

On Kumarajiva's Thought of Buddhist Scripture Translation and His Influence

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Abstract: Kumarajiva is one of the "four translators" in the history of Buddhist scripture translation. He has translated many classics in his entire life. His translation has a far-reaching impact on Buddhist Scripture Translation in China and even the whole world, as well as in the fields of philosophy and literature. Therefore, the study of his theory and thoughts are of great benefit to us in learning translation theory and engaging in translation work. This paper will analyze Kumarajiva's Buddhist Scripture Translation Thought from many aspects and summarize his influence on Buddhism and future translators, with the aim to make more translation learners deepen their understanding and understanding of Kumarajiva's translation theory.

Keywords: Kumarajiva; Translation of Buddhist scriptures; Buddhist scripture translation and interpretation; Influence and impact.

1. Introduction

When referring to famous translators and their translation theories, it is easy to think of Eugene Nida's functional equivalence, Tetler's "Three Principles" of translation, Peter Newmark's communicative translation and semantic translation theory. These are foreign translators. Although foreign translation theories have had a profound impact on the development of translation in China, we should still focus on our translators and seriously study our translation ideas, which will help the development of our translation cause. As we all know, the famous translators in China, including Xu Yuancong, Yan Fu, Liang Qichao. There are many famous translation thoughts, such as "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance", which is promoted by Yan Fu. Nevertheless, in fact, the earliest translation in China started from the translation of Buddhist scriptures. In the history of Buddhist scripture translation in China, there are four major translators, namely Xuanzang, Bukong, Zhendi and Kumarajiva. Among them, Kumarajiva was the first to practice the three principles of "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance". Kumarajiva was called by Liang Qichao as the "first-class master of translation". His translation feat became a milestone in the history of Buddhist culture in China, opening a new era for the translation of ancient Buddhist scriptures in China. The study of Kumarajiva's Buddhist sutra translation activities and thoughts will help us to have a deeper understanding of ancient Chinese translation theories. And it will help us to innovate and develop our own unique translation theory on the basis of summing up and drawing lessons from it.

The cause of translation in China began with the translation of Buddhist scriptures, which belong to the category of religious classics. The translation of religious classics is the result of the exchange, fusion and collision between different cultures. Compared with ordinary texts, religious texts have their own uniqueness, which lies in that the former expresses ideas through symbolic meaning or metaphor, forming a special form of dialogue with readers. When translating religious classics, the translator should not only focus on the vocabulary or grammar of the original text, but also combine the context with the local culture to get the final translation results. Because different translators will have different

understanding and interpretation of the original text, which makes the translator become a classic creator. In different periods and in different versions of the classics, the translation of scriptures will lead to differences in the readers' understanding of religious doctrines. In addition, religious believers and ordinary translators have different understandings of scriptures, so their respective meanings will be different, which leads to the diversity and multiplicity of translation criteria. Therefore, learning the translation of religious classics plays an important role in our better understanding of the nature of translation.

2. Overview of Buddhist Scripture Translation

2.1. Overview of Buddhist Scriptures Translation before Kumarajiva's Appearance

Buddhism was introduced into China from the Han Dynasty. Since then, the translation of Buddhist classics has been gained momentum continuously. The large-scale written translation in China began with the translation of Buddhist scriptures in the Eastern Han Dynasty, and lasted for thousands of years until the Northern Song Dynasty. In the end, the introduction, integration and development of Buddhism have penetrated into Chinese traditional culture. During this period, many famous Buddhist scripture translators emerged, including Zhi Qian, Shi Daoan, Zhu Fahu, Xuan Zang, Bukong, Zhendi, Kumarajiva. They had a great impact on the development of Buddhist translation theory, thought and other aspects, as well as the development of Chinese philosophy, culture, Buddhism and so on. Kumarajiva, one of the "Four Great Translators", has translated a large number of Buddhist scriptures, with a poor quality, incomplete translation and full of ambiguity.

