

On some basic features of Buddhist Chinese

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This paper focuses on some basic features of the language of Chinese Buddhist texts that I have designated Buddhist Chinese (which used to be called Buddhist Hybrid Chinese),¹ a kind of written Chinese used originally in the translation into Chinese of Indian Buddhist sūtras in early times.

1 Research background

In China, Buddhist writing enjoys a position of utmost importance among the treasures of historical Chinese literature. Prior to the 20th century, mainstream Chinese culture was deeply affected by Buddhism, yet Buddhist “classics” and the language in which they were written received little attention from secular researchers of Chinese language and literature. Apart from some semantic research performed by scholars within Buddhist circles, which was necessary for interpreting the tenets of Buddhist classics, their language had not aroused the interest of many scholars.

Beginning in the latter half of the 19th century, Chinese culture received increasing attention from the Western academic world, and several attempts were made to understand the many different values exhibited by Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist sūtras. By the beginning of the 20th century, some Western scholars engaged in research into the history of the Chinese language had already tried to bridge the chronological gaps they found between the language of the so-called classics (*wenyan* 文言) and later developmental stages

¹ See Zhu 1992a, 2001 and Mair 1994.

of the Chinese language in Buddhist sūtras; this had an immediate effect on Chinese academic circles. In 1923, A. von Staël-Holstein, an Estonian Indologist and professor of Peking University, published his article “Yinyi Fanshu yu Zhongguo guyin” 音譯梵書與中國古音 (“Chinese transliteration of Sanskrit Buddhist texts and sound in Ancient Chinese”).² This directly inspired Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, a Chinese linguist to write his famous paper “*Ge, ge, yu, yu, mo gudu kao*” 歌戈虞魚模古讀考 (“A study of ancient pronunciation of the sound classes *ge, ge, yu, yu, mo*”),³ which not only initiated the practice of using Chinese Buddhist texts for the study of the Chinese language, but also exerted great influence on the study of phonology thereafter, pushing this discipline from traditional classification of ancient rhymes (*guyun fenbu* 古韻分部) to linguistic reconstruction of ancient sounds (*guyin gouni* 古音構擬).

In the 1940s, Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 published a series of papers, starting with “*Shi Jingde Chuandeng Lu zhong zai, zhuo er zhuci*” 釋景德傳燈錄中“在”“著”二助詞 (“An explanation of the two auxiliary words *zai* and *zhu* in the *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* [Record of the Transmission of the Lamp compiled during the Jingde period]”),⁴ in which he used the incomparably rich examples provided by Buddhist documents containing vernacular material to study “Early Modern Chinese.”⁵ Thus, standing in the forefront of the study of early modern Chinese grammar, he also became the pio-

² A. von Staël-Holstein 1923.

³ Wang 1924.

⁴ Lü 1955.

⁵ Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 (1900–1991), one of the founders of modern Chinese linguistics in the 20th century, divided the history of Chinese language into two parts at the point of Mid-Tang (about 1000 CE), the earlier one being called *gudai hanyu* 古代漢語 (“Ancient Chinese”), and the later one being called *jindai hanyu* 近代漢語 (“Modern Chinese”). This later one, starting from Late-Tang and the Five Dynasties period up to now, is divided again into three stages: an Early period (from Late Tang to Yuan dynasty), a Middle period (from Ming dynasty to Qing dynasty), and the third from the May 4th Movement in 1919 to now.

neer in using Buddhist language material for the study of Chinese historical grammar.

