

**A Study of the Translation Process of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* from Sanskrit to  
Chinese**

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**A Study of the Translation Process of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* from Sanskrit  
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## ABSTRACT

Many Sanskrit Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese during the early medieval period around 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Century. The *Infinite Life Sūtra* (無量壽經) was published as part of these translations, and the content of the sūtra was based on *Sukhāvatīvyūha* written in Sanskrit. While scholars have established the connection between the two texts, the factors that affected the translation are unclear. In this thesis, I examine five factors that potentially influenced the translation of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* from Sanskrit to Chinese—source text, apocrypha, translator, the Géyi concept, and working environment—and offer insight into the context that shaped the translated text.

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Infinite Life Sūtra* is known as a main text for the Pure Land Buddhist Teachings. It was written as one of the records of the Shakyamuni's Dharma talk which was heard by one of his disciples, Ānanda. The main content of the *Sūtra* is the 48 Vows of the Tathāgata Amitābha. According to the 18<sup>th</sup> Vow of the 48 Vows, a follower of the Tathāgata Amitābha can be enlightened by reciting the name of the Tathāgata without following any monastic life or practice. Since the teachings was introduced in Chinese translation, it became popular, especially in the general populous. The Pure Land Buddhist Teachings is currently still known as a dominant teachings in Japan with having 26000 temples.

There were 12 different translations of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* in the past, although only 5 translations remain in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I always wondered that how these translations were made, and decided to research the sūtra from 5 unique aspects as a thesis subject. Throughout this paper, a reader will acquire the knowledge on a source text of the *Infinite Life Sūtra*, an issue of apocrypha, translators of 5 versions of the *Infinite Life Sūtra*, the Géyi concept as translation technique, and working environment of the translators.

In the chapter one of this thesis, the development of the Pure Land tradition, the central concept of the scripts, and the origin of Amitābha and Amitāyus will be discussed. These topics are essential in understanding the origination of the Pure Land Teachings in India. The knowledge of the origination of the teachings will help understanding the Chinese Pure Land tradition and its Chinese translations. Especially, when the analysis on translation in Chinese is conducted, it is impossible to conduct the research without

knowing the original. There are various arguments are presented and discussed on the origin of the Pure Land thought.

In the chapter two, the various factors in the process of the translation will be presented. The problems of apocrypha and the Géyì conception are especially key issues that bear on the translation of the text. One of the Pure Land sūtras, The *Meditation Sūtra on the Infinite life* is categorized under the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha.<sup>1</sup> How the process of the categorization of the apocrypha is made will be discussed. Géyì is the fundamental conception for the early translation technique in China, although one of the top sinologists, Victor Mair argues that there is no Géyì in the historical account.<sup>2</sup> Yamada states that Dao terminologies are borrowed to explain the Sanskrit Indian Pure Land conceptions to Chinese readers.<sup>3</sup> He shows that how the Sanskrit Infinite Life Sūtra was translated into Chinese with Dao conceptions. In order to understand Géyì, it is essential to understand some fundamental ideologies of Daoism.

One of the eminent scholars, Kodatsu Fujita in the Mahāyāna tradition questions on the translator for one of the Pure Land sūtras, the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.<sup>4</sup> He argues that the credit of the translator in the sūtra may be wrong. The sūtra is treated as one of the main texts in various Pure Land Buddhist traditions and schools. It is known that there are various translation techniques and methodologies.<sup>5</sup> In the chapter two, several translators

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<sup>1</sup> *Taiso Tripitaka*, T2145\_.55.0022a08.

<sup>2</sup> Mair, "What Is Geyi, After All?," 227.

<sup>3</sup> Yamada, "Jinen, Naturalness in the Chinese Translations of the Sukhavativyuha," 79.

<sup>4</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 63.

<sup>5</sup> Funayama, *Making Sutras into Classics*, 1-17.

and translation styles are also discussed. It is assumable that some translation projects of Chinese sūtra could be done by multiple translators. In the historical Chinese text, Kāng Sēngkǎi was credited as a translator for the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.<sup>6</sup> Fujita and Karashima question that the *Infinite Life Sūtra* might have multiple translators and they presents some possibilities as evidence for their questions. At the end of the chapter, their possibilities are discussed. At the conclusion of the thesis, it will be stated that it is questionable that the *Infinite Life Sūtra* was translated by a single translator, and it can be translated by multiple translators with possible evidence.

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<sup>6</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T0360\_.12.0265c05.



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1. The Pure Land Thoughts

It is difficult to describe and determine when and where historically the Pure Land thoughts are established based on the two early Pure Land texts - *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* and *Amitābha Sūtra*. There is no solid evidence to determine the answers to these two questions, but it may be possible to approach toward to the historical facts by making the consideration from various aspects.<sup>7</sup> It is widely known that when the publishing date of Sanskrit Mahāyāna sūtras need to be estimated, the record of the sūtra translation in China will generally give the publishing year of the translation version. The year of the translation can be considered as the latest year for publishing the Sanskrit version. For instance, if the Chinese translation of a sūtra is made in 211 C.E., an original Sanskrit sūtra is published prior to 211 C.E.<sup>8</sup>

The oldest Chinese translation of the Pure Land sūtra was *Mahā Amitābha Sūtra* translated by Zhī qiān 支謙, and it was published around 222 – 228 C.E. It is assumable that the original Sanskrit sūtra of *Mahā Amitābha Sūtra* was established prior to 200 C.E. One of the well-known translators, Lokakṣema made his translation of *Samādhi Sūtra* on Oct 8, 179 C.E.<sup>9</sup> In the translation, Lokakṣema mentioned the name of Amitābha Buddha several times. It indicates that the Pure Land thoughts must be existed before 179 C.E.

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<sup>7</sup> Ikemoto, *A Doctrinal Study of Sukhavativyuha*, 156.

<sup>8</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 222.

<sup>9</sup> Takata, *The Origin of Buddhist Statues*, 428.

Fujita assumes that the establishment of the Pure Land thoughts could be occurred circa 150 C.E.<sup>10</sup>

There are arguments on the relationship between the Pure Land sūtras such as *Mahā Amitābha Sūtra* and *Samādhi Sūtra*. The first argument is that the primitive form of the Pure Land sūtras was established prior to *Samādhi Sūtra*.<sup>11</sup> The second argument is that *Samādhi Sūtra* is the oldest sūtra, which appears in the history of the Pure Land thoughts, therefore *Samādhi Sūtra* was established prior to the Pure Land sūtras.<sup>12</sup> These two arguments are completely standing on the opposite sides. It needs to be discussed how it should be understood.

The main figures of *Samādhi Sūtra* are the Buddhas in the ten directions. Although Amitābha Buddha is described and treated as one of the main figures in the sūtra, but it is not the required figure which means that the sūtra can be written without Amitābha Buddha.<sup>13</sup> The allusion to the figure of Amitābha Buddha in *Samādhi Sūtra* can be considered as an addition to make the sūtra more valuable. It means that when the primitive form of *Samādhi Sūtra* was compiled, Mahāyāna Buddhism such as the ideology of Amitābha Buddha has been already established prior to the establishment of *Samādhi Sūtra*. The sūtra might acquire the thought of Amitābha Buddha as a part of its content.

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<sup>10</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 223.

<sup>11</sup> Ikemoto, *A Doctrinal Study of Sukhavati-Vyuha*, 90-94.

<sup>12</sup> Mano, "The Formation of the *Smaller Sukhavativyuha*," 171-180.