When Buddhism was first introduced into China, it was often translated in the way of case meaning, that is to say, some terms and concepts of Lao Tzu's and Zhuang Tzu's thoughts produced by metaphysics were borrowed to explain Buddhist principles. In other words, some nouns in the Central Plains are used to replace those in the Biblical Sutra. In this way, Buddhist scriptures are easy for readers to

understand. Therefore, it expresses the similarities between foreign cultures and some Chinese cultures, so that people will eliminate certain exclusion psychology and begin to accept Buddhism, which is also the psychological basis for Buddhism to gain a foothold in China, and also the process that foreign cultures need to experience when they go deep into China. However, it is this farfetched analogy that makes it difficult for people to deeply understand Buddhist doctrines, and also makes the translation of Buddhist scriptures obscure and ambiguous.

2.2. Overview of Buddhist Scriptures Translation after Kumarajiva's Appearance

The spread of Buddhism in China is actually the process of the beginning of the localization of it in China. To spread it more widely in China, one thing that must be assured is that Buddhism adapts to China's national conditions and realities, so that Chinese people can quickly and actively accept Buddhism. This is also the attitude that Kumarajiva held when translating its scriptures, which is completely different from the predecessors. In this process, he did not hesitate to delete some of the contents of Buddhist scriptures, use Taoist language, and steal concepts. Owing to his dedication, he promoted the spreading and growth of Buddhism in China. He opened the way for the high-quality development of Buddhist sutra translation, and set an example for later Buddhist sutra translators.

Buddhist sutra translators after Kumarajiva are more committed to the high-quality development of Buddhist sutras. Taking him as a benchmark, they strive to be a good contributor to Buddhist sutra translation, which has further promoted the spread of Buddhism in China.

The Introduction of Kumarajiva

Kumarajiva, an eminent monk in the Eastern Jin Dynasty and the Sixteen Kingdoms Period, is one of the four Buddhist sutras translators of Chinese Buddhism. His ancestral home is Tianzhu, that is, he was born in Kuqa (Xinjiang, China) in India. Kumarajiva was gifted from childhood and was called the reincarnation of Buddhist relics by many people at that time. When he was young, he studied Hinayana Buddhism with his mother and traveled everywhere. It is said that Kumarajiva could preach on the altar when he was nine years old. At the age of 12, Kumarajiva's mother returned to Kucha. During this period, he studied Mahayana Buddhism in Shule (Xinjiang, China) for more than a year. At the same time, Kumarajiva translated the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, and then began to translate Buddhist scriptures. Kumarajiva is becoming more and more famous in many countries. He also presided over the cause of sutra translation, and translated a large number of sutras, such as the Great Prajna Sutra, the Vajra Sutra, and the Hundred Theories. It has become one of the four major sutra translation histories in the history of Buddhist sutra translation in China, and has had a profound impact on Buddhist sutra translation and translation in various fields in China.

3. The Translation Thoughts of Kumarajiva

3.1. Translation Methods

3.1.1. Overview of Previous Translation Features before Kumarajiva

Before Kumarajiva, Buddhist sutras were translated by

foreign translators who did not understand Chinese or Chinese translators who did not understand Sanskrit. As a result, the profound connotation and special meaning of the original Buddhist scriptures cannot be clearly explained, and the translation loses its flavor. In addition, before Kumarajiva, most Buddhist sutras were translated by literal translation, such as the "Five Losses of Source Texts and Three Difficulties in Translation" advocated by Daoan, who is, an outstanding litterateur, Buddhist scholar and translator in the pre-Qin period. He overemphasized that the content of the original text should not be deleted and should be faithful to the original text, which made the language of the translated text poor and difficult to understand. This is because most of these people who use literal translation do not know Sanskrit, and most of them understand it through oral recitation by monks, so they cannot translate it freely.

