

The Cult of Ārya Aparimitāyus: Proto-Pure Land Buddhism in the Context of Indian Mahāyāna

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Introduction

The familiar image of the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India has been significantly revised over the past two or more decades. The received view was that the Mahāyāna was a massive movement sweeping over Indian Buddhism, displacing the older Nikāya form which in turn only lived on in such places as Sri Lanka and Burma.¹ One version of the rise of the Mahāyāna which has been widely presented is a linear development of a single tradition, beginning with the *Perfection of Wisdom*, advancing philosophically with Mādhyamika and Yogācāra, and culminating in the single vehicle (*ekayāna*) of the *Lotus Sutra*. Recent studies, however, have called this image into question.² In its place emerges a picture of early Indian Mahāyāna as a variety of geographically diverse, marginal cults with small groups of followers, forming unstable communities which only in retrospect have come to be interpreted collectively as part of the same “movement.”

Similar to the retrospective fallacy of Mahāyāna unity which has been displaced by recent studies is the treatment of the Vajrayāna. Both traditional scholars, e.g., Bu-ston and Taranatha, and modern Western scholars have attempted to create neat categories, grouping texts and teachers, and interpreted the Vajrayāna as a unified, coherent tradition. It is to be

suspected, however, that the origins of the Vajrayāna are just as diverse and discontinuous as those of the Mahāyāna. The construction of a monolithic Vajrayāna separated it from what was constructed as an equally monolithic Mahāyāna.³ One strongly suspects, however, that the transition from Mahāyāna to Vajrayāna is anything but a sharp one.⁴ Other, historically comparable instances would suggest just the contrary.

For the history of what becomes the Pure Land tradition in East Asia, this shift in the way in which the Indian origins is conceived has serious implications since at the same time that the image of separate, monolithic unities of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna are broken down, the idea of the Pure Land tradition as a single, coherent, continuous tradition is also called into question.

In Japan and in Western Buddhist studies the term “Pure Land” (*Jōdo*) has come to be identified exclusively with Sukhāvātī, the Buddha-realm (*Buddhakṣetra*) of the Buddhas Amitābha and Amitāyus as described in the “three Pure Land sūtras,” (i.e., the *Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvātī Sūtras* and the *Visualization sūtra*). There are, however, many Buddha-realms.⁵ Included among these is the realm of the Buddha Aparimitāyus. Given the similarity of his name to Amitāyus (for example, both names are rendered identically into Chinese), the cult of Aparimitāyus and its attendant literature should be considered part of the religious culture of Indian Mahāyāna that either constituted or provided the context for “proto-Pure Land Buddhism,”⁶ Thus, the corpus of texts relevant to the Indian religious culture out of which the Pure Land tradition was formed in China is significantly expanded. Examination of this expanded corpus reveals a more complicated picture of Indian “proto-Pure Land” Buddhism than would be expected based solely upon Hōnen’s canonization of the *Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvātī Sūtras*, and the *Visualization*

Sūtra as the Pure Land *sūtras*. While it cannot be fully established in the course of this essay, an additional point being suggested here is that the religious culture of medieval Indian Buddhism was shared by both the proto-Pure Land and Vajrayāna traditions, i.e., that the two were not as distinct as their later, sectarian formulations would lead us to believe.

In the following we will first catalogue the literary corpus of the Aparimitāyus cult, and second the similarities and differences between the practices indicated by that literature and the practices of Vajrayāna. Lastly, some of the intellectual issues raised by this study will be discussed.

The Literary Corpus of the Aparimitāyus Cult

The Literature

The Tibetan Buddhist canon⁷ contains the following texts in the Aparimitāyus (tShe dpag med) corpus:

1. *Ārya Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-Mahāyāna-sūtra* (Peking catalogue number [hereinafter "P"] 361, 362 and 474, same title; translator[s] unknown. Taisho catalogue number [hereinafter "T"] 936 and 937; translated by Fa ch'eng and Fa t'ien, respectively. This is the work which Max Walleser edited and translated in 1916. According to Peter Pfandt, there is also an incomplete translation by Harold Walter Bailey, "Hvatanica IV. III. S. 2471." in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. 10 [1942], pp.891-893, and a Khotanese version is included in A.F. Rudolf Hoernle, ed., *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature Found in Eastern Turkeatan* [1916. Reprint. Amsterdam: Philo-Press, 1970.]⁸)

2. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-hṛdaya-nāma-dhāraṇī* (P 363 and P 475; translated by Puṇyasambhava and Ba-tshab-ñi-ma-grags. T 370; translator[s] unknown.)

3. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-sādhana/Aparimitāyur-nāma-sādhana*

(P 2990 and P 4886; same author and identical text. Authored by Ye śes kyi mkhaḥ-ḥgro ma Grub-paḥi [Jñānaḍākini Siddharājñī]; translator[s] unknown. Note that P 4886 is different from P 3523, which has the same title.)

4. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-sādhana* (P 2992; translated by Zla-ba bzañ-po and Darma tshul-khrims.)

5. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi-nāma* (P 2993; same translators as P 2992.)

6. *Aparimitāyur-homa-vidhi-nāma* (P 2994; translated by Balacaṇḍa bla-ma and Darma tshul-khrims.)

7. *Aparimitāyur-stotra* (P 3522; authored by Jetāri; translated by Ba-ri lotsā ba; Ḥchims-pa Brson-ḥgrus señ-ge, Rgya nañ phug-pa, Dbus-pa sañs-rgyas ḥbum, Bla-ma dge-sḍins-pa, and Bla-ma bsam gtan bzañ-po.)

8. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-sādhana* (P 3523; same author as P 3522; translated by Ḥjam-paḥi dbyaṅs and Dgaḥ-baḥi dpal.)

9. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-vidhi-nāma* (P 3524; same author as P 3522; translated by Śrīmañju and Dgaḥ-baḥi dpal.)

10. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi-nāma* (P 4887; same translators as P 2992.)

The sūtra

In 1916 Max Walleser published a critical edition of the Sanskrit text of the *Ārya Aparimitāyur sūtra* based on a Nepalese manuscript and on comparisons with the Tibetan and Chinese translations.⁹ The sūtra is primarily focused on a dhāraṇī for longevity. Walleser gives the dhāraṇī as:

*oṃ namo bhagavate Aparimitāyur jñāna suviniścita tejo
rājāya tathāgatāyārḥate samyak saṃbuddhāya tad yathā oṃ
puṇya puṇya mahāpuṇya aparimita puṇya Aparimitāyuh
puṇya jñāna sambhā ropacite oṃ sarva saṃskāra pariśud-
dha dharmate gaga ṇa sa mudgate svabhāva viśuddhe*

mahānaya parivāre svāhā.¹⁰

The Nepalese sūtra fits into the identification of the cult of the book as a major strain of practice in Indian Mahāyāna, contrasting with the cult of the stūpa.¹¹ Although the sūtra repeats the dhāraṇī several times, the benefits described by the sūtra derive not from repetition of the dhāraṇī, but rather from copying the book.

Despite the similarity of the names Aparimitāyus and Amitāyus, the sūtra makes it seem that at least for the Nepalese tradition there is a distinction between the two. Specifically, the land of Aparimitāyus is identified as the “Accumulation of Immeasurable Virtues” (Skt., *aparimita-guṇa-saṃcaya*), and not Amitāyus’ “Land of Bliss” (Skt., *Sukhāvātī*). The distinction between Aparimitāyus and Amitābha is even clearer, as one of the list of benefits deriving from copying the text is birth in Sukhāvātī, clearly identified as the land of Amitābha. This is an instance of Sukhāvātī as a free-floating mytheme, being introduced as a goal of practice in the context of a sūtra devoted to a different buddha.¹² Thus, in the history of Indian proto-Pure Land Buddhism, we are dealing with what were understood to be three different Buddhas. The Chinese text translated by Walleser¹³ agrees with the Nepalese concerning the name of Aparimitāyus’ land, however, it makes no reference to birth in Amitābha’s Sūkhāvātī as a benefit of copying the sūtra. The reference to Amitābha and Sukhāvātī must have been emended to the Sanskrit text sometime after the translation of the sūtra into Chinese.

