

A Study of “Tathagata” in the Different Versions of *The Diamond Sūtra*

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The Diamond Sūtra, full name is Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita in Sanskrit. It is recorded that there are six Chinese versions of *The Diamond Sūtra*, and it is also the most famous and popular Buddhist scripture in China. It lays the foundation of Indian Mahayana Buddhism. There are a lot of titles of Buddha in the six versions; “Tathagata” is one of them.

Keywords: *The Diamond Sūtra*, Tathagata, translation

Introduction

The so-called different translation of the same Scripture is the different Chinese versions of the same classic translated by different translators in the history of Buddhism. The comparative study of different translations of the same scriptures has a long history, but it is generally limited to the field of Buddhist studies, and the purpose is to better dredge the main meaning of the Scriptures. This paper takes *the Diamond Sūtra* as the research object, focusing on the word “Tathagata” to compare six Chinese versions in history, in order to make some contribution to the collation of the *Diamond sutra*.

Chinese Versions of *The Diamond Sūtra*

The Diamond Sūtra first appeared in India around 100 B.C., which was introduced to West China from the Northwest India. Since *The Diamond Sūtra* was introduced into China from eastern Jin dynasty to the Tang dynasty, there are six translations, they are Kumarajiva (Jiva for shot) in the Post-Qin Dynasty, Bodhiruci in the North-Wei Dynasty, Paramartha in the Liang and Chen Dynasties, Dharmagupta in the Sui Dynasty, Xuanzang and Yijing in the Tang Dynasty. Kumarajiva was the first one who translated *The Diamond Sūtra*.

There are many titles of “Buddha” in *The Diamond Sūtra*, such as “Tathagata” (如来), “the world-honored one” and “Buddha”. In the process of translation, “title” as a noun is usually not omitted in order to be equivalent to the original text. However, the types and quantities of titles used in the six Chinese versions of *The Diamond Sūtra* are not the same. What causes such problems and whether other problems can be found in the comparison? With these questions, this paper takes “Tathagata” as an example to compare the six Chinese versions, tries to solve the above problems.

Study of “Tathagata”

In the Buddhist dictionary, “Tathagata” (如来) is a honorific title of Buddha, which defined as he who comes as do all other Buddhas; or as he who took the zhenru or absolute way of cause and effect, and attained to perfect wisdom; or as the absolute come; one of the highest titles of a Buddha. The two kinds of “Tathagata” are (1) the “Tathagata” in bonds, i.e. limited and subject to the delusions and sufferings of life, and (2) unlimited and free from them. There are numerous sutras and sastras bearing this title of “如来”. “Buddha” has ten titles, they are “Arhat” “Samyak-sambuddha” “Vidyacarana-sampanna” “Sugata” “Lokavid” “Anuttara” “Bhagavan” “Purusa-damya-sarathi” “Sastadeva-manusy-ananm”.

According to the statistics, we find that there are 88 “Tathagata” in Kumarajiva’s version, 100 in Bodhiruci’s version, 113 in Paramartha’s version, 149 in Dharmagupta’s version, 157 in Xuanzang’s version and 91 in Yijing’s version. In all the translated sutras, the meaning of Tathagata is the honorific title of Buddha, not self-claiming. In order to intuitively understand its use in the translation of the six versions, we use the following chart to express.

