

A Study of the Three Grades of Aspirants in the Larger Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra

メタデータ	言語: English 出版者: 武蔵野大学仏教文化研究所 公開日: 2017-05-11 キーワード: 大阿弥陀経, 三輩往生, 斎戒清浄, 悪人往生, 観無量寿経, 九品往生 作成者: XIAO, Yue メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://mu.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/490

〈無量寿経〉における三輩往生について

肖 越

キーワード

大阿弥陀経／三輩往生／斎戒清浄／悪人往生／観無量寿経／九品往生

要 旨

本論では、『大阿弥陀経』を中心に〈無量寿経〉諸本における三輩往生について検討するものである。次の四章からなる。

第一には、『大阿弥陀経』の特徴を纏めた。『大阿弥陀経』と『無量清浄平等覚経』との特徴を巡っては、池本重臣氏の『大無量寿経の教理史的研究』（1958）と静谷正雄氏の『初期大乘仏教の成立過程』（1974）に詳細に纏められているが、この二つの研究からすでに42年以上になる。本論では、両氏の研究が触れていなかった『大阿弥陀経』の成立に深い関連がある重要な特徴を24点纏めた。

第二には、『大阿弥陀経』を中心に〈無量寿経〉諸本の上輩往生について検討した。まず、『大阿弥陀経』の上輩往生段の構成について分析した。次に、上輩往生を説く『大阿弥陀経』の第七願の特徴とその成立を検討した。さらに、〈無量寿経〉諸本の三輩往生段との対応関係を分析した。最後に、以上を比較することによって、『大阿弥陀経』の上輩往生段とそれに対応する第七願のそれぞれの原初形態を論じた。

第三には、『大阿弥陀経』を中心に〈無量寿経〉諸本の中輩往生に関して検討した。まず、『大阿弥陀経』の中輩往生段の構成を検討した。次に、中輩往生に対応する『大阿弥陀経』の第六願、また〈無量寿経〉ほかの諸本の中輩段を比較した。次に、以上の比較によって、『大阿弥陀経』の中輩段とそれに対応する第六願の原初形態を検討した。

第四には、『大阿弥陀経』を中心に〈無量寿経〉諸本の下輩往生を検討した。まず、『大阿弥陀経』の下輩往生段の構成の特徴を検討した。次に、『大阿弥陀経』の第五願の特徴と〈無量寿経〉諸本の下輩往生段の比較を通じて、『大阿弥陀経』と第五願と下輩往生段の成立を検討した。

以上の検討より、次の結論が得られる。

まず、〈無量寿経〉諸本に見られる三輩往生の上輩、中輩、下輩往生段の構成は、原典から翻訳されたものではなく、『大阿弥陀経』の翻訳者が意図的に修訂したものである。原典にあったものは、現存の〈無量寿経〉梵本にあるように、明確に差別のある三

輩ではなく「三種」異なる往生方法を説いている。このような明確に区別される『大阿弥陀経』の三輩往生段は、『無量清浄平等覚経』をもとより魏訳の『無量寿経』、乃至『観無量寿経』の九品往生にも影響した（『観無量寿経』の九品は魏訳『無量寿経』の影響より『大阿弥陀経』の三輩段の影響を受けたと十分に考えられる）。従って、中国、日本浄土教の成立・展開において『大阿弥陀経』の三輩往生は大きな役割を果たした。

次に、〈無量寿経〉漢訳諸本の上輩段にみられる出家のために説いた内容は、原典から翻訳されたものではなく、『大阿弥陀経』の漢訳者により付加されたものである。また、『大阿弥陀経』において上輩往生を説く第七願と上輩往生段の原初形態は、現存梵本のものとはほぼ同じである。

次に、『大阿弥陀経』において、中輩往生を説く第六願とそれに対応する中輩往生とも原典から翻訳されたものではなく、意図的に付加し修正したものだと判断した。『大阿弥陀経』の原典には、第六願に対応する誓願文が存在せず、漢訳者は菩薩行の重要性を強調するため、意図的に第六願を付加した。それに対応する中輩段は、後の魏訳『無量寿経』にも影響した。

次に、『大阿弥陀経』の下輩往生を説く第五願と下輩往生段はそれほど対応していない。第五願に説く悪業をなした人も懺悔しながら持戒し願えば極楽へ往生することもできる。このような悪人往生の考えも、『大阿弥陀経』の漢訳者が意図的に修訂したものである。その目的は、すべての衆生を救うことにある。この特徴は、『観無量寿経』の下品往生にも影響した。また、十戒を守ることによって往生することは、『観無量寿経』にも影響を与えた。

A Study of the Three Grades of Aspirants in the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*

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A Study of the Three Grades of Aspirants in the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra**

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Key words: the *Da amituo jing*/the three grades of aspirants/ascetic precepts/akunin rebirth/the *Guan Wuliangshou jing*/the nine-grade system of rebirth

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the formation of the texts related to the three grades of aspirants in the *Foshuo amituo sanyesanfo shalou fotan guodurendao jing* 佛說阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛檀過度人道經 (T.12, No. 362, hereafter the *Da amituo jing*, or *siglum*: 大阿), the earliest version of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*. In my recent paper, I presented a preliminary discussion on the formation of the three most significant vows (the 5th, 6th and 7th) in the *Da amituo jing*. This paper considers the fulfillment of these vows, as evident in the paragraphs pertaining to the three grades of aspirants, with the higher grade corresponding to the 7th vow, the middle grade to the 6th vow and the lower grade to the 5th vow. Furthermore, this paper explores the following three related issues in the *Da amituo jing*: firstly, some notable features of the *Da amituo jing*; secondly, aspirants who committed evils in their

* I would like to acknowledge that this paper partially draws on studies undertaken during my time as a NUMATA research fellow at Ryukoku University during 2016. I have a special debt of gratitude to professor Kenneth TANAKA, Rev. John PARASKEVOPOULOS and Rev. Petros THEODORIDES for their editorial assistance. Remaining errors are, of course, my responsibility.

previous lives and are still able to attain rebirth and, finally, the three grades of aspirants in other Chinese translations of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*.

1. The Characteristics of the *Da amituo jing*

It is commonly believed that the *Da amituo jing* represents the earliest form of devotion to Amitābha in that it is the earliest version of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*, and is markedly different to its later versions.¹ Regarding the crucial features of the *Da amituo jing*, IKEMOTO and SHIZUTANI undertook a discussion in detail based on a comparative study between the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdengjue jing*.² However, it has been over forty-two years since SHIZUTANI'S research, and there has been made remarkable prog-

¹ Despite the translation period of the second oldest version, the text of the *Wuliang qingjing pingdeng jue jing* 無量清淨平等覺經 (T. 361, hereafter the *Pingdengjue jing*, or *siglum* 清淨) was very close to that of the *Da amituo jing* (which also contains twenty-four vows) but the vows of the *Pingdeng jue jing* reveal a great difference both in the content and the order.

² See IKEMOTO 1958, pp156-219; and SHIZUTANI 1974, pp. 51–102. Due to space constraints, the arguments against IKEMOTO and SHIZUTANI'S claims cannot be presented here even though I hope to do so in a subsequent paper. All of the seven versions of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* have been classified into two groups, the two earliest versions of which both contain twenty-four vows—the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdengjue jing*. These are attributed to the Early Recension (*Shoki muryōjūkyō* 初期無量壽經), with the remaining three Chinese translations, the Sanskrit version and the Tibetan translation all being attributed to the Later Recension. It is worth noting that the phrases “Early Recension” and the “Later Recension” have been used at least since the publication of IKEMOTO'S book published in 1958 and have been widely followed by scholars in the study of early Mahāyāna sūtras; however, the phrase “Early Recension” possesses different meanings for the oldest version was not recognized as the *Da amituo jing* until FUJITA published his famous monograph in 1970 (see FUJITA 1970). Accordingly, the oldest version was not recognized as the *Da amituo jing*, but the *Pingdeng jue jing*, in all of the research before 1970, but, given the evidence provided in FUJITA'S book in 1970, things changed and the oldest version was recognized as the *Da amituo jing*, cf. XIAO 2016 b, P.5 (note 5).

ress in the field of the formation of the *Da amituo jing*. Particularly, according to my recent research, the *Da amituo jing* is a version largely compiled by its Chinese translator based on his own views.³ Accordingly, it is necessary to reconsider the characteristics of the two earliest versions of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*. The following important features are worth noting.

1.1 As I indicated in my recent paper,⁴ there are at least three difficulties in the study of how the *Da amituo jing* was formed: (i) the Dharmākara story of this version is significantly different compared to the one found in other versions of this sūtra; (ii) a comprehensive study regarding each vow in the two versions containing twenty-four vows (the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdeng jue jing*); and (iii) the paragraphs on the Five Evils. These three issues cover almost all of the significant issues related to the formation of the *Da amituo jing* and they are closely related to each other. Consequently, someone who has overlooked these issues cannot objectively understand the *Da amituo jing*.

1.2 Although it is commonly believed that: (i) the formation of the vows of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* evolved from the earliest version of the twenty-four vows in the *Da amituo jing*, to the second version of the twenty-four vows in the *Pingdengjue jing*, and then to the forty-eight vows system in the Later Recension of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*; and (ii) Amitābha's vows in the *Karuṇāpundarīka-sūtra* are derived from the system of forty-eight

³ I am the first to point out this view in 2011 (see XIAO 2011, and 2012a-b etc.).

⁴ See XIAO 2016a, p.63.

vows in the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*,⁵ according to my recent research,⁶ it is unlikely that these two hypotheses are correct. In fact, there is no evidence supporting them other than the popular saying that “a mistake, or lie repeated one hundred times becomes the truth.” Accordingly, it is necessary to reconsider the two versions of the twenty-four vows in the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*.