Dates of the Aparimitāyus Corpus, Compared with the Pure Land Sūtras

As is usually the case, we are dependent upon the dates of Chinese translations to assist us with the history of Indian

Buddhist texts. The earliest translation of the LSV is that of Lokakṣema between 147 and 186.¹⁴ The earliest translation of the SSV is from ca. 402, by Kumārajīva. While both the LSV and the SSV have extant Sanskrit versions indicating their Indian origins,¹⁵ the origin of the *Visualization Sūtra* appears to have been either in Central Asia or China.¹⁶ The traditional “translator” is Kālayaśas and the traditional date is sometime between 424 and 453.

In comparison, the anonymous Chinese translation of the *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-hṛdaya-dhāraṇī* (T 370) was made between 502 and 557.¹⁷ There are two Chinese translations of the *Aparimitāyur [dhāraṇī] sūtra* (T 936 and 937). The first of these was made by a Tibetan monk from Tun Huang whose Sanskrit name would have been Dharmasiddhi, known in Chinese as Fa-ch’eng, who was active in the first half of the ninth century.¹⁸ The second was done by a monk from Nālandā named Dharmadeva (?) in Sanskrit and Fa-t’ien in Chinese, active in the second half of the tenth century.¹⁹ Turning to the Tibetan translations of the *Aparimitāyus* corpus, I have been able to identify two figures. The first is Jetāri²⁰ who, according to the *Blue Annals*, was a teacher of the famed Atīśa while the latter was in his early thirties.²¹ This would have been before Atīśa came to Tibet in 1042,²² and hence Jetāri would have been active at the end of the tenth century, beginning of the eleventh. The second figure is the translator Darma tshul-khrims²³ whom the *Blue Annals* identifies as an older contemporary of a monk who was born in 1350.²⁴ Thus, Darma tshul-khrims would have been active early to mid-fourteenth century.

The literature of Amitābha, Amitāyus and *Aparimitāyus* stretches from the first century to the thirteenth.²⁵ The LSV can be dated to about the first century, while the SSV and *Visualization sūtras* can be dated to about the fourth century. This

approximately three hundred year gap between the LSV on the one hand and the SSV and Visualization sūtras on the other is significantly greater than the one century gap between the SSV and Visualization sūtras and the earliest known Aparimitāyus text, which can be dated to about the fifth century. There appears to be, therefore, more continuity than would be assumed were one to simply uncritically accept the grouping of the LSV, SSV and Visualization sūtras as *the* Pure Land sūtras.

Similarities Between Proto-Pure Land and Vajrayāna

If we examine the wider range of texts which represent the sources from which the later Pure Land tradition was formulated, we find a number of practices which constitute the cultic practices of Indian proto-Pure Land Buddhisms. Most characteristic of these practices are mantra and visualization. Clearly, prior to Rennyō's explanation of the verbal phrase (*shomyo nembutsu*) NAMO AMIDA BUTSU as an expression of gratitude, it functioned as a mantra, i.e., as a means of concentrating the mind.²⁶ For example, reciting the name of Amitāyus as described in the *Visualization Sūtra* is to concentrate the mind of the dying person on the figure of Amitāyus. Thus, functionally, the phrase NAMO AMIDA BUTSU is a mantra (with the exception of its use in Jōdo Shinshū).

Much more important to the developing proto-Pure Land Buddhisms of India and Central Asia is the practice of visualization. Not only is this explicit in such later works as the *Visualization Sūtra*, but one can see the wonderfully rich descriptions of Sūkhāvātī in the *Larger Sūkhāvātīvyūha Sūtra* as intended to guide the practitioner of a visualization style of meditation.

In the case of the *Visualization Sūtra* the description of Sūkhāvātī extends over a long series of visualizations. Simply

as an example, one part of this series says:

The Buddha said to Vaidehī, “Those who wish to see that Buddha should form an image of a lotus-flower on the seven-jewelled ground. They visualize each petal of this flower as having the colours of a hundred jewels and eighty-four thousand veins like a celestial painting with eighty-four thousand rays of light issuing forth from each vein. They should visualize all of these clearly and distinctly. Its smaller petals are two hundred and fifty yojanas in both length and breadth. Each of these lotus-flowers has eighty-four thousand large petals. Between the petals there are a hundred koṭis of king-maṇi-gems as illuminating ornaments. Each maṇi-gem emits a thousand rays of light which, like canopies of the seven jewels, cover the entire earth.

