

A Critical Study of Triune Vehicle of Mount Lushan Huiyuan

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Introduction

It is always a popular topic to talk about the difference and common ground between Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism for all the Buddhists and scholars from both traditions. Though the controversy over the superiority or legitimacy hasn't ceased, Buddhists and scholars are more and more interesting in find a way to harmonizing them. Coming to China, as we know, though we can find both Theravada (mostly in Yunnan Province) and Mahāyāna Buddhism here, still it is regarded as the representation of Mahāyāna. So it may be interesting to study the development of Theravada Buddhism in this so-called Mahāyāna country and investigate the relation between Theravada and Mahāyāna. Also, it will be important to know how Chinese monks or Buddhists think about Theravada Buddhist scriptures. In fact, in China, the attempt to harmonize Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism can date back to very early dynasties, when a lot of monks or scholars try to get rid of the problems between these two traditions, among which Mount Lushan Huiyuan (廬山慧遠), one of the great masters in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, really tried a lot to make these two traditions develop harmoniously.

So this paper will focus on Huiyuan's thoughts of the Triune Vehicle, together with which his idea about the relation between Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism was illustrated, to make clear his work of harmonizing these two traditions. Huiyuan had accepted different kind of Buddhism practices which should have determined his thought of the Triune Vehicle. His thought of the Triune Vehicle is mainly illustrated in *Ta-sheng Ta-i Chang* (大乘大義章) which is a compilation of his correspondence with Kumārajīva. In this text we would find that Huiyuan's idea of Triune Vehicle was changing all the time, especially about the differentiation between the Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism, in which he should be affected by Kumārajīva greatly. In the end of above-mentioned *Ta-sheng Ta-i Chang*, we can easily find that Huiyuan was apt to syncretize the Theravada and Mahāyāna doctrines. This tendency was explicitly expressed in his *Preface to Yoga-caryā-bhūmi Sūtra* (廬山出修行方便禪經統序) too, which is his last paper involving the Triune Vehicle. Therefore, in my opinion, although Huiyuan was influenced by Kumārajīva a lot, he was attempting to syncretize the Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism all the time, which could be proved by his Buddhist experiences.

So, in detail, in this article, firstly, I will review the existent researches or works on Huiyuan's idea about Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Secondly, the illustration in *Ta-sheng Ta-i Chang* will be studied, in order to know how he regard the relationship between them in his most important work. In the third part, I will focus on his last paper *Preface to Yoga-caryā-bhūmi Sūtra* to understand how he get rid of the problems in his later years. In the end, I will make a conclusion and outline what Huiyuan did for syncretizing Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism and why he did that. What is even more

significant, I hope my research on Chinese monks' work to syncretize Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism will benefit us in modern society.

After coming to China, Buddhism had gone through different stages, by and by it was accepted by Chinese monks and people. Till now although a lot of Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhist scriptures have been translated, generally the Chinese Buddhism was still regarded as the representation of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Then actually what kind of role the Theravada Buddhism scriptures play in Chinese Buddhism. How the Chinese Buddhist monks think of the relations of Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism scriptures or what is their opinion of triune vehicle. Again, this paper will pay close attention to Mount Lushan Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle in the early Chinese Buddhism to find us an answer.

Review of Literature

About Mount Lushan Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle in the early Chinese Buddhism, there is few books researching on this topic particularly.¹ However there are some articles regarding Mount Lushan Huiyuan, within which researchers gave their ideas about Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle. The most typical opinion is from Leon Hurvitz and Ocho Enichi, both of whom think that Mount Lushan Huiyuan has an unifying thought about Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism.² The so-called unifying Buddhist thought means that all the Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhist scriptures are Buddha's real teachings which should be thoroughly believed in, and Theravada and Mahāyāna teachings should be interpreted mutually. On the basis of this kind of opinion, Huiyuan always interprets Mahāyāna teachings with Theravada Abhidharma teachings. Yet this makes Huiyuan very confused of many Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings sometimes.