1.3 Regarding the Dharmākara story, it is noteworthy that *zuo pusa dao* 作菩薩道 “cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection” is highlighted in the *Da amituo jing* in contrast to the *fa pusa yi* 發菩薩意 in the *Pingdengjue jing* which is equivalent to “*anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam upādayāmi*” in the Sanskrit version. Moreover, some important vows have been purposely compiled into a short paragraph which consists of 129 words. Rather than

⁵ See UJITANI 1969. FUJITA 2007, pp.340–341. It is well-known that the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra* includes Śākyamuni’s vows, Amitābha’s vows and Akṣobhya’s vows so that scholars commonly believed that it was compiled based on the Mahāyāna sūtras mentioned above; however, this does not mean that Amitābha’s vows in the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra* come later than the ones in the *Da amituo jing*. There is a clear example in a Chinese Buddhist text, *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (T.53, No. 2122) which was compiled by *Daoshi* 道世 in 668. The vows in the *Da amituo jing* has been fully copied in *Fayuan zhulin* (T.53, No. 2122, p.552a23-p.553b21). Accordingly, the vows cited in the *Fayuan zhulin* are earlier than the vows in the *Wuliang shoujing*, which was translated in 421 C.E (Regarding the period of the translation of the *Wuliangshou jing*, see FUJITA 1970, pp.340–341). In my preliminary study of the relationship between the vows of the *Da amituo jing* and the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra*, I suggested that the vows in the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra* are quite probably earlier than those in the *Da amituo jing* (see XIAO 2014, and 2016c).

⁶ As I have pointed out, the original Indian text of the *Pingdengjue jing*, quite possibly, did not contain twenty-four vows but, rather, may have been more closely akin to the extant Sanskrit version which presents the forty-eight vows system (see XIAO 2010, p.51–56). It is worth noting that MITANI also pointed out a similar conclusion based on the fragments from an unknown Chinese translation of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*. His suggestion is that we can, at least, say that an unknown Chinese version comprising of a forty-eight vow system, also attributed to the Early Recension, had been translated (MITANI 2014, pp.21–22).

the earliest form of the vows of the *Da amituo jing* as suggested by SUEKI and KARIYA,⁷ the Dharmākara story in this version is quite possibly the one which was purposely revised by the Chinese author of the *Da amituo jing* in order to highlight the importance of the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection.⁸

1.4 The paragraphs on the Five Evils present a crucial issue closely related to the formation of the *Da amituo jing*. It is hard to believe that: (1) these paragraphs were compiled after the *Da amituo jing* was translated into Chinese by an unknown person who is different from the translator,⁹ and: (2) these paragraphs were translations from an unknown Sanskrit version of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*, rather than the creation of the Chinese translator of the *Da amituo jing*. According to my recent research, by contrast, these paragraphs were firstly compiled as part of the *Da amituo jing* purposely, and they correspond with¹⁰ the first part of the sūtra, including the vows and the Dharmākara story which appears before the section containing the vows. In other words, the author of the paragraphs on the Five Evils is the translator of the *Da amituo jing*.¹¹

1.5 There are some special terms found in the *Da amituo jing* which are related to the cultivation of good deeds. At least two dozens of these can be confirmed in this version. In my recent papers, I listed some of these terms and their characteristics as they appear in the vows of the *Da amituo jing*,¹² and a comprehensive study on all of the special terms, based on a philological

⁷ See SUEKI 1980, and KARIYA 2003, pp.2-3.

⁸ See XIAO 2012a; and 2015a, pp.16-21.

⁹ See SUEKI 1980, and 2013, pp.233-235.

¹⁰ For example: there are three corresponding relationships found in the 11th vow with those paragraphs on the Five Evils, in grammar, meaning and syntax. Regarding the 11th vow of the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2014, pp.77-85.

¹¹ Regarding the formation of the paragraphs on the Five Evils, see XIAO 2012b, 2014, p.59, and (forthcoming a).

¹² See XIAO 2015a, pp.63-65; and 2016b, pp.16-17.

analysis, is ongoing. Because these special terms appear throughout the *Da amituo jing* with great frequency, they are able to assist us in determining the original form of the *Da amituo jing* by means of surveying all the usages of these special terms in the *Da amituo jing*.

1.6 In addition to the Dharmākara story in the *Da amituo jing*, the importance of the cultivation of the Bodhisattva path to perfection (Six Perfections) 作菩薩道 is purposely highlighted in full in the *Da amituo jing*. It is worth noting that although passages related to the ‘Six Perfections’ are not uncommon in other early Mahāyāna sūtras, it does not mean that this feature of the *Da amituo jing* is unimportant, since it is completely different to that found in other Mahāyāna sūtras. Even though it had been highlighted in the *Da amituo jing*, it unexpectedly disappeared in later versions, especially the one in the Sanskrit. In other words, the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection, as it appears in the *Da amituo jing*, is quite possibly not derived from the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing*, but rather is the translator’s own fabrication. The 6th and the 7th vow are vivid examples of this.¹³

1.7 Instead of being the version representing the earliest form of Indian Pure Land Buddhism as suggested by a number of scholars, the *Da amituo jing* is the version compiled on the basis of *shan* 善 “good” and *e* 惡 “evil”. It would appear therefore, that cultivation of good deeds is purposely highlighted in this version.¹⁴

1.8 The lengths of the vows in the *Da amituo jing* are generally longer than their counterparts in all later versions. According to my survey, the average number of characters in each vow in the *Da amituo jing* is 62; by contrast the average is 36 characters in the *Pingdengjue jing* and the *Foshuo Wuliangshou jing* (T.12, No.360, hereafter the *Wuliangshou jing*, *siglum* 無量) and 37 in the *Wuliangshou rulai hui* 無量壽如來會 (T.12, No.310.5, hereafter the *Rulai hui*,

¹³ Regarding the formation of these two vows, see XIAO 2016a, pp.65-70; and see below.

¹⁴ Regarding what is good, and what is evil in the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2016 (forthcoming a)

siglum: 如來). The most significant three vows in the *Da amituo jing* (the 5-7th vows) are the longest ones, not only in all the versions of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* but even in the other Mahāyāna sūtras, such as the Chinese translations of the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra*.¹⁵ The 7th vow consists of 117 characters, whose counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing* is the 18th vow with 57 characters; and the counterpart in the *Wuliangshou jing* is the 19th vow with 45 characters; and the counterpart in the *Rulai hui* is the 19th vow with 58 characters. It is of interest that these longer vows are comprised of some special terms related to the Six Perfections.

1.9 Some of the vows in the *Da amituo jing* consist of two, or more, items. For instance, the second vow, regarding women's rebirth, consists of five items¹⁶ and the 6th vow, regarding the middle grade of aspirants, consists of two items. In addition, two-fold corresponding relationships can be found in the vows of the *Da amituo jing*, which not only hold corresponding relationships with the fulfillment articles that stand next to the vows but some of the corresponding relationships with those special 129 characters, which are part of that Darmakāra story of the *Da amituo jing* preceding the vows (also cf. XIAO 2014, pp.59-62).

1.10 The 6th vow, which is equivalent with the middle grade of aspirants, does not have a counterpart in any other version. The vow is, very likely, a creation by the Chinese translator of the *Da amituo jing* and the second part of this vow regarding the importance of abiding by the ascetic precepts is quite similar to the words in the 7th vow of the *Da amituo jing* (see below).

1.11 The 5th vow, which is equivalent to the lower grade of aspirants, concerns those who, although they have committed evils in their previous lives, are reborn in the land of Amitābha. It is worth noting that the 5th vow of the *Da*

¹⁵ Two Chinese versions of this sūtra are preserved in Taishō, one is *Dashengbei fentuoli jing* 大乘悲分陀利經 (T.3, No. 158) ; the other is the *Beihua jing* 悲華經 (T.3, No. 157).

¹⁶ See XIAO 2014, pp.42-47.

amituo jing contains the unique feature regarding evil persons being reborn in Amitābha's Land, which must have been important in the relationship between this vow and *akunin shōki* 惡人正機 as advocated by Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263), founder of *Jōdo Shinshū*. It is noteworthy that the three levels of the lowest grade of rebirth found in the *Guan wuliangshou fo jing* (T. 365, 觀無量壽佛經; hereafter the *Guanjing*, or *siglum* 觀經) should have evolved from the 5th vow of the *Da amituo jing*.

1.12 The ascetic precepts are purposely highlighted in the *Da amituo jing* through the terms, *zaijie* 齋戒, and *jingjie* 經戒.¹⁷ The character 戒 *jie* appears in the most crucial vows of the *Da amituo jing*, namely the 5-7th, their fulfillment, the paragraphs on the three grades of aspirants, but this feature unexpectedly disappears in their counterparts in all of the later versions. Moreover, the 11th vow, stating that bodhisattvas and arhats in the land of Amitābha incessantly cultivate ascetic practices, also relates to precepts. Accordingly, among the twenty-four vows of the *Da amituo jing*, there are four vows relating to precepts.

1.13 Wisdom as the foremost goal of cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection is clearly highlighted in the *Da amituo jing* in three ways. Firstly, through the Dharmākara story. Secondly, through the vows and their fulfillment, such as in all of the three grades of aspirants (see below). Thirdly, through the paragraphs on the Five Evils by means of addressing the ignorance of people in this world.

