

Article

The Strategic Use of “雜” (zá) in Xuanzang’s Translations

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Abstract: The character “雜” (zá), commonly found in Chinese Buddhist literature, typically conveys the meaning of “mixed” or “varied”. However, in the translations of the renowned Tang dynasty translator Xuanzang, its usage stands out both in frequency and distinctiveness, setting his work apart from that of other translators. Terms traditionally conveyed using “不淨” (bù jìng, “impure”) or “穢” (huì, “filth”) were deliberately transformed by Xuanzang into “雜染” (zá rǎn, “mixed defilement”) and “雜穢” (zá huì, “mixed filth”), with “雜” nearly becoming synonymous with impurity. Examining the original meaning of “雜”, we find that it primarily signifies “to gather” or “miscellaneous”, typically carrying a neutral connotation. However, when used as an adjective describing a state, “雜” transcends its neutral sense of “various” or “diverse” to encompass notions of impurity, disorder, and deviation from normative standards—often with negative implications. Building on this understanding, it becomes clear that the abstract opposition between purity and impurity in the doctrinal meanings of Buddhist scriptures was reinterpreted by Xuanzang as a concrete opposition between “清淨” (qīng jìng, “purity”) and “雜穢” (mixed filth). This reinterpretation allowed “雜” to describe anything defiling the mind or carrying negative overtones—even when the original Sanskrit text did not explicitly indicate such a notion—thereby constituting a strategic substitution in translation. Furthermore, Xuanzang and his contemporaries frequently employed “雜” as a functional component within disyllabic compounds that collectively expressed negative meanings. Some terms containing “雜” thus cannot be understood simply as “mixed” or “varied”; instead, “雜” functions as a negative marker, reinforcing unfavorable connotations. This paper provides a focused case study on the lexical strategies of ancient Buddhist translators, illustrating how particular concepts—including 雜—were leveraged to reshape doctrinal content. In doing so, it highlights the deliberate linguistic and interpretative choices made by translators like Xuanzang, offering insights into their motivations and the cultural-linguistic contexts that framed their work.

Keywords: Xuanzang; Chinese Buddhist translations; Kumārajīva; Paramārtha



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1. Introduction

Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), one of the most renowned translators in ancient China, profoundly shaped the history of Chinese Buddhism through his meticulous and influential translations. According to the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (開元釋教錄), a Buddhist catalog compiled by Zhisheng 智昇 during the Tang dynasty, Xuanzang translated 75 texts comprising a total of 1335 volumes. His corpus includes seminal works, such as the *Da bore boluomiduo jing* (大般若波羅蜜多經, *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*), the *Yuqie shidi lun* (瑜伽師地論, *Yogācārabhūmi*), and the *Shuo wugoucheng jing* (說無垢稱經, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*), all of which have

had an enduring impact on Chinese Buddhist thought and practice. Xuanzang's translations are celebrated for their fidelity to the Sanskrit originals, a feature often emphasized in modern scholarship.¹ Furthermore, Xuanzang is credited with establishing five key translation principles,² which have had a profound and lasting influence on the history of Buddhist translation in China. These principles not only guided his own translation efforts but also shaped subsequent Buddhist translation methodologies.

Before Xuanzang, Chinese Buddhist history was marked by the contributions of several eminent translators, such as An Shigao 安世高 (fl. 2nd century), Zhi Qian 支謙 (fl. 3rd century), Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa, 239–316), and Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413). Xuanzang's translations not only built upon the work of these predecessors but also introduced notable innovations that reflected his rigorous approach to Buddhist philology. By comparing parallel versions of the same scriptures, we can trace the deliberate and nuanced choices made by different translators.

One notable linguistic innovation in Xuanzang's translations is his extensive use of the character “雜” (zá). His works exhibit a remarkably high frequency of this character, making it a distinctive hallmark of his translation style.

While the following data may not be entirely precise, it provides valuable insight into this linguistic pattern. A statistical analysis of the CBETA database reveals that Xuanzang's works contain an astonishing 5130 instances of the character “雜”, far surpassing other major Buddhist figures. By comparison, Chengguan 澄觀 used it 2116 times, Daoxuan 道宣 1249 times, and Kuiji 窺基 1228 times. To further contextualize this pattern, we examined some of the most renowned Buddhist translators. Kumārajīva used “雜” only 678 times, Paramārtha 真諦 297 times, and Amoghavajra 不空 a mere 179 times.³ Naturally, these figures are influenced by various factors, such as the thematic focus of the texts and the overall volume of each translator's corpus. However, even when accounting for these variables, the exceptionally high frequency of “雜” in Xuanzang's translations stands out as a defining linguistic feature, highlighting a distinctive aspect of his translation approach.

Moreover, “雜” not only appears frequently in Xuanzang's works but also takes on a unique meaning that does not fully correspond to its Sanskrit equivalent, *saṃkleśa*. This raises an important question: why did Xuanzang favor this character in his translations?

Beyond its standalone usage, “雜” also forms compound terms, such as “雜染”. Modern scholars have extensively explored the opposition between “雜染” and “清淨” (purity) in Yogācāra thought (Takaoka 2003; Azami 2002, 2001; Ikeda 1997; Ujike 1970; Yasui 1954). However, little attention has been given to a fundamental question: why is the opposite of “清淨” not simply “染污” (defilement) or “不淨” (impurity), but specifically “雜染”?

The answer to these questions lies in Xuanzang's deliberate and nuanced lexical choices, reflecting his efforts to convey doctrinal subtleties in his translations. This suggests that his preference for “雜” was not merely a stylistic tendency but a conscious attempt to shape Buddhist discourse in Chinese, distinguishing his translations from those of his predecessors.

This paper first identifies the specialized usages of “雜” in Xuanzang's translations, examining its neutral and negative connotations within Chinese literature. It then investigates underlying linguistic and interpretative considerations that may have influenced Xuanzang's choice of this term.

By analyzing this subtle yet revealing strategy, this study seeks to illuminate the complex factors that shaped the linguistic choices of ancient Buddhist translators. Through Xuanzang's use of “雜”, we gain a deeper understanding of how translators navigated the interplay between fidelity to the original texts and the interpretative demands of Buddhist exegesis.

2. The Unique Usage of “雜” in Xuanzang’s Translations

In Chinese Buddhist translations, the character “雜” often corresponds to Sanskrit terms, such as Skt. *miśra*, *vaicitrya*, *viśva*, and *saṃbhinna*, which commonly convey notions of “mixing” or “variety” (Hirakawa 1997, pp. 1229–30). In some of Xuanzang’s translations, such as the *Shuo wugoucheng jing*, “雜” is also used to render Sanskrit terms, including *saṃbheda*, *sārdham*, *ākīrṇa*, and *saṃsṛṣṭa*. In these instances, these usages of “雜” appear semantically appropriate within their respective contexts.

However, some of Xuanzang’s translations exhibit a distinctive and strategic application of “雜”. A notable example is the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, which has three Chinese translations: *Weimojie jing* (維摩詰經), translated by Zhi Qian⁴ between 222 and 254 CE; *Weimojie suoshuo jing* (維摩詰所說經), translated by Kumārajīva in 406 CE; and *Shuo wugoucheng jing* (說無垢稱經), translated by Xuanzang in 650 CE. Among these versions, Xuanzang’s translation demonstrates a significantly higher frequency of the term “雜” compared to the other two.⁵

In Xuanzang’s rendition, “雜” is frequently combined with other Chinese characters to form disyllabic compounds, such as “雜染” (*zá rǎn*, “mixed defilement”) and “雜穢” (*zá huì*, “mixed filth”). However, the meanings conveyed by these compounds do not always align with the semantic intent or phrasing of the Sanskrit parallel texts. This marked increase in the usage of “雜”, along with the formation of novel compounds, reflects a distinctive linguistic and conceptual approach in Xuanzang’s translations.

