

Article

Tracing the Origin of the Prepositional Construction *chu* (除) in Chinese: A Sanskrit–Chinese Comparative Study

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Abstract

Focusing on a pivotal yet underexplored syntactic phenomenon, this study demonstrates that the prepositional construction *chu* (除), essential for marking exception and inclusion, not only finds its earliest documented origins exclusively within translated Buddhist scriptures of the Eastern Han–Sui period, but also reveals within them a tripartite system of grammatical meanings: (1) an exclusive usage, highlighting element B in contrast to A; (2) an additive usage, supplementing A with B; and (3) a conditional–exceptive usage, expressing “only if A, then B”. To account for this novel system, this study employs a contrastive analysis of parallel texts, meticulously comparing the Chinese translations with their Sanskrit originals. The analysis reveals that *chu* (除) served as a systematic calque, corresponding to a defined set of Sanskrit morphosyntactic forms: the absolute participles (*sthāpayitvā*, *sthāpetv*, *vinirmucya*) and the past passive participle *virahita* (all conveying exception); the adverb *api* (expressing inclusion); and the indeclinable *anyatra* (meaning “except”). Integrating evidence from historical Chinese corpora with Sino–Sanskrit comparative data, this study establishes that the tripartite semantic system of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) constitutes a syntactic calque on Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, rather than an endogenous development. This finding provides a robust case of contact-induced grammatical replication, thereby illuminating the profound and specific impact of Sanskrit-to-Chinese translation on the trajectory of Chinese syntactic history.

Keywords: language contact; grammatical replication; syntactic calque; prepositional construction *chu* (除); Chinese Buddhist translations; Sanskrit–Chinese comparison

1. Introduction

The prepositional construction *chu* (除), a key syntactic device for marking exceptive and inclusive relations, presents a long-standing historical puzzle in Chinese grammar, owing to the uncertain origins of its semantic complexity. While its modern usage is largely confined to two functions—the exclusive (“except”) and the additive (“in addition to”) (S. Lü 1999)—an examination of early Chinese Buddhist translations (Eastern Han through Sui) reveals that both were already fully operational.¹ More crucially, this pre-medieval corpus attests to a third, functionally distinct type: a conditional–exceptive meaning (“only if A, then B”) that has since largely disappeared. This study, therefore, focuses on the complete tripartite system (exclusive, additive, and conditional–exceptive) uniquely preserved in this vital yet understudied body of texts. By systematically mapping the construction’s grammatical functions and syntactic realizations, and by conducting a contrastive analysis with available Sanskrit sources, the study seeks not only to provide a comprehensive description of this system but also to trace the historical trajectory of its development.



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2. A Historical-Syntactic Study of the Prepositional Construction *chu* (除): Evidence from Early Chinese Buddhist Translations

Drawing on a corpus of early Chinese Buddhist translations (Eastern Han to Sui)², this study proposes a tripartite functional–structural taxonomy for the prepositional construction *chu* (除): (1) Exclusive, foregrounding B by excluding A; (2) Additive, introducing B as an addition to the set defined by A; and (3) Conditional–Exceptive (“only if A, then B”), where B holds only if condition A is met.

2.1. Exclusive Type: Functions to Foreground the B-Element (Exclusive Usage)

As a high-frequency core pattern of the prepositional construction *chu* (除),³ this form profiles a semantic relationship that is pragmatically constrained: it must hold between an antecedent (A) and a consequent (B) whose opposition is grounded in the interlocutors’ common ground. The construction “A and B are contrastive and complementary” serves to profile the dual relationship of contrast and complementarity between A and B, while simultaneously according greater cognitive salience to B. This semantic configuration is underpinned by an opposition that operates primarily at the propositional level (affirmative vs. negative) and secondarily at the lexical-conceptual level (semantic differentiation). The formal realization of this configuration often involves the marking of the subsequent element B with universal or residual quantifiers, such as *xi* (悉 “all”), *ju* (俱 “together”), *jie* (皆 “all”), *yiqie* (一切 “everything”), *gengwu* (更無 “none other”), *qiyu* (其餘 “the rest”), or *yu* (餘 “remainder”). Thus, A and B form a tightly coupled pair in a reverse relationship, where one precedes and the other follows, each defined in opposition to the other. For example:

(1) 是彼善男子、善女人，彼所止處當完堅無有燒者，除其宿罪不請，餘不能動。（東漢支謙譯《道行般若經》卷二，8/435a⁴）

For those virtuous men and women, wherever they dwell will be secure and firm, without any disturbances. **Only** their unresolved karmic offenses retain the power to cause harm; all else is incapable of it.

The scope under discussion here is *bi suo zhichu dang wanjian wuyou raozhe* 彼所止處當完堅無有燒者 “wherever they dwell will be secure and firm, without any disturbances”. The phrase *qi suzui buqing* 其宿罪不請 “their unresolved karmic offenses retain the power to cause harm” functions as the preceding element A of the prepositional construction *chu* (除), while *yu bu neng dong* 餘不能動 “all else is incapable of it” is the following element B. The two elements—A and B—are in a relationship of semantic opposition and are directionally contrastive. This contrast falls within the range of mutually known information shared by the speaker and the hearer. The relationship between A and B is one of complementary opposition: the exception A (*qi suzui buqing* 其宿罪不請 “their unresolved karmic offenses retain the power to cause harm”) is explicitly contrasted with and thus highlights the significance of B (*yu bu neng dong* 餘不能動 “all else is incapable of it”). The following element B is further reinforced by the presence of the residual quantifier *yu* 餘 “all else”, marking a typical form-function correspondence of such prepositional construction *chu* (除).

(2) 除身之外，更無錢財。（吳支謙譯《菩薩本緣經》卷上，3/56b）

Except for my body, I possess no other wealth.

This example focuses on the semantic domain of terms like *shen* 身 “body” and *qiancai* 錢財 “wealth”. The word *shen* 身 “body” constitutes the first part (A) of the construction involving the preposition *chu* 除 “except for”, while *gengwu qiancai* 更無錢財 “there is no other wealth” forms the second part (B). The relationship between *shen* 身 “the body” and *gengwu qiancai* 更無錢財 “there is no other wealth” is oppositional and contrastive. Both expressions fall within the realm of shared knowledge between the speaker and the

hearer. The two are mutually exclusive and complementary, with the opposition serving to emphasize the significance of the latter clause—*geng wu qiancai* 更無錢財 “there is no other wealth”. The latter part (B) is reinforced by the phrase *gengwu* 更無 “there is truly no”, understanding its weight in the discourse.

The disyllabic compound *weichu* (唯除) serves to mark a relationship of mutual exclusivity and contrast between two propositions, its primary pragmatic force residing in the second constituent (B). This functional profile is unequivocally instantiated in the following example:

(3)一時婆伽婆住舍婆提城祇陀樹林給孤獨園，與大比丘眾千二百五十人俱。皆是阿羅漢.....唯除一人尊者阿難，餘者悉是大阿羅漢。（元魏般若流支譯《得無垢女經》，1297c）

At one time, the Bhagavān was residing in the Jeta Grove of Anāthapiṇḍada’s Park in Śrāvastī, together with a great assembly of 1250 monks. All were arhats...excluding one, the venerable Ānanda; all the rest were great arhats.

(4)我聞快目王自誓布施，唯除父母不以施耳，其餘一切不逆來意。（元魏慧覺等譯《賢愚經》卷六，4/391c）

I heard that King Kuaimu made a vow to practice giving, excluding his parents, whom he would not offer; he did not go against anyone’s request.

Likewise, *chuque* (除却) instantiates the same exceptive–contrastive schema, its primary pragmatic effect being the foregrounding of the subsequent constituent (B). For example:

(5)除却斷命，不壞諸根。（元魏菩提流支譯《大薩遮尼乾子所說經》卷四，9/333c）

Except for taking life, one does not harm their sense faculties.

The prepositional construction *chu* (除), which encodes mutual exclusivity and contrast with a focus on the excluded element (B), exhibits flexibility in its constituent order. Specifically, the positions of its two core constituents are reversible, a syntactic option that is pragmatically conditioned and employed to meet contextual needs, as demonstrated in the following examples:

(6)設我得佛，國中人天壽命無能限量，除其本願修短自在。（曹魏康僧鎧譯《無量壽經》卷上，12/268a）

If I attain Buddhahood, the lifespans of humans and devas in my Pure Land shall be limitless, except for those who, by virtue of their own original vows, take on a life of predetermined length.

(6)‘設我得佛，除其本願修短自在，國中人天壽命無能限量。

If I attain Buddhahood, except for those who, by virtue of their own original vows, take on a life of predetermined length, the lifespans of humans and devas in my Pure Land shall be limitless.

The disyllabic compound *weichu* (唯除) serves to mark an exclusive contrast between two propositions, with the pragmatic focus predominantly falling on the second element (B). Notably, the linear order of these elements is pragmatically motivated and can be reversed to meet specific contextual demands, as illustrated in the following examples:

(7)一切種智所修集法，其誰聞者而不雨淚？然以此淚能禳災患，唯除宿業。（後秦鳩摩羅什譯《大莊嚴論經》卷八，4/298a）

Who, upon hearing the Dharma cultivated and accumulated through the wisdom of all modes, would not shed tears? Yet these tears can avert calamities, excluding karmic retribution from past actions.

