely absent from the *Heart Sūtra* is Subhūti, the main interlocutor in all of the earliest Prajñāpāramitā texts. The cast of characters, in other words, is not at all what we would expect, for both the Buddha himself and Subhūti are entirely missing, while a seeming interloper, the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, has been awarded the only speaking part. The name of the *sthavira* Śāriputra does appear in the *Heart Sūtra*, as in the main body of Prajñāpāramitā texts, but only as the listener addressed by Avalokiteśvara in this text. This is not, however – as we shall see below – a coincidence, for this passage has an exact parallel in

another Prajñāpāramitā text.

A fifth and final feature that sets the *Heart Sūtra* apart, if not from the Prajñāpāramitā literature as a whole (for certain other relatively late scriptures in that category share this feature) but from the earliest and most widely used texts in this category, is the presence of a mantra at the conclusion of the text. We have already noted that it is peculiar for a Mahāyāna *sūtra* to end with anything other than a reference to the reaction of the Buddha's listeners; it is particularly unusual for such a text to end, quite abruptly, with a mantra. For while the Prajñāpāramitā literature is not utterly lacking in such formulas, they play a relatively limited role in texts of this kind, and when they first appear in this literature they are labeled not mantras but *dhāraṇīs*, a term referring (in this early usage) to mnemonic devices rather than inherently salvific or protective formulas.⁹ The very presence, in other words, of a mantra in a Prajñāpāramitā text – let alone the highlighting of such a mantra by allowing it to stand alone as the *sūtra*'s conclusion – is a feature that demands our attention.

The *Heart Sūtra*, then, contains a number of features that are unusual in a scripture of its kind. These suggest, at the very least, that the circumstances of its composition may have differed notably from those that led to the production of the more extensive Prajñāpāramitā texts. Our task at this point, therefore, will be to attempt to determine where and under what circumstances this unusual text was produced.

The Heart Sūtra and the Large Sūtra¹⁰

The single most important clue to the origins of the *Heart Sūtra* is provided by yet another peculiarity of this text: the fact that the core section – from the declaration to Śāriputra that form is not other than emptiness, and vice versa, to the statement that in emptiness there is “no knowledge and no attainment” – is virtually identical to a passage in another Prajñāpāramitā text. As scholars of East Asian Buddhism have long been aware, the central section (that is, all but the opening and closing lines) of the *Heart Sūtra* matches a passage in the *Large Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom* (Ch. *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ching*,^a Skt. *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*)

almost character for character.¹¹

The extent of this resemblance is so great that it can be recognized even by the non-Sinologist through a simple juxtaposition of the core passage as contained in these two texts:

Large Sūtra, trans. Kumārajīva
(T. No. 223, 8.223a13-20)

Heart Sūtra, attributed to Hsüan-tsang
(T. No. 251, 8.848c4-10)

舍利弗

舍利子

色不異空空不異色

色不異空空不異色

色即是空空即是色

色即是空空即是色

受想行識亦如是

受想行識亦復如是

舍利弗

舍利子

是諸法空相

是諸法空相

不生不滅

不生不滅

不垢不淨

不垢不淨

不增不減

不增不減

是空法非過去非未來非現在

——

是故空中無色無受無想行識

是故空中無色無受無想行識

無眼耳鼻舌身意

無眼耳鼻舌身意

無色聲香味觸法

無色聲香味觸法

無眼界乃至無意識界

無眼界乃至無意識界

亦無無明亦無無明盡

無無明亦無無明盡

乃至亦無老死亦無老死盡

乃至無老死亦無老死盡

無苦集滅道

無苦集滅道

亦無智亦無得

無智亦無得

Such word-for-word agreement cannot possibly be coincidental. It seems necessary to conclude – unless we assume that both texts are based on a common but unattested ancestor – that one of these texts must be patterned directly on the other.

When we turn to the Sanskrit version of the *Heart Sūtra*, its resemblance to its Chinese counterpart (and, accordingly, to the corresponding passage in the Chinese *Large Sūtra* as well) is again very striking. Indeed it would be fair to say that there is a virtual word-for-word correspondence between the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, in the critical edition published by Edward Conze, and the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang. An English translation of the core passage as contained in these two versions of the *Heart Sūtra* clearly illustrates their similarities:

Chinese Heart Sūtra

Śāriputra,

Form is not different from emptiness,
emptiness is not different
from form.

Form itself is emptiness,
emptiness itself is form.

Śāriputra,

All *dharmas* are marked by
emptiness:
[They are] not originated,
Not extinguished,
Not defiled,
Not pure,
Not increasing,
Not decreasing.

Therefore in emptiness there is
no form, no sensation, no concept,
conditioning force, [or]
consciousness;

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body [or]
mind;

No form, sound, smell, taste,
touch-object
[or] mind-object (*dharma*);

Sanskrit Heart Sūtra

Here, Śāriputra,

Form is empty, emptiness itself is form.¹²

Form is not distinct from emptiness,
emptiness is not distinct
from form.

[That which is form is emptiness,
that which is emptiness is form.^{12a}]

Here, Śāriputra,

All *dharmas* have the mark of
emptiness:¹³

[They are] non-originated,
Non-extinct,
Non-defiled,
Non-pure,
Non-decreasing,
Non-increasing.¹⁴

Therefore, Śāriputra, in emptiness there
is no form, no sensation, no concept,
no conditioning forces, no
consciousness;

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body [or]
mind;

No form, sound, smell, taste,
touch-object
[or] mind-object (*dharma*);

No eye-realm (and so on up to) no
realm of mind-consciousness;
And no ignorance and no destruction
of ignorance;
(And so on up to) no old-age-and-
death [and] no destruction of
old-age-and-death;
There is no suffering, arising
[of suffering], extinction
[of suffering], [or] path;
No wisdom and no attainment.

No eye-realm (and so on up to) no
realm of mind-consciousness;
No ignorance, no destruction
of ignorance;
(And so on up to) no old-age-and-
death [and] no destruction of
old-age-and-death;
There is no suffering, arising
[of suffering], extinction
[of suffering], [or] path;
No wisdom [and] no attainment.

The two texts are thus so similar that either could be construed as a translation of the other.

The Problem of the Sanskrit Large Sūtra

When we turn to the Sanskrit version of the *Large Sūtra*, however, the pattern of word-for-word correspondence that we have observed so far breaks down. If we compare the core passage of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* with its counterpart in the *Large Sūtra* (that is, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, here transcribed from the Gilgit manuscript copy, in which certain features of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit are evident¹⁵) a general similarity in content – that is, in the ideas and their sequence – is evident. Yet a comparison of the two Sanskrit texts reveals a degree of divergence great enough to be evident even to those who are not Sanskrit specialists:

Sanskrit Large Sūtra

na hi Śāradvaūputra-¹⁶

—
-anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā¹⁸
nānya śūnyatānyad rūpaṃ
[rū]pam eva śūnyatā
śūnyat(ai)va rūpaṃ
evaṃ nā(ny)ā vedanānyā śūnyatā ·
nānya saṃjñā nānyā śūnyatā ·
nānye saṃskārā anye śūnyatā ·
nānya vijñānam anyā śūnyatā ·
nānyaḥ śūnyatānyad vijñānaṃ

Sanskrit Heart Sūtra

iha Śāriputra
rūpam śūnyam¹⁷ śūnyataiva rūpam
rūpān na pṛthak śūnyatā
śūnyatāya na pṛthag rūpam
[yad rūpam sā śūnyatā
ya śūnyatā tad rūpam¹⁹]
evam eva vedanā-saṃjñā-saṃskāra-
vijñānam

vijñānam eva śunyatā śunyataiva
vijñānaṃ ·
ya Śāradvaūputra śunyatā

na sā utpadyate
na nirudhyate ·
na saṃkliśyate
na vyavadāyate ·
na hīyate
na vardhate ·

nāūtā nānāgatā na pratyutpannā²⁰
yā notpadyate na nirudhyate na
saṃkliśyate na vyavadāyate na
hīyate na vardhate nāūtā
nānāgatā na pratyutpannāḥ

na tatra rūpaṃ na vedanā na
na saṃjñānā na saṃskārān
na vijñānaṃ
na cakṣur na śrotraṃ na ghrāṇaṃ
na jihvā na kāye na manaḥ
na rūpaṃ na śabda na gandho na rasa
na sparśo na dharmāḥ

(na) tatra skandhā na dhātavo
nāyatanāni
na tatra cakṣudhātu na rūpadhātur
na cakṣuvijñānadhātu
na (śro)tradhātu na śabdadhātur
na śrotravijñānadhātuḥ
na ghrāṇadhātur na gandhadhātur
na ghrāṇavijñānadhātu
na jihvadhātur na rasadhātur
na jihvavijñānadhātuḥ
na kāyadhātur na spraṣṭavyadhātur
na kāyavijñānadhātur
na manodhātur na dharmadhātur
na manovijñāna[dhā]tuḥ [sic]
na tatāvidyā nāvidyānirodhaḥ
na saṃskārān na saṃskāranirodhaḥ
na vijñānaṃ na vijñānanirodhaḥ
na nāmarūpaṃ na nāmarūpanirodhaḥ
na satvāyatanam²³ na

iha Śāriputra sarva-dharmāḥ śunyatā-
lakṣaṇā
anutpannā
aniruddha
amalā
avimalā
anūnā
aparipūrṇāḥ
—

tasmāc Chāriputra śūnyatāyām na
rūpaṃ na vedanā
na saṃjñā na saṃskārāḥ
na vijñānaṃ
na cakṣuḥ-śrotra-ghrāṇa-jihvā-kāya-
manāṃsi
na rūpa-śabda-gandha-rasa-
spraṣṭavya²¹-dharmāḥ

na cakṣur²²-dhātur yāvan
na manovijñāna-dhātuḥ

nāvidyā nāvidyā-kṣayo

satvāyatananirodhaḥ	
na sparśo (na) sparśananirodhaḥ	
na vedanā na vedanānirodhaḥ	
na tṛṣṇā na tṛṣṇānirodhaḥ	
nopādānaṃ nopādānanirodhaḥ	
na bhavo na bhavanirodhaḥ	
na jāti(r na) jātinirodhaḥ	
na jarāmarāṇaṃ	yāvan na jarāmarāṇaṃ
na jarāmarāṇanirodhaḥ	na jarāmarāṇakṣayo
na duḥkhaṃ na samudayo na nirodho	na duḥkha-samudaya-nirodha-mārga
na mārgaḥ	
na prāpti nābhisamayaḥ ²⁴	na jñānaṃ na prāptir

There are a number of obvious discrepancies between these two versions, of which the most evident is the greater length of the *Large Sūtra* relative to the *Heart Sūtra*. This is due, however, not to the presence in the *Large Sūtra* of ideas or images that are altogether absent from the *Heart Sūtra*, but merely to the greater thoroughness of the *Large Sūtra* in spelling out in detail categories that are related in a more summary form in the *Heart Sūtra*. The *Large Sūtra*, for example, is not content simply to declare that “form is not one thing and emptiness another” (*na ... anyad rūpaṃ anyā śunyaṭā*), but goes on to repeat the same formula for each of the remaining four *skandhas* (“sensation is not one thing and emptiness another” and so on). The *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, states simply that the same is true of the other *skandhas* as well (*evam eva vedanā-saṃjñā-saṃskāra-vijñānaṃ*). Likewise when the *Large Sūtra* declares that in emptiness there is no eye, no ear, and so forth, it does so by enumerating each of the eighteen *dhātus* individually, while the *Heart Sūtra* simply lists the first twelve elements in the list (that is, the sense-organs and their respective objects) in streamlined fashion and then summarizes the remaining *dhātus* in abbreviated form (“no eye-realm and so forth up to no mind-consciousness-realm,” Skt. *na cakṣur-dhātur yāvan na manovijñāna-dhātuḥ*). The *Heart Sūtra*, in other words, contains all the same elements that are found in the *Large Sūtra*, but simply expresses them in as concise a fashion as possible.²⁵

More peculiar than these discrepancies, however, are divergences of a second type, in which the general meaning of the two texts

is the same but the vocabulary they employ is not. Two representative examples are the following:

Large Sūtra

(*na*) anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā
nānya śūnyatānyad rūpaṃ

na jarāmaraṇaṃ
na jarāmaraṇanirodhaḥ

Heart Sūtra

rūpān na prthak śūnyatā
śūnyatāyā na prthag rūpaṃ

yāvan na jarāmaraṇaṃ
na jarāmaraṇakṣayo

In both of these cases we have statements that are fully synonymous, but contain distinct (and quite unrelated) vocabulary. In the first example the *Large Sūtra* reads “form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form” using the Sanskrit expression *na anya X anya Y*, that is, “X is not other than Y” (literally “not other X other Y”). The *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, employs the expression *X na prthak Y*, that is, “Y is not distinct from X” (lit. “from-X not distinct Y,” in which item X appears in the ablative case). The two texts are thus essentially identical in meaning, but they differ noticeably in wording. Similarly, in the second example both texts assert that “there is no old-age-and death” (*na jarāmaraṇaṃ*); the *Large Sūtra*, however, goes on to state that there is no “extinction” (or “stopping,” Skt. *nirodha*) of old-age-and-death, while the *Heart Sūtra* uses instead the Sanskrit term *kṣaya* (“destruction”). Once again the essential meaning is the same, but the manner of expression is different.

An even more vivid example of the divergence between these two texts may be found in the well known passage describing the nature of *dharma*s characterized by emptiness. Here the parallels are the following:

Large Sūtra

na ... utpadyate
na nirudhyate
na saṃkliśyate

Heart Sūtra

anutpannā
aniruddhā
amalā

<i>na vyavadāyate</i>	<i>avimalā</i>
<i>na hīyate</i>	<i>anūnā</i>
<i>na vardhate</i>	<i>aparipūrṇā</i>

In this sequence the *Large Sūtra* employs singular verbal forms throughout:

[It] does not originate (*na ... utpadyate*), is not extinguished (*na nirudhyate*), is not defiled (*na samkliśyate*), is not purified (*na vyavadāyate*), does not decrease (*na hīyate*), does not increase (*na vardhate*).

The *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, uses plural adjectival forms:

[They] are non-originated (*anutpannā*), non-extinct (*anirudhā*), non-defiled (*amalā*), non-pure (*avimalā*), non-decreasing (*anūnā*), non-increasing (*aparipūrṇāḥ*).

Not only are the terms themselves different in these two renditions; their grammatical forms (verbs vs. adjectives, singulars vs. plurals) do not agree. The wording thus could not be more different, though the overall meaning is the same.²⁶

These two types of divergences – the repetitive style of the *Large Sūtra* vs. the conciseness of the *Heart Sūtra*, on the one hand, and their differences in vocabulary and grammatical categories on the other – offer in turn two very different kinds of evidence concerning the respective histories of these texts. To begin with the first, it is well known that Indian Mahāyāna texts were subject to continual elaboration and expansion, culminating (in the case of the Prajñāpāramitā literature) in such literary monstrosities as the *Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Lines* (*Śata-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*), whose considerable bulk is due mainly to its endless repetitions. A text that was originally as short and compact as the *Heart Sūtra* (or rather, its core) could easily have grown, via this gradual process of literary elaboration, into what we see in the *Large Sūtra*.

Yet we must stop at this point and remind ourselves that the

Heart Sūtra was considered by Edward Conze, the foremost Western scholar of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, to be *later*, not earlier, than the *Large Sūtra*, and to represent a condensation (not a prototype) of the larger text.²⁷ And the evidence offered by the Chinese and Tibetan sources would seem to confirm Conze's hypothesis. While the *Large Sūtra* had been translated into Chinese by the end of the 3rd century CE, the *Heart Sūtra* makes its appearance much later, in the 5th century CE at the earliest and quite possibly not until the 7th.²⁸ Likewise the extant Indian commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* (which have not survived in their Sanskrit originals, but are preserved in Tibetan translation) date only from the 8th to the 11th centuries,²⁹ while commentaries on the *Large Sūtra* appear several centuries earlier.³⁰ It seems clear, therefore, that we must follow Conze's lead in considering the *Large Sūtra* to be considerably older than the *Heart Sūtra*. Thus what needs to be explained here is not the development from a shorter text to a longer one (a process quite usual in the history of Indian Buddhist literature), but the reverse.

But how are we to get from the *Large Sūtra*, with its extensive and repetitive language, to the crisp and abbreviated formulations of the *Heart Sūtra*? We could, of course, assume (as Conze has done) that the *Heart Sūtra* was intended as a summary of the overall contents of the earlier Prajñāpāramitā literature, and as such represents a deliberate act of abbreviation on the part of some unknown Indian author. This hypothesis seems quite reasonable at first, even though it runs counter to the usual Indian practice of expanding (not contracting) Buddhist texts. Yet the absolute parallelism in the sequence of ideas between the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra* – not to mention the word-for-word agreement in the Chinese versions of the two texts – makes it clear that the *Heart Sūtra* is not an “abbreviation” of the Prajñāpāramitā literature in general; it is built around a specific passage found in the *Large Sūtra*, with additional introductory and concluding material. Our problem, therefore, is to come up with a sequence of literary evolution that could lead from the expansive text found in the *Large Sūtra* to the concise formulations of the *Heart Sūtra*.

At this point we must return to the second type of divergence

discussed above: the difference in vocabulary found in the two Sanskrit texts, despite the fact that the ideas they contain (and their sequence) are identical. To get from the Sanskrit text of the *Large Sūtra* to the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, in other words, we must not only posit the emergence of an abbreviated style from an elaborate one; we must also account for the substitution of adjectives for verbs, plurals for singulars, and synonyms (e.g., *kṣaya* for *nirodha*) for certain Buddhist technical terms.