In addition, Leon Hurvitz and Ocho Enichi also have some different opinions by their own. For example, Leon Hurvitz thinks that Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle is mostly represented by his concern of "the Buddhist practitioner who observes the truth" by contrast with Kumārajīva's "the truth observed". On the other side, according to Huiyuan's later writings, Ocho Enichi thinks that Huiyuan's final understanding of Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism is not completely correct. The reason is that Huiyuan just understood the relationship between Mahāyāna and Theravada from subjective standpoint and did not get the point of the advantage of Mahāyāna over Theravada.³ Ocho Enichi's student Kimura Sensho also has this kind of opinion that Huiyuan just understood the relationship nominally from the change of time and Buddhist monks.⁴

Almost all the above-mentioned conclusions the kind of static analysis, they did not noticed that Huiyuan was always changing his thought of triune vehicle as his correspondence with Kumārajīva went on.⁵ Even when Ocho Enichi and Kimura Sensho

¹ Kamata Shigeo, General History of Chinese Buddhism, volume 2, Gaoxiong: Foguang Press, 1986.4, p394-395; Fukunaga Mitsuji, Research on the history of thought of Wei and Jin dynasty, Tokyo: Iwanami Press, 2005.7, p171-178.

² Leon. Hurvitz, The Triune Vehicle in the Correspondence of Huiyuan and Kumārajīva; Ocho Enichi, A Preface to the Study of the Correspondence of Huiyuan and Kumārajīva, both in Studies on Huiyuan-Researches, edited by Kimura Eiichi, Tokyo: Sobunshya, 1962.3, p169-193, p121-168.

³ Ocho Enichi, The Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in China, Study on Chinese Buddhism, Kyoto: Hozokan, 1958.1, p290-325.

⁴ Kimura Sensho, Buddha-view of Early Chinese Buddhism, Thought Study on Chinese Buddhism, Kyoto: Hozokan, 2009.9, p39-64.

⁵ These correspondence was compiled as Ta-sheng ta-i chang, 大乘大义章, Chapters concerning the great doctrine of

tried to determine the nature of his final thought of Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism, they just did it by Huiyuan's later papers of some literary and historical feature rather than theoretical analysis. So their conclusions are not very suitable to the development of Huiyuan's thought.

For these reasons, I think Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle need to be further researched from new perspective. Firstly, we should pay more attention to the change and development of Huiyuan's thought about Mahāyāna and Theravada. Secondly, we should notice and divide the different nature of Huiyuan's works. Thirdly, we need fully consider Huiyuan's overall Buddhist experiences. Based on all of these, we will discuss Huiyuan's correspondence with Kumārajīva and his later works in turn, so that we could get a more suitable and convincing conclusion about his thought of triune vehicle, and know his real idea about the relation of Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism.

Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle in Ta-sheng ta-i chang

Although there were many studies on Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle, all the former studies haven't defined what properties the study should exactly include. So at the beginning, we should firstly make an explicit definition about it. In my opinion, this kind of study should illustrate how the Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism (scriptures) come into being, what the relationship between the Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism (scriptures, practitioner) should be, what kind of attitude or standpoint toward the three vehicles is hold and also what is the reasons. On the basis of these questions, we will start our study of Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle.

As the former studies show, Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle mainly expressed in the Ta-sheng ta-i chang. Because comparing to his other works, his questions in Ta-sheng ta-i chang are much more theoretical and well-directed. But for his expression is problem-oriented, these questions could reflect the change and development of his thought rather than his sustained and final thought. But in these questions we could find that there are some factors which were revised gradually and also some factors which were never changed. Therefore, we could infer Huiyuan's final and fixed thought of triune vehicle.

By reading Ta-sheng ta-i chang, we could discover that Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle are mainly reflected in two places. The first one is his understanding of dharma-kāya of Bodhisattva. That is to say, how the dharma-kāya of Bodhisattva would generate? The second is his understanding of the relationship between Arhat, Pratyekabuddha, Bodhisattva and Buddha. Namely, how Arhat and pratyekabuddha can become Buddha, why a bodhisattva must practice all the courses of the two vehicles? How a bodhisattva would not backslide to the status of the two vehicles etc.? It is just what Leon.Hurvitz said that the aspect of "the Buddhist practitioner who observes the truth".