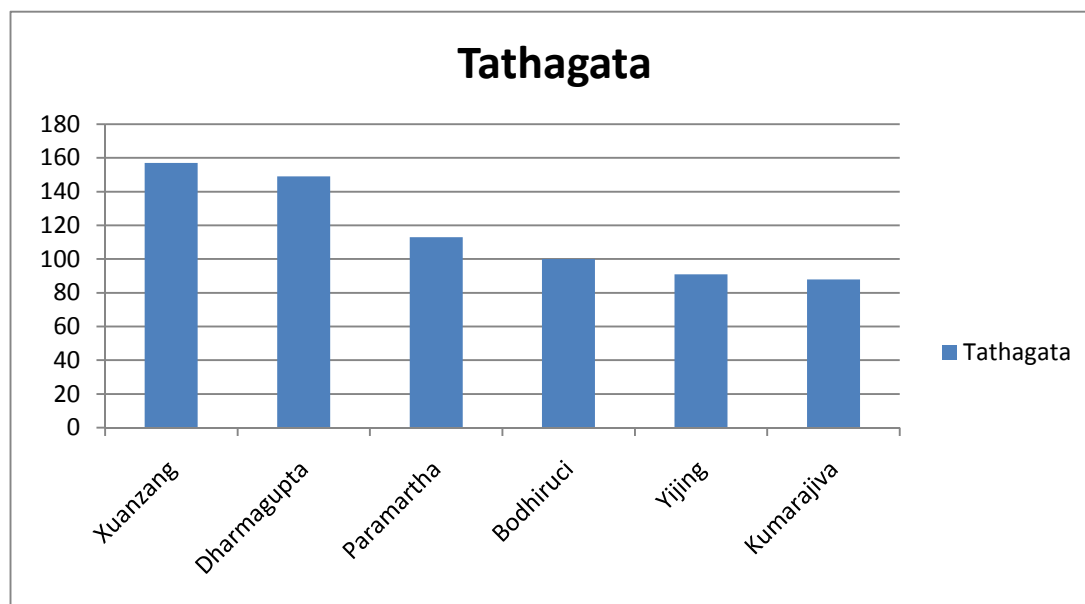


Figure 1. Times of “Tathagata” in each version.

From the Figure 1 we can see that the number of “Tathagata” in Xuanzang’s version is the highest, and then is Dharmagupta, Kumarajiva is the least. The meaning of “Tathagata” in the six versions is the same, which refers to the honorific title of “Buddha”. In the process of translation, some translators will retain the address terms. However, if the appellation terms are too many and deleted without affecting the meaning of the original text, some translators will choose to omit, making the translation easier to understand and praise.

After a sentence by sentence comparison of the word “Tathagata” in six versions, the author finds the following problems:

(1) The use of the word “Tathagata” in Jiva’s translation is the least. After investigation, it is found that there are many omissions in his translation.e.g.:

Kumarajiva:

「須菩提！我今實言告汝。若有善男子、善女人，以七寶滿爾所恒河沙數三千大千世界，以用布施，得福多不？」(750a)¹

The same sentence in the other five versions are:

Bodhiruci:

佛言：「須菩提！我今實言告汝。若有善男子、善女人，以七寶滿爾數恒沙數世界，以施諸佛如來。(754a)

Paramartha:

佛言：「須菩提！我今覺汝，我今示汝。諸恒伽中所有沙數爾許世界，若有善男子、善女人，以七寶遍滿，持施如來應供正遍覺知。(763b)

Dharmagupta:

世尊言：「欲我汝，善實！知我汝。所有彼中恒伽大河中沙有，彼所有世界有，如是婦女，若丈夫，若七寶滿作已，如來等、應等、正遍知等施與。(768b)

Xuanzang:

佛言：「善現！吾今告汝，開覺於汝，假使若善男子或善女人，以妙七寶盛滿爾所殑伽河沙等世界，奉施如來、應、正等覺。(961c)

Yijing:

「妙生！我今實言告汝。若復有人，以寶滿此河沙數量世界，奉施如來，得福多不？」妙生言：「甚多，世尊！」(773a)

The other five examples translated the object of almsgiving “Tathagata” to make the sentence meaning more clearly, however, in kumarashi’s version, the sentence object was missing, resulting in incomplete sentence meaning.

other example:

Kumarajiva:

須菩提！如來說第一波羅蜜，非第一波羅蜜，是名第一波羅蜜。須菩提！忍辱波羅蜜，如來說非忍辱波羅蜜。(750b)

Bodhiruci:

須菩提！如來說第一波羅蜜，非第一波羅蜜。如來說第一波羅蜜者，彼無量諸佛亦說波羅蜜，是名第一波羅蜜。(754b)

Paramartha:

須菩提！此法如來所說，是第一波羅蜜。此波羅蜜，如來所說，無量諸佛亦如是說，是故說名第一波羅蜜。(764a)

Dharmagupta:

最勝彼岸到，此，善實！如來說：若及，善實！如來最勝彼岸到說，彼無量亦佛、世尊說；彼故，說名最勝彼岸到者。(769a)

Xuanzang:

¹ The use cases of Buddhist scriptures cited in this paper are all from the photocopied version of Japan’s *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, each example is followed by page number and column number.

善現！如來說最勝波羅蜜多，謂般若波羅蜜多。善現！如來說最勝波羅蜜多，無量諸佛世尊所共宣說，故名最勝波羅蜜多。如來說最勝波羅蜜多即非波羅蜜多，是故如來說名最勝波羅蜜多。(982b)

Yijing:

妙生！此最勝波羅蜜多，是如來說諸波羅蜜多。如來說者，即是無邊佛所宣說，是故名為最勝波羅蜜多。(773b)

The direct result of Kumarajiva's omission in translation is that compared with other versions, Kumarajiva's "Tathagata" appellation terms are obviously less than other translators.

