

# Rethinking the Chinese Translation of the *Prajñāpradīpa*

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## 1. Introduction

In my last paper (Akahane 2013), I discussed the establishment of the *Prajñāpradīpa* (hereafter PPr) by Bhāviveka (ca. 490/500–570), which is a commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (hereafter MMK) by Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250). There, I compared and contrasted the respective digressions between the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the PPr. As one of conclusions in that paper, I referred to the possibility that the Chinese translation by Prabhākaramitra and the Tibetan translation by Klu'i rgyal mtshan were based on different original Sanskrit texts of the PPr, and that the text on which the Chinese translation depended was older and smaller than the other. Of course, this argument is only suggesting a possibility, and thus I am not certain whether or not it is correct. However, in any case, the Chinese translation of the PPr has gained an undeserved negative reputation against its genuine value, as a result of the work of Tsukinowa (1929, 1929a, and 1931), who pointed out many faults in it compared to the Tibetan translation. I accept that most of his points are appropriate. Nevertheless, when we look over the whole Chinese translation of the PPr, we can also find that there are many well-translated parts that are coincident with the Tibetan translation. Is the Chinese translation of the PPr really worse, and lacking in value for academic studies? In the present paper, I will compare a part of Chapter 8 of the PPr in both translation, and explore the cause of the differences between these two translations of the PPr.

## 2. The Problems of the Chinese Translation of the PPr

In his three papers, Tsukinowa pointed out many problems with the Chinese translation of the PPr, drawing comparisons with the Tibetan translation. He summarized these problems into five categories as follows:<sup>1)</sup>

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- (1) Additions (sentences, prose, verses, etc., which we cannot find in the Tibetan translation, but are inserted into the Chinese translation);
- (2) Deletions (sentences, prose, verses, etc., which we can find in the Tibetan translation, but cannot be found in the Chinese translation);
- (3) Misunderstanding about verses (when a verse in the Tibetan translation is written in prose in the Chinese translation and vice versa, and when the positions of some verses are different in the two translations);
- (4) Some verses that are cited from other texts or sūtras are translated as verses of the MMK;
- (5) Some words in the Chinese translation are translated inconsistently.

We can undoubtedly agree with these problems. However, we should pay attention to the difference between categories (4), (5) and (1), (2), (3). In other words, problems such as those described in (1), (2), and (3) can be seen as translation style: In many cases, the translations do not contain major differences in terms of meaning. For example, even if the same verse is cited three times and rendered differently each time in the Chinese translation, the meaning of each is not very different from the Tibetan translation. Likewise, even though the positions of some verses are different from those in the Tibetan translation, the meanings are basically the same. Of course, these types of differences are very important when we are thinking about the content of the original Sanskrit text, and thus should not be ignored. This fact also teaches us that the translator, Prabhākaramitra, and many Chinese monks who were involved in the work of translating the PPr into Chinese, understood the context and contents of the PPr well.

On the other hand, although Tsukinowa does not provide many examples of (1) and (2), in my observations of both translations of the PPr, there do not seem to be as many additions as deletions. Consequently, the Chinese translation is shorter than the Tibetan translation, and although the meanings of many sentences that we can find in both translations are essentially the same, the two translations have a different style.

When we consider this situation, it is difficult to argue that the differences between the two translations have occurred because of a lack of skill on the part of the translators such as Prabhākaramitra.

### 3. Is the Chinese Translation Wrong or Not?

I will examine one example of this type of difference between the two translations. This can be found in eighth chapter of the PPr, just before the digression starts. The *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* (hereafter SK) verse 9, which refers to the five reasons of the effect that exists in the cause, is picked up as an objection.<sup>2)</sup> Here is a table of comparison between the two translations.