1.14 Cultivation of the ten good deeds to perfection (十善) is one of the fundamental prerequisites for being reborn in the land of Amitābha in the *Da amituo jing*. This feature has been followed in the passage on the three acts of virtue for attaining birth in the Pure Land, *jingye sanfu* 淨業三福, which appears in the *Guan-jing* [cf. XIAO (forthcoming b)].

¹⁷ For a comprehensive study on the ascetic precepts in the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2016 (forthcoming d).

1.15 Some of the vows in the *Da amituo jing* correspond to the paragraphs on the Five Evils, both in grammar and meaning. For example, the 11th vow of the *Da amituo jing* has three corresponding relationships with the paragraphs on Five Evils. Accordingly, the editor of the paragraphs on the Five Evils is most likely no other than the translator of the *Da amituo jing*.

1.16 Even though the number of vows in the *Da amituo jing* is only twenty-four, half the vows found in the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra*, the two sūtras are undoubtedly related.¹⁸ In addition to my previous research,¹⁹ I have also undertaken a preliminary study based on the second vow of the *Da amituo jing* where I indicated that the vows in the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra* are probably earlier than the ones in the *Da amituo jing*.²⁰ I am currently preparing a further comparative study.

1.17 Some of the features of the *Da amituo jing* which do not possess a Sanskrit counterpart are reflected in the *Guan-jing*. A preliminary study on the formation of the *Guanjing*, based on its relationship to the *Da amituo jing*, is ongoing.²¹

1.18 A two-fold conception of the Buddha Lands (Amitābha's land and this *saha* world) appear in the *Da amituo jing*. Firstly, in the smaller *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* and the *Guan jing* (even in later versions of the late recension of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*) one finds this world depicted as an evil realm full of the five defilements, in order to encourage aspirants to

¹⁸ One piece of evidence is that the second vow of the *Da amituo jing* containing the phrases “no women in the Pure Land” and “transformation rebirth on a lotus flower” which correspond to those in the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra*, has no counterparts in the vows of the later versions of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*.

¹⁹ A more representative research, see UJITANI 1969. Recently, IWAGAMI presented a different hypothesis on the relationship between the vows in the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka-sūtra* and the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* (see IWAGAMI 2013).

²⁰ See XIAO 2014, pp.85-91.

²¹ See XIAO (forthcoming b).

be reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land. By contrast, even though the purity of Amitābha's Land is highlighted in the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdeng jue jing*, the importance of the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection in this world, including the ten good deeds, is strongly encouraged rather than negated. The first feature is related to the question of why Amitābha's land is labeled as *Jingtu* 淨土, and the formation of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. The second feature is related to the doctrine of 淨佛國土 and engaged Buddhism (also called *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教 “Humanistic Buddhism”).²²

1.19 The characteristics of the bodhisattvas in Amitābha's land have been illustrated by means of the five constant virtues in Chinese Confucianism.²³ Of course, these concepts do not have any counterparts in the Sanskrit version.

1.20 Some characteristics have been repeatedly highlighted by a negative syntax in terms of literatures, syntax, antonyms. For example: the importance of belief, “信” is highlighted through a negative syntax “不信”; and the cultivation of good merit, *zuoshan* “作善” is highlighted through the five evils.

1.21 A narrative concerning the prediction to Prince Ajātaśatru and the five hundred sons of the elders is found in the *Da amituo jing*.²⁴ It is hard to believe that this narrative is derived from the original Indian text of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*.²⁵ It is of some interest that there is a similar narrative, regarding Queen Vaidehī and her five hundred female attendants in the *Guan-jing*.²⁶ Accordingly, the two narratives regarding the prediction found in the *Da amituo jing* and the *Guan-jing* should share some connection.

1.22 As discussed in detail below, the system of the three grades of aspirants

²² Regarding “the view of humanity” appearing in the *Da amituo jing* and a humanistic approach to Pure Land Buddhism (人間学としての浄土教), see XIAO (forthcoming a).

²³ See XIAO 2016c.

²⁴ T.12, p. 303b2–8. Regarding the connection of these two narratives between the *Da amituo jing* and the *Guan-jing*, see XIAO (forthcoming b).

²⁵ See FUJITA 1970, p. 173. Also see XIAO 2015, p.24.

²⁶ See T.12, p.346a27–b04. cf. XIAO (forthcoming b).

was purposely compiled based on the grade of the cultivation of good merit, especially abiding by the precepts. This three-grade rebirth system found in the *Da amituo jing* was developed into the nine-grade rebirth system in the *Guan-jing* by the composer of the *Guan-jing*.

1.23 The characteristics of the bodhisattva *Guan-yin* 觀音 found in the *Da amituo jing* do not correspond with the characteristics found in the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing*, but rather were created by the translator, or purposely compiled based on an Indian text different from the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha-sūtra*.²⁷

1.24 The phrase 善男子、善女人 is a special phrase which appears frequently in the *Da amituo jing*. Although this phrase is frequently found in the Buddhist sūtras,²⁸ undoubtedly, it is a special phrase as far as the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha-sūtra* is concerned in that this phrase does not appear in the *Wuliangshou jing*, translated in the *Wei* 魏 period.²⁹ It is noteworthy that this phrase is also found in the *Guan-jing*, and it is likely that those texts containing this phrase have something connections with the *Da amituo jing*.

Owing to space constraints, the above points are confined only to those that are related to the topic of this paper. All the points listed above are crucial issues and some of them need to be discussed in a book length monograph.

2. The higher grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing*

Undoubtedly, in addition to the vows of Amitābha, the paragraphs addressing the three grades of aspirants are the most important in the Larger

²⁷ See XIAO 2016b.

²⁸ For example, in the *Daoxing banruo jing* 道行般若經 (T.8, No. 224); the *Beihua jing* 悲華經 (T.3, No. 157); and the *Dacheng bei fentuoli jing* 大乘悲分陀利經 (T.3, No.158).

²⁹ For a detailed discussion regarding this phrase in the Pure Land Sūtras, see XIAO (forthcoming).

Sukhāvāṭīvyūha-sūtra, and find their fulfillment in the most significant vows in the earliest version: namely the 5th, 6th and 7th. The order of these grades matches that of the three vows: the 7th vow corresponds to the higher grade, the 6th vow to the middle grade, and the 5th vow to the lower grade. In my recent paper, I took into account a preliminary discussion on these three vows studied in comparison with their counterparts in the other versions of the Larger *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha-sūtra*. This paper focuses on the context of their fulfillment, namely the three grades of aspirants. I would like to figure out their relationship from two perspectives. Firstly, by studying their internal relationship with parallel vows found within the *Da amituo jing*. Secondly, by analyzing their external relationship with the counterparts found in other versions.

Before proceeding further, I would like to draw your attention to the Chinese character *bei* 輩 “grade” widely used in the phrase *sanbei wangsheng* 三輩往生 “three grades of aspirants”. In fact, there is no Sanskrit equivalent to this character in the Sanskrit version.³⁰ Instead of three grades, the *Rulai hui* and the Sanskrit version illustrate three kinds, or types of aspirants. In the English translation of the *Wuliangshou jing* by Gómez,³¹ these paragraphs are simply labelled as “three kinds of believers” rather than “three grades”, even though the words *sanbei* 三輩 clearly appear in this context. The first reference to these words found in the *Da amituo jing* is as follows.

【大阿 (A1a)】 佛告阿逸菩薩:³²其世間人民, 若善男子、善女人,³³ 願欲往生

³⁰ See FUJITA 2011, pp.48–49; and 2015, pp.124–125 (a Japanese translation based on the Sanskrit version compiled by FUJITA). Also cf. ŌTA 2004, pp.184–185.

³¹ See GÓMEZ 1996, p. 187.

³² It is noteworthy that the listener is different between the contexts above in the *Da amituo jing*, its counterpart in the *Wuliangshou jing* and the Sanskrit version. It is Ajita in the *Da amituo jing*, but it is Ānanda in the *Wuliangshou jing* and the Sanskrit version. Regarding the listener Ajita, it is one of the significant features of *Da amituo jing* and deserves to be discussed more in a separate paper. For some referable previous studies see NONIN 2007; SUEKI 2013, pp.209–239.

³³ The phrases 善男子、善女人 appear 7 times in the *Da amituo jing*, which deserve to be discussed more in a separate paper, cf. XIAO (forthcoming a).

阿彌陀佛國者，有三輩，作德有大小，轉不相及。佛言：何等為三輩。³⁴

(T12, p.309c24-26)

The Buddha said to Ajita bodhisattva: “Humans, good men or good women, in this world who desire to be reborn in the land of Amitābha can be classified into three grades based on their merits. Any change (from the standards above) leads to failure in achieving the expected results as laid out above. The Buddha said: what are the three grades of aspirants?”

The counterpart of the passage above found in the *Foshuo Wuliangshou jing* (T.12, No.360, hereafter the *Wuliangshou jing*, or *siglum* 無量) is as follows.

【無量 (W1a)】佛告阿難：十方世界諸天人民，其有至心願生彼國，凡有三輩。(T.12, p.272b15-16).