The first Chinese scholar, however, to point out explicitly the value of Buddhist sūtras for historical linguistics was perhaps Zhou Yiliang 周一良. In his article “Lun Fodian fanyi wenxue” 論佛典翻譯文學 (“On translated Buddhist literature”), first published in 1947–1948, he wrote:

“... looking at the translated Buddhist literature from the perspective of linguistic history, ... in terms of word usage, there are words in the Wei 魏, Jin 晉, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (220–581 CE) that cannot be found in other records but are only preserved in Buddhist sūtras.”⁶

Zhou cites such examples as *man* 曼 (“to take advantage of, while”), *wu* 烏 (“to kiss”), *tang* 唐 (in the sense of “for nothing”), *jiangwu* 將無 (“perhaps”), and *fuci* 複次 (“again, then”) to point out exceptional expressions and meanings which are not found in earlier, non-Buddhist literature.

Jiang Lihong’s 蔣禮鴻 examination and explanation of vernacular words in the so-called “transformation texts” (*bianwen* 變文) from Dunhuang 敦煌, which began in the 1950s, should be considered the most important research in Buddhist Chinese vocabulary of the early period, although the author did not fully realize the connection between *bianwen* and Buddhist sūtra translations.

With the revival of Chinese scholarship in the latter half of the 1970s, the linguistic material in Buddhist documents has received unprecedented attention, resulting in the publication of many pieces of important academic research. Yu Min 俞敏, and his students Shi Xiangdong 施向東, Liu Guanghe 劉廣和, and Nie Hongyin 聶鴻音 studied phonetic equivalents of Sanskrit sounds in Chinese (*fanhan duiyin* 梵漢對音); Dong Kun 董琨, Wu Jinhua 吳金華, Liu Shizhen 柳士鎮, Yan Qimao 顏洽茂, Liang Xiaohong 梁曉虹, Yu Liming 俞理明, Zhang Lianrong 張聯榮, Cai Jinghao 蔡鏡浩, and Zhu Qingzhi 朱慶之 studied the Chinese historical lexicon and grammar. All these scholars used, in varying degrees,

⁶ Zhou 1963: 320.

linguistic material from Buddhist sūtras and achieved remarkable results. The studies of Zhang Yongyan 張永言 and Wang Weihui 汪維輝 in the evolution of everyday words in ancient Chinese depend on Buddhist classics to an even higher degree. Unfortunately the limited space of this article here does not allow a detailed discussion of the latest generation of Chinese linguists and their focus on Buddhist Chinese.

Although the work of scholars within and outside of China has only just begun, it is important to call the attention of the academic world to the tremendous value of linguistic materials from the Buddhist sūtras in studying the history of the Chinese language, as a vital supplement to traditional Chinese materials.

2 Some misunderstandings

With the increasing use of Buddhist sūtras in linguistic studies, however, specific problems of interpretation have appeared. Many scholars in China who use this material as the main source of data for their study of Middle Chinese opine that the language of the Buddhist texts was most likely a kind of spoken Chinese, but fail to recognize that this variety of Chinese does not in all cases represent vernacular Chinese. I would like to bring up two examples for this kind of misrepresentation and misinterpretation:

In his paper “Wenxuan Li Shan zhu ciyi xungu zhaji” 文選李善注詞義訓詁筭記 (“Notes on the meaning of some words in Li Shan’s Annotations of Wenxuan”)⁷ Xu Zhiming 徐之明 discusses the semantic structure of the word *yueai* 月愛 in *bianwen* 變文. In the *Weimojie jing jiangjingwen* 維摩詰經講經文 (“Sūtra-lecture on the Vimalakīrti(-nirdeśa)-sūtra”), we find the following sentence:

緣舍利弗身居小果，與佛及菩薩所見不同。似甚？螢火對於日光，泥彈同於月愛。

Because Śāriputra attained only the small fruit (on the lower level of existence), what he could see is different from what the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas could see. [The difference looks] like what? A firefly in comparison with sunlight, and a pellet of mud in relation to a *yueai*.

⁷ Xu 1989.