If the evolution from a longer text to a shorter one is mildly (but not insuperably) problematic, these differences in vocabulary comprise an obstacle of an altogether different order. For such changes simply do not follow the normal rules of textual emendation. While an Indian editor might add (or far less commonly, subtract) certain expressions and terms when transmitting an existing text, to *change* virtually every word in the text (aside from certain fixed technical terminology, such as the names of the five *skandhas*, the eighteen *dhātus*, and the four noble truths) while adding no new conceptual input is, at least in this writer's experience, unheard of. We can identify, in other words, neither a motive nor a precedent for the kinds of changes we see when comparing the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* to its parallel passage in the *Large Sūtra*. To put it succinctly: there is no straightforward way to derive the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, or vice versa.

Textual Transmission: A Re-Analysis

How, then, are we to explain the virtual identity of these two texts in their Chinese translations? The usual (and understandable) assumption has been that the path of transmission is from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* to the Chinese *Large Sūtra*, and from the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* to the Chinese *Heart Sūtra*. To approach the problem in this way, however, means that we would have to explain the identical appearance of the two Chinese texts via convergence: i.e., that they were either accidentally or deliberately brought into harmony. To further incorporate into our explanation the exact correlation in wording between the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, we would have to concoct a hypothesis that goes something

like this: Sometime after the completion of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Large Sūtra* into Chinese, the *Heart Sūtra* was translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang. At this point a Chinese editor noticed a certain similarity between the core of the *Heart Sūtra* and a passage in the *Large Sūtra*. In order to make the two texts match, he altered one of the two (either the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva or the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang) to bring it into conformity with the other. No similar emendation was made, however, in the text of the earlier translations of the *Large Sūtra*.

Such a hypothesis is, however, intolerably convoluted, and requires us to posit a set of literary processes that are unattested elsewhere (to the best of my knowledge) in Chinese Buddhist textual history. And it goes without saying that the odds against two virtually identical Chinese translations of this core passage (one in the *Large Sūtra*, the other in the *Heart Sūtra*) being produced independently – especially given the evidence that the underlying Sanskrit versions were not identical – are astronomical. But if we accept the standard assumption that the ancestor of the Chinese *Large Sūtra* is the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* and that the ancestor of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* is the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, there is simply no other way to account for the evidence. I would suggest, therefore, that we discard this assumption and begin again at the beginning, taking the earliest texts as our starting point.

When we compare the passage in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* (in particular, the earliest extant version, found in the manuscript copy discovered at Gilgit) with its counterpart in the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva, the two agree almost perfectly – provided we assume that Kumārajīva indulged in a certain degree of textual condensation in the course of his translation. But this is precisely what we would expect of a Chinese translator, and in particular of Kumārajīva, who is renowned for having produced translations of Indian Buddhist texts capable of appealing to Chinese aesthetic sensibilities. In the Chinese literary world one of the greatest offenses is to be repetitious, for succinctness – not effusive reiteration – is seen as a virtue in Chinese aesthetic theory (precisely the opposite of Indian preferences).³¹ The differences between the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* and its

Chinese counterpart are thus exactly what we would expect, given both what is generally known concerning Chinese literary preferences and what we can actually observe in other Chinese Buddhist texts.³² There is no difficulty, therefore, in positing a line of transmission from a version of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* resembling the extant editions to the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva.

The next step in our analysis, while perhaps somewhat unexpected (at least by scholars whose orientation is primarily Indological), seems to be required by the degree of similarity between the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva and the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang: we must assume that the core of the latter – as East Asian Buddhist scholars have long been aware – is an excerpt from the former.³³ The Chinese *Heart Sūtra*, in other words, consists of an excerpt from the Chinese *Large Sūtra*, together with certain “frame” elements (the opening and closing sections) that have no parallel in the larger text.

So far, then, we have succeeded in establishing the sequence Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* → Chinese *Large Sūtra* → Chinese *Heart Sūtra*, with no step of this process offering any difficulty. But how are we to fit the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* into this scheme? The answer is as compelling as it is startling: *the Sanskrit Heart Sūtra is a translation from the Chinese.*

Such a seemingly heretical assertion requires strong supporting evidence. Such evidence, however, is readily available. We may approach the problem from two angles: first, the evidence for this direction of transmission found within the texts themselves; and second, the historical possibility (and plausibility) of such a transaction.

Internal Evidence: How to Spot a Back-Translation

Before proceeding with our analysis of the Chinese and Sanskrit versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, it may be useful to consider an instance of back-translation (that is, the reconstruction of Sanskrit terms from another Buddhist language) found in another context. Numerous examples of such back-translations can be found in the Mongolian Buddhist canon, the result of a long-standing Mongolian

preference for Indian loan words rather than the translated expressions preferred by the Tibetans. When, during and after the Yüan dynasty (1280-1368), the Mongols came under strong Tibetan influence and began to translate voluminous quantities of Tibetan Buddhist texts into Mongolian, they were faced with the task of either finding appropriate Indian-based equivalents for Tibetan Buddhist terms or capitulating to the Tibetan procedure and simply translating these terms into Mongolian. Especially in the case of personal and place names, the Mongols tried – wherever possible – to reconstruct the corresponding Indian original.

The result, of course, was a combination of correct and incorrect guesses on the part of the Mongols as to what the original Sanskrit form was. A revealing example of an incorrect guess can be found in the story of the future Buddha Maitreya, as given in the **Ārya-maitrī-sūtra*.³⁴ The Indian city in which Maitreya will appear is regularly referred to as Ketumatī in the Sanskrit literature, which in turn is translated into Tibetan as *Rgyal-mtshan blo-gros*, where *rgyal-mtshan* (lit. “royal ensign”) is a Tibetan translation of Skt. *ketu* “flag,” and *blo-gros* (“mind”) is an attempted rendition of the suffix *-matī*.³⁵ In their efforts to recover the original Indian spelling of *Rgyal-mtshan blo-gros*, however, the Mongolian translators reconstructed the first element in the name not as *ketu*, but as *dhvaja* – another Sanskrit word for “flag,” which is also regularly rendered into Tibetan as *rgyal-mtshan*. The Mongols, in other words, made an educated but erroneous guess, in all probability using a Tibetan-to-Sanskrit dictionary as their reference.³⁶

An unmatched but synonymous equivalent of a Sanskrit term, then, is one of the leading indicators of back-translation. But there are other indicators as well. Incorrect word order, grammatical errors that can be traced to the structure of the intermediary language, and incorrect readings (due to visual confusion of certain letters or characters in the intermediary language) can all provide evidence that reconstruction, not preservation of an original text, has taken place. In sum, it is through the inadvertent errors of the back-translators that we can observe this process in operation.

In the case just described, of course, we are concerned with the

reconstruction of individual Indian terms (in particular, proper names) within an overall Mongolian text. The same logic can be used, however, to evaluate the ancestry of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. If we can identify differences between the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* and the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* that can easily be explained by the presence of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* as an intermediary (and are difficult or impossible to explain otherwise), these will serve as evidence that the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* is indeed a back-translation from the Chinese.

We may begin with the first two examples cited above in our discussion of the divergences between the Sanskrit texts of the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra*, respectively. In the first of these the *Large Sūtra* reads *na anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā* (“form is not one thing and emptiness another”) or – to translate this expression more colloquially – “form is not different from emptiness.” In Kumārajīva’s Chinese translation of the *Large Sūtra* this is in turn rendered as *se pu i k’ung* (“form is not different from emptiness”), a perfectly good rendition of the Sanskrit. The Chinese version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang follows the wording of Kumārajīva’s *Large Sūtra* exactly, as it does almost without exception throughout the core passage of the text. The Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*, however, does not conform to the wording of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*; instead it reads *rūpān na pṛthak śūnyatā* (“emptiness is not distinct from form”), a perfectly good (if somewhat unidiomatic) translation of Chinese *se pu i k’ung*. What we have here, in other words, is an exact counterpart of the sequence Skt. *ketu* → Tib. *rgyal-mtshan* → Skt. *dhvaja*, in which a Sanskrit term is transformed – via back-translation through a second-language intermediary – into a synonymous but quite different expression.

A similar transformation can be observed in our second example, in which the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* reads *na jarāmarāṇanīrodhaḥ* “no extinction (*nīrodha*) of old-age-and-death,” while the *Heart Sūtra* has *na jarāmarāṇakṣayo* “no destruction (*kṣaya*) of old-age-and-death.” Once again the effect of a Chinese intermediary provides an intelligible explanation, for the character *chir* which appears in this expression in both the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra* can serve as an equivalent of either *nīrodha* or *kṣaya*

(though more commonly the latter). Kumārajīva apparently chose, in other words, to render the Sanskrit term *nirodha* into Chinese as *chin*, a reading maintained in the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang and subsequently retranslated into Sanskrit as *kṣaya*.

Most striking of all, however, is the evidence contained in the third passage cited above. Here the sequence of negations is expressed in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* in singular verbal forms, while in the *Heart Sūtra* the entire list is given in the form of plural adjectives. But this is precisely the sort of information that is not generally marked in Chinese: though a plural can be specified if necessary, the usual practice is to let the number be implied by the context, while (as students of Chinese are all too well aware) a given word can easily serve such diverse functions as noun, adjective, or verb, depending once again on the context. Here the parallels are the following:

Sanskrit <i>Large Sūtra</i>	Chinese <i>Large Sūtra</i> (=Chinese <i>Heart Sūtra</i>)	Sanskrit <i>Heart Sūtra</i>
<i>na ... utpadyate</i>	<i>pu sheng^d</i>	<i>anutpannā</i>
<i>na nirudhyate</i>	<i>pu mieh^e</i>	<i>aniruddhā</i>
<i>na saṃkliśyate</i>	<i>pu kou^f</i>	<i>amalā</i>
<i>na vyavadāyate</i>	<i>pu ch'ing^g</i>	<i>avimalā</i>
<i>na hīyate</i>	<i>pu tseng^h</i>	<i>anūnā</i>
<i>na vardhate</i>	<i>pu chienⁱ</i>	<i>aparipūrṇā</i>

In each case the Chinese is a perfectly good rendition of the terminology contained in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, while the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* in turn represents a perfectly good rendition of the Chinese. Once again the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* offers us exactly the kind of synonym-shift that we would expect if it were a back-translation from the Chinese.

In sum, while the sequence of ideas found in the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* matches that of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* exactly, *virtually every word* in these two texts (with the exception of certain fixed technical terminology such as the names of the *skandhas*, *āyatanas* and *dhātus*³⁷) is different. Such a striking similarity in content,

combined with an equally striking difference in vocabulary, can only be explained as the result of a back-translation – that is, by the translation of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* from the Chinese.

The Emergence of the Heart Sūtra: Indian and Chinese Evidence

Though the philological data reviewed above can stand alone as convincing evidence for the back-translation of the *Heart Sūtra* from Chinese into Sanskrit, it is nonetheless of considerable interest to review the corroborating historical evidence as well. Such evidence can serve not only to support (or, if need be, to modify) our hypothesis concerning the general direction of transmission of the *sūtra* but also to provide concrete information as to the date, place, and general environment in which the *Heart Sūtra* was first created as an independent text.

One of the most reliable methods for documenting the emergence of the *Heart Sūtra* as an independent scripture is to identify the dates of the earliest commentaries on the text. On the Indian side, however, such works make a very late appearance; as we have already noted, the earliest extant Indian commentaries date only from the 8th century CE.³⁸ Nor has any other independent evidence for the existence of the text in India prior to this date (e.g., citations of the *sūtra* in other works or reports of its existence by Chinese travelers in India) yet come to light.³⁹ There is, in sum, no evidence for the existence of the *Heart Sūtra* in India before the 8th century CE.

When we turn to the Chinese records, by contrast, evidence for the avid use of the *sūtra* by Chinese Buddhists prior to this date is abundant. Extant commentaries include works by both of Hsüan-tsang's major disciples, K'uei-chiⁱ and Wōnch'ük^k, both dating from the latter half of the 7th century, as well as a group of three closely related works known only from manuscripts found at Tun-huang, of which at least one appears to have been composed prior to 645 CE.⁴⁰ We have solid evidence, then, for the existence of commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* in China no later than the second half of the 7th century CE, and quite possibly as much as several decades earlier.

As to evidence for the existence of Chinese versions of the *sūtra* itself, here matters become somewhat more complicated.

Modern catalogues list a total of eight Chinese versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, ranging in date from the early 5th through the beginning of the 11th century CE.⁴¹ The attributions of the first two of these texts, however – those supposedly translated by Kumārajīva and Hsüan-tsang – are extremely problematic. The so-called “Kumārajīva version” is associated with his name for the first time only in an 8th-century catalogue, the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lu*;⁴² likewise there is no mention of a translation by Hsüan-tsang prior to the publication of the same catalogue.⁴³ Moreover, it is noteworthy that Hsüan-tsang's biography speaks not of his translation of the text, but of his being given the text by a sick man he befriended.⁴³

We will return to the question of the ancestry of these two versions of the text below. For the moment, however, the most important point to observe is this: that the existence of the *Heart Sūtra* is attested in China at least a century before its earliest known appearance in India.⁴⁴ Thus the dates of the first appearances of the *sūtra* in China and India, respectively, tell us nothing that would contradict the hypothesis that the Sanskrit text is a back-translation from the Chinese, and indeed offer much to support it.

The Frame Sections: Reconstructing the Context

As we have seen, the core section of the *Heart Sūtra* has an exact parallel in the *Large Sūtra*, and East Asian commentators had realized as early as the latter half of the 7th century that the former was in fact an excerpt from the latter. What remains to be considered, however, are those passages we have described as the “frame sections” of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra*: that is, the introductory and concluding sections of the text, which have no parallel in the larger *sūtra*. If the *Heart Sūtra* was indeed manufactured as an independent text in China, these sections should be purely apocryphal compositions – that is, they should have been created on Chinese soil, using only materials available there.

At this point we may return to consider some of the anomalies in the form and content of the *Heart Sūtra* noted above: first, that the text has no proper opening (that is, that it does not begin with the phrase “Thus have I heard at one time”); second, that

Avalokiteśvara – who is almost unknown elsewhere in the Prajñāpāramitā literature – here plays a major role, while the Buddha is omitted altogether, and Subhūti (the main interlocutor in the mainstream Prajñāpāramitā texts) likewise does not appear at all; and third, that the text does not have a proper conclusion (in which some indication of the reaction of the Buddha’s audience should be given), but concludes simply with a Sanskrit mantra, providing (for those accustomed to “proper” *sūtra* format) a sense of no real conclusion at all.⁴⁵ All of these anomalies occur exclusively in the frame sections of the text, though the context may lead us to read them into the core section as well. (Though Avalokiteśvara is never mentioned by name in the core section, for example, his presence in the introductory lines leads the reader to infer that he is the speaker in the core of the text as well.) Thus these divergences from the expected form and content of a Prajñāpāramitā *sūtra* may offer us certain clues as to the locus of the composition of the frame sections and, accordingly, to the time and place of the production of the *Heart Sūtra* itself as a free-standing scripture.

Is this, then, the sort of text we would expect to have been formulated in China? At first we might well be dubious of this assertion, for it is one of the hallmarks of Chinese apocryphal *sūtras* that their authors have exerted themselves at all costs to make them resemble their canonical Indian counterparts. That is, creators of Chinese apocryphal *sūtras* have generally been extremely careful to supply the proper Indian format (from the introductory “thus have I heard” to a proper conclusion), as well as peppering their newly-minted texts with authentic-sounding Indian names.⁴⁶ If this is indeed a Chinese apocryphal text, we must ask ourselves, why does its author seem to have made so little effort to make the text conform to Indian standards?

At this point the writings of FUKUI Fumimasa provide an important clue, for Fukui’s research has led him to conclude that the *Heart Sūtra* is not really a *sūtra* at all; rather, the Chinese expression *hsin ching*^m, which is generally translated into English as “Heart Sūtra,” should be understood instead as meaning “*dhāraṇī* scripture” – that is, a text intended for recitation, not (as has previously been

supposed) a text intended to represent the “heart,” or essence, of the Prajñāpāramitā philosophy.⁴⁷ If this is indeed the case (and Fukui’s arguments in this regard are quite convincing), we need not wonder at the absence of the standard *sūtra* format in the earliest Chinese version of this text. Since the text was intended for ritual use (that is, as a *dhāraṇī* to be chanted) rather than to impersonate a genuine Indian *sūtra*, it is no surprise that the author(s) of the text have not tried to cloak their product in foreign garb; nor, we might add, that the text does not contain that other hallmark of most Chinese apocryphal texts: the intrusion of indigenous Chinese (i.e., non-Indian and non-Buddhist) ideas.⁴⁸

But we must still consider whether it is plausible to contend that the introductory and concluding portions of the text could have been manufactured in China. Foremost among the items to be considered in this regard are two elements in the text: first, the substitution of Avalokiteśvara for the expected Prajñāpāramitā spokespersons, Subhūti and the Buddha himself; and second, the presence in the concluding section of a perfectly good Sanskrit mantra.⁴⁹ Both are features that have no parallel in the *Large Sūtra* from which the core passage was clearly derived, and indeed are extremely unusual in the Prajñāpāramitā literature in general. Thus both Avalokiteśvara and the concluding mantra appear to have been introduced into the frame sections gratuitously, as it were, based on considerations extraneous to the *Large Sūtra*.

Would such considerations have been found in the time and place where the *Heart Sūtra* first makes its appearance (that is, in southwest China in the 7th century)? The answer, emphatically, is yes. The presence of Avalokiteśvara is not at all unexpected, for this figure was by far the most popular *bodhisattva* in China at this time, as attested by both textual and artistic evidence.⁵⁰ Indeed it is probably fair to say that his following among Chinese Buddhists over the centuries has far exceeded his popularity in India.⁵¹ Thus the choice of Avalokiteśvara as the central figure in a newly created Buddhist recitation text would be perfectly plausible in a Chinese milieu.

