

# The Writing of the Body in the Kumarajiva from the Imagery of the Sun

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**Abstract:** Across multiple civilizations, the sun has been for centuries considered an extremely prized cultural symbol with numerous connotations. In "Kumarajiva" by Shi Jincun, the sun is a recurring symbol that plays a significant role in the story's emotional transformation of the protagonist. Therefore, it is interesting to delve deeper into the meaning of this image. This essay aims to analyze the coexistence of the two suns in Kumarajiva, which represent human and buddhist nature, respectively, with their various cultural connotations. It also seeks to uncover the narrative idea of the supremacy of the body in the work by highlighting the rivalry and differences between the two suns. This paper aims to bridge the gap between the study of narrative and literary history by examining the similarities between the concept and the principle of neo-sensationalist creativity. It will also offer textual perspectives on the genre attribution of Shi Zhecun, a case that has garnered significant attention in literary history.

**Keywords:** Kumarajiva; Shi Zhecun; The Imagery of the Sun; Neo-sensualism.

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## 1. Introduction

The protagonist of the book "Kumarajiva" is a high-ranking monk who lived during the Later Qin Dynasty, during the Sixteen Kingdoms of the Eastern Jin Dynasty. The story follows Kumarajiva as he struggles to strike a balance between his sexual desires and adhering to Buddhist teachings while working as a missionary. The book took seven drafts and half a year to write. It employed symbolism and Freudian psychoanalytic theory to depict the inner life and psychological details of the main character in great depth, making it a typical work of Shi Zhecun's psychoanalytic novels.

The research approaches used in the articles that employ "Kumarajiva" as their subject matter are more varied, and they can be broadly summed up as follows: the first concentrates on the Buddhist connotation and how the Buddhist characters are performed in the work; examples of this include Xiao Taiyun's "Analysis of Buddhist Connotation of Kumarajiva and Master Huangxin" as well as Dai Jiashu and Luo Jiayi's "Different Ways of Writing Monks and Nuns' Love Affairs -- The Trial Comparison of Spring Breeze of Tanhua Nunnery, Trial of Moga and Kumarajiva." The second approach involves examining the work through the lens of new story compilation, as exemplified by Gao Junlin's "Rethinking the Authenticity of Historical Novels - Taking Shi Zhecun's as an example"; the third involves contrasting and analyzing Kumarajiva's various portrayals under different writers, such as Wang Tao's "The Monk Who Broke the Precepts - The Various Images of Kumarajiva in the Writings of XuZhaoshou and ShiJingscun"; the fourth approach involves analyzing the works through the lens of Freudian psychology, as demonstrated by Li Lingjin's "Conflict and Split of Kumarajiva's Personality--A Brief Discussion of Freudian Theory of Personality Structure in Kumarajiva" and Du Xiaojie's "Freudian Personality Structure Textual Analysis in the Perspective of Theory--Taking Shi Jincun's Kumarajiva as a Case Study". It is evident that the majority of the study articles published to date begin with an overview, analyzing Kumarajiva as a whole. However, fewer publications examine

the work's meanings from the details, particularly from the imagery that appears in the entire work. There are just two articles, "Old Subjects and New Feelings--On Shi Zhecun's Novel, Kumarajiva" and "Masks and Chains--Existential Anxiety and Penitential Consciousness of Shi Zhecun's Novel, Kumarajiva," which discuss the tongue and the fox, crows, and flying insects, respectively.

With six total appearances, the sun is the most common imagery in Kumarajiva. It is a crucial but sometimes disregarded component in the narrative. By beginning our analysis of the text with this picture, we may better understand the conflict and meaning present in the work and ultimately uncover the innovative ideas that Shi Zhecun left hidden.

## 2. Double Metaphors of the Sun

In contrast to other imagery with a single meaning, the sun in Kumarajiva is dualistic and can be viewed as a collection of two suns with distinct metaphorical meanings that represent the Buddhist and human aspects of Kumarajiva, respectively. This is a visual representation of Kumarajiva's contradictory and opposing personalities.