Coming to the first aspect, Huiyuan's questions about dharma-kāya are mainly expounded in 1st-6th chapters of the first volumes of Ta-sheng ta-i chang. Among these

the Mahāyāna, consists of three volumes which divided into eighteen chapters. The beginning and finishing time of these correspondence maybe from 406 or 407 to 411, the year Kumārajīva died, see Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, edited by Kimura Eiichi, Tokyo: Sobunshya, 1960.11, p407. About Kumārajīva's death, see Saito Tatuya, The Date of Kumārajīva's death: A Reexamination, Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, Vol.3, 2000.3, p125-154.

questions, Huiyuan always wanted to interpret dharma-kāya with the four gross elements and five faculties, which shows his mix-up of dharma-kāya and rūpakāya. But the background of this kind of thought is that he believed in all the Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhist scriptures, and he claimed the doctrines from these two schools could interpret each other without discrimination. A typical question about this in chapter 2 is as follows:

“Now what I (Huiyuan) want to ask you (Kumārajīva) is that, the body born of Dharma-nature (dharma-kāya) is based on a lot of marvelous activities. Expedient Means of Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra says like this, Tathāgata’s body is born of marvelous activities.⁶Your answer may be just similar. Should those activities expressed in Expedient Means be the reason for the body born of Dharma-nature? If they are the preceding reasons, it must cause its result. So the question is that, do these activities fit the Dharma-nature? If they do so and don’t mix up remains of defilement, the body of Dharma-nature should not be born. Please let me deduce that what are the grounds for being born, so that we can see the rule of it.”⁷

Huiyuan thought that these Marvelous activities could produce dharma-kāya. As a matter of fact, these marvelous activities are common practices for arhat and bodhisattva. So Huiyuan’s deduction goes on.

“From unenlightened people to arhat whose last body get unimpeded, they all born of defilements which are transformed from karma of their own. From the bodhisattva who get pure dharma-kāya to the one who will become the next Buddha, they all born with the remains of defilement(烦恼残气) which are transformed from the defilement stains of their own. From this moment on, there is no more signs of physiology... Even the bodhisattva of dharma-kāya, whose aim is to understand the Dharma-nature and based on marvelous activities, when they get born into the status of bodhisattva, they must be by means of the remains of defilement... Now what I can’t understand is that if the bodhisattva already have no physical body, their present body is not like the past, so their remains of defilement should not get arisen. How should I know about it? Because the remains of defilement must get born from arhat’s last body.”⁸

From this paragraph, we can see that Huiyuan thought that it is a coherent process from arhat to bodhisattva. That is to say, on the basis of the marvelous activities, arhat’s last body, bodhisattva’s purified body and Buddha’s dharma-kāya are all born of defilement or remains of defilement. But what Huiyuan confused is that after the transformation from arhat to bodhisattva, how would the defilement generated in the past arhat’s body pass on to the different bodhisattva’s body.

From this question we can infer that Huiyuan thought arhat and bodhisattva were two coherent stages of Buddhism practice, the accomplishment of arhat was just the basis

⁶ *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*, T14, p539c.

⁷ *Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations*, p7.

⁸ *Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations*, p7.

for bodhisattva. Even at this time Huiyuan did not mention the difference between arhat and bodhisattva, but as coherent practice process, we can see that bodhisattva' stage follows Arhat's in Huiyuan's thought. Despite all that, we could perceive that Huiyuan was attempting to syncretize the triune vehicle, which is his background as a Buddhist monk.

So we can determine some parts of Huiyuan's original thought of triune vehicle. It is that, at first he thought that all Buddhism scriptures are credible, because all of them are the teachings of Buddha. For this reason, he thought that arhat' body and bodhisattva's body should have the same properties, so they are two coherent stages of Buddhism practice, even bodhisattva is prior to Arhat. At this time there is no explicit differentiation between Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism in Huiyuan's standpoint. He just attempt to syncretize the Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism in order to understand the dharma-kāya which is Buddhists' ideal status.