<sup>13</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 223.

On the other hand, when Pure Land sūtras are discussed, both *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* and *Amitābha Sūtra* cannot exist without the thought of Amitābha Buddha.<sup>14</sup> It is not an ideal to think that the establishment of the Pure Land sūtras was triggered by the establishment of *Samādhi Sūtra*. Many of the features of Amitābha Buddha which are described in the Pure Land sūtras are not mentioned in *Samādhi Sūtra*. From the above consideration, it is assumable that the primitive forms of the Pure Land sūtras such as *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* and *Amitābha Sūtra*, and the primitive form of *Samādhi Sūtra* were independently established. Later the thought of Amitābha Buddha might be added to *Samādhi Sūtra*.<sup>15</sup> If these hypotheses are reasonable, the allusion to the figure of Amitābha Buddha in *Samādhi Sūtra* might be adopted from the primitive form of *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* and *Amitābha Sūtra*, however, it does not mean that the primitive form of *Samādhi Sūtra* was established after the primitive form of *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* and *Amitābha Sūtra* were established. Even if the allusion to the figure of Amitābha Buddha in *Samādhi Sūtra* is excluded, the thought of Samādhi can be existed independently. The essential core of the primitive form of the sūtra does not rely on the Pure Land sūtras. It is assumable that the allusion to the figure of Amitābha Buddha in *Samādhi Sūtra* can be based on the thought of the Pure Land sūtras.

From the consideration on two arguments for the timing prediction of the establishment of these sūtras, the first argument may be reasonable to support, however, it does not mean the first argument is agreeable. When these two arguments are compared, the first argument seemed to more reasonable to support, because it is not agreeable to the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 574.

second argument that the description of the Amitābha Buddha in *Samādhi Sūtra* is the oldest description in the history.<sup>16</sup> From the view point of the primitive form of the sūtras, it is most likely impossible to determine which sūtras came out first by comparing their contents. If it is so, these two kinds of sūtras and thoughts might be established and developed almost same time and period, and then the establishment of the thought of the Amitābha Buddha might be around 150 C.E. If the hypothesis of the thought of Amitābha Buddha was independently established and developed prior to the establishment of *Samādhi Sūtra* can be acceptable, then it may be able to assume that the primitive Pure Land thought could be formed around 100 C.E.<sup>17</sup>

## 1.2. Pure Land Teachings and its Contents

As discussed, in one sense, it can be assumed the Pure Land tradition was established by publishing the Pure Land sūtras in Sanskrit. They are called *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*. The Pure Land tradition or the Pure Land sūtras are based on the thoughts or ideas regarding the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha.<sup>18</sup> The term “Pure Land” is commonly used in the Mahāyāna Buddhist Tradition, and each Buddha which is described in the sūtras has own Pure Land. After the Pure Land Buddhist Teachings were flourished in China, Korea and Japan, the term “Pure Land” were heavily used to describe the land of the Amitābha Buddha. Nowadays generally the usage of the term “Pure Land” is to describe “the Amitābha Buddha’s Pure Land”.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>17</sup> Hirakawa, *A Study on Primitive Mahayana Buddhism*, 117.

<sup>18</sup> Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 342-343.

For the primitive thoughts on the Pure Land of the Amitābha Buddha, it can be called the primitive Pure Land thoughts.<sup>19</sup> The period of the primitive thoughts is from the formation of the Pure Land thoughts to the compilation of the early Pure Land sūtras. The primitive Pure Land thoughts was occurred and established in India. Then a question arises. What is the concept of Amitābha?

### **1.3. The General Understanding of Amitābha**

Regarding to the origin of the Amitābha Buddha, there are so many arguments as widely known, but there is no accepted argument.<sup>20</sup> There are two general arguments for the origin of the Amitābha Buddha.<sup>21</sup> One is the argument of the external origin which means the idea of the Amitābha Buddha may be from outside of India, and the other is the argument of the internal origin which means the concept of the Amitābha Buddha may be formed in India. In the next three sections, some possible origins of the Amitābha Buddha will be discussed.

As the external origin of the Amitābha Buddha, Nakamikado argues that Zoroastrianism is referred as one of the most possible evidences.<sup>22</sup> Zoroastrianism is known as one of the Iranian religions,<sup>23</sup> and some scholar argues that Manicism is also the possible evidence, but other scholars consider that Manicism is treated as a part of the

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<sup>19</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>22</sup> Nakamikado, "A Japanese Translation of bDe Ba Can Gyi Zhīng Bkod Brjod Pa -Zhīng Der Bgrod pa'l Them Skas- : Posing Questions of the Establishment and Rising of Pure Land Buddhism," 92.

<sup>23</sup> Aoki, "A Study on Zurvanite Zoroastrianism (1)," 162.

arguments of Zoroastrianism.<sup>24</sup> Majority of the external origin arguments were developed by western scholars. The first scholar who argued the external origin was the German scholar Eitel. He was a pastor in missionary and studied Chinese languages. He wrote a book on Chinese Buddhism with the support of Takakuwa. In the book, he mentioned about Amitābha Buddha.

There is no evidence where the teaching of Amitābha was started, but it is assumable that the teaching was started by people who influenced their thoughts for Buddhism in Kashmir and Nepal. A monk who was a Tocharians brought Amitābha Sūtra to China in C.E.147. It is very surprising that two Chinese famous monks Fǎ xiǎn (法顯) and Hsüan-tsang (玄奘) did not mention the teaching of Amitābha. Theravada Buddhists do not know the teaching of Amitābha. There is no evidence that the teaching was originated from Brahmanism or the Vedas.<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese monks Fǎ xiǎn and Hsüan-tsang did a travel to India and they wrote travel books. Fǎ xiǎn wrote the *Travel book to Buddhist Countries* in 414 C.E. and Hsüan-tsang wrote the *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* in 646 C.E. It is the fact that both Chinese monks did not mention anything about Amitābha Buddha in their books. It is the fact that the teaching of Amitābha Buddha was not introduced in the Theravada Buddhism. These facts make us to consider that the teaching of Amitābha Buddha is a foreign thought, and the originated place may be Iran.

The argument of Eithel was first introduced in U.S. by P. Carus,<sup>26</sup> and in Europe by H. de Lubac.<sup>27</sup> At least seven notable scholars are supporting the hypothesis of the

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<sup>24</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 262.

<sup>25</sup> Eitel and Takakuwa, *Hand-Book of Chinese Buddhism*, 7-8.

<sup>26</sup> Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, 272-273.

origin of Amitābha Buddha is from Zoroastrianism. These scholars are S. Beal, L. A. Waddell, C. Eliot, W. E. Soothill, A. B. Keith, H. Hoffmann and E. Conze.<sup>28</sup> Fujita argues that there are minimum nine outstanding scholars who support the hypothesis of the origin of Amitābha Buddha is Iran.<sup>29</sup> These scholars are the S. Lévi, P. Pelliot, J. Przyluski, J. Hackin, P. Mus, J. Filliozat, A. Bareau, L. de. La Poussin, and É. Lamotte.