### 2.1. The Sun as a Metaphor for Buddhist Nature

The Buddhist aspect of Kumarajiva's thinking is symbolized by the first Sun, and the metaphor's cultural overtones stem from Kumarajiva's Buddhist beliefs.

Primitive cultures frequently connected the sun to faith, and all forms of civilization expanded light's experience to the sacred realm of spirituality. Buddhism, in particular, reveres the sun as a key symbol of radiant holy light. Buddhist paintings frequently employ light to symbolize the Buddha. Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and saints are shown with a dazzling circle of spiritual light over and behind their heads, with varying headlights and backlights to reflect their various fruitions. Moreover, the sun is associated with many of the Buddha's sources of inspiration; for example, the Mahayana Buddhist Maitreya picture is based on the sun god of Persian

and indigenous faiths. "The ancient Persians revered the sun and light, so that Mithra, the god of the sun in their early mythology, was universally worshipped" [2]. Then came the rise of Zoroastrianism, whose primary deity was Ahura Mazda, who took on the form of kindness and brightness. These stories and religious concepts made their way to Northwest India, where they were assimilated by Buddhism and eventually became one of Maitreya's cultural prototypes. Another cultural paradigm of Maitreya originates from Surya, the sun god worshipped by the Indo-Aryans. Mithra, the god of light, is an incarnation of Surya and signifies "love" and "friendship." Buddhism created the figure of Maitreya, a symbol of light "with a purple-golden body, luminous and bright, resembling a hundred thousand suns," [2] after critically assimilating the two religions. Another school of Mahayana Buddhism, Tantric Buddhism, worships a supreme deity called Vairocana, who is likewise closely related to the sun. In addition to being known as the sun in Sanskrit, Mahāvairocana is also referred to in Chinese as "Da Ri Rulai", a metaphor for "light that radiates all over the world." The scriptures indicate that Vairocana's whole body shines like the sun, enlightening everything that is alive.

It is evident that the sun, light, and other symbols have always played a significant role in Buddhist thought, and it is straightforward to understand how Shi Zhecun utilizes the sun to represent Kumarajiva's Buddhist nature in the book. In order to attain this kind of Buddhist nature, one must control or even completely eradicate the seven emotions and six cravings that ordinary people have, as well as focus on studying Buddhism in order to reach the state of having no demands or wishes and having only one thought for the Buddha. In the piece, the sun makes three appearances as a metaphor for the Buddhist nature:

The first time we see Shi Zhecun's portrayal of an inviolable image of a holy monk—when Kumarajiva appears—he does so on the back of a camel, buffeted by the encroaching desert winds, his wide lapel sleeves and belt fluttering in the golden light of the sun; his wife is seated on a similarly high camel, her bright face glinting in the sun's light, giving her a stately regal appearance. The depiction of Kumarajiva here, with his sash and belt fluttering in the sunlight and his dignified and majestic manner, is precisely to associate Kumarajiva with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who have a spiritual light on their heads and are clad in golden light, and it is the embodiment of their Buddha-nature. In Buddhism, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas typically appear in the midst of boundless light.

On the third day of Kumarajiva's journey from Liangcheng to Qin, the sun reappears as a metaphor for the nature of Buddha. At this point, when he is looking for a reason to justify his lust for his wife, "the sun seemed to lose its light for a few moments, and Kumarajiva perceived a dimness before his eyes, which he knew to be a sign from the Devil." When a devout monk wishes to walk the bad path, this is how the devil manifests himself." Because his wife was travelling with him, Kumarajiva experienced a variety of emotions and cravings. However, as a monk, he was aware that he could not have such intimate relationships because doing so would be a betrayal of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, he called these types of sensual impulses held by mortals "demons." Kumarajiva is definitely positioning the sun against the devil, or want, and connecting it with the Buddha-nature, which is devoid of desire and want, by viewing the sun's absence and the descent into darkness as signs of the arrival of the devil.

