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# PRAJNAPARAMITA HEART SUTRA



般若波羅蜜多心經

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刹時窠羅一行般

子多照見薩度皆

三藐三羅多轉苦五蘊空



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觀薩想若故故窠

波羅蜜多諦揭

無能除故切苦遠

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智亦集

故老無

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# PRAJNAPARAMITA HEART SUTRA

— Translated from the Chinese Version of Xuanzang —



*English Translators*

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Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra: Translated from the Chinese Version of Xuanzang

Venerable Yifa, Michael Charles Owens, Peter Matthew Romaskiewicz

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Frontispiece: Illustration of a five tier pagoda composed of the characters from the *Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. It is based on a series of manuscripts discovered in the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas near Dunhuang, China. The title forms the spire of the pagoda and the sutra begins (and ends) just below the Buddha in the center.

Cover design: P. M. Romaskiewicz.

Frontispiece Illustration © P. M. Romaskiewicz.

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般若波羅蜜多心經

唐三藏法師玄奘譯

# PRAJNAPARAMITA HEART SUTRA



Translated by the Tang Tripitaka Master Xuanzang



般若波羅蜜多心經

觀自在菩薩。行深般若波羅蜜多時。照見五蘊皆空。度一切苦厄。舍利子。色不異空。空不異色。色即是空。空即是色。受想行識。亦復如是。舍利子。是諸法空相。不生不滅。不垢不淨。不增不減。是故空中無色。無受想行識。無眼耳鼻舌身意。無色聲香味觸法。無眼界。乃至無意識界。無無明。亦無無明盡。乃至無老死。亦無老死盡。無苦集滅道。無智亦無得。



## PRAJNAPARAMITA HEART SUTRA



The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, while practicing the profound *prajnaparamita*, clearly saw that all five *skandhas* are empty, thus overcoming all suffering.

Sariputra,

form is no different from empty,

empty no different from form,

form is just empty,

empty just form,

sensation, perception, volition and consciousness are also like this.

Sariputra, this is the emptiness of all *dharmas*:

they neither arise nor cease,

are neither defiled nor pure,

neither increase nor decrease.

For this reason within emptiness there is no form, no sensation, perception, volition or consciousness;

no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind;

no sight, sound, scent, taste, touch or thought;

no seeing, ... even no thinking;

no ignorance nor end of ignorance, ... even

no aging and death, nor end of aging and death;

no suffering, origin, cessation or path;

no wisdom and no attainment.

以無所得故。菩提薩埵。依般若波羅蜜多故。心無罣礙。無罣礙故。無有恐怖。遠離顛倒夢想。究竟涅槃。三世諸佛。依般若波羅蜜多故。得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。故知般若波羅蜜多是。大神呪。是大明呪。是無上呪。是無等等呪。能除一切苦。真實不虛。故說般若波羅蜜多呪。即說呪曰。揭諦揭諦。波羅揭諦。波羅僧揭諦。菩提薩婆訶。

Because nothing is attained,  
bodhisattvas maintain *prajnaparamita*,  
then their heart is without hindrance,  
and since without hindrance, without fear;  
escaping upside-down, dream-like thinking,  
and completely realizing *nirvana*.  
All buddhas of all times maintain *prajnaparamita*,  
thus attaining *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.  
Hence know, *prajnaparamita* is  
the all-powerful mantra,  
the great enlightening mantra,  
the unexcelled mantra,  
the unequaled mantra,  
able to dispel all suffering.  
This is true, not false.  
Therefore proclaim the *prajnaparamita* mantra.  
Recite the mantra thus:  
*Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha!*





# SUTRA INTRODUCTION



## THE PRAJNAPARAMITA HEART SUTRA

It is a great honor to introduce the first translation in our series of bilingual sutra publications. To inaugurate our **new standardized canon** of Chinese Buddhist sutras in English, we are proud to present a translation of the *prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. The translation is based on a series of scrolls discovered in the caves at Dunhuang (敦煌), where the characters of the sutra are arranged and connected to form the shape of a pagoda.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese is the version of the Tang Dynasty monk Xuanzang (玄奘 602~664 CE) and matches the text found in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, the standard Buddhist canon compiled in Japan.<sup>2</sup> These unique