What now is the meaning of the term *yueai* 月愛? Xu remarks: “The lexical structure of *yueai* (literally ‘moon love’) is the same as *riguang* 日光 (literally ‘sunlight’). So *yueai* should be a compound word with a noun as modifier, and *ai* should be a noun that means ‘treasure,’ and thus *yueai* is a colorful treasure that will shine under the moon.”⁸ *Yueai* is, however, a loan translation for Sanskrit *candra-kānta*, in which *yue* stands for *candra* (“moon”), and *ai* for *kānta* (“lovely”), a “pearl lovely like a moon” or “moonstone”).

Another example is the case of *ayi* 阿姨 (“mother’s sister”), a word that had already appeared earlier in Middle Chinese. In the *Wu Jun Chunqiu* 吳均春秋 (“Spring and Harvest [Annals written by] Wu Jun”), preserved in the Buddhist encyclopedic compendium *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (“Garden of the Dharma and Grove of Pearls”), written by Daoshi 道世 in the Tang dynasty, the following passage is found:

南齊晉安王蕭子懋字雲昌，武帝之子也。始年七歲，阮淑媛嘗病危篤，請僧行道。有獻蓮華供養佛者，眾僧以銅甕盛水浸其華莖，欲令不萎。如此三日而更鮮。子懋流涕禮佛誓曰：“若使阿姨因此勝利，願佛之力，令華竟齋不萎。” (T53, no. 2122, 572, b4–9)

The king of Jin’an in Southern Qi Dynasty, named Xiao Zimao, with the courtesy name Yunchang, was the son of the Emperor Wu. At the age of seven, [his mother] Ruan Shuyuan was endangered by disease, and several monks were invited to perform certain rituals. [At that moment,] there were some people who presented lotus flowers to the Buddha, and, to avoid their withering, the monks placed them in a copper jar filled with water. The flowers became even more brightly colored after three days. In tears and with great respect, Zimao vowed in front of [the statue of the] Buddha that: ‘If *ayi* because of this [rarity] got a huge benefit, then the power of the Buddha should keep the flowers vivid until the fulfillment of the ritual.’

⁸ “月愛”對應“日光”，語法結構相當。據此，月愛當是一個名詞作修飾語的合成詞，“愛”為名詞，作寶玩講，月愛乃月光之下有異彩之寶玩。 My English translation.

⁹ Sanskrit *kānta* is the past participle of $\sqrt{kam-}$, “to love, to like,” etc. The meaning of *ai* corresponds to both $\sqrt{kam-}$ and *kānta*, as it could be used as a verb and as a noun. Therefore *ai* is a perfect translation for *kānta*.

Here we can see that *ayi* refers to the king's mother and not to his maternal aunt; Jiang Lihong 蔣禮鴻 in his paper "Yifu xudiao bu 義府續貂補" ("Supplement to the Yifu-xudiao")¹⁰ therefore considers the term to be another title for "mother." But as the term is used here, *ayi* is just the common title for women of high social status who believe in Buddhism but who still live at home. Now, keeping in mind that the Chinese character *yi* 姨 can be replaced by *yi* 夷, I would rather suggest that *ayi* 阿姨 is the disyllabic form of the transcriptional term *youpoi* 優婆夷 (*upāsikā*), which means "female Buddhist lay person," with the prefix *a-* 阿.

Another example for an analysis on the basis of Buddhist terminology can be given in form of a sentence which appears in the *Chuyao jing* 出曜經 (**Udānavarga*), translated by Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 in the Late Qin 後秦 period (384–417 CE):

時逼節會，新歲垂至，家家縛豬，投於澆湯，舉聲號喚。(T04, no. 212, 688, b6–7)

The time is very close to the *jiehui*. The new year is coming soon. Every family captures a pig and throws it into the boiling kettle. The pig cries aloud.