Furthermore, the sun made a third connection to Buddhist nature in Kumarajiva's heart when he was captivated by the prostitute Meng Jiao Niang. "The next morning, Kumarajiva did not perform his early morning service, nor did he translate the sutras; he prayed to the sun, which had risen in the east, and he hoped that the Bodhisattva of Light would instruct him what to do." Upon realizing the uncontrollable nature of his inner cravings, Kumarajiva decided to pray to the sun and associated it with the Bodhisattva; the sun represented the Bodhisattva of Light and the Buddhist nature inside him. In essence, praying to the sun entails pleading for the Buddhist nature within oneself to awaken and the ability to repress cravings that are slowly spiralling out of control.

The aforementioned examples demonstrate to us that: the work contains a metaphor of the sun of Buddhist nature, which is the result of years of ardent Buddhist practice by Kumarajiva; its appearance is frequently accompanied by the emergence of the majesty of Kumarajiva's Buddhist nature, and its disappearance signifies the darkening of the Buddhist nature in Kumarajiva's heart.

## 2.2. The Sun as a Metaphor for Human Nature

Apart from the sun symbolizing Kumarajiva's Buddhist nature, there is another sun in the work symbolizing Kumarajiva's human nature. This human nature, in turn, becomes apparent in Kumarajiva's heart's insatiable desire.

In contrast to the sun, which represents the Buddha's nature, the sun, which represents human nature, has greater cultural value because it is based on the sun's actual properties. The sun is frequently regarded as a sign of life and fertility because of its inherent attributes of warmth and light, which allow things to flourish and life to blossom. Numerous cultures across the globe have associated the sun with reproduction; the Indian "*Rig Veda*" describes the Creator as the "golden foetus," [3] or "sperm of the sun." The sun is revered as the fount of manhood in New Guinea, Australia, and the Samadhi Islands, where it is thought that the sun's masculinity is what allows women to become pregnant [4]. One may argue that throughout ancient times, the fertility cult has been inextricably and inevitably linked to the sun. "No matter what shape the sun god is abstracted into, and no matter whether it is early or late, it is given the role of a fertility god, which profoundly reflects the cultural concept of fertility worship of the ancestors." [5] It follows that the sun's association with fertility worship and its invocation as a symbol of desire in Kumarajiva are not surprising.

The work also features three appearances of the sun, a metaphor for human nature; the first occurs on the third day of Kumarajiva's voyage to Qin. "He felt a strong indication from the brilliant light that glistened over the vast desert that love, lust, and merit were not mutually exclusive. It was an odd idea, and he himself was not entirely sure why he had it—why, on this third travelling day, he had conceived of this thought—which no monk had ever ventured to defend." The warm, brilliant sunlight that ignites everything makes Kumarajiva desire lust and affection. Due to the increasing intensity of his love and desire, Kumarajiva spent all of his mental energy trying to convince himself that getting married and following the Buddhist path would not negate his previous merit and virtue. This was in contrast to the previous two days when he had searched for methods to repress his inner desires.

In the second appearance, Kumarajiva was repentant of his decision to marry and to have betrayed his faith. He was also

prepared to set aside his recent detrimental thoughts and focus on praying. "At that time, a ray of strong sunlight came down from the gap of the leaves, and it happened to be shot into his face, and this ray of sunlight became a thing that destroyed his purity and disturbed his prayers. Thus, it also suggests that although Kumarajiva appears to be concentrating on praying on the surface, his inner waves are raging beneath the surface. Although Kumarajiva gave the impression that he was focused on his prayers, his heart was racing, and he was unable to focus. As was to be expected, he closed his eyes and did not focus, instead paying great attention to his wife's every move and being sensitive to her sighs.