2.1. “雜染” (Mixed Defilement)

The exact origins of the term “雜染” cannot be precisely determined, but it became increasingly prevalent during the Tang dynasty, particularly in the translations of Xuanzang. The Skt. *aśubha* (“impure” or “not pure”), which earlier translators, such as Zhi Qian and Kumārajīva, rendered as “不淨” (*bù jìng*, “impurity”) or “穢” (*huì*, “filth”), was systematically translated by Xuanzang as “雜染”. This shift in terminology reflects a deliberate reconfiguration of semantic nuances. For example, in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* (Vkn), the following passages illustrate Xuanzang’s distinctive usage of “雜染”:

Vkn: *na śubho na aśubhaḥ* (neither pure nor impure).

Zhi Qian: “無淨無不淨”⁶ (neither pure nor impure).

Kumārajīva: “非淨非穢”⁷ (neither pure nor filthy).

Xuanzang: “非雜染非清淨”⁸ (neither mixed defilement nor purity).

Vkn: (no corresponding Sanskrit phrase).

Zhi Qian: (no corresponding translation).

Kumārajīva: “是淨是垢”⁹ (this is purity, this is defilement).

XuanZang: “此是雜染, 此是清淨”¹⁰ (this is mixed defilement, this is purity).¹¹

These examples reveal Xuanzang’s systematic introduction of 雜染 as a doctrinal term, distinct from the earlier translations. Unlike 不淨 (impurity) and 穢 (filth), which primarily denote physical or moral uncleanness, 雜染 emphasizes a state of contamination or defilement resulting from intermixture.

Xuanzang’s juxtaposition of “雜染” with “清淨” (*qīng jìng*, “purity”) is particularly evident in his translation of *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (大般若波羅蜜多經):

時, 舍利子復白佛言: “世尊! 如是清淨本無雜染。”佛言: “如是畢竟淨故。”¹²
(At that time, Śāriputra again addressed the Buddha, saying, “World-Honored One! Such is the purity, without any mixed defilement”. The Buddha responded, “Indeed, because it is ultimately pure”).

佛告善現：“於汝意云何？諸像頗有真實修道，依彼修道有離雜染得清淨不？”¹³
(*The Buddha said to Śāriputra, “What do you think? Do these images have any true ability to cultivate the path? Can one rely on them to cultivate the path, abandon defilements, and attain purity?”*).

In other words, meanings that could originally be conveyed by terms such as “不淨” or “穢” are reinterpreted and transformed by Xuanzang into the term “雜染”.

2.2. “雜穢” (Mixed Filth)

Another noteworthy example of Xuanzang’s translation strategy is his use of “雜穢”. In secular literature, the term “雜穢” can refer to anything impure,¹⁴ but in Buddhist scriptures, the term tends to be semantically closer to “穢”, often referring to unclean substances, such as excrement. In *Miaofa lianhua jing* (妙法蓮華經, *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*), “雜穢” corresponds to Skt. *uccāra*¹⁵, meaning filth or excretion.

The following examples clearly illustrate how the Skt. *apariśuddha* (impure), which was translated as “不淨” by both Zhi Qian and Kumārajīva, was rendered by Xuanzang as “雜穢”. Similarly, Skt. *pariśuddha* (pure), which Zhi Qian translated as “淨” (pure), was rendered by Xuanzang as “無雜” (wú zá, “without mixture”).

Vkn: *yadi yādṛṣī cittapariśuddhis tādrṣī bodhisatvasya buddhakṣetrapariśuddhiḥ saṃbhavati, tan mā āhaiva bhagavataḥ śākyamuner bodhisatvacaryāṃ carataś cittam apariśuddhaṃ yenedaṃ buddhakṣetram evam apariśuddhaṃ saṃdrśyate. (If it is true that the bodhisattva’s purification of his buddha-domain is commensurate with the purification of his mind, is that not saying that this buddha-domain appears as impure as it does because the Exalted One Sakyamuni’s mind was not purified when he pursued his bodhisattva practice?).¹⁶*

Zhi Qian: “以意淨故得佛國淨，我世尊本為菩薩時意豈不淨，而是佛國不淨若此。”¹⁷ (*Because the mind is pure, the Buddha-land becomes pure. When our World Honored One was a bodhisattva, was his mind not pure? Yet this Buddha-land was impure in such a way*).

Kumārajīva: “若菩薩心淨則佛土淨者，我世尊本為菩薩時意豈不淨，而是佛土不淨若此。”¹⁸ (*If a bodhisattva’s mind is pure, then the Buddha-land becomes pure. When our World Honored One was a bodhisattva, was his mind not pure? Yet this Buddha-land was impure in such a way*).

Xuanzang: “若諸菩薩心嚴淨故佛土嚴淨，而我世尊行菩薩時，心不嚴淨故，是佛土雜穢若此。”¹⁹ (*If bodhisattvas wholly purify their minds, then the Buddha-land becomes wholly purified. However, when our World Honored One was practicing as a bodhisattva, his mind was not purified, and so this Buddha-land was mixed with filth in such a way*).

Vkn: *prakāśā bodhiḥ svabhāvapariśuddhā* (*enlightenment is shining, intrinsically pure*).

Zhi Qian: “明哉！佛自然已淨。”²⁰ (*Illustrious indeed! The Buddha is naturally pure*).

Kumārajīva: (none).

Xuanzang: “明顯是菩提，自性無雜故。”²¹ (*Illuminated is bodhi, as its nature is free from mixture*).

In the first example, “不淨” is distinctly replaced by “雜穢”. In the second example, while the Sanskrit term primarily conveys the idea of purity, Xuanzang opts for a negative construction, rendering it as “無雜”.²² This shift illustrates that in Xuanzang’s translations, the original opposition between purity and impurity (*pariśuddha* vs. *apariśuddha*) is transformed into an opposition between purity (清淨) and mixture (雜穢 or 雜). In this context, “雜” nearly becomes synonymous with impurity.

In summary, while the traditional view holds that Xuanzang's translations are more rigorous in adhering to the Sanskrit originals, these examples demonstrate that this is not always the case. Rather than translating Skt. *aśubhaḥ/apariśuddha* as “不清淨” (impure), Xuanzang systematically introduced terms like “雜染” and “雜穢”, reflecting his particular interpretation of impurity as arising from the mixture.

2.3. Xuanzang's Substitution of Terms with “雜”-Based Expressions

Notably, Xuanzang's use of “雜” was neither incidental nor unintentional. A comparison of different translations of the same scripture reveals that Xuanzang deliberately replaced terms used by earlier translators, with a distinct focus on forming compounds with “雜” to reinterpret and refine negative descriptions. For example, Xuanzang's *She dasheng lun ben* (攝大乘論本, *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahaśāstra*) represents a later translation of the same text previously translated by Paramārtha真諦 (499–569) as *She dasheng lun* (攝大乘論). A detailed comparison reveals that while Xuanzang's translation closely resembles Paramārtha's in structure and content, he made deliberate modifications to certain key terms. These changes provide insight into Xuanzang's unique translation strategy, particularly his tendency to introduce “雜染” as a substitute for earlier terms such as “染污” (*rān wū*, “defilement”), “不淨” (impure), and “煩惱” (*fán nǎo*, “afflictions”).

Paramārtha: “若離此名相所立阿黎耶識，不淨品、淨品等皆不成就。煩惱不淨品、業不淨品、生不淨品、世間淨品、出世淨品等皆不成就。云何煩惱不淨品不成就？”²³ (*If the Ālaya-vijñāna [Storehouse Consciousness] is not established in terms of its name and form, then neither the impure nor the pure aspects can be accomplished. The impure aspects related to afflictions, actions, and existence, as well as the pure aspects of the worldly and transcendental realms, cannot be accomplished. Why is it that the impure aspect of afflictions cannot be accomplished?*).