There were some famous Buddhist translators in the history of the Buddhism in China, including Shidaoan and Xuanzang. Here will give a general introduction to their Buddhist translation methods and thoughts. Shi Dao'an was a Buddhist master in the Eastern Jin Dynasty and the Pre Qin-Dynasty. His translation ideas were mainly reflected in his preface to the Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures. He adopted the principle of "Five Losses of Source Texts and Three Difficulties in Translation", which laid a theoretical foundation for later Buddhist translation. However, this idea was controversial later, because although Shi Daoan himself put forward this idea, he did not directly show the attitude of "Five Losses of Source Texts". In addition, it was he who began to organize excellent translators to set up Translation Workshop to translate Buddhist scriptures. Although it was not as complete as Xuanzang's Translation Workshop system, which only had simple procedures such as oral teaching, interpretation and proofreading, he made great contributions to the establishment and formation of the system. In any case, his contribution to the translation of Buddhist scriptures is beyond reproach.

Xuanzang, an eminent monk in the Tang Dynasty, is one of the four great Buddhist sutras translators. In the early days, he traveled many countries to solve his confusion about Buddhism, learned many Buddhist sutras, and then preached the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism and began to engage in the cause of sutra translation. He was also the first person in the history of translation, with one of his well-known principles of "Five categories of untranslated terms". At the same time, he created a new style and new situation in the history of Buddhist translation. He is well versed in Sanskrit and Chinese, has a deep study of Buddhist classics, and is proficient in Buddhist teachings. He has the capacity to translate works without relying on foreign monks. So it seems that he is better at being faithful to the original text, but in literature, he has a lot of space to improve. In general, Xuanzang also occupies an indispensable position in the history of Buddhist translation, which is worthy of our thoroughly study and leaning.

3.1.2. Free Translation

Kumarajiva is proficient in Sanskrit and Chinese, so when translating Buddhist scriptures, he abandoned literal translation and switched to free translation. Because he has translated a large number of Buddhist scriptures, his translation skills are relatively skilled. He completely abandoned the "Geyi", the translating strategy characteristic of traditional Chinese culture, playing an important role in rendering Buddhist Scripture into Chinese. He believed that

the translation of Buddhist scriptures should not be confined to the original text, but should fully understand the original text and fully consider the reader's receptivity "Equal emphasis. The translated text should conform to the expression habits of Chinese, while retaining the style of Buddhist scriptures, so that it can be accepted and understood by the readers. Kumarajiva does not use free translation without following the rules. He would first compare the previous translated text and translate Buddhist scriptures on the basis of his own understanding. His purpose is to let the people who recite Buddhist scriptures deeply understand the connotation of Buddhist scriptures. It can be said that Kumarajiva is the first person to practice the idea that takes readers as the guide. In this regard, it coincides with that of contemporary translator Eugene Nida. Kumarajiva's free translation first practiced the three principles of translation advocated by Yan Fu, that is faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance. Kumarajiva, who stayed in China for a very long time, has read extensively, and has a good understanding of the Chinese culture. Therefore, he is proficient in both Sanskrit and Chinese, and can accurately express the meaning of the source text when translating. In addition, Kumarajiva has a certain capacity of literature, which makes the translated work beautiful and mellow. He also used some rhetorical devices, such as metaphor, rhyme, etc. To a certain extent, it can be said that the Buddhist scriptures he translated have surpassed their predecessors in terms of content, vocabulary and other expressions, forming his own style.

3.1.3. Re-translation Method

On the other hand, Kumarajiva also adopted the method of re-translation. As early as Shi Daoan, he adopted the method of re-translation, and Kumarajiva pushed this method to the top. Kumarajiva takes the original text seriously when dealing with the translation of Buddhist scriptures. In the previous paper, it was mentioned that the translation of Buddhist scriptures before Kumarajiva often used some academic terms in Lao Tzu's and Chuang Tzu's thoughts to replace the proper terms in Buddhist scriptures, overemphasizing the similarities between Buddhism and Chinese traditional thoughts, and ignoring the real ideas to be conveyed in Buddhist scriptures. It is on this basis that Kumarajiva re-translated these specific terms in the Buddhist scriptures, restoring the profound connotation that the Buddhist scriptures intended to convey, basically eliminating the ambiguity and restoring the true face of the Buddhist scriptures. From the perspective of cultural communication, this is a necessary step for all cultures to achieve development and social progress. We must discard the original shortcomings, correct mistakes and start anew. Buddhism was introduced into China and developed by relying on metaphysics. However, Buddhism is always different from metaphysics. It should not be used to guide Buddhism. They are independent of each other. This is also the embodiment of Kumarajiva's critical thought. Criticism is the redefinition of the content of previous translation, namely re-translation. The re-translation of Kumarajiva laid an important foundation for the sustainable development of Buddhism in China.