(7)‘一切種智所修集法，其誰聞者而不雨淚？唯除宿業，然以此淚能禳災患。

Who, upon hearing the Dharma cultivated and accumulated through the wisdom of all modes, would not shed tears? Excluding karmic retribution from past actions, these tears can avert calamities.

(8)明日當教帝須一切佛法及義，唯除律藏。（蕭齊僧伽跋陀羅譯《善見律毗婆沙》卷一，24/679c）

Tomorrow I shall instruct the monk Tīṣya in all the Buddha-dharma and its meanings, **with the exception of** the Vinaya Piṭaka.

(8) 唯除律藏，明日當教帝須一切佛法及義。

With the exception of the Vinaya Piṭaka, tomorrow I shall instruct the monk Tīṣya in all the Buddha-dharma and its meanings.

In the corpus of Classical Chinese, the disyllabic term *weichu* (唯除) is attested also in the graphic variant *weichu* (惟除). This orthographic variation is illustrated in the following examples:

(9) 我從初發菩提心來更不見佛，**惟除**燃燈。(元魏般若流支譯《奮迅王問經》卷下，13/942b)

Ever since I first generated bodhicitta, I have not beheld another Buddha—**with the sole exception of** Dīpaṃkara.

(9) 惟除燃燈，我從初發菩提心來更不見佛。

With the sole exception of Dīpaṃkara, ever since I first generated bodhicitta, I have not beheld another Buddha.

2.2. Additive Type: Functions to Add B to the Base of A (Additive Usage)

In this construction, the relationship between the preceding element (A) and the subsequent element (B) is not one of coordination, but rather one of asymmetric addition: B is appended to A and is syntactically dependent upon it. Semantically, this structure frequently encodes informational layering or progression, with A providing the background or foundation and B constituting the foreground or semantic core. This hierarchically ordered, sequential arrangement naturally facilitates semantic progression when B extends or elaborates upon A. Critically, the additive and scalar nature of this relationship is often formally marked by degree adverbs such as *zhengshi* (正使 “even”), *gengyi* (更亦 “further”), *jiexiljie* (皆悉/皆 “altogether”), *yi* (亦 “also”), or *yu* (餘 “the rest”), which explicitly signal the semantic and often scalar asymmetry between A and B. For example:

(10) 除在惡師邊，正使在善師邊，其功德薄少。⁵ (西晉竺法護譯《般舟三昧經》⁶卷上，13/907c)

Apart from being near a spiritually harmful teacher, even if one is with a virtuous spiritual teacher, their merits are scant.

The phrase *zai e'shi bian* 在惡師邊 “being near a spiritually harmful teacher” constitutes the preceding element A in the construction involving *chu* (除 “apart from”), while *zhengshi zai shanshi bian* 正使在善師邊 “even if one is with a virtuous spiritual teacher” serves as the subsequent element B. These two are not coordinated as equals, but rather B is added on top of A, forming a sequential and directional relationship that conveys a sense of layering or progression. *Zai e'shi bian* 在惡師邊 “being near a spiritually harmful teacher” functions merely as a prelude or setup, whereas *zhengshi zai shanshi bian* 正使在善師邊 “even if one is with a virtuous spiritual teacher” is the core point and the focus of the statement. The use of the correlative expression *zhengshi* (正使 “even if”) in B further reinforces its status as the crucial, emphasized part.

(11) 除此三種變，更亦有神變。(後秦鳩摩羅什譯《大莊嚴論經》卷一五，4/343c)

In addition to these three types of transformations, there are further miraculous displays.

In this sentence, *ci san zhong bian* 此三種變 “these three types of transformations” constitutes the preceding element A in the construction involving *chu* (除 “in addition to”), while *gengyi you shenbian* 更亦有神變 “there are further miraculous displays” is the subsequent element B. The relationship between A and B is not one of equal coordination, but rather one of addition built upon A. It is directional and sequential, carrying a sense of accumulation and progression. *Ci san zhong bian* 此三種變 “these three types of transformations” serves as the prelude, while *gengyi you shenbian* 更亦有神變 “there are further

miraculous displays” is the core focus and main point of emphasis. The use of the correlative phrase *gengyi* (更亦 “further”) in B further marks its prominence and illustrates the hierarchical relationship between A and B.

2.3. Conditional–Exceptive Type (“Only if A, Then B”): Functions to Present B as Contingent upon A (Conditional–Exceptive Usage)

In this construction⁷, *chu* (除) functions to mark an exclusive conditional relation. Here, the logical entailment operates through exclusion: the antecedent (A) serves as a necessary condition that must be absent or set aside for the consequent (B) to hold. Thus, the construction specifically frames A as the excluded condition, thereby stipulating that proposition B is valid only when A is not in effect. For example:

(12) 守口攝意，身無犯惡，除是三行，得賢經度。(吳康僧會譯《六度集經》卷六，3/32b)

Guarding one’s speech and disciplining the mind, committing no evil through the body—**except through** these three practices, one obtains the true path to liberation.

In this sentence, *shi san xing* 是三行 “these three practices” serves as the preceding element (A) in the prepositional construction *chu* (除), while *de xianjing du* 得賢經度 “obtains the true path to liberation” is the following element (B). The relation between A and B is conditional: the attainment of liberation is conditioned upon the performance of these three practices. Specifically, this prepositional construction *chu* (除) encodes A as a necessary condition for B, thereby positing these three practices as the indispensable gateway to liberation.

(13) 菩薩演說不可思議諸佛法時，學及無學、聲聞、緣覺，除佛護持，不能信解。(劉宋求那跋陀羅譯《大方廣寶篋經》卷上，14/468c)

When a Bodhisattva expounds the profound Dharma of the Buddha, neither śaikṣas, aśaikṣas, śrāvakas, nor pratyekabuddhas are able to believe or comprehend it—**unless** they receive the empowerment of the Buddha.

In this sentence, *fo huchi* 佛護持 “the empowerment of the Buddha” serves as the preceding element (A) in the prepositional construction *chu* (除), while *buneng xinjie* 不能信解 “are not able to believe or comprehend it” is the following element (B). The relation between A and B is conditional: the receipt of belief and understanding is conditioned upon the empowerment of the Buddha. Specifically, this prepositional construction *chu* (除) encodes A as a necessary condition for B, thereby receiving the empowerment of the Buddha as an indispensable condition for believing and comprehending.

In Classical Chinese, disyllabic expressions such as *weichu* (唯除) serve to encode an exclusive conditional relationship. This relationship is defined by the premise that B is permissible or valid only on the explicit condition that A is excluded. A classic manifestation of this logic is found in the formulation of monastic precepts.

(14) 女人所用衣服悉一切不得捉。若捉，突吉羅；唯除布施，得取。(蕭齊僧伽跋陀羅譯《善見律毗婆沙》卷一二，24/762b)

For a bhikṣu, handling garments used by women constitutes a *duṣkṛta* offense, **unless** those garments have been formally given to him as alms, in which case he may receive them.

(15) 入手，尼薩耆；唯除親里比丘尼，不犯。(蕭齊僧伽跋陀羅譯《善見律毗婆沙》卷一四，24/774c)

It is an offense entailing relinquishment to take it, **except when** taken from a related bhikkhunī.

Building on the tripartite classification proposed above, the Conditional–Exceptive type of the prepositional construction *chu* (除), which encodes the logic “B only if A” also demonstrates syntactic flexibility. The order of the conditional clause (A) and the main clause (B) can be inverted to serve contextual or rhetorical purposes, as demonstrated below:

(16)外寇欲來攻者，終不能得，除其內人與外通也。（後秦竺佛念譯《出曜經》卷八，4/652b）

No external enemies would ever be able to conquer it—**except in the case of** collusion between insiders and outsiders.

(16)‘除其內人與外通也，外寇欲來攻者，終不能得。

Except in the case of collusion between insiders and outsiders, external enemies, even if they wish to attack, will never prevail.

(17)不與惡人同坐起，除彼為眾說法處。（隋達磨笈多譯《大方等大集經菩薩念佛三昧分》卷七，13/857c）

He does not sit or associate with wicked people, **except when** teaching the Dharma to the assembly in their presence.

(17)‘除彼為眾說法處，不與惡人同坐起。

Except when he is teaching the Dharma to the assembly, he does not sit or associate with wicked people.

The disyllabic expression *weichu* (唯除, “save only for”/“with the sole exception of”) introduces an exclusive condition (“B, save only for A”). Notably, the order of the two clauses (B and A) is reversible, a syntactic flexibility driven by contextual or rhetorical purposes, as the following examples demonstrate:

(18)我今正燒草，得波夜提；教人燒，得突吉羅；唯除護住處，得燒。（蕭齊僧伽跋陀羅譯《善見律毗婆沙》卷一一，24/754b）

If I myself burn grass, I incur a *pārājika* offense; if I instruct others to burn it, I incur a *duṣkṛta* offense—**except when** burning to protect the residence, in which case it is permitted.