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Devas and humans in the worlds of the ten directions who sincerely aspire to be born in that land can be classified into three grades.”³⁵

There is no counterpart in the *Rulai hui* and the *Dacheng wuliangshou zhuangyan jing* 大乘無量壽莊嚴經 (T.12, No.363, hereafter the *Zhuangyan jing*, or *siglum*: 莊嚴).³⁶ Accordingly, it is quite possible that the short paragraph

³⁴ The counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing* reads: 【清淨】佛告阿逸菩薩：其世間人民，若善男子、善女人，欲願往生無量清淨佛國者有三輩，作德有大小，轉不能相及。佛言：何等為三輩？(T.12, p.291c14-16). “The Buddha said to Ajita bodhisattva: the humans, good men or women, in this world who desire to be reborn in Measureless Purified Buddha’s Land can be classified into three grades based on their merits. Any change from the standards above leads to failure in achieving the expected results as laid out above. The Buddha said: what are the three grades?” A similar sentence containing the phrase 轉不相及 also appears in a Taoist text, the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 “The Master Embracing Simplicity”, attributed to *Gehong* 葛洪 (284~364) whose period was slight later than that of the *Da amituo jing*. It reads 雖有優劣轉不相及 in the chapter four, *jindan* 金丹 “Gold and Cinnabar (The Pill of Immortality)” of the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子.

³⁵ See INAGAKI 1995, p. 54. Cf. GÓMEZ 1996, pp.187-188.

³⁶ See ŌTA2004, p. 184.

above found in the *Da amituo jing* is deliberately created by the translator of the *Da amituo jing*, and was followed by the translator of the *Pingdengjue jing* and the *Wuliangshou jing* (see below). The passages following the lines above are as follows.

【大阿 (A1b)】最上第一輩者，(I) 當去家捨妻子斷愛欲、行作沙門、就無為之道；(II) 當作菩薩道，奉行六波羅蜜經者。(I) 作沙門不虧經戒、慈心精進、不當瞋怒，³⁷ 不當與女人交通、齋戒清淨、心無所貪慕。(I+II) 至誠願欲往生阿彌陀佛國，常念至心不斷絕者，其人便於今世求道時，即自然於其臥止夢中見阿彌陀佛及諸菩薩、阿羅漢；其人壽命欲終時，阿彌陀佛即自與諸菩薩、阿羅漢，共翻飛行迎之，則往生阿彌陀佛國，便於七寶水池蓮華中化生。即自然受身長大，則作阿惟越致菩薩。³⁸ 便即與諸菩薩共翻輩飛行供養八方、上下諸無央數佛。即逮智慧勇猛，樂聽經道，其心歡樂。所居七寶舍宅，在虛空中，恣隨其意。在所欲作為，去阿彌陀佛近 (T12,

³⁷ The term 瞋怒 “behaving angrily, outrage” is also a special term appearing 12 times in the *Da amituo jing*.

³⁸ 阿惟越致 Sk. *avivartika*, *avivartya*, see FUJITA 2015, pp.221. This term is translated as 不退轉 in the versions of the Later Recension, and appears in the 47th vow of the *Wuliangshou jing* and the *Rulai hui*; and the 46th vow of the Sanskrit version. The term 阿惟越致 appears 14 times both in the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdengjue jing* and deserves to be studied more. Moreover, the term 阿惟越致 frequently appears in some early Chinese translations too, such as the translations by *Zhiloujiachen* 支婁迦讖 (Lokakṣema, 147 ? ~?); *Zhi Qian* 支謙 (a famous layman Buddhist translator during the Three Kingdom period, ?~?); and *Zhufahu* 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa, 239~316). For example, (1) the *Daoxingbanruojing* 道行般若經 (T.8, No.224, attributed to *Zhiloujiachen* 支婁迦讖 Lokakṣema); (2) the *Achufoguo jing* 阿闍佛國經 (T. 11, No. 313, attributed to Lokakṣema); (3) the *Banzhou sanmeijing* 般舟三昧經 (T.13, No. 417, attributed to Lokakṣema); (4) the *Banzhou sanmeijing* 般舟三昧經 (T.13, No. 418, attributed to Lokakṣema?); (5) *Wenshushili wen pusashu jing* 文殊師利問菩薩屬經 (T.14, No. 458, attributed to Lokakṣema); (6) *Foshuo asheshiwang jing* 佛說阿闍世王 (T.15, No.626, attributed to Lokakṣema); (7) *Foshuo weimojie jing* 佛說維摩詰經 (T.14, No. 474, attributed to *Zhi Qian*); (8) *Foshuoqinü jing* 佛說七女經 (T.14, No. 556, attributed to *Zhi Qian*); (9) *Foshuo huiyin sanmei jing* 佛說慧印三昧經 (T15, No. 632, attributed to *Zhi Qian*).

p.309c26-310a14)。³⁹ (238 characters)

The first and foremost aspirants are those who: (I) leave their households and discard erotic desire and become Buddhist priests engaged in the fulfillment of their Buddhist way (nirvāṇa);⁴⁰ (II) cultivate the bodhisattva path to perfection by pursuing the Six Perfections. (I) Those who leave their household to become Buddhist priests should: (I-a) abstain from breaking the Buddhist precepts; (I-b) abstain from behaving angrily and having intercourse with a woman while being diligent and maintaining a benevolent mind; (I-3) completely adhere to the ascetic precepts without greedy desires in their mind. (I+II) (If those humans) wholeheartedly aspire to be reborn in Amitābha Buddha's Land, they will spontaneously see Amitābha Buddha surrounded with bodhisattvas and arhats in a dream during their present life, while pursuing the Buddhist dharma. When they are about to die, Amitābha Buddha, together with a host of bodhisattvas and arhats, will fly towards them. Then, they will be reborn in Amitābha's land by transformation on a lotus flower in a pond with seven-jewels, they will spontaneously grow up and attain the stage of Non-retrogression. They will follow the bodhisattvas flying to the eight quarters, above and below, in order to make offerings to the Buddhas (of other Lands), they will attain unrivaled wisdom, rejoice in hearing the Buddhist dharma and their heart will be full with joy. Their abodes adorned with seven jewels are able to float freely in the sky, and they are free to be close to Amitābha according

³⁹ These parts have been faithfully followed by the translator of the *Pingdengjue jing*, but the Buddha's name has been changed into *Wuliang qingjing* 無量清淨 "measureless purity". Cf. T.12, pp.291c14-292a5.

⁴⁰ *Wuwei* 無為 "non-action" appears 5 times in the *Da amituo jing*. One of them is similar both in meaning and grammar to this one; it reads: 【大阿】佛語阿逸菩薩等：“若世有是佛，皆慈愍哀之，威神摧動，眾惡諸事皆消化之，令得去惡就善棄捐所思。奉持經戒莫不承受，施行經法不敢違失。度世、無為、泥洹之道，快善極樂 (T.12, p.315b22-26).

to their inclinations.

A short paragraph following these notions, repeatedly highlights the importance of the precepts as follows.

【大阿A1c】諸欲往生阿彌陀佛國者，當精進持經戒，奉行如是上法者，則得往生阿彌陀佛國，可得為眾所尊敬。是為上第一輩。⁴¹ (T.12, p.302p.310a12-14)

Those who desire to be reborn in land of Amitābha should be diligent and abide by Buddhist precepts. Those who pursue the Buddhist dharma listed above are able to be reborn in land of Amitābha, and then they will be admired by people. This is the premier grade.

Of course, this short paragraph, following the notion of the higher grade of aspirants above, does not have a counterpart in all the versions of the Later Recension.

2.1 The relationship with the 7th vow in the *Da amituo jing*

The concept of the higher grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing* is the fulfillment of the 7th vow of the *Da amituo jing*. Regarding the relationship between the 7th vow and its counterpart in other versions, I took into account a previous study in a recent paper of mine.⁴² I would like to undertake a more detailed, comparative study of the 7th vow and its fulfillment in the context of the higher grade of aspirants. The 7th vow in the *Da amituo jing* is as follows.

【大阿 (A7)】第七願：使某作佛時，(1) 令八方、上下無央數佛國，諸天人民，若善男子、善女人有作菩薩道奉行六波羅蜜經；(2) 若作沙門，不毀經戒，斷愛欲，齋戒清淨，一心念欲生我國，晝夜不斷絕，若其人壽欲終時，

⁴¹ The translator of the *Pingdengjue jing* fully followed these words in the *Da amituo jing*, but the Buddha's name has been revised to *Wuliang qingjing*. It reads: 佛言：“諸欲往生無量清淨佛國者，精進持經戒奉行如是上法者，往生無量清淨佛國者，可得為眾所尊敬，是為上第一輩” (T12, p.292a02-05).

⁴² See XIAO 2016a. The 7th vow of the *Da amituo jing* is equivalent to the 18th vow of the *Pingdengjue jing*, and the 19th vow of the *Wuliangshou jing* and the *Rulai hui*; to the 18th vow of the Sanskrit version and the Tibetan translation.

我即與諸菩薩、阿羅漢，共飛行迎之，即來生我國；則作阿惟越致菩薩，智慧勇猛。得是願乃作佛，不得是願終不作佛。(T.12, p.301b27-c05, 119 characters)

The Seventh Vow: when I attain Buddhahood, (1) if good men or good women in the immeasurable Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, as well as above and below, who cultivate the bodhisattva path to perfection by pursuing the Six Perfections; or (2) Buddhist priests who strictly adhere to the Buddhist precepts—discarding sexual desire and strictly adhering to the ascetic precepts—wholeheartedly aspire to be reborn in my land, constantly, day and night, when they approach the moment of their death, if I do not let them see me surrounded by a multitude of bodhisattvas and arhats, and they are not reborn in my land, and do not instantly reach the stage of Non-retrogression and unsurpassed wisdom, may I not attain Buddhahood.

2.2 The relationship with the counterparts in other versions

The counterpart of the text above in the *Wuliangshou jing* is as follows.