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<sup>1</sup> 佛說般若波羅蜜多心經 . Four versions of the *Heart Sutra Pagoda* are known from Dunhuang; Stein Mss. 4289 and 5410 (reproduced in Huang Yongwu, ed., *Dunhuang baozang*, 35:187, 42:410), both are held by the British Library, London. And Pelliot Mss. 2168 and 2731 (reproduced in *ibid.*, 123:515b-16a) both held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviated as *T*, ed. Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaigyōku, and Ono Gemmyō, 100 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924~1935). See *T* no. 251, 8:848a-c.

images date from approximately the 9<sup>th</sup> century. However, the official issuing year for Xuanzang's version of the *Heart Sutra* is 649 CE, the same year he translated eleven other texts from Sanskrit upon returning from his 16-year pilgrimage to India.<sup>3</sup>

The *Heart Sutra* is unlike any other sutra in the Buddhist canon. It is by far the most popular sutra read today and contains some of the Buddha's most profound teachings. The English word 'heart' actually comes from the Sanskrit *hrdaya*, and, as it is used in the title, has many of the same connotations as both the Chinese and Sanskrit, which indicate that it is the essence, or fundament of a topic (as in the phrase "the heart of the matter"). For Buddhists, the *Heart Sutra* presents the essence of the Buddha's teachings on *prajna*, the highest form of wisdom attained by enlightened beings, and the means to its perfection (*paramita*). As such, it is praised for its precision and brevity in handling such a profound topic.

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<sup>3</sup> In total, Xuanzang returned from India with 657 texts, of which he himself translated over seventy-three works in more than one thousand scrolls. He is considered one of the greatest translators of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese, and over the course of his life he produced more translations than any other translator.

As a sutra, the version attributed to Xuanzang is uncommon in that it does not have the traditional “Thus have I heard...” introduction like all other sutras, and the Buddha himself is conspicuously missing from the text. Rather, we are first introduced to the **Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara**, who delivers the discourse in his stead. Avalokitesvara has been revered in East Asia as a savior deity since the first centuries of the Common Era, and remains the most popular bodhisattva in the Buddhist pantheon. Often depicted with a thousand arms and eleven heads, Avalokitesvara, or Guanyin (觀音) as she is known in China, is capable of manifesting herself in a variety of forms depending on the need. Xuanzang is said to have encountered the Bodhisattva in the desert as he lay dying of thirst and chanting the *Heart Sutra*. She led him and his horse to an oasis of water, and Xuanzang remained devoted to her throughout his life.

The other character that appears in the text is Shariputra, one of the first and wisest of the Buddha’s disciples, considered the foremost expert in *abhidharma*, the Buddhist teaching about the constituent elements of reality. According to the earliest schools of Buddhist thinking, all

phenomena, both mental and physical, can be broken down into fundamental principles, or particles, called *dharmas*. In his first discourse to five ascetics in Deer Park at Sarnath, the Buddha revealed the most basic understanding necessary for the cessation of suffering, that the sentient subject is not one single entity, and has no essential Self or Soul, but is actually the momentary coalescence of five *dharmas* called *skandhas*. The five *skandhas* are form (or matter), sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness, and it is the misunderstanding of their coming together and falling apart that leads to our suffering. This revelation of impermanence set into motion the turning of the Wheel of the Law, as it is called in Buddhist tradition, and represents the beginning of the Buddha's forty-five years of teaching.

The *Heart Sutra*, however, comes to us from a later time in the history of Buddhism, and presents a radically different understanding of the nature of phenomena and *dharmas*. As a *prajnaparamita* text, the *Heart Sutra* elucidates the fundamental doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism, that all phenomena are empty of any independent,



substantial or eternal existence. In other words, for the later schools of the Mahayana tradition, not only is the Self devoid of any real, objective existence, so are the very *dharmas* that combine to create the illusion of a Self. Or, as Avalokitesvara realizes in the Sutra, all five *skandhas* are empty, and it's through this realization of emptiness, rather than impermanence, that the Bodhisattva overcomes all suffering.