(18)‘我今正燒草，得波夜提；教人燒，得突吉羅；得燒，唯除護住處。

Burning grass entails a *pārājika* offense if done by oneself, or a *duṣkṛta* if instigating others. The sole **exception**, where the act becomes permissible, is **when** it is done to protect the residence.

3. The Origin of the Prepositional Construction *chu* (除) in Chinese

In Chinese Buddhist translations from the Eastern Han to Sui dynasties, the prepositional construction *chu* (除) can be analyzed as comprising three distinct, functionally defined types: (1) the Exclusive type (mutual exclusivity, highlighting B), which corresponds to the well-studied negative exclusive construction; (2) the Additive type (supplementation based on A), often treated under the rubric of the inclusive construction; and (3) the Conditional–Exceptive type (“B only if A”). This constitutes a distinct category that encodes a specific logical relationship: the validity of proposition B is strictly contingent upon the fulfillment of condition A, thereby expressing exception under a stipulated condition.

3.1. The Origin of the Exclusive Usage of the Prepositional Construction *chu* (除) in Chinese

Evidence from digitized corpora⁸ indicates that no attested instances of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) appear in native Chinese literature predating or contemporaneous with the Eastern Han dynasty. However, two occurrences are found in Chinese Buddhist scriptures translated during this period, which currently represent the earliest known examples in extant texts. This temporal and textual distribution offers compelling, corpus-based evidence for the hypothesis that the construction first emerged within the context of Eastern Han Buddhist translation.

Scholarly perspectives on the origin of the exclusive prepositional construction *chu* (除) in Chinese are primarily divided into two camps. The first, known as the Internal Development Hypothesis, posits an indigenous origin. For instance, Wang (2003, pp. 112–13) observes that in texts such as the *Zuozhuan* (左傳) and *Guoyu* (國語), *chu* (除) frequently functions as the second element in disyllabic verb compounds, occupying a complement

position in resultative constructions to indicate the result or direction of an action. Wang suggests that this function was gradually generalized and underwent grammaticalization. Furthermore, Wang argues that the need for a precise linguistic means to express exclusion facilitated the development of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) as a syntactic innovation. Similarly, Chen and Zhu (2009, p. 91) regard the development of *chu* (除) as a process of grammaticalization. They assert that it, “like many other Chinese prepositions, derives from the grammaticalization of a verb,” and maintain that “the prepositional *chu* (除) originates from its verbal sense of ‘to remove’.” Zhao (2020, p. 62) posits that words such as *chu* (除) and *zhi* (置), whose meanings encompass “to put aside”, “to leave aside for the moment” or “to disregard for now” inherently encode a semantics of exclusion. From this semantic base, they naturally grammaticalized into markers of negative exclusivity, following well-established pathways of semantic change. Accordingly, he suggests that the early exclusive use of *chu* (除) and *zhi* (置) emerged precisely through this process of semantic–pragmatic evolution. The second is the Language Contact Hypothesis. Hu (2008, pp. 564–65) proposes a contact-induced origin. He argues that negative exclusive markers such as *chushe* (除捨) in Chinese likely originated as syntactic calques from Sanskrit grammar, particularly through Buddhist translation practices. According to his analysis, these markers constitute direct translations of Sanskrit absolute participles such as *sthāpayitvā* (having put aside) and *muktvā* (having abandoned). Consequently, their emergence in Chinese should be understood as a case of grammatical replication, closely resembling the processes typically triggered by intense language contact with Sanskrit.

Building upon a systematic comparison of Chinese Buddhist translations with their Sanskrit parallels, this study not only corroborates Hu (2008) Language Contact Hypothesis but also refines it. We demonstrate that the negative exclusive construction *chushe* (除捨) in Medieval Chinese functions as a syntactic calque of Sanskrit exclusive expressions, primarily absolute participles like *sthāpayitvā* and *muktvā*. More significantly, our analysis reveals that the translational role of *chu* (除) extended beyond rendering these “abandonment”-notion participles. It was also systematically employed to translate Sanskrit past passive participles (e.g., *virahita*) and the indeclinable *anyatra*—both of which are inherently exclusive markers. This broader pattern of correspondence significantly strengthens the case for contact-induced origin and outlines a more comprehensive picture of the syntactic replication process.

3.1.1. In the Translation of Sanskrit Buddhist Texts into Chinese, Absolute Participles (Such as *Sthāpayitvā*, *Vinirmucya*, and *Sthāpeto*) Are Frequently Translated by Adopting Chinese Constructions That Convey an Exclusive or Exceptional Sense—Namely, “Except” or “Excluding”

This equivalence in translation practice is illustrated in the following example:

(19) 設我得佛，十方眾生至心信樂，欲生我國乃至十念。若不生者，不取正覺。唯除五逆誹謗正法。（曹魏康僧鎧譯《無量壽經》卷上，12/268a）

If, upon my attainment of Buddhahood, sentient beings of the ten directions, with utmost sincerity and joyful faith, wish to be born in my Pure Land and even after forming ten mindful thoughts, yet fail to be born there, then I shall not attain perfect enlightenment—**with the exception of** those who have committed the five gravest offenses or who slander the true Dharma.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

sacen adv. if me pron.1.sg.G. my bhagavan m.sg.V. the world-honored one bodhiprāptasya PPP.m.sg.G. of the accomplished bodhi aprameyāsaṃkhyeṣu FPP.n.pl.L. in the innumerable asaṃkhyeṣa bud-dhakṣetreṣu n.pl.L. in the Buddha-lands ye pron.m.pl.N. those sattvā⁹ m.pl.N. all sentient beings mama pron.1.sg.G. my nāmadheyam n.sg.Ac. name śrutvā ger. hear tatra adv. there buddhakṣetre n.sg.L. in the Buddha-land cittam n.sg.Ac. heart preṣayeyur pra-√iṣ, caus.3.pl.opt.P. cause them to offer upapattaye f.sg.D.

in order to be born *kuśalamūlāni* n.pl.Ac. roots of virtue *ca* conj. and *pariṇāmayeyus* pari-√nam, caus.3. pl.opt.P. make them mature *te* pron.m.pl.N. those *ca* conj. and *tatra* adv. there *buddhakṣetre* n.sg.L. in the Buddha-land *na* indec. no *upapadyerann* upa-√pad, 3.pl.opt.Ā. they can be born *antaśo*¹⁰ adv. even *daśabhiḥ* num.m.pl.I. through ten *cittotpādaparivartaiḥ* m.pl.I. through giving rise to the mind *sthāpayitvā* caus.ger. except *anantaryakāriṇaḥ* adj.m.pl.Ac. the continuous offenses committed *saddharmapratikṣepāvaraṇāvṛtāṃś* adj.m.pl.Ac. the sublime Dharma slandered and obstructed *ca* conj. and *sattvān* m.pl.Ac. all sentient beings *mā* indec. no *tāvad* adv. such *aham* pron.1.sg.N. I *anuttarām* adj.f.sg.Ac. unsurpassed *samyaksambodhim* f.sg.Ac. perfect awakening *abhisambuddhyeyam* abhi-sam-√budh, 1.sg.opt.P. I can realize | 19 | (The larger and smaller *sukhāvatīvyūha* sutras (Fujita 2011, p. 18))

The term *sthāpayitvā* is the absolutive participle of the causative form of the Sanskrit verbal root √*sthā* (to place aside). The object governed by this participle in the source text is *anantaryakāriṇaḥ saddharmapratikṣepāvaraṇāvṛtāṃś sattvān*—that is, *zaozuo wujian zuiye, feibang zu'ai miaofa de zhongsheng men* 造作無間罪業、誹謗阻礙妙法的眾生們 “all sentient beings who have committed the continuous offenses or slandered and obstructed the sublime Dharma”. *Sthāpayitvā* here takes on a prepositional value, meaning “except”. Thus, the phrase *sthāpayitvā anantaryakāriṇaḥ saddharmapratikṣepāvaraṇāvṛtāṃś sattvān* may be translated as *chule zaozuo wujian zuiye, feibang zu'ai miaofa de zhongsheng men* 除了造作無間罪業、誹謗阻礙妙法的眾生們 “except all sentient beings who have committed the continuous offenses or slandered and obstructed the sublime Dharma”. Kang Sen-gkai rendered this phrase as *weichu wuni feibang zhengfa* 唯除五逆誹謗正法 “except [those who] commit the five gravest transgressions and slander the true Dharma”, notably omitting the explicit reference to *sattvān* 眾生們 “all sentient beings”, likely for conciseness or because the referent was considered self-evident from context. The binom *weichu* (唯除)¹¹ is a disyllabic construction used in Chinese Buddhist translation to convey the meaning of the prepositional construction *chu* (除), which accurately captures the functional semantics of *sthāpayitvā* in this context.

Chen Xiulan renders this passage as follows:

World-Honored One, I vow that upon my attainment of Buddhahood, all sentient beings in the countless, immeasurable Buddha-lands who, having heard my name, single-mindedly desire to be born in my Pure Land and dedicate their virtuous roots toward it, shall assuredly be born there—even if only through ten moments of mindfulness—**with** the sole **exception of** those who have committed continuous offenses or who have slandered the True Dharma. If this vow is not fulfilled, I myself will not achieve complete, unsurpassed awakening.