The word *jiehui* 節會 is common in Middle Chinese and refers to a festival meeting or some kind of gathering of people to celebrate a festival. But what is the meaning of *jiehui* in this passage? It obviously indicates an ancient Indian festival which takes place just before New Year's Day. However, Wang Yunlu 王雲路 and Fang Yixin 方一新 in their book "Zhonggu hanyu yuci lishi" 中古漢語語詞例釋 ("Explanations of some words and expressions in Middle Chinese")¹¹ explain it as follows: "'*Shi bi jiehui*' 時逼節會 can be compared with '*xinsui chui zhi*' 新歲垂至, therefore, *jiehui* means *Chunjie* 春節 (the Spring Festival).'"¹² But in India, clearly, there is no such festival as the Chinese Spring Festival which is based on one of the four distinct seasons – spring, summer, autumn, and

¹⁰ Jiang 1989.

¹¹ Wang, Fang 1994: 222.

¹² "時逼節會，新歲垂至"對舉，知"節會"即指春節。My English translation.

winter –, a fact which Wang and Fang have ignored by not taking into account that the text is a translation of an Indian original.

Still another example is the expression *yishisanyue* 一時三月 in Buddhist Chinese. It is, for instance, found in the *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經 (“Sūtra of the Origins [in the Buddha’s life] – Middle [Part]”), a partial biography of the Buddha which was translated by Tanguo 曇果 and Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 during the Eastern Han Dynasty:

阿祇達往詣祇洹。入門見佛威神光明，敬心內發，前禮佛足，卻坐一面。佛為說法，歡喜踴躍。即便退席，請佛及比丘僧垂化照臨，一時三月。佛以神旨知往古因緣，默然受請。(T04, no. 196, 162, c27 – 163, a2)

Aqida (Agnidatta) traveled to the Qiyuan 祇洹 (Jetavanah Anāthapiṇḍikasyārāmaḥ), and he felt great reverence at first seeing the Buddha in all his grace and glory when he entered the hall, so he went forward to devoutly greet the Buddha’s feet [with his forehead], then he retreated and sat to one side. The Buddha expounded the dharma to him, and he reacted with pleasure and trembled with joy. He decided to retreat at once, and invited the Buddha and the *saṅgha* to visit his house and stay for *yishi sanyue*. [As] the Buddha by his divine wisdom knew his former karmic bonds, he taciturnly accepted his invitation.

In his paper titled “Zhonggu Fojing ciyi jueyao” 中古佛經詞義抉要 (“Discussions of word meanings in Buddhist classics in Middle Ages”) Zeng Zhaocong 曾昭聰¹³ explains *yishi sanyue* 一時三月 as having the same meaning as *yishi sanke* 一時三刻, which means “in a very short time.” But in the light of the following discussion this seems to be quite incorrect.

Yishi sanyue 一時三月 is actually a special expression in Buddhism, and in its original meaning it refers to *vārṣika* in Sanskrit (“summer [rainy season] retreat”), in which *yishi* is an appositional coordination of *sanyue*. *Yishi* designates a specific period of time, and *sanyue* is a specification of the period of the Buddhist summer retreat which lasted three months.

¹³ Zeng 2004.

Knowledge of the climate in India can aid our understanding. Most regions in China have four distinct seasons, while all of India is located in either tropical or subtropical areas with only two clearly discernible seasons, monsoon and dry season; the monsoon season occupies only the months of May, June, and July. In the monsoon season, rain falls almost every day, but in the dry season, it is rare to see a drop of rain. Therefore, monks often travel during the dry season, while during the monsoon they settle down in one place to receive teachings, and to discuss and receive donations from laypeople at the end of the period (*pravāraṇā*). Because of his misunderstanding of the pertinent expression Zeng introduced wrong punctuation into the sentence: ... 即便退席，請佛及比丘僧垂化照臨。一時三月，佛以神旨知往古因緣，默然受請。（“...He decided to leave at once, and invited the Buddha and the *saṅgha* to visit his house. After a very short time, the Buddha by his divine wisdom knew his former karmic bonds, he taciturnly accepted his invitation.”)