The doctrine of emptiness, called *sunyata*, is the ultimate conclusion of the Buddha's teaching that all things depend upon causes and conditions to arise and, therefore, lack any intrinsic nature. A Buddhist monk from the south of India named Nagarjuna (龍樹 c. 150 BCE~150 CE) is credited with having founded an entire school of Buddhist thought based on the Mahayana doctrine of emptiness, called the Madhyamika. Nagarjuna is considered the greatest expositor of Buddhist thinking after the Buddha himself, and his school of thought is considered the second turning of the Wheel of the Law. Nagarjuna constantly warns

against the reification of *sunyata* as the underlying substratum or essential nature of reality. Hence, there is a danger in translating the most famous line of the *Heart Sutra*, which equates the first *skandha* (form) with *sunyata*, because there is the potential of construing emptiness as an object that simply replaces matter as the substance of the world. Rather, *sunyata* should be understood as a principle that explains the manifestation of all phenomena by revealing that the underlying nature of all things is empty, and that the perception of independent, self-existing objects is an illusion. As the *Heart Sutra* makes clear, this is true of all *dharmas*, all things, ideas and concepts, including the Buddha's most fundamental teachings about the nature of suffering. Therefore, in reality, there is no coming together or falling apart, nothing to be labeled pure or impure, nothing to be or not to be.

Once this most profound doctrine of emptiness has been set forth, Avalokitesvara continues to apply this negation to all the basic components of the *abhidharma* thinking that Shariputra

represents in the text, including the eighteen bases of perceptual activity, the twelve links in the chain of causation, and the Four Noble Truths. The Bodhisattva explains that even *prajna*, the very wisdom that arises through this penetratingly deep understanding of emptiness, is also empty, and that ultimately nothing is attained in the practice of *prajnaparamita* because there is nothing to attain and no one to attain it. This paradox of non-attainment is at the very heart of the *prajnaparamita* literature and is nowhere more clearly presented than in the *Heart Sutra*.

The *prajnaparamita Sutras* are a genre of Buddhist literature that began to appear predominantly in the northern regions of the Indus Valley between 100 BCE and 100 CE. Although produced considerably late in the history of Buddhism, these sutras present themselves as records of the teachings of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gotama. According to Chinese tradition, the Buddha spent 22 years discoursing on *prajna* during his lifetime. Edward Conze, the foremost Western scholar of

*prajna* sutras, lists forty different extant sutras dealing with *prajna* in his extensive bibliography of *prajnaparamita* literature.<sup>4</sup> In Sanskrit these sutras are typically measured by their number of *slokas*, lines of verse in 32 syllables. The largest extant *prajna* sutra is in 100,000 lines, with other versions ranging in length from 25,000 lines to one of the smallest in 14 lines, which is also known as the *Heart Sutra*. Yet, despite having such a large body of information, the exact origin of this sutra is shrouded in a veil of mystery.

The popularization of *prajnaparamita* sutras is usually traced back to the activities of the founder of the Madhyamika school, Nagarjuna. Legend has it that Nagarjuna was lecturing at the famous monastery at Nalanda when he caught sight of two shape-shifting serpents, known as *nagas*, in human form attending his class. Afterwards he followed them down to an underwater kingdom where he encountered the seven-headed Naga King

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<sup>4</sup> See Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (New Delhi; Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000) .

named Muchilinda. Muchilinda had once protected the Buddha for seven days with his massive hood during a hailstorm, for which the Buddha bestowed him with special teachings. It was from the Naga King that Nagarjuna first heard the *Great prajnaparamita Sutra*, which supposedly consisted of one million lines of metered verse. When he returned to the world of men, Nagarjuna began making known the wisdom he had obtained by teaching and writing about *prajna* and its related systems. The Buddhist tradition holds that over time the essence of the *prajnaparamita Sutra* was distilled into more and more condensed versions, until it finally reached its most succinct form as the *Heart Sutra*. However, this story does not entirely agree with what we know from historical records. There are essentially two versions of the *Heart Sutra*, a longer and a shorter, which have both appeared in a variety of different languages throughout the centuries, including: Sanskrit, Tibetan, Sogdian, Mongolian, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese. The shorter version appears to be the oldest, judging by both Sanskrit

and Chinese sources, and lacks the traditional introduction of a Buddhist sutra with the six characteristic marks: Faith in the accuracy of the text (*ru shi* 如是), a rapporteur (*wo wen* 我聞), the time (*yi shi* 一時), the Buddha (*fo* 佛), the place (*zai* 在), and the assembly (*zhong* 眾). The longer versions have these elements appended to the front, yet none appear prior the production of Xuanzang's, which is by far the shortest rendition, consisting of only 268 Chinese Characters.