“The dais is made of Śakra’s pendent maṇi-gems and is decorated with eighty thousand diamonds, kimśuka-gems, brahma-maṇi-gems and also exquisite pearl-nets. On the dais four columns with jewelled banners spontaneously arise, each appearing to be as large as a thousand million koṭis of excellent gems, each emitting eighty-four thousand rays shining in eighty-four thousand different tints of golden colour. Each golden light suffuses this jewelled land and transforms itself everywhere into various forms, such as diamond platforms, nets of pearls and nebulous clusters of flowers. In all the ten directions it transforms itself into anything according to one’s wishes, and performs the activities of the Buddha. This is the visualizing of the lotus-throne, and is known as the seventh contemplation.”²⁷

Compare that description of Sukhāvātī with the following description which is drawn from the Shingon Garbhakośadhātu

ritual. This is the part of the ritual in which the practitioner visualizes the ritual space into which the buddhas, bodhisattvas and deities of the Garbhakośadhātu maṇḍala will be evoked for the ritual performance. This kind of visualization forms a part of all of the Shingon rituals which derive from Vajrayāna sources.²⁸

... above the earth cakra there is the syllable BAN, which transforms into a vast ocean. Above this ocean, there is the syllable RAN, which changes to become the flames of Great Wisdom. Contained within the flames is the syllable A, which transforms into an eight petalled lotus with a vajra for its stalk. Above the lotus is another syllable A. This syllable becomes the eight peaks of Mt. Sumeru, which are surrounded by seven gold mountains and a circular mountain wall of iron. These mountains are full of streams running with water containing the eight beneficial properties. At the very top of Mt. Sumeru is the syllable BAN, which transforms into the Mahākarma Cakra. Above the cakra is the syllable UN, which transforms into the Threefold Realm.

... within the Vajra realm exists a mandala altar of four levels. Within this altar is the syllable AKU, which becomes a mountain peak on which is set a large, expansive palace. Inside the palace is a Karma, above which is the syllable A. This syllable transforms into a large, eight petalled white lotus throne. The throne shines with countless rays of light and is entirely surrounded by a hundred thousand lotuses. Above this lotus throne is the syllable AKU, which transforms into the Lion Throne of the Great Awakened One. Above the Lion Throne is the syllable A, which changes to a large, jewelled red king of lotuses. Over this lotus is the syllable A, which transforms into a

pure moon cakra.

... within the round, brightly shining moon cakra there is the syllable A, which transforms into the Dharmadhātu Stūpa. The stūpa transforms into the Tathāgata Mahāvairocana. He is sitting straight up, dressed in robes of fine silk, bedecked with strands of jewels and wearing the Five Buddha Jewelled Crown. From his body shines marvellous light which illuminates the entire Dharmadhātu. Above each of the eight petals of the lotus upon which he sits are eight syllables: RAN, BAN, SAN, KAKU, AN, A, BU and YU. These syllables transform into the eight Buddhas: Ratnaketu, Samkusmitarāja, Amitābha, Dundubhinirghoṣa, Samantabhadra, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Maitreya. More deities from the three leveled mandala surround them on all sides.²⁹

While the latter visualization employs the bīja-mantra which are typical of Vajrayāna Buddhism, it is otherwise very similar to that previously given from the *Visualization Sūtra*. In both cases one is visualizing a magnificent realm in which a Buddha resides.

In addition to mantra and visualization, the cult of Aparimitāyus involves many other practices as well: dhāraṇī: the Aparimitāyur dhāraṇī itself; homa (text no. 2 above); maṇḍala (text no. 4 above); sādhana (text no. 6 above); nāma: recitation of (the mantra of) the name.