【無量 (W1b)】其上輩者，捨家棄欲而作沙門，發菩提心，一向專念無量壽佛，修諸功德願生彼國。此等眾生臨壽終時，無量壽佛與諸大眾現其人前，即隨彼佛往生其國，便於七寶華中自然化生，住不退轉、智慧勇猛，神通自在。是故，阿難！其有眾生欲於今世見無量壽佛，應發無上菩提之心，修行功德，願生彼國。(T.12, p.271b16–23; 114 characters)

The higher grade of aspirants are those who leave their homes and abandon worldly desires to become monks. Having awakened aspiration for Enlightenment, they single-mindedly remember Amitāyus and perform meritorious practices, aspiring to be born in his land. When they are about to die, Amitāyus, together with a host of sages, will appear before them. Then they will follow him and attain birth in his land. At once they will be born by transformation spontaneously from within seven-jewelled lotus-flowers. They will dwell in the Stage of Non-

retrogression, attain steadfast wisdom and be capable of freely exercising supernatural powers. For this reason, Ānanda, sentient beings who wish to see Amitāyus while in this world should awaken aspiration for the highest Enlightenment, do meritorious deeds, and aspire to be born in his land. (INAGAKI 1996, p.54)

The counterpart in the *Rulai hui* is as follows.

【如來 (R1)】阿難：若有眾生於他佛刹發菩提心，專念無量壽佛及恒種殖眾多善根，發心迴向願生彼國，是人臨命終時，無量壽佛與比丘眾前後圍繞現其人前，即隨如來往生彼國得不退轉，當證無上正等菩提。是故阿難，若有善男子、善女人願生極樂世界欲見無量壽佛者，應發無上菩提心、復當專念極樂國土、積集善根應持迴向，由此見佛生彼國中得不退轉乃至無上菩提 (T.12, p.272b12-20, 114 characters)。

Ānanda, if sentient beings in their Buddha Lands have awakened aspiration for Enlightenment, and wholeheartedly contemplate on the Buddha while steadily cultivating and transferring their roots of merit to be reborn in the Land of Amitāyus, when they about to die, Amitāyus Buddha will appear before them surrounded by *bhikṣus*, they will be reborn in his Land followed by the Buddha and the *bhikṣus*, and will attain the Stage of Non-retrogression or the highest Enlightenment. For this reason, Ānanda, good men or good women who desire to be reborn in the land of bliss to see Amitāyus, should awaken aspiration for the highest Enlightenment and wholeheartedly recollect the land of bliss, do meritorious deeds and transfer their merits, for this reason, they will see the Buddha and attain birth in that land, and attain the Stage of Non-retrogression and the highest Enlightenment.

The counterpart in the Sanskrit version is as follows:

【梵本(S1)】 ye cānanda kecit sattvās taṃ tathāgataṃ punaḥ punar ākāraṭo manasikariṣyanti bahv aparimitaṃ ca kuśalamūlam avaropayiṣyanti bodhāya cittaṃ pariṇāmya tatra ca lokadhātāv upapattaye praṇidhāsyanti teṣāṃ so 'mitābhas tathāgato 'rhan samyaksambuddho

marañakālasamaye pratyupasthite 'nekabhikṣugaṇaparivṛtaḥ puraskṛtaḥ sthāsyati| tatas te taṃ bhagavantaṃ dṛṣṭvā prasannacittāḥ santi ta- traiva sukhāvatyāṃ lokadhātāv upapadyante| ya ānandākāṃkṣeta kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā⁴³ kim ity ahaṃ dṛṣṭa eva dharme tam amitābhaṃ tathāgataṃ paśyeyam iti tenānuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādyādhyāsayapatitayā saṃtatyā tasmin buddhakṣetre cittaṃ saṃpreṣyopapattaye kuśalamūlāni ca pariṇāmayitavyāni ||⁴⁴ (FUJITA 2011, p. 48)

2.3 The origin of the paragraph of the higher grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing*

In light of the comparison above, the following features found in the paragraph about the higher grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing* can be summarized.

(1) First of all, I would like to draw your attention again to the main characteristics of the 7th vow I have already discussed in a separate paper.⁴⁵ The

⁴³ The Sanskrit terms *kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā* are equivalent with the Chinese phrase 善男子、善女人 frequently found in the *Da amituo jing* (FUJITA 2015, p.237, note 125). Regarding the phrase 善男子、善女人, cf. XIAO (forthcoming a).

⁴⁴ See FUJITA 2011, p. 48. The Japanese translation cf. FUJITA 2015, pp.124–125. An English translation of the respective paragraph by Gómez is as follows: “And, Ananda, some living beings will bring to mind the Tathagata, envisioning him again with all his characteristics, and they will plant many and limitless roots, merit, and they will dedicate their thoughts to awakening, vowing to be reborn in Amitabha’s Land of Bliss. When the time of their death approaches, the Tathagata, Arhat, the perfectly and fully awakened Amitabha will stand before these living beings, and he will appear surrounded and honored by a host of countless monks. Thereupon, having seen the Blessed One, their thoughts will only be thoughts of serene trust, and forthwith they will be reborn in the Land of Bliss. “Ananda, sons or daughters of good families who wonder, ‘How then can I get to see the Tathagata Amitabha in this very life?’ should resolve to attain unsurpassable, perfect, and full awakening, should dedicate their thoughts to rebirth in this Buddha-field, with their whole person pervaded by this highest of resolutions, and should dedicate their roots of merit to rebirth in that field.” (GÓMEZ 1996, pp.92–93)

⁴⁵ See XIAO 2016a pp.65–68.

7th vow with its 119 characters is the longest one and includes some special terms underlined above connected to the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection. This vow can be separated into three categories based on those special terms.

(i) The first subject begins with the phrases 諸天人民、善男子、善女人、作菩薩道奉行六波羅蜜經 addressing the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection.

(ii) The second subject begins with the term 沙門, which highlights the importance of abiding by the Buddhist precepts, such as 不毀經戒, 斷愛欲, 齋戒清淨, the most important method in terms of the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection. Accordingly, this vow includes two subjects, a unique characteristic in all versions of the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*, and both of them are deliberately highlighted by the Chinese translator in order to emphasize the importance of the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfections, especially abiding by the Buddhist precepts.

(iii) The third relates to the fruits of the cultivation of the bodhisattva practice and being reborn in the land of Amitābha, 阿惟越致菩薩,⁴⁶ 智慧勇猛, indicating that the primary result of being reborn in the land of Amitābha is the attainment of unsurpassed wisdom akin to that of Amitābha.⁴⁷

If one tries to delete the terms underlined in the 7th vow, the remaining words are almost similar in meaning to those of the 19th vow in the extant Sanskrit version. That is to say, two subjects are both deliberately highlighted by the Chinese translator.

⁴⁶ Regarding the 阿惟越致菩薩, cf. the note 38 of this paper. It deserves to be discussed regarding the relationship of this term between in the 7th vow and its fulfillment in the *Da amituo jing*, and the 47th vow in the *Wuliangshou jing* and *Rulaihui*.

⁴⁷ A vivid example finds in the text regarding on the predictions to Ajātaśatru (T12, p.303b02-08) is found in the text of the *Da amituo jing*. According to FUJITA, it is hard to believe that these lines are derived from the original Indian text of the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*, but rather the different system without the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*. Cf. FUJITA 1970, p. 173.

(2) The passage of the fulfillment of the higher grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing* (A1b) corresponds pretty much to the 7th vow of the *Da amituo jing*. The length of this paragraph (A1a-c) is also two times the size of its counterpart in other versions, such as (W1) and (R1).⁴⁸

(a) The main part of the fulfillment of the higher grade of aspirants (A1a-b) can be classified into three parts. The first part concerns the Buddhist priests 沙門, who leave their households and discard erotic desire. The second subject should be 諸天人民, 善男子、善女人 but it has been left out, where it should be between the words 無為之道 and 當作菩薩道⁴⁹ so that the subject 善男子、善女人 is easy to be overlooked.⁵⁰ The third part repeatedly takes into account the ascetic precepts which Buddhist priests should adhere to (作沙門不虧經戒). The phrase 作菩薩道 pursuing the Six Perfections is the means for the cultivation of the bodhisattva practice to perfection.⁵¹ Although the counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing* (T12, p.291c14–a5, hereafter P1) is quite parallel to the texts of (A1a-c), it is not derived from the original Indian text of the *Pingdengjue jing*, but a copy of the texts in the *Da amituo jing*, along with the fact that the name of the Buddha is revised from Amituo 阿彌陀 to *Wuliang qingjing* 無量清淨 “Measureless Purity”⁵² in the *Da amituo jing*. The main evidence supporting

⁴⁸ ŌTA 2005, pp. 184–185

⁴⁹ Instead of an individual unknown sūtra suggested by HIRAKAWA (HIRAKAWA 1969, pp.120–122), I agree with SHIZUTANI’s suggestion that the character 經 indicates Buddhist dharma (SHIZUTANI 1974, p.57, and KARASHIMA 1999, p.145, note 65).

⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that the subject 善男子、善女人 may indicate both lay Buddhists and Buddhists priests.

⁵¹ Regarding 作菩薩道, see XIAO 2015a. The synonym(s) repeatedly used in the same sentence is one of the typical characteristics of the *Da amituo jing*. For example, the terms 去家、捨妻子、斷愛欲 are the synonyms of 沙門. In the text of the note of 40 in this paper above, 度世、無為、泥洹 are the synonyms found in the *Da amituo jing*, even though they may not be the synonyms based on Chinese literature.

⁵² Regarding why *Amituo*’s name has been revised to *Wuliang qingjing* in the *Pingdengjue jing*, see XIAO 2012b, and (forthcoming a).

my suggestion is that: all the terms related to precepts (去家、捨妻子、斷愛欲、瞋怒、不當與女人交通、齋戒清淨) unexpectedly disappeared in the vows of the *Pingdengjue jing*,⁵³ even though they were followed in the P1.