It makes an appearance for the third time just before Kumarajiva's wife passes away: "A ray of sunlight shone down from the leafy slit onto her face as if like the remnants of a flower, the crows were all circling the tree, eery and noisy." Here, too, the sun is a projection of Kumarajiva's inner yearning; the sun is actually a metaphor for Kumarajiva's unquenchable desire for his wife. This also clarifies why Kumarajiva decides to break his fast once more by giving his wife a final kiss after hearing his wife's last words. The sunshine is the manifestation of Kumarajiva's unbridled desire, which is the true cause of his recurrent offences; his wife's words are merely the catalyst.

Sunlight and love are frequently combined in Shi Zhecun's artwork. In "Chunyang," for instance, Aunt Cicada—a Kunshan native—experiences a romantic awakening after basking in Shanghai's warm springtime sunlight. She begins to fantasize about falling in love and acts contrary to her past ten years of habits. Similarly, in "The General's Last Hat," the general's affection for the young girl is likewise piqued by the flowers blooming in the sunlight. It is evident that Shi Zhecun intended for sunshine and love to coexist in the book of Kumarajiva, and that there is a metaphor behind it.

The two suns in "Kumarajiva" form a dichotomy structure, symbolizing two distinct personalities—the Buddhist nature and the human nature. The metaphorical personality takes centre stage when one of the sun shines, and the other personality swiftly usurps the dominating personality when the other sun arrives. The two suns' alternating patterns serve as a symbol for Kumarajiva's dominant personality. By doing this, the author skillfully brings the virtual world to life, bringing Kumarajiva's psychological struggle and the suffering caused by her dual personality into the readers' laps.

### **3. The Triumph of the Sun and the Body of Human Nature**

Despite their opposition, the sun of Buddhist nature and Human Nature are not equal, and the odds of success are frequently stacked in favour of the Sun of Human Nature.

Kumarajiva briefly attempts to control his sexual urges and adhere to his Buddhist beliefs during the three sun appearances, which are a metaphor for the three facets of Buddhist nature. However, this effort is fleeting, as the strong desires quickly resurface and take control of Kumarajiva's heart once more, leading him to consistently act in ways that are morally repugnant to Buddhism. When Kumarajiva first emerged into the sunlight, he was enlightened by the Buddhist faith, filled with grief and rage, and hated Lu Guang for disdaining Buddhism and causing the destruction of his own vajra body. However, as soon as he broke out of his contemplative state and saw his wife's graceful figure, the fire of desire in his heart was kindled once more. Little by little,

Kumarajiva began recollecting his own experience with his cousin and "suddenly felt again as if they were a family and the feeling of love began surging through him." When Kumarajiva realized for the second time that the Buddhist nature's sun was about to lose its light, he became terrified and sealed his heart to pray. However, at that very moment, human nature's sun appeared and upset his intentions to offer prayers. With a sudden surge of love in his heart, he halted his camel to ride parallel to his wife and asked her calmly what was causing her to look so dejected. Before giving his sermon for the third time, Kumarajiva prayed to the sun in the hopes of controlling his own sexual impulses. However, this was in vain, and when he opened his eyes to look down at the audience from the rostrum, his suppressed desires burst forth, causing him to fantasize about his wife's figure and uncontrollably reveal what was in his heart in front of the crowd.

The Sun of human nature, in contrast to the Sun of Buddhist nature, has a lasting impact. When the Sun of human nature arises, Kumarajiva always gives in to his desires repeatedly. Even when his fervent Buddhist beliefs grant him a brief moment of enlightenment midway through the journey, the rush of desires overwhelms him instantly and is difficult to control for an extended length of time. Driven by the sun on the third day of his desert expedition, Kumarajiva started to look for justifications to justify his wants, formulating the theory that "love and virtue are not mutually exclusive," planning a rationale for his deviation, and being consumed by desire. Then, though for a moment he shuddered at the thought of violating the laws of purity and attempted to control his evil thoughts and pray, the sun of human nature jumped out at Kumarajiva's face once more, upsetting the peace and tranquillity of his prayers, drawing his attention away from his wife's current conditions, and making him cease to pray. Furthermore, Kumarajiva was forced to bid his wife farewell with a kiss and to be silent in response to her pleas when the sun of mankind finally emerged a third time and shone on her face. Following his wife's passing, Kumarajiva appears to have given up on the desire entirely, implying that "all the ties of the human world, all the trials and tribulations, all the temptations have all been overcome." But behind the surface of having nothing to think about or strive for, human desire is still present and continues to fluctuate continually in his subconscious mind. The unquenchable desire surged to the surface again as he reached Qin, and this time it was uncontrollable. It is evident that Kumarajiva's sexual drive was influenced by and controlled by the sun of human nature. The conflict between the suns of Buddhist nature and the sun of human nature ultimately results in the latter's triumph.