Obviously, features of Buddhist Chinese were often misunderstood, not least because the impact of the colloquial language on it has been overemphasized. Linguistic elements and phenomena encountered frequently in Buddhist texts but not found in the classical Chinese texts (*wenyanwen* 文言文) are, on the one hand, consistently and commonly regarded as belonging to the stratum of the spoken language and vernacularisms. On the other hand, many scholars believe that one can find the sources of those particular linguistic elements in the earlier classical language; few are willing to recognize that some of these peculiarities of Buddhist Chinese come from other languages or other cultures than the Chinese.

The unique value of linguistic material from Buddhist sūtras has largely been neglected. Produced by what may be called the first systematic “Indo-Europeanization” of the Chinese language combined with the influence of ancient Indian culture, Buddhist Chinese texts possess a great potential as primary documents for the study of that significant confluence of two linguistic and cultural strands, the Chinese and the Indian. This has, in my opinion, not been properly emphasized. Therefore, a very important issue in the development of Chinese culture – the influence of Buddhism

and translated Buddhist sūtras on the Chinese language – has not been examined thoroughly enough, but has at best been recognized on a hypothetical level.

3 Two basic characteristics

The differences between Buddhist Chinese and the native Chinese language found in non-Buddhist documents are obvious. Since it is a unique variant of the ancient Chinese language, Buddhist Chinese is characterized by two processes of “blending,” one of the original Chinese and Indian linguistic elements, the other of written Chinese, or classical Chinese (*wenyanwen* 文言文), with spoken or vernacular Chinese. I now will briefly discuss these two aspects.

3.1 *Blending Chinese with foreign elements*

The recurrent alternating use of prose and verse, with prose written in a continuous form and verse beginning in a new line, is a main feature of Buddhist Chinese that had never been used in the Chinese language before for narrative or expository purposes. In terms of vocabulary, the most obvious characteristic of Buddhist Chinese, if not the most important, is the large number of transcribed or transliterated words, which include not only Buddhist terminology or concepts specific to Indian culture, but also those that are common both to Chinese and Indian cultures.

Most transliterated words are easily distinguished, but some are not, especially when special and unusual pictophonetic characters are used, as for example *mo* 磨 instead of the more common *mo* 魔 (“demon”) for Skt. *māra*; *shan* 扇 instead of *shan* 騷 (“to emasculate”) for Skt. *sandhā*; *duoduo* 多多 for Skt. *tāta* instead of *diedie* 爹爹 (“dad”), etc.¹⁴ Compared with transcribed words, more freely and semantically rendered words and their grammatical elements are far more difficult to distinguish, but they are the main area of foreign influence.

¹⁴ Zhu 1994.

With regard to the syntax influenced by the underlying Indic texts, the famous starting formula of Buddhist sūtras *rushi wo wen* 如是我聞 for Skt. *evaṃ mayā śrutam* (“Thus have I heard ...”) is not the only one of its kind. In addition, quite a lot of translations were made word by word, in an interlinear fashion, resulting in the imposition of the syntax of the original on the translated Chinese. The following example is from the *Sheng jing* 生經 (**Jātaka-sūtra*), translated by Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa):

一時佛遊舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園，與大比丘眾千二百五十人俱。 (T03, no. 154, 70, a16–17)

The Buddha once visited the Qishu-Jigudu-Garden (Jetavana Anāthapiṇḍikasyārāma) in the country of Shewei (Śrāvastī), along with 1,250 eminent *bhikṣus*. [The Indian original would probably have an expression like *mahābhikṣusaṅghena ... sārddham* “with a huge group of (1,250) *bhikṣus*”].

The first part of this passage presents the standard introduction of Buddhist texts, and the expression “along with 1,250 eminent *bhikṣus*” is not a sentence but a prepositional phrase, which corresponds in word order to the original sūtras, but obviously does not match the normal order of the Chinese language. In standard Chinese, such a phrase should be “Once Buddha shuai 率 (“led”) / yu 與 (“along with”) 1,250 *bhikṣus* ...,” or the statement should be divided into two complete sentences, the latter one being: “1,250 *bhikṣus* followed him.” So here we find a clear instance of the influence of Indic syntax on the Chinese translation idiom.