Xuanzang: “由若遠離如是安立阿賴耶識，雜染清淨皆不得成。謂煩惱雜染，若業雜染，若生雜染皆不成故；世間清淨，出世清淨亦不成故。云何煩惱雜染不成？”²⁴ (*Because if the Ālaya-vijñāna is not established in this way, neither defilement nor purification can be accomplished. Specifically, the defilements related to afflictions, actions, and existence cannot be accomplished; nor can the purity of the worldly or the transcendental realms be accomplished. Why is it that the defilement of afflictions cannot be accomplished?*).²⁵

The examples listed above illustrate that Xuanzang systematically replaces earlier terms with “雜”-based expressions. This deliberate substitution reflects his thoughtful approach and careful consideration in conveying nuanced meanings through his translations. A closer examination of parallel translations reveals a pattern of lexical substitution, emphasizing Xuanzang's deliberate linguistic modifications. The following table presents a structured comparison of his key substitutions.

Table 1 demonstrates that Xuanzang's deliberate lexical substitutions—particularly the systematic use of “雜” in expressions like “雜染” and “雜穢”—constitute a distinctive and intentional translation strategy, rather than incidental linguistic variation. By recasting “不淨” and “煩惱” as states arising from intermixture, Xuanzang reshaped Buddhist doctrinal discourse to emphasize the causal and composite nature of defilement, reflecting a clear alignment with Yogācāra thought.

Table 1. Xuanzang’s replacement of terms used by preceding translators.

Text	Sanskrit	Terms Used by Preceding Translators	Terms Used by Xuanzang
<i>Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra</i>	<i>āmiṣa-kāyāḥ</i>	思欲身 (Zhi Qian, Kumārajīva)	雜穢身
	<i>saṃbhinna-pralāpaḥ</i> ²⁶	無義語 (Kumārajīva)	雜穢語
	<i>vivakṣitam tat pārūṣyam</i>	無義語, 非應語 (Paramārtha)	雜穢語
	<i>alpāyūṣām jantūnām</i>	微細眾生 (Paramārtha)	雜類生
<i>Abhidharmakośabhāṣya</i> ²⁷	<i>bahu vaktavyam</i>	多言 (Paramārtha)	言論繁雜
	<i>anākulaḥ</i>	濫 (Paramārtha)	雜亂
	<i>vyākula</i>	亂 (Paramārtha)	雜亂
	<i>avyākulas</i>	過亂 (Paramārtha)	雜亂
	<i>mala-palvale</i>	不淨之器 (Paramārtha)	雜穢
<i>Mahāyānasamgrahasāstra</i>		不淨, 煩惱, 染污 (Paramārtha)	雜染

However, to fully grasp the rationale behind Xuanzang’s nuanced approach, it is crucial to first examine the original, predominantly neutral meanings and various applications of “雜” in Chinese secular and Buddhist literature, as will be discussed in the following section.

3. The Neutral Connotations of “雜”

3.1. The Role of “雜” in Secular Texts

According to the *Shuowen jiezi* (說文解字), the original meaning of “雜” is defined as “the combination of five colors, derived from clothing and from gathering” (五采相合, 從衣從集). Initially signifying the blending of multiple hues used in clothing, the term inherently conveys a sense of mixture or aggregation, generally without explicitly positive or negative connotations. Indeed, throughout classical Chinese literature, “雜” usually retained a neutral meaning, associated primarily with the notions of diversity or variety rather than moral judgment.

In secular literature, “雜” frequently combines with other nouns in the structure “雜 + X” to form compound terms widely used for categorization or classification. Examples are abundant across Chinese literary traditions: the *Zhou yi* (周易) contains a section named 雜卦 (zá guà, “miscellaneous hexagrams”); similarly, the *Hanshu* (漢書) lists categories such as 雜家 (zá jiā, “miscellaneous schools”), 雜賦 (zá fù, “miscellaneous rhapsodies”), and 雜占 (zá zhān, “miscellaneous divinations”). Such naming conventions extend to numerous classical titles, such as *Xijing zaji* (西京雜記), *Youyang zazu* (酉陽雜俎), and *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* (建炎以來朝野雜記), among others.

Beyond book titles, “雜” is commonly used in literary anthologies and genre classifications, emphasizing its role as a neutral aggregative marker rather than a term carrying inherent positive or negative connotations. Terms such as 雜文 (zá wén, “miscellaneous writings”), 雜詩 (zá shī, “miscellaneous poems”), and 雜著 (zá zhù, “miscellaneous essays”) frequently appear as section headings in various texts, reflecting a concept of miscellany and collection.

The neutral and classificatory function of 雜 (zá) extends beyond literary usage into various secular domains, where it denotes heterogeneous, composite, or miscellaneous categories without implying any moral valuation. This broad applicability is evident in terms such as 雜病 (zá bìng, “miscellaneous diseases”), 雜劇 (zá jù, “miscellaneous plays”), 雜技 (zá jì, “miscellaneous acrobatics”), 雜貨 (zá huò, “miscellaneous goods”), and 雜業 (zá yè, “miscellaneous trades”)—all of which emphasize the notion of variety and inclusion.

These examples underscore the versatile function of “雜” as a tool for categorization and classification. While its specific connotations vary depending on context, they consis-

tently revolve around the concept of aggregation and multiplicity. In ancient China, “雜” largely retained a neutral connotation, serving as a linguistic marker for diverse, assorted, or multifaceted entities. In essence, “雜” functioned as the ultimate descriptor for anything that embodied variety—an all-encompassing term for the mixed, the diverse, and the multifaceted.

The use of “雜” in Buddhist literature closely mirrors its application in secular texts, particularly in its function as a marker of aggregation. This characteristic is most prominently reflected in the naming of Buddhist scriptures.

3.2. The Role of “雜” in Buddhist Texts

3.2.1. “雜” in Textual Compilation

A significant number of extant Buddhist texts include “雜” in their titles, which denotes the aggregation of specific types of writings. Examples include *Zabaozang jing* (雜寶藏經), *Zapiyu jing* (雜譬喻經), *Za’ahan jing* (雜阿含經), and *Zawuji jing* (雜無極經)—all of which are compilations of shorter texts. The inclusion of “雜” in these titles does not diminish the value of the scriptures; in fact, many of these texts were widely circulated, indicating that within the Buddhist literary tradition, “雜” primarily carried a relatively neutral connotation.

Notably, while these scriptures were widely disseminated, there is little evidence to suggest that their titles had exact Sanskrit equivalents. The term “雜” was likely not a direct translation from Sanskrit but rather a designation introduced by Chinese translators or scholars based on the structural and thematic nature of these texts. For instance, titles such as *Samyuktāgama* (雜阿含經)²⁸, *Samyuktābhīdharmahr̥daya* (雜阿毘曇心論)²⁹, and *Samyuktaratnapitakasūtra* (雜寶藏經)³⁰ are commonly used in academic discourse as reconstructed Sanskrit equivalents. However, these Sanskrit titles do not correspond to any extant originals; rather, they were retroactively inferred from the Chinese texts.

The scriptures mentioned above share a notable feature: the character “雜” appears as the initial word in their titles, underscoring its role in textual aggregation and classification. Additionally, other Buddhist works incorporate “雜” to denote compilations of texts originating from India, such as *Apidamo zaji lun* (阿毗達磨雜集論), *Genben shuoyiqieyoubu zashi* (根本說一切有部雜事), and *Tanwude lobu zajiemo* (曇無德律部雜羯磨). In these cases, “雜” conveys the idea of compiling multiple distinct sources into a single text.

