

Original Paper

A Reinterpretation of Kumarajiva's Translation Thought and Its Enlightenment to the "Going Out" of Chinese Culture

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Abstract

The translation of Buddhist sutras has played a vital role in the spread of Buddhism in China, of which Kumarajiva has made a great contribution. With his unique translation ideas and translation practices, he made it easier for the Buddhist scriptures to be accepted by the public, thus promoting the spread of Buddhism and the exchange and integration of ancient Indian civilization and Chinese culture. Now, our country is also actively advocating the strategy of "culture going out". To promote China's culture to go abroad, to spread Chinese cultural symbols and values to the world, we will enhance China's international discourse power and the international influence of Chinese culture, thus further enhancing China's cultural soft power. In this context, more and more Sinology classics go to the world through translation, among which the translation of Sinology classics in English is undoubtedly the mainstream. Based on this, Kumarajiva's translation thoughts can be used for reference to the translation process of "Chinese culture going out", for instance, how to deal with cultural untranslatability and translate some words with cultural characteristics, which can better promote the spread of Chinese culture and enhance China's international influence.

Keywords

Kumarajiva, Chinese culture, "going out"

1. Buddhist Sutra Translation and Kumarajiva

1.1 Overview

Kumarajiva (343-413), an eminent monk in the Sixteen Kingdoms period of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, as one of the four major translators of Chinese Buddhist sutras, is one of the key figures in the introduction of Buddhist thought into China. Buddhism was introduced into China during the Han Dynasty. Moreover, Buddhist classics have been translated since that period. The introduction of Buddhism into China essentially reflects the process of the integration of Buddhism and Chinese

culture. In the 4th century AD, Buddhism spread widely in the Western regions and the Central Plains. Kumarajiva, who was born in Qiuci State (Kuqa, Xinjiang), played a vital role in this process of communication.

He became a monk with his mother when he was seven years old. He first studied Hinayana Buddhism in the country of Hinayana (present-day Kashmir). Later, he met the country's Prince in Shache and was inspired to study Mahayana Buddhism. Since then, Kumarajiva has been advocating Mahayana Buddhism and devoted a lot of painstaking efforts to it. According to records, after Yao Xing attacked Liang, he personally welcomed Kumarajiva into Chang'an and treated him as a national teacher. He organized a large-scale translation venue in Chang'an and invited Kumarajiva to preside over it. He presided over the translation of about 35 Buddhist scriptures and 300 volumes, with equal emphasis on quality and quantity. According to the catalogue of Buddhist Tibetan sutras, as many as 384 volumes of scriptures have been translated by Kumarajiva, who is a rare and prolific translator in the history of translation of Buddhist sutras. Kumarajiva's translation covers the scriptures, laws and theories, such as Prajna Sutra, Quadripartite Law, Vimachi Sutra, realism, Shizhu Pipasa Theory, and so on. As many as a thousand people presided over the sutra translation field, and his students and disciples also helped in the translation field, some in charge of moistening the text and some in charge of writing, that is, to record the dictation of others with a pen.

In the process of Buddhist sutra translation, he formed a series of translation ideas and translation methods, which had a great impact on the field of translation, and had a far-reaching impact on Chinese literature, philosophy, as well as the formation and development of Buddhist theories and schools. This paper intends to explain some of Kumarajiva's views on translation studies, with a view to exploring its significance to the "going out" of Chinese culture in the light of the role of the translation process in cultural communication and the spread of Buddhist sutras and related ideas. And it provides inspiration for the theoretical innovation and translation practice of Chinese translatology in the future.

2. Kumarajiva's Translation Theory and Its Reinterpretation

2.1 Theory of Untranslatability

Shi Sengyou's Biography of Kumarajiva, *The Tripitaka*, records that Kumarajiva is a monk on the western style of ci. The content is as follows in Chinese: "初，沙门僧叡，才识高朗，常随什传写。什每为叡论西方辞体，商略同异，云：‘天竺国俗甚重文藻，其宫商体韵，以入弦为善。凡见国王，必有赞德；见佛之仪，以歌叹为尊。经中偈颂，皆其式也。但改梵为秦，失其藻蔚，虽得大意，殊隔文体。有似嚼饭与人，非徒失味，乃令呕啜也。’" (Sengyou, n.d.) The meaning of the text is that the Indian Buddhist scriptures attach great importance to the beauty of the rhythm of poetry and are suitable for singing, mainly used to praise the virtue of the king. Due to the differences between the two countries, the translation of Sanskrit into the language at that time conveys the basic meanings, but the form of target text is strange and the beauty of the article has disappeared, so it is disgusting to read. From this point, we can see that the translation depends on the situation. We should not blindly pursue

the equivalent translation in words or meaning so that ignore its charm. For some Sanskrit words that have not been found in Chinese, Kumarajiva adopted transliteration to avoid losing the flavor of foreign culture and making people confused. Such as Prajna, Buddha, Shri, Raksha, Nirvana, Shamen, Sakya, Maitreya, Bodhi and so on. These words have been integrated into Chinese culture and are well known. From this we can see that the transliteration of these new nouns and loanwords used to translate Buddhist concepts not only enriches and expands the Chinese language, but also expands the corresponding culture. For example, it brings people the concepts of past life, present life, afterlife, cause and effect and reincarnation.