This collection of practices is virtually identical with the kinds of practices identified with the Vajrayāna traditions as they developed in India. (Perhaps the only characteristically Vajrayāna practice not explicitly found in the titles of the Aparimitāyus corpus is mudrā, which can be expected to be found in the sādhana.) Given this identity of practices, one is forced to reevaluate the notion of there having been two iden-

tifiably separate, monolithic traditions, Pure Land and Vajrayāna, in the diffuse developments of Mahāyāna in India.

Intellectual Issues Raised by the Study

There are (at least) three issues raised by this inquiry into the cult of Aparimitāyus. The first is conceptual, the second theoretical and the third methodological. The conceptual problem has already been alluded to, i.e., the anachronistic projection of a twelfth century, Japanese formulation appropriately known as Pure Land Buddhism onto earlier historical periods and different religious cultures. The theoretical issue is the use of a rhetoric which describes religious phenomena in terms of “influences.” Finally, the methodological issue is the tendency to assume the historical priority of sūtras.

Pure Land and Proto-Pure Land

In the context of Japanese Buddhism, discussion of the Pure Land tradition usually focuses solely on the *Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras* together with the *Visualization Sūtra* and a few other texts, such as the *Rebirth Treatise*. The names of the Buddha of these texts are Amitābha and Amitāyus, Infinite Life and Infinite Light, conflated in Chinese to *Amito fo* and hence in Japanese to *Amida butsu*.

Of course Sukhāvātī is not the only pure land. The pure lands of the Medicine King Buddha, of Maitreya, of Akṣobhya, and of Mahāvairocana are well known. One issue which this raises then is “What does it mean to speak of a pure land tradition in the Indian context?” or “Just what are we talking about when we speak of the Indian origins of Pure Land Buddhism?” One must avoid carrying a later formulation, e.g., that of Hōnen who is responsible for the canonic character of the three sūtras,³⁰ back into the Indian setting.

Such a formulation of a monolithic Pure Land tradition originating in India is already made problematic by the *Visualization Sūtra* which was apparently compiled in Central Asia.³¹ Such anachronisms give rise to what one must suspect are at best pseudo-problems, e.g., whether or not the *Rebirth Treatise* proves that Vasubandhu made a third conversion, from Yogācāra to Pure Land, at the end of his life. Such a pseudo-problem seems to arise from the anachronistic reading of the strong sectarian separations which exist in Japan back onto early medieval India. The general character of Indian religious culture indicates that, rather than the kind of exclusive adherence indicated by the concept of conversion, multiple cultic affiliations were possible.

It is essential that we avoid the anachronism of reading the sectarian identity and self-definitions found in the Chinese and Japanese Amito/Amida centered Pure Land Buddhisms backwards onto Indian Buddhism.³² (This is not to deny, of course, that we can seek information concerning the origins of the Amitābha and Amitāyus cults and their texts.) Since the term "Pure Land" seems to have only come into use as a name of a self-identified sect with Hōnen, it seems appropriate to use the term "proto-Pure Land" to identify the broader stream of Buddhas, their cults and attendant texts that precede Hōnen's formulation. This terminological precision will help to avoid inadvertent conflation of different phases of the development of what becomes Pure Land Buddhism. If instead of thinking of one single, continuous Pure Land tradition extending across the "three countries," we consider each historical period as requiring a new self-definition, then the continuing creativity of the tradition is highlighted. At the same time, I believe such a view is historically more accurate, i.e., Indian proto-Pure Land was not a single, unified, exclusivistic tradition, but rather included the cults of the Buddhas Amitābha and Amitāyus, shad-

ing off in a religious milieu which also included cults devoted to other buddhas as well.

One of the other cults is that of Aparimitāyus. Almost unknown in East Asia (only two texts were translated into Chinese), this cult is part of the religious culture which provided the context for the origins of the Pure Land tradition. One indication of this is that the Chinese translators considered Aparimitāyus to be a synonym for Amitayus, itself synonymous with Amitābha.³³ If we turn our attention to the Aparimitāyus corpus, one of the questions we can ask is, "What practices were engaged in by followers of the cult?" A cursory overview of the texts reveals dhāraṇī, visualization, homa, etc., practices which are essentially identical with those of the early Vajrayāna, or tantric, forms of Buddhism.