Beyond these Indian-origin texts, Chinese excerpts and anthologies derived from canonical Buddhist scriptures were also labeled as “雜事” (zá shì, “miscellaneous affairs”), such as *Shisonglv jiemo zashi* (十誦律羯磨雜事). Additionally, some collections that do not necessarily represent combinations of multiple texts but still incorporate “雜” in their titles include *Kongquewang zashenzhou* (孔雀王雜神咒) and *Tuoluoni zaji* (陀羅尼雜集). Overall, the fragmentary nature of many shorter Buddhist scriptures made them well-suited for compilation into independent works organized around various themes.

While the Buddhist texts discussed above primarily center around the term “雜”, another term in the Chinese context—集 (jí, “collection”)—also denotes compilation, though with subtle differences in meaning and usage. Notably, “集” seldom appears as the initial word in titles. However, some pre-Tang Buddhist texts did feature “集” in their titles, such as *Liuduji jing* (六度集經), translated by Kang Senghui 康僧會 during the three kingdoms period; *Dengji zhongde sanmei jing* (等集眾德三昧經), translated by Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa) during the Western Jin dynasty; and *Zhufoyaoji jing* (諸佛要集經), also translated by Dharmarakṣa, and *Sengjialuocho ji jing* (僧伽羅刹集經), translated by Sengjiabacheng 僧伽跋澄 and others during the Former Qin period.

As Chinese Buddhist literature expanded, many Chinese compilations also adopted the character “集” in their titles. Notable early examples include *Chusanrang ji ji* (出三藏記

集) and *Hongming ji* (弘明集), both compiled by the Liang dynasty monk Sengyou. From the Sui and Tang dynasties onward, an increasing number of translations adopted “集” in their titles.³¹ By this period, texts incorporating “集” in their titles had surpassed those beginning with “雜”, reflecting a shift in naming conventions.

The widespread use of “雜” and “集” in Buddhist text titles highlights the strong aggregative nature of Buddhist literature. Both Indian and Chinese Buddhist traditions produced numerous compilations aimed at structuring, preserving, and transmitting Buddhist teachings. This prevalence also indicates that, in the early stages of Chinese Buddhism, “雜” retained a largely neutral connotation, primarily serving as a descriptor for editorial methods or the structural characteristics of texts. In certain contexts, “雜” and “集” were even used interchangeably, further demonstrating that “雜”, in its early textual applications, functioned primarily as a neutral classificatory marker rather than a term implying impurity or disorder.

3.2.2. “雜” in Describing Diverse Combinations

It is important to note that “雜” frequently appears in Buddhist scriptures, often functioning as a neutral descriptor without inherent positive or negative connotations. For instance, phrases like 雜華 (zá huá, “mixed flowers”) and 雜香 (zá xiāng, “mixed incense”) are common in these texts.³² In the Chinese linguistic context, “雜”, in such phrases, simply denotes “varied” or “mixed”, conveying the idea of a combination of diverse elements.

Interestingly, in some cases, the Sanskrit originals do not explicitly contain the concept of “雜”. A notable example can be found in the famous text *Miaofa lianhua jing* (妙法蓮華經, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*):

諸天人民，悉以雜華、末香、燒香、塗香，衣服、瓔珞、幢幡、寶蓋，伎樂、歌頌，禮拜供養七寶妙塔。³³ (*Gods and humans alike offer assorted flowers, powdered incense, burning incense, paste incense, clothing, a festoon of jewels, streamers and banners, an canopy (adorned) with jewels, music, and hymns to venerate the stupa adorned with seven treasures*).

種種末香，諸雜華香。如是等天香和合所出之香，無不聞知。³⁴ (*Innumerable powders and mixed fragrant flowers—such heavenly fragrances, all of which are blended and exuded, were perceived by all*).

In these examples, 雜華 corresponds to Skt. *puṣpa*,³⁵ which simply means “flower”. The translation as 雜華 was likely influenced by the Chinese preference for disyllabic expressions rather than any direct equivalent in Sanskrit. Similarly, the phrase 七寶雜色樹³⁶ (trees of mixed colors adorned with seven treasures) corresponds to the Sanskrit *ratnāmayair vṛkṣaśatair upetā*³⁷, meaning “a thousand trees adorned with treasures”. Here, the translator’s choice of 雜色 (mixed colors) appears to be an interpretative addition, emphasizing the diverse hues of the trees after being adorned with jewels.

Another example is 雜香 (mixed incense), which refers to incense made by blending various fragrant substances. This term corresponds to different Sanskrit expressions, such as *vilepana*, *vilepana-cūrṇa*, *candana*, and *candana-cūrṇa*,³⁸ none of which directly include the notion of mixing. It is likely that 雜香 was a term coined in China, reflecting a localized linguistic adaptation while maintaining a neutral connotation.

In earlier Buddhist scriptures, “雜” frequently appears without any clear emotional undertone. This is particularly evident in the *Weimojie jing* (維摩詰經, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*), translated by Zhi Qian during the Three Kingdoms period. In this text, “雜” is repeatedly used to signify the blending or combination of elements, as seen in phrases like 雜糅 (zá róu, “blended”) and 雜聲 (zá shēng, “mixed sounds”).³⁹ In many cases, “雜” corresponds to terms derived from the Skt. *√yuj* (to join), such as 雜言 (zá yán, Skt. *saṃprayuktā kathā*, “connected discourses”) and 雜行 (zá xíng, Skt. *saṃyojana*, “deviant conduct”). In these

instances, “雜” functions neutrally, indicating variety and composition rather than carrying evaluative connotations. One such case is 雜句 (zá jù, Skt. vicitrāpada, “varied phrases”), where “雜” signifies structural complexity and textual heterogeneity.

Certainly, “雜” also carries negative connotations in certain contexts, as seen in expressions like 鄙雜心 (bǐ zá xīn, base mixed mind) in Guṇabhadra’s translation of the Saṃyuktāgama. However, quantitatively and contextually, neutral uses of 雜—denoting mere aggregation or mixture—were more predominant in early Buddhist texts.

As time progressed, the negative connotations of “雜” in Chinese Buddhism gradually shifted, leading to both a decline in its usage in scripture titles and an increasing association with impurity or undesirability within texts. This shift in meaning will be explored in greater detail in the following sections.

4. The Negative Connotations of “雜”

4.1. The Role of “雜” in Secular Texts

Since “雜” denotes the aggregation of diverse elements, it naturally gives rise to multiple adjectival interpretations. Its core meaning is “miscellaneous” or “various”. When emphasizing the contrast between components, it can signify “impure”, while focusing on the number of components suggests “numerous”. Additionally, the notion of “impure” presupposes the existence of a pure or normative state, leading “雜” to carry connotations of a “deviation of the norm”. Moreover, the presence of an excessive number of components often results in disorder, which further allows “雜” to take on the meaning of “chaotic”.

As a verb, “雜” frequently appears in disyllabic compounds that convey the idea of mixture or combination, such as 雜糅 (to blend) and 混雜 (to intermingle). However, through repeated use in contexts describing the mixing of opposites, “雜” gradually acquired a slightly negative connotation. For example, in *Yanzi chunqiu* (晏子春秋): “Right and wrong, good and evil are mixed, and influential figures spread heretical ideas; therefore, individual preferences and aversions are insufficient to guide the masses” (是非賢不肖雜, 上妄說邪, 故好惡不足以導眾). Similarly, in the *Hanshu* (漢書): “Now the virtuous and the unworthy are intermingled, making it difficult to distinguish between the good and the bad. The wicked and the upright are mixed together, and both the loyal and the sycophantic are being promoted simultaneously” (今賢不肖混淆, 白黑不分, 邪正雜糅, 忠讒並進). In such contexts, “雜” conveys a negative implication, particularly when referring to the blending of moral or ethical opposites.