3.1.4. Transliteration

Kumarajiva also used the method of transliteration. All the translators before him believed in idealism and conveyed Buddhist ideas through it. There are also many terms related to metaphysics, but idealism is biased towards philosophy, causing translated version boring and unattractive. When Kumarajiva encountered words in Buddhist scriptures that are

difficult to correspond to Chinese, he usually adopts the way of transliteration, with the aim to avoid polysemy and misunderstanding, so as to truly convey the original meaning of Buddhist scriptures and make the translation more faithful to the original text.

3.2. Features of Kumarajiva's Buddhist Sutra Translation

3.2.1. Emphasis on the Style

Before Kumarajiva, the translated texts of Buddhist scriptures tended to be archaic, such as Shi Daoan, who himself did not know Sanskrit and only understood Buddhist scriptures from the teachings of monks. He mistakenly believed that the translated texts of Buddhist scriptures and Sanskrit should be archaic. This easily leads to misunderstanding of the text. However, Kumarajiva is proficient in Sanskrit and Chinese, and the text he translated has changed the ancient style of Buddhist scripture translation into popularity as always. He emphasized that the translation of Buddhist scriptures should be easy to understand, easy for the readers to understand, not omit the meaning, retain the style of the original text, but also have the literary feelings. The transformation of Buddhist scripture translation style is also reflected in transliteration. When encountering names of people, gods and proper nouns, Kumarajiva adopts transliteration to deal with them. This is a great progress in the history of translation. The adoption of transliteration method has changed the obscure and far-fetched situation of the translated Buddhist scriptures, and also enriched the Chinese vocabulary for the convenience of reading Buddhist scriptures.

3.2.2. Translation Works mainly focuses on Mahayana Buddhism

When Kumarajiva was young, he became a monk with his mother and began to learn Hinayana Buddhism. At the age of 12, he occasionally encountered the classics of Mahayana Buddhism in the temples of King Kucha City. From then on, he began to study the ideas of Mahayana Buddhism, and then converted to Mahayana Buddhism. In the early days, Kumarajiva would translate some works of Mahayana Buddhism. Since he went to Chang'an, his translation of Buddhist scriptures has mainly focused on Mahayana Buddhist classics. His translated works made more people understand Mahayana Buddhism, which made Mahayana Buddhism widely spread and believed in China. This was also the basis and condition for the formation of Chinese Buddhism sects during the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

3.2.3. Combination of Buddhist scripture translation and interpretation

The system of Translation Workshop was established by Shi Daoan, and had begun to take shape at that time. And Kumarajiva further improved the Translation Workshop system. During this period, he was strongly supported by King Yao Xing of Qin Dynasty, so the Translation Workshop system was further developed. It was also the first time in Chinese history that the state organized translation activities, which opened the prelude to the development of China's translation industry. Later, Kumarajiva was arranged to translate scriptures and preach to more people, which not only promoted the spread of Buddhism in China, but also promoted the development of translation. In this process, if he encountered some mistakes in the previous translation of scriptures, he would discuss with each translator, so as to

determine the method of how to translate correctly, by doing so to start the dialectical work of scriptures, and finally get a generally accepted translation. This process is also indispensable in the gradual improvement of the Translation Workshop system.