	Tibetan translation	Chinese translation
9a	'dir <b>Grañs can dag</b> gis smras pa   'bras bu sña na yod pa rgyu yod pa ñid kyis byed de   med pa la mi byed pa'i phyir ro    'di na gañ med pa de la ni byed pa med de   dper na rus (P. ru) sbal gyi spu las (P. la) gos byed pa med pa bzin no    <u>žo la ni (X) byed pa po yod pas de'i phyir   'bras bu sña na yod pa kho na yin no</u>    (D119a5-6/P146a5-6)	復次僧法人言。如我立義因中有果。因能起作無不作故。此若無者彼因則無。如龜毛衣是何等因。謂酪(X)瓶等。是故有果。(T81c6-8)
9b	(B) gal te 'bras bu sña na med par gyur na dper na (i) 'o ma la žo sña na med pa bzin du rtsi skyañ <sup>1</sup> la sogs pa dag kyañ med par 'dra bas (ii) <u>žo'i don du de'i rgyu 'o ma len par mi byed pa žig na len par yañ byed pas de ltar rgyu len pa'i phyir   'bras bu sña na yod pa kho na yin no</u>    (D119a6-7/P146a6-8)	復次(B)若無果者。(A)是義不然。何以故。(i)如乳中無酪。草中亦無(ii)彼求酪者。何故取乳而不取草。由彼取故。知因有果。(T81c8-11)
9c	(B) gal te 'bras bu sña na med par gyur na   dper na 'o ma la žo sña na med pa bzin du   'jig rten gsum po dag kyañ med par 'dra bas žo bzin du 'jig rten gsum po dag kyañ 'byuñ bar 'gyur ba'i rigs na de dag mi 'byuñ bas   de ltar thams cad 'byuñ ba med pa'i phyir 'bras bu sña na yod pa kho na yin no    (D119a7-b1/P146a8-b1)	(B)又如乳中無酪。亦無三界。等是無者。何因緣故從乳因緣而生於酪。不生三界。由彼乳中不生三界。非一切物從一因起。是故定知因中有果。(T81c11-14)
9d	(B) gal te 'bras bu sña na med par gyur na   ci'i phyir rdza mkhan gyi (P. om.) nus pas 'jim pa nus pa can dag kho na las bum pa sgrub par byed ciñ thams cad las mi byed pa nes pa 'di 'byuñ bar 'gyur   de ltar nus pas nus pa can byed pa'i phyir 'bras bu sña na yod pa kho na yin par sems so    (D119b1-2/P146b1-3)	(B)又若無者。何故決定如窯師見土堪作瓶者取以為瓶。非取一切。由此功能。能有起作。知因有果。(T81c14-16)
9e	(Y) 'dis kyañ 'bras bu sña na yod pa kho nar mñon te   gañ med pa la ni rgyu'i dños po yod pa ma yin pas   gal te 'bras bu sña na med par gyur na de la yañ rgyu'i dños po med par 'gyur ba žig na de lta ma yin pas   de ltar rgyu yod pa'i phyir yañ 'bras bu sña na yod pa kho na yin no (D. na)    (D119b2-3/P146b3-4)	若無果者。因亦無體。終無一物無果有因。而無此事。是故當知。因有體故。彼果亦有。(T81c16-18)

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summary	'o ma la ni zo sna na yod pa kho na yin te   de yod na 'byuñ ba'i phyir ro    gañ la gañ sna na med pa de ni(P.  ) de yod kyañ 'byuñ bar mi 'gyur ro    (D119b3/P146b4-5)	Not present
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In this table, 9a–9e coincide with the five reasons given in the SK verse 9.<sup>3)</sup> The underlined parts in this table have some differences. For example, in (X), there is small difference between the two translations, and (Y) does not exist in the Chinese translation. In (A), the Chinese translation states, “This idea is not correct. Why is that?” In the Tibetan translation, the text simply states, “for example,” but because the Tibetan translation includes a negative meaning in its context, we can say that both translations have the same meaning. (B) is a more interesting case. The first phrase of the sentences in 9b–9d, “*gal te 'bras bu sna na med par gyur na,*” which means “if an effect does not exist [in a cause],” are the same in the Tibetan translation. However, in the Chinese translation, each phrase is different. 9b is the perfect translation. On the other hand, in 9c, this sentence is translated as only one word “or” (*you* 又). This translation is not perfect but acceptable, when we consider the context, because Prabhākaramitra probably thought that same passage should not be repeated. Therefore, he does not translate this sentence and expresses it through the word “or.” However, Prabhākaramitra does not translate this sentence as “or” in 9d, but as “Or if [the effect] does not exist [in the cause],” which is different from both 9b and 9c. This type of inconsistency in the translation gave Tsukinowa a negative impression. However, if we change our perspective a little, we can say that these differences do not take away the meaning of the original sentence, even though the translation uses different words. Therefore, we can assume that Prabhākaramitra and Chinese translators understood the meaning of the sentence and then translated PPr into Chinese.

Also of interest, here are the underlined points (i) and (ii) in 9b. The Chinese translation is “(i) If there is no curd in the milk, and also none in the grass, (ii) why does the person who wants curd get milk, but not get grass? Because he gets [the milk], [we] know that the cause has the effect.” On the other hand, the Tibetan translation is “(i) There is no curd in milk. In the same way, there is no grass, etc. [in the milk]. (ii) If the person does not get milk for curd, [he] gets the cause by getting [curd].<sup>4)</sup> Therefore, the effect exists [in the cause].” In particular, (i) is most interesting. In the Chinese translation, grass is used as an example of the cause. On the other hand, in the Tibetan translation, it is used as an example of the effect. Which is the better translation? Is the Tibetan translation

better, as has often been argued? I think that the Chinese translation is better, because grass is the feed of a cow, which produces milk, and so it can be seen as a cause of a cause of curd, but not as an effect of milk. Indeed, we can find the same example in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (*Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經) as follows:

若言乳中定有酪相。百草之中亦必有乳。 (*Da banniepan jing*, T12 n.374, 411a29)

[Translation:] If [you] say that there is a feature of curd in the milk, then there is also milk in a hundred [kinds of] grasses.