(20)善男子，百千諸佛以神通力共守護汝，於一切世間天人之中無如汝者，**唯除**如來。
(後秦鳩摩羅什譯《妙法蓮華經》卷六，9/54c)

A virtuous man, you are guarded in mind and protected by the spiritual power of hundreds of thousands of buddhas. In all the worlds of devas and humans, there will be none who equals you, **except** the Tathāgata.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

na indec. no *tava* pron.2.sg.G. your *kulaputra* m.sg.V. a virtuous man *sadevake* adj.m.sg.L. (together) with gods *loke* m.sg.L. in the world *samārake* adj.m.sg.L. (together) with Māras *sabrahmake* adj.m.sg.L. (together) with Brahmās *saśramaṇabrahmaṇikāyāṃ* adj.f.sg.L. among monks and brahmins *prajāyāṃ* f.sg.L. among the people *sadrśo*¹² adj.m.sg.N. equal *vidyate* √vid, 3.sg.pres.Ā. it exists *tathāgatam* m.sg.Ac. Tathāgata *ekaṃ* num.m.sg.Ac. one **vinirmucya** ger. except | (saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Kern and Nanjio [1908] 1992, p. 420))

Vinirmucya, as the absolutive (gerund) form of the Sanskrit verb *vi-nir-√muc* (to release), governs the accusative object *tathāgatam ekaṃ* (*yi ge rulai* 一個如來 “one Tathāgata”) and functions as a prepositional phrase meaning “except”. Consequently, the phrase *vinirmucya tathāgatam ekaṃ* translates to *chule yi ge rulai* 除了一個如來 “except one Tathāgata”.

A significant divergence appears in Kumārajīva's classical Chinese translation *weichu rulai* 唯除如來 “except the Tathāgata”, where the numeral *ekam* (*yi ge* 一個 “one”) is not explicitly rendered. Here, the disyllabic form *weichu* (唯除) itself exemplifies the morphological accommodation of Indic syntax, evolving from the monosyllabic preposition *chu* (除).

In his translation, Huang Baosheng renders this passage as follows:

善男子啊，包括天界、魔界和梵界的所有世界，包括沙門和婆羅門的一切眾生，無人能與你相比，除了如來。（《梵漢對勘妙法蓮華經》，Huang 2018, p. 768）

O virtuous men, throughout all worlds including the realms of gods, Māras, and Brahmas, and among all beings such as monks and brahmins, there is no one who compares with you—**except** the Tathāgata.

(21)與諸菩薩及聲聞眾乘此寶乘直至道場，以是因緣，十方諦求，更無餘乘，除佛方便。（後秦鳩摩羅什譯《妙法蓮華經》卷二，9/15a）

Together with the bodhisattvas and the śrāvakas, they ride this jeweled vehicle directly to the place of enlightenment. It is for this reason that genuine seekers in the ten directions find no other vehicle, **except** the skillful means of the Buddhas.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

ratnāmayaṃ¹³ adj.n.sg.N. jewel yānaṃ n.sg.N. vehicle idaṃ pron.n.sg.N. this varīṣṭhaṃ adj.n.sg.N. wondrous gacchanti √gam, 3.pl.pres.P. they go yena pron.n.sg.I. through that iha adv. here bodhimāṇḍe m.sg.L. in the place of enlightenment | vikrīḍamānā¹⁴ pp.m.pl.N. games bahubodhisattvā (Ibid.) m.pl.N. many bodhisattvas ye pron.m.pl.N. those ca conj. and śṛṃṇonti √śru, 3.pl.pres.P. they hear sugatasya m.sg.G. of Well-Gone One śrāvakāḥ m.pl.N. śrāvakas | |95| |

evam adv. in this way prajānāhi¹⁵ pra-√jñā, 2.sg.imper.P. you shall know tvam pron.2.sg.N. you adya adv. today tiṣya m.sg.V. Tiṣya na indec. no asti √as, 3.sg.pres.P. it exists iha adv. here yānaṃ n.sg.N. vehicle dvitīyaṃ adj.n.sg.N. secondary kaḥimcit (Edgerton [1953] 2004, vol. 2) pron.n.sg.N. any | diśo¹⁶ f.pl.Ac. directions daśa num.f.pl.Ac. ten sarva¹⁷ adj.f.pl.Ac. all gavesayitvā ger. seek sthāpetv¹⁸ caus.ger. except upāyaṃ m.sg.Ac. means puruṣottamānām m.pl.G. of Supreme among men | |96| | (saddharma-puṇḍarīkap, p. 91)

The form *sthāpetv* is an absolutive (gerund) derived from the Sanskrit verbal root √stha (to place aside)—a morphological feature typical of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. In this context, it governs the accusative phrase *upāyaṃ puruṣottamānām* (*ren zhong zhizun men de fangbian* 人中至尊們的方便 “the skillful means of the Supreme among Men”). Here functioning as a preposition equivalent to “except”, the entire phrase *sthāpetv upāyaṃ puruṣottamānām* can be translated as *chule ren zhong zhizun men de fangbian* 除了人中至尊們的方便 “except the skillful means of the Supreme among Men”. This interpretation is succinctly captured in Kumārajīva's Chinese version as *chu fo fangbian* 除佛方便 “except the Buddha's skillful means”¹⁹.

In his translation, Huang Baosheng renders this passage as follows:

這輛七寶製成的美妙車乘，眾菩薩和聲聞乘坐遊樂，前往菩提道場，聆聽善逝說法。（95）

提舍啊，你應該知道，在世上尋遍四面八方，這種車乘沒有第二輛，除了人中至尊的方便。（96）（《梵漢對勘妙法蓮華經》，Huang 2018, pp. 195–96）

This marvelous vehicle, made of seven jewels, is joyfully ridden by bodhisattvas and śrāvakas as they proceed to the bodhi-mandala, listening to the teachings of the Sugata. (Section 95)

Tiṣya, you should understand: throughout the world, in all directions, there is no second such vehicle—**except** the skillful means of the Supreme among Men. (Section 96)

3.1.2. In the Translation of Buddhist Texts, the Sanskrit Past Passive Participle *Virahita* Is Often Interpreted as Carrying a Prepositional Force Equivalent to “Except”

The following example can prove this situation. For instance:

(22)若有善男子、善女人為阿耨多羅三藐三菩提故，于八十萬億那由他劫行五波羅蜜：檀波羅蜜、尸羅波羅蜜、羼提波羅蜜、毘梨耶波羅蜜、禪波羅蜜，除般若波羅蜜。（後秦鳩摩羅什譯《妙法蓮華經》卷五，9/44c）

If there are virtuous men or women who, seeking unsurpassed complete enlightenment, were to practice the five pāramitās—namely, dāna-pāramitā, śīla-pāramitā, kṣānti-pāramitā, vīrya-pāramitā, and dhyāna-pāramitā—for eighty trillion nayuta kalpas, yet **excluding** the prajñā-pāramitā.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

tadyathāpi adv. for example nāma adv. truly ajita m.sg.V. Ajita kaścid pron.m.sg.N. any eva adv. truly kulaputro²⁰ m.sg.N. a virtuous man vā indec. or kuladuhitā f.sg.N. a virtuous woman vā indec. or anuttarām adj.f.sg.Ac. unsurpassed samyaksaṃbodhim f.sg.Ac. perfect enlightenment abhikāṃkṣamāṇaḥ pp.m.sg.N. aspire pañcasu num.f.pl.L. in the five pāramitāsv f.pl.L. in the perfections aṣṭau num.n.pl.Ac. eight kalpakotīnayutaśatasahasrāṇi n.pl.Ac. hundreds of thousands of koṭi-nayuta kalpas caret √car, 3.sg.opt.P. he/she can practice | tadyathā adv. for example dānapāramitāyām f.sg.L. in the perfection of generosity śīlapāramitāyām f.sg.L. in the perfection of morality kṣāntipāramitāyām f.sg.L. in the perfection of forbearance vīryapāramitāyām f.sg.L. in the perfection of energy dhyānapāramitāyām f.sg.L. in the perfection of meditation **virahitaḥ** caus.ppp.m.sg.N. excluding prajñāpāramitāyā²¹ f.sg.I. through the perfection of wisdom | (saddharmapuṇḍarīka, pp. 332–33)

The form *virahitaḥ* is the masculine, singular, nominative form of *virahita*, the past passive participle of the causative derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *vi-√rah* (to abandon, separate). Here, *virahitaḥ* governs the instrumental case *boreboluomi* 般若波羅蜜 (*prajñā-pāramitāyā* “by/with prajñā-pāramitā”), functioning as an exception marker equivalent to Chinese *chule* 除了 “excluding”. Thus, the phrase *virahitaḥ prajñāpāramitāyā* can be accurately translated as *chule boreboluomi* 除了般若波羅蜜 “excluding prajñā-pāramitā”. This analysis is confirmed by Kumārajīva’s own rendering of the phrase as *chu boreboluomi* 除般若波羅蜜 “excluding prajñā-pāramitā”.