A further example can be found in Zhu Fahu’s translation of the Lotus sūtra (*Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*), the *Zhengfa hua jing* 正法華經, where we find the following passage in the 14th chapter :

世尊告曰：“止，族姓子！仁等無乃建發是計 ...” (T09, no. 263, 110, b21–22)

The Bhagavat said: “Stop here, sons of a great family (*kulaputra*)! May it not be that you will come up with helpful suggestions ...?”

The expression *zuxingzi* 族姓子, used here as a parenthetical element, is rarely found in native Chinese literature. It is here representing the noun *kulaputra* in the vocative of the underlying original text; in common Chinese, however, *zuxingzi* 族姓子 should be used

as an object of the verb *gao* 告 (“tell”), and such a sentence should rather have taken a form similar to 世尊告族姓子曰：止！... (“The Bhagavat told the *kulaputras*: Stop here! ...”) in native Chinese.

It is one of the specific features of Buddhist Chinese that the passive voice¹⁵ is widely used. From very beginning, passive sentences were much more used in the Buddhist translation than non-Buddhist literatures, and we encounter some new kinds of passive patterns, such as:

欲閉口不語，而當為王所見生理，... 故複語耳。(Taizi Mupo jing 太子慕魄經 [Sūtra of Prince Mupo], tr. by An Shigao 安世高, in East Han Dynasty. T03, no. 167, 409, b28–c1)

[He] was willing to close his lips and did not speak anymore, but he was afraid he would be buried alive by the King, ... therefore he spoke.

Here the disyllabic particle *suojian* 所見 is used instead of the common monosyllabic particle *suo* 所. Both Wu Jinhua 吳金華, especially in his paper “Shi lun ‘R wei A soujian V’ shi” 試論 ‘R 為 A 所見 V’ 式 (“On the pattern of ‘R wei A soujian V’”),¹⁶ and Zhu Qingzhi 朱慶之, mainly in his PhD dissertation “Fodian yu zhonggu hanyu cihui yanjiu” 佛典與中古漢語詞彙研究 (“A study of relationship between Buddhist scriptures and vocabulary of Medieval Chinese”),¹⁷ have discussed this phenomenon. The difference in their argumentation lies in the fact that Wu believes that the abundant use of passive sentence in Buddhist translation is a reflex of

¹⁵ Chinese is a typical non-flexional language in which almost all grammatical categories of a sentence are expressed by the position of its parts and by so-called “empty words” (*xuzi* 虛字), pre- and postpositions. Most linguists in China consider that there only is a passive sentence expressing the passive meaning (*beidongju* 被動句) but no passive voice (*beidongtai* 被動態) in Chinese.

¹⁶ Wu 1983. R = recipient, A = actor, V = verb. In the paragraph cited above, for instance, in the sentence [我]當為王所見生理 “(I) would be buried alive by the king” 我 (“I”) is the recipient (R), 王 (“king”) is the actor (A), and 埋 (“bury”) is the verb (V).

¹⁷ Zhu 1992a.

spoken Chinese, while Zhu assumes that this reflects an aspect of the original Sanskrit.

In the translations, beside passive patterns such as “R *wei* 為 A V” and “R *wei* 為 A *suo* 所 V,” one also finds the patterns “R A *suo* 所” and “*suojian* 所見 V” without the preposition *wei*, as in examples such as the following from the *Sheng jing* 生經, translated by Zhu Fahu:

命盡神去，載出野田，... 飛鳥所食。(T03, no. 154, 83, a4–5)

Life ends and the spirit leaves the body; the body is deserted in a wild field ... and eaten [by] birds.

有子聰明，... 無央數人所共愛敬。(T03, no. 154, 105, c15–19)

He has a clever son, ... loved by numerous people.