But what of the mantra itself – the well-known expression

gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā – with which the text (in its shorter recension) comes to an end? If the mantra were found in the core of the text (that is, the portion which duplicates material contained in the *Large Sūtra*) we would have no difficulty, for this section was clearly composed in India. Yet the mantra does not occur here but in the frame section, which (if the reasoning outlined above is correct) should be viewed as a purely Chinese creation. How, then, are we to explain the presence of a perfectly good Sanskrit mantra in a text that was tailored in China?

Here a point recently made by both McRae and Fukui is of considerable importance, for some or all of the mantra found in the *Heart Sūtra* also occurs in at least three other texts contained in the Chinese Buddhist canon. Of these one is a catalogue of mantras, said to have been translated into Chinese in 653 CE,⁵² while two others are *Mahāyāna sūtras*.⁵³ It would thus have been perfectly plausible that the composer of the original Chinese *Heart Sūtra* adopted the mantra in question from an existing work and inserted it directly into his text.⁵⁴ Moreover, not only the mantra itself, but also the string of epithets that precede it ("the supreme mantra, the mantra which is equal to the unequalled," etc.) have now been shown to occur independently in other Chinese texts.^{54a} The presence of a genuine Sanskrit mantra, then, offers no obstacle to the hypothesis that the *Heart Sūtra* as an independent text was an indigenous Chinese production.

When we consider the likelihood that the frame elements are entirely Chinese in origin, this casts certain textual problems in the Sanskrit version of the *sūtra* in a wholly new light. For most of the problematic elements in the Sanskrit text are found precisely in these frame sections and not in the core of the text. If we treat the Chinese – rather than the Sanskrit – as the original, much can be clarified, for the language used here (particularly in the list of epithets of the mantra) includes Chinese terms for which no Sanskrit equivalent is readily apparent. When the text tells us, for example, that the mantra is "genuine, not vain" (*chen shih pu hsü* 眞不誑), the wording is entirely natural in Chinese, while its Sanskrit counterpart *satyam amithyatvāt* [sic] (translated rather idiosyncratically by Conze as "[it is] true. For



what could go wrong?") has perplexed a number of modern readers. Likewise it is intriguing to note that the typically Chinese term *shen*^o "spirit" in the expression *ta shen chou*^p (lit. "great spirit incantation") has no equivalent in the Sanskrit version, which reads simply *mahā-mantra* ("great mantra") in Conze's edition, while the Sanskrit word *mantra* elsewhere in this section corresponds to the character *chou*^q alone. It seems quite likely that a Sanskrit translator would have had great difficulty in finding an appropriate Buddhist technical term to represent the not-particularly-Buddhist term *shen*^o in this context.⁵⁵ Finally, the Chinese expression *chiu-ching nieh-p'an*^r (lit. "ultimate[ly] *nirvāṇa*") is attested in a number of other Buddhist texts, and might well be described as standard (even idiomatic) Buddhist Chinese, while the corresponding Sanskrit phrase *niṣṭhā-nirvāṇa* (in which the first term can carry such meanings as "state," "perfection," or "termination") strikes the reader as overly abbreviated at best, and has required a certain amount of textual supplementation not only in the English translation of Edward Conze, but even in some of the Sanskrit manuscript copies themselves.⁵⁶ Both in terms of vocabulary and of grammatical structure, then, it is easier to understand the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* as a translation from the Chinese than the reverse.

We have seen that it is fairly easy to identify elements in the frame sections of the *Heart Sūtra* that make better sense in the Chinese than in the Sanskrit. But even in the core passage of the Sanskrit version of the text we can identify, in retrospect, elements that are less idiomatic than we would expect from an Indian composition. The format of the list of negations of the six sense organs, for example – which in the *Heart Sūtra* reads *na cakṣuḥ-śrotra-ghrāṇa-jihvā-kāya-manāṃsi* – simply does not "ring" properly (that is, does not sound idiomatic) to the well-trained Sanskrit ear.⁵⁷ Rather, the construction one would expect to find is precisely what we have in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, where the negative *na* is repeated before each of the sense-organs in turn (in the Gilgit manuscript, *na cakṣur na śrotraṃ na ghrāṇam na jihvā na kāye na manāḥ*). The *Heart Sūtra* thus diverges from the anticipated Sanskrit usage, offering instead a precise replication of the word order of the Chinese.

If the evidence reviewed above seems unanimous in supporting the hypothesis that the Chinese text is indeed the antecedent of the Sanskrit, we are still faced with an important historical question: when, and by whom, could the text have been transported to India and rendered into Sanskrit? Here our discussion will necessarily become more speculative, for we have neither a Sanskrit colophon relating the origins of the text nor an external historical source describing its transmission. Nonetheless there is strong circumstantial evidence pointing to the role of a specific figure: the well-known Chinese Buddhist scholar, translator, and pilgrim, Hsüan-tsang.

Historical Evidence: In the Footsteps of Hsüan-tsang

In the discussion above we have noted that Chinese commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* begin to appear considerably before their Indian counterparts. What we have not mentioned so far, however, is a noteworthy difference between the Chinese commentaries, on the one hand, and their Indian and Tibetan counterparts on the other: all extant Chinese commentaries are based on a single version of the *Heart Sūtra*, namely, the version associated with Hsüan-tsang (T. No. 251), and thus with a version of the shorter recension of the text (Conze's ST); all Indo-Tibetan commentaries, by contrast, are based on the longer version (LT), which is clearly a later recension.⁵⁸ The earliest commentaries, then, are not only in Chinese, but are all based on the version generally described as a "translation" by Hsüan-tsang.

The spotlight that this places on Hsüan-tsang's version of the text raises two further questions: where did Hsüan-tsang get his copy of the text, and what role did he play in its subsequent diffusion? That Hsüan-tsang was already familiar with the *Heart Sūtra* prior to his departure for the Western Regions is made quite clear in his biography, where his initial encounter with the text is described as follows:

Formerly when the Master was in Szechuan, he once saw a sick man suffering from foul boils and dressed in rags. With pity he took him to his monastery and supplied him with food and clothes. Out of gratitude the sick man taught the Master this *sūtra*, which he often recited.⁵⁹

Subsequently in the course of his journey Hsüan-tsang is said to have recited the text at various points along the way when he was in danger, finding it even more powerful than appealing to the *bodhisattva* Kuan-yin.⁶⁰ We are given to understand, in other words, that this text immediately became a favorite of Hsüan-tsang's, so much so that he entrusted himself to it in a number of life-threatening situations. This account provides concrete evidence, then, both of Hsüan-tsang's love for the text and his transport of its content (at least in oral form) to India.

What, then, would he have done if, upon arriving in India, he discovered that the Indian Buddhists were unfamiliar with this text? According to his biography, this was exactly what took place in the case of another text, *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, widely believed to be a Chinese apocryphon. As Hui-li* tells the story, during his stay at Nālandā University Hsüan-tsang discovered that this important text was unknown to his Indian correligionists. And his response, we are told, was to translate the text into Sanskrit.⁶¹ Thus there is a clear precedent for viewing Hsüan-tsang not merely as the passive recipient of Indian Buddhist learning, but also as an active transmitter of Chinese Buddhist culture in foreign lands.

We are not told, of course, that Hsüan-tsang translated the *Heart Sūtra* into Sanskrit, and indeed we should not expect this fact to be recorded even if Hsüan-tsang and his biographers knew it to be the case. For in China the fundamental criterion for the authenticity of a Buddhist *sūtra* is its Indian pedigree, and to state outright that Hsüan-tsang had translated the *Heart Sūtra* from Chinese into Sanskrit would cast doubt upon its legitimacy, arousing suspicions that it might be a non-Indian text and hence (by Chinese Buddhist standards) apocryphal. One can well imagine that Hsüan-tsang, convinced of the authenticity of the *Heart Sūtra* as a religious text and with first-hand experience of its supernatural protective power, would simply have concluded that the Indian original had been lost. Under the circumstances he may have done just what we would expect him to do: quietly re-translate the text back into Sanskrit.

If the image of Hsüan-tsang as a forger of an Indian Buddhist text seems amusing (or perhaps, to other readers, alarming), it is

because it is so contrary to what the standard histories of Buddhism would lead us to expect. The Chinese people, we are told, were the recipients – not the creators – of Buddhist *sūtras*, and the “*sūtra* trade” flowed exclusively from West to East. Yet it is now becoming clear that the Chinese were avid producers as well as consumers of Buddhist *sūtras*, and that some of the most popular scriptures in East Asia – e.g., the *Humane King’s Sūtra* (*Jen-wang ching*⁶¹) and the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (*Ta-sheng ch’i-shin lur*⁶²) were the product of Chinese hands.⁶² Even more striking is the convincing evidence recently set forth by Robert Buswell for the Korean origin of the *Vajrasamādhi Sūtra* (*Chin-kang san-mei ching*⁶³), a text subsequently exported westward to both China and Tibet.⁶³

It is not unheard of, then, for Buddhist *sūtras* to flow from East to West, and indeed evidence is accumulating of an important backwash of Chinese Buddhist influence into eastern Central Asia (the Tarim Basin region) during and after the late T’ang period.⁶⁴ That the *Heart Sūtra* should have been a part of this East-to-West trade is thus not at all impossible.

The role of Hsüan-tsang himself in the back-translation of the *Heart Sūtra* into Sanskrit cannot, of course, be definitively proven. We have at our disposal only circumstantial evidence, which is insufficient to decide the case with certainty. It is possible that Hsüan-tsang simply left the text with his correligionists in India, where it awaited the efforts of some other Chinese pilgrim before it was finally translated into Sanskrit. Nonetheless, whatever the specific circumstances surrounding the Sanskrit translation of the text may have been, we should note that the first Indian commentaries on the text appear roughly a century and a half after Hsüan-tsang’s visit. Thus if it was not Hsüan-tsang himself who translated the text into Sanskrit, we must credit this work to some other Chinese visitor who would have arrived in India at approximately the same time, someone fond enough of the *sūtra* to have transported it westward over this great distance and skilled enough in Sanskrit to have translated (or overseen the translation of) the text back into an Indian “original.” Until further evidence of other possibilities should surface, Hsüan-tsang must remain the most likely candidate for the

transmission of this Chinese creation to India.

The Heart Sūtra in China: The Role of Hsüan-tsang

We may now pause to consider briefly an issue whose thorough explication is properly the preserve of the Sinologist: that of Hsüan-tsang's role in the diffusion of the *Heart Sūtra* in China. A thorough study of this topic would be highly desirable, and it is hoped that a specialist in Chinese Buddhism will take up this challenge in the future. In the meantime, however, a few preliminary comments may be offered on this topic.

Up to this point we have focused on only one version of the *Heart Sūtra*: the Chinese "translation" (a term we can now use only in quotation marks) of the shorter recension of the text popularly attributed to Hsüan-tsang, together with its Sanskrit counterpart. But there are other versions of the *Heart Sūtra* found in the Chinese canon as well. Of the eight versions contained in the Taishō canon three represent the shorter recension of the text (ST), while the other five are variant editions of the longer recension (LT).⁶⁵ In addition to these eight extant versions of the text we should also take note of two titles found in ancient catalogues which have been considered by some scholars to represent early translations of the text into Chinese, though the texts themselves are no longer extant.⁶⁶

All five of the Chinese versions of the longer recension of the text postdate Hsüan-tsang's edition by periods ranging from several decades to several centuries. It is the earlier versions of the *sūtra*, however, that are of the greatest interest to us here, since we are interested in determining what versions of the text, if any, were circulating in China prior to Hsüan-tsang's involvement with the text. More specifically, the questions we must confront are these: first, when did any version of the *Heart Sūtra* first surface in China; second, what version of the text did Hsüan-tsang obtain during his sojourn in Szechwan; and third, what changes (if any) did he subsequently make in the content of the text?

"Lost translations" of the *Heart Sūtra*. Two titles that have been considered by some scholars to represent lost Chinese transla-

tions of the *Heart Sūtra* are known to us only through their inclusion in Tao-an's^w catalogue, the *Tsung-li chung-ching mu-lu*^r (itself non-extant, but largely reproduced in Seng-yu's^y *Ch'u san-tsang chi-chi*,^z completed c. 515 CE).⁶⁷ Both are listed here as the work of anonymous (that is, unknown) translators. The attributions of these translations to Chih Ch'ien^{aa} and Kumārajīva, respectively, given in later scripture catalogues are clearly after the fact and can easily be discounted.⁶⁸ Their titles, however, are intriguingly similar to those of subsequent versions of the *Heart Sūtra*. Titled *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi shen-chou i chüan*^{ab} and *Po-jo po-lo-mi shen-chou i chüan*,^{ac} respectively, both are clearly intended to be construed as mantras (*shen-chou*^{ad}) based upon – or at least associated with – the Prajñāpāramitā corpus. In the case of the first of these titles the reference seems at first glance to refer specifically to the *Large Sūtra*, whose title (in Kumārajīva's translation) is *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ching*.^{ae} Yet upon further reflection this association is unfounded, for if a work by this title really was included in Tao-an's original catalogue, it would predate the appearance of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Large Sūtra* by several decades.⁶⁹ Earlier Chinese translations of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines* (to use the Sanskrit form of the title) do not use the terms *mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi*;^{af} rather, Mokṣala's version is titled *Fang kuang po-jo ching*^{ag} (T No. 221), while Dharmarakṣa's text is labeled *Kuang tsang ching*^{ah} (T No. 222). Thus the very use of the term *po-jo po-lo-mi*^{ai} (let alone *mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi*^{aj}) in reference to the *Large Sūtra* in a Chinese text prior to the time of Kumārajīva is anachronistic, and casts doubt on the likelihood that these titles are genuine references to early versions of the *Heart Sūtra*. In the absence of an extant copy of either text, then, we are not in a position to say anything about their content. Until and unless new data should appear we must leave open the question of whether either of the texts represented by these titles had any association with what eventually came to be known as the *Heart Sūtra*.

The three extant versions of the shorter (ST) recension, however, clearly demand our attention. These are the Chinese version attributed to Kumārajīva (T No. 250) which, if the attribution

were correct, would date to some two and a half centuries before Hsüan-tsang's time; the transliterated Sanskrit version in Chinese characters (T No. 255), attributed by at least one modern scholar to Hsüan-tsang himself; and the Chinese version discussed above (T No. 251), which has traditionally been considered a translation by Hsüan-tsang from the Sanskrit.

The "Kumārajīva translation" (T No. 250). A thorough evaluation of the origins of the so-called "Kumārajīva version" of the *Heart Sūtra* has long been needed, and significant progress in this enterprise has recently been made by Japanese and Western scholars. To summarize their findings briefly, it seems clear that students of Kumārajīva (in particular, Seng-chao) read and commented on the core passage of the *Heart Sūtra* found in Kumārajīva's version of the *Large Sūtra*.⁷⁰ There is no evidence, however, that they were aware of the existence of the *Heart Sūtra* as a separate text, nor is there any evidence that Kumārajīva himself had any role in the production of the "translation" associated with his name. In the earliest catalogues of his works no such translation is listed, and for this reason alone the attribution of this text to Kumārajīva in later works is highly suspect.⁷¹

The actual content of this translation raises some intriguing questions concerning the process of its composition. The bulk of the text agrees word for word with Hsüan-tsang's edition of the *sūtra* (T No. 251); yet in certain crucial respects the two versions diverge. These divergences may be summarized as follows:

(1) at the beginning of the text (T 8.847c, lines 5-7) Kumārajīva's *Heart Sūtra* contains a series of 37 characters which have no counterpart in Hsüan-tsang's version of the text;

(2) in the midst of the core passage of the text (T 8.847c, line 10) Kumārajīva's *Heart Sūtra* contains a line stating that "these empty *dharma*s are not past, not future, not present" (*shih k'ung fa fei kuo-ch'ü fei wei-lai fei hsien-tsa^h*) which has no counterpart in Hsüan-tsang's version; and

(3) at another key point in the core passage – that is, in the first statement of the non-difference between form and emptiness –

Kumārajīva's text phrases this statement differently than does Hsüan-tsang; and

(4) at various points throughout both the core and the frame sections the two versions differ in their rendering of certain Buddhist technical terms (e.g., the terms *prajñāpāramitā*, *skandha*, *bodhisattva*, and the names of Avalokiteśvara and Śāriputra).

These divergences, I believe, provide us with our best clues to the ancestry of the two texts as well as to the relationship between them.

Beginning with the first, as Fukui has recently pointed out there are near the beginning of the so-called Kumārajīva translation (T No. 250) a series of 37 characters which have no counterpart in Hsüan-tsang's version of the text (or, for that matter, in any other Chinese or Sanskrit recension of the *sūtra*).⁷² These characters – reading in English translation “Śāriputra, because form is empty, it is without the mark of disfiguring (*nao-huar*^{ak}); because perception (*vedanā*) is empty, it is without the mark of perception; because concept (*saṃjñā*) is empty, it is without the mark of knowing; because conditioning force (*saṃskāra*) is empty, it is without the mark of production; because consciousness (*viññāna*) is empty, it is without the mark of awakening (*chüeh*^{al}). And why?” (T 8.847c5-7) – correspond exactly, however, with a line in Kumārajīva's version of the *Large Sūtra*.⁷³

Fukui also draws attention to the second of the divergences listed above, namely the statement in Kumārajīva's *Heart Sūtra* – and in this version alone – that “empty *dharmas* are not past, not future, [and] not present.” Once again, however (as Fukui rightly points out), this line corresponds character for character with a line in the *Large Sūtra* translation of Kumārajīva,⁷⁴ but is found in no other version (in any language, we might add) of the *Heart Sūtra*.