As an adjective, “雜” similarly implies disorder or confusion when used in disyllabic words like 雜亂 (chaotic) or 雜遝 (disordered). It combines multiplicity with a sense of disarray or insignificance. For instance, in the *Chu ci* (楚辭): “Riding in a jumble of carts, disorderly and rampant” (騎膠葛以雜亂兮, 斑漫衍而方行). And in *Wenxin diaolong* (文心雕龍): “In the jumble of chapters, the substance and style are intertwined, and knowledge is partial, none can comprehend everything” (篇章雜遝, 質文交加, 知多偏好, 人莫圓該). In these passages, “雜” connotes disorganized multiplicity, reinforcing its association with confusion and disorder.

In Zhuangzi (莊子), the Dao (道) is portrayed as something that should remain pure and unadulterated, making “雜” undesirable: “The Dao should not be mixed; if mixed, there will be multiplicity; with multiplicity comes confusion; with confusion, anxiety arises; and with anxiety, salvation becomes impossible” (夫道不欲雜, 雜則多, 多則擾, 擾則憂, 憂而不救). This passage highlights the necessity of preserving the Dao’s purity, as contamination with heterogeneous elements leads to disorder and distress. Within Zhuangzi’s philosophical framework, the Dao represents the fundamental universal principle, which should remain pure and consistent. This aligns with the concept that “the ultimate Dao is simple” (大道至簡). Zhuangzi employs the notion of “雜” as a contrast to

the ideal, unblemished state of the Dao,⁴⁰ emphasizing that mixture introduces multiplicity, which in turn leads to confusion.

For Zhuangzi, “雜” signifies a negative state, functioning as a foil to the desired purity of the Dao. By juxtaposing “雜” with concepts like “purity” (純粹) and “simplicity” (素), he reinforces the importance of maintaining the Dao’s purity and singularity.

To conclude, “雜” originated as a neutral term denoting “miscellaneous” or “various”, but over time, it acquired additional connotations of impurity, disorder, and confusion, particularly when describing the blending of opposites or deviations from an ideal state. This semantic shift is reflected in philosophical and literary texts, where “雜” serves as a counterpoint to purity, simplicity, and order, emphasizing the cultural and ethical importance of maintaining clarity and integrity.

4.2. The Role of “雜” in Buddhist Texts

As previously discussed, the term “雜” was often used in the titles of Buddhist texts to indicate compendious or aggregated collections. However, over time, its opposition to “純” (pure) led to a semantic shift, transforming “雜” into a marker that distinguished orthodoxy from heterogeneity in Chinese Buddhist discourse. In the following examples, we will observe numerous instances where “雜” is employed with a negative connotation.

When reviewing a newly translated Abhidharma text, Dao’an (312/314–385) remarked, “頗雜義辭”⁴¹, which translates to “interspersed with various interpretations”.

Similarly, Zhi Mindu 支愍度 (fl. 4th century), after examining earlier translations of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, expressed his dissatisfaction, stating, “文義混雜, 在疑似之間”⁴², meaning “the main text and commentary are mixed, creating doubts about authenticity”.

During the Later Qin dynasty, Sengzhao 僧肇 (384–414?), while revising scriptures at the translation institute, remarked, “文義舛雜”⁴³, observing that many early translations were “marred by errors and inconsistencies in their content”.

Sengyou, in his analysis, further distinguished authentic scriptures from apocryphal ones, writing, “真經體趣融然深遠, 假託之文辭意淺雜”. This translates to “the essence of authentic scriptures is harmonious, deep, and far-reaching, while the language and ideas of falsely attributed texts are shallow and mixed”.⁴⁴

Furthermore, in the *Chu Sanzang ji ji*, there is a text titled *The Note on the Two Sutras: Pusa shanjie, pusa dichu* (菩薩善戒菩薩地持二經記). Its author, Sengyou, documented the mixed nature of these two sutras as follows:

“諸品亂雜, 前後參差。”⁴⁵ (*Various sections are disorderly and unevenly arranged*).

“當是曝曬誤雜, 後人不悉, 便爾傳寫。”⁴⁶ (*This was mistakenly mixed due to exposure and drying. Later generations, unaware of the error, transmitted it as is*).

In summary, expressions such as 混雜 (mixed), 淺雜 (shallowly mixed), 雜糅 (interwoven), and 亂雜 (chaotically mixed) clearly illustrate the negative connotations of “雜” in Buddhist contexts. These terms were frequently used to describe textual corruption, doctrinal impurity, and errors introduced through translation or transmission.

5. Understanding Xuanzang’s Strategic Use of “雜”

5.1. “雜染” and “雜穢”

Through the preceding analysis, it becomes evident that the character “雜” embodies both neutral and negative connotations. What, then, were the underlying motivations behind Xuanzang’s use of “雜” in his translations? To explore this question, we turn to two terms—“雜染” and “雜穢”—which were discussed at the outset of this paper. These terms serve as a critical lens for understanding Xuanzang’s translation strategy and interpretive choices.

First, let's consider “雜染”. In addition to translating Skt. *āsubha* (impure), “雜染” typically corresponds to Skt. *saṃkleśa*. In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, when the Sanskrit text employs *saṃkleśa*, Kumārajīva translated it as 煩惱 (afflictions) or 垢 (gòu, “defilements”), whereas Xuanzang rendered it as “雜染”.⁴⁷ Similarly, in the *Apidamo jushe shilun* (阿毘達磨俱舍釋論, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*), where Skt. *saṃkleśa* appears, the translator Paramārtha rendered it as 染污 (defilement), while Xuanzang once again opted for “雜染”.⁴⁸ By critically evaluating the translations of his predecessors, Xuanzang selectively replaced certain terms, demonstrating a deliberate approach that reflects his interpretive priorities and linguistic sensibilities.

The original meaning of Skt. *saṃkleśa* is “suffering”, “defilement”, or “impurity”, and it frequently appears in Buddhist scriptures. Early Chinese translators rendered it as 煩惱 (afflictions), a choice that accurately conveys the original meaning while emphasizing the state of mental and physical bondage or contamination. The term 煩惱 has held a significant place in Chinese Buddhist culture, eventually permeating modern Chinese vernacular and becoming a familiar term in daily language. Linguistically, Skt. *saṃkleśa* is derived from $\sqrt{kliś}$, meaning “to suffer”, “to feel pain”, or “to torment”. Other derivatives of this root, such as Skt. *kliṣṭa* and Skt. *saṃkliṣṭa*, were also translated as 染污 (defilement). In Buddhist philosophy, Skt. *saṃkleśa* refers to the defilement or impurity of the mind.

Xuanzang's translation of “雜染” emphasizes the notion of “染” (defilement), underscoring its essence as impurity, while “雜” serves as a modifier, expanding the meaning to encompass “various forms of defilement”. In this context, “雜染” underwent semantic bleaching, with “雜” losing its distinct meaning, and the phrase, as a whole, came to emphasize defilement and contamination rather than mere mixture.

Next is the case of “雜穢”. The origin of “雜穢” can also be traced to the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*. In this text, a contrast is drawn between the pure Buddha-lands and the impure world of this realm. When describing the impure world, Sanskrit uses *bahudoṣaduṣṭaṃ buddhaḥṣetraṃ*. Zhi Qian translated this as “多怒害……佛國” (a Buddha-land of much anger and harm) or “多怒之處” (a place of much anger), while Kumārajīva rendered it as “不淨土” (impure land) or “多怒害處” (a place of much anger). Xuanzang, however, translated it as “無量過失雜穢土” (a land of countless faults and mixed filth) or “多雜穢土” (a land of much mixed filth), where “雜穢” corresponds to Skt. *duṣṭa* (defiled).