Such examples for passive constructions are otherwise rarely found in Chinese texts and are certainly prompted by the frequency of the passive voice in Indic texts.¹⁸

3.2. *Blending of wenyan 文言 with oral elements*

It has been proved by many researchers that Buddhist Chinese contains traces of intense oralization. Throughout the history of the Chinese language there are vast differences between written and spoken language. As early as in the eras of *jiaguwen* 甲骨文 (oracle bone inscriptions; used in the period of the Shang Dynasty (1600–1047 BC) and the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BC)) and *jinwen* 金文 (bronze bell-vessel inscriptions; used in period of Western Zhou Dynasty, the Spring and Autumn Period (*Chunqiu* 春秋; 770–476 BC), and in the Warring States Period (*Zhanguo* 戰國; 475–221 BC), practical limitations on writing, including the limited number of characters (*hanzi* 漢字) available and the shortage of writing material, meant that the language had to be greatly reduced when it came to be written down, and thus the so-called written language may first have consisted of a group of signs that could be understood only by their inventors and some specially trained people. In fact, the written language came to be associated

¹⁸ Zhu 1995.

with considerable social privilege. When the writing tools gradually improved, the language came to be accommodated to a greater degree to how it was actually spoken. But this process of narrowing the gap between the written and spoken languages stopped in the Spring and Autumn Period and in the Warring States Period, when independent grammatical and vocabulary systems of written and spoken language arose. Thereafter, the written language moved further and further away from the spoken language, although it could not completely avoid being influenced by oral elements, especially with respect to vocabulary.

In what could be called Middle Ages (from the Eastern Han Dynasty 東漢, 26–220 BC to the Sui Dynasty 隋, 581–618 CE), when the distinction between the written and spoken language was clear-cut and when *wenyan* dominated the written language, the translation idiom of Buddhist sūtras nevertheless adopted a form that used partly *wenyan* and partly colloquial expressions. On the basis of *wenyan* a large number of non-*wenyan* elements were added, which comprised oral and dialectal elements, a fact remarkable in itself. As a result, during the Tang Dynasty, a new type of written Chinese (*baihuawen* 白話文) came into existence.

4 Excursus

Finally, I would like discuss some special expressions found in Buddhist Chinese. In his paper titled “Gāndhārī and the Early Chinese Buddhist Translations Reconsidered,”¹⁹ Daniel Boucher cites the following passage from the early catalogue *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (“Collection of the Postscripts of the Translations of Tripitaka”):

太康七年八月十日，燉煌月支菩薩沙門法護手執胡經，口宣出《正法華經》二十七品，授優婆塞聶承遠、張仕明、張仲政共筆受。竺德成、竺文盛、嚴威伯、續文承、趙叔初、張文龍、陳長玄等共勸助歡喜。

Boucher’s English translation of this passage is as follows:

¹⁹ Boucher 1998.

“On the tenth day of the eighth month of the seventh year of the Taikang reign period [= September 15, 286 C.E.], the Yuezhi *bo-dhisattva śramaṇa* from Dunhuang, Dharmarakṣa, holding the foreign (*hu* 胡) scripture in his hand, orally delivered and issued the twenty-seven chapters of the *Zhengfahua jing*, conferring (*shou* 授) it upon the *upāsaka* Nie Chengyuan, Zhang Shiming, and Zhang Zhongzheng, who together took it down in writing. Zhu Decheng, Zhu Wensheng, Yan Weibo, Xu Wencheng, Zhao Shuchu, Zhang Wenlong, Chen Changxuan, and others all took pleasure in encouraging and assisting.”

The expression *kou xuan chu* 口宣出 (literally “[using the] mouth to speak out”) is here translated as “orally delivered and issued.” Although Boucher has persisted in this explanation, I would argue that the traditional explanation of *chu* here is the correct one: *kou xuan chu* 口宣出 simply means “to translate orally.” In this phrase, *kouxuan* modifies *chu* (“to translate”).

