

The Term “Tzŭ-jan” in the Chinese Translations of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*

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“Tzŭ-jan 自然” is a term of great importance in Chinese Buddhism. First, in this article, I have examined the problem of how the term is used in the six Chinese translations of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (*Taisho Tipitaka* [T], No, 224 225, 226, 227, 220-4, 228). I found that it is used as the equivalent for the Sanskrit “svabhāva” or “asvabhāva” in the early translations (T. 224, 225, 226), and for “svayambhū” in the later translations (T. 227, 220-4, 228). The most interesting point is that in the former case “tzŭ-jan” is used both for “svabhāva” and its negative form “asvabhāva”. The next problem is to consider how this is possible. I think it is because of two reasons. 1. “Svabhāva” means the nature of a thing. It is perpetual and does not depend on others. The *Prajñāpāramitā* theory denies the existence of the svabhāva behind the phenomenal things, because it is incompatible with the principle of the *pratītyasamutpāda* (cause and effect relationship). The svabhāva of all beings is none other than having no svabhāva (asvabhāva). Therefore one and the same word may be used to refer to both “svabhāva” and “asvabhāva”. 2. The Chinese “tzŭ-jan” means the nature of a thing, therefore it corresponds to the Sanskrit “svabhāva”. On the other hand, “tsŭ-jan” is a mode of phenomenal beings rather than something substantial behind the phenomenal world. Therefore it also corresponds to “asvabhāva”. Probably because of these two reasons, “tzŭ-jan” is used as the equivalent both for the Sanskrit “svabhāva” and its negative form “asvabhāva”.