The Rhetoric of "Influences"

When religious phenomena are analyzed by means of the rhetoric of influences, as for example in Nakamura Hajime's claim that the "later Chinese version of the *Sukhāvati-vyūhasūtra* translated by Fa-hsien is somewhat influenced by Esoteric Buddhism, being mingled with the ideas of altruism and universal salvation,"³⁴ there are at least two unquestioned assumptions underlying and supporting this rhetoric.³⁵ First, to talk about religious phenomena in this fashion is to further the idea that religious traditions are by nature monolithic and autonomous. It implies that the norm is separate religious traditions which may then influence each other in one way or another. Second, to use the rhetoric of influences is to imply that there is some standard of purity against which the presence of outside influences can be discerned. We must ask, however, what are those standards and where do they come from? Again, it is particularly problematic if those standards derive from a later historical period or a different religious culture. For example,

to apply a standard of what Pure Land Buddhism “really is” which arises from the Japanese tradition onto Indian Buddhist phenomena is inappropriate.

The Issue of Sūtra Priority

Both in Buddhist philosophy and Western scholarship on Buddhism there is a tendency to assume that the sūtras have historical, and, therefore, intellectual priority.³⁶ Such an assumption cannot, however, be supported for the *historical* study of Buddhism, including the historical study of Buddhist doctrine and philosophy. It is particularly dubious if our interest is the historical study of Buddhist practice. For the study of a cult such as that of Aparimitāyus it is inappropriate to simply assume that the sūtra is prior and that all the other works are derivative. For example, although the chronology of translation is not necessarily identical with the chronology of composition, the Chinese translation of the *Aparimitāyur-jūāna-hṛdaya-dhāraṇī* predates the Chinese translation of the *Aparimitāyur [dhāraṇī] sūtra* by about four hundred years. This provides some indication that the practice of the dhāraṇī preceded the composition of the sūtra.

Conclusion

The Indian origins of Pure Land Buddhism must be seen to be both deeper and wider than just the LSV, SSV, *Visualization sūtra* and *Rebirth Treatise*. In addition, not only should such texts as the *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*³⁷ be examined, but the rich corpus of the Aparimitāyus literature should be examined as well. A preliminary review of this literature shows, for example, that in terms of practices proto-Pure Land and Vajrayāna Buddhism have a great deal of similarity. Such results require calling into question the view of religious tradi-

tions as static, monolithic, autonomous entities. Questioning such a fundamental assumption about religious traditions also serves to highlight such issues as anachronisms, the rhetoric of influences, and the assumption of the priority of the sūtras.

NOTES

1. The popular devotionalism of Bodhisattva worship was seen as fundamentally similar to the Protestant reformation, i.e., the appropriation of religious authority by the laity at the expense of the priesthood. The neat similarity itself should be sufficient grounds for questioning this interpretation. See Gregory Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. Pp.1-22.); Douglas Brear, "Early Assumptions in Western Buddhist Studies" *Religion* (5.2 [1975], pp.136-159.); and Christopher Clausen, "Victorian Buddhism and the Origins of Comparative Religion," *Religion* (5.1 [1975], pp.1-15.).

2. See particularly, Gregory Schopen, "From Marginal to Mainstream: The Mischievous Metamorphosis of the Mahāyāna in China and the Study of Indian Buddhism," in Jan Nattier and John McRae, eds., *Buddhism Across Boundaries*, forthcoming.

3. It seems highly likely that at least part of the motivation for such views of history was a sort of religious "one-ups-manship," i.e., to present one's own religious tradition as a fundamental advance over previous forms, its difference has to be emphasized, presented as a radical break with earlier forms.

4. For example, what is known in East Asian Buddhism as the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* is considered to be the Mahāvairocana tantra by the Tibetans. Cf. David Snellgrove (*Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* [2 vols., numbered continuously. Boston: Shambhala, 1987.] P.148) who notes that "some of the works that were subsequently cataloged by the Tibetans as tantras are referred to in their titles as sūtras. Thus there is a slight overlapping between these two classes of Buddhist literature, although clear distinctions of content can be drawn between them." Despite this, I suspect that the distinctions are not as clear as Snellgrove indicates.