Although there are supporters of the external origin of Amitābha Buddha, some of them are not showing their evidences to support their arguments. For instance, the one of the most well-known French scholars for the Indian Studies, Lévi published *L'Inde et le monde* in 1926, and in the book, he argues that:

These (Amitābha, Sukhāvātī, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya) thoughts, beliefs, names are not explained in the Indian literatures. They are not related to the ancient Brahmanism or the ancient Buddhist teachings. These thoughts, beliefs, names are related to Zoroastrianism in Iran, and it means that it relates to Judaism, and the dogma of Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

Although Lévi clearly supports the hypothesis of the origin of Amitābha Buddha is from Zoroastrianism, he does not show the evidence or reason to support the hypothesis. After his death, *L'Inde civilisatrice* was published in 1938. In the book, Lévi argues that Amitābha is related to the religious ritual of Sun and light in Iran,<sup>31</sup> but he does not provide actual evidence to support his argument.

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<sup>27</sup> de Lubac, "Amida," 90.

<sup>28</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 263.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>30</sup> Lévi, *L'Inde et Le Monde*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Lévi, *L'Inde Civilisatrice*, 45-46.

On the other hand, majority of scholars provide evidences to support their arguments of the external origin of Amitābha Buddha.<sup>32</sup> They provide some kinds of evidences. There are two main approaches to explain their evidences. One is Amitābha, and the other is Amitāyus. In the next two sections, these two words will be discussed.

#### **1.4. The God of the Sun and Amitābha**

The teaching of Amitābha Buddha contains two essences. One is Amitābha, and the other is Amitāyus. Amitābha simply means infinite light (Ch: 無量光) and Amitāyus can be translated as infinite life (Ch: 無量壽). Most frequent argument is that the formation of the essence of Amitābha was influenced by the god of sun in Zoroastrianism.<sup>33</sup> Grünwedel is the one of first scholars who argues that the concept of Amitābha was originated from the god of sun in 1893.<sup>34</sup> Two years after Grünwedel's argumentation in 1895, Waddell made his statement on the relationship between Amitābha and the god of the sun.

There are many holy Buddhas in Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. The first Buddha was named Amitābha (Infinite Light). Later, the essence of Infinite light was given a man-kind figure and image. As Amitābha Buddha, it was assigned a residence which was called the western Pure Land and it became like monotheism. The sun sinks into the western horizon, and it is the direction that all the sunlight is sucked into the surface of the terrain. This Buddha was created by people who believe the myth of the sun and the sun worship and have been influenced by

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<sup>32</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 266.

<sup>33</sup> Ohtawa, "Das Geheimnis Des Mythos von Der Geburt Zarathustras : Das Urbild von Der Trinitat," 14.

<sup>34</sup> Grünwedel, *Buddhistische Kunst in Indien*, 195.



Persian culture, because the main supporters of the primitive Mahāyāna Buddhism were the Indo-Scythae ethnic group who believes the worship of the sun.<sup>35</sup>

His statement indicates that how some scholars got an idea of the origin of Amitābha is from the Iranian worship of the sun. At a later date, Przyluski and Lamotte argue that

Mithra, Surya or Amitābha is the infinite light which is believed by the nobles of the Indo-Scythae as the god of the sun.<sup>36</sup>

Their statement is very similar with Waddell's argument. Another outstanding scholar, Poussin states that

Among the various Buddhas in the Mahāyāna Buddhism, Amitābha is given the highest honor and the figure like a god in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. It is assumable that Amitābha is the god of the sun and it would be originated in Iran.<sup>37</sup>

Poussin's student, Lamotte states that

Amitābha which is on the highest rank among the various Mahāyāna Buddhas and it is the god of the eternal life and infinite light. It has the western paradise. It is originated from the Iranian god of the sun. The Iranian god of the sun was converted and translated in Indian and Buddhist society as their own-way, and it became Amitābha.<sup>38</sup>

Keith, the scholar for the Indian studies, states that

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<sup>35</sup> Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism*, 12-13.

<sup>36</sup> Przyluski and Lamotte, "Bouddhisme et Upanisad," 168.

<sup>37</sup> Poussin, "Dynasties et Histoire de l'Inde Depuis Kanishka Jusqu'aux Invasions Musulmanes," 386-387.

<sup>38</sup> Lamotte, "Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien," 240-242.

Amitābha is intentionally recreated from the god of the sun to the Buddhist figure with the Buddhist understanding on the infinite light.<sup>39</sup>

Although there are scholars who support the origination hypothesis of the god of the sun, there is no further detailed explanation. From these statements above, Amitābha may be understandable as the incarnation of the god of the sun however, it cannot be translated as the Iranian god of the sun. There is no evidence to confirm that Amitābha is the Iranian god, because there is the worship for the god of the sun in India. In the *Rigveda*, there are Mitra, Sūrya, Savitṛ, Viṣṇu, Vivasvat and Ādityas gods.<sup>40</sup> These gods are known as a part of the worship of the god of the sun, and so it could be any god of the sun from any region which can be identified as an incarnation of Amitābha.

### **1.5. Zurvan Akarana and Amitāyus**

Another possible evidence of the hypothesis of the origin of Amitābha Buddha is from Zoroastrianism because the relationship between Zurvan akarana (boundless time) and Amitāyus (infinite life) are the same.<sup>41</sup> A sinologist, Beal was the first scholar who argued the relationship between Zurvan akarana and Amitāyus in 1884. He states that

It is called Amitābha or Amitāyus (the Eternal). In this respect, it can be understood as Zurvan akarana in Persia which is the boundless time.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon*, 221.

<sup>40</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 269.

<sup>41</sup> Ohtawa, "Das Geheimnis Des Mythos von Der Geburt Zarathustra's : Das Urbild von Der Trinitat," 13-14.

<sup>42</sup> Beal, *Buddhism in China*, 127.

Conze made a similar statement to Beal which is Amitāyus is equal to Zurvan akarana (unlimited time) in Iran.<sup>43</sup> As evidence, Zurvan akarana is often referred by various scholars to explain what Amitāyus is. It is questionable to use Zurvan akarana as the equivalent concept to Amitāyus. First, it is important to know that there is no detailed explanation on how these two concepts are similar or the same. Second, there is no detailed explanation of what Zurvan akarana is.

In Zoroastrianism, there are two gods (dual gods).<sup>44</sup> One is called Ahura Mazdāh (creator) which is a good (holy) god, and the other is called Angra Mainyu (destroyer) which is a bad (evil) god. Originally in Zoroastrianism, there were only two gods, and later Zurvan akarana was added as a higher god (the fundamental existence) above these two gods in the era of Sāsāniyān Empire (226 – 651 C.E.).<sup>45</sup> The thought of Amitābha Buddha might be established around C.E. 150, therefore it is questionable that whether Amitāyus was an incarnation of Zurvan akarana, although the idea of Zurvan akarana might be formed in the era of Achaemenid Empire (550 B.C.E. – B.C.E. 330).<sup>46</sup>

Scholars who support the hypothesis of the similarity of Zurvan akarana (boundless time) and Amitāyus (infinite life)<sup>47</sup> may not properly translate what the Zurvan akarana mean. Amitāyus is a term of the combination of Amita and āyus. Amita means infinite or immeasurable, and āyus means life. Zurvan akarana is a term of the

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<sup>43</sup> Conze, *Buddhism: A Short History*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Ohtawa, "Das Geheimnis Des Mythos von Der Geburt Zarathustra's : Das Urbild von Der Trinitat," 13.

<sup>45</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 275.

<sup>46</sup> Pourhosseini, "Zurvanism and Post Islamic Persian Literature," 14.

<sup>47</sup> Conze, *Buddhism: A Short History*, 33.

combination of zurvan and akarana. Zurvan means time, and akarana means boundless or unlimited. When two terms zurvan and āyus are compared, it is clear that these two terms have different meanings. Therefore it is very questionable to accept the hypothesis of the origin of Amitābha Buddha is from Zoroastrianism.