Building on this framework, Xuanzang introduced terms such as “穢土” (defiled land), “雜穢土” (land of mixed filth), “雜穢處” (place of mixed filth), and “雜穢佛土” (Buddha-land of mixed filth) to describe the earthly realm. Even when the original Sanskrit text merely referred to the realm without additional characterization, Xuanzang infused his translation with interpretative elements, associating this world with the notion of mixed filth. For example, he constructed expressions like “此佛土種種雜穢” (this Buddha-land is full of various forms of mixed filth), while the original Sanskrit merely stated *buddhaḥṣetra* (this Buddha-land). In contrast, earlier translators, such as Zhi Qian and Kumārajīva, adhered more closely to the Sanskrit source, rendering it simply as “此佛土” (this Buddha-land) or “此土” (this land).

Additionally, Xuanzang's deliberate substitutions demonstrate his strategic use of “雜染” as a nuanced functional term. Unlike Paramārtha, who employed simpler translations such as 不淨 and 染污, Xuanzang's choice of “雜染” reflects an effort to emphasize the compounded nature of defilements—mixing afflictions, actions, and existential factors. This suggests that Xuanzang viewed “雜” as a critical functional term to convey deeper layers of meaning, possibly aiming for a more precise doctrinal articulation or a linguistic adaptation that resonated better with his intended audience.

In sum, the analysis above reveals that in the original doctrinal framework of Buddhist scriptures, the abstract opposition between purity (清淨) and impurity (不清淨) was

concretized by Xuanzang into a conceptual dichotomy between purity (清淨) and mixed filth (雜穢). Within this framework, anything that defiled the mind or carried negative connotations—even when the original Sanskrit text did not include the concept of “雜” (mixed)—could be rendered into Chinese using “雜”, thus facilitating a deliberate substitution, strengthening the semantic link between “雜” and impurity in Chinese Buddhist discourse.

Based on this conclusion, it becomes clear that terms like “雜” had already acquired distinct value judgments. As a result, Xuanzang frequently replaced “雜” with other expressions when previous translators had used it to describe neutral concepts, as will be demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Xuanzang’s replacement of terms used by Paramārtha.

Text	Sanskrit	Terms Used by Paramārtha	Terms Used by Xuanzang
<i>Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya</i>	<i>kāmāvacarāṇi</i>	欲界雜業	欲界繫業
	<i>yoni</i>	雜	種, 種姓, 類
<i>Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-śāstra</i>		相雜	和合

5.2. Similar Cases in Other Translations

The use of “雜” to express negative connotations was not exclusive to Xuanzang. Other Buddhist translators also employed 雜 in ways that reinforced negative or undesirable qualities, suggesting that its semantic shift was part of a broader linguistic and doctrinal development. For instance, in the early 6th century, Lenamoti 勒那摩提 (Ratnamati, fl. 6th century) translated the *Baoxing lun* (寶性論, *Ratnagotravibhāgamahāyānottaratantraśāstra*), rendering the Skt. *samālā* (impurities) as 雜垢 (zá gòu, “mixed filth”).⁴⁹ Additionally, in this text, “雜穢” is directly contrasted with 淨妙 (jìng miào, “pure and marvelous”),⁵⁰ further emphasizing the negative associations of “雜”.

Beyond Xuanzang, the substitution of “雜染” for “染” (defilement) can also be observed, highlighting nuanced differences in their interpretative approaches. For instance:

Tan Wuchen 曇無讖 (Dharmakṣema, 385–433) in the *Da fangdeng daji jing* (大方等大集經) used 染: “一切法無染門, 自性寂靜故。”⁵¹ (All dharmas are untainted; their own nature is quiescence).

Bukong 不空 (Amoghavajra, 705–774) in the *Daji daxukongzangpusa suowen jing* (大集大虛空藏菩薩所問經) introduced “雜染” to modify 染: “云何無雜染? 謂一切法性寂靜故。”⁵² (How can there be no mixed defilement? It is because the nature of all dharmas is quiescence).

This shift suggests that later translators increasingly used “雜染” to highlight a more nuanced or composite concept of impurity, distinguishing it from the simpler notion of 染.

Interestingly, although Xuanzang occasionally replaced earlier translators’ term “染污” (defilement) with “雜染”, he also retained numerous instances of “染污” in his own translations. However, in later translations, these retained instances of “染污” were further replaced, reinforcing the trend toward using “雜” in a negative sense. A comparison between Xuanzang’s translation in the *Da baoji jing* (大寶積經, *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*) and Fahu’s 法護 (Dharmarakṣa, 963–1058) translation in the *Dasheng pusazang zhengfa jing* (大乘菩薩藏正法經) demonstrates this shift:

Xuanzang: “一者慳垢染污, 二者惡戒垢染污, 三者瞋垢染污, 四者懈怠垢染污, 五者散亂垢染污, 六者惡慧垢染污, 七者不遵尊教垢染污, 八者邪疑垢染污, 九者不信解垢染污, 十者不恭敬垢染污。”⁵³ (First, the defilement of stinginess. Second, the defilement of bad discipline. Third, the defilement of anger. Fourth, the defile-

ment of laziness. Fifth, the defilement of distraction. Sixth, the defilement of perverted wisdom. Seventh, the defilement of not following the revered teachings. Eighth, the defilement of wrong doubt. Ninth, the defilement of lack of faith and understanding. Tenth, the defilement of disrespect).

Fahu: “一者慳悋垢雜染，二者毀戒垢雜染，三者瞋恚垢雜染，四者懈怠垢雜染，五者散亂垢雜染，六者惡慧垢雜染，七者無聞垢雜染，八者疑惑垢雜染，九者無信解垢雜染，十者不尊重垢雜染。”⁵⁴ (First, the mixed defilement of stinginess. Second, the mixed defilement of broken discipline. Third, the mixed defilement of anger. Fourth, the mixed defilement of laziness. Fifth, the mixed defilement of distraction. Sixth, the mixed defilement of perverted wisdom. Seventh, the mixed defilement of ignorance of teachings. Eighth, the mixed defilement of doubt and confusion. Ninth, the mixed defilement of lack of faith and understanding. Tenth, the mixed defilement of disrespect).

It is evident that Xuanzang and other translators of his time primarily employed “雜” as a functional word. This functional role allowed it to pair with other terms to form disyllabic compounds that collectively conveyed negative meanings. The terms “雜染” and “雜穢” exemplify this usage. In these compounds, “染” (defilement) and “穢” (filth) carry the core semantic weight, while “雜” serves primarily as a structural filler to create disyllabic expressions. This suggests that “雜” in such contexts may have become semantically vacuous,⁵⁵ functioning solely as a negative marker rather than retaining its original sense of “mixed” or “varied”.

A further indication of 雜’s role as a negative marker is found in earlier translations. In Kumārajīva’s *Zhufa wuxing jing* (諸法無行經), monks who fail to adhere to precepts are described as engaging in 雜行 (deviant conduct). This usage was directly adopted by Shenajueduo (闍那崛多) in the Sui dynasty’s *Zhufa benwu jing* (諸法本無經).⁵⁶ Similarly, in Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdesaśūtra* (維摩詰所說經), the term 雜行 corresponds to the Skt. *aṅgaṇa* (blemish, depravity).⁵⁷ In these cases, “雜” is employed not to denote literal mixing but to emphasize impurity or deviation, reinforcing a negative characterization. This linguistic shift underscores how “雜” evolved from a neutral marker of variety to an integral part of Buddhist terminology, denoting impurity, heterogeneity, and doctrinal deviation.