5. The question of whether or not they deserve the qualifying epithet "pure" is, of course, in large part determined by how the term "pure" is understood and the cosmological classifications of various realms of existence. Concern with the cosmological classification of different Buddha-realms was initiated in China by T'an-luan and developed further by such figures as Hui-yuan, Chih-i, Chi-tsang and Tao-ch'ō. See Shinkō Mochizuki, *The Development of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism (Chūgoku*

Jōdo kyōri shi), tr. Leo M. Pruden. Xerographic copy, 1982

6. Gregory Schopen has described the search for a Pure Land Buddhism in India as having been "a good deal of wasted effort." Schopen, "From Marginal to Mainstream," p.3.

7. The Korean canon catalogue lists the following:

1. *Aparimitāyur (dhāraṇī) sūtra*: Korean catalogue number [hereinafter "K"] 1089, T 987

P rgyud ba 243b-249a, 249a-254a, Ma 55b-60b

K: translated by Fa-t'ien, 8th month 6th year of K'ai Pao, Northern Sung dynasty (AD 973) in P'u-chung, Hai-chou or in the 10th month, 1st year of Tuan Kung, Northern Sung dynasty (AD 988)

2. *Aparimitāyur jñāna hṛdaya dhāraṇī*: K 443, T 370

P rgyud ba 254a-256a, Ma 60b-62b

K: translator unknown, Liang dynasty (AD 502-557)

The following are alternate titles for the *Sukhāvativyūha sūtra*: A(par)mitāyūM sūtra: K 22(5), 24, 25, 26, 1199 The following is an alternate title for the *Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa*: A(par)mitāyūM sūtra (śāstra): K 565

8. Peter Pfandt, ed., *Mahāyāna Texts Translated into Western Languages A Bibliographic Guide*, rev. ed (Cologne. E J Brill, 1986), pp 8-9

9. Walleser, Max, tr. *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtram Nach einer nepalesischen Sanskrit-Handschrift mit der tibetischen und chinesischen Version Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. (Heidelberg Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1916.)* Pp 6-7

10. Walleser, p.22. [Not found in Hata's *Shingon Jiten*.]

11. Gregory Schopen, "The Phrase 'sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet' in the *Vajracchedikā*. Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17.3 & 4 (Nov./Dec. 1975), pp 147-181.

12. The reference to Sukhāvati in the *Aparimitāyus sūtra* does not indicate that there was a Pure Land Buddhism which was predominant in India See Gregory Schopen, "Sukhāvati as a Generalized Religious Goal in Sanskrit Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 19.3 & 4 (Ang./Sept 1977), pp 177-210

13. I.e., Nanjio no. 786. This corresponds to T 937, translated by Fa-t'ien, active late tenth to early eleventh centuries. Thus, on the basis of Walleser's work, and assuming that the text Fa-t'ien used was current for India as well (a questionable assumption), the earliest date for the emendation must be the late tenth century.

14. Hisao Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras, A Study and Translation* (Kyoto Nagata Bunshodo, 1994.), p.56.

15. See Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, pp.55-7

16. See Kenneth K. Tanaka, *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine, Chung-ying Hui-yuan's Commentary on the Visualization Sutra* (Albany, New York. State University of New York Press, 1990), pp 38-40 for a summary of the scholar-

ship on this issue.

17. Demiéville, Paul, Hubert Durt and Anna Seidel, eds. *Répertoire du Canon Bouddhique Sino-Japonais*. (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve and Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1978). P.47.

18. *Répertoire*, p.255.

19. *Répertoire*, p.257.

20. Jetāri is identified by the Peking catalogue as the author of three of the works: *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-vidhi-nāma* (P 3524), *AparimitāyurM-stotra* (P 3522) and *Ārya Aparimitāyur-jñāna-sādhana* (P 3523).

21. George N. Roerich, tr. *The Blue Annals* (1949. Reprinted in one volume. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979). P.243.