There is no concrete evidence for the origin of Amitābha Buddha. It may be because there is no evidence for when and where it was developed, and who developed. While these three things are unknown, it is very hard to determine, what the origins of Amitābha and Amitāyus are. It may be reasonable to support the Lamotte's argument which is the hypothesis of the origin of Amitābha Buddha is an incarnation of the god of the sun,<sup>48</sup> because it sounds more reasonable than the hypothesis of the origin of Amitābha Buddha is from Zoroastrianism<sup>49</sup> because the relationship between Zurvan akarana (boundless time) and Amitāyus (infinite life) are quite different.

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<sup>48</sup> Lamotte, "Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien," 240-242.

<sup>49</sup> Conze, *Buddhism: A Short History*, 33.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1. Research on the Pure Land Thoughts

There are some confusions and complications of the research on the Pure Land thoughts. The researches on the Pure Land thoughts were started when the faith of Amitābha Buddha was widely recognized in China and Japan. Even in this twenty first century, the researchers are still actively done by many researchers. Most of these researches are completed based on the Chinese translation of the Pure Land sūtras and these researches are considered as the research on the Chinese and Japanese Pure Land Teachings. Especially in Japan, since the Pure Land Sect and the Pure Land Shin Sect have been formed, they had started conducting their own research from their view points. It can be considered as the sectarian studies on the Pure Land thoughts. For instance, for the study on the Pure Land sūtras, the majority of their researches are based on their traditional understandings for the Chinese translation of these sūtras. Only handful researches were done by using the critical argumentations through the Pure Land sūtras which were written in Sanskrit and compiled in India. Although Dr. Max Muller and Dr. Fumio Nanjo published the recensions of *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* and *Amitābha (shorter Sukhāvatīvyūha) Sūtra* in 1883, only few serious researches were conducted until present.

The Pure Land Buddhist Teaching as the teaching of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* or Amitābha was propagated to various countries such as Tibet, Vietnam, China, Korea, and Japan in the ancient and the medieval periods. The Chinese *Sukhāvatīvyūha* has two independent books and they have respective contents. One book is called the *shorter Sukhāvatīvyūha* (Ch: 佛說阿彌陀經), and the main content of the book is the description of the Land of Bliss. The other book is called the *longer Sukhāvatīvyūha* (Ch: 佛說無量

寿経) and the main content of the book is the explanation of the core teaching (as known as forty eight vows) of Amitābha.

Tibetan translation and five Chinese translations of *Sukhāvātīvyūha* along with *Sukhāvātīvyūha* in Sanskrit are preserved in this 21st century. Funayama argues that Tibetan translation of Sanskrit literatures are more accurately captured the essence of the original than Chinese translation of Sanskrit literatures.<sup>50</sup> There are two main reasons. As first reason, he states that the characters of Tibetan language are constructed by copying the characters of Sanskrit (Devanagari), Tibetan idioms and postpositions are rearranged, and Tibetan devises a countermeasure of the conversion to Sanskrit idioms, case inflections, and prefixes. As second reason, he explains that King Tridé Songtsen of Tibetan Empire in 814 C.E., contrived the standardization of the Sanskrit-Tibetan translation as the national undertaking, and as the result, *Mahāvyutpatti* and *sGra sbyor bam po gñis pa* were published.

*Mahāvyutpatti* is known as *The Great Volume of Precise Understanding or Essential Etymology*. It was originally compiled to standardize Sanskrit and Tibetan translation, but later Mongolian and Chinese standardization techniques are added into the book.<sup>51</sup> *sGra sbyor bam po gñis pa* is mainly written as an annotation edition of *Mahāvyutpatti*.<sup>52</sup> In the introduction of the book, the methodology of the Sanskrit Tibetan translation is discussed.<sup>53</sup> An intensive research of *Sukhāvātī-vyūha* in Tibetan translation

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<sup>50</sup> Funayama, *Making Sutras into Classics*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Harada, "Reason to be Published Mahavyutpatti," 10.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>53</sup> Ishikawa, "On Reference Books of the *sGra Sbyor Bam Po Gnyis Pa*," 331.

is recently conducted by Georgios Halkias. He states that Emperor Khri Srong-Ide-brtsan (756 - ca.800 C.E.) established a training college for Sanskrit Tibetan translators, and three Buddhist colleges to train Tibetans for the correct understanding of the Buddhist teachings and doctrines.<sup>54</sup>

Funayama argues that the trained Tibetans can understand Sanskrit Buddhist literatures well and so the Tibetan translation of Sanskrit literatures is easily re-translated back to the original Sanskrit writings.<sup>55</sup> He compares the relationship between Tibetan and Sanskrit with the relationship between Japanese and classical Chinese. In Japan, all middle and high school students must take the classical Chinese course which is known as Kanbun 漢文. When they read the classical Chinese, they utilize a methodology of the Japanese reading of a Chinese Character – Kanbun Kundoku 漢文訓読. The methodology is established at least by the beginning of the Nara period (710-794) in Japan.<sup>56</sup> By using the methodology, they will be able to read and write a classical Chinese in Japanese literatures and successfully translate Chinese Buddhist texts into Japanese without losing their fundamental essence. The translation from Chinese into Japanese seems no problem. How the translation from Sanskrit into Chinese is made?

There are five different translations in Chinese of the *longer Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* which were made by five different translators.<sup>57</sup> They were Zhī qiān (Ch: 支謙, fl. 222-252

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<sup>54</sup> Halkias, *Luminous Bliss*, 59.

<sup>55</sup> Funayama, *Making Sutras into Classics*, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Suzuki, “The Establishment of a Japanese Reading of a Chinese Character,” 108.

<sup>57</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 23.

C.E.), Lokakṣema (Ch: 支婁迦讖, 147-? C.E.), Kāng Sēngkǎi (Ch: 康僧鎧, fl. mid 3<sup>rd</sup> Century C.E.), Bodhiruci (Ch: 菩提流志 or 覺愛, fl. 713 C.E.) in the Tang Dynasty of China, and Fǎ xiǎn (Ch: 法賢, fl. mid 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.).

## 2.2. An Original Source, the Longer Sukhāvatīvyūha

Various scholars have been tried to figure out that where and when the idea of Pure Land Buddhism established from the publication history also some other scholars have tried to trace the evidence of the origin from the sūtra. Amitābha (Ch: 阿彌陀),<sup>58</sup> Vow (Ch: 本願)<sup>59</sup> and Lokeśvararāja (Ch: 世自在王佛)<sup>60</sup> are known as the fundamental terms in the Pure Land Buddhist tradition which are appeared in the Nāgārjuna's commentary book, so that the Pure Land Buddhism was at least occurred with the text of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* by 2<sup>nd</sup> century. In the *shorter Sukhāvatīvyūha* of Sanskrit, there is a directional explanation of the Pure Land (Land of Bliss), but it does not mention where the location of the land is.

Then, the blessed One (the historical Buddha) addressed the reverend Sharipūtra, saying: “to the west of us, Sharipūtra, a hundred thousand million Buddha-fields from where we are, there is a world called the Land of Bliss.”<sup>61</sup>

It is presumable that these five Chinese translators used the longer Sukhāvatīvyūha as an original source text for their translation, because their translations and the longer

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<sup>58</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T1509\_.25.0093a28. The word appears 17 times in the book.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, T1509\_.25.0083a22. The word appears 40 times in the book.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, T1509\_.25.0418a29. The word appears 1 time in the book.