In addition, Kumarajiva has a high sense of responsibility, and his attitude towards Buddhist scripture translation is rigorous, careful and meticulous. When translating Buddhist scriptures, he will first interpret Sanskrit into Chinese, and then compare the previous translation. If there is any doubt, he will discuss the preliminary translation with the personnel in the Translation Workshop, and after repeated proofreading and review. After the review, the translation version shall be finally determined after ensuring the smooth flow of the text. There are many translated parts in Buddhist scriptures. In order to make the translation easier for Buddhists to understand and accept, he would delete some repetitive and complicated contents, making the translation more in line with the receiver's expression habits and rhyme characteristics. In addition, Kumarajiva also reviewed some of the previous Buddhist sutra translations, and put forward the parts he thought were inaccurate to discuss with everyone for proofreading, and finally came up with a more accurate version.

Kumarajiva's Translation Workshop and sutra translation system is a watershed in the history of Buddhist sutra translation. The translated version of Buddhist sutras before him is called the old translation, and the translated version after him is called the new translation. To some extent, the new translation has replaced the old one, becoming the mainstream of Buddhist sutra translation. Although Kumarajiva did not translate as many works as Xuanzang, he was really spreading and promoting Buddhist scriptures in Chinese. From an objective perspective, Kumarajiva's translation is a milestone of Chinese Buddhism and plays an irreplaceable positive role.

3.3. Translation Attitudes of Kumarajiva

Kumarajiva has a strict attitude towards the translation of Buddhist scriptures, and he is serious and careful when undertaking translation works. When translating Buddhist scriptures, the first step was to interpret Sanskrit into Chinese, and then discuss the preliminary translation with the personnel in the Translation Workshop. After repeated proofreading and review, the final version will be determined. There are many translated parts in Buddhist scriptures. In order to make the translation easier for Buddhists to understand and accept, he would delete some repetitive and complicated contents, making the translation more in line with the receiver's expression habits and rhyme characteristics. In addition, Kumarajiva also reviewed some of the previous Buddhist sutra translations, and put forward the parts he thought were inaccurate to discuss with everyone for proofreading, and finally came up with a more accurate version.

4. Kumarajiva's Translation Achievements and Its Influence

4.1. Kumarajiva's Translation Achievements

Kumarajiva has profound attainments in the translation of Buddhist scriptures. He has changed the method of literal translation in the past and adopted a free translation method that is not rigidly bound to the original form. The purpose is

to accurately convey the Buddhist doctrine and let the Buddhist scripture readers deeply understand the connotation of the doctrine. Compared with the simple and unsophisticated method of Buddhism, Kumarajiva's translation is both literal and qualitative. The Buddhist scriptures he translated are fluent, elegant and accurate in concept.

The original translation of Buddhist scriptures was a private activity. The translation of Buddhist scriptures was produced after being read by foreign monks, recorded after oral translation, and then modified and determined. After Kumarajiva coming to Chang'an, he began to organize a Translation Workshop. Since then, the number of people engaged in translation has increased significantly, and translation has become a collective activity. Moreover, the division of work in the translation field is clear, and the final translation version of the translation needs to go through the process of interpretation, recording, correcting and proofreading, which reflects preciseness. As a result, the quality of translation has also been greatly improved. The emergence of the Translation workshop is undoubtedly a great progress in the history of Chinese translation, which provides a reference for future generations to engage in translation and promotes the development of translation in China.

4.2. Impact on Buddhism in China

The translation of Kumarajiva's Buddhist scriptures has also had a profound impact on the development of Chinese Buddhism. It can be said that, to a certain extent, the sutras translated by Kumarajiva had a direct impact on Tiantai Sect, Huayan Sect and Sanlun Sect, and had an indirect impact on Zen, Pure Land Sect and Lvze Sect, which is because they all developed under the influence of Kumarajiva's sutras. In addition, Kumarajiva's combination of Buddhist scripture translation and interpretation also promoted the development and promotion of Mahayana Buddhism in China. It has played an indispensable and important role in the development of China's Buddhist cause.