But as his correspondence with Kumārajīva went on, Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle gradually got changed. When he ask Kumārajīva that how the Buddha could get rid of all the remains of defilement in chapter 8, he mentioned Theravada scriptures as follows:

“It is also like that three animals pass through the river or three men shoot the same target.⁹ Now in Mahāyāna scriptures these differences are all removed. These parables are all in the scriptures of śrāvaka, not real intention of Mahāyāna. So I have some doubt about the teachings of [Theravada].”¹⁰

So what we can find here is that Huiyuan have some doubt about the teachings of Theravada. Actually he always used “the scriptures of śrāvaka” in place of Theravada scriptures like this. And he used the word “scripture” (经) to call all the Buddhism texts. For example, these two parables is taken from fourteen scrolls *Vibhāṣā-śāstra* (鞞婆沙论) translated by Saṃghabhadra (僧伽跋澄). At this time Huiyuan already tried to divide the Theravada and Mahāyāna scriptures before interpreting some particular doctrines. So why did he change his attitude toward the Theravada and Mahāyāna scriptures? Of course it's due to Kumārajīva's influence. In Kumārajīva's answer from chapter 2 and 5 we could see something as follows.

“But the Abhidharma teachings and the Mahāyāna teachings are different. For example, Kātyāyanī-putra's Abhidharma (迦旃延《阿毗昙》) says that the kind of illusion, dreams, sound and reflex in the mirror are visible and recognizable, which consist of three categories (阴界入) and belong to trayo dhātavaḥ i.e. the three realms. But the kind of illusion and moon reflected in the water is never some determined things but delusive to our mind.”¹¹

“What you asked about thirty-two ideas (三十二愚) is that the disciples of Kātyāyanī-putra preached with their personal intentions, and it is not suitable to

⁹ *Vibhāṣā-śāstra*, Saṃghabhadra translated, T28, p445c.

¹⁰ Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p25.

¹¹ Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p12.

the teachings of the Buddha.”¹²

So from these paragraphs, we could see that Kumārajīva’s standpoint is always on the side of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. When he answered Huiyuan’s questions, he always differentiated the Theravada and Mahāyāna scriptures firstly. More than this, Kumārajīva also drew a distinction between the Theravada sutras and the Abhidharmas of *Kātyāyanī-putra* or his disciples.¹³

Huiyuan regarded the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* as the most important sutra, so he was respecting Kumārajīva very much. Therefore he had a lot of correspondence with Kumārajīva to ask the real meanings of Mahāyāna scriptures, especially about the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (《大智度论》). Through this kind of question-and-answer communication, Huiyuan must be affected by Kumārajīva.

But although Huiyuan accepted some influence from Kumārajīva, he was always attempting to syncretize the Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism. For example in chapter 17, Huiyuan asked as follows:

*“1. Huiyuan asked that while the Bodhisattva observes things neither dying nor being born, the practitioner of Two Vehicles observes things arising and ceasing. So why the acquisition of wisdom (智) by and self-purgation (断) of the Two Vehicles to be identified with anutpattikadharmaksanti(无生法忍)?”*¹⁴

As the text shows, firstly Huiyuan made a distinction between the Bodhisattva Vehicle and the Two Vehicles, especially on the aspect of doctrines. Secondly, he asked the relationship between the acquisition of wisdom by and self-purgation of the Two Vehicles and *anutpattikadharmaksanti* of the Bodhisattva.

Furthermore, Huiyuan continued to ask about the relationship between these two things.

*“6. Huiyuan asked again, the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra says that all the acquisition of wisdom by and self-purgation of the four stages of śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha etc. are identified with anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti of the Bodhisattva. Inferring from this text, I think that maybe the Bodhisattva practice the acquisition of wisdom by and self-purgation of the Two Vehicles in order to achieve his anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti. But these Three Vehicles are originally of different nature, so how does the Bodhisattva achieve the anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti? If it must rely on the practicing of those teachings of the Two Vehicles, then there should not be any Bodhisattva who suddenly achieved the anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti in the Buddha’s meeting. That is what I deduct, but I am always feeling suspicious of it.”*¹⁵

At this time Huiyuan already began to make a distinction between the Three

¹² Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p. 17.

¹³ Kumārajīva also made a clear distinction between the Mahāyāna and Theravada scriptures (especially *Kātyāyanī-putra*’s Abhidharma) in these places: p. 18,26,30-31, Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations.

¹⁴ Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p46.

¹⁵ Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p49.