<sup>61</sup> Gomez, *Land of Bliss, the Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light*, 18.



Sukhāvatīvyūha have similar contents. Recent studies show the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* might have a different title.<sup>62</sup> Five Chinese translations have all different but similar titles.

- 1) Zhī qiān “Amitaha-/Amidaha-vyuha (Ch: 大阿彌陀經)”
- 2) Lokakṣema “Samyaksambuddhasya Amitahasya-vyuha (Ch: 無量清淨平等覺經)”
- 3) Kāng Sēngkǎi named his translation “Amitābha-vyūha (Ch: 無量壽經)”
- 4) Tang’s Bodhiruci “Amitābhasya tathagatasya vyuha-parivarta (Ch: 無量壽如來會)”
- 5) Fǎ xián “Amitābhasya-vyuha Mahāyāna Sūtra (Ch: 大乘無量壽莊嚴經)”.

The term *Sukhāvati* is generally translated as the Land of Bliss, and the term *vyuha* is translated as the magnificent display. Then a question arises. All Chinese versions have the term *Amita* in their title, but why the term does not appear in the Sanskrit. As Karashima Seishi argues, the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* was called the *Amitābha-vyūha* around the time the Pure Land Teaching was established, and later the title was changed to the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* which is based on the transitions in the chronological order of the Chinese translations<sup>63</sup>. Amitābha is referred to as Infinite Light (Ch: 無量光), not Infinite Life (Ch: 無量壽). Karashima argues that when the *Amitābha-vyūha* was translated into Chinese, the term “life” is more acceptable than the term “light” under the cultural influences of Lǎozǐ (Ch: 老子) and Zhuāng zǐ (Ch: 莊子) in the ancient China. It deserves to consider his argument on the title change of Chinese sūtras by the cultural influence, however a further study is needed to be done in that area for clarification, because his argument does not have an evidence.

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<sup>62</sup> Mibu, “The Various Names and Appellations Given to Amitābha’s Buddha-Field,” 16.

<sup>63</sup> Karashima, “The Original Landscape of Amitābha’s,” 15.

For his first argument on the Sanskrit title, Mibu Yasunori confirmed that Karashima's argument is valid with two evidences<sup>64</sup>. One is that all Tibetan translations of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* applied the transliteration of the *Amitābha-vyūha* to their title, and the other is that the Sanskrit version of the *Amitābha-vyūha* is owned by the National Archive of Nepal. The archive collection has the *Amitābha-vyūha parivarttaḥ* as the title. The term *parivarttaḥ* means chapter in English so that the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* or the *Amitābha-vyūha* could be a chapter of a book or a sūtra. It appears as a chapter of the *Amitābhasya tathagatasya vyūha-parivarta* in the *Mahāratnakuta Sūtra* (Ch: 大寶積經)<sup>65</sup>. The Sanskrit version of the sūtra was not discovered at this point, but the name of the sūtra appears in the Nāgārjuna's commentary book<sup>66</sup> so that the sūtra was published in India. From the above-mentioned evidences, it is presumable that the *Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra* was compiled in India which had a chapter of the *Amitābha-vyūha parivarttaḥ*. The *Amitābha-vyūha parivarttaḥ* was singled out for an independent publication and it was translated into Chinese by several translators. It is how the *longer Sukhāvatīvyūha* traveled from India to China.

### 2.3. Complications of Apocrypha

So far in this paper, two different kinds of *Sukhāvatīvyūha* of the Pure Land Buddhist tradition are introduced. The *longer Sukhāvatīvyūha* is known as the *Infinite Life Sūtra* and the *shorter Sukhāvatīvyūha* is known as the *Amitābha Sūtra*. When the two

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<sup>64</sup> Mibu, "The Various Names and Appellations Given to Amitābha's Buddha-Field," 19.

<sup>65</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T0310\_11.0091c05.

<sup>66</sup> Soma, "On the Hochokyo in the Dasabhumika-Vibhasa-Sastra," 671.

sets of *Sukhāvativyūha* (longer one and shorter one) are translated into Chinese, their script titles are changed completely different from the original Sanskrit version. There is another Pure Land text which is not introduced yet. The text is called the *Meditation Sūtra on the Infinite Life* 觀無量壽經 *Guān wú liàng shòu jīng*.<sup>67</sup> Including the *Meditation Sūtra*, these sūtras are known as three Pure Land sūtras in Japanese Pure Land Tradition. In the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, the *Meditation Sūtra* has been treated as one of the fundamental texts on the teachings of Amitābha.<sup>68</sup>

The *Infinite Life Sūtra* is written as 無量壽經 in Chinese and the Amitābha Sūtra is written as 阿彌陀經 in Chinese, although both sūtras have same title of the original Sanskrit version. The Chinese title of the *Meditation Sūtra on the Infinite Life* has one extra Chinese character to 無量壽經, which is 觀 *Guān*. The term *Guān* has a meaning of meditation or contemplation. The *Meditation Sūtra* has a Chinese version and a Uyghur translation. The Chinese version of the sūtra is first mentioned in the *Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka* (Ch: 出三藏記集) by Sēngyòu 僧祐 (445 – 518 C.E.).<sup>69</sup> It is known that the Chinese version is translated by Kālayaśas 𑖑𑖦𑖟𑖜𑖦𑖪𑖫𑖹𑖻𑖽𑖿 (Ch: 𑖑𑖦𑖟𑖜𑖦𑖪𑖫𑖹𑖻𑖽𑖿, 382-443 C.E.) and it should be published prior to appear in print of the *Compilation of Notes*.<sup>70</sup> The Uyghur translation of the *Meditation Sūtra on the Infinite Life* was discovered from one of the Turpan Grottos in the Xīnjiāng Uyghur Autonomous

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<sup>67</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T0365\_.12.0340c27.

<sup>68</sup> Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 151.

<sup>69</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2145\_.55.0022a08.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, T0365\_.12.0340c28.

Region of China while Abbot Kozui Otani conducted three series of his Otani expedition in the early 20th century. The translation has its own Uyghur title which completely differs from the Chinese version. It is called *alty ygrmi qolulamaq sudur* which means the *Sūtra of 16 contemplation*.<sup>71</sup> It is assumable that the *Meditation Sūtra* is heavily related to the longer *Sukhāvativyūha* and it is compiled in India.

In the academia, however, the *Meditation Sūtra* is generally known as an apocrypha, not as an authentic sūtra. According to Mollier, among the scripts of Chinese Buddhism, which represent 80 percent or more of the whole collection from the Dunhuang grottos of China, one finds 5 to 10 percent are non-canonical manuscripts.<sup>72</sup> These manuscripts are conventionally treated to as the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha. Then, a question arises. What is an apocrypha?

A traditional usage of the term Apocrypha in the Christian Theology is considered for the articles and documents which are not included in the Old Testament such as commentaries and letters.<sup>73</sup> In Buddhism, an apocrypha is described as a fake scripture or sūtra.<sup>74</sup> Zhì Shēng 智昇 argues that there are 1,076 sūtras of Chinese translation in his book, a *Record of Shakyamuni's Teachings in Kāi yuan Period* (Ch: 開元釋教錄).<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, he argues that 491 Chinese sūtras are considered as a fake translation in

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<sup>71</sup> Shimin, "A Study on the Uighur Text Abitaki (4)," 182.

<sup>72</sup> Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 4-5.

<sup>73</sup> Allsop, *The Esoteric Codex*, 1-5.