Basing his discussion only on the features listed in (1) and (2) above, Fukui concludes that the word-for-word identity between these elements unique to the so-called Kumārajīva translation of the *Heart Sūtra* (among *Heart Sūtra* recensions) but found also in Kumārajīva's own version of the *Large Sūtra* serves as proof that this recension of the *Heart Sūtra* is a genuine translation by Kumārajīva

himself. This contention is problematic, however, for it rests on a questionable assumption: namely, that if a single individual (e.g., Kumārajīva) were to translate both the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra* into Chinese from Sanskrit originals, the two Chinese translations should agree word for word *even though the Sanskrit texts do not*. For, as we have already seen, the Sanskrit texts of the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra* diverge in a number of respects. Thus the nearly verbatim agreement between the two Chinese texts should instead arouse our suspicions. Moreover, even if a given translator were to render two perfectly identical texts on two separate occasions into a second language, the odds against his or her choosing exactly the same word in each instance are enormous. And this is especially true of a translator like Kumārajīva, who is renowned not for a wooden faithfulness to the Sanskrit original but for his fluid and context-sensitive renditions. Thus the character-for-character correspondences between the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva and the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to the same person can be used to argue against – rather than for – this attribution. Instead, such a close correspondence serves as evidence of what we in the 20th century would describe as plagiarism: the adoption of one individual’s wording by another.

It is the third divergence listed above – the fact that the so-called Kumārajīva translation of the *Heart Sūtra* phrases the initial statement of the non-difference between form and emptiness in wording distinct from the version of Hsüan-tsang – that may offer us the most valuable clue to the ancestry of “Kumārajīva’s” version of the text. For in this line the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva does not agree with his own translation of the *Large Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom*; rather, it corresponds to his version of the *Ta chih-tu lun*^m (Skt. **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*).⁷⁵ Where the *Heart Sūtra* of Hsüan-tsang and the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva both read *se pu i k’ung*^b (“form is not different from emptiness”),⁷⁶ the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva and the *Ta chih-tu lun* both read *fei se i k’ung*^m (“it is not that form is different from emptiness”).⁷⁷ How, then, are we to explain this divergence?

The answer, I believe, is a simple one. If we combine this piece of evidence with the fact just set forth – that the near-identity

in wording between the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra* should be attributed to borrowing by a third party and not to sequential translations by a single individual – we can then draw a further conclusion: that the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva was based not directly on his version of the *Large Sūtra*, but on the citations from that *sūtra* contained in the *Ta chih-tu lun*. In other words, the *Heart Sūtra* may be viewed as the creation of a Chinese author who was more familiar with the *Large Sūtra* as presented in this widely popular commentary than with the text of the *sūtra* itself.

The hypothesis that the so-called Kumārajīva version (T No. 250) of the *Heart Sūtra* was created on the basis of the *Ta chih-tu lun* also accords well with the fourth and final divergence listed above: the fact that in numerous respects this recension uses vocabulary that is quite at home in the translations of Kumārajīva, but for which Hsüan-tsang (and the recension of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to him) used later, more scholastic terms. If T No. 250 was the creation of writer(s) familiar with Kumārajīva's work, in other words, we should not be at all surprised to find that it renders the Sanskrit word *skandha* into Chinese as *yin*,⁹⁰ not *yün*⁹¹ (the reading found in Hsüan-tsang's works, and in the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to him). Nor should we be surprised to find Avalokiteśvara given in Kumārajīva's standard rendering as *Kuan-shih-yin*⁹² (in contrast to Hsüan-tsang's *Kuan-tzu-tsa*⁹³), Śāriputra as *Shê-li-fu*⁹⁴ (vs. Hsüan-tsang's *Shê-li-tzu*⁹⁵), *prajñāpāramitā* as *po-jo po-lo-mi*⁹⁶ (vs. Hsüan-tsang's *po-jo po-lo-mi-to*⁹⁷), and the word *bodhisattva* in its standard Chinese rendering of *p'u-sa*⁹⁸ (while in one instance Hsüan-tsang's *Heart Sūtra* offers the rather pedantic reading *p'u-ti-sa-to*⁹⁹). T No. 250 need not be, in other words, the work of Kumārajīva himself in order to exhibit Kumārajīva's standard vocabulary; the core passage has simply been extracted from his *Ta chih-tu lun*, while the frame sections need only be the product of a community or an individual at home with his renderings of Buddhist technical terms.

If this text is not the work of Kumārajīva himself, then, when (and under what circumstances) was it produced? This question cannot be answered easily, though the evident patterning of T No. 250 on Kumārajīva's *Ta chih-tu lun* provides us at least with a

terminus post quem for its composition; that is, it cannot have been produced prior to the completion of the *Ta chih-tu lun* itself, which according to the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lü* took place in 406 CE.⁷⁸ No comparable *terminus ante quem*, however, is available to us, and indeed at least one scholar has suggested that this version of the text may postdate that of Hsüan-tsang himself.⁷⁹ In the absence of firm evidence, therefore, we must restrict our inquiry to the most obvious question: that is, when the so-called "Kumārajīva translation" of the *Heart Sūtra* first gained currency in China. Yet the answer to this question is startling, for this version of the *sūtra* (unlike the one attributed to Hsüan-tsang) *never* became popular in China. Not a single Chinese commentary is based on this version (nor, for that matter, on any version of the *sūtra* other than that of Hsüan-tsang),⁸⁰ and the version of the text recited throughout China, Korea, and Japan is the recension attributed to Hsüan-tsang. In retrospect this may indeed be the most telling indication that Kumārajīva played no role in the creation of this version of the *Heart Sūtra*, for it is otherwise quite unheard of in Chinese Buddhist history for a work of Hsüan-tsang's to eclipse one of Kumārajīva's. Hsüan-tsang's cumbersome and (by Chinese standards) overly literal style, together with his scholarly innovations in Buddhist technical terminology (most of which were never accepted outside limited scholarly circles), seem to have put off most of his Chinese audience. Kumārajīva's translations of a number of works have thus remained the most popular until today, despite the existence of later (and technically more accurate) renditions by Hsüan-tsang. If a version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva had indeed been in circulation in China prior to the appearance of the version attributed to Hsüan-tsang, it seems highly unlikely that Hsüan-tsang's edition would have succeeded in supplanting it.

Based on the evidence presently available, then, we cannot determine with certainty just when the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva was produced. We are quite safe in concluding, however, that this *Heart Sūtra* is not the work of Kumārajīva himself, but is an adaptation of his version of the *Large Sūtra* (or rather, an adaptation of the version of his *Large Sūtra* contained in the *Ta chih-*

tu lun) by a third party. We will return to a consideration of the relationship between this version of the *sūtra* and the version attributed to Hsüan-tsang below, at which point we will again take up the fourth feature noted above, namely the divergences in technical vocabulary between the versions of the *Heart Sūtra* associated with Kumārajīva and Hsüan-tsang. What we can state with certainty at this point is that this version of the *Heart Sūtra* is neither Kumārajīva's nor an independent translation from the Sanskrit.

The Hsüan-tsang "translation." But should we raise the same question concerning the Chinese version of the text attributed to Hsüan-tsang? As we have seen, we can no longer use the term "translation" to apply to this text, for there is every indication that it was fabricated in China. Moreover, Hsüan-tsang's biography speaks not of his translation of the text, but of his initial encounter with the *sūtra* in Szechwan. But the possibility of some editorial input by Hsüan-tsang into the text as it has come down to us must still be examined. What, then, was the role of Hsüan-tsang in composing, editing, or popularizing the text in the form in which it has come down to us?

In retrospect, we should perhaps have been alerted to the fact that this text is not what later generations have taken it to be – that is, a translation from the Sanskrit by Hsüan-tsang – by the fact that the *sūtra* does not appear where we would expect it to: as part of Hsüan-tsang's *magnum opus*, the translation of a compendium of Prajñāpāramitā texts ranging from the *Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Lines* (Skt. *Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) to the *Questions of Suvikrāntavikrāmi* (Skt. *Suvikrāntavikrāmi-paripṛcchā-sūtra*).⁸¹ Here the various *sūtras* are not treated as separate texts, but as chapters in a single work, a rather unusual arrangement that may well go back to Hsüan-tsang himself. No Prajñāpāramitā text translated by Hsüan-tsang appears anywhere else in the canon but in this collection – none, that is, but the popular *Heart Sūtra* edition associated with his name, which appears in the general Prajñāpāramitā section. This in itself may tell us something of the history of the text:

that it was first classified simply as a Prajñāpāramitā text, in all probability listed as “translator unknown,” and that only later – through its close association with Hsüan-tsang and his activities in popularizing it – it came to be attributed to him.

But did Hsüan-tsang simply pass on the *sūtra* as he received it, or did he himself leave a certain editorial imprint on the text? In a number of respects we find evidence that Hsüan-tsang may have “corrected” the text, in all probability after his travels in India.

In most respects Hsüan-tsang’s *Heart Sūtra* contains readings identical to those found in Kumārajīva’s *Large Sūtra*. It does differ, however, in the translation (or transliteration) of certain terms, most notably the spellings of the name of Śāriputra as *Shê-li-tzu*⁸¹ (vs. *Shê-li-fu*⁸² in Kumārajīva’s translations and in the *Heart Sūtra* erroneously attributed to him), Avalokiteśvara as *Kuan-tzu-tsai*⁸³ (vs. *Kuan-shih-yin*⁸⁴), and the Sanskrit word *skandha* as *yün*⁸⁵ (vs. *yin*⁸⁶). Other minor divergences between the versions of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang and Kumārajīva, respectively, can be identified as well; since the above three examples are the most regular and the most easily traceable, we will restrict our inquiry to them.⁸²

A survey of the uses of the terms *Shê-li-tzu*, *Kuan-tzu-tsai* and *yün* (in the sense of Skt. *skandha*) in the Taishō canon reveals a striking and consistent pattern, for all three of these terms appear to have been introduced into the Chinese Buddhist literature by Hsüan-tsang himself. Not a single one of them is certain to have appeared in the work of any translator active prior to Hsüan-tsang’s time, and indeed the pool of Chinese translators and commentators who later adopt these spellings is conspicuously small.⁸³ The appearance of all three of these terms in a work that is certain to have been in circulation by the middle of the 7th century is thus a virtual fingerprint of Hsüan-tsang’s editorial activity.⁸⁴

Should we assume, then, that Hsüan-tsang was responsible not only for the editing of the text, but for the composition of the frame section itself? This would, I believe, be going too far. His biography is eloquent on the extent of his devotion to the text and its recitation, a devotion that seems unlikely to have been so strong if Hsüan-tsang himself were the author (or the partial author) of the text.

The most likely possibility, it would seem, is that Hsüan-tsang encountered the text in its full form and made only minor editorial changes, in all likelihood after his extended study of Sanskrit terms in India.

We cannot determine, on the basis of the evidence presently available, the extent of the resemblance between the text given to Hsüan-tsang in Szechwan and the version traditionally attributed to Kumārajīva. In addition to the changes in technical vocabulary introduced by Hsüan-tsang himself, if a text resembling T No. 250 was indeed the prototype (and not a later creation) we must also account for the absence of the 37 characters at the beginning of the longer version from Hsüan-tsang's copy of the text, and for the absence of the line "empty *dharmas* are not past, not future, [and] not present." Hsüan-tsang's version of the *sūtra*, in other words, is somewhat abbreviated when compared with the so-called Kumārajīva version, or indeed with the core of the *sūtra* found in the Chinese *Large Sūtra* itself. If these lines were not removed by Hsüan-tsang himself, then, they must have been extracted at some time prior to his encounter with the text.

At least three scenarios can be envisioned to explain the divergences between Hsüan-tsang's version of the *sūtra* and the only other version (T No. 250) which can lay any claim to priority: (1) T No. 250 was fabricated after Hsüan-tsang's version of the *sūtra* was already in circulation, perhaps by a traditionalist party unhappy with Hsüan-tsang's innovations in Buddhist technical terms; (2) the version of the *sūtra* obtained by Hsüan-tsang in Szechwan was essentially identical with the text now classified as T No. 250, and Hsüan-tsang himself not only "corrected" its technical terminology, but excised certain portions of the text; and (3) the version of the text given to Hsüan-tsang had already been abbreviated before he obtained it, and the innovations introduced by Hsüan-tsang were limited to certain changes in technical terminology. At the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to determine with certainty which of these scenarios is correct. As a working hypothesis, however, the third possibility seems the most likely.

The “Hsüan-tsang” transliteration (T No. 256). We now come to the most peculiar version of the *Heart Sūtra* found in the Chinese canon: a Sanskrit version in which the Indian sounds are recorded in Chinese characters.⁸⁵ In contrast to the Chinese version attributed to Hsüan-tsang, this transliterated version seems not to have been widely circulated in China, for it was not included in the Buddhist canons produced at least from the Liao through the Ch’ing dynasties (10th-19th centuries), and was recovered only in the 20th century by Western archaeologists at Tun-huang.⁸⁶

The text is not assigned a translator in the Taishō edition of the canon (nor indeed in the body of the text itself), for it is not, of course, a translation. Nonetheless, it would be of considerable interest to know both the date of this transliterated edition and the identity of the person or persons responsible for its recording. In a recent article Leon Hurvitz has suggested that this transliteration, or “Brahmanical text” (as he calls it), was set down in writing by Hsüan-tsang himself.⁸⁷ A quite different thesis, however, has recently been put forth by Fukui, who argues that the text is not the work of Hsüan-tsang at all, but is to be attributed to the 8th century tantric master, Amoghavajra.⁸⁸

Fukui’s arguments in this regard are quite convincing, and the reader is referred to his monumental study for further details. One piece of supporting evidence not discussed by Fukui, however, may be mentioned here: that is, that the transliterated version diverges in several respects from the Chinese text attributed to Hsüan-tsang. Where Hsüan-tsang’s Chinese text reads “[he] passed beyond all suffering” (8.848c4), for example, the transliterated text – like all the Sanskrit versions of the *sūtra* discovered to date – has no equivalent of this line.⁸⁹ Again, where the transliterated text reads *rūpam śūnyam śūnyataiva rūpam* (“form is empty, emptiness itself is form,” 8.851b29-c1) the Chinese text associated with Hsüan-tsang lacks any equivalent of these lines. Likewise the expression *na vidyā na vidyākṣayo nāvidyā nāvidyākṣayo* (“no knowledge, no destruction of knowledge; no ignorance, no destruction of ignorance” in the transliterated text (8.851c17-19) does not match Hsüan-tsang’s Chinese version, which reads simply “no ignorance, no destruction

of ignorance” (8.848c9). Finally, while Hsüan-tsang’s Chinese version reads “no knowledge and no attainment” (8.848c10), the transliterated text contains an expansion of this expression found in some (but not all) copies of the Sanskrit text, namely *na jñāna na prāpti(r) nābhisama(yaḥ)* (“no knowledge, no attainment, [and] no realization,” 8.852a2-3). The two texts, in other words, diverge in content (not just in wording) in a number of respects, and thus are extremely unlikely to have been the work of the same person. In particular, they are unlikely to have been the work of a person like Hsüan-tsang, whose philological and textual precision were legendary, and who certainly would not have let such discrepancies go unnoticed.⁹⁰

But if the two texts were not produced by the same person, then which – if either – should we attribute to Hsüan-tsang? The answer hinges in part, of course, on the degree of probability with which we can establish some connection between Hsüan-tsang and the text regularly associated with his name. As we have already seen, however, T No. 251 (ordinarily described as a “translation” by Hsüan-tsang) does indeed contain the distinctive technical vocabulary that appears in other translations and original compositions by Hsüan-tsang. Moreover, it is this version of the *sūtra* that served as the basis for commentaries by both of Hsüan-tsang’s main students, K’uei-chi and Wōnch’ūk. The combined weight of this evidence seems sufficient, in the view of this writer, to point to this version of the *sūtra* as the one used by Hsüan-tsang.

Hsüan-tsang and the Reception of the Heart Sūtra in China. Whatever the extent of Hsüan-tsang’s role in the editing of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* associated with his name, we can be certain of one thing: that it was this version, and not any other, that first gained wide popularity in China, and that it has remained down to the present day the sole version of the *sūtra* that is actually read, chanted, and commented upon in East Asia. And this situation was clearly already in effect during the T’ang dynasty. As Fukui has pointed out, most T’ang-period references to the *Heart Sūtra* refer to the text as the *To hsin ching*,⁹¹ where the first character (pronounced *to* in the modern

Beijing dialect, but *ta* in T'ang-period Chinese) represents the final character of the transliteration of the Sanskrit word *prajñāpāramitā*.⁹¹ These three characters are, however, the last three elements in *Hsüan-tsang*'s title of the text; the character *to* does not appear in the title of the version attributed to Kumārajīva (nor, for that matter, in the titles of the two non-extant texts popularly supposed to have been early versions of the *Heart Sūtra*⁹²). That some of the later Chinese renditions of the *sūtra* (none of which ever gained significant popularity) also end in these three characters – quite likely in imitation of *Hsüan-tsang*'s text – need not dissuade us from drawing the obvious conclusion: that these T'ang-period mentions of the *To hsin ching* refer specifically to *Hsüan-tsang*'s edition.

It was certainly *Hsüan-tsang*, then, who was responsible for the widespread popularity of the *sūtra* in China, and in all probability for its initial circulation (and perhaps its translation into Sanskrit) in India as well. It now remains only for us to consider the subsequent fate of this Chinese apocryphal scripture in the hands of the Buddhists of India and Tibet.

The Heart Sūtra in India and Tibet

It has long been known that there are numerous Sanskrit manuscript copies of the *Heart Sūtra*, a fact which has obscured until now the Chinese ancestry of the text. But the text did not stop evolving once it had been introduced into the Indian environment. Far from it; like all other Indian Buddhist texts, the *Heart Sūtra* was subjected to a series of additions and changes, the most striking of which was the creation of a distinctive variant of the text popularly known as the “longer” recension.