Regarding the paragraph of (W1a-b), it is true that the same words (捨家棄欲而作沙門) indicate that the subject of this paragraph appear in the (W1b), this concept, however, does not appear in the forty-eight vows of the *Wuliangshou jing* at all. Moreover, considering the context of (W1a), which is the one copied from (A1a), the phrases presenting the subject of (W1b) (捨家棄欲而作沙門) must not be based on those of the original Indian text of the *Wuliangshou jing*, but the copy of its counterpart in the *Da amituo jing* (A1a-b) or the *Pingdengjue jing* (P1).⁵⁴ Moreover, we can understand, from the structure of (A1a-c), that the intention of the translator of the *Da amituo jing* is to highlight the importance of abiding by the ascetic precepts for those who aspire to be reborn in the land of Amitābha, and consequently, he deliberately gave the paragraph about the higher grade of the aspirants its present form, mainly about the monks 沙門 aspiring to be reborn in the Pure Land. The intention of the translator can be understood clearly in (A1c), where the importance of the ascetic precepts for the aspirants who desire to be reborn in the land of Amitābha are repeatedly highlighted.

(b) Those special terms found in the 7th vow of the *Da amituo jing* also

⁵³ There is no equivalent with P1 in the vows of the *Pingdeng jue jing*. The 18th vow in the *Pingdengjue jing* is equivalent with the 7th vow of the *Da amituo jing*, which reads: 十八、我作佛時，諸佛國人民有作菩薩道者常念我淨潔心，壽終時我與不可計比丘眾飛行迎之共在前立，即還生我國作阿惟越致；不爾者我不作佛 (T12, p.281c02-05). Those terms related to the precepts listed above do not appear in this vow. Obviously, the subject of this vow is “people in various Buddha-lands, who cultivate the bodhisattva path,” completely different with the subjects found in P1 and A1b. Regarding 作菩薩道 in this vows, see XIAO 2015a.

⁵⁴ In addition to the subject of W1b, some special words underlined in W1b are quite possibly copies from A1a instead of the genuine translation from the original Indian text of the *Wuliangshou jing*. Regarding the formation of the *Wuliangshou jing*, it deserves to be studied in detail rather than in this paper.

appear in the fulfillment of this vow, the paragraph about the higher grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing*. *Zaijie* 齋戒 “ascetic precepts” is one of the most important terms in them. Instead of “the eight precepts” for lay Buddhists suggested by scholars, 齋戒 have a special meaning in the *Da amituo jing*; discarding lust and desire has been repeatedly highlighted by the phrases 去家、捨妻子、斷愛欲、不與女人交通. Although it is similarly in meaning to the Sanskrit term brahmacharya suggested by KARASHIMA,⁵⁵ it is hard to believe that this term is the genuine translation from the Indian original text of the *Da amituo jing*, but rather one of the creations based on the translator’s own views.

3. The middle grade of the aspirants

The middle grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing* was discussed very well by scholars in that this paragraph includes the veneration of the stupas, considered one of the typical characteristics of early Mahāyāna Buddhism as formed in India.⁵⁶ This paper focuses on the introduction of the veneration of the stupas in the *Da amituo jing*. The middle grade of aspirants is described as follows.

【大阿（A2）】其中輩者，其人願欲往生阿彌陀佛國，雖不能去家捨妻子斷

⁵⁵ See KARASHIMA 1999, p.145, note 60. KARASHIMA also indicated that *zaijie* is the means of the eight precepts for lay Buddhists. (KARASHIMA 2005, p.8, note 10). Obviously, both the 7th vow and its fulfillment, the passage regarding the higher grade of the aspirants, in the *Da amituo jing* do not focus on lay Buddhists, but rather mainly Buddhist priests (monks) in spite of the fact that 善男子、善女人 may also include the lay bodhisattvas. It is noteworthy that the 11th vow of the *Da amituo jing* is probably the one deliberately compiled based on that of *jōshū bongyō* 常修梵行.

⁵⁶ See HIRAHARA 1990, p.117-136.

愛欲，行作沙門者。(I) 當持經戒無得虧失，(II) 益作分檀布施，(III) 常⁵⁷信受佛經語深，當作至誠中信。(II-1) 飯食諸沙門，(II-2) 作佛寺起塔，(II-3) 散華、(II-4) 燒香、(II-5) 然燈，(II-6) 懸雜繒綵；如是法者，無所適莫。⁵⁸ 不當瞋怒，齋戒清淨，慈心精進，斷愛欲念。欲往生阿彌陀佛國，一日一夜不斷絕者。其人便於今世，亦復於臥止夢中，見阿彌陀佛。其人壽命欲終時，阿彌陀佛即化，令其人目自見阿彌陀佛及其國土。往至阿彌陀佛國者，可得智慧勇猛。(T12, p.310a15-25)

The middle grade of aspirants concerns those who desire to be reborn in the land of Amitābha. Even though they are unable to leave their households and wives, neither discard erotic desire, nor become Buddhist priests, they should (I) abstain from breaking the Buddhist precepts, (II) cultivate almsgiving and donations as much as possible, (III) steadily and sincerely believe in the fact that (all of the words in) the Buddhist sūtras are holding profound meaning, (II-1) offer foods to the sangha, (II-2) build stupas and temples, (II-3) spread flowers, (II-4) burn incense, (II-5) light candles, and (II-6) hang silk fabrics, cultivate all these aspects of the Buddhist dharma without emotional attachment. (I) They should (I-1) abstain from behaving angrily, (I-2) completely adhere to the ascetic precepts, (I-3) be diligent and maintain a benevolent mind, (I-4) discard erotic desire, and (I-5) desire to be reborn

⁵⁷ According to KARASHIMA, the character 常 found here is the changed character 當, see KARASHIMA 2005, p.9, note 28. I also investigated two Japanese manuscripts of the *Da amituojing*, the *Kongō-ji* manuscript 金剛寺 and the *Takada-senshū-ji* manuscript 高田專修寺, both of them do not contain 當, but 常.

⁵⁸ 【*dimō*適莫】: the attitude for people or something in accordance with their emotional inclination. An example containing this term is found in the chapter of the *Lixiezhuan* 李燮傳 of the *Houhanshu* 後漢書, it reads: 時穎川荀爽、賈彪，雖俱知名而不相能，燮並交二子，情無適莫，世稱其平正。(HD:10, p.1165). The counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing* was revised to “無所適貪”。Also see: 【無量】: 於其國土所有萬物，無我所心、無染著心，去來進止情無所係，隨意自在無所適，無彼、無我，無競、無訟 (T12, p.273c25-27)。Cf. KARASHIMA 1999, p.150, note 108.

in the land of Amitābha day and night. While lying, they will see the Buddha in a dream during their present life. When they are about to die, Amitābha will manifest his transformed body so that they are able to see him and his land. Those who are reborn in the land of Amitābha will attain unrivaled wisdom.

There is a long paragraph of about 700 characters following the text above, A2. This long paragraph only appears in the *Da amituo jing* and the *Ping-dengjue jing*.⁵⁹ Owing to space constraints, the original Chinese texts and their English translation cannot be presented here. This long paragraph presents an account for those who neither believe in the law of causality, nor believe in rebirth in the land of Amitābha but can also be reborn in the land of Amitābha by constantly cultivating good merit, and why they are merely able to be born in the border region and unable to see the Buddha for five-hundred years. I would like to discuss this paragraph in detail in a separate paper.

3.1 The relationship with the 6th vow of the *Da amituo jing*

The 6th vow in the *Da amituo jing* is equivalent to the passage about the middle grade of the aspirants above. There is no counterpart to this vow in any other versions of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*. This issue has puzzled scholars for several decades. The 6th vow is as follows.

【大阿（A6）】第六願：使某作佛時，令八方、上下無央數佛國，諸天人民，（I）若善男子、善女人，欲來生我國，用我故益作善，（II-1）若分檀布施、（II-2）遶塔燒香、（II-3）散花然燈、（II-4）懸雜繒綵、（II-5）飯食沙門、（II-6）起塔作寺，（III）斷愛欲、齋戒清淨，一心念我晝夜一日不斷絕皆令來生我國作菩薩。得是願乃作佛，不得是願終不作佛。（T.12, p.301b21-26）

⁵⁹ The texts read: (T.12, p. 310a25-c9) cf. (T.12, p.292a16-b28). I would like to discuss this paragraph in detail in a separate paper.

The Sixth Vow: When I attain Buddhahood, (I) if good men or good women among the people of the immeasurable Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, as well as above and below, who desire to be reborn in my Land, and do (the following) good deeds as much as possible because of my (virtue): (II-1) cultivate almsgiving and donations, (II-2) worship stupas by circumambulating them and burning incense, (II-3) worship Buddhas by spreading flowers and lighting candles, (II-4) hang silk fabrics to adorn Buddhist temples, (II-5) offer foods to the sangha, (II-6) build stupas and temples; and (III) discard lust, attachment and keep ascetic precepts day and night, they will all be reborn in my Land as bodhisattvas. If I cannot fulfill this vow, may I not attain Buddhahood.

3.2 The relationship with its counterpart in other versions

The passage of the middle grade in the *Wuliangshou jing* is as follows:

【無量 (W2)】佛語阿難：“其中輩者，十方世界諸天人民，其有至心願生彼國，雖不能行作沙門大修功德，當發無上菩提之心，一向專念無量壽佛；多少修善、奉持齋戒、起立塔像、飯食沙門、懸繒然燈、散華燒香，以此迴向願生彼國。其人臨終，無量壽佛化現其身——光明相好，具如真佛——與諸大眾現其人前，即隨化佛往生其國，住不退轉，功德智慧次如上輩者也” (T.12, p.272b24-c03).