<sup>74</sup> Funayama, *Making Sutras into Classics*, 122.

<sup>75</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2154\_55.0581c20.

his book.<sup>76</sup> His *Record* was published around 730 C.E. and it tells that there are many fake sūtras in China by the early 8th century. Funayana states that there are two kinds of the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha.<sup>77</sup> One is a fake sūtra (Ch: 偽經). Although it is not a Chinese translation of a foreign scriptures such as a Sanskrit sūtra, it is designed to look like a translated sūtra. It is originated and written in China. The other is a doubtful sūtra (Ch: 疑經) which is considered as a Chinese translation from a foreign language, but there is no original scripture which is not discovered. Sēngyòu treats the *Meditation Sūtra* as a doubtful sūtra (Ch: 失訳). As the reason, he states that the translator is unknown. By the time of publishing his *Record*, he did not know whether Kālayaśas was the translator, the place where the translation was proceeded, or when the translation was made.<sup>78</sup>

Kālayaśas's name first appears in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (Ch: 高僧傳) as the translator of the *Meditation Sūtra*.<sup>79</sup> The *Biographies* is written by Huì jiǎo 慧皎 (497-554 C.E.). The *Compilations* of Sēngyòu and the *Biographies* of Huì jiǎo are coincidentally written within 50 years apart. Sēngyòu categorizes the *Meditation Sūtra* as the sūtra of the missing translator. Huì jiǎo states that the translator of the sūtra is Kālayaśas. About 50 years later from Huì jiǎo's *Biographies*, Fǎ jīng 法經 of Suí Dynasty (581-618 C.E.) published the *Catalogue of Scriptures* (Ch: 衆經目錄) and he states that the *Meditation Sūtra* is written by Kālayaśas, in the beginning year of Yuán jiǎ

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., T2154\_.55.0576c19.

<sup>77</sup> Funayama, *Making Sutras into Classics*, 123.

<sup>78</sup> Takahashi, "A Study on the Apocrypha in Chinese Buddhism," 72.

<sup>79</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2059\_.50.0343c18.

元嘉 (424 C.E.) of Sòng Dynasty (420-479 C.E.), at Yáng zhōu 陽州 city.<sup>80</sup> Ochiai states that the data of the *Catalogue* on the *Meditation Sūtra* has too much detail and there is no traceable evidence to support the data.<sup>81</sup> Historically, there is no evidence to determine that the sūtra is not a Chinese Buddhist apocrypha, although Buddhist scholars attempt defining the sūtra is not the apocrypha.

Why does the apocrypha need to be discussed for *Sukhāvatīvyūha*? There is a question such as if the Meditation Sūtra is the apocrypha, how is about *Sukhāvatīvyūha*? Some scholars start arguing that the translations of *Sukhāvatīvyūha* may be the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha. As one of the most recent attempts, Fujimoto argues that both *longer* and *shorter Sukhāvatīvyūha* are possibly considered as fake sūtras.<sup>82</sup> How the Fujimoto's argument can be considered?

The study of Chinese Buddhist apocrypha is first conducted by Dào ān 道安 (314-385 C.E.). His view to the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha is described in his *Xīn jí ān gōng yí jīng lù* (Ch: 新集安公疑經錄). His text is compiled in the *Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka*. Dào ān states:

When people learn a foreign Buddhist teaching, they go down on their knees and receive an oral instruction from teachers. These teachers transmit the teaching to students in similar fashion how they received it from their own teacher. These teachers repeat the oral transmission from 10 to 20 times to their students, and finally these students memorize all the knowledge from them. Even if there is one incorrect transmission, the teachers and their students work together on their correct oral transmission. By such way of the transmission, the correct understanding of the foreign Buddhist teachings are preserved from teachers to

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., T2146\_.55.0116c01.

<sup>81</sup> Ochiai, "Apocrypha in Chinese Buddhism," 73.

<sup>82</sup> Fujimoto, *Do We Consider Shin Buddhism as Buddhism?*, 20. Fujimoto is a researcher at the Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University, Japan.

students, the Buddhism is able to avoid the impairment of the essential teachings. Buddhism reached the country of Jin (China). It was not long ago. Some people insist mixing alluvial gold with sand, and they are pleased thinking that they earned real gold. If we do not properly correct their iniquity, what kind of a standard can we utilize for judging authenticity? It is like weeds in the rice field and if weeds grow, Hòu jì (a god of agriculture in China) will be disappointed and grieve. If a significant stone and an insignificant stone are secured together in a golden chest, Biàn hé (gemologist, cir 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E.) will be humiliated or embarrassed. Why I can compel to transmit the teaching to the next generation? The lower course of Wèi River consists of a muddy stream of Jīng River and a pure stream (upper course) of Wèi River. It is like a dragon and a snake are marching together. Now I listed the sūtras which are so called forgery or inauthentic Buddhist scriptures in the following (in the left). By disclosing the list for future Buddhist scholars, I wanted to notify that these sūtras are vulgar and they go against the Buddhist teachings.

外國僧法學。皆跪而口受。同師所受。若二十轉。以授後學。若有一字異者。共相推按。得便擯之。僧法無縱也。經至晉土、其年未遠。而熹事者以沙標金。斌斌如也。而無括正。何以別真偽乎。農者禾草俱在。后稷爲之嘆息。金匱玉石緘。卞和爲之懷恥。安敢預學次、見涇渭雜流、龍蛇並進。豈不恥之。今列意謂非佛經者如左。以示將來學士。共知鄙信焉。<sup>83</sup>

Ochiai argues that although Dào ān and other Chinese medieval scholars who research on the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha shows their understandings and standards for the evaluation on the apocrypha, their evaluation are.<sup>84</sup> In fact, Dào ān did not explain the detail of his standard in his text. He only shows his view and feeling to the apocrypha. Additionally, Ochiai argues that a number of the successive Buddhist historians popularize the apocrypha scripts and share them with the general populace by making their transcript under the political pressure.<sup>85</sup> The historical evidence shows that emperors

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<sup>83</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2145\_55.0038b08 - T2145\_55.0038b16. All quotations from Taisho Tripitaka in this paper were translated into English by Kazuaki Nakata, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>84</sup> Ochiai, "Apocrypha in Chinese Buddhism," 61.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

ordered to translate Sanskrit sūtras<sup>86</sup> and executed to burn unwanted sūtras,<sup>87</sup> and so his argument is agreeable.

The reason why the *Meditation Sūtra* is counted as the apocrypha is not only the translator's name was missing when Sēngyòu published his *Compilations*. Most fatal reason is that no one has not found the original Sanskrit version of the *Meditation Sūtra* yet. A translated manuscript without an original foreign text cannot be recognized as a “translated” manuscript. Although Fujimoto argues that both *longer* and *shorter Sukhāvātīvyūha* are fake sūtras, there are the original Sanskrit scripts and additionally there are the Tibetan and Uyghur translations.<sup>88</sup> It seems that Fujimoto's argument has no evidence to support.

As mentioned earlier, there is the Uyghur translation of the *Meditation Sūtra* although the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions do not exist. That is the reason why the *Meditation Sūtra* does not have a Sanskrit title like *Sukhāvātīvyūha*. The Uyghur version seems that the translation is made based on the Chinese translation of the *Meditation Sūtra*. The Uyghur versions of the both *longer* and *shorter Sukhāvātīvyūha* also seem like the translation from the Chinese translations of the *Infinite life Sūtra* and the *Amitābha Sūtra*.<sup>89</sup> It means that any Uyghur versions of the Pure Land sūtras cannot be used for the validation of the authenticity of the sūtra. Sēngyòu categories the *Meditation Sūtra* under the sūtras which have no translator.