(2) For the same Scripture, the translators form their own classical sentence pattern (XY refers to the explanation in the text):

Kumarajiva:

- (1) XY者，則非XY，是名XY
- (2) 佛說非X，是名adj+X
- (3) 佛說XY，則非XY
- (4) 如來說非XY，是名XY，如來說XY，非XY，是名XY
- (5) 是X者，則是非X，是故如來說名X。
- (6) 如來說XY，即是非Y，是名XY

Bodhiruci:

- (1) 如來說XY者，則非XY，是名XY
- (2) 佛說非X，是名adj+X。
- (3) 佛說XY，則非XY
- (4) 如來說非XY，是名XY；如來說XY，非XY，是名XY。
- (5) 是X者，則是非X，是故如來說名X、X
- (6) 是X者，即非X，是故如來說名X

Paramartha:

- (1) XY者，如來說非XY，是故XY。
- (2) 如來說非X，名為有X，此非是X，故說有X。
- (3) 是/此xy，即非xy，是故如來說xy
- (4) 如來說非X，故名X。
- (5) 是XY者，非XY，是故如來說名XY、說名XY
- (6) 此XY,如來說非XY，是故如來說名XY

Dharmagupta:

- (1) 不X，彼，如來說；彼故，說名X者
- (2) X，如來說；彼如是非X；彼故，說名X者
- (3) X，如來說；非X，彼，如來說；彼故，說名X者

Xuanzang:

- (1) XYXY者，如來說為非XY，是故如來說名XYXY
- (2) XYXY者，如來說非XY，是故如來說名XYXY
- (3) 如是XY,如來說為非XY，是故如來說名XY

- (4) XY, 如来说非XY, 是故如来说名XY
- (5) 如来说XY, 即非XY, 是故如来说名XY
- (6) XY, 如来说为非XY, 是故如来说名XY

Yijing:

- (1) 此XY者, 则非是XY, 是故如来说为XY、XY
- (2) XY者, 如来说非XY, 是名XY
- (3) XY者, 如来说非XY, 由此说为XY。
- (4) 如来说为XY者, 即说为非XY, 是名XY
- (5) XY、XY者, 如来说非XY, 是故名为XY。
- (6) 诸XY者, 如来说非XY, 是故如来说名XY。
- (7) XY者, 如来说为非XY, 故名XY
- (8) XY, 如来说为非XY, 故名XY
- (9) 佛说XY者, 说为非XY, 是故说为XY
- (10) 诸/此XY, 佛说非XY, 故名XY
- (11) XY, 佛说非XY, 是故说为XY

Through the comparison of the above classical sentence patterns, we can see that:

(1) In the classical sentence patterns of Kumarajiva, Bodhiruchi and Yijing, “Tathagata” and “Buddha” was been universally used. It can be inferred that “Buddha” and “Tathagata” were equally used in the three translators’ translation.

(2) The classical sentence patterns of Kumarajiva, Bodhiruchi, Paramartha, and Xuanzang are relatively fixed and all have six forms; Dharmagupta’s sentence pattern is the least, while Yijing’s sentence pattern is relatively rich.

(3) The classical sentence patterns of Kumarajiva and Bodhiruchi are basically the same, so it can be inferred that Bodhiruchi takes Kumarajiva’s translation for reference to a great extent.

(4) The sentence patterns of Dharmagupta are complex and difficult to understand in many places. Even though the classical sentence patterns are relatively fixed, they are difficult to be understood.

Controversial Points in the Translation

Omission of Translation

In addition to the problems mentioned above, there are also many problems of omission in Kumarajiva’s version, such as the omission of Gāthā:

Kumarajiva:

若以色見我, 以音聲求我, 是人行邪道, 不能見如來。(752a)

Bodhiruchi:

若以色見我, 以音聲求我, 是人行邪道, 不能見如來。

彼如來妙體, 即法身諸佛, 法體不可見, 彼識不能知。(756b)

Paramartha:

若以色見我, 以音聲求我, 是人行邪道, 不應得見我。

由法應見佛，調御法為身，此法非識境，法如深難見。(766a)

Dharmagupta:

若我色見，若我聲求，邪解脫行，不我見彼。

法體佛見應，法身彼如來，法體及不識，故彼不能知。(771a)

Xuanzang:

諸以色觀我，以音聲尋我，彼生履邪斷，不能當見我。

應觀佛法性，即導師法身；法性非所識，故彼不能了。(985a)

Yijing:

若以色見我，以音聲求我，是人起邪觀，不能當見我。

應觀佛法性，即導師法身，法性非所識，故彼不能了。(775a)

Kumarajiva transferred the negative meaning that Tathagata cannot be seen without telling believers how to see him from the positive perspective. Kumarajiva's omission is called as the famous “one of the two stanzas missed” (二頌闕一).