The struggle between the two suns represents the conflict between Kumarajiva's two selves as well as the battle between his ideas and his physical form. The Sun of Buddhist nature is a metaphor for the Buddhist notion, which is nonphysical; the body cannot sense it, nor can it come to believe in Buddhism and abstinence via sensing the Sun. It is purely conceptual, "communicated directly to the soul of the experience." [3] One could argue that the sun of Buddhist nature, along with the religious concepts and purifications it represents, are products of a particular cultural education and are retained in Kumarajiva's mind in the form of consciousness, which the body is unable to sense. On the other hand, the sun of human nature symbolizes physical desire, and Kumarajiva's body can actually sense and

experience both its mode of being and its symbolic significance. One's body can actually feel the sun's light and heat as long as they are in direct sunlight. The sun also stimulates sexual instincts, and the desire that the sun represents in human nature is a continuation of the sun's light and heat qualities, stemming from our primal, tangible, and unending physical instincts.

To put it succinctly, the sun of Buddhist nature is the sun of conceptualization; it is acquired, abstract, and insentient. The sun of human nature is the sun of the body; it is tangible, genuine, and instinctual, and its symbolism and manner of being are in harmony with the body. The triumph of the body over the concept is declared by the sun of human nature over the sun of Buddhist nature. The author demonstrates the unreliability of concepts and the power of bodily sensations through the imbalance of the dualistic structure of the sun. This reveals that Shi Zhecun's bodily desires are unquenchable and that even Kumarajiva, a holy monk who is well-versed in Buddhist culture and who identifies with and honours Buddhist asceticism in concept, is powerless to resist the body's urges.

Shi Zhecun's constant creative notion is the supremacy of the body. The body's desire always triumphs in Shi Zhecun's works. Not only the monk Kumarajiva, but other characters in Shi Zhecun's works also frequently battled the conceptual constraints against their own physical desires, ultimately giving in to them and acting in ways that did not comply with the conceptual constraints. Examples of these instances include Mrs. John Lee's adultery in "Madame Butterfly," Liu Huade's infidelity in "Walking," and Duan Gong's return to the city of feud in "Princess Ashi" as a result of his incapacity to control his longing for Princess Ashi. Even women who, in a fit of rage, revert to their former life of sexual repression, such as Aunt Cicada, have fantasized about having their physical wants fulfilled on several occasions. "Every great story of lofty objectives crumbles in the face of their personal love and desire, no matter if the protagonists are monks, generals, princesses, heroes, or pursuing virtue, merit, glory, or righteousness. When faced with one's own love and desire, everything crumbles, only the body remains intact while the the desire endures forever." [6]

#### **4. Viewing Shi Zhecun and neo-sensualism from the Imagery of the Sun**

In certain ways, the Kumarajiva text's concept of bodily supremacy is very comparable to the aesthetic core of neo-sensualism as Liu Naou and Mu Shiyin depict it.