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<sup>86</sup> Nakamura, “Problems Relating to the Composition of the Shih-Mo-Ho-Yen-Lun,” 535.

<sup>87</sup> Tsukamoto, “The Suppression of Buddhism and Resuscitation of Buddhism in China,” 130

<sup>88</sup> Kudara, *Uyghur Translations of The Meditation Sutra on the Infinite Life*, 11-15.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 14-15.



## 2.4. Single Translator or Multiple Translators

A translator of a publication makes a big influence on how an original source will be understood by readers. Even if the translator carefully translates each sentence thoroughly as the principle of the writer's responsibility, he often put his own understandings or views in the translation. As mentioned earlier, there are five translations of *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, and each book has different contents. It does not simply mean there were five different versions of *Sukhāvatīvyūha* in Sanskrit, but these translations could be a good example of how the translators put their ideas into their translation. In addition, the essential question is that whether the translators as credited were the actual translators. In this section, the translator of the *Infinite life Sūtra* will be examined.

The name of Kāṅg Sēngkǎi was credited in the *Infinite Life Sūtra* as the translator.<sup>90</sup> His name appears in several books such as the *Record of the Lineage of the Buddha and the Patriarchs* (Ch: 佛祖統紀), the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, and the *Compilation of Translated Buddhist Terms* (Ch: 翻譯名義集). The *Record* states:

Indian Buddhist monk, Kāṅg Sēngkǎi went to Luoyang (the capital of Wei) and translated the Infinite Life Sūtra.

中天竺沙門康僧鎧。至洛陽譯無量壽經。<sup>91</sup>

The *biographies* states:

In those days, there was a foreign Buddhist monk Kāṅg Sēngkǎi, and in the end of Jiaping era (249-254 C.E.) he came to Luoyang. He translated four sūtras such as “the Grhapaty-Ugrapariṣccha (Ch: 郁伽長者所問經)”.

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<sup>90</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T0360\_12.0265c05.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, T2035\_49.0332a10.

時又有外國沙門康僧鎧者。亦以嘉平之末。來至洛陽。譯出郁伽長者等四部經。<sup>92</sup>

The *Compilation* states:

Kāng Sēngkǎi is Indian. He studied the series of sūtras intensively and understood the essence of sūtras precisely. In 252 C.E. (Jiaping 4<sup>th</sup> year of Wei Kingdom), he translated the Infinite Life Sūtra at the White Horse Temple in Luoyang.  
康僧鎧。印度人。廣學群經義暢幽旨。嘉平四年。於洛陽白馬寺。譯無量壽經。<sup>93</sup>

These publications indicates that Kāng Sēngkǎi was at least not Chinese origin person and might be somewhere from between China and India. A first character of Chinese name generally suggests a birth place of a person or where a family came from. Kāng (Ch: 康) in Chinese traditionally means Samarkand of the central Asia in English so that Kāng Sēngkǎi can be Sēngkǎi from Samarkand or the family of Sēngkǎi came from Samarkand. It seems that these publications indicate there is enough evidence to confirm and support that he is the translator of the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.

However, Fujita makes a strong opposition to confirm Kāng Sēngkǎi as the translator of the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.<sup>94</sup> His argument is based on a lack of evidence. Kāng Sēngkǎi's translation work appears in the *History of the Development of the Buddhist Canon from the Latter Han to the Sui dynasties* (Ch: 歷代三寶紀) and the author of the history book, Fei Chang-fang states:

Kāng Sēngkǎi translated two sūtras, and each sūtra has two volumes. One is “the Grhapaty-Ugrapariprccha” which is reviewed by Zhu Dao-zu and added in his Catalogue of the Wei dynasty, and the other is “the Infinite Life Sūtra (Ch: 無量壽經)” which is reviewed by Zhu Dao-zu and added in his miscellaneous records

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., T2059\_.50.0325a06.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., T2131\_.54.1068c11.

<sup>94</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 63.

of the Jin dynasty and his records of the treasure chanting. When Cao Fang was the emperor of Wei in Jiaping era (249-254 C.E.), an Indian monk Kāṅg Sēngkǎi translated them at the White Horse Temple in Luoyang.

郁伽長者所問經二卷第二譯。一名 郁伽羅越問菩薩行經見 竺道祖魏錄。無量壽經二卷第二譯。見竺道祖晉世雜錄及寶唱錄與世高出者小異。右二部合四卷。天竺國沙門康僧鎧齊王世嘉平年於洛陽白馬寺譯。<sup>95</sup>

The critical problem is that Fei Chang-fang mentioned in the end chapter of his history book that he did not have a chance to see the actual records of Zhu Dao-zu.<sup>96</sup> As mentioned earlier, the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* records that Sēngkǎi made four translations and the *Biographies* was published in 519 C.E. of the Liang dynasty. Fei Chang-fang's history book was published in the Sui dynasty (581-618 C.E.) and it states Sēngkǎi made only two translations. These records intimate that the evidence of his two translations disappeared in 60 years. Fei Chang-fang did not check whether these two translations were made by Sēngkǎi, and all of Zhu Dao-zu's books were scattered and lost. Moreover, Hirakawa concluded that the *Grhapaty-Ugrapariṣṭha* is not the translation of Sēngkǎi.<sup>97</sup> These evidence indicate that the translation of the *Infinite life Sūtra* was made by Sēngkǎi is questionable.

Fujita introduces two other inferences for the translator of the sūtra.<sup>98</sup> First inference is that the translation was made by Fǎ hù (Ch: 竺法護, Snsk: Dharmarakṣa, ca. 239-316 C.E.), and second inference is that the translation was made by two monks which are Buddhahadra (Ch: 佛陀跋陀羅, 359-430 C.E.) and Baoyun (Ch: 寶雲, 376-

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<sup>95</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2034\_49.0056b22.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, T2034\_49.0127c16.

<sup>97</sup> Hirakawa, *Riitsuzo no Kenkyu*, 214.

<sup>98</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 64.

450 C.E.). For the examination of the translation process, it is very important to determine the translator of the sūtra, so that each inference needs to be thoroughly examined.

The name of Fǎ hù appears in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* which states:

Indian (Zhu) Dharmarakṣa who was called Fǎ hù. He was born in the Indo-Scythian family. The family originally emigrated from Central Asia to China, and his family name was Zhī. He grew up in Dunhuang, and at the age of eight, he entered monastery. He studied under a foreign monk Zhu Gaozuo and chanted sūtras ten thousand times every day. He had a good reading skill and he was obedient, elegant, humble and patient as his nature. He loved to study and so he traveled faraway places to meet teachers for his study. By his efforts, he learned six sūtra series and memorized Chinese philosophy of many scholars.

竺曇摩羅刹。此云法護。其先月支人。本姓支氏。世居燉煌郡。年八歲出家。事外國沙門竺高座爲師。誦經日萬言。過目則能。天性純懿操行精苦。篤志好學。萬里尋師。是以博覽六經遊心七籍。<sup>99</sup>

And the *Biographies* continues:

Fǎ hù followed his teacher to travel the western region (India and Central Asia), visited thirty six counties, and mastered their languages.