In addition, Kumarajiva also enriched people's imaginative world through his understanding and interpretation of Buddhist scriptures. As we all know, before Buddhism was introduced into China, its concept was limited. However, after the enrichment of Kumarajiva, Buddhism has brought the concepts of past life, afterlife, cause and effect, reincarnation, etc. Thus, through translation, Buddhism expanded the dimensions of time and space in the Buddhist scriptures, and introduced people into a broader spiritual world. This has an irreplaceable role in the spread of Buddhism in China and even in the world, and also has epoch-making significance.

Moreover, Kumarajiva's translated works are of great significance for future generations in prose, drama, poetry and novel creation, especially for Buddhist statues and painting art. Chinese unique styles have been formed in pagodas and Buddhist temples all over China. Murals, grottoes and other works have injected fresh blood into the psychological structure and national spirit of Chinese culture. Kumarajiva has fully interpreted Buddhism in China., Buddhism has become an integral part of the traditional Chinese culture.

4.3. Impact on Future Translators

Kumarajiva's rigorous attitude towards translation deserves our deep consideration. With the development of science and technology, computer aided translation technology has become more and more advanced in recent years. Many

translators show a perfunctory attitude when dealing with translation tasks. They import the original text into the machine translation software and complete the translation task without making any changes and even taking references from related works. This attitude is fundamentally wrong. As a qualified translator, we should take every translation in a serious and strict way. Translation is a collision between different cultures. As different cultures have different factors, we should fully consider the differences and similarities between languages. Computer aided translation can only be used as the auxiliary means, and the results of it still need to be modified and proofread, just like the steps in the Translation Workshop. Therefore, Kumarajiva teaches us that we should have a strict attitude towards translation, not be perfunctory, but stick to the professional ethics of translators.

5. Conclusion

Buddhism was introduced into China at the turn of the Han Dynasty. The early Buddhist translation terms were hard, non-standard, obscure and ambiguous, and many of the contents were not fully explained. Later, Kumarajiva began to take charge of Buddhist translation. Owing to his dedicated efforts, many important Buddhist classics were widely spread in China. From this point of view, the emergence of Kumarajiva made Buddhism vigorously developed in China. In addition, he also trained a large number of monks with profound attainments, and popularized the work of translation, which tends to be personalized, creating a precedent for the state to support the translation cause, improving the authority of translation, and further promoting the development of China's translation cause. In addition, he also standardized the translation procedures and improved the quality and loyalty of translation.

Kumarajiva's Buddhist sutra translation thought has not formed a complete translation system, but it involves translation methods, stylistic translation, transliteration of proper nouns, re-translation and even translation teaching. Kumarajiva's newly emerging translation theories reflect the fine tradition of China's translation theory, profoundly affect the development of translation studies later, and lay the initial foundation for China's translation theory system. Today's study of his translation thoughts is not only a summary of experience and reference, but also a development and exploration. At the same time, we should modestly learn from advanced foreign theories. He is meticulous and unswerving in dealing with translation, which is worth learning for future translation learners and translators. He changed the method of Buddhist scripture translation, making it from literal translation to free translation. He developed the private activity of translation into a collective activity, which promoted the development of Buddhism and the progress of translation. Kumarajiva's translation thought and attitude towards translation are worthy of our study and reference, and we should develop it on this basis. At the same time, we should also carefully study the advanced translation ideas and methods of foreign translators. Only in this way can China's translation cause go to a higher level.

To sum up, Kumarajiva's efforts to strengthen the ideological and cultural exchanges between the East and the West, promote the development of China's Buddhist cause,

translation cause and friendly exchanges and exchanges among various ethnic groups will be forever recorded in history. If the Confucian culture is the carrier of Chinese traditional culture, then Buddhism is the heart of Chinese culture. Therefore, if we want to better understand Chinese culture and spread it, we must first study Buddhism. Like Kumarajiva, we should think critically and not accept all foreign cultures. We should combine foreign culture with local culture, take its essence and discard its dross. We should critically absorb all outstanding cultural achievements in human history, and keep pace with the times to enrich and update ourselves. Only in this way can our excellent traditional Chinese culture maintain its youth, immortality and development.

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