As we can see at glance, grass is referred to as the cause of milk. In addition, another similar discussion can be found in the case of the introduction of the SK verse 9 and in the *Tattvasamgrahapañjikā* (hereafter TSP), as follows:

[Tib.] de bzin du bdag sañ bram ze la ston mo bya'o sñam nas (ii) žo don du gñer ba 'o ma ñid lan gyi chu ni ma yin no || (D149a4–5)

[Skt.] tathā “śvo me brāhmaṇā bhoktāraḥ” iti dadhyarthinaḥ kṣīram upādadate, na salilam | (TSP, p.24)

[Translation:] In that manner, after thinking that “Let us give the Brāhmans meals,” (ii) the people who want curd get milk, but not water.

In particular, if “water” is changed into “grass,” this sentence means the same as (ii) of the Chinese translation of the PPr. Moreover, (ii) of the Tibetan translation of the PPr is so unclear that we cannot read it correctly. It seems clear that the Tibetan translation (ii) of the PPr has some mistakes. In any case, the Chinese translation of this part at least should be considered better than the Tibetan translation.

In this case, a small question will occur: why would such a translator as Prabhākaramitra, who could understand the arguments of the opponent, Sāmkhya, and provide a better translation, not translate the final part as indicated in this table, the summary?<sup>5)</sup> It was apparently easy for him to translate this short passage correctly. We should imagine that he did not omit to translate this part due to a lack of skill, but either because he thought that this short summary did not need to be translated, or because this summary did not exist in the Sanskrit text that he used. I do not know the answer to this question, but I want to provide two examples that may be a clue to solving it.

#### 4. The Interesting Omissions in the Chinese Translation 1

When compared with the Tibetan translation, we can find the many examples of omis-

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sions of passages in the Chinese translation. It is difficult to know the real reason for this, as Tsukinowa admits in his paper. However, some of the omissions in the Chinese translation seem to have depended on the original Sanskrit text.

As is well known, Bhāviveka sometimes tries to justify the validity of assertions in the MMK by rewriting verses as inferences with full logical contents in the PPr. Namely, (Step 1) He begins by quoting a verse from the MMK. (Step 2) He then points out which words or expressions in the verse correspond with the proposition that is to be proved (*sādhya*dharma), the logical reason (*liṅga*), and the example (*dr̥ṣṭānta*) in the inference. (Step 3) He then rephrases the verse as an inference including these elements. Out of these three steps, according to my examination of the Chinese translation of PPr so far, (Step 2) does not exist at all in the Chinese translation of the PPr. One example is as follows:

Tibetan translation	Chinese translation
[Chapter 4] (Step 1) 'bras bu rgyu dañ mi 'dra zes    bya ba'añ 'thad pa ma yin no    [MMK4.6cd] (Step 2) 'dir yañ <i>bsgrub par bya ba'i chos</i> ( <i>sā-</i> <i>dhyadharmā</i> ) myu gu smra bar 'dod pa'i rgyu'i 'bras bu ma yin pa ñid dañ   <i>sgrub pa'i chos</i> ( <i>sādhanadharmā</i> ) mi 'dra bar bstan pa ñe bar b'zag go    des na yan lag lhag ma yañ sña ma b'zin du mñon no    (Step 3) 'dir rjes su dpag pa ni [Thesis] don dam par myu gu ni smra bar 'dod pa'i rgyu'i 'bras bu ma yin te   [Reason] mi 'dra ba'i phyir [Example] dper na gyo mo la sogs pa b'zin no    (D87a6-b1/P105b6-8)	(Step 1) 若果不似因 義亦不応爾 [MMK4.6cd] (Step 2) <b>NOT PRESENT</b>  (Step 3) 釈曰。[Thesis] 第一義中。驗此穀子。 不為芽因。[Reason] 何以故。不相似故。[Ex- ample] 譬如碎瓦。(T70a22-24)

Of course, we can also understand the relationship between the verse and the inference of (Step 3) without (Step 2). Therefore, it is possible to argue that Prabhākaramitra deleted these parts intentionally. However, it is curious that similar omissions can be found throughout the entire Chinese translation of the PPr, because, as Tsukinowa states, and I have also shown in the present paper, the Chinese translation of PPr does not follow a consistent style. How can we argue that this type of omission is the only consistent feature of the whole Chinese translation? Therefore, is it not more likely that expressions such as those in (Step 2) did not exist in the original Sanskrit text of the PPr that Prabhākaramitra used?<sup>6)</sup>

## 5. The Interesting Omissions in the Chinese Translation 2

I want to demonstrate another interesting case of an omission in the Chinese translation of the PPr chapter 8.