In total there are eight extant translations of the *Heart Sutra* in the standard Chinese Buddhist canon, as well as five versions that are known to be lost. The earliest record of what might be the *Heart Sutra* comes from the oldest surviving catalogue of Chinese Buddhist Sutras compiled by Sengyou (僧祐 445~518 CE) around 515 CE, which contains information from the very first catalogue made by Dao'an (道安 312~385 CE) in 374, which is now lost. According to these catalogues, there was a translation made sometime during the mid-third century by a Central Asian monk named Zhi Qian

(支謙190~250 CE) of a text Sengyou's catalogue calls the *Mahaprajnaparamita Spirit Spell* (摩訶般若波羅蜜神呪). This title appears to be anachronistic to the time and is remarkably close to a later version of the text that also refers to it as a mantra, or spell, rather than a sutra (*see below*). Zhi Qian's translation, however, has been lost since the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, and without it, it is difficult to say with certainty that it was a version of the *Heart Sutra*.

The oldest surviving version of the *Heart Sutra* is a Chinese translation attributed to the Kuchean monk Kumarajiva (鳩摩羅什 344~413 CE), dated to approximately 401 CE, the same year he entered the capital city of China at Chang'an. This version has been grouped among the works of Kumarajiva only since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when a catalogue listed him as its translator, yet there are doubts concerning its authorship.<sup>5</sup> Upon close

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<sup>5</sup> 摩訶般若波羅蜜大明呪, *T* no. 250. For the catalogue listing Kumarajiva as the translator see *T* no. 2154, 開元釋教錄.

examination the Chinese text appears to have been pieced together from sections of Kumarajiva's translation of the larger *Prajnaparamita Sutra* in 25,000 lines, rather than the traditional account that it was translated from Sanskrit, and today there is scholarly debate over the original language of the *Heart Sutra* and its country of origin.<sup>6</sup>

The version done by Xuanzang is almost identical to Kumarajiva's, and appears to be a more refined version of his rather than a new translation. According to Xuanzang's biography, he received a version of the *Heart Sutra* (perhaps Kumarajiva's) from a beggar he had helped in Sizhuan prior to his journey to the West, and used it as a talismanic chant during his treacherous crossing of the Gobi desert. After he returned to China, Xuanzang issued his own version of the sutra with several important changes, the most significant being the title. The Kumarajiva version is called the

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<sup>6</sup> See Jan Nattier, "The *Heart Sūtra*: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15, no. 2 (1992): 153-223.



*Mahaprajnaparamita Great Enlightening Spell*, which indicates that it should be read as a mantra, or chant, rather than as a sutra. This would explain why the shorter version of the text is missing the six aforementioned elements of a sutra, because it may not have been intended to be read as one. Xuanzang's version, however, is the first to be called a sutra and, as such, raises interesting questions regarding its nature.

Every version of the *Heart Sutra* concludes with a mantra, a sacred incantation used in the practice of meditation and the performance of ritual. Another word used for this type of formulae is a *dharani*, which is similar to a mantra but considered to have more protective or magical properties. A *dharani* can also be thought of as a mystical mnemonic device, containing vast amounts of Buddhist knowledge in highly condensed phrases. Thus, in the same way that the essence of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* retrieved by Nagarjuna from the *nagas* was condensed into smaller and smaller versions until it finally reached the size of

the *Heart Sutra*, the meaning and the essence of the *Heart Sutra* itself is believed to be held in the phrase: *Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha*.





## TRANSLATION CATALOGUE



The following is a fairly comprehensive list of books and journals that contain versions of the *Heart Sutra* in Chinese or in English translation.

