On Multilingual Spread of PrajnaParamita Heart Sutra

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Abstract: This paper aims to provide an overall explanation of the translations of Sanskrit PrajnaParamita Heart Sutra into Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian languages and spread among the corresponding nationalities and its significant role in cultural exchanges.

1. Foreword

The Buddhist literature PrajnaParamita Heart Sutra (abbreviated as Heart Sutra in the following text) is of cardinal significance in Mahayana Sutras and widely spread by Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian languages.

2. Explanation and translation of the names of the Heart Sutra

The names of the Buddhist Sutras normally include functions, contents and meanings etc. and the studies on the names are essential. Prajñāparamitā Hṛdayasūtra (meaning heart sutra) is a Buddhist scripture, one of the three most valuable scriptures in Mahayana Buddhism. According to the East Asian tradition, this sutra was either chanted and spread in the vulture shore or passed through the edge of the mortal life and peace. Thus Prajñā is made up of the prefix pra (meaning before) and the stem jna (meaning cognition) and is normally translated as bilig in Mongolian. In ancient Greece, prognosis means knowledge of future and among the Buddhist in ancient India Prajñā means to be the state of ignorance.

2.1 The meanings of the name of the sutra

The Sanskrit name of the sutra is Prajñāparamita Hṛdayasūtra, of which we could analyze as the following:

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(2) Parama in parama-paramita means highest, and paramita is the variation of parama[1]. Another says that the Chinese character (para) in the last incantation of the Heart sutra means the opposite or to the other shore. In other words, paramita is made up of param and ita two parts, of which the m in param is the suffix that indicates where to and i in ita is the stem (meaning go) and ta in ita is referred to the past perfect tense of i. Thus the bilig baramid can be comprehended as releasing souls from purgatory or supreme and is translated as to go to the other shore in various versions of Chinese translation.

Sutra is Sanskrit and is translated as Confucian classics[2] in Chinese and also transliterated as Sutra. The stem of sutra is regarded as the variation of siv (meaning to sew and mend), which shares the same origin with the word suture in English[3]. According to other experts, the origin of sutra is the variation of another Sanskrit word sukta (meaning proverb or recorded utterance of sage). Whatever the origin is, Brahmanism, Jaina and Buddhism all name their scriptures as sutra.

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peak mountain in the Biography of Shakyamuni. In Buddhism, *bilig baramid*, which can cut off all stupid and foolish acts and worries, is the core of Buddhism and attaining Buddhahood is actually means “attaining the *belge bilig* finally, which is the utmost and clear away the foolish mind and understanding the intrinsic quality of all scriptures.” In the *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* it says all those acts like combing with the heretical, indulgence, drowsiness, passiveness to the circumstances, contempt to the Great, smattering, being extreme, being depressed easily, teasing oneself, being aloof of the sage are due to the foolishness thus the *bilig baramid* is for cutting them off.

*bilig* is a concept in Buddhist Philosophy, or more precisely, in the ontology of Mahayana Buddhism, with which that the surroundings are observed from the view of emptiness. *Bilig* in Buddhism is a summary of all wisdom and be classified into two kinds as of the mortal life and the afterlife. It says: we can’t understand the true meaning of sutra even if we are with them for life without *bilig*.

*baramid*, meaning the path to the other shore, to separate from misery, the utmost, to the end, is the transliteration of Sanskrit word *Paramita*. It says in the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* that everything dues to the preordained fate, is the result of cause and effect and is only recognized by *bilig* and that *bilig* is the intelligence and weapon to find the true nature of things and affairs. The concept of *Going to the other shore* in Buddhism is to separate from misery.

*To the other shore* is one of the core theories of Mahayana and is the six practising ways of going to the world of nirvana, which is the ultimate requirement of Buddhism. Besides this it indicates the path to *belge bilig* of Buddha. *Belge Bilig* of Buddha is the capability of learning, one kind of indication or an instinct.

*jirüken* means the heart of something, to core or utmost importance. In the *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Sir Monier Williams* it is explained: “This sutra is named of heart, which is because the word sutra contains two meanings, one is “immortal” and the other is “path”.” The heretical can’t be destroyed due to the “immortal” and all beings percept and mend their ways.

### 2.2. The survey of the translations of the Sutra

In Chinese history, we have at least more than 10 Chinese translated version of the Heart Sutra until Song dynasty, of which well-preserved 8 versions until today as the following:

1. The version of Kumaraiva (402-413 A.D.), in North Qin.
3. The version of Yi Jing (695-713 A.D.).
4. The version of Fa Yuechu (738 A.D.), in Tang dynasty.
5. The version of Fa Yuechung (738 A.D.), in Tang dynasty.
6. The version of Baraguliyan (790 A.D.), in Tang dynasty.
8. The version of Danapala (980-1000 A.D.), in Song dynasty.