Therefore, we should not simply pursue the equivalent translation of some words, such as some word-formation problems in Chinese. For example, 女卑为婢 ; 人曾为僧 (this is word-formation example in Chinese). This is essentially a cultural difference, and the word formation is different, so it is impossible to find a correspondence in English. From the perspective of translation equivalence, there is untranslatability. Therefore, in view of this, transliteration can be adopted to explain the connotation behind it. Secondly, based on the discussion of the background of Chinese culture going out, it is necessary to have Chinese cultural characteristics in order to spread Chinese culture. In view of the exotic customs of Kumarajiva's translation, it is also gradually accepted by China. Then Chinese culture can also be used for reference when going abroad, such as some allegorical sayings in Chinese: 孔夫子搬家—尽是书 (输)。 In this saying, “书” means book and “输” means lose. The two words have the same pronunciation but different meanings in Chinese. From a cultural point of view, this kind text is also untranslatable and can not be found to be completely equivalent in pronunciation in English, so based on this category, we can learn from the translation practice of Kumarajiva, so as to better enable Chinese culture to retain the greatest Chinese characteristics, go abroad and be accepted by the world.

2.2 *Literary Translation Thought*

Kumarajiva found that his predecessors' translation of “multi-stagnant text does not correspond to Hu Ben”, that is, the traditional literal translation method, but his Buddhist sutra translation thought belongs to the typical representative of “literary school”. He completely abandoned the “case meaning” and adopted the free translation method to translate the Buddhist scriptures. He believed that there were many problems in these translations, such as unfamiliar words, obscure texts and misleading texts contrary to the original meanings. In the process of translating Buddhist sutras, he changed his previous translation methods from literal translation and hard translation to free translation, which means abandoning the form of the original text, not word-for-word translation, and directly expressing the meaning of the original text. This method not only pays attention to the reproduction of classics and meaning, but also has beautiful and smooth words, so it is widely loved by monks. Such as: “人天交接, 两得相见”。 This translation story is in the Biography of the eminent Monk. Kumarajiva pointed out that although the translation of “天见人, 人见天”(target text in Chinese) embodied the meaning of the original text, it was not elegant enough. It can be seen that based on the situation of the readers at that

time Kumarajiva opposed that the article was too simple and advocated that the translation was expected to be beautiful. This also has a profound impact on today's cross-cultural communication. Chinese culture has a long history, broad and profound. Five thousand years of history has accumulated a lot of cultural heritage and cultural treasures. Under the background of globalization and China's going out, we need to combine our own characteristics to create cultural exchange models and means with Chinese characteristics. The dissemination of Chinese poetry with distinctive cultural characteristics has become a top priority. Poetry itself is very cultural, so it is urgent to solve how to translate poetry and Chinese traditional cultural words and retain their cultural characteristics, spread them and be accepted by the world.

Nowadays, we all pay more attention to the translation of poetry, and we can also explore one or two from the translation of Kumarajiva, we should retain the cultural characteristics, make the article beautiful and convey its meaning. For example, 是年七夕, 芸设香烛瓜果, 同拜天孙于我取轩中 (source text in Chinese). Mr. Lin Yutang annotated the words with cultural characteristics, such as Qixi Festival (七夕) and Tian Sun (天孙). Although we can mark Qixi Festival according to the calendar, the purpose of our translation is to spread Chinese culture better. In addition, Xu Yuanchong prefers free translation to the translation of Chinese poetry, conveying the beauty of Chinese poetry. For example, 寻寻觅觅, 冷冷清清, 凄凄惨惨戚戚 (source text in Chinese). He translated it as *I look for what I miss; I know not what it is. I feel so sad, so drear, so lonely, without cheer*. This translation not only retains the beauty of Chinese rhyme, but also does not adopt literal translation. From the point of view that cultural communication has Chinese characteristics, when we translate, we should not only pay attention to the content of the original text, but also retain Chinese characteristics. We should not pay too much attention to literal translation, but also to convey the meaning of the article, so that non-native cultures can understand its profound meaning and better able to achieve this goal, thus conducive to the development of Chinese culture.

3. The Influence of the Translation of Kumarajiva Buddhist Scriptures

Liang Qichao said that the translation of Buddhist scriptures determines the process of the development of Chinese Buddhism. As mentioned above, Buddhism became popular in China only in the 4th century AD, and the key factor is the emergence of many Buddhist translators, such as Kumarajiva. These people not only put forward some translation theories, ideas and principles, which improved the quality of Buddhist sutra translation at that time, but also established some norms and improved the translation field for Buddhist sutra translation. All these practices have laid a solid foundation for the smooth spread of Buddhist culture in China. The influence of Buddhist sutra translation also permeates all aspects. For example, Kumarajiva's Buddhist sutra translation is to translate Sanskrit into Chinese, which essentially plays a role in the integration of Chinese civilization and ancient Indian civilization, and promotes the mutual infiltration and influence of the two cultures. Secondly, the translation of Kumarajiva has greatly promoted the development of Chinese Buddhism, or it can be said that it is his

translation that provides a cultural carrier for the spread of Buddhism in China. This provides a certain basis for the emergence of many religious sects, such as Cheng Shizong, Tiantai sect, Huayan sect, San Lun sect and so on.