6. Conclusions

The preceding analysis allows us to draw several key conclusions regarding the evolving semantic role of 雜 in Chinese Buddhist translations. In early Buddhist texts, “雜” frequently corresponds to Sanskrit terms such as *miśra*, *vaicitrya*, *viśva*, and *saṃbhinna*, generally conveying notions of “mixed” or “varied”. However, in Xuanzang’s translations, “雜” appears with significantly greater frequency, often forming disyllabic compounds, such as “雜染” and “雜穢”. The semantic meanings expressed by these compounds, however, do not fully align with the original Sanskrit texts.

Originally, concepts that could be conveyed using terms such as “不淨” or “穢” were deliberately reinterpreted by Xuanzang using “雜染” and “雜穢”. In this context, “雜” took on connotations that closely approximated impurity, marking a clear semantic shift. Xuanzang consciously replaced earlier translators’ terminology, prioritizing 雜-based compounds to reinterpret impurity and defilement within Buddhist discourse.

In early Chinese Buddhist literature, however, “雜” primarily functioned as a neutral descriptor, commonly used to indicate the collection or diversity of texts and phenomena. This neutral usage is evident in the titles of numerous Buddhist compilations, such as the *Za baozang jing*, where “雜” signifies the aggregation of thematically related scriptures. Analyzing the original meaning of “雜” in classical Chinese sources highlights its primary sense as denoting aggregation, along with extended meanings such as inclusion,

collaboration, and embellishment. In these contexts, “雜” carried no inherent positive or negative valuation.

However, when used as an adjective to describe a state, “雜” extends beyond “varied” or “diverse” to include connotations of impurity, disorder, and deviation from normative standards—thus increasingly adopting a negative tone. Within Chinese Buddhist literature, the opposition between “雜” and “純” (purity) gradually led to the emergence of “雜” as a tool for distinguishing orthodoxy from heterogeneity, particularly in the context of textual mixing during Buddhist scriptural transmission. This shift is evident not only in indigenous Chinese Buddhist writings but also in translated scriptures, where “雜” became an essential term to characterize negative phenomena.

Xuanzang’s translations exemplify this semantic transformation, wherein the abstract doctrinal opposition between purity and impurity was restructured into a concrete contrast between “清淨” and “雜穢”. This reinterpretation enabled anything that defiled the mind or carried negative connotations—even when the original Sanskrit did not explicitly contain the notion of “mixed”—to be rendered in Chinese using “雜”, thereby facilitating semantic substitutions that reinforced negative associations.

Furthermore, Xuanzang and his contemporaries often employed “雜” as a functional linguistic element that combined with other terms to form disyllabic compounds, collectively conveying negative meanings. For instance, in terms such as “雜染” and “雜穢”, the core semantic weight is carried by “染” (defilement) and “穢” (filth), while “雜” serves as a structural filler to complete the disyllabic word. In such cases, “雜” might have become semantically vacuous, functioning more as a linguistic device than as a term with independent meaning. This finding suggests that not all instances of “雜” in Buddhist texts should be understood as denoting mere mixture or diversity; instead, in many contexts, it functions primarily as a negative marker, reinforcing unfavorable connotations.

By examining Xuanzang’s strategic use of “雜”, this study provides a focused case study on the deliberate lexical choices of Buddhist translators. It reveals how translators employed subtle linguistic strategies to reinterpret doctrinal concepts and adapt them to specific cultural and linguistic frameworks. Xuanzang’s practice of replacing terminology from earlier translations reflects a broader phenomenon in Buddhist scriptural transmission, where multiple translations of the same content often resulted in notable linguistic and conceptual shifts. These systematic substitutions provide valuable insights into the evolving cultural contexts of Buddhist translators and their interpretations of Buddhist doctrines.

More broadly, this research highlights the transformative role of linguistic choices in shaping doctrinal meaning and cultural transmission. The shift of “雜” from a neutral descriptor to a marker of impurity and heterogeneity underscores the dynamic interplay between language and ideology in Buddhist translations. This case study illustrates how subtle lexical changes influence doctrinal interpretation, sectarian identity, and the broader reception of Buddhist thought in China.

Finally, this study underscores the importance of analyzing translation practices as a means of tracing patterns of cultural adaptation and understanding the enduring legacy of textual transmission. Future research could extend this analysis to other frequently modified Buddhist terms, further illuminating the linguistic and philosophical evolution of Chinese Buddhist discourse.

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Abbreviations

Skt.	Sanskrit word
Vkn	<i>Vimalakīrtinirdeśa</i>
CBETA	Comprehensive Buddhist Electronic Text Archive Foundation

Notes

¹ See Huang (2011, p. 23). For additional perspectives on Xuanzang’s translation style, see Fan (2022).

² See CBETA (n.d., T54, no. 2131, p. 1057c7-12).

³ Regarding the frequency of “雜”, this study utilized the statistical function of CBETA Online. See: <https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/search/?q=%E9%9B%9C&lang=zh> (accessed on 11 March 2025).

⁴ The attribution of this translation remains a subject of scholarly debate. Drawing upon various perspectives, four primary hypotheses have emerged: (1) the text was translated by Zhi Qian (支謙); (2) it was rendered into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa (竺法護); (3) it was initially translated by Yan Fotiao (嚴佛調) and later revised by Zhi Qian; or (4) it was first translated by Zhi Qian and subsequently revised by Dharmarakṣa. Although no definitive consensus has been reached, scholars generally acknowledge that this scripture was translated at an early date and that it bears a close connection to Zhi Qian. For further discussion, see Ono (1983, p. 35), Shi (1998, p. 217), Sakaino (1972, pp. 147–48), Karashima (2015, p. 92), and Radich (2019, p. 33).

⁵ Zhi Qian’s version features 15 instances of “雜”, Kumārajīva’s version includes 5 instances, and Xuanzang’s version contains 29 instances.

⁶ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 474, p. 534b27-28).

⁷ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 475, p. 555a11).

⁸ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 476, p. 584b10).

⁹ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 475, p. 553a10).

¹⁰ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 476, p. 580c4).

¹¹ This study utilized the *Thesaurus Literaturae Buddhicae* (TLB n.d.) database at the University of Oslo for comparing different versions of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*. For details, see: <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=volume&vid=37> (accessed on 7 December 2024).

¹² CBETA (n.d., T06, no. 220, p. 450b10-11).

¹³ CBETA (n.d., T06, no. 220, p. 1047c15-17).

¹⁴ For example, Liu Yiqing 劉義慶’s *Shishuo xinyu* (世說新語) says: “劉公榮與人飲酒, 雜穢非類, 人或譏之 (Liu Gongrong, when partaking in drinking gatherings, was known to mix with individuals of diverse and sometimes questionable backgrounds. Some critics have taken him to task for this association)”.

¹⁵ See Karashima (2001, p. 409).

¹⁶ The English translation of the Sanskrit is from Gomez and Harrison (2022, pp. 14–15).

¹⁷ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 474, p. 520b24-26).

¹⁸ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 475, p. 538c6-8).

¹⁹ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 476, p. 559c26-28).

²⁰ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 474, p. 524a16-17).

²¹ CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 476, p. 565a25-26).

²² It is noteworthy that Xuanzang had already used “無雜” earlier in the same passage. He translated “無雜” to correspond to Skt. *asamsṛṣṭa*, which means “not mixed with” (rendered by Zhi Qian as 不會 and by Kumārajīva as 不合). Given this precedent, Xuanzang’s translation of Skt. *parisuddhā* as “無雜” may have been influenced by his earlier usage, suggesting a deliberate attempt to maintain terminological consistency within the passage.

²³ CBETA (n.d., T31, no. 1593, p. 116a4-6).

²⁴ CBETA (n.d., T31, no. 1594, p. 135b24-26).