[**Objection:**] **Graṅs can dag** las gaṅ dag rgyu la 'bras bu sṅa na yod pa yin mod kyi (1) cha phra ba'i phyir ram | (2) zil gyis non pa'i phyir mi dmigs so zes zer ba [**Answer:**] de dag la yaṅ (1) rags pa ṅid daṅ | (2) zil gyis ma non pa ṅid sṅa na med pa las phyis yod pa'i 5 phyir | 'bras bu sṅa na yod pa ma yin pas phyogs sṅa ma la gnod do || (D120a4–5/P147a7–8)

[**Objection:**] 復次異僧佉人言。因中果体不可得者。(1) 由果細故。[**Answer:**] 此執不然。何以故。(1) 因中無麤故。麤先無体後時可得者。即是因中無果。汝立義破。 [T82a1–4]

Here, an opponent, Sāṃkhya, explains why people cannot see the effect that exists in the cause. In the Tibetan translation, he points to two reasons: (1) because the effect is too small, and (2) because the effect is overpowered [such as how the moon cannot be seen in the day time because its view is overpowered by that of the sun]. However, in the Chinese translation, (2) cannot be found either the “objection” or in the “answer,” although all the other sentences exist in both translations. Both of these reasons are consistent with two out of the eight reasons why people cannot see an object through direct perception, which are expounded in verse 7 of the SK. So it is unlikely that this would be a motivation for Prabhākaramitra to delete this reason (2). Therefore, it is highly possible that this reason (2) was not present in the Sanskrit text that he used. We can find similar examples in the Chinese translation of the PPr, where some parts of the objection cannot be found, and their counterparts in the answer does not exist either.

## 6. Conclusions

I cannot say for certain that the original Sanskrit text of the PPr that was translated into Chinese was different from the text that was translated into Tibetan. It is true that this idea does not explain all the differences between the two translations. However, it does at least seem that Prabhākaramitra had a general understanding of the PPr and thus it is difficult to say that he was a poor translator. Furthermore some deficiencies in the Chinese translation of the PPr indicate the possibility that there were two different Sanskrit texts of the PPr. Although the scope of the present paper has only allowed me to pick up a few examples, other similar examples can be found in both translations, and thus we will have to continue to explore both translations in order to attain clear answers for this question.<sup>7)</sup>

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1) He describes six kinds of problems, but I summarize them into five categories. 2) Of course, Bhāviveka himself does not refer to the name of the SK, although he says that this objection is from Sāṃkhya. However, Avalokitavrata, who wrote the *Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā* (hereafter PPrṭ), the commentary on the PPr, refers to the SK verse 9 and mentions it in the PPrṭ, and its content is consistent with the SK. 3) In the present paper, I do not discuss the insistence of the Sāṃkhya due to space constraints. 4) This part of the Tibetan translation is unclear and hard to understand. 5) Bhāviveka does not say state that this part is the summary of the SK verse 9. However, Avalokitavrata explains so this in the PPrṭ. 6) Similar examples are as follows: [chapter1] D49b3–4/P59a6–7 (T52c24–27) [chapter2] D69b2–3/P83b1–2 (T62c13–18); D71b2–3/P86a2–3 (T64a1–4); D74a5–6/P89a7–8 (T65a28–b1) [chapter4] D84a2–3/P101b1–2 (T68c23–27); D87a2/P105a6–7 (T70a1–2); D87a7–b1/P105b6–7 (T70a10–13) [chapter5] D90a4–5/P109a7–8 (T71a25–b1); D91a7–b1/P111a7–b1 (T71c7–8) [chapter7] D104a7/P127b2 (T76a12–17); D104b6/P128a2–3 (T76a25–28); D110b4–5/P135b4–5 (T78c9–14) [chapter10] D134b5/P165b5–6 (T85c22–26) [chapter22] D209b6–7/P262b2–3 (T117a19–22); D210b1–2/P163a8–b1 (T117b10–16), etc. 7) Prabhākaramitra translated another Sanskrit Buddhist text, the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (hereafter MSA), into Chinese. It has been pointed out that this translation is largely different from the Sanskrit text of the MSA. Needless to say, we have to take account of the characteristics of the Chinese translation of the MSA when we think about the Chinese translation of the PPr.

**Abbreviations:** D: sDe dge edition, MMK: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, MSA: *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, P: Peking edition, PPr: *Prajñāpradīpa*, PPrṭ: *Prajñāpradīpa-ṭīkā*, SK: *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, T: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新修大藏經, TSP: *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*.

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