Omission of Yijing:

Kumarajiva:

須菩提！汝若作是念：『如來不以具足相故，得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。須菩提！莫作是念。如來不以具足相故，得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(752a)

Bodhiruchi:

須菩提！於意云何？如來可以相成就得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提？須菩提！莫作是念：如來以相成就得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(756b)

Paramartha:

須菩提！汝意云何？如來可以具足相得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提不？須菩提！汝今不應作如是見：如來以具足相得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。何以故？須菩提！如來不由具足相得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(766a)

Dharmagupta:

彼何意念？善實！相具足，如來無上正遍知證覺？不，復彼，善實！如是見應。彼何所因？不，善實！相具足，如來無上正遍知證覺。(771b)

Xuanzang:

佛告善現：於汝意云何？如來、應、正等覺以諸相具足現證無上正等覺耶？善現！汝今勿當作如是觀。何以故？善現！如來、應、正等覺不以諸相具足現證無上正等菩提。(985a)

After sentence by sentence proofreading, it is found that there is no such sentence in Yijing's translation, so we can infer that this is omission of Yijing.

Mistranslation

Kumarajiva:

須菩提言：如我解佛所說義，無有定法名阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(749b)

Bodhiruchi:

須菩提言：如我解佛所說義，無有定法如來得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(753b)

Paramartha:

須菩提言：如我解佛說義，無所有法如來所得，名阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(762c)

Dharmagupta:

善實言：如我，世尊！世尊說義解，我，無有一法若如來無上正遍知證覺。(771a)

Xuanzang:

善現答言：世尊！如我解佛所說義者，無有少法，如來、應、正等覺證得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(981a)

Yijing:

妙生言：如我解佛所說義，如來於無上菩提實無所證，亦無所說。何以故？佛所說法，不可取，不可說，彼非法，非非法。何以故？以諸聖者，皆是無為所顯現故。(772c)

This is the mistranslation of Kumarajiva, while the other five cases are consistent. According to the translation of the other five versions, the sentence meaning should be as follows: According to my understanding of the Buddha's righteousness, the Tathagata hasn't obtained the supreme and equal right consciousness. As far as I know, there is no fixed Dharma that can be called the supreme equal sense of justice. In Kumarajiva's translation, these words are from the Buddha, but the other five are from Subhuti, in other words, from the semantic point of view, the subject here is changed.

other examples:

Kumarajiva:

「須菩提！於意云何？菩薩莊嚴佛土不？」

「不也，世尊！何以故？莊嚴佛土者，則非莊嚴，是名莊嚴。」

「是故須菩提，諸菩薩摩訶薩應如是生清淨心，不應住色生心，不應住聲、香、味、觸、法生心，應無所住而生其心。(750a)

Bodhiruchi:

佛告須菩提：「若菩薩作是言：『我莊嚴佛國土。』彼菩薩不實語。何以故？須菩提！如來所說莊嚴佛土者，則非莊嚴，是名莊嚴佛土。(754a)

Paramartha:

佛告須菩提：「若有菩薩作如是言：『我當莊嚴清淨佛土。』而此菩薩說虛妄言。何以故？須菩提！莊嚴佛土者，如來說非莊嚴，是故莊嚴清淨佛土。(765a)

Dharmagupta:

世尊言：「若有，善實！菩薩摩訶薩如是語：『我國土莊嚴成就。』我者，彼不如語。彼何所因？國土莊嚴者，善實！不莊嚴，彼，如來說；彼故，說名國土莊嚴者。(771a)

Xuanzang:

佛告善現：「若有菩薩作如是言：『我當成辦佛土功德莊嚴。』如是菩薩非真實語。何以故？善現！佛土功德莊嚴佛土功德莊嚴者，如來說非莊嚴，是故如來說名佛土功德莊嚴佛土功德莊嚴。(981c)

Yijing:

「妙生！若有菩薩作如是語：『我當成就莊嚴國土。』者，此為妄語。何以故？莊嚴佛土者，如來說非莊嚴，由此說為國土莊嚴。(773a)

There are a lot of mistranslation and omission in Kumarajiva’s translation of this part. The subject positions of the conversation are replaced in Jiva’s version. “何以故？庄严佛土者，则非庄严，是名庄严” is what the Buddha said, while in Jiva’s translation was translated it into the content of Subhuti.

Summary

The number of characters in the six versions of *The Diamond Sūtra* is completely different. Although Jiva’s version is the most popular one, through the proofreading of the word “Tathagata”, we found that there are a lot of omission and mistranslation in Jiva’s version. Therefore, other versions especially Xuanzang’s version are worthy of our study. Due to the influence of different Sanskrit texts of *The Diamond Sūtra* and the translator’s personal translation tendency, there are some differences between the various versions of *The Diamond Sūtra*. By proofreading the six versions of *The Diamond Sūtra* can help us to sort out the original Sanskrit. *The Diamond Sūtra* is a cultural masterpiece in China and even in the world, which is worthy of our serious study.

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