

## Defining a new road for Mahāyāna Buddhism in China

Scholars have many conceptions of Mahāyāna Buddhism by referring to particular Mahāyāna Buddhist texts they study. They may be right in terms of what those texts reveal about “Mahāyāna.” However, in the religious and intellectual environments of the late fourth century in China, Kumārajīva’s translation of Buddhist scriptures set up a decisive track for the consequent Buddhist development in China. By clarifying the confusion of contemporary Chinese Buddhist elites about the doctrine of prajñāpāramitā through the translation of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitodeśa*, Kumārajīva, at the same time, introduced the doctrine of ekayāna through the translation of the *Lotus Sūtra*. My paper demonstrates the doctrinal tension between prajñāpāramitā and ekayāna, in which envision and union of the religious mysterious takes over the dialectical reasoning, becoming the first priority for Chinese Buddhists to betake. As a result, Mādhyamika Buddhism as evolved from the doctrine of the prajñāpāramitā in India did not receive the equal development in China. Kumārajīva probably knew the implications of this tension, but finding no way to resolve it. That paves way to the *Parinirvana Sūtra* soon moving into the mainstream of Chinese Buddhism and the rise of various commentaries on the *Lotus Sutra*.