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The middle grade of aspirants are the devas and humans in the worlds of the ten quarters who sincerely desire to be born in that land. Although unable to become monks and cultivate much merit, they awaken aspiration for the highest Enlightenment, single-mindedly think on Amitāyus, perform some good deeds, observe the precepts of abstinence, build stupas, donate Buddhist statues, give alms to mendicants, hang banners, light candles, scatter flowers, burn incense, and so forth. They transfer the merit of those practices to his land, aspiring to be born there. When they are about

to die, Amitāyus will manifest his transformed body, which is fully possessed of the same radiance and physical characteristics and marks as those of the real Buddha, and make it appear before them, together with a host of sages. Then they will follow this transformed Buddha and be born in the Pure Land, where they will dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. Their virtue and wisdom will be next to those of the higher grade of aspirants.” (INAGAKI 1996, pp. 54–55)

The counterpart in the Rulai hui is as follows.

【如來 (R2) 阿難：若他國眾生發菩提心，雖不專念無量壽佛，亦非恒種眾多善根，隨己修行諸善功德，迴向彼佛願欲往生。此人臨命終時，無量壽佛即遣化身與比丘眾前後圍繞，其所化佛光明相好與真無異，現其人前攝受導引，即隨化佛往生其國得不退轉無上菩提。(T11, p.98a05–11)

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “although those sentient beings in other lands who awaken aspiration for Enlightenment are neither able to concentrate on Amitāyus nor steadily cultivate much merit, they can cultivate some good merit in accordance with their abilities, and transfer the merit of that cultivation to the land of the Buddha, aspiring to be reborn there. When they are about to die, Amitāyus will dispatch his transformed body, which fully possesses the same radiance and physical characteristics and marks as the historical Buddha, and make it appear before them, together with a host of *bhikṣus* (monks), to embrace and guide them. Then they will follow this transformed Buddha and be born in his land, where they will attain the Stage of Non-retrogression till the supreme Enlightenment”.

The counterpart in the Sanskrit version is as follows.

【梵本 (S2)】 ye punas taṃ tathāgataṃ na bhūyo manasikariṣyanti, na ca bahv aparimitaṃ kuśalamūlam abhīkṣṇam avaropayiṣyanti tatra ca buddhakṣetre cittaṃ saṃpreṣayiṣyanti teṣāṃ yādṛśa eva so 'mitābhas tathāgato 'rhan samyaksambuddho varṇasaṃsthānārohapariṇāhena bhikṣusaṃghaparivāreṇa, tādṛśa eva buddhanirmito maraṇakāle

purataḥ sthāsyati | te tenaiva tathāgatadarśanaprasādāmbanena
samādhināpramuṣitayā smṛtyā cyutā tatraiva buddhakṣetre
pratyājaniṣyanti|| (FUJITA 2011, pp. 48-49)

“But, other living beings will not bring this tathagata to mind many times and will not plant constantly numerous roots of merit, or an unlimited number of roots, yet they will direct their minds toward rebirth in that Buddha-field. Before them, at the time of their death, will stand a magical creation of Amitabha, the Tathagata, Arhat, perfectly and fully awakened. And this magical creation of the Buddha will be exactly like him, with exactly the same colors, shape, girth, and height, and attended by exactly the same group of monks. If such living beings pass away while in possession of this mental concentration, the focus of which is the serene trust caused by the vision of the Tathagata, and if their mindfulness is not weakened at that point, they too will be reborn in that same Buddha-field, the Land of Bliss. (Gómez 1996, p. 93)

3.3 Does the 6th vow exist in the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing*?

In HIRAKAWA’S discussion, the difficulty is why there is no counterpart in any other versions of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*, even though its fulfillment (the middle grade of aspirants) appears in the three Chinese translations, the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdengjue jing* and the *Wuliangshou jing*. The most important, I think, is how to understand the 6th vow in the *Da amituo jing*.

The 6th vow in the *Da amituo jing* consists of three parts. The first part can be summarized in 善男子、善女人作善 “good men or women cultivate good merit”. The term *zuoshan* 作善 is a special term in the *Da amituo jing*, which appears at least 43 times. In fact, the *Da amituo jing* is the right version deliberately compiled by the Chinese translator based on the *shan* 善 and

e 惡⁶⁰ The second part of the 6th vow lists six kinds of almsgiving and donations. The third part concerns the precepts, *zaijie* (discarding lust and desire). That is to say, the translator compiled two kinds of cultivation of good merit from the Six Perfections into this vow, the donations and keeping the precept. The notion of the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection 作菩薩道 begins with the story of Dharmākara, the 7th and 6th vows being an extension of this concept. The words regarding the veneration of the stupas discussed by HIRAKAWA are merely one of the six items regarding donations listed in the 6th vow. We need to figure out a comprehensive consideration of this while we discuss any character in the *Da amituo jing*. Obviously, the 6th vow of the *Da amituo jing* is the extension of the *zuopusa dao* 做菩薩道, purposely highlighted in the story of Dharmākara in the *Da amituo jing*.⁶¹ Accordingly, the only possibility is that there is no equivalent to the 6th vow in the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing*.

Obviously, the paragraph pertaining to the middle grade aspirants (A2) was compiled based on the 6th vow. However, in addition to pure cultivation found in the 6th vow, the translator purposely added the concept of belief (常信受佛經語深, 當作至誠中信), which corresponds with the long paragraph following the A2.

Paragraph (A2) consists of three parts. The first part is an introduction including three aspects: (i) keeping the ascetic precepts; (ii) a list of six kinds of donations; (iii) belief in the fact that all of the words in the Buddhists sūtras hold profound meaning. The second and third parts follow the 6th vow. That is to say, P2 contains belief 信 and cultivation 行. Moreover, the three poisons (anger, greed, ignorance) are included in the list of the precepts. The paragraph about the middle grade in the *Wuliangshou jing* has been compiled based on its counterpart in the *Da amituo jing* (A2) or the *Pingdengjue jing* (P2).

⁶⁰ The topic of the paragraphs on the Five Evils, which is over one third the length of the whole sūtra, is regarding the evils in this world. A detailed discussion on *shan* and *e* based on the view of human beings found in the Pure Land sūtras see Xiao (forthcoming a).

⁶¹ Regarding the formation of the Dharmākara story of the *Da amituo jing*, see XIAO 2015a.

4. The lower grade of the aspirants

The passage pertaining the lower grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing* is as follows.

【大阿 (A3)】佛言：“其三輩者，其人願欲往生阿彌陀佛國，若無所用分檀布施，亦不能燒香、散華、然燈，懸雜繒綵，作佛寺起塔，飯食諸沙門者。當斷愛欲無所貪慕，得經疾慈心精進，不當瞋怒，齋戒清淨。如是法者。當念欲往生阿彌陀佛國，晝夜十日不斷絕者。壽命終即往生阿彌陀佛國，可得尊敬，智慧勇猛。” (T.12, p.310c10-16)

The Buddha said: the lower grade of aspirants includes those who aspire to be reborn in the land of Amitābha. Even though they have nothing for almsgiving and donations and they are neither able to offer burning incense, spread flowers and light candles, nor hang silk fabrics (to adorn Buddhist temples), build Buddhist temples and stupas, and offer foods to the sangha, they should discard erotic desire, not be greedy and miserly, be diligent and maintain a benevolent mind based on the sūtras, abstain from behaving angrily and completely adhere to the ascetic precepts. Those who pursue the Buddhist dharma should aspire to be reborn in the Land of Amitābha for ten days and nights. They will be reborn immediately in the land of Amitābha after they die, and will be respected and attain unrivaled wisdom.

Obviously, the passage about the lower grade of aspirants above (A3) was compiled with a focus on ascetic precepts. The subject of the vow consists of those who are unable to cultivate good merit by the means listed in the middle grade. Although it is commonly believed that the 5th vow addresses the lower grade of aspirants, it is unlikely that the passage (A3) above corresponds to it.

4.1 The relationship with the 5th vow of the *Da amituojing*

The 5th vow of the *Da amituojing* concerns those who committed evils in their previous lives but are also able to be reborn in the land of Amitābha

by cultivating good merit and adhering to the Buddhist precepts, meanwhile, confessing and correcting their mistakes. The 5th vow is as follows.

【大阿】第五願：使某作佛時，令八方、上下諸無央數天人民，及蜻飛蠕動之類，若前世作惡，聞我名字，欲來生我國者，即便反政自悔過，為道作善，便持經戒，願欲生我國不斷絕。壽終皆令不復泥犁、禽獸、薜荔，即生我國，在心所願。得是願乃作佛，不得是願終不作佛。 (T.12, p.310b14-20)

The Fifth Vow: When I attain Buddhahood, if people and sentient beings, even species that flit and wriggle in the immeasurable Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, as well as above and below, who committed evils in their previous lives, hear my name and aspire to be reborn in my land, instantly correct their actions and confess their mistakes, cultivate the Buddha-dharma and good merit, and, adhere to the Buddhist precepts, constantly aspire to be reborn in my land, they will not be reborn into the realm of hell, birds and beasts, but will instantly be reborn in my land in accordance with their aspiration when they die. If I do not fulfill this vow, may I not attain Buddhahood.

4.2 The relationship with its counterpart in other versions

The lower grade of aspirants in the *Wuliangshou jing* is not akin to the middle grade in this version, which is parallel to its counterpart in the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdengjue jing*.