In his translation, Huang Baosheng renders this passage as follows:

譬如，阿逸多啊，某個善男子或善女人渴望無上正等菩提，實行五波羅蜜八百千千萬那由他劫，即布施波羅蜜、持戒波羅蜜、忍辱波羅蜜、精進波羅蜜和禪定波羅蜜，除了智慧波羅蜜。（《梵漢對勘妙法蓮華經》，Huang 2018, p. 628）

Just so, O Ajita, if a virtuous man or woman aspires to attain unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment, and for eight hundred thousand million nayutas of kalpas, practices the five pāramitās—dāna-pāramitā, śīla-pāramitā, kṣānti-pāramitā, vīrya-pāramitā, and dhyāna-pāramitā—but **excluding** the prajñā-pāramitā.

3.1.3. In Buddhist Scriptures, the Invariable Word *Anyatra*, Which Functions as an Exclusive Marker, Is Usually Translated as “Except”

The following example can prove this situation. For instance:

(23)設我得佛，國中人天壽命無能限量，除其本願修短自在。若不爾者，不取正覺。（曹魏康僧鎧譯《無量壽經》卷上，12/268a）

If, upon achieving Buddhahood, the lifespans of humans and devas in my Pure Land are not immeasurable—**with** the sole **exception of** those who, by virtue of their original vows, exercise sovereignty over their own life’s length—then may I not attain supreme enlightenment.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

sacen adv. if me pron.1.sg.G. my bha[ky12a]gavaṃs m.sg.V. World-Honored One tasmin pron.n.sg. L. in that buddhakṣetre n.sg.L. in the Buddha-land ‘nuttarām adj.f.sg.Ac. unsurpassed samyaksaṃbodhi[R16a]m f.sg.Ac. perfect enlightenment abhisambuddhasya ppp.m.sg.G. of attainment sattvānām m.pl.G. of all sentient beings pramāṇīkṛtam adj.n.sg.N. appropriate āyuspramāṇam n.sg.N. lifespan bhaved √bhū, 3.sg.opt.P. it is **anyatra** indec. except praṇidhānavaśena m.sg.I. by the power of vow mā indec. no

tāvad adv. in this way aham pron.1.sg.N. I anuttarām adj.f.sg.Ac. unsurpassed samyakṣambodhim f.sg.Ac. perfect enlightenment abhisambudhyeyam abhi-sam-√budh, 1.sg.opt.P. I shall realize |14| (The larger and smaller sukhāvatīvyūha sūtras, p. 17)

The Sanskrit indeclinable particle *anyatra*, meaning “except” or “unless”, here exerts its semantic force over the instrumental phrase *praṇidhānavaśena* (*shiyuanli* 誓願力 “by the power of [one’s] vow”). Consequently, the compound *anyatra praṇidhānavaśena* can be interpreted as *chule shiyuanli* 除了誓願力 “except through the efficacy of [one’s] vow”. This understanding is masterfully rendered into classical Chinese by the third-century translator Kang Sengkai as *chu qi benyuan xiuduan zizai* 除其本願修短自在 “except for those [beings] for whom the shortening or extension [of life] is autonomously determined by their original vow”.

Chen Xiulan renders this passage as follows:

World-Honored One, if, when I attain the supreme perfect enlightenment, the beings in my Pure Land were not to possess immeasurable lifespans—**except for** those who, by the power of their original vows, independently determine the length of their lives—then may I never attain the supreme perfect enlightenment.

(24)十方佛土中，唯有一乘法，無二亦無三，**除**佛方便說，但以假名字引導于眾生。（後秦鳩摩羅什譯《妙法蓮華經》卷一，9/8a）

In all the Buddha-lands of the ten directions, there exists only the One Vehicle Dharma; there is neither a second nor a third—**except** when the Buddha teaches expediently, using merely provisional names to guide sentient beings.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

ekam num.n.sg.N. one hi indec. because yānam n.sg.N. vehicle dvitīyam adj.n.sg.N. second na indec. no vidyate √vid, 3.sg.pres.Ā. it exists tṛtīyam adj.n.sg.N. third hi indec. because na indec. no eva adv. truly asti √as, 3.sg.pres.P. there is kadāci adv. when loke m.sg.L. in the world |**anyatru**²² indec. except upāyā²³ m.sg.I. by the means puruṣottamānām m.pl.G. of the Best among Men yad pron.n.sg.Ac. that yānanānātv²⁴ n.sg.Ac. various kinds of vehicles upadarśayanti upa-√dṛś, caus.3.pl.pres.P. make them explain ||54|| (saddharmapuṇḍarīka, p. 46)

Anyatru is a documented variant of the standard Sanskrit indeclinable “*anyatra*” (meaning “except”), commonly found in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS). In the BHS phrase under examination, its syntactic scope governs the instrumental singular phrase *upāyā puruṣottamānām* (*ren zhong zhizun men de fangbian* 人中至尊們的方便 “by the skillful means of the Best among Men”, i.e., Buddhas). Thus, the compound *anyatru upāyā puruṣottamānām* conveys the sense *chule ren zhong zhizun men de fangbian* 除了人中至尊們的方便 “except through the skillful means of the Buddhas”. Notably, the early Chinese translator Kumārajīva (344–413 CE) rendered this expression more succinctly as *chu fo fangbian* 除佛方便 “except for the Buddha’s expedient means”. This translation effectively condenses the original’s plural “Best among Men” into a singular “Buddha”, thereby focusing the emphasis squarely on the Buddha’s unique pedagogical agency as the exemplar of *upāya*.

In his translation, Huang Baosheng renders this passage as follows:

在這世上只有這一乘，絕無第二乘或第三乘，**除非**是人中至尊們運用方便，才會宣說各種乘。（54）（《梵漢對勘妙法蓮華經》，Huang 2018, p. 98）

In this world, there is only the One Vehicle; there is absolutely no second or third vehicle—**except** when the Best among Men employ skillful means to proclaim various vehicles. (54)

3.2. The Origin of the Additive Usage of the Prepositional Construction *chu* (除) in Chinese

Based on an examination of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) in digitized corpora, this study demonstrates that the additive usage of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) had already emerged in the Chinese Buddhist translations during the Western Jin period²⁵.

To date, the prevailing view in the field has been that the additive function of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) evolved from its original exclusive function. Hu (2008, p. 568) argues that the additive function of the prepositions *chu* (除) and *chunque* (除却) in Modern Chinese originated from a reanalysis of rhetorical questions as genuine questions. This shift, which began during the Tang-Song period, gradually transformed their earlier exclusive uses into inclusive ones through the reinterpretation of interrogative structures. Similarly, Chen and Zhu (2009, p. 95) maintain that prior to the Tang dynasty, the preposition *chu* (除) could only express exclusivity. It was not until the Tang that an additive function emerged, and even then, this development was restricted to interrogative sentences, without extending to declarative contexts or to the monosyllabic form *chu* (除) alone. Zhao (2020, p. 68) contends that the additive usage of *chu* (除) clearly developed from its exclusive use, representing an indigenous Chinese innovation. He argues that it was neither introduced through Buddhist translation nor arose from the reanalysis of rhetorical questions.

Challenging prior accounts, this paper argues through comparative analysis of Buddhist texts and their Sanskrit sources that the additive function of *chu* (除) resulted from language contact. Its development was triggered by the need to translate the inclusive/additive semantics of the Sanskrit adverb *api*. This triggering mechanism is clearly observable in the following textual examples. For example:

(25) 此諸眾生始見我身聞我所說，即皆信受入如來慧，除先修習學小乘者。如是之人，我今亦令得聞是經，入於佛慧。（後秦鳩摩羅什譯《妙法蓮華經》卷五，9/40b）

These sentient beings, upon first seeing me and hearing my words, all immediately develop faith, accept and enter into the Tathāgata's wisdom—**besides** those who had previously cultivated and practiced the Lesser Vehicle. As for such individuals, I now also cause them to hear this sūtra and to enter the Buddha's wisdom.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

darśanād n.sg.Ab. because of seeing eva adv. truly hi indec. because kulaputrāḥ m.pl.V. sons of good family śravaṇāc n.sg.Ab. because of hearing ca conj. and mama pron.1.sg.G. my adhimucyante adhi-√muc, 3.pl.pres..Ā. they believe , buddhajñānam n.sg.Ac. wisdom of the Buddha avataranty ava-√tṛ, 3.pl.pres..P. they realize and understand avagāhante ava-√gāh, 3.pl.pres..Ā. they attain full insight into |yatra adv. there ye pron.m.pl.N. those 'pi²⁶ adv. besides śrāvākabhūmau f.sg.L. in the stage of the Śrāvaka vā indec. or pratyekabuddhabhūmau f.sg.L. in the stage of the Pratyekabuddha vā indec. or kṛtaparicaryā²⁷ adj.m. pl.N. previously practiced abhūvan √bhū, 3.pl.aor.P. were , te pron.m.pl.N. those 'pi adv. also mayā pron.1. sg.I. through me eva adv. truly etarhi adv. now buddhadharmajñānam n.sg.Ac. wisdom of the Buddha's Dharma avatāritā (Ibid.) caus.ppp.m.pl.N. make them awaken to saṃśrāvitāś caus.ppp.m.pl.N. make them hear ca conj. and paramārtham m.sg.Ac. ultimate truth || (saddharmapuṇḍarīka, pp. 301–302)

Api is a Sanskrit adverb that conveys inclusion or addition. The phrase *yatra ye api śrāvākabhūmau vā pratyekabuddhabhūmau vā kṛtaparicaryā abhūvan* can be translated literally as *cíwài naxie yíqian chuyu shengwendì huozhe yuánjuèdì de xiúxingzhe men* 此外那些以前處於聲聞地或者緣覺地的修行者們 “besides those who formerly engaged in practice at the level of the Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha”. In his translation, Kumārajīva rendered this phrase more concisely as *chu xian xiuxi xue xiaocheng zhe* 除先修習學小乘²⁸者 “besides those who had previously cultivated and studied the Lesser Vehicle”.