Another example from Boucher’s paper which I would like to discuss is *quanzhu huanxi* 勸助歡喜 which he translates as “took pleasure in encouraging and assisting.”

Now, *quanzhu huanxi* is a quadrosyllabic phrase. Synonyms are disyllabic forms such as *zhuxi* 助喜 and *quanzhu* 勸助, and the trisyllabic *zhuhuanxi* 助歡喜. See for example:

王遣使者迎焉。使者就道，山中樹木俯仰屈伸，似有跪起之禮；百鳥悲鳴，哀音感情。太子曰：“斯者何瑞？” 妻臥地曰：“父意解釋，使者來迎。神祇助喜，故興斯瑞。” (*Liu du ji jing* 六度集經, collected by Kang Senghui 康僧會 in the Three Kingdoms. T03, no. 152, 10, c29–11, a4)

The King sent his servants to receive (the prince). When they stated in the mountain the trees bended and looked as if they bowed to them, and hundreds of birds movingly tweeted. The prince said: ‘What does this mean?’ His wife said respectfully: ‘[Our] father (King) has not been angry, and the servants come to receive us back, the gods *zhuxi*, hence they made the auspicious signs.’

In the the *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 (*Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra*, translated by Zhi Loujiachen 支婁迦讖 (Lokakṣema) in Eastern Han Dynasty) we find the following prose sentence:

若有善男子善女人取是人所行處滿中珍寶佈施，不如聞是三昧四事助歡喜，其福過佈施者百千萬億倍。(T13, no. 417, 902, a8–11)

It is not as good as to hear about the *samādhi* and do the four things for *zhuhuanxi* even if there are good-men (*upāsaka*) and good-women (*upāsikā*) who took the treasures of the whole world to donate them. The fortune of listening to the *samādhi* and doing the four things for *zhuhuanxi* is hundreds millions times more than the fortune of the donation.

In the verse part of the sūtra the same content is presented by the following *gāthā* in which the word *zhuhuanxi* is replaced by word *quanzhu* 勸助:

不退轉菩薩／滿中珍寶施／不如聞是法／四事之勸助／其福出彼上
(T13, no. 418, 917, c14–16)

Non-returner Bodhisattvas donate the treasure of the whole world [to the *saṅgha*] which is not as good as to listen to this *dharma* and do four-things *quanzhu*. The fortune of listening to the *dharma* and doing four-things *quanzhu* is bigger than the donation.

The Sanskrit correspondent to *quanzhu* is *anumodana* (> *anu-√mud*), as for instance found in the Lotus-sūtra, which, according to Monier-Williams, means “pleasing,” “causing pleasure,” “applauding,” “assent,” “acceptance,” and “sympathetic joy,” and so on.²⁰

In another section of his paper, Boucher quotes and translates a paragraph of the *Zheng fahua jing* (Zhu Fahu’s translation of the Lotus-sūtra) into English as follows:

如幻如化野馬影響，悉無所有，住無所住。

“They understand all dharmas as illusory, as conjured, like shimmering air (*yema* 野馬) or reflections – all without real existence, abiding in non-abiding.”

The word *yema* 野馬 (literally “wild horse”), in Chinese tradition, was first used in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. But its usage in Buddhist texts is slightly different: in the *Zhuangzi* it means “shimmering air”

²⁰ Zhu 1997. It should be noted that the most common translation of *anumodana* is *suixi* 隨喜.

while in Buddhist texts it usually indicates the mirage that occurs in deserts.²¹

In addition, translating the phrase *yingxiang* 影響 as “reflections” is not correct. *Yingxiang* is not used as one word in the *sūtra*, but as two words. *Ying* means “shadow,” and *xiang* means “echo.”²²

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²¹ Zhu 1990.

²² Zhu 1992b.

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