### CHINESE VERSIONS

- Taishō* no. 250. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Great Enlightening Spell Sūtra* 摩訶般若波羅蜜大明呪經. Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什, ca. CE 400.
- T* no. 251. *Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra* 般若波羅蜜多心經. Xuanzang 玄奘, CE 649.
- T* no. 252. *The Storehouse of Omniscience Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra* 普遍智藏般若波羅蜜多心經. Dharmacandra 法月, CE 741.
- T* no. 253. *Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra* 般若波羅蜜多心經. Prajñā 般若, CE 790.
- T* no. 254 *Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra* 般若波羅蜜多心經. Prajñācakra 智慧輪, CE 861.

T no. 255. *Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra* 般若波羅蜜多心經. Facheng 法成, CE 856.

T no. 256. *Sanskrit Original Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra* 梵本般若波羅蜜多心經. Attributed to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Xuanzang.

T no. 257. *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Holy Mother of Buddhas Prajñāpāramitā* 佛說聖佛母般若波羅蜜多經. Dānapāla 施護, ca. CE 1005.

## ENGLISH VERSIONS

### *Translations from Chinese:*

Fox, Douglas A. *Heart of Buddhist Wisdom: A Translation of the Heart Sutra With Historical Introduction and Commentary*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985.

Hsüan Hua. *The Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra, With Verses Without a Stand and Prose Commentary*. San Francisco: The Buddhist Text Translation Society, 1980.

Hurvitz, Leon. "Hsüan-tsang (602-664) and the *Heart Scripture*." in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related*

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## GLOSSARY



The entries in this glossary fall under two categories: 1) foreign terms and technical concepts that appear in the body of the text and 2) generalized topics that are inferred in the text and which have thematic importance to the reading of the sutra.

All entries that are covered by the first category are parenthetically followed by their commonly romanized Sanskrit form, with diacritical marks if necessary, and by the appropriate Chinese character(s) as they are exactly found in the text. The Sanskrit term provided is the most typical equivalent of the Chinese word found in the text.

Since entries covered by the second category are topical and are not discussed in the text directly, the Sanskrit and Chinese equivalents are not included.

When possible we have also provided other common translations of terms at the end of some entries.



**anuttara-samyak-sambodhi** (*anuttarā-samyak-sambodhi* 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提): A term that refers to the complete enlightenment of a buddha. It is considered to be the greatest class of awakening and is characterized by the possession of omniscience and the ten powers. Other translations: “supreme correct enlightenment” or “unexcelled perfect enlightenment”.

**Avalokitesvara** (Avalokiteśvara 觀自在): An extremely popular bodhisattva famed for the practice of compassion who is often called upon for assistance in times of danger or despair. In Sanskrit Avalokitesvara literally means “The Lord Who Looks Down”, implying the role of a compassionate caretaker who looks after those in need. In China this bodhisattva is known as Guanyin 觀音 (“Perceiver of Sounds”) or Guanshiyin 觀世音 (“Observer of the World’s Cries”). Originally Avalokitesvara was depicted as male, but has taken on a female form in East Asian iconography.

**bodhisattva** (*bodhisattva* 菩薩; 菩提薩陲): A title given to a being who compassionately vows to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and help free them from the cycle of rebirth. Originally this term was exclusively used to describe the Buddha in his previous lives before his enlightenment, but in the Mahayana tradition this term denotes anyone who aspires to attain buddhahood.

The term “bodhisattva” is traditionally glossed as meaning “enlightenment being”.

**buddha** (*buddha* 佛): A title meaning “Awakened One” used for a being who has perceived the true nature of all phenomena, has overcome all suffering, and who compassionately teaches these insights to others. It is one of the ten titles of a fully enlightened being. When capitalized and preceded by definite article “the” the term refers to the historical figure Siddhartha Gautama, and when it is pluralized or not capitalized or it refers to anyone in the general class of fully enlightened beings.

**dharma** (*dharma* 法): 1. A constituent element of the phenomenal world. Dharmas comprise both the physical world as well as the internal psychological processes of a subject. Other translations: “phenomena” or “thing”. 2. A thought or idea, the sensory object of mental perception. Other translations: “mind-object”. 3. The Dharma refers to the body of Buddhist teachings. Other translations: “Truth” or “Law”.

