

## Kumārajīva's Translation of Buddhist Texts

—His Chief Translations of Sūtras and Śāstras  
and the Existence of the Draft Versions—

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Kumārajīva was one of the greatest translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese. Together with Hsüan-tsang he holds an important place in the Chinese Buddhist history. In the number of translations Kumārajīva is no match for Hsüan-tsang, but the influence of the sūtras and the śāstras which he translated was decisive on the later development of the San-lun, Ssu-lun, Ch'eng-shih and T'ien-t'ai sect, as well as Ch'an and Pure land Buddhism.

However, not all questions about Kumārajīva's translation have been solved. For example, the number of texts he translated is not known with certainty. *Ch'u-san-tsang-chi-chi* of the early sixth century enumerates 35 works attributed to Kumārajīva; *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* of the late sixth century gives 98 works and *K'ai-yüan-shih-chiao-lu* of the mid eighth century gives 75 works. The compiler of Taisho Tripiṭaka gives 52 works as Kumārajīva's authentic works on the basis of *K'ai-yüan-shih-chiao-lu*. To solve this problem we have to examine the more reliable materials which are closer to his age.

This article takes again up the above problem by examining the documents written by Seng-jui and Seng-chao who studied directly under Kumārajīva. Through my research I have come to the conclusion that

at least over 20 among the extant 52 works which are supposed to be authentic cannot be considered Kumārajīva's translation. Even *Ch'u-san-tsang-chi-chi* which is regarded to be authoritative has some mistakes.

Among the works translated by Kumārajīva three Mahāyāna sūtras, namely, *P'an-jo*, *Fa-hua* and *Wei-mo* as well as Mahāyāna śāstras, namely, *Chung-lun*, *Pai-lun*, *Shih-erh-men-lun*, *Tai-chih-tu-lun* and *Ch'eng-shih-lun* are of particularly importance. According to my research the work which Kumārajīva was required to accomplish by the Buddhist society of that time was to retranslate more correctly and in a more beautiful style the sūtras which had been translated already. This is because the Mahāyāna sūtras translated by Chu-fa-fu and others in Chang-an had many mistakes, and it was necessary to correct them and to make a more accurate and elegant translations of the principal Mahāyāna sūtras. Kumārajīva's translations of *P'an-jo*, *Fa-hua*, *Wei-mo* and other Mahāyāna sūtras were made the response to such needs of the Buddhist society at that time.

There seemed to be no pressing need to translate Mahāyāna śāstras at that time. Thus Kumārajīva first translated the śāstras at his own will. But the śāstras he translated are of great significance in Chinese Buddhist history. *Tai-chih-tu-lun* was an authoritative text for sūtra studies, and the Three Treaties, such as *Chung-lun* were of utmost significance in comprehending the essential meaning of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Needless to say, these translations introduced the Mādhyamika Buddhism to China for the first time. Unlike these treatises, *Ch'eng-shih-lun* was a systematic manual of the teachings of Buddhism.

Kumārajīva took great pains to produce authoritative versions of these sūtras and śāstras. In translating these works, he first made a draft version before producing a final translation. It has not been known that there were the draft versions of *Fa-hua-ching*, *Chung-lun*, *Pai-lun* and other sūtras and śāstras which were translated by Kumārajīva. In this article I proved that there had in fact prevailed two kinds of versions of the chief works translated by Kumārajīva.

Through the above examinations I think it was partially made clear why Kumārajīva's translations have been acquiring the fame since ancient times.