In his translation, Huang Baosheng renders this passage as follows:

諸位善男子啊，他們見到我，聞聽我說法，信奉我，悟入佛智。**即使**那些在聲聞地或緣覺地修行者，我也引導他們悟入佛法智，向他們宣說第一義。（《梵漢對勘妙法蓮華經》，Huang 2018, p. 570）

O sons of good family, upon seeing me and hearing my teaching, they come to believe in me and awaken to the Buddha's wisdom. **Even** those practitioners who previously followed the path of the Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha, I also lead to awaken to the wisdom of the Buddha's Dharma and expound to them the ultimate truth.

3.3. The Origin of the Conditional–Exceptive Usage of the Prepositional Construction *chu* (除) in Chinese

Drawing on an analysis of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) in digitized corpora, this study argues for the early emergence of its conditional–exceptive function, evinced in Chinese Buddhist scriptures dating to the Three Kingdoms period²⁹.

To date, no scholarly discussions have addressed the origin of this conditional–exceptive usage of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) in Chinese. Based on a comparative study of Chinese translations and their parallel Sanskrit texts, this paper demonstrates that this usage is a result of language contact, specifically a calque modeled on the syntactic blend of the Sanskrit absolutive participle *sthāpayitvā* (placing aside) and the indeclinable word *anyatra* (except).

3.3.1. This Transference Process Is Reflected in the Systematic Correspondence Between *Sthāpayitvā* (Placing Aside) and *chu* (除)

The following example can prove this situation. For instance:

(26) 若有比丘實得阿羅漢，若不信此法，無有是處，**除**佛滅度後，現前無佛。（後秦鳩摩羅什譯《妙法蓮華經》卷一，9/7c）

If there is a bhikṣu who has truly attained Arhatship yet does not believe in this Dharma—no such case exists, **except** in the time after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, when the Buddha himself is no longer in the world.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

asthānam n.sg.N. there is no such case etac pron.n.sg.N. this cāriputra m.sg.V. Śāriputra anavakāśo³⁰ adj.m.sg.N. there is no such thing yad pron.n.sg.N. that bhikṣurarhankṣīṇāsravaḥ m.sg.N. a bhikṣu who has eradicated afflictions and attained arhatship saṁmukhībhūte ppp.m.sg.L. presently tathāgata³¹ m.sg.L. in Buddha imam pron.m.sg.Ac. this dharmam m.sg.Ac. the Dharma śrutvā ger. to hear na indec. no śrad-dadhyāt śrad-√dhā, 3.sg.opt.P. he will believe sthāpayitvā caus.ger. except parinirvṛtasya ppp.m.sg.G. of having passed into final extinction tathāgatasya m.sg.G. of Buddha | (saddharmapuṇḍarīka, p. 43)

Sthāpayitvā is the absolutive (gerund) of the causative stem of the Sanskrit verbal root √sthā (to place, to stand). In this context, it governs the genitive phrase *parinirvṛtasya tathāgatasya* (*rulai niepan* 如來涅槃 “of the Tathāgata who has attained parinirvāṇa”). Here, *sthāpayitvā* functions prepositionally, conveying the meaning “except”. Thus, the phrase *sthāpayitvā parinirvṛtasya tathāgatasya* may be translated as *chule rulai niepan* 除了如來涅槃 “except after the Tathāgata's parinirvāṇa”. This construction was rendered into Chinese by Kumārajīva as *chu fo miedu* 除佛滅度 “except [after] the Buddha's extinction”³².

In his translation, Huang Baosheng renders this passage as follows:

因為滅盡煩惱的比丘、阿羅漢，在如來前面聞聽這種法後，會不相信，絕無這等事，**除非**如來在涅槃之後。（《梵漢對勘妙法蓮華經》，Huang 2018, p. 91）

A bhikṣu who has eradicated all afflictions and attained arhatship cannot disbelieve in this Dharma after hearing it in the presence of the Tathāgata. This impossibility holds true in all circumstances **except** one: after the Tathāgata has attained parinirvāṇa.

3.3.2. In Translation, the Sanskrit Indeclinable *Anyatra* (Except) Is Translated or Interpreted Through the Following Means

(27)是法不可示，言辭相寂滅，諸餘眾生類，無有能得解，**除**諸菩薩眾，信力堅固者。
(後秦鳩摩羅什譯《妙法蓮華經》卷一，9/5c)

Inexpressible and beyond words, this Dharma eludes the understanding of all sentient beings—all, that is, **except** the bodhisattvas possessed of immovable faith.

The corresponding passage in the Sanskrit original is:

na indec. no tad pron.3.n.sg.Ac. it darśayitum √drś, caus.inf. explain śakyam adv. able to vyāhāro³³
m.sg.N. language 'sya pron.m.sg.G. of this na indec. no vidyate √vid, 3.sg.pres.Ā. it exists |na indec. no apy
adv. also asau pron.m.sg.N. that tādṛśaḥ adj.m.sg.N. in this way kaścit pron.m.sg.N. any sattvo (Ibid.)
m.sg.N. sentient beings lokasmi³⁴ m.sg.L. in the world vidyate √vid, 3.sg.pres.Ā. he exists ||6||
yasya pron.m.sg.G. of that tam pron.m.sg.Ac. that deśayed √diś, caus.3.sg.opt.P. he will proclaim
dharmaṁ m.sg.Ac. Dharma deśitam caus.ppp.m.sg.Ac. to be taught ca conj. and api adv. also jāniyāt³⁵
√jñā, 3.sg.opt.P. he will know |**anyatra** indec. except bodhisattvebhyo³⁶ m.pl.Ab. from the bodhisattvas
adhimukṭīya³⁷ f.pl.Ab. from the faith ye pron.m.pl.N. those sthitāḥ ppp.m.pl.N. belongings ||7|| (sad-
dharmapuṇḍarīka, p. 31)

The Sanskrit indeclinable *anyatra* (except) governs the ablative case, as in the phrase *anyatra bodhisattvebhyo* (*chule pusa men* 除了菩薩們 “except from the bodhisattvas”). This construction is accurately translated into Chinese as *chule pusa men* 除了菩薩們, a rendering mirrored in Kumārajīva’s version *chu zhu pusa Zhong* 除諸菩薩眾 “except for the assembly of bodhisattvas”.

In his translation, Huang Baosheng renders this passage as follows:

無法向誰展示它，這種法不可言說，在這世上還沒有任何這樣的眾生。(6)

若是向誰宣示此法，他理解宣示的此法，**除非**是那些菩薩，他們具有信解力。(7)

(《梵漢對勘妙法蓮華經》，Huang 2018, pp. 67–68)

This Dharma has no one to whom it can be shown; it is ineffable, and in this world, there exists no being yet capable of receiving it. (6)

If, however, it was to be proclaimed and comprehended by someone, that someone must necessarily be—**with the sole exception of** those bodhisattvas who possess the capacity for authentic faith and insight. (7)

Summary:

Based on a Sanskrit–Chinese textual collation, this study argues that the exclusive, additive, and conditional–exceptive functions of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) in early Chinese Buddhist translations emerged from language contact. These specialized usages can be traced to specific grammatical forms in the source language, including: Sanskrit absolutive participles (e.g., *vinirmucya*, *sthāpayitvā*, *sthāpeto*); past passive participles like *virahita*; the indeclinable exceptive marker *anyatra*; and inclusive adverbs such as *api*.

4. Conclusions

Through an investigation of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) in early Chinese Buddhist translations and a systematic comparison with their Sanskrit parallels, this study establishes the following conclusions:

1. A Contact-Induced Innovation: The exclusive, additive, and conditional–exceptive usages of *chu* (除) are unattested in pre-Qin or Han dynasty native Chinese texts—including philosophical treatises (*Zi Shu* 子書), historical writings (*Shi Shu* 史書), and canonical classics (*Jing Shu* 經書). They emerge distinctly for the first time in early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures.
2. A Calque from Sanskrit: These innovative functions of *chu* (除) are direct syntactic calques, induced by language contact. They correspond systematically to specific Sanskrit grammatical forms, such as absolutive participles (e.g., *vinirmucya*, *sthāpay-*

itvā, sthāpayito), the past passive participle *virahita*, the exceptive marker *anyatra*, and the inclusive adverb *api*.