**eighteen dhatus**: The eighteen bases (*dhātu* 界) of perceptual activity which include the six sense faculties (eye 眼, ear 耳, nose 鼻, tongue 舌, body 身, and mind 意), the six sensory objects (sight 色, sound 聲, scent 香, taste 味, touch 觸, and thought 法), and the

six perceptual awarenesses that arise from the contact between the sense faculty and its corresponding sensory object (e.g., visual 眼界 and mental awareness 意識界).

**emptiness** (*śūnyatā* 空): A central tenet in Mahayana philosophy which claims that all phenomena are empty of independent, substantial or eternal existence. The doctrine of emptiness is not to be equated with nihilism nor is it to be reified as an underlying substratum of all things. Other translations: “voidness”.

**empty** (*śūnya* 空): See **emptiness**.

**five skandhas** (*pañca-skandha* 五蘊): The five constituent elements that combine to form a sentient subject. The Buddhist analysis of sentient existence thereby refutes the notion of an eternally present Self or soul. The five *skandhas* are: form 色, sensation 受, perception 想, volition 行 and consciousness 識. Other translations: “five aggregates”, “five bundles”, or “five heaps”.

**Four Noble Truths**: One of the foundational tenets of Buddhism taught by the Buddha in his first sermon which describes **the nature of suffering and the method for its eradication**. The Four Noble Truths are: suffering 苦, its origin 集, its cessation 滅, and the Eightfold Path 道.

**gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha** (*gate gate pāragate pārasamgate bodhi svāhā* 揭帝揭帝般羅揭帝般羅僧揭帝菩提僧莎訶): The mantra found at the end of the Heart Sutra. The efficacy of mantras is understood to be in their phonetic quality and generally have no English equivalent. However, Edward Conze has translated this mantra as “gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, o what an awakening, all hail!”

**mantra** (*mantra* 咒): A sacred incantation used in the practice of meditation and the performance of ritual. Mantras are thought to be imbued with the power to produce specific effects and range from a single syllable to a lengthy series of words. The continuous recitation of mantras is generally accompanied by other practices such as visualization techniques and the positioning of the body into particular postures.

**nirvana** (*nirvāṇa* 涅槃): The Buddhist goal of liberation from the cycle of rebirth and the cessation of all suffering caused by the extinction of greed, hatred and delusion. Nirvana literally means “blown out”.

**prajnaparamita** (*prajñāpāramitā* 般若波羅蜜多): The practice of the highest form of Buddhist wisdom that is fully actualized by bodhisattvas. This wisdom (*prajna*) denotes the specific insight into phenomenal

reality that results in the direct realization of emptiness. It is one of the six perfections (*paramita*) that comprise the Mahayana Bodhisattva path. Other translations: “perfection of wisdom”, “perfection of insight”, or “transcendental wisdom”.

**Sariputra** (Śāriputra 舍利子): The chief disciple of the Buddha who was considered foremost in wisdom. He entered the Buddha’s monastic order with his lifelong friend Maudgalyayana, and both are commonly represented in artworks as flanking the sides of the Buddha. Sariputra is regarded one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha.

**skandha** (*skandha* 蘊): See **five skandhas**.

**sutra** (*sūtra* 經): Scripture which traditionally preserves the discourses of the Buddha. The earliest preservation of the dialogues of the Buddha were done orally, and it is commonly held that his teachings were not committed to writing until the first century BCE. With the advent of Mahayana Buddhism new sutras were circulated in Northern India and Central Asia.

**twelve links:** The twelve causally connected factors that condition each other and delineate why sentient beings are continuously reborn life after life. The twelve links

are: ignorance 無明, volition, consciousness, name and form, six sense bases, contact, sensation, craving, clinging, becoming, birth, and aging and death 老死.





## Editorial Message



With the growing popularity of Buddhism around the world, access to its doctrine through reliable translations of its scriptures is of utmost importance. Therefore, we have set as our pinnacle goal the production of a new standardized canon of Buddhist sutras in English. As scholars, teachers and students of Buddhism, we recognize that the most valuable resources for Buddhist texts are the exhaustive editions of the Chinese Buddhist canon, yet of the hundreds of sutras in Chinese, only a fraction have been reliably translated into the English language. We are aware of the efforts of other translation committees and translators involved in the effort to produce English translations of Buddhist texts. However, we feel our endeavor is unique in several important ways.