22. Snellgrove. *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, p.45.

23. Dharma tshul-khrims is listed in the Peking catalogue as the co-translator together with Zla-ba bzang-po of three works: *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-sādhana* (P 2992), and two works both entitled *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi-nāma* (P 2993 and P 4887, for this latter his name is given as Glan Darma tshul-khrims); and with Balacaṇḍa bla-ma of one work: *Aparimitāyur-homa-vidhi-nāma* (P 2994).

24. Roerich, tr., *Blue Annals*, p.541.

25. This dating assumes that there is generally at least a century between the date that a text was translated and the date that it was written. Such an assumption is of course somewhat arbitrary. However, in the absence of additional reasons for establishing dates, at least the same assumption should be made uniformly. For example, there seems to be no historical grounds for attributing a first century date to the SSV as some authors do. The dating of Indian texts is, though, notoriously difficult. Snellgrove comments, for example, that "To give a date to a particular tantra is a difficult, indeed an impossible task, unless one is content to date it from the time that it became sufficiently accepted in scholarly Buddhist circles for commentaries to be written on it" (*Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, p.147). Similarly, Gregory Schopen points out that the date of the Chinese translation of a text only establishes one point of reference. The duration of the text's existence prior to that date is usually just a reasonable estimate of one to two centuries. This rule of thumb, however, is obviously at best rough since we have no reason to assume a consistent rate of transmission of materials from India to China. Additionally, the translation of a text does not establish the importance of a text, any more than the importance of a text in China reflects in equal importance in India ("From Marginal to Mainstream," p.5).

26. For a review of the complexities of defining "mantra," see Harvey P. Alper, "Introduction" in Harvey P. Alper, ed., *Understanding Mantras* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989. Pp.1-14).

27. Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, pp.329-30. Cf. Ryukoku University Translation Center, *The Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life as Expounded by Śākyamuni Buddha* (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1984). Pp.45-7.

28. There are rituals in the Shingon corpus which derive from Buddhist sources which are not Vajrayāna, and these rituals can be clearly identified on the basis of the differences in ritual activities. One such is the ritual for feeding the hungry ghosts.

29. Richard K. Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan* (Sata Pitaka Series, no. 364. Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1991). Pp.269-70. The bīja-mantra are rendered here as they are pronounced in Japanese.

30. "These [three] sutras were chosen by Hōnen of Japan (1133-1212) and called the Three Pure Land Sutras." Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, p.3.

31. See John C. Huntington, "Rebirth in Amitābha's Sukhāvati," in James Foard, Michael Solomon and Richard Payne, eds., *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development* (Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, no. 3. Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1996. Pp.43-105.).

32. One should also perhaps question the propriety of simply referring to such figures as Shan-tao and T'an-luan as "Pure Land" masters. The lineage of Patriarchs was, of course, formulated by Shinran. Additionally, it is not an insignificant question to ask "Would Shan-tao, for example, have thought of himself as a Pure Land practitioner?" One suspects that he would have thought of himself as a *nien fo* practitioner, whose *nien fo* practice was centered on Amīto.

33. One feels an almost immediate desire to question this: Were Amitābha, Amitāyus and Aparimitāyus considered the same by the practitioners of their cults? In other words, did they think that there was one Buddha with three names or three Buddhas (or some other variant)? In terms of Buddhist philosophic thought this is one kind of problem (see Paul Griffiths, *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994]), however, what we are asking here is a question regarding the *mentalité* of medieval Indian Buddhists and its contrast with that of medieval Chinese Buddhists.

34. Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism, A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Buddhist Traditions series, no. 1. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987). P.204.

35. The same issue in different terminology is raised by the category of "syncretism," about which Robert D. Baird has written that it is "another category which adds little if anything to religio-historical understanding" (*Category Formation and the History of Religions*. Religion and Reason, no. 1. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971. P.142). The situation is different, however, where the dynamics of religion is taken as the norm, instead of the statics. See for example, Judith A. Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.), esp. ch. 1.

36. It is tempting to refer to this attitude as "sūtra fundamentalism." Such an attitude in the Western scholarship on Buddhism would appear to obviously derive from the Bibliocentrism of post-Reformation Christianity.

37. Paul Harrison. *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*. (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1990).



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