A brief literary movement in China during the 20th century, Neo-Sensualism was primarily the product of a number of works by Liu Naou and Mu Shiyin, who drew inspiration from the Neo-Sensualism of Japan. However, Liu, Mu, and others did not exactly copy the creative methods of Japanese Neo-Sensualism in the process of imitation writing but rather incorporated many creative writing methods with local characteristics because Liu Naou misinterpreted the Japanese Neo-Sensualism when he introduced it, as well as the fact that China's national conditions at the time were different from those of Japan. Because of this, some academics argue that it is not totally correct to refer to this school of thought as Chinese Neo-Sensualism; yet, the term Neo-Sensualism is still widely used in the literary world today to refer to the literary

genre created by Liu and Mu.

One of the many contentious questions raised by Neo-Sensualism in literature is whether or not Shi Zhecun was an integral part of the movement. This is a topic that has been discussed incessantly. Shi rejected the label of "Neo-Sensualism," despite the majority of academics viewing him as such. He said that his writings were unrelated to neo-sensualism and that they solely referenced Freud's psychoanalytic theory. But when addressing the issue of authors' genre affiliation, we should not merely take into account their subjective assessment, as many factors, like the sources of inspiration for their works, the assessment of their genres, and the preservation of their reputations, frequently influence the authors' personal judgment. In order to provide an in-depth response, we must additionally examine the work's core significance. From the perspective of the text's internal connections, Shi Zhecun's emotional core and style are indeed inextricably related to Neo-Sensualism.

A recurring theme in the writings of neo-sensualist authors like Liu Naou and Mu Shiyin is the body. "The Neo-Sensualists have always attached importance to the feelings and needs of the body, and obedience to the body's desires is the criterion for the behaviour of the protagonists of their novels." [7] This perspective on the body differs from other genres in that it emphasizes the body itself and its demands rather than the social and political aspects of the body. This body perspective is "strongly individualised and non-utilitarian, a reversal of the mainstream view of the body, and has a unique aesthetic value." [7]

Shi Zhecun's writings are likewise replete with instances of this type of writing concerning inward emotions and desires. We get a glimpse into the text's inner desires because of Kumarajiva's utilization of the imagery of the sun. By understanding the sun's imagery and using it as a metaphor, we can decipher the text's characters' intense struggle between abstinence and their physical desires by looking at the phenomenon of the conflict between the suns of human nature and Buddhist nature. Furthermore, the sun of human nature holds a prominent place in the text, allowing us to observe the mainstream logic of the body narrative in the work. There are significant conceptual parallels between this type of body narrative and the writing of Liu Naou and other Neo-Sensualists, which illustrate and encourage bodily desires. This type of writing is exactly in line with their core. Therefore, even though there are many differing views regarding whether Shi Zhecun is a member of the Neo-Sensualist writers in the annals of modern literature due to the contradictions between genre variation, textual connotation, and authorial identity, Shi Zhecun's classification as a member of this faction is supported by the text.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The sun's iconography appears frequently in Kumarajiva's narrative, giving us a means of delving deeper into the inner turmoil of the work. By using the text as our starting point and culture as our point of entry, we can capitalize on the sun's imagery to form a deeper interpretation of Shi Zhecun's works. From there, we can investigate the notion that the body consistently comes first in Shi Zhecun's creative process, which is consistent with neo-sensualism's emphasis on the body. This presents us with a perspective from which to judge Shi Zhecun's relationship with neo-sensualists based on the text's analysis. In addition to shattering conventional notions,

refuting corrupt notions of anti-humanity, and affirming the natural human sexual desires, Shi Zhecun's audacious depiction of Kumarajiva's bodily desires also subverts and rewrites the image of the holy monk Kumarajiva, demonstrating Shi Zhecun's avant-garde and bravery. While the focus of this study is on analyzing the imagery of the sun in Shi Zhecun's masterwork "Kumarajiva," there are several instances of the imagery of the sun in Shi Zhecun's other works, including "*Chunyang*," "*Leo Meteor*," "*Gulls*," and others. It would be worthwhile to investigate whether Shi Zhecun's works feature any instances of the double metaphors associated with the imagery of the sun, as well as whether these images have taken on distinct meanings.

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