The illustration is as follows:

Literatures Usages of <i>chu</i>	Pre-Qin or Han Dynasty Native Chinese Texts			Early Chinese Buddhist Translations	Sanskrit Parallels
	<i>Zi Shu</i> 子書	<i>Shi Shu</i> 史書	<i>Jing Shu</i> 經書		
exclusive	not	not	not	existence	existence
additive	not	not	not	existence	existence
conditional–exceptive	not	not	not	existence	existence

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Abbreviations

Ā. ātmanepada, middle-voice; Ab. Ablative; Ac. Accusative; adj. adjective; adv. Adverb; aor. aorist; caus. causative; conj. Conjunction; f. feminine; fut. future; FPP. future–passive–participle; G. genitive; ger. Gerund; I. instrumental; imper. Imperative; indec. Indeclinable; inf. Infinitive; L. locative; m. masculine; N. nominative; n. neuter; num. numeral; opt. optative; P. parasmaipada, active-voice; pl. plural; pp. present-participle; ppp. past-passive–participle; pres. present; pron. Pronoun; sg. singular; V. vocative; 1. first-personal; 2. second-personal; 3. third-personal.

Notes

- On the earliest attested instances of the exclusive usage of the prepositional construction *chu* (除), Chen and Zhu (2009, p. 91), cite a passage from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子: Ren shangshou baisui, zhongshou bashi, xiashou liushi, **chu** bingshou sisang youhuan, qizhong kaikou er xiao zhe, yi yue zhi zhong buguo si wu ri eryl yi. 人上壽百歲，中壽八十，下壽六十，除病瘦、死喪、憂患，其中開口而笑者，一月之中不過四五日而已矣。 “With a long life spanning a hundred years, a medium one eighty, and a short one sixty, and **excluding** the times of illness, bereavement, and worry, the days on which one can open one’s mouth to laugh amount to no more than four or five in any given month.” However, the reliability of this example as the earliest evidence is debatable and requires cautious consideration for several reasons. First, concerning the authenticity and compilation period of the “Miscellaneous Chapters” (*Zapian* 雜篇) of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, scholarly consensus maintains that these chapters were not authored by Zhuangzi himself but by later disciples, likely compiled in the early Western Han dynasty. Second, many texts, including the *Zhuangzi*, were edited by Liu Xiang 劉向 and Liu Xin 劉歆 during the Western Han, thereby incorporating linguistic features of that era. Third, a comprehensive survey of pre-Qin and Western Han texts suggests that this may be a unique or late interpolation, rather than a representative usage. Furthermore, and perhaps most critically, the word *chu* (除) in this context can plausibly be interpreted as a verb meaning “to remove” (i.e., “removing illness, bereavement, and worries, [then]...”), which undermines its status as an unambiguous preposition. Therefore, while illustrative, this example may not serve as conclusive evidence for the exclusive prepositional use of *chu* (除) in the pre-Qin period. Scholars have proposed six additional views regarding the earliest attested examples of *chu* (除) functioning as an exclusive preposition (i.e., marking an exception). The first is put forward by (Ōta [Ōta 1957] 1987, p. 249), who cites the following instance from *Hongloumeng*

紅樓夢 [Dream of the Red Chamber]: Dan zheli **chu** ni, hai you shui hui jiexian? 但這裏除你，還有誰會界線？“But here, **except** you, who else could use the boundary line?” The second view is supported by multiple scholars (e.g., Xiang 1993, p. 288; Feng 2000, p. 419; Ma 2002, p. 328) who, in their discussions, cite the same passage from the *Qi Min Yao Shu · Za-shuo* 齊民要術·雜說 [Qi Min Yao Shu · miscellaneous sayings]: Yiqie dan yi ci fa, **chu** chongzai wai, xiaoxiao han bu zhi quan sun. 一切但依此法，除蟲災外，小小旱不至全損。“If one relies solely on this method, then **except in cases of** severe insect infestation, minor droughts would not lead to complete crop loss.” Third, this perspective is also substantiated by Zhu (1992, p. 16), who references an early Buddhist text, the *Laizhaheluo jing* 賴吒和羅經 [Sūtra of Laizhaheluo], translated by Zhi Qian during the Three Kingdoms period. The cited passage reads: Ren you gudu yi shen, bu neng zhisheng zhi qiancai, zhengshi you caichan bu neng jianchi, yi shi gu zuo shamen. Wo shi qing liaowu shi, chu wangjia zongqin, shi wo guo zhong shang wu guo qing zhe. 人有孤獨一身，不能治生致錢財，正使有財產不能堅持，以是故作沙門。我視卿了無是，除王家宗親，視我國中尚無過卿者。“A person is alone and cannot manage family business nor accumulate wealth; even those who have property cannot hold on to it, hence they become monks. I consider you don’t have this situation at all; except for the royal clan, there is no one in our country who surpasses you.” (1/871a) Fourth, the viewpoint finds support in Wang (2003, p. 113), who likewise draws on a historical example, this time from the *Sanguozhi · Zhang Yan Cheng Kan Xue Zhuan* 三國志·張嚴程關薛傳 [Records of the Three Kingdoms · Biographies of Zhang, Yan, Cheng, Kan, and Xue]. Wang cites the passage: Zi chen xi ke shi zhi zhi shi, zhuya **chu** zhoushan jiaqu, jie xu ba yue yinhu, renmin jihui zhi shi, nannü zi xiang keshi, nai wei fuqi, fumu bu neng zhi. 自臣昔客始至之時，珠崖除州縣嫁娶，皆須八月引戶，人民集會之時，男女自相可適，乃為夫妻，父母不能止。“During my first residence in Zhuya, I learned that all settled households—**except** those marrying under official arrangement—must register by August. When communities assembled, men and women could freely choose each other as spouses, with no hindrance from parents.” Fifth, further textual support is provided by Hu (2008, p. 563), who draws upon an analysis of the *Daoxing bore jing* 道行般若經 [Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra], an Eastern Han dynasty translation attributed to Zhi Chen. The relevant passage from Volume 2 states: **Chu** qi suzui buqing, yu bu neng dong. 除其宿罪不請，餘不能動。“**Only** their unresolved karmic offenses retain the power to cause harm; all else is incapable of it.” Sixth, additional evidence can be traced to Zhao (2020, p. 62), who references a passage from the *Panzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 [Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra], a sūtra translated during the Eastern Han period and traditionally ascribed to Zhi Chen. The text in Volume 1 records the Buddha’s admonition to Bhadrāpāla: Fo gao batuohe: “Wo suo shuo wuyou yi, er gu shuo shi yu er. Jin jian wo shuo shi sanmei zhe, qi ren que houshi shi, wen shi sanmei zhong bu yi, bu xingxiao, bu yan bu xin. **Chu** zai e’shi bian, zhengshi zai shanshi bian, qi gongde boshao.” 佛告跋陀和：“我所說無有異，爾故說是語耳。今見我說是三昧者，其人却後世時，聞是三昧終不疑、不形笑、不言不信。除在惡師邊，正使在善師邊，其功德薄少。” “The Buddha said to Bhadrāpāla: ‘What I have spoken is without variation; for this reason, I speak these words. Now, those who hear me speaking of the samādhi, in future generations, upon hearing of this samādhi, they will never doubt, show scorn, nor talk about the disbelief. **Except for** near a spiritually harmful teacher, even if one is with a virtuous spiritual teacher, their merits are scant.’” Scholarship has crystallized around five main views regarding the earliest attested additive usage of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) in Chinese, meaning “apart from” or “besides”. The first view, represented by Zhu (1992, p. 16), traces this usage to the Western Jin dynasty. Zhu cites a key example from the *Panzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 [Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra], Vol. 1, translated by Dharmarakṣa: Jin jian wo shuo shi sanmei you yi zhe, qi ren quehou **chu** zai e’shi bian, zhengshi shanshi suo, qi gongde bu zu yan. 今見我說是三昧有疑者，其人却後除在惡師邊，正使善師所，其功德不足言。(13/900b) “Now, those who may have doubts upon hearing me speak of this samādhi, **apart from** being near a spiritually harmful teacher in future lives, even if one is with a virtuous spiritual teacher, his merits will be so minimal as to be beyond description.” This example demonstrates that the additive usage of the prepositional structure *chu* (除) already existed in Buddhist scriptural translations during the Western Jin period. In contrast, other scholars have proposed later chronologies. The second view, advanced by Jiang and Wu (1997, p. 501), significantly pushes the chronology forward to the Song dynasty. They identify the additive *chu* (除) in a secular political document, the memorial *Yimao Ruguo Zouqing* 乙卯入國奏請, arguing that it represents a mature, non-Buddhist usage within the bureaucratic discourse of the period. Their key example is: Bu zhi **chu** ci wai, nanchao Huangdi geng you he yizhi? 不知除此外，南朝皇帝更有何意旨？“**Apart from** this, I do not know what further intentions the Emperor of the Southern Court may have.” The third view, proposed by Feng (2000, p. 420), introduces a crucial vernacular and Chan (Zen) Buddhist context into the discussion. Feng identifies the additive *chu* (除) in the seminal Chan discourse record *Zutangji* 祖堂集 [Anthology of the Patriarchal Hall], specifically in a dialogue with Master Dadian 大顓和尚 (Vol. 5). This source represents a distinct genre: native Chinese records of oral teachings, which may preserve colloquial usages contemporaneous with or even predating their written fixation. The pivotal example is: **Chuque** yangmeidongmu yiqie zhi shi wai, zhi jiang xin lai. 除却揚眉動目一切之事外，直將心來。“**Besides** all acts such as raising the eyebrows or moving the eyes, the key is to bring your mind directly here.” This usage is significant because it demonstrates *chu* (除) functioning seamlessly within a philosophical injunction in vernacular Medieval Chinese. It suggests the construction’s grammaticalization was sufficiently advanced by the time of the *Zutangji*’s compilation (c. 952 CE) to be employed in abstract, mind-oriented discourse, thereby offering a potential bridge between earlier Buddhist textual models and later mature vernacular usage. The fourth view, put forward by Ma (2002, p. 328), shifts the focus to the stylized and rhetorical realm