In addition, Kumarajiva combined the lecture with the translation of the sutra, which created the style of free lecture and provided a new method and truth-seeking method for the ideological circle. At the same time, he trained a large number of Buddhists in the process of translation, who were knowledgeable and proficient in Buddhism and Sinology, which greatly promoted the development of Mahayana Buddhism and promoted Mahayana Buddhism, which played a vital role in the spread and development of Chinese Buddhist thought.

4. The Contemporary Significance of Kumarajiva's Translation Thought and Its Enlightenment to the Development of Chinese Culture

4.1 Interpreter

In terms of the translator's own conditions, Kumarajiva was proficient in Sanskrit and Chinese, reading scriptures and staying in China for a long time. He had a good knowledge of both cultures. Because of these abilities, his translation can be accepted by the public. In today's form, if we want to make Chinese culture go abroad with the greatest utility and characteristics, and be in line with international standards, we must have high requirements for the quality of interpreters. While being proficient in Chinese culture, we should also master the language habits, customs and customs of the target language, so as to make the translation more acceptable to the public and have the characteristics of "literature". Take the traditional cultural works and books with Chinese characteristics as an example, such as ancient poetry. They contain a variety of images, and it is easy to lose some of their flavors in the process of translation into other languages. If the translator does not understand the poem, or if it is translated by someone who does not understand Chinese traditional culture, it is very easy to lose its flavor. Domestic scholars should actively respond to the proposal of "going out" of Chinese culture and study the translation of culture-loaded words, so as to be qualified Chinese culture communicators, that is, translators.

4.2 Translation

The Chinese nation's long history of more than five thousand years has given birth to a rich Chinese civilization, thus shaping a unique Chinese culture. Some poetic and cultural works with Chinese culture or some cultural words with Chinese characteristics and communicative words are the essence of Chinese culture. Kumarajiva's translation of some words with obvious cultural characteristics retained its original words to avoid losing the flavors. Therefore, in the process of translating these texts, the target language translation should not only take into account the readers' own language habits and cultural traditions, but also have Chinese characteristics. That is to say, the translated text has Chinese characteristics and should not blindly pursue the form of equivalence with the target language, but lose the charm of Chinese traditional culture and retain the grace of the original work. Don't forget

the original. At present, we are facing great changes that the world has not seen in a century, so in order to better let Chinese culture go out and deal with the current situation, we should strengthen our cultural self-confidence and fully understand how to inherit and carry forward the excellent Chinese traditional culture.

4.3 Opportunity

Based on the fact that Chinese culture needs to go out, and China's influence in the international community is getting higher and higher, people are more and more interested in Chinese culture. As a core link of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the strategy of "going out" of culture has become a necessary driving force to promote its cultural development. In order to realize the "going out" of Chinese culture, it is necessary to make an in-depth analysis of the attractiveness of Chinese culture. At that time, the spread of Buddhism was in urgent need of carriers, and Kumarajiva translated a large number of scriptures at this time, so that Buddhism had the conditions to spread. Based on this, at a time when the world is also interested in China, we should seize the opportunity to carry forward Chinese culture.

5. Conclusion

If Chinese culture wants to go abroad better, the necessary condition is that it is deeply rooted in Chinese traditional culture. Combined with the background of cross-cultural communication and the social and cultural background at that time, Kumarajiva's translation theory played a great role in promoting the translation of Buddhist sutras and the spread of Buddhism. In the context of the "going out" of Chinese culture, Kumarajiva's translation thought provides an important inspiration for correctly handling the relationship between Chinese culture and world culture and promoting Chinese culture to go global. It is necessary to retain the original Chinese cultural characteristics and take into account the cultural background of the target language. On the one hand, the untranslatability in cultural words, we can adopt the way of transliteration to explain the meaning. Do not just seek reciprocity, losing the cultural charm. On the other hand, in the process of translation, we should pay attention to the cultural background of the target language readers and learn to use translation strategies flexibly on the basis of understanding the source text, focusing on free translation, in order to express the meaning of the original text and seek the balance between domestication and foreignization. It can not only make readers understand, but also maintain the characteristics of Chinese traditional culture, and achieve the purpose of spreading Chinese culture. Buddhist sutra translation enables Buddhist culture to be integrated into Chinese traditional culture, and Chinese culture should also be shown to the world in the form of translation, so as to accelerate the exchange and integration of cultures. To promote the development of Chinese culture and translate it into a bridge, we should spread the unique characteristics and features of Chinese culture to the outside world through this bridge.

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