We have already taken note of the fact that commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Indian authors are clustered in a period from the 8th to the 11th century CE.⁹³ There is also, however, a clustering of a different sort, for all seven of the surviving commentaries are based on the longer recension of the *sūtra*.⁹⁴ And the same is true of the commentaries on the *sūtra* written in Tibet, all of which are based on the longer version of the text. The situation is precisely the reverse, however, in China: here all of the extant commentaries are based not only on the shorter recension of the text, but on a single

example of that recension – the version attributed to Hsüan-tsang (T No. 251).

How can this striking discrepancy be explained? There is certainly no significant doctrinal difference between the two recensions, for the core section of the *sūtra* (in which the basic teachings are given) is identical in the shorter and longer texts. Indeed the only difference is that the “defects” we identified above in our discussion of Hsüan-tsang’s shorter recension (the absence of the standard opening and closing statements, together with the total non-appearance of the Buddha himself) have been remedied in the longer version, at least in perfunctory fashion. With only such a seemingly minor difference between the two versions, then, why should it be that all the Indian and Tibetan commentaries are based on the longer recension, while all the Chinese commentaries expound on the shorter one?

Not every event in the history of Buddhism, of course, has a single easily identifiable cause. We must not discount the importance of accidents of preservation and popularization: the role of a single charismatic preacher (whose name has long since been lost), for example, in disseminating a particular version of a text could have left an impact which we will never be able to recover. There is, however, at least one identifiable factor which may explain this commentarial pattern: the difference between Chinese and Indian perceptions of what constitutes an authentic Buddhist scripture.

Scriptural Authenticity: The Chinese View. The dilemma faced by the early converts to Buddhism in China, confronted by an ever-mounting collection of canonical scriptures (many of which seemed to conflict with one another) arriving almost daily from the Western Regions, has long been familiar to modern scholars. And indeed it was just this seeming jumble of self-proclaimed authoritative works that led to some of the most creative developments in East Asian Buddhism, from the complex *p’an-chiao*⁹ systems of Chih-i and some of his predecessors (who tried to incorporate all of these diverse scriptures into a single coherent framework) to the formation of a variety of “one-practice” systems (based on the selection of a

single scripture or practice as most appropriate to the present age) in Kamakura-period Japan.

Yet throughout these quite divergent efforts a single fundamental criterion of authenticity can be discerned: the fact that a Buddhist scripture, to be authentic, must be of Indian origin. And when the composers of apocryphal texts set out to create new scriptures in China or Korea, one of their first concerns (as demonstrated by Robert Buswell⁹⁵) was to include the proper Indian-sounding elements, such as personal names and place names, in order to give their newly minted scriptures the ring of authenticity. In China, in other words, the first criterion of scriptural legitimacy was that of geography, for any text that had no demonstrated Indian pedigree was, on those grounds alone, suspect.

Scriptural Authenticity: The Indian View. In India, by contrast, the criterion of geography could hardly be used, for both genuine traditions of the Buddha's own sermons and texts containing much later fabrications emerged in precisely the same geographical milieu. Here other means had to be used to determine whether a given text was indeed the word of the Buddha, and the early Buddhists formulated a series of methods for deciding doubtful cases (to be discussed immediately below). That these means were insufficient for weeding out later claimants to the status of "Buddha-word" (Skt. *buddhavacana*) is amply demonstrated, for the modern scholar, by the fact that a large number of so-called Mahāyāna scriptures, and eventually even certain tantric works, came to be accepted as genuine by substantial portions of the Buddhist community.⁹⁶ These were not, of course, accepted without some resistance, and some of the earliest scriptures that eventually came to be associated with the Mahāyāna wing of Buddhism still bear the marks of their struggle for legitimacy.⁹⁷

At least in the early centuries, however, Indian Buddhists had a fairly clear-cut method of evaluating the authenticity of a given text (a method evolved prior to the recording of Buddhist scriptures in written form): it had to agree with the other teachings of the Buddha, on the one hand,⁹⁸ and it had to be something "heard" from a

legitimate source, on the other.⁹⁹ It is this latter category, I would argue, that led to the eventual formulation of an implicit single criterion for authenticity: a legitimate *sūtra* had to conform to the sole acceptable format for this genre of Buddhist literature – that is, it had to open with the words “Thus have I heard at one time. The Lord was dwelling at ...,”¹⁰⁰ and to close with some indication of the reaction of the audience. Everything else – as the Mahāyāna scriptures amply attest – was negotiable.

By this Indian criterion, then, the reason for the clustering of commentarial attention around the long version of the *sūtra* becomes evident. The difference between the shorter and longer versions of the *Heart Sūtra* is – to put it bluntly – that the longer version is a *sūtra*, while the shorter one is not.

In sum, the first order of business, for Indian Buddhists, was to convert the text into acceptable *sūtra* format. Once this had been done, its legitimacy could be established, and the work of commentary-writing could begin. What we see in the longer recension of the *sūtra*, in other words, is the result of the domestication of a Chinese product to fit the demands of the Indian Buddhist market.

Scriptural Authenticity and the Heart Sūtra in Tibet. Tibet is, of course, situated midway between India and China, and thus it is not surprising that Tibetan criteria for the genuineness of a Buddhist scripture represent a combination of Indian and Chinese specifications. First and foremost, a legitimate text must come from a certifiably Indian source; and second, it must – in accordance with the sole identifiable Indian criterion – be of the “proper” genre. It is thus quite natural that only the longer version of the *Heart Sūtra* was ever accepted into the Tibetan Buddhist canon, despite the fact that a short version of the text is known to have been extremely popular in the Sino-Tibetan border region of Tun-huang.¹⁰¹

But there may be evidence of Chinese, rather than Indian, influence in the pattern of the commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra* written in Tibet, for these are apparently clustered into two distinct periods of composition: an earlier group, composed during the Imperial Period (7th-9th centuries CE) and its aftermath, and a later

group, dating from the period of the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912).¹⁰² But these are precisely the two periods in Tibetan history when Chinese influence in Tibet was at its peak. In the face of this striking pattern it seems legitimate to raise the question of whether the degree of Tibetan interest in the *Heart Sūtra* may have been directly related to the extent of Tibetan contacts with China. Once again, what we may be seeing here is evidence not of the centrality of the *Heart Sūtra* to Tibetan religious concerns, but of its ongoing importance in China.

Conclusions

In this paper I have sought to demonstrate, primarily on the basis of philological evidence, that a flow chart of the relationships among the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Large Sūtra* and the *Heart Sūtra* can reasonably be drawn in only one sequence: from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* to the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva to the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* popularized by Hsüan-tsang to the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. To assume any other direction of transmission would present insuperable difficulties – or would, at the very least, require postulating a quite convoluted series of processes, which (by virtue of this very convolution) seems considerably less likely to have taken place.

A second level of argument – and one that need not be accepted in order to validate the hypothesis of a Chinese-to-Sanskrit transmission of the *Heart Sūtra* – has been offered in support of the role of Hsüan-tsang in the transmission of the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* to India, and perhaps even in the translation of the text into Sanskrit. While the circumstantial evidence of his involvement with the text (and, in particular, of his recitation of the text en route to India) is sufficient to convince this writer that he is the most likely carrier of this *sūtra* to the West, one need not accept this portion of the argument in order to conclude that the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* is indeed a translation from the Chinese.

What is not open to question, however, is the fact that the *Heart Sūtra* gained significant popularity in China well before it became the subject of commentarial attention in India, and that it has maintained a central role in East Asian Buddhism from the 7th

century CE down to the present. And even if we accept the idea that the *sūtra* is “apocryphal” in the technical sense – that is, that it was created as a separate scripture in China, composed of an extract from the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva (itself a translation of the Indian *Pañcaviṃśati-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) together with an introduction and conclusion composed in China – this in no way undermines the value that the text has held for Buddhist practitioners. “Whatever is conducive to liberation and not to bondage” – so the Buddha is said to have told his followers – “that is my teaching.”¹⁰³ And for millions of East Asian Buddhists, and countless numbers of Indian and Tibetan Buddhists as well, the *Heart Sūtra* has played just such a role.

“The *Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya*,” wrote John McRae in the opening line of an article published recently in this journal, “is a Chinese text.”¹⁰⁴ He went on to make it clear that he did not mean this statement to be taken literally, and offered a carefully documented analysis of the centrality of this text in Chinese Buddhist thought and practice and of the variety of ways in which Buddhist commentators had employed it. Yet his words were, in retrospect, prophetic. After many years spent in demythologizing the work both of Buddhist hagiographers and (occasionally) of other Buddhist scholars, I now find myself in the rather unaccustomed position of urging the reader to take this statement in a literal, not a figurative, sense. The *Heart Sūtra* is indeed – in every sense of the word – a Chinese text.

NOTES

The author would like to thank Gregory Schopen for providing a photocopy and transcription of the relevant section of the Gilgit manuscript of the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*. Extensive comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript were offered by Gil Fronsdal, John McRae, Masatoshi Nagatomi, and Alan Sponberg. Additional comments, suggestions, and good leads were provided by Judith Boltz, Robert Buswell, Paul Harrison, Dan Lusthaus, Elizabeth Napper, Richard Salomon, Jonathan Silk, and Nobuyoshi Yamabe. Michael Saso and David Chappell cheerfully answered my inquiries on a variety of Chinese source-materials; David Eckel and Donald Lopez did the same for texts originating in India and Tibet. Finally, the members of the American Oriental Society (Western Branch) provided the needed encouragement and enthusiasm to propel this paper from its earlier incarnation as a conference talk into its present printed form.

1. Skt. *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya* (the word *sūtra* does not appear in the title in any of the extant Sanskrit manuscripts). For a critical edition of the Sanskrit text based on manuscripts found in Nepal, China, and Japan see Edward Conze, "The *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*," in his *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies* (London: Bruno Cassirer, 1967), pp. 148-167. (A similar but not identical discussion and edition of the text was published by Conze in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* [1948], pp. 38-51; because each contains certain elements not found in the other, the two publications are best used together.) Both short-text (ST, in Conze's terminology) and long-text (LT) recensions of the Sanskrit text are known; Conze has conflated the two in his edition.

A number of versions of the *sūtra* (both ST and LT) are included in the Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon, under various titles for the ST see Taishō nos. 250, 251, and 256 (the latter a transliterated Sanskrit version in Chinese characters), and for the LT nos. 252, 253, 254, 255, and 257 (of which no. 255 is a translation from the Tibetan). In working with the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* I have been greatly assisted by an unpublished synoptic edition of all the Chinese versions of the text prepared by Gil Fronsdal.

The Tibetan canon contains only the LT edition, which is ordinarily found in both the *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Tantra* sections of the Kanjur (Derge nos. 21, 531; Narthang nos. 26, 476; Lhasa no. 26, 499), though in the Peking Kanjur the text appears only in the *Tantra* section (no. 160). Numerous copies of a Tibetan ST version, however, have been found at Tun-huang. For the canonical (LT) version a superb critical edition has been prepared by Jonathan Silk, to be published in the near future. The ST Tibetan text is the subject of a study now being prepared for publication by John McRae and myself; in the meantime see a preliminary note on the ST version published by UBEYAMA Daijun in *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū*, vol. 26 (1965), pp. 783-779 (where, however, the Tun-huang text has been substantially regularized to conform with the orthographic conventions of Classical

Tibetan). The Mongolian Kanjur, following the format of the Tibetan Peking xylograph edition, includes the *Heart Sūtra* only in the Tantra division (Ligeti No. 162).

A Sogdian version of the *Heart Sūtra*, together with a barbarous rendition of the Sanskrit, has been edited by E. Benveniste in *Textes sogdiens*, Part 1 (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1940), pp. 142-144. An incomplete Khotanese version has recently been edited and translated by Prods Oktor Skjærvø; see "The Khotanese *Hṛdayasūtra*" in *A Green Leaf: Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen*, Acta Iranica, Series 2, No. 28 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 157-171. An Uighur (Turkish) version of the text has recently been discovered in the Berlin Turfan collection, but is as yet unpublished. According to Peter Zieme (cited in Silk, *op. cit.*, p. 71, n. 78) the text is an incomplete manuscript, translated into Uighur from the Chinese but possibly also with reference to the Tibetan.

For additional bibliographical comments see Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, 2nd revised ed. (Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1978), pp. 67-74.

2. See the studies by Conze in his *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies* and in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* cited above, note 1. For an English translation and commentary on the text see his *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 2nd ed. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), pp. 99-129.

3. FUKUI Fumimasa, *Hannya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1987).

4. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Heart Sūtra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

5. See M. David Eckel, "Indian Commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*: The Politics of Interpretation," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1987), pp. 69-79, and John R. McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*: Preliminary Inferences on the Permutation of Chinese Buddhism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1988), pp. 87-115.

5a. An additional line, which occurs only in a small minority of Sanskrit manuscripts, has not been translated here. See below, note 19.

6. See Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (2nd ed.), pp. 56-74.

7. On this formula see John Brough, "Thus have I heard...", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 13 (1950), 416-426.

8. See Lopez, *The Heart Sutra Explained*, p. 7 and n. 14.

9. No instance of the use of mantras or *dhāraṇīs* occurs in what are generally considered to be the earliest Prajñāpāramitā texts, viz. the *Ratnagaṇasamcayagāthā* and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. The first appearance of such formulas in this body of literature occurs in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (see the following note), where these formulas are arranged in a syllabic sequence known as the *arapacana*, which is widely attested in documents written or originally composed in the Kharoṣṭhī script (see Richard Salomon, "New Evidence for a

Gāndhārī Origin of the Arapacana Syllabary,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 110, no. 2 [1990]), 255-273). The term *mantra* is of course widely used in Indian religions generally, and goes back to the period of the Vedas; the term *dhāraṇī*, by contrast, appears to be a peculiarly Buddhist expression. Though it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between incantations of these two types (and indeed the two categories seem increasingly to fall together over the course of Buddhist history), it would appear that the word *dhāraṇī* was first employed in reference to mnemonic devices used to retain (Skt. *√dhr*, “hold”) certain elements of Buddhist doctrine in one’s memory, in contrast to the word *mantra* which was used to refer to words or phrases in which the sounds themselves were considered to be highly effective when pronounced correctly. Much basic research still remains to be done on the uses of both mantras and *dhāraṇīs* in Buddhist literature and practice.

10. The name “Large Sūtra” is derived from the title of the most popular Chinese version of the text (discussed immediately below), and has been adopted here for convenience to refer to versions of the *sūtra* in all languages. The Sanskrit title is *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (“The 25,000-Line Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra”). A Sanskrit text of the so-called “rearranged” version of the text (Conze’s type 2a), which was edited in around the 9th century to conform with the format of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* of Maitreyañātha, has been published by N. Dutt on the basis of very late (c. 19th c.) Nepalese manuscripts; see his *The Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā, Edited with Critical Notes and an Introduction*, Calcutta Oriental Series No. 28 (London: Luzac & Co., 1934). For the passage corresponding to the core of the *Heart Sūtra* see p. 46, line 2 through p. 47, line 3. A portion of an older (unrearranged, Conze’s type 2) Sanskrit version has survived in manuscripts found at Gilgit, dating to around the 6th century CE; these have been published in facsimile by Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra, *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts*, Parts 3-5, Śatapiṭaka Series, Vol. 103 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1966). For the passage corresponding to the core of the *Heart Sūtra* see folio 21v, lines 2-11.

Though the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras are regularly identified in Sanskrit (and in the corresponding Tibetan translations) by the number of lines they are said to contain, in Chinese this convention is not followed. The Taishō edition of the Chinese canon contains four versions of the text: T. nos. 220 (section 2, 7.1a-426a), 221, 222 (a partial translation), and 223. Of these by far the most popular is the translation attributed to Kumārajīva (no. 223); it is titled *Mo-ho po-jo po-lo-mi ching* (**Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, that is, “The Large *Prajñāpāramitā* Sūtra”), and is popularly known simply as the “Large Sūtra.”

The sole translation of the text preserved in the Tibetan canon corresponds to the unrearranged Sanskrit version (Conze’s type 2); see Peking no. 731, Derge no. 9, Narthang no. 10, and Lhasa no. 10. For the corresponding Mongolian version see Ligeti nos. 758-761.

No manuscript copies of the *Large Sūtra* have yet been identified, to the best

of my knowledge, in any of the major Buddhist languages of Central Asia (Tokharian A and B, Khotanese, Sogdian and Uighur). Sanskrit fragments of other closely related texts (the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras in 100,000 and 18,000 lines) have, however, been found in Sinkiang; see Lore Sander, "Buddhist Literature in Central Asia," in G. P. Malalasekera, ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. 4, fasc. 1 (Colombo: Government Press, 1979), pp. 52-75 (especially p. 68).

For further discussion and bibliography see Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (2nd ed.), pp. 34-40.

11. The first such reference was apparently made in the 7th century (see below, note 33).

12. This line, which is absent from all the Chinese versions of the text, appears in the form cited here (that is, Skt. *rūpaṃ śūnyam śūnyataiva rūpaṃ*) in the majority of extant Sanskrit copies (for details see Conze's critical edition [cited in n. 1 above], p. 150, n. 10) as well as in the Tibetan translation of the longer recension of the sūtra (which reads *gzugs stong-pa'o*). Conze, however, preferred the reading "form is emptiness" (*rūpaṃ śūnyatā*) and accordingly chose this version (which constitutes a distinct minority of readings in the manuscript copies) as standard.