²⁵ This study utilized the *DEDU Parallel Reading System* provided by Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts for a comparative analysis of Xuanzang’s and Paramārtha’s translations. Specifically, it consulted Lin Peizhen 林佩貞’s work (Lin 2003), “《攝大乘論》玄奘與真諦譯本 (全文對讀)” (*A Parallel Reading of Xuanzang’s and Paramārtha’s Translations of the She Dacheng Lun*). For details, see: <https://dedu.dila.edu.tw/view/61cf0a123236b> (accessed on 7 December 2024).

- 26 It should be noted that Skt. *sambhinna* convey the meaning of “mixed” and can therefore be translated as “雜”.
- 27 The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* was translated into Chinese by Paramārtha as *Apidamo jushe lun* (阿毘達磨俱舍論) and later retranslated by Xuanzang as *Apidamo jushe shi lun* (阿毘達磨俱舍釋論). This study utilized the *DEDU Parallel Reading System* provided by Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts for a comparative analysis of Xuanzang’s and Paramārtha’s translations. Specifically, it consulted the resource “阿毘達磨俱舍釋論 *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*”, provided by the “數位典藏組” ([Digital Archives Team n.d.](#)). For details, see: <https://dedu.dila.edu.tw/view/Abhidharmakosabhasya> (accessed on 7 December 2024).
- 28 The *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經) does not have a fully corresponding Sanskrit title. The reconstructed Sanskrit title *Samyuktāgama* is based on the Pali equivalent *Samyutta-nikāya*. In the *Za ahan jing*, instances of the term “雜” generally indicate “various” (e.g., “雜類” [miscellaneous categories], “雜色” [various colors], or “雜香” [various fragrances]) or “mixed” (e.g., “雜泥食” [mixed with mud food], “雜酪飯” [mixed rice and milk]).
- 29 The *Za abidamo xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論 has multiple historical translations, with most versions retaining the same title. The extant version is the translation by the Liu Song monk Sengjiabaluō 僧伽跋摩 (Saṃghavarman). According to the preface, this Buddhist text is a commentary on the *Abhidharmahṛdaya*, compiled by Dharmatrāta from various sources. Given the composite nature of the text, it incorporates multiple commentaries interwoven with the original *Abhidharmahṛdaya*. Therefore, the term “雜” in the title can be understood as “mixed”, indicating that the work draws upon and blends multiple sources. Throughout the text, “雜” frequently conveys this sense of integration and synthesis.
- 30 The *Za baozang jing* (雜寶藏經) currently lacks a fully corresponding Sanskrit title. Scholars commonly refer to it as *Samyuktaratna-piṭakasūtra*, though the text itself does not include the character “雜” (mixed). Additionally, no authoritative preface explains the origin of this title. The term “雜” here signifies “collection”, and “雜寶藏” implies the gathering of various treasures. This interpretation aligns with the compilation format of the scripture, which assembles diverse narratives to illustrate Buddhist teachings and moral principles.
- 31 For instance, the *Fo benxing ji jing* (佛本行集經), translated by Shenajueduo 闍那崛多 during the Sui dynasty, and the *Dasheng daji dizang shilun jing* (大乘大集地藏十輪經), translated by Xuanzang during the Tang dynasty.
- 32 It is important to note that in traditional Chinese culture, “雜” was also used as a descriptive noun for objects, such as “雜木” (mixed wood), which originally referred to variegated wood. In later periods, this term took on a pejorative meaning, coming to denote inferior-quality wood. However, in Buddhist texts, terms like “雜香” (mixed incense) and “雜華” (mixed flowers) do not imply variegation but simply refer to a mixture of different types of incense or flowers, maintaining a neutral and non-pejorative connotation.
- 33 CBETA (n.d., T09, no. 262, p. 35a10-12).
- 34 CBETA (n.d., T09, no. 262, p. 48c2-3).
- 35 This study utilized the Thesaurus Literaturae Buddhicae (TLB n.d.) database at the University of Oslo for comparing different versions of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*. For details, see: <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=volume&vid=483> (accessed on 7 December 2024). The case of 雜華, See <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=483&mid=814555> and <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=483&mid=815401> (accessed on 7 December 2024).
- 36 CBETA (n.d., T09, no. 262, p. 11c20).
- 37 See <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=483&mid=812860> (accessed on 7 December 2024).
- 38 See Karashima (1998, p. 569) and Karashima (2010, pp. 619–20).
- 39 See CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 474, p. 520c4 and T14, no. 474, p. 534c1-2).
- 40 Examples like “純粹而不雜，靜一而不變，愜而無為，動而以天行，此養神之道也” (*pure and without mixture, calm and unchanging, tranquil and effortless, moving in harmony with the natural order – this is the way to nourish the spirit*) and “故素也者，謂其無所與雜也；純也者，謂其不虧其神也。能體純素，謂之真人” (*the plain signifies it is untainted; the pure signifies it does not diminish its essence. To embody the pure and plain is to be a true person*) illustrate how “雜” is contrasted with purity (純) and simplicity (素), reinforcing its negative connotation in certain philosophical contexts.
- 41 CBETA (n.d., T55, no. 2145, p. 72b1-3).
- 42 CBETA (n.d., T55, no. 2145, p. 58b27-c2).
- 43 CBETA (n.d., T45, no. 1859, p. 162a17-18).
- 44 CBETA (n.d., T55, no. 2145, pp. 38c17-39a5).
- 45 CBETA (n.d., T55, no. 2145, p. 63a3-4).
- 46 CBETA (n.d., T55, no. 2145, p. 63a17-18).
- 47 For example, see <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=37&mid=129602> (accessed on 7 December 2024) and <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=37&mid=129467> (accessed on 7 December 2024).
- 48 For instance, see <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=511&mid=963197> (accessed on 7 December 2024).

- 49 See <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=1125&mid=1943583> (accessed on 7 December 2024).
- 50 See <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=record&view=record&vid=1125&mid=1944012> (accessed on 7 December 2024). *Baoxing lun* (寶性論), volume 4: “轉雜穢身得淨妙身。” (Transforming the defiled body to attain the pure and marvelous body). CBETA (n.d., T31, no. 1611, p. 841a3).
- 51 CBETA (n.d., T13, no. 397, p. 93c25-26).
- 52 CBETA (n.d., T13, no. 404, p. 614a3-4).
- 53 CBETA (n.d., T11, no. 310, p. 197c2-7).
- 54 CBETA (n.d., T11, no. 316, p. 783c19-23).
- 55 Similarly, Zhu (1992, pp. 138–48) observed that during the evolution of disyllabic word formation in Chinese vocabulary, certain monosyllabic words exhibited a particularly strong tendency to combine with other terms, facilitating their transition from monosyllabic to disyllabic forms. Examples of such words include 行 (xíng), 毒 (dú), 復 (fù), and 自 (zì), among others.
- 56 *Zhufa wuxing jing* (諸法無行經): “是比丘雜行, 去佛道甚遠。” (These monks engage in deviant conduct, straying far from the Buddha’s path). CBETA (n.d., T15, no. 650, p. 753a28-29). *Zhufa benwu jing* (諸法本無經): “此比丘雜行, 去菩提遠。” (These monks engage in deviant conduct, straying far from enlightenment). CBETA (n.d., T15, no. 651, p. 764c20-21).
- 57 Vkn: *adhyāśayamaitrī niraṅgaṇatayā* (The love which is one’s highest ambition because there is no evil in it. cf. Gomez and Harrison (2022, p. 72). Kumārajīva: “行深心慈, 無雜行故。” (Engaging in profound compassion, free from mixed conduct), CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 475, p. 547b29-c1). Xuanzang: “修深心慈, 離瑕穢故。” (Cultivating profound compassion, because free from filth and blemishes). CBETA (n.d., T14, no. 476, p. 573a23-24).

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