of Tang dynasty poetry. Ma identifies a pivotal example in the work of the renowned poet Liu Yuxi, specifically in his poem on *Magushan* 麻姑山 [Magu mountain]. This moves the discussion beyond prose documents and into the domain of regulated verse (*lüshi* 律詩), where linguistic economy and aesthetic effect are paramount. Ma's key evidence is the line: **Chuque** magu, geng you shui? 除却麻姑，更有誰？“**Apart from** Magu, who else is there?” Crucially, Ma emphasizes that this represents one of the earliest prominent uses of additive *chu* (除) within an interrogative construction. This observation is vital: it demonstrates how the construction had been fully integrated into the poetic toolkit, capable of driving rhetorical questions that express exclusivity, emphasis, or lament. Thus, by the High Tang period, additive *chu* (除) was not only grammatically mature but also stylistically versatile, employed by master poets for specific affective and rhetorical purposes. The fifth and potentially most groundbreaking view is advanced by Zhao (2020, p. 67). Zhao directs our attention back to the very heart of the Buddhist translation corpus, citing a critical passage from the *Dabanniepan Jing* 大般涅槃經 [Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra], translated by the illustrious Dharmakṣema during the Northern Liang dynasty (5th century CE). His example, drawn from Vol. 21, is of paramount importance: Mimi zhi yi, jin yu ci jing er de zhi zhi. Fu you shi yi bu jing, **chu** pifolüe, yi wu rushi shenmi zhi yi. Jin yin ci jing er de zhi zhi. 秘密之義，今於此經而得知之。復有十一部經，除《毘佛略》，亦無如是深密之義。今因此經而得知之。“The profound and secret meanings are now revealed in this sūtra. **Apart from** the Vipulya, none of the other eleven sūtras contain such depth. Thus, it is solely through this sūtra that this ultimate realization is attained.” Zhao's argument is pivotal: if his analysis is correct, this Northern Liang translation would push the documented emergence of additive *chu* (除) back by several centuries, squarely into the Early Medieval period. This would robustly support the hypothesis of a Buddhist textual origin for this grammatical function, positioning it not as a late medieval innovation but as a feature catalyzed by the massive translation projects of the 4th–5th centuries. Consequently, this view directly challenges later datings (such as the Tang or Song dynasty examples) as representing not the point of origin for the construction but rather the processes of diffusion and vernacular adoption of an already established syntactic model. Of the five perspectives outlined above, two scholars have traced the additive usage of *chu* (除) back to Chinese Buddhist scriptures.

- 2 Drawing upon a 4.08-million-character corpus of Chinese Buddhist translations (Eastern Han-Sui), this article undertakes a fine-grained examination of the prepositional construction *chu* (除), identifying and analyzing three distinct structural patterns that emerged in its usage.
- 3 Applying a functional taxonomy to the 254 instances of *chu* (除) extracted from our 4.08-million-character corpus reveals a tripartite division: the Exclusive type predominates (N = 205, 80.7%), followed by the Conditional–Exceptive (N = 26, 10.2%) and Additive (N = 23, 9.1%) types.
- 4 References to the Taishō shinshū daizōkyō (abbreviated T; Xinwenfeng edition) follow the standard format of volume.page.column (e.g., T 85.280a). In this notation, Arabic numerals indicate the volume and page, while the letters a, b, and c denote the upper, middle, and lower columns, respectively.
- 5 Regarding the grammatical meaning and syntactic pattern of this example, our analysis diverges from that of Zhao (2020, p. 62). Zhao categorizes it under the exclusive type of *chu* (除). We argue, however, that this is better analyzed as an instance of its additive function. More precisely, it instantiates the “A-based with supplementary B” subtype within our framework, where element B is supplementarily appended to the baseline A, rather than being excluded from it.
- 6 The translator of the Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra has long been a subject of scholarly dispute. The Taishō shinshū daizōkyō ascribes it to Lokakṣema of the Eastern Han dynasty. In contrast, C. Lü (1981, p. 10), following meticulous textual research, convincingly argues for Dharmarakṣa of the Western Jin dynasty as the translator. In light of Lü's established authority in Buddhist philology and the cogency of his reasoning, the present study follows his attribution, and all subsequent analyses proceed from this identification.
- 7 Regarding the earliest attested usage of the conditional–exceptive function of the prepositional construction *chu* (除) in Chinese, one prevailing scholarly view is as follows: Zhu (1992, p. 17), cites a translation by Dharmarakṣa from the Western Jin period in the *Wuliang qingjing pingdeng gue jing* 無量清淨平等覺經 [Sūtra of immeasurable purity, equality, and enlightenment], vol. 1: wo zuofo shi, renmin you lai sheng wo guo zhe, **chu** wo guo zhong renmin suo yuan, yu renmin shouming wuyou neng ji zhe; bu er zhe, wo bu zuofo. 我作佛時，人民有來生我國者，除我國中人民所願，餘人民壽命無有能計者；不爾者，我不作佛。(12/281a) “When I attain Buddhahood, for those born into my land, **except** it is according to the wish of those dwelling therein, the lifespan of all other beings shall be immeasurable. Should this not be fulfilled, I shall not attain perfect enlightenment.” In this vow-formula context, *chu* (除) performs a dual function: it marks an explicit exception (“except it be according to the wish...”), and in doing so, it simultaneously establishes the logical condition for the main pledge. The immeasurable lifespan is contingent upon—that is, guaranteed only if—the specific case of personal wish does not intervene. This exemplifies the early operationalization of the conditional–exceptive logic within a Chinese syntactic frame.
- 8 This study draws upon key digital collections, including the *Guoxue Baodian* 國學寶典 (Treasury of Sinology), the *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library of the Four Treasuries), and the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) database. These corpora serve as fundamental linguistic resources widely utilized in Mainland China's linguistic studies, whose academic validity commands general recognition in the scholarly community.

- ⁹ (Edgerton [1953] 2004, vol. 1). See § 8.78. Nom.pl.-ā, p. 55.
- ¹⁰ BHSG, § 4.38, p. 34.
- ¹¹ The particle *wei* (唯) functioning as a positive exclusivity marker to indicate exclusion has its origins in Classical Chinese usage (Hu 2008, p. 562).
- ¹² BHSG, § 8.18. Nom.sg.-o., p. 49.
- ¹³ BHSG, § 3.9. *ā* for non-final *a*., p. 23.
- ¹⁴ BHSG, § 8.78. Nom.pl.-ā, p. 55.
- ¹⁵ BHSG, § 30.6. *āhi* or (m.c.) *āhī*., p. 146.
- ¹⁶ BHSG, § 4.38., p. 34.
- ¹⁷ BHSG, § 9.86. Nom.-acc.pl.-a., p. 66.
- ¹⁸ BHSG, § Gerunds in *tu(m)*, p. 177. BHSD, p. 610.
- ¹⁹ When encountered in Buddhist Sanskrit texts, the epithet *puruṣottamānām* is subject to doctrinal interpretation within Chinese translation practice. Rather than a literal translation, translators might contextually equate its referent to the Buddha, thereby rendering it as “佛陀” through a process of doctrinal alignment—though this remains an interpretive choice rather than a standard lexical equivalent.
- ²⁰ See above Note 12.
- ²¹ BHSG, § 9.48. Instrumental, p. 64.
- ²² BHSG, § 3.57., p. 26.
- ²³ BHSG, § 8.42. Inst.sg.-ayā and -āya, and perhaps -ā, p. 52.
- ²⁴ BHSG, § 8.30. The ending -u., p. 51.
- ²⁵ Cf. Example (10) in Part 2.
- ²⁶ In Sanskrit, the adverb *api* carries the meaning of “besides”. *Api* is often used to express emphasis, in the sense of even, also, very. Monier-Williams (1960).
- ²⁷ See above Note 14.
- ²⁸ The *śrāvakabhūmi* and *pratyekabuddhabhūmi* represent the distinct fruition stages (or attainments) of the Hīnayāna path.
- ²⁹ Cf. Example (12) in Part 2.
- ³⁰ See above Note 12.
- ³¹ BHSG, § 4.37., p. 34.
- ³² In translational practice, *tathāgata* is regularly mapped onto the Chinese concept of “Buddha”. This lexical convergence is consistently observed in Chinese translations from Sanskrit, reflecting a deliberate strategy to align core ontological titles.
- ³³ See above Note 12.
- ³⁴ BHSG, § 8.64., p. 54.
- ³⁵ BHSG, § 3.38., p. 25.
- ³⁶ See above Note 16.
- ³⁷ BHSG, § 10.104.-īya, Abl., p. 76.

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