Vehicles of his own free will. But despite all that Huiyuan still wanted to interpret some Mahāyāna doctrines with teachings of the Two Vehicles. Maybe in his mind, even Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism are different in the initial doctrines and the practitioner's capacity¹⁶, but both of them, same as Buddhism, should have some connection between some particular doctrines. Therefore eventually Huiyuan's standpoint is that he stand on the side of the Mahāyāna Buddhism to syncretize the Theravada Buddhism. Even in the last question in chapter 17, Huiyuan still asked about the relationship between the Śrāvaka Vehicle and the Bodhisattva Vehicle, taking it for granted there are some thing in common between the two things.

“10. Huiyuan asked again... if ‘perception’ (iñ) is the removing of defilement, then after the removing of tri-saṃyojana (i.e. satkāya-dṛṣṭi-saṃyojana, śīla-vrata-parāmarśa-saṃyojana and vicikitsā-saṃyojana) will be Srota-āpanna, after the removing of pañca-avara-bhāgīyā-saṃyojana will be Anāgāmin, after the removing of both pañca-avara-bhāgīyā-saṃyojana and pañca-ūrdhva-bhāgīyā-saṃyojana will be Arhat. If all the above three defilements are removed and the Bodhisattva are no longer in the three realms of saṃsarā, then there should be some same and different part of the Three Vehicles. So what is the different part? If in the Bodhisattva's practices he firstly do the same part then the different, it is the Theravada first and Mahāyāna second. If he firstly do the different part then the same, it is the Mahāyāna first and Theravada second. If there are neither the same nor the different part between the Three Vehicles, then it will go against your answers.”¹⁷

Here Huiyuan asked about what is the difference between “perception” and “the acceptance of perception”. Actually there is no difference here. In this text we could see that Huiyuan thought that the removing of defilement is perception, so at this point he thought that the Three Vehicles should have same part among the Buddhist practices. Based on that he thought the Three Vehicles are one continuous interconnecting practice process.

From the above, we could see that in Ta-sheng Ta-i Chang, Huiyuan's thought of the Triune Vehicle was changing all the time. He gradually recognized the differentiation between the Three Vehicles by being affected by Kumārajīva. Although he had already known the difference of doctrines and practitioner's capacity between the Three Vehicles, he still attempted to syncretize them. At this time Huiyuan's standpoint of Triune Vehicle is very explicit, that is he stand on the side of the Mahāyāna Buddhism but the Theravada scriptures was deemed very important as the path to the Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Huiyuan's thought of triune vehicle in Preface to *Yoga-caryā-bhūmi Sūtra* at Mount Lushan

The same idea of Huiyuan was existing all long, for example in his the Preface to

¹⁶ About it, besides 1 and 6, also showed in Huiyuan's questions 3, 4 and 10 of chapter 17, Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p.47, 48, 53-54.

¹⁷ Id. pp. 53-54.

Yoga-caryā-bhūmi Sūtra at Mount Lushan (Lushan Chu Fangbian Chanjing Tongxu 庐山出方便禅经统序)¹⁸, he said as follows.

“when the Tathāgata got nirvāṇa, Ānanda passed this Yoga-caryā-bhūmi Sūtra (修行方便禅经) on to Madhyāntika, and Madhyāntika to Śaṅavāsin. These three arhats all cherished the profound vow and deeply fit the Buddha’s teaching. If there are some remarks of theirs which were not found in the Buddha’s scriptures, they must be suitable to the Buddha’s hidden meanings without any differentiation. After then a person by the name of Upagupta... he only attached importance to the significant parts of the eighty thousands of dharma-treasure. From then on Buddhism became to be divided into five sects... Therefrom some people in the five Buddhism sects felt the vicissitude of the world, and they always were yearning for the classical scriptures. Afraid that the teachings of the Buddha would vanish away, these practitioners sighed with deep emotion then began to state and commend the sutra of dhyāna respectively, in order to make the Buddhism prosperous. As their teachings with infinite expedient means, they tried to pursue the silent thing which is the one and the only rule. But many practitioners sought the root from branches and few ones found the essence from the basis. Somebody tried to attain it but failed, and somebody kept to their own things without changes. Therefore Buddhism scriptures commend the great merit of Pūrṇa (富楼那) and advocate the universal respect behavior of Sadāparibhūta bodhisattva (常不轻菩萨). Originally the Buddha’s real teachings are not only preserving its advantages but also keep its disadvantages. In such a way the five Buddhism sects relied on the practitioners respectively while the practitioners could not succeed to the precursors, so the teachings got flourished or discarded. Because the teachings were sometimes out of use, sometimes of use, the position of different sects got up and down. Therefore the name of Theravada and Mahāyāna should get determined in such a manner... This Sūtra came from Dharmatrāta and Buddhasena who were outstanding masters of dhyāna practice in Western Regions. They collected important Buddhist scriptures and vigorously preached the Mahāyāna Buddhism.”¹⁹