First, our focus is the production of not just one, but a complete series of translations of specifically Chinese Buddhist sutras using a consistent vocabulary for technical terms and foreign concepts. Throughout all our translations we will employ a standardized lexicon and methodology for translation, so that a term will be translated, or transliterated, in the same manner in every volume in this series. In this way, we hope to aid the reader in comprehending the complexities of Buddhist

doctrine, which often call upon a diverse array of technical jargon and conceptual constructs.

Next, we are committed to producing bilingual editions of each sutra with tools for studying the original Chinese text. By providing facing bilingual pages, we hope to encourage those students who are learning Chinese to compare our English translation with the original source text, thereby deepening their understanding of the translation process and of the content of the sutra. Our editions will also include a brief history of the particular sutra, an exhaustive glossary of foreign words and ideas, and a translation catalogue of other Chinese and English translations of the same text.

Finally, our method of translation provides a literal, yet fluid rendition of the Chinese text that tries to capture the experience of reading sutras in Chinese, while remaining as faithful as possible to the original text. By attempting to make the translation process more transparent, we aim to uncover the subtleties of the text that are easily lost when rendering a sutra from one language into another. Our translation board consists of a variety of experts on Buddhism from different areas and fields, and all our translations go through a series of revisions and renditions before final printing to ensure their accuracy.



We inaugurate our series with translations of the *Heart Sutra* and *Diamond Sutra*, unquestionably two of the most popular sutras in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. By establishing our formula mentioned above with these two sutras, we intend to move on to more obscure sutras that, for one reason or another, have been overlooked by previous translators.

Through the publication of these translations, we hope to allow a greater accessibility to Buddhist sutras, and circulate them to a much wider audience. We hope to appeal not only to the uninitiated novice, but also to the more accomplished student of Buddhist thought.





## ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS



**Venerable Yifa** has been a nun at Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Taiwan since 1979. She received a law degree from National Taiwan University, a M.A. in comparative philosophy from the University of Hawaii, and her Ph.D. in religious studies from Yale University in 1996. She was named one of “The Ten Outstanding Young Persons” in Taiwan in 1997, and was the recipient of the “Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award” in 2003 and the “Juliet Holister Award” in 2006. She was the Dean at Fo Guang Shan Buddhist College and the Provost at Hsi Lai University, Rosemead, California, as well as a visiting scholar at the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard University, a lecturer at Boston University, and a faculty member at National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan. She taught at McGill University as the Numata visiting professor in the spring of 2005 and currently serves as the chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of the West in Los Angeles.

She is the author of *The Origin of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, by Hawaii University Press, and *Safeguarding the Heart: a Buddhist Response to Suffering and September 11*, by Lantern Books, NY. She is the co-author of *Benedict's Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of Saint Benedict*, by Riverhead, NY.

**Michael Charles Owens** received his B.A. in Religion from Hunter College and his M.A. in Religion from the University of Hawaii. In Fall 2001, he was accepted into Princeton University to pursue his Ph.D. in Buddhism.

**Peter Matthew Romaskiewicz** was born and raised in a small town near the Atlantic coastline of New Jersey. While attending Rutgers University he was captivated by the study of philosophy and world religions and was ultimately attracted to the richness of Buddhism and Chinese culture. He embarked on his study of literary Chinese at Columbia University in New York City, where he received his M.A. in Chinese Buddhism in 2005. His interests range from Buddhist ethics and linguistic philosophy and extend into art history and graphic design.

## 助印功德芳名

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謝宜儒	謝沛成	小坂陳美	小坂浩之
小坂展生	小坂展慶	高橋正幸	高橋泰仁
高橋裕明	齊木清稔	尾田俊彥	宮下桂香
司徒敏堂	司徒正彬	司徒靜儒	榆井春菊
黃迦僂	李金玉	黃祥洲	李友成
黃美珠	褚芸烈	王張罔	王朝清
王秀純	王秀如	王興隆	曹嚴之
羅鳳蘭	游東隆	黃鈴惠	陳繼東
呂小燕	陳善也	釋心悌	釋心今
釋心瑞	釋心屬	釋妙澤	釋覺應
黃麗華	潘啟順	潘郭于	李翊綸
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陳世軒	陳芷薇	洪逸杰	王之豪
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(至2006年8月15日止)