13. Here we come to a large rift between the traditional Chinese understanding of this line, on the one hand, and the Tibetan on the other. The Chinese *Heart Sūtra* reads *shih chu fa k'ung hsiang*, "all dharmas [have] the mark [of] emptiness." The Tibetan *Heart Sūtra*, by contrast, reads *chos thams-cad stong-pa-nyid-de / mtshan-nyid med-pa* ("all dharmas are emptiness [they are] devoid of marks"). Grammatically the Sanskrit admits of either interpretation; it can be read either as *sarvadharmāḥ śūnyatā-lakṣaṇā* ("all dharmas have the mark of emptiness") or as *sarvadharmāḥ śūnyatā-alakṣaṇā* ("all dharmas are emptiness, [and are] unmarked"). Conze's English translation of the Sanskrit follows the Chinese sense, but without a discussion of the alternative reading.

14. It is noteworthy that both Sanskrit versions of this passage (that is, both the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Large Sūtra*) follow the sequence "not decreasing, not increasing," while both Chinese versions place the word "increasing" (*tseng*) before "decreasing" (*chien*). It is difficult to explain this reversal no matter what direction of textual transmission is postulated. A possible explanation is that the difference is due simply to the established sequences of these terms in the two languages: that is, that in Sanskrit the more natural sequence would be "decreasing-increasing," while the reverse would be true in Chinese (just as in English we normally say "waxing and waning" rather than the reverse, and would tend to follow this sequence even when translating from a language that read "waning and waxing"). An additional factor may be the visual effect of the Chinese characters: by placing the word "decreasing" last, one obtains a sequence of six negations in which items 2, 4 and 6 all contain the "water" radical while items 1, 3 and 5 do not. If one followed instead the sequence found in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* the water radical would not alternate so rhythmically, but would instead appear in items

2, 4 and 5, lending a perhaps less poetic appearance to the list. Both of these suggestions are, however, merely hypothetical.

15. All citations from the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* are based on the readings found in the Gilgit manuscript published in facsimile by Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra (cited above, note 10); a photocopy and transcription of the passage corresponding to the core section of the *Heart Sūtra* were generously supplied by Gregory Schopen. I have followed Schopen's lead in not regularizing the transcription. Some of the more important scribal errors and variants are discussed in the following notes.

16. The Gilgit manuscript of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* regularly reads *Śāradvatīputra*, while the later Nepalese manuscripts (and the Tibetan translation) read *Śāriputra*. For a discussion of this and other variants of this name see André Migot, "Un grand disciple du Buddha Śāriputra," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 56 (1954), 405-554 (p. 411).

17. See above, note 12.

18. The Gilgit manuscript regularly reads *śūnyatā* where one would expect *sūnyatā*.

19. The sentences *yad rūpam sā śūnyatā yā śūnyatā tad rūpam* ("that which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness is form") are absent from a substantial majority of the Sanskrit manuscripts reviewed by Conze in his critical edition, as well as from the canonical (LT) Tibetan translation, though they do appear in the Tun-huang manuscript copies (ST), where they are rendered into Tibetan as *gag gzugs-pa de stong-pa-nyid // gag stong-pa-nyid-pa de gzug-te* [sic]. Accordingly, I have omitted these lines from the English translation of the Sanskrit given above (p. 155).

20. This line ("not past, not future, [and] not present") is found in both the Gilgit manuscript and Dutt's late Nepalese copies of the *Large Sutra*, as well as in the Chinese translations of the text. It is absent, however, from all versions of the *Heart Sūtra* (in all languages) except the Chinese version attributed to Kumārajīva, a text whose attribution is extremely problematic. For further discussion see below, pp. 184-189 and notes 71-73.

21. Note that the *Heart Sūtra* reads *spraṣṭavya* while the *Large Sūtra* has *sparśa*. In this context (that is, in the list of *āyatanas* and *dhātus*) the reading *spraṣṭavya* ("touchable") is more standard than *sparśa* ("touch"); see Bruce Hall, *Vasubandhu on "Aggregates, Spheres, and Components": Being Chapter One of the "Abhidharmakośa"*, Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1983, p. 62 (I, §9a-b) and p. 80 (I, §14a-b).

22. The *Heart Sūtra* regularly reads *caḥṣurdhātu* where the *Large Sūtra* has *caḥṣudhātu*.

23. Where the Gilgit text reads *na satvāyatanam na satvāyatananirodham* ("no being-*āyatanas* and no extinction of being-*āyatanas*") Dutt's edition has *na ṣaḍāyatanā na ṣaḍāyatana-nirodha* ("no six *āyatanas* and no extinction of the six *āyatanas*"), which is the more expected reading.

24. While the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* negates attainment (*prāpti*) and realization (*abhisamaya*), most Sanskrit manuscript copies of the *Heart Sūtra* place the term *prāpti* second rather than first and negate knowledge (*jñāna*) rather than realization. In this respect the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* matches both the Chinese *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang and the Chinese *Large Sūtra* translation of Kumārajīva, where the corresponding terms are *chih*²² and *te*.²³

25. The Sanskrit text of the *Large Sūtra* edited by Dutt (based on considerably later manuscripts) is even more repetitive, demonstrating the ongoing amplification that has continued throughout the life of the text.

26. The shift from singular forms (in the *Large Sūtra*) to plurals (in the *Heart Sūtra*) is paralleled by a change of subject in the Sanskrit texts, from “emptiness” (in the *Large Sūtra*) to “all *dharma*s” (in the *Heart Sūtra*). This change, however, seems easiest to explain as the result of a transition that took place in the course of Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Large Sūtra* from Sanskrit into Chinese. While the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* reads “that which is emptiness does not originate” and so on, the Chinese *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva reads “all *dharma*s are marked by emptiness: not originated” and so on, wording which the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang follows exactly. In this context, without an explicit subject in the Chinese text, the reader would most naturally assume that the subject is “all *dharma*s” – which is exactly what we find in the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. (For the Chinese and Sanskrit texts see above, pp. 159 and 162, respectively.)

27. See Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (2nd ed.), pp. 10-12.

28. The earliest complete Chinese version of the *Large Sūtra* was translated by Mokṣala (T No. 221) in 291 CE, though a partial translation was produced by Dharmarakṣa in 286 CE (T No. 222). The version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang is said to have been translated in 649 CE, while Kumārajīva’s version is dated to 402-412 CE. Both of these attributions are, however, extremely problematic; for details see below, pp. 184-191.

29. On the date of the Indian commentaries see Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, pp. 4 and 8-13, and Eckel, “Indian Commentaries,” p. 71.

30. Commentaries attributed to Nāgārjuna (but certainly not by him) and to Maitreyanāthā (whose identity is likewise problematic) both appear by the early 5th century CE, the former in China and the latter in India. For details see Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 35-36 and 39-40.

31. The classic statement of differences between Chinese and Indian preferences is given by Tao-an²⁴ in his *Preface to an Abstract of the Prajñā Sūtras* (382 CE), where he enumerates five deviations (Ch. *wu shih per*²⁵) and three non-alterations (*san pu* ²⁶) in Chinese translations from Indian originals. For a discussion of these eight categories and whether Tao-an viewed any or all of them as permissible deviations from the Indian originals see Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* (1967; rpt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), pp. 77-88. For a convenient discussion of Chinese Buddhist translation practices in general see also Kenneth Ch’en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 365-372. As Ch'en notes, despite the scholastically superior innovations of Hsüan-tsang and others "the principles advocated by Kumārajīva finally won supremacy" (p. 372).

32. An exception to this rule is Hsüan-tsang, whose scholastic scruples won out over his awareness of Chinese literary preferences, resulting in translations which – while prized by certain scholars for their accuracy – never gained widespread favor among Chinese Buddhists. A poignant account of Hsüan-tsang's struggle between his awareness of Chinese literary preferences (as pointed out to him by, among others, his students) and his desire for faithfulness to the Sanskrit original is contained in his biography, as recorded by Hui-li:

On the first day of the first month in the spring of the fifth year (A.D. 660), he started the translation of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* [Skt. *Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*]. . . . Since it was such an extensive work, his disciples suggested that he should make an abridgement of it. The Master complied with their wishes and intended to translate it in the way as Kumārajīva translated the Buddhist texts, expunging the tedious and repetitionary parts. When he cherished this thought he dreamed in the night some very terrible things as a warning to him. He dreamed that he was climbing over a precipitous peak and some wild animal was trying to catch him. He trembled with perspiration and managed to escape from the dangerous position. After awakening he related his evil dream to the people and decided to translate the *sūtra* in full text. In that night then he dreamed to see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas emitting a light from the middle of their eyebrows, shining over his body and making him feel comfortable and happy. . . . When he awoke he felt happy, and he thought no more of making any abridgement but made the translation in exact accordance with the original Sanskrit text.

(English translation from LI Yung-hsi, trans., *The Life of Hsüan-tsang* [Peking: The Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959], pp. 260-261).

33. See T. No. 1710, 33.524a25-b1, where K'uei-chi writes as follows:

"*Hsin*" [lit.: heart or core] refers to what is firm and substantial, yet subtle and exalted. In accord with the capacity of its [original] audience, the *Large Sūtra* has a meaning and content of expansive breadth. When we, however, receive it, grasp it, transmit it and study it, it gives rise to a sense of timorous retreat. The sages who transmitted the Dharma therefore published this [*Heart Sūtra*] separately to record the firm and substantial, yet subtle and exalted purport [of the *Large Sūtra*]. The traditional three divisions and dual introduction [of that work] were consequently truncated in order better to formulate its essence and highlight its guiding themes: [the teaching that] things, occurring in their myriad representations, all have form, yet are all empty as well. The Way allows a thousand gateways, yet all pass through non-wisdom to attain

realization of both [the form and the emptiness of all things]. This *sūtra* assays the marvelous purport of the expanded scripture signalling its substance, and thus it is given the name *Heart* [of the *Perfection of Wisdom*].

(translation by Alan Sponberg, in a paper to appear in a volume of translated commentaries on the *Heart Sūtra*, edited by Donald Lopez). The most striking feature of K'uei-chi's description of the *Heart Sūtra*, for our purposes, is the statement that the *Heart Sūtra* was "published separately" by "the sages who transmitted the Dharma" – not "preached separately" by the Buddha himself. Such a statement by Hsüan-tsang's own student (who was also, as Sponberg points out, the author of the earliest extant commentary on the *Heart Sūtra*) carries significant weight, and seems to be seconded by the comparison made by Wöñch'ük, another of Hsüan-tsang's disciples, between the *Heart Sūtra* and the Kuan-yin (Avalokiteśvara) chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which was likewise part of a larger text but was extracted and circulated separately (see T No. 1711, 33.543b). In sum, the statements of both K'uei-chi and Wöñch'ük indicate that at least some Chinese Buddhists, already in the 7th century CE, considered the *Heart Sūtra* to be not a separate sermon preached by the Buddha, but an extract made by certain "sages who transmitted the Dharma" from the *Large Sūtra* of Kumārajīva.

34. For the Mongolian text see Ligeti no. 1105, *Qutuy-tu asaraqui neretü sudur* (Mongolian Kanjur vol. 90, *eldeb XXXI*), folio 437b and *passim*. The Mongolian version is a translation of the Tibetan text titled '*Phags-pa byams-pa'i mdo zhes-bya-ba* (Peking no. 1010, Narthang no. 328, Lhasa no. 349; the text is not included in the Derge edition). The Sanskrit title appears in Tibetan transcription as *Ārya-maitrī-sūtra*; one would have expected it to read instead **Ārya-maitreya-sūtra*. The fact that both *Maitreya* and *maitrī* are regularly translated into Tibetan as *byams-pa* suggests that this Sanskrit title is not original, but was reconstructed by the Tibetans. No Sanskrit version of the text has survived; there is, however, a Pali edition of this peculiar text, which represents an amalgamation of a prophecy concerning the future Buddha Maitreya (Pali *Metteyya*) in verse, and a prose commentary by Buddhaghosa on the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. For further details see Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), p. 56 and n. 81. In the other Mongolian version of the same text (Ligeti No. 783, corresponding to Peking no. 751) the name of Maitreya's city is simply translated into Mongolian.

35. The term *blo-gros* "mind" is, however, the equivalent of Skt. *matī* (id.), not of *-matī* (which occurs regularly in the Sanskrit version of the name Ketumatī). The latter is presumably a feminine form of the suffix *-mat* "having, possessed of." The name of the city thus seems to have meant "the one (f.) possessing a flag," not – as the Tibetans interpreted it – "flag-mind."

36. The various Mongolian-Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries employed by the Mongols in translating Buddhist texts from the Tibetan are discussed in detail in

Vladimir Leonidovich Uspensky, "Buddiiskaya terminologiya v mongol'skom perevode. Istochniki dlya izucheniya i puti formirovaniya" ["Buddhist Terminology in Mongolian Translation. Sources for their Study and their Means of Formation"] (unpublished M.A. thesis, Leningrad University, 1981), pp. 8-27. One of the most important of these texts is the Mongolian version of the Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionary known as the *Mahāvvyutpatti*; see Alice Śārkózi, "Some Words on the Mongolian *Mahāvvyutpatti*," *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), vol. 34 (1980), pp. 219-234.

37. Even the name of one of the *dhātus* is given differently in these two texts (see above, note 21).

38. See above, p. 166 and n. 29.

39. According to a story recently quoted in a number of English-language studies (e.g., Eckel, "Indian Commentaries," p. 70, and Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, p. 13), one of the stories collected by Hsüan-tsang on his visit to India was that of the Buddhist philosopher Bhavaviveka, who is said to have recited the *Heart Sūtra* in order to conjure up a vision of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara. If this story were true, it would provide evidence of the use of the *Heart Sūtra* in India well before Hsüan-tsang's visit in the first half of the 7th century. This assertion, however, which is based on the account given in Samuel Beal's translation of the *Hsi-yü ch'ü*^d (*Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* [1884; rpt. New York: Paragon Reprint Corp., 1968], vol. 2, pp. 223-225) is a figment of Beal's translation; the text in question is not the *Heart Sūtra* at all, but an entirely different work of which certain characters in the Chinese title are identical with those in the title of the *Heart Sūtra* (viz., the "Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva Wish-Granting Dhāraṇī Sūtra," Ch. *Kuan-tzu-tsai p'u-sa tan-fo sui-hsin t'o-lo-ni ching*,^e T No. 1103b, translated by Chih-t'ung^f c. 650 CE).

Another oft-cited piece of evidence for the early currency of the *Heart Sūtra* in India is the existence of a Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscript of the *sūtra* kept at the Hōryūji temple in Japan and supposedly brought from China to Japan in 609 CE. This assertion first appeared in the works of F. Max Müller, and has subsequently been widely quoted in Western-language sources (e.g., Edward Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, p. 155). Here Müller was misled by his Japanese research assistants, who reported to him that a date for the arrival of the *sūtra* in Japan corresponding to 609 CE appears in a Japanese source (see F. Max Müller, ed., *Buddhist Texts from Japan* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881], pp. 4-5). Indeed it does; but the source in question, a local chronicle titled *Ikaruga koji benran*^g ("Memorandum on Ancient Matters of Ikaruga"), composed in 1836, is entirely unreliable on matters of ancient chronology; to cite only one example, it asserts that together with the palm-leaf *Heart Sūtra* the mission that arrived in Japan in 609 brought (*inter alia*) a robe and a bowl belonging to Bodhidharma, items that acquired symbolic importance in Chinese Ch'an only during and after the time of Shen-hui^h (684-758 CE). Such a tradition, in other words, could only have been formulated around 730 CE at the earliest, and thus the assertion that Bodhidharma's

robe and bowl reached Japan in 609 CE is patently false, making the parallel claim that the *Heart Sūtra* manuscript was brought by the same mission quite useless as evidence. In the absence of any other source that could provide a concrete date for the arrival of this manuscript in Japan (and accordingly a *terminus ante quem* for its copying in India), we may provisionally accept the evidence (admittedly always tentative) provided by the shape of the letters in the manuscript itself: as G. Bühler asserts in the same volume (Müller, *Buddhist Texts from Japan*, p. 90), "If we had no historical information [a reference to the *Ikaruga* chronicle] regarding the age of the Horiuzi palm-leaves, every palaeographer, I believe, would draw from the above facts the inference that [the *Heart Sūtra* manuscript] belonged to the beginning of the eighth century A.D." Constrained by what he believed was a concrete date for the *Heart Sūtra* manuscript, Bühler went on to use that text to re-evaluate the history of Indian palaeography (pp. 90-95); as we can see, however, such contortions were not necessary, and the appropriate move would have been the reverse.

40. See McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," pp. 93-94 and p. 109, n. 23. I have retained the full form of the name "K'uei-chi" for ease of identification. The validity of this usage has been questioned, however, by Stanley Weinstein; see his "A Biographical Study of Tz'u-en," *Monumenta Nipponica* 15, 1-2 (1959), pp. 119-149.

41. For references see above, note 1.

42. On the tenuousness of the attribution of this text to Kumārajīva see McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 88 and p. 106, n. 6; for the supposed Hsüan-tsang translation see Fukui, *Hannya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū*, p. 188. (Fukui does not, however, question this attribution.) The fact that this famous text is attributed to these two illustrious translators for the first time only several centuries (in the case of Kumārajīva) or several decades (in the case of Hsüan-tsang) after their deaths, while no such translation is mentioned in contemporary biographical accounts of either of them, casts considerable doubt on the validity of these attributions.

43. The story of Hsüan-tsang's receipt of the text becomes ever more detailed in the course of its transmission, acquiring evidently hagiographic elements along the way. In the *Chen-yüan hsin-üing shih-chiao mu-lu*^a edited by Yüan-chao,^b for example, Hsüan-tsang receives the text not from a sick man, but from a "spirit person" or "divine man" (*shen jen*^h) (T No. 2157, 55.893c-894a), while in the novelized version of Hsüan-tsang's journey the anonymous donor has acquired a concrete identity as the "Crow's Nest Ch'an Master" of Pagoda Mountain, described by Hsüan-tsang as a *bodhisattva* (see Anthony Yü, trans., *Monkey* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977], vol. 1, pp. 392-394). For the earliest version of this story, as related by Hui-li,^c see below, p. 179.

