

Research Proposal

Paper's title: Kumarajiva's Contribution to Chinese Literature: Focusing on His Translation of Buddhist Scriptures from Sanskrit to Chinese

Author's name and affiliation: Fan Jingjing, Ph. D candidate, Institute of Comparative Literature and Culture, Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Peking University, China

Email address: fanjingjing@pku.edu.cn, fanjj1984@163.com

A Brief Description of the Paper:

Kumarajiva is an important figure in medieval China. He traveled a long and difficult way from Kucha to Chang'an, wherein he finally settled down and began his great translation career. Under the sponsorship of the government of Later Qin, he organized a group of about five hundred eminent monks, who helped him translating the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit to Chinese. His translations were called "new translations", better and more widely accepted compared to the previous translations by others, which were then called "old translations". Generally speaking, his translation aimed at conveying the meaning rather than strictly obeyed the original text. Therefore, his translations were more flexible and fluent. Perhaps it is for this reason that his translations attracted a lot more readers and exerted a great impact on Chinese literature.

This paper will mainly focus on two Buddhist scriptures translated by Kumarajiva: one is Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, the other is Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra. Both are very popular among Chinese literati. In addition, we have found Sanskrit texts of both and we have different Chinese translations for both. So it is possible to compare the Sanskrit texts with different Chinese translations, in order to figure out Kumarajiva's translating strategies and how his translation influenced Chinese literati's writings.