From this text, we could infer three points about Huiyuan’s thought of the Triune Vehicle. Firstly, Huiyuan thought this Sūtra was a Mahāyāna scripture which actually was a Theravada scripture with some Mahāyāna characters.²⁰ Therefore Huiyuan did not make a distinction between the Three Vehicles on dhyāna practice.

Secondly, Huiyuan tactfully criticized the breakup of Buddhism. That means Huiyuan already recognized some teachings of different Buddhist sects was not very suitable. He thought we should unify the Buddhism on the basis of dhyāna and

¹⁸ This Preface should be written at the year of 411 or 412, four or five years before Huiyuan’s death. This is the last article in which Huiyuan set forth the relationship of the Three Vehicles. In his actual last article, Fo Ying Ming (佛影铭) there is no mention of the Three Vehicles.

¹⁹ Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p101-102.

²⁰ See Ando Toshio, Huiyuan’s Thinking with Respect to Dhyana, Studies on Huiyuan-Texts and translations, p249-285.

prajñāpāramitā which was the fundamentality of Buddhism.

Thirdly, Huiyuan thought that both the Theravada and Mahāyāna doctrines should be advocated. Therefore he commend the merit of both Pūrṇa and Sadāparibhūta bodhisattva. The former was praised by the Buddha as Most eminent in ability to explain the dharma while the later was typical image of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Therefore although Huiyuan probably had accepted the influence from Kumārajīva that not all abhidharma teachings are suitable to the Buddha's real meaning, he still respected the abhidharma teachings very much.

For these reasons, I think that the opinions of Ocho Enichi and Kimura Sensho are not very suitable. I think that Huiyuan not only mastered the nominal difference between the Three Vehicles, but also understand their nature; but he still attempted to syncretize them, because he thought that Buddhism was originally one without many sects and discriminations. So he wanted to pursue unifying Buddhism.

Conclusion

Now we have got a rough browse on Mount Lushan Huiyuan's thought of the Triune Vehicle. Through the correspondence with Kumārajīva, Huiyuan's thought was continuing to change. At the beginning he did not notice the differentiation between the Theravada and Mahāyāna scriptures. He just think that the Buddhism should have a continuous theory. But as time went on, Huiyuan began to make a distinction between the Mahāyāna and Theravada scriptures voluntarily and accepted Kumārajīva's opinion about the differences of the Three Vehicles. From then on, although Huiyuan had understood it but he still attempted to pursue a continuous unifying Buddhism which is based on dhyana and prajñāpāramitā. The reason for this kind of his intention can be well understood by inspection of Huiyuan's Buddhist experience.

When Huiyuan attend a Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra lecture of Dao-an (道安), he made up his mind to be a Buddhist monk under the complete tutelage of Dao-an. Like his Master, Huiyuan's Buddhist practice stood on two feet, one of them being the study of the doctrinal content of the Mahāyāna prajñāpāramitā-śāstra, the other being the practice of dhyana according to prescriptions contained in the Theravada scriptures translated by the Theravada missionary An Shigao (安世高). But Huiyuan also attached great importance to the Mahāyāna dhyāna teachings translated by Lokakṣema (Zhi Chen, 支讖). For example, he had inquired into the doctrines of Samādhi of Buddha Recitation. For these reasons he paid much attention to *Yoga-caryā-bhūmi Sūtra*, because this Sutra of a mixture of both the Theravada and Mahāyāna teachings is very suitable to his experiences. So these activities determined Huiyuan's standpoint of the Triune Vehicle.