44. Hsüan-tsang's biography states that he acquired the text during his sojourn in Szechwan, a visit which took place during c. 618-622 CE, while the earliest evidence for the presence of the *sūtra* in India – the commentary attributed

to Kamalaśīla – dates from around the end of the 8th century CE (see Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, pp. 4 and 11).

45. The first and third of these items are corrected, at least in perfunctory fashion, in the longer recension of the text, while the Buddha makes a brief appearance there as well; yet it is quite clear that the shorter recension is older, and is thus the version which should be of primary concern to us in our inquiry into the origins of the text. For a discussion of the relation between the shorter and longer recensions of the text see below, pp. 194 - 197.

46. See Robert E. Buswell, Jr., ed., *The Formation of Ch'an Ideology in China and Korea: The Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 16-17.

47. Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, p. 201-207. It may well be the fact that the *Heart Sūtra* was originally produced for ritual use – that is, for use as a *dhāraṇī* to be chanted – that accounts for the peculiar absence of a single line found in Kumārajīva's *Large Sūtra* (and the Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Large Sūtra* as well) from all extant versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, in all languages, with a single exception to be discussed immediately below: that is, the line that reads “[empty *dharmas*] are not past, not future, not present” (T 8.223a16; for the corresponding Sanskrit text see Dutt, *Pañcaviṃśati*, p. 46, line 11). While all the surrounding materials in this section are arranged in groups of two, this line alone contains three elements. Thus it is possible (though this is admittedly far from certain) that this line was omitted from the text as it was excerpted and transformed into a *dhāraṇī* because this three-part arrangement would have interrupted the rhythm used in chanting. If this line of reasoning is correct, the fact that the so-called “Kumārajīva translation” does include this line (in agreement with Kumārajīva's *Large Sūtra* and his *Ta chih-tu lun*^{am} but in disagreement with all other versions of the *Heart Sūtra*, in any language) may provide additional evidence that the so-called Kumārajīva text has a separate (and aberrant) history – that is, that it was excerpted from the *Ta chih-tu lun* after a Chinese version of the *Heart Sūtra* resembling that attributed to Hsüan-tsang was already in circulation.

48. Another possibility, suggested by Robert Buswell in a letter dated 21 January 1992, is that the *Heart Sūtra* might be a kind of *ch'ao-ching* (“condensed *sūtra*”), “a fairly common genre of scriptural writing in early Chinese Buddhism, which excerpted seminal passages from the Mahāyāna *sūtras* to create easily digestible ‘gists’ of these texts.” (For a discussion of this genre see Kyoko Tokuno, “The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues,” in Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, pp. 31-74, especially p. 39.) If this line of interpretation is followed, the term *hsin-ching* might be understood – as Buswell suggests – not as *dhāraṇī* (as Fukui would have it) but as “gist *sūtra*,” a reading more in line with traditional exegesis.

49. For a recent discussion of the mantra of the *Heart Sūtra* see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., “Inscribing the Bodhisattva's Speech: On the *Heart Sūtra*'s Mantra,” *History of Religions*, vol. 29 [1990], pp. 351-372.

50. TSUKAMOTO Zenryū has noted, based on a study of the iconography of the Lung-men caves in northern China, a shift from Śākyamuni and Maitreya as the primary figures in Buddhist iconography during the late Northern Wei dynasty and after (c. 500-540 CE) to a focus on Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara at a later time (c. 650-720); for an English summary of his study see Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 171-172. In fact the emergence of Avalokiteśvara as a dominant figure appears to take place even earlier – around 530 CE – based on the data assembled by Tsukamoto. Avalokiteśvara's popularity has continued to increase since that time, and he (or she) has remained the most prominent *bodhisattva* in China until today.

51. It is difficult to find textual support for this assertion, which is admittedly based on anecdotal evidence both from traditional written sources and from modern scholars specializing in Chinese Buddhism. Nonetheless, it seems to be a fair characterization of the situation in these two societies, where Avalokiteśvara remained one *bodhisattva* among many in India, on the one hand, while attaining the status at least of first-among-equals in China, on the other.

52. See McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 107, n. 10. The text to which McRae refers is the *T'o-lo-ni chi ching*^{bl} (T. No. 901, 18.785a-897b); for the mantra of the *Heart Sūtra* see p. 807b20-21. It is noteworthy that this *dhāraṇī* catalogue offers not one but three *hsin t'o-lo-ni*^{bm} ("heart *dhāraṇīs*") associated with the Perfection of Wisdom; for the complete list see 18.8071b19-c9. Still other *dhāraṇīs* associated with the Perfection of Wisdom are given on the preceding pages (18.804c-807b).

53. Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, p. 192, referring to the *Ta-fang-teng wu-hsiang ching*^{bn} (Skt. *Mahāmegha-sūtra*, T No. 387) and the *Tung-fang tsui-sheng teng-want t'o-lo-ni ching*^{bo} (Skt. *Agrapradīpadhāraṇīvidyārāja*, T No. 1353). No page references are given in Fukui's study, but the passages to which he refers are presumably T 12.1084c7 and c12 and T 21.867c12 and c22, respectively. While neither of these passages contains a full replication of the mantra found in the *Heart Sūtra*, the striking similarities between them suggests that a number of variants of this mantra must have been circulating outside the context of the *Heart Sūtra* itself. Though T No. 1353 was translated into Chinese only toward the end of the 6th century, T No. 387 was translated by Dharmakṣema early in the 5th century (during the period 414-421 according to the *Ku-chin i-ching t'u-chin*,^{bp} T No. 2151, 55.360b24).

54. It is also possible, of course, that the mantra was circulating in oral form, in Szechwan and perhaps also elsewhere in China.

54a. Just as this paper was going to press, I received word from two colleagues of a number of occurrences of the list of epithets of the mantra (*chou* or *ming-chou*) in other Chinese texts. (Here I must beg the reader's indulgence for the absence of Chinese characters for the terms mentioned in this footnote; it was not possible to add to the glossary at this late stage in the publication process.) The closest correspondence (indeed, an exact one) is found in the *Chin-kang san-mei ching* (* *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*), which reads *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta shen-chou, shih*

ta ming-chou, shih wu-shang chou, shih wu-teng-teng chou (T No. 273, 9.371b12-14), a word-for-word match to the epithets lists (though not to the spelling of *prajñāpāramitā*) found in the version of the *Heart Sūtra* associated with Hsüan-tsang (T No. 251, 8.14-15). Given the late date of this sūtra (685 CE according to Buswell), however, and its originally Korean provenance, it seems certain that this passage did not provide the inspiration for the corresponding section of the *Heart Sūtra*, but quite the opposite: that is, the composer of the *Vajrasamādhi* borrowed these lines from the by then quite popular *Heart Sūtra* (as suggested in Buswell, *The Formation of Ch'an Ideology*, p. 22 and n. 28; I would like to thank Gil Fronsdal for bringing this discussion to my attention).

Of considerably greater interest, therefore, are a number of similar occurrences that clearly date from well before Hsüan-tsang's time. This group of passages, recently identified by Nobuyoshi Yamabe (who kindly sent me notice of his findings in letters dated 1 October 1992 and 7 November 1992), includes the following:

- (1) *Kuan-fo san-mei hai ching* ("The Sūtra of the Samādhi-Sea of Buddha Visualization," tr. c. 420-422 CE by Buddhahadra; T No. 643, 15.647b4-6): *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta ming-chou, shih wu-shang chou, wu-teng-teng chou*. No Sanskrit version of this text is known.
- (2) *Hsiao-p'in po-jo po-lo-mi ching* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, tr. 408 CE by Kumārajīva; T No. 227, 8.543b25-27 and repeated in 28-29): *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta ming-chou, po-jo po-lo-mi shih wu-shang chou, po-jo po-lo-mi shih wu-teng-teng chou*. The corresponding Sanskrit passage reads *mahāvīdyeyaṃ Kauśikayad uta prajñāpāramitā | apramāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | aparimāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | niruttareyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | anuttareyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asameyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asamasameyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā* (from P. L. Vaidya, ed., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, p. 36, line 30 - p. 37, line 7; cf. Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, pp. 108-109). As the reader will note, the extant Sanskrit text is considerably more repetitive than is Kumārajīva's version.
- (3) *Ta-p'in po-jo po-lo-mi ching* (*Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, tr. 404 CE by Kumārajīva; T No. 223, 8.283b9-10): *shih po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta ming-chou shih wu-shang ming-chou* (cf. Conze, *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, p. 229). No corresponding Sanskrit text of the *Pañcaviṃśati* is easily available for comparison (Dutt's published edition of the Nepalese version ends with Chapter 21, while this citation occurs in Chapter 28; and the corresponding section of the text is missing from the Gilgit manuscripts according to Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, 2nd ed., pp. 34-37).

In addition Yamabe has located a number of parallel passages in the translations

of Hsüan-tsang himself (T 7.151a29-b3, 156a17-19, 551b10-13, 556a23-25, 580b27-29, 580c4-6, and 875a3-4).

To Yamabe's substantial list may now be added two further occurrences in Kumārajīva's translations (cf. nos. 2 and 3 above), located by this writer as a direct result of Yamabe's findings:

- (4) *Hsiao-p'in* (tr. Kumārajīva, T No. 227): *po-jo po-lo-mi shih ta chou-shu, wu-shang chou-shu* (T 8.542b5-6). The corresponding Sanskrit passage reads *mahāvideyaṃ Kauśika yad uta prajñāpāramitā | apramāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | aparimāṇeyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | anuttareyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asameyaṃ Kauśika [vidyā] yad uta prajñāpāramitā | asamasameyaṃ Kauśika vidyā yad uta prajñāpāramitā* (Vaidya, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, p. 27, lines 29-32; cf. Conze, *Eight Thousand*, p. 104). Note that Kumārajīva's text is not consistent in its rendering of the word *vidyā* "lore, knowledge, spell"; in (2) above it appears as *ming-chou* (or simply *chou*), while here it is translated as *chou-shu* "mantric art."
- (5) *Ta-p'in* (tr. Kumārajīva, T No. 223): *shih po-jo po-lo-mi...shih ta ming-chou, wu-shang ming-chou, wu-teng-teng ming-chou* (T 8.286c2-3; cf. Conze, *The Large Sūtra*, p. 237). No published Sanskrit text is available for comparison (cf. (3) above).

These examples (and there may well be others) are quite sufficient to demonstrate that there were ample prototypes available in China for the creation of an epithets lists such as the one contained in the *Heart Sūtra*.

Even more important, however, is yet another observation offered by Mr. Yamabe: that the underlying Sanskrit term (where extant texts are available for comparison) corresponding to Ch. *chou* is not *mantra* (as in the *Heart Sūtra*) but *vidyā* — thus supplying us with yet another example of back-translation. The Sanskrit term *vidyā*, in other words, was originally translated into Chinese as *ming-chou* (or simply *chou*); but after a passage containing this term was incorporated into the Chinese *Heart Sūtra*, it was then back-translated into Sanskrit using the partially synonymous term *mantra*.

55. The Chinese term *shen*⁶ is sometimes used to translate Sanskrit *ṛddhi*, "supernatural power," and, less commonly, *deva*, "god." Neither of these renderings would, however, have been appropriate in the present context. My assumption is that the person who translated the text into Sanskrit simply chose not to include an equivalent of this character.

56. The majority of Conze's Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts, for example, add the word *prāpnōi* ("he attains") following the phrase *niṣṭhā-nirvāna* (see Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, p. 152 and n. 44), as does the Tibetan (LT) translation, which reads *mya-ngan-las 'das-pa'i mthar phyin-to* ("he attains to the end [which is] *nirvāna*"). Likewise Conze finds it necessary to supplement

this cryptic phrase with additional words in his English translation, where he renders it as "in the end he attains to nirvāṇa."

57. The ear in question is not my own but that of Richard Salomon, who kindly drew this infelicity to my attention.

58. On the Sanskrit LT recension and its Chinese and Tibetan translations see below, pp. 194-197 and note 65.

59. Li, *Life of Hsüan-tsang*, p. 23.

60. *Loc. cit.*

61. See Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka and Other Pieces* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 53.

62. On these and other apocryphal texts created in China see Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, especially pp. 1-29.

63. See Buswell, *Vajrasamādhi*, especially pp. 3-40.

64. For a preliminary discussion of this issue see Jan Nattier, "Church Language and Vernacular Language in Central Asian Buddhism," *Numen*, vol. 37 (1990), pp. 195-219.

65. Long versions of the *sūtra* contained in the Taishō canon are T No. 252 (translated by Dharmacandra in 741 CE), No. 253 (Prajñā, 790 CE), No. 254 (Prajñācakra, 861 CE), No. 255 (Fa-ch'eng,²⁴ 856 CE, from the Tibetan), and No. 257 (Dānapāla, 1005 CE). Short versions are T No. 250 (attributed to Kumārajīva), No. 251 (attributed to Hsüan-tsang), and No. 256 (a transliterated version of the Sanskrit text in Chinese characters, for which no clear attribution is given).

66. For a discussion of these titles see John McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 88 and notes 4-7, and FUKUI Fumimasa, *Hannya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū*, pp. 171-185.

67. Although Tao-an's catalogue was not completed until 374 CE, it is generally considered to include only those works available in China through the beginning of the 4th century. For a convenient summary of the current state of our knowledge of this and other catalogues of Chinese Buddhist scriptures see Kyoko Tokuno, "The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues" (cited above, n. 48).

68. For further discussion see McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 106, notes 5 and 6.

69. Kumārajīva's translation was completed in 404 CE.

70. McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 89 and n. 9. For another example of the use of the section of the *Large Sūtra* which would eventually be extracted to form the core of the *Heart Sūtra* in the commentary literature prior to the time of Hsüan-tsang see Chih-i's *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, T No. 1911, 46.5b20.

71. According to Fukui (*op. cit.*, p. 177) this text is attributed to Kumārajīva for the first time in the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao lü* (730 CE). Cf. McRae, *op. cit.*, p. 89 and n. 9.

72. Fukui, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

73. These characters in turn are clearly patterned on a passage found at this

point in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*, which reads (in Conze's translation) "because the emptiness of form does not molest [*sic*], the emptiness of feeling does not feel, the emptiness of perception does not perceive, the emptiness of impulses does not put together, the emptiness of consciousness is not aware" (Skt. *tathāhi yā rūpaśūnyatā na sā rūpayatī yā vedanāśūnyatā na sā vedayatī yā saṃjñāśūnyatā na sā saṃjñānte | yā saṃskāraśūnyatā na sābhisamskarotī yā vijñānaśūnyatā na sā vijñāntī*). For the English text see Conze, *The Large Sūtra*, p. 61; for the Sanskrit see Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 45, line 14 - p. 46, line 2.

74. Fukui, *loc. cit.*

75. I would like to thank Prof. Masatoshi Nagatomi of Harvard University for drawing my attention to the *Ta chih-tu lun*^m in this connection, and for raising the question of the significance of this divergence in phrasing. The reading found in the *Ta chih-tu lun* also occurs in some of the more recent editions of Kumārajīva's *Large Sūtra* consulted by the Taishō editors (viz., the Sung, Yüan and Ming editions, as well as the *K'ai-pao* [Old Sung] edition). My working assumption, at this point, is that these relatively late editions reflect an editorial emendation introduced on the authority of the *Ta chih-tu lun* itself.

76. See T 8.848c4-5 and 8.223a13, respectively.

77. See T 8.847c7-8 and 25.327c22, respectively.

78. T No. 2154, 55.513a4.

79. McRae, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

80. See above, p. 179. The sole exception to this rule appears (at first glance) to be the commentary by Kūkai (T No. 2203a), who claims to be writing on the basis of Kumārajīva's version of the text. A close examination of the actual content of Kūkai's commentary, however, reveals that it is Hsüan-tsang's version, not the text attributed to Kumārajīva, that served as its basis.

81. T No. 220, comprising the totality of volumes 5-7 of the Taishō edition.

82. Other respects in which T No. 250 differs from T No. 251 include the rendition of Skt. *prajñāpāramitā* as *po-jo po-lo-mi^m* in the former (vs. *po-jo po-lo-mi-to^m* in the latter), the rendering of the term *bodhisattva* in one instance as *p'u-t'i-sa-to^m* in the latter (but never in the former, which consistently has the standard Chinese reading *p'u-sa^m*); differences between certain characters used in the transliteration of the mantra at the end of the *sūtra* (see T 8.847c20-21 and 848c18-19, respectively); and the use of the term *hsin^m* "heart" or rather – as Fukui has argued – "*dhāraṇī*" in the title of the latter, where the former reads *ming chou^m* ("bright incantation").

83. The only translators in whose works these three terms (*Kuan-tzu-tsai^m*, *Shê-li-tzu^m*, and *yü^m*) regularly appear in the forms found in the version of the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Hsüan-tsang (T No. 251) are Divākara (fl. 680-688), Bodhiruci II (fl. 693-727), Amoghavajra (fl. 723-774), *Devaśānti, a.k.a. *Dharmabhadra (fl. 980-1000), Dānapāla (fl. 928-1017), Dharmapāla (fl. 1004-1058), and of course Hsüan-tsang himself. Not one of these translators, however, predates the work of Hsüan-tsang; thus it seems quite probable that these terms

– all of which represent scholastic innovations designed to replace other, already well-established expressions – were introduced by Hsüan-tsang himself. (The only exceptions to this chronological pattern are two works attributed to Bodhiruci I, fl. c. 508-540, one containing the term *yütr*⁹⁰ [T No. 675] and another using the name *Kuan-tzu-tsa*⁹¹ [T No. 587]. Elsewhere in the works of this earlier Bodhiruci, however, the expressions *yin*⁹² and *Kuan-shih-yin*⁹³ are consistently used instead; one therefore suspects that in these two instances either some textual corruption has taken place or there has been some confusion with Bodhiruci's later namesake.)