Among the above versions of translation, the most welcome one is considered to be the Xuan Zang version. The sutra is short and brief, of 260 words. It is elegant and easy for recitation and is often seen in our everyday lives, like on tea cups, towels, pens and other stationeries. Zi Bai explained: “This sutra is named of heart, which is because among the four limbs, bones and viscera of human body, heart is the most important one”. Likewise, though the pages are few, it is the narrow of the 600 volumes of Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra.

There are two kinds of Tibetan translations of the sutra in general as the following:

1. There are distinguished two different versions of Derge version in the Tibetan Tripitaka. One is the translation by Vimalamitra, the name of the sutra is *Buddha Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. The other version is anonymous, the name of the sutra is *Buddha said San mother HeartSutra*.

2. Among the Tibetan scriptures of Dunhuang, there is a Tibetan version of translation. The name of the sutra is *San Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. There are more than 20 manuscripts in Kangyur of Dunhuang and the contents are similar.

In the General Catalogue of Mongolian Scriptures in China, there are 17 kinds of Mongolian Heart sutra, besides the folk preserved versions around the world. Among them, there are four versions of Mongolian translations as the following:

3. Latin transliteration of the Heart Sutra

The Latin transliteration of the sutra is for the convenience of reading and understanding. (the transliterating is of the version which has been preserved in the library of Marburg of Germany <Photographed in Inner Mongolian university library in June, 1988>. The a and b stand for the front and back page and the Arabic numerals mark the lines.

_Qabitsu_

**bilib aaramid sudur orosiba**

1a. 1 –3 namo buddha-ya namo dharma-ya nam-a sanggha-ya

4 –6 Enedkeg-ün keleber Bhgavadi praśa-ā-baramida heri-da-ya

7 –9 Töbed-ün keleber Bcöm idan ’das ma šisreb gî paröldu

2a. 1 –3 piyebegei sningpûn Mongol-un keleber ilaju tegüs nöögösgen

4 –6 eke bilig baramid-un yool jirüken ilaju tegüs nöögösgen eke

7 –9 brady-ā baramid-tur mörgüümü eyin kemen minu somusuyan nigen

2b. 1 –3 čay-tur ilaju tegüs nöögösgen burqan Ranjagriq-a balayasa-un

4 –6 kenderigüd ayula-dur ayay-q-a taikîlîn-un yekes qavaray-ud kíged

7 –9 bodisadv-a-nar-un yekes qavaray-ud-ay-a nigen-e qamtu sayun bûlûge

3a. 1 –3 tere čay-tur ilaju tegüs nöögösgen burqan gün

narin-i üyên-i

4 –6 nom-un jüli kemegeđek diyan-dur tegsi orol-daju abai basa kä tere

7 –9 čay-tur bodisadv-a-maqasadv-a Ary-a Avalogida isvari bilig

3b. 1 –3 baramid-un gün narin yabadal-i büged üyên-i üdeger tabun čoýchas-i-ber


4. The characteristics of the writing

According to the speech sounds and morphological features of the sūtra of the above Latin transliteration, in the written Mongolian language of the pre-classical period, there is only one “-tur” (闻) in the dative locative (“to whom?”、“where?”). In the Mongolian translation of The Book of Filial Piety of the late 13th century and the early 14th century and in the other Uyghur-Type Mongolian literature, there is only one “-tur” (闻) in the dative locative (“to whom?”、“where?”).

(1) In the classical period, the dative locative “-dur” and “-tur” were written distinctively, however, they were written distinctively in the heart sutra, like ayulan-dur, čag-tur etc. In the process of printing or copying, there occur different usages of suffixes in the individual words or sentences. Thus there exist more errors or differences in the variation version than the original version sometimes. The consonant “n” (na), “y” (ya) was written with or without dot during the classical period. According to N.N.Poppe, the consonant “n” (na) was written without dot in the ancient written Mongolian[18]. And for Kara Gyorgy and R.John Krueger’s The Written Mongolian of Classical Period, the dot used to be ignored in “n” (na) and “y” (ga)[19].

(2) In this version of heart sutra the consonant “n” (na) is without dot and so is the consonant “y” (ga). For example, balyasan, nom, nöögčigen, nasun-a, qoγusun etc.

(3) Likewise, the consonant “j”(ja) and “y”(ya) were written in the same form as “ja”. In between words and the endings, the “j”(ja) was written the same as “č”(ča). For example in “yabusuyai”, “yeke”, “ijayur” etc.

(4) In the sutra the “a” in endings were written in two forms. One is “ča” and the other one is “č”. For example, “-ud”, “kiged”, “tabun” etc.

In conclusion, Heart Sutra, as one of the most important scriptures of Buddhism, has played an important role in cross-cultural activities, especially by spreading at home and abroad by being translated into various languages. This doom to be the basis for further literature research and answering why it spread over areas of Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolians.

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