【無量】佛語阿難：“其下輩者，十方世界諸天人民，其有至心欲生彼國，假使不能作諸功德，當發無上菩提之心，一向專意乃至十念，念無量壽佛，願生其國。若聞深法歡喜信樂，不生疑惑，乃至一念念於彼佛，以至誠心願生其國。此人臨終夢見彼佛，亦得往生，功德智慧次如中輩者也。” (T.12, p.272c04-10)

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The lower grade of aspirants are the devas and humans in the worlds of the ten quarters who sincerely desire to be born in that land. Although unable to do many meritorious deeds, they awaken aspiration for the highest Enlightenment and single-mindedly concentrate on Amitāyus even ten times, desiring birth in

his land. When they hear the profound Dharma, they joyfully accept it and do not entertain any doubt; and so, remembering the Buddha even once, they sincerely aspire to be born in that land. When they are about to die, they will see the Buddha in a dream. Those aspirants, too, will be born in the Pure Land. Their merit and wisdom will be next to those of the middle grade of aspirants.” (INAGAKI 1996, p.55)

The counterpart in the Rulai hui is as follows.

【如來】阿難，若有眾生住大乘者，以清淨心向無量壽如來，乃至十念念無量壽佛願生其國，聞甚深法即生信解。心無疑惑乃至獲得一念淨心。發一念心念無量壽佛。此人臨命終時。如在夢中見無量壽佛。定生彼國得不退轉無上菩提。(T.12, p.272c04-10)

(The Buddha said to) Ānanda: if sentient beings pursuing the Mahāyāna, concentrate on Amitāyus Tathāgata with a pure mind and aspire to be born in his land even ten times, they will develop have faith in the profound Dharma and comprehend it immediately upon hearing it, and if they do not entertain any doubt, give rise to even one pure thought, awaken aspiration, even once, and remain concentrated on Amitāyus, when they are about to die, if they see the Buddha in a dream, they will be reborn in that land and attain the state of Non-retrogression for the highest Enlightenment.

The counterpart in the Sanskrit version is as follows.

ye punar ānanda sattvās taṃ tathāgataṃ daśacittotpādāt samanumari-
ṣyanti sprhāṃ ca tasmin buddhakṣetra utpādayiṣyanti gambhīreṣu
ca dharmeṣu bhāṣyamāṇeṣu tuṣṭiṃ pratilapsyante na vipatsyante na
viṣādam āpatsyante na saṃsīdam āpatsyante 'ntāśa ekacittotpādenāpi
taṃ tathāgataṃ manasikariṣyanti sprhāṃ cotpādayiṣyanti tasmin bud-
dhakṣetre te 'pi svapnāntaragatās taṃ amitābhaṃ tathāgataṃ draṅkṣy-
anti sukhāvatyāṃ lokadhātāv upapatsyante 'vaivartikāś ca bhaviṣyanti
anuttarāyāḥ samyaksaṃbodheḥ || (FUJITA 2011, p.49)

“Other living beings, Ananda, will recollect the Tathagata through ten

moments of thought, they will long for this Buddha-field, and when the profound teachings of Dharma are being preached they will feel satisfaction, will not become anxious, will not become dejected or sink into despair. These beings may in fact merely bring to mind this tathagata in only one moment of thought, but if they will long for rebirth in his Buddha-field, they too will see the Tathagata Amitabha in their dreams, and they will be reborn in the Land of Bliss, and will attain the state of not falling back from unsurpassable, perfect, full awakening. (GÓMEZ 1996, p.93)

There are two paragraphs following the (A3) above in the *Da amituo jing* and the *Pingdengjue jing*.⁶² Owing to space constraints, the original Chinese texts and their English translation cannot be presented here.⁶³ This long paragraph presents an account for those who neither believe in the law of causality, nor believe in rebirth in the land of Amitābha but can still be reborn in the land of Amitābha by constantly cultivating good merit; and why they are only able to be born in the border region, unable to see the Buddha for five-hundred years. Almost all of these two paragraphs do not have a Sanskrit counterpart, apart from a few lines addressing all those who cultivate the bodhisattva path to perfection and aspire to be reborn in the land of Amitābha where they will attain the stage of Non-retrogression, fully possessing the thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man and attain Buddhahood.⁶⁴ These words clearly indicate that the hierarchical system of the aspirants who are reborn in the Pure Land is derived from the system of the three grades found in the *Da*

⁶² 【大阿】 T.12, pp.310c16-311b29 cf. 【清淨】 T.12, pp.292c6-293b17.

⁶³ A comprehensive study and an English translation of these paragraphs is being prepared.

⁶⁴ The text reads: 【大阿】 佛言：“其欲求作菩薩道生阿彌陀佛國者，其人然後，皆當得阿惟越致菩薩。阿惟越致菩薩者，皆當有三十二相紫磨金色、八十種好，皆當作佛。隨所願在所求欲於他方佛國作佛，終不復更泥犁、禽獸、薜荔。隨其精進求道，早晚之事同等爾。求道不休會當得之，不失其所欲願也。” (T.12, p.311a10-17). For the counterparts of these lines as found in each version, see ÖTA 2005, pp.212-213.

amituo jing. Obviously, this system has been inherited by the translator of the *Pingdeng jue jing*, and the *Wuliangshou jing*. The composer of the *Guan-jing* developed this system to the nine-grade rebirth system.

The first part of this long paragraph is about the ways to achieve rebirth for those who cannot diligently cultivate contemplation and the ascetic precepts, through the cultivation of ten good precepts. Although the text refers to ten good precepts (also named ten good merits) with a number before each item denoting its order, ten more good merits follow. That is to say, there are twenty precepts listed there. Accordingly, the intention of the composer of the *Da amituo jing* is no other than highlighting the importance of the cultivation of good merit for those who desire to be reborn the Land of Amitābha. It is of some interest that this feature is also found in the “three acts of virtue for attaining birth in the Pure Land,” so-called *jingye sanfu* 淨業三福 *Guan-jing*.

Conclusion

The following conclusion can be reached based on the above investigation.

The three grades of aspirants in the *Da amituojing* have been deliberately compiled and classified based on the degree of their cultivation of the bodhisattva path to perfection. The texts on the higher grade of aspirants had been compiled based on the 7th vow of the *Da amituo jing*. Both the 7th vow and its fulfillment (the higher grade of aspirants) include two subjects. The first subject concerns those good men or good women (including Buddhist priests) who cultivate the bodhisattva path to perfection in general; and the second subject concerns those Buddhist monks who strictly abide by the ascetic precepts, highlighting the importance of abiding by the ascetic precepts, something repeatedly stressed in last the lines of the paragraph, (A1c). Both subjects, (i) good men or good women; (ii) Buddhist monks, were deliberately created by the Chinese translator of the *Da amituo jing*. This feature is also reflected in its counterpart in the *Pingdengjue jing* (P1) and the *Wuliangshou*

jing (W1). That is to say, both the translators of the *Pingdengjue jing* and the *Wuliangshou jing* followed or referred to the text of (A1a-c) instead of translating the text from the original Indian text. The original form of the text concerning the higher grade in the *Da amituo jing* is quite possibly similar in meaning to that of the extant Sanskrit version.

The paragraph about the middle grade of aspirants (A2) was deliberately compiled based on the 6th vow as found in the *Da amituo jing*. As I pointed out in a recent paper, the 6th vow was purposely fabricated by the translator (see XIAO 2016a) in order to highlight the importance of cultivation of good merit by lay Buddhists. It is hard to believe that there was a difference in the original Indian text of the *Da amituo jing* and that all of these are the creations of the translators.

The paragraph about the lower grade of aspirants (A3) is not quite corresponding with the 5th vow in the *Da amituo jing*. The 5th vow concerns those who committed evils in their previous lives but are also able to be reborn in the land of Amitābha by confessing and correcting their mistakes while abiding by the ascetic precepts. The passage about the lower grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing* concerns those who are unable to cultivate good merit through the means listed in the paragraph about the middle grade, but are also able to be born in the land of Amitābha by abiding by the ascetic precepts. Obviously, the passage about the lower grade of aspirants in the *Da amituo jing* is an extension of the middle grade of aspirants in this version. The content of the lines 前世作惡 in the 5th vow of the *Da amituo jing*, in contrast, is an elaborate masterpiece created by the translator. It deserves to be discussed together with the doctrine of *akunin shōki* 惡人正機 firstly advocated by Honen 法然 who was the founder of Japanese Jōdo Shū, and developed by Shinran 親鸞, the founder of Japanese Jōdo Shinshū.

The nine-grade rebirth system found in the *Guan-jing* should be the development of the three grades rebirth system found in the *Da amituo jing*, although scholars suggested that it appears to be related to the three-grade

rebirth system found in the *Wuliangshou jing*, or the development of the Nine-rank system, which was a very popular of the governmental structure in China.⁶⁵ Obviously, by no means do I deny that some elements correspond with those of the *Wuliangshou jing*, but the main ideas concerning the three acts of virtue for attaining birth found in the *Guan-jing* should be derived from those of the *Da amituo jing*, which have no counterpart in the Sanskrit version of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*.

Although these characteristics discussed above are not derived from the original Indian text of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*, but are the deliberate creations of the translator of the *Da amituo jing*, no one can deny they played an important role in the formation of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism and Japanese Jōdo Shū and Jōdo Shinshū.

ABBREVIATION

HD = *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典, 13 vols. Shanghai: *Hanyu dacidian chubanshe* 漢語大詞典出版社.

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⁶⁵ This suggestion was firstly suggested by NOGAMI Shinjō in 1973. Also see SUEKI 1982, pp. 463-462.

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