84. It is noteworthy that even Hsüan-tsang's own disciples, K'uei-chi⁹⁴ and Wöñch'ük,⁹⁵ tended to retain the reading *Kuan-shih-yin*⁹⁶ rather than *Kuan-tzu-tsa*⁹⁷ as the name of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, even while they followed their master's lead in adopting new readings for *Śāriputra* and *skandha*.

85. See T No. 256, based on the Tun-huang manuscript now catalogued as Stein 2464. For a recent discussion of this text see Leon Hurvitz, "Hsüan tsang (602-664) and the *Heart Scripture*," in Lewis Lancaster, ed., *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1977), pp. 103-121. Two minor corrections should now be made to the transcription of the Sanskrit text given there: on p. 111, line 1, the word *sūnyam* has been omitted in typesetting before the word *sūnyataiva* (see T 8.851b29); and on p. 112, line 2, the five characters read by Hurvitz as *na siddhitvād* are probably intended to represent the expression *nāstivād* instead (see T 8.852a8). A complete romanization of the transliterated Chinese text, based on the Tun-huang manuscript versions, may now be found in Fukui, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-138.

86. The version of the text that served as the basis of the Taishō edition is Stein No. 2464. Fukui has recently drawn attention, however, to the existence of two other Tun-huang manuscript copies (Stein 5648 and Pelliot 2322); see Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, pp. 98-99.

87. Leon Hurvitz, "Hsüan tsang (602-664) and the *Heart Scripture*," p. 108.

88. See Fukui, *Hannya shingyō*, especially pp. 92-115.

89. This is also true of both Tibetan versions of the text (ST and LT), as well as of all extant Chinese versions of the text except T Nos. 250, 251, and 254.

90. Without discussing the discrepancies between the transliterated and translated versions, Fukui suggests that the transliterated version corresponds to the text obtained by Hsüan-tsang before his trip to the West, popularly known as the "Kuan-yin-given version" (p. 93).

91. The character *m*⁹⁸ was pronounced with a final *-t* in T'ang-period Chinese, and thus was able to stand alone as an equivalent of final *-mitā* in the term *prajñāpāramitā* (see Bernard Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* [1923; rpt. New York: Dover, 1974], no. 617, and cf. the Japanese pronunciation of the same character as *mitsu*). For the pronunciation of the final character in the title of T No. 251 as *ta* in T'ang-period Chinese see Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary*, no. 1006.

92. See above, pp. 182-184.

93. See above, p. 166 and note 29. It is striking that not a single one of these commentaries is preserved either in an extant Sanskrit text or in a Chinese translation; commentaries attributed to Indian authors appear only in the Tibetan canon, and a number of them may in fact have been composed in Tibet. (For further details see below, notes 94 and 102.) All the commentaries preserved in the Chinese canon, by contrast (T Nos. 1710-1714, plus Nos. 2746-2747 [classified as "apocryphal" in the Taishō canon] and 2202-2204 [composed by Japanese authors]), are the works of East Asian authors.

94. See Peking nos. 5217-5223 and Derge nos. 3818-3823. (Note that the Derge edition of the Tibetan canon lacks any equivalent of Pek. No. 5221, titled *Shes-rab-kyi pha-tol-tu phyin-pa'i snying-po shes-bya-ba 'grel-pa*, the commentary on the *Heart Sūtra* attributed to Kamalaśīla.)

95. Buswell, *Vajrasamādhi*, pp. 16-17.

96. That not even the Mahāyāna sūtras were ever accepted as legitimate by a majority of Indian Buddhists is, however, amply attested, for example in the travel account composed by Hsüan-tsang. According to Hsüan-tsang's calculations, fewer than 50% of the Buddhist monks he encountered on his journey were Mahāyānists (this in the middle of the 7th century CE). For a convenient summary of his census figures see Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958; rpt. 1967), pp. 596-601.

97. See for example Conze's translation of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines* (Skt. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*), where in the very first chapter there is an explicit defense of teachings produced by the Buddha's disciples (rather than by the Buddha himself) as taking place "through the Buddha's might" (*buddhānubhavana*) and thus not contradicting the true nature of the Dharma (p. 83). Clearly what is intended here is the defense of scriptures that could not plausibly be attributed to the Buddha himself as representing, in some sense, *buddhavacana*. Likewise in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*) the opposition of many Buddhists to this "new teaching" is made explicit in the story of five thousand monks, nuns and lay devotees who walk out of the assembly when the Buddha is about to expound the *Lotus Sūtra* (see H. Kern, trans., *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka or the Lotus of the True Law* [1884; rpt. New York: Dover, 1963], p. 38ff.).

98. The assumption that the Buddha's teachings were homogeneous is, from the perspective of the modern scholar, quite striking; this perception of homogeneity was subsequently abandoned, of necessity, in China and Tibet.

99. See Étienne Lamotte, "La critique de l'authenticité dans le bouddhisme," in *India Antiqua* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1947), pp. 213-222. The notion that to be legitimate a Buddhist scripture must have been "heard" from an authorized source has, of course, intriguing parallels with the Hindu concept of *śruti*, parallels which have not (to my knowledge) been fully explored to date. For a more recent discussion of the issue of scriptural authenticity (including an examination of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna perspectives on the issue) see Ronald M. Davidson,

“An Introduction to the Standards of Scriptural Authenticity in Indian Buddhism,” in Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, pp. 291-325.

100. Even some (though by no means all) tantric texts begin with this formula; see for example the *Hevajra Tantra*, ed. and trans. by David Snellgrove (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), vol. 1, p. 3.

101. Dozens of copies of a Tibetan ST recension, translated either directly from the Chinese or from a Sanskrit ST text but with considerable input from a Chinese version, have been found at Tun-huang. These manuscript copies, now preserved primarily in the Stein (London) and Pelliot (Paris) collections, are the subject of a forthcoming study by John McRae and myself. Cf. above, n. 1.

102. Commentaries attributed to Indian authors but preserved only in Tibetan, and composed during or shortly after the Tibetan Imperial Period (possibly at the request of the Tibetans themselves), include those of Vimalamitra (8th c.), who – though of Indian origin – had studied in China and returned there after his sojourn in Tibet, Kamalaśīla (8th c.), Atiśa (11th century) and Mahājana (11th c.). (The commentaries attributed to the latter two were definitely composed in Tibet, and those of Vimalamitra and Kamalaśīla may have been written there as well, though this is less certain; a fifth commentary, written by Vajrapāṇi [10th-11th century], was composed according to its colophon in Nepal [Lopez, personal communication, 1992].) Following these works there is an apparent hiatus in the composition of commentaries on the *sūtra* in Tibet, after which exegetical activity was resumed in the Ch’ing period. (This statement is based on a personal communication from Donald Lopez [1986], who has been engaged in an active search for Tibetan commentaries on the text. Lopez points out, however, that there may well have existed other commentaries that have not yet come to light [personal communication, 1992].) For a complete listing of canonical references to commentaries by Indian authors preserved in Tibetan see above, n. 94.

103. The passage from which this oft-cited line is taken occurs both in the *Vinaya (Cullavagga, X, 4)* and in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya (IV, pp. 280-281)*, in the context of a discussion between the Buddha and his foster-mother, Mahāpajāpatī. In response to a request by the latter for the “Dharma in a nutshell,” the Buddha offers a number of criteria for determining what should and should not be considered his teaching. Each item is first stated negatively (i.e., in terms of what is *not* the Dharma), and then positively as follows:

[Of] whatever teachings (*dharme*), O Gotami, you can assure yourself “these teachings lead to dispassion (*virāga*), not to passion (*sarāga*); to freedom from bondage (*viśaṃyoga*), not to bondage (*saṃyoga*); to decrease [in possessions], not to increase; to few desires, not to many; to contentment, not to discontent to solitude, not to socializing; to exertion, not to indolence; to ease in maintaining oneself, not to difficulty” – indeed you may consider “this is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the teaching of the Teacher (*sasthusāsana*).”

The Buddha's reply thus offers a set of general guidelines for evaluating anything that purports to be the Dharma, while simultaneously undercutting the all-too-human tendency to grasp at a any particular formulation of the Dharma to the exclusion of others (a move which, we might note, serves to counter the notion of a "closed canon" of Buddhist teachings).

104. McRae, "Ch'an Commentaries," p. 87.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----|-----------------|
| a. | 摩訶般若波羅蜜經 | al. | 覺 |
| b. | 色不異空 | am. | 大智度論 |
| c. | 盡 | an. | 非色異空 |
| d. | 不生 | ao. | 陰 |
| e. | 不滅 | ap. | 蓮 |
| f. | 不垢 | aq. | 觀世音 |
| g. | 不淨 | ar. | 觀自在 |
| h. | 不增 | as. | 舍利弗 |
| i. | 不減 | at. | 舍利子 |
| j. | 窺基 | au. | 般若波羅蜜多 |
| k. | 圓測 | av. | 菩薩 |
| l. | 開元釋教錄 | aw. | 菩提薩埵 |
| m. | 心經 | ax. | 多心經 |
| n. | 真實不虛 | ay. | 判教 |
| o. | 神 | az. | 智 |
| p. | 大神咒 | ba. | 得 |
| q. | 咒 | bb. | 五失 |
| r. | 究竟涅槃 | bc. | 三不易 |
| s. | 惠立 | bd. | 西域記 |
| t. | 仁王經 | be. | 觀自在菩薩但嚩多唎隨心陀羅尼經 |
| u. | 大乘起信論 | bf. | 智通 |
| v. | 金剛三昧經 | bg. | 班鳩古事便覽 |
| w. | 道安 | bh. | 神會 |
| x. | 綜理眾經目錄 | bi. | 貞元新定釋教目錄 |
| y. | 僧 | bj. | 圓照 |
| z. | 出三藏記集 | bk. | 神人 |
| aa. | 支謙 | bl. | 陀羅尼集經 |
| ab. | 摩訶般若波羅蜜神咒一卷 | bm. | 心陀羅尼 |
| ac. | 般若波羅蜜神咒一卷 | bn. | 大方等無想經 |
| ad. | 神咒 | bo. | 東方最勝燿王陀羅尼經 |
| ae. | 摩訶般若波羅蜜經 | bp. | 古今譯經圖紀 |
| af. | 摩訶般若波羅蜜 | bq. | 法成 |
| ag. | 方光般若經 | br. | 心 |
| ah. | 光讚經 | bs. | 明咒 |
| ai. | 般若波羅蜜 | bt. | 蜜 |
| aj. | 是空法非過去非未來非現在 | | |
| ak. | 偈壞 | | |

APPENDIX:

The Core Passage of the *Heart Sūtra* in the Gilgit and Nepalese
Manuscripts of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra*
(*Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*)

Part of the evidence outlined above in support of the hypothesis that the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* is a back-translation from the Chinese is that the differences between the core passage of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra* and its counterpart in the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* can more easily be explained by positing a Chinese intermediary between the two than by positing intra-Indian textual evolution alone. In considering the validity of this hypothesis we are fortunate to have manuscripts of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* representing not one but two layers of the Indian textual tradition: a Gilgit manuscript dating from perhaps the 6th century CE, and a group of very late Nepalese manuscripts dating from the 19th century. The Nepalese texts, of course, represents only one of many possible descendants of the Gilgit text (or rather, of the original text on which both are ultimately based); there could well have been other versions of the text that have not come down to us in which we might have been able to observe other directions of textual evolution. Nonetheless it is useful to observe that the Nepalese texts – when compared with the much earlier Gilgit version of the same *sūtra* – exhibit none of the wholesale shifts in wording and parts of speech that we see in the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. Rather, we see precisely what one would usually expect in a Buddhist text dating from this period: a number of amplifications, derived mainly from the reiteration or more detailed enumeration of items already present in the earlier manuscript. (There are also certain amplifications found in the Gilgit manuscript but not in the Nepalese texts, suggesting that these two groups of texts represent separate lines of descent from a common, and somewhat simpler, ancestor.) There is not a single case – and this is extremely important to emphasize – in which we see any of the specific changes (from verbs to adjectives, from singulars to plurals, or the substitution of one synonym for another) that are reflected in the core of the Sanskrit *Heart Sūtra*. Thus while a comparison of the Gilgit manuscript of the Sanskrit *Large Sūtra* with its Nepalese counterpart is insufficient in and of itself to prove our hypothesis, it provides no evidence whatsoever to the contrary.

Gilgit Manuscript (c. 6th c. CE)

na hi Śāradvatdīputra-
-anyad rūpam anyā śūnyatā
nānya śūnyatānyad rūpaṃ
[rū]pam eva śūnyatā
śūnyat(ai)va rūpaṃ
evam nā(ny)ā vedanānyā śūnyatā

Nepalese Manuscript (c. 19th c. CE)

Śāriputra
nānyadrūpam anyā śūnyatā
nānyā śūnyatā anyadrūpam
rūpam eva śūnyatā
śūnyataiva rūpam
nānyā vedanā anyā śūnyatā

nānyā saṃjñā nānyā śūnyatā ·
 nānye saṃskārā anye śūnyatā
 nānya vijñānam anyā śūnyatā ·
 nānyāḥ śūnyatānyad vijñānaṃ ·
 vijñānam eva śūnyatā śūnyataiva
 vijñānaṃ ·
 ya Śāradvatīputra śūnyatā
 na sã utpadyate
 na nirudhyate ·
 na saṃkliśyate
 na vyavadāyate ·
 na hīyate
 na vardhate
 nāñitā nānāgatā na pratyutpannā
 yā notpadyate na nirudhyate na
 saṃkliśyate na vyavadāyate
 na hīyate na vardhate nāñitā
 nānāgatā na pratyutpannāḥ
 na tatra rūpaṃ na vedanā
 na saṃjñān na saṃskārān na
 vijñānaṃ
 na cakṣur na śrotraṃ na ghrāṇaṃ
 na jihvā na kāye na manaḥ
 na rūpaṃ na śabda na gandho na rasa
 na sparśo na dharmāḥ
 (na) tatra skandhā na dhātavo
 nāyatanāni
 na tatra cakṣurdhātu na rūpadhātu
 na cakṣurvijñānadhātu
 na (śro)tradhātu na śabdadhātu
 na śrotravijñānadhātuḥ
 na ghrāṇadhātu na gandhadhātu
 na ghrāṇavijñānadhātu
 na jihvadhātu na rasadhātu

nānyā śūnyatā anyā vedanā
 vedanaiva śūnyatā śūnyataiva
 vedanā
 nānyā saṃjñā anyā śūnyatā
 nānyā śūnyatā anyā saṃjñā
 nānye saṃskārā anyā śūnyatā
 nānyā śūnyatā anye saṃskārāḥ
 nānyad vijñānam anyā śūnyatā
 nānyā śūnyatā anyad vijñānam
 vijñānameva śūnyatā śūnyataiva
 vijñānam
 iti samudayasatyāvavādaḥ
 śūnyatā Śāriputra
 notpadyate
 na nirudhyate
 na saṃkliśyate
 na vyavadāyate
 na hīyate
 na vardhate
 nāñitā nānāgatā na pratyutpannā
 yā ca īdrśī
 na tatra rūpaṃ na vedanā
 na saṃjñā na saṃskāra na
 vijñānam
 na pṛthivīdhātur nābdhātur
 na tejodhātur na vāyudhātur
 nākāśadhātuḥ na vijñānadhātur
 na cakṣurdhātu na rūpadhātu
 na cakṣurvijñānadhātuḥ
 na śrotradhātu na śabdadhātu
 na śrotravijñānadhātuḥ
 na ghrāṇadhātu na gandhadhātu
 na ghrāṇavijñānadhātuḥ
 na jihvadhātu na rasadhātu

na jihvavijñādhātuh
 na kāyadhātur na spraṣṭavyadhātur
 na kāyavijñādhātur
 na manodhātur na dharmadhātur
 na manovijñāna[dhā]tuḥr [sic]
 na tatṛavidyā nāvidyānirodhaḥ
 na saṃskārān na saṃskāranirodhaḥ
 na vijñānaṃ na vijñānanirodhaḥ
 na nāmarūpaṃ na nāmarūpanirodhaḥ
 na satvāyatanam na
 satvāyatananirodhaḥ
 na sparśo (na) sparśananirodhaḥ
 na vedanā na vedanānirodhaḥ
 na tṛṣṇā na tṛṣṇānirodhaḥ
 nopādānaṃ nopādānanirodhaḥ
 na bhavo na bhavanirodhaḥ
 na jāti(r n)a jātinirodhaḥ
 na jarāmaraṇam
 na jarāmaraṇanirodhaḥ
 na duḥkhaṃ na samudayo na nirodho
 na mārgaḥ
 na prāpti nābhisamayah

na jihvavijñādhātuh
 na kāyadhātur na spraṣṭavyadhātur
 na kāyavijñādhātuh
 na manodhātur na dharmadhātur
 na manovijñādhātuh
 nāvidyotpādo nāvidyānirodhaḥ
 na saṃskārotpādo na saṃskāranirodha
 na vijñānotpādo na vijñānanirodha
 na nāmarūpotpādo na nāmarūpanirodha
 na ṣaḍāyatanotpādo na
 ṣaḍāyatananirodha
 na sparśotpādo na sparśanirodha
 na vedanotpādo na vedanānirodha
 na tṛṣṇotpādo na tṛṣṇānirodha
 nopādānotpādo nopādānanirodha
 na bhavotpādo na bhavanirodha
 na jātyutpādo na jātinirodha
 na jarāmaraṇaśokaparidevaduḥkhadaur-
 manasyopāyāśotpādo
 na jarāmaraṇaśokaparidevaduḥkhadaur-
 manasyopāyāśanirodhaḥ
 na duḥkha na samudayo na nirodho
 na mārgo
 na prāptir na abhisamayo