

Notes on the textual and doctrinal development of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* as reflected in T5 and T6 during the Wu dynasty (222–80)

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T5 *Fo bannihuan jing* and T6 *Bannihuan jing* are rare materials from which we can extract information about how archaic Buddhist texts developed into later standardised sectarian texts. Particularly due to the fact that, as I argue, the original text of T6 is a revised version of T5, these two texts clearly show the process of how the archaic Buddhism of T5 developed into T6, and then into later standardised Buddhism with sectarian affiliation.

In this paper, [1] by examining the writing style and the use of renderings and transliterations, I attribute the translatorship of T5 to Zhi Qian (fl. 222–53), suggesting that it was probably translated before T210 (tr. in c. 224), and T6 to a successor of his in the Wu dynasty (222–80), suggesting that it was probably translated later than T152 of Kang Senghui (?–280). [2] Comparing T5 and T6 with the Sarvāstivāda MPS/T1451 as well as other sectarian versions of the *sūtra*, I argue that, although containing primitive aspects before the standardisation of later sectarianism, T5 and T6 belong to the textual tradition of Sarvāstivāda. [3] Surveying what has been deleted, revised and added in the development from T5 to T6 and then to later texts, particularly in the Sarvāstivāda tradition, I illustrate a process of textual and doctrinal standardisation, and point out that the textual development from so-called proto-*tripiṭaka* to later standardised texts is not merely incremental: since many parts of the older texts were deleted or revised in the course of transmission, as is shown in T5 and T6, it is hopeless to “reconstruct” a proto-*sūtra* from extant standardised versions of the *sūtra*.