遂隨師至西域。遊歷諸國。外國異言三十六種。<sup>100</sup>

In the *Biographies*, Fǎ hù was described as a monk of an immigrant family who had an excellent language skill for multilingual capabilities and always had eagerness to study more. In the *Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka* (Ch: 出三藏記集),

Fǎ hù's publication work was mentioned as:

There were approximately one hundred fifty four series (total three hundred nine volumes). When Wu was an emperor of Jin (265-290 C.E.), a monk Fǎ hù visited the western region to collect Sanskrit publications and returned. He had continued his translation work by himself from the time of the Emperor Wu to the second year of the Emperor Huai (308 C.E.).

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<sup>99</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2059\_50.0326c02.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, T2059\_50.0326c09.

凡一百五十四部。合三百九卷。晉武帝時。沙門竺法護。到西域得胡本還。自太始中至懷帝永嘉二年。以(己)前所譯出。<sup>101</sup>

In the *Compilation*, he was recorded as a scholar who was able to understand various philosophies and teachings to translate into Chinese with his own words.

The reason why Fǎ hù was considered as a translator of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* is that his name appears as the translator to several publications. In the *Compilation*, under his publication list it records:

The Infinite Life Sūtra, two volumes, it is known as the Samyaksambuddhasya Amitahasya-vyuha.

無量壽經二卷一名無量清淨平等覺經。<sup>102</sup>

In the previous section, the *Samyaksambuddhasya Amitahasya-vyuha* is introduced as Lokakṣema's translation. In the *Catalogue of Scriptures* (Ch: 衆經目錄), it states:

The Infinite Life Sūtra, two volumes, the Jin dynasty, Yongjia era (Ch: 永嘉年, 307-313 C.E.), Fǎ hù translated.

無量壽經二卷晉元嘉年竺法護譯。<sup>103</sup>

Fujita argues that he does not agree to accept him as the translator, because his translation was scattered and lost by sixth century and so it is not traceable whether he translated.<sup>104</sup>

It seems that his argument does not have a concrete evidence to support himself, although he made a same argument in his article in 2004.<sup>105</sup> As mentioned earlier, there are five different translations of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*. Some of their translations have problems to

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0009b28.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0007c06.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., T2146\_.55.0119b23.

<sup>104</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 65.

<sup>105</sup> Fujita, "Recent Studies and Problems of the Pure Land Buddhist Texts," 100.

confirm their real translators who they were. When someone tried *transcribing* the *Infinite Life Sūtra*, the title might be mixed up. This matter will be discussed later.

Fujita supports the second inference which is the translators of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* were Buddhahadra and Baoyun.<sup>106</sup> Gomez questioned about Kāng Sēngkǎi as whether he was the only translator, so he think Kāng Sēngkǎi was one of the translators. He argues that the sūtra was translated and edited several times after Kāng Sēngkǎi had published his first edition, and latter Buddhahadra published the final edition as the *Infinite Life Sūtra* which we have as a current version.<sup>107</sup>

The biography of Buddhahadra appears in the *Compilation of Notes* on the Translation of the Tripitaka and it states:

Buddhabhadra, he is called Fotuobatuoluo in the Jin dynasty of China. He was born in the northern India, and when he was five years old, he was left an orphan. He entered monastery at seventeen years old and studied chanting with several students. While other students took one month to master chanting, Buddhahadra mastered it in one day. His teacher admired him and commented that what Buddhahadra can learn in one day is equivalent to what thirty people can learn in one day. He received the ordination and practiced hard. He extensively studied various sūtras and mastered most of them. Especially, he studied the meditation and Lu (Vinaya), and he became famous in these studies.  
佛大跋陀。齊言佛賢。北天竺人也。五歲而孤。十七出家。與同學數人誦經。衆皆一月。佛賢一日誦畢。其師歎曰。佛賢一日敵三十夫也。及受具戒修業精勤。博學群經多所通達。少以禪律馳名。<sup>108</sup>

The biography of Baoyun appears in the *Compilation of Notes* on the Translation of the Tripitaka and it states:

Shi Baoyun. There is no record of his family name. He might be born in Liangzhou of China. When he was young, he entered monastery and put his

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>107</sup> Gomez, *Land of Bliss, the Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light*, 126.

<sup>108</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2145\_.55.0103b28.

efforts for study and practice... Later he traveled the outside of the country to study Sanskrit texts, and mastered phonogram (linguistics) and exegetics of Indian countries through intensive practices. After he returned to Chang'an, he diligently studied Chan meditation under the master Buddhahadra.

釋寶雲。未詳其氏。族傳云。涼州人也。弱年出家精勤有學行。。。雲在外域遍學胡書。天竺諸國音字詁訓悉皆貫練。後還長安。隨禪師佛馱跋陀受業修道禪諷(門)孜孜不怠。<sup>109</sup>

From the *Compilation*, it is known that Buddhahadra and Baoyun were teacher and student.

The trace of their possible joint work for the translation of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* can be found in the *Compilation of Notes*. Buddhahadra's credit appears under his translation list, and it states

The new Infinite Life Sūtra, two volumes, the second year of Yongchu (421 C.E.), translated at Daochang.

新無量壽經二卷永初二年於道場出。<sup>110</sup>

Baoyun's credit appears under his translation list, and it states:

The new Infinite Life Sūtra, two volumes, the second year of Yongchu (421 C.E.) in the Song dynasty, translated at the Daochang temple, or at the Liue-shan temple.

新無量壽經二卷宋永初二年於道場寺出一錄云於六合山寺出。<sup>111</sup>

These records show that the Sūtra was translated at same time and at same location, so that Fujita argues that the sūtra was translated by two of them.<sup>112</sup> However, the title of the sūtra was changed to the “New” *Infinite Life Sūtra* and there is no concrete evidence to indicate the *Infinite Life Sūtra* and the New *Infinite Life Sūtra* are same book. And Gomez argues, if the Sūtra was translated and edited several times by several people, it is

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0113a06.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0011c12.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0012a24.

<sup>112</sup> Fujita, “Recent Studies and Problems of the Pure Land Buddhist Texts,” 100.

very hard to trace who involved in the actual translation process.<sup>113</sup> It seems there is a limitation to approach this matter from the traditional philology.

Goto uses the stylometry approach to determine the translator.<sup>114</sup> From the result of the stylometry, he argues that Fǎ hù was the original translator, and Buddhahadra and Baoyun were co-editors. He indicates that Buddhahadra and Baoyun worked at same time on different section or chapter of the sūtra for editing, so that the each chapter of the sūtra might have different style of writings. His argument seems most reasonable and acceptable however it is not solid evidence as Goto agreed. Therefore, it still needs to examine whether Kāng Sēngkǎi involved for the translation process. It will be discussed in the next section.

## **2.5. The Géyì Conception – Acceptance of Foreign Philosophy**

It is widely understood that Buddhism started in India by the historical Buddha about twenty five hundred years ago, and after he passed away, many Buddhist publications were published in Sanskrit, Pali and other Indian languages. Later when Buddhism was exported from India to other countries, their publications also were exported. The introduction of Buddhism to China might be started by the mid first century. In the *Book of the Later Han* (Ch: 後漢書), it states:

Prince Liu Ying (n.d. – 71 C.E.) recites the profound words of the Huang-Lao, and he respects Buddhist Temple. To commit himself for god, he had purified himself for three months. There is nothing to feel offensive, doubt, regret or

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<sup>113</sup> Gomez, *Land of Bliss, the Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light*, 126.

<sup>114</sup> Goto, “The Chinese Translation of Wu-Liang-Shou-Jing by Zhu-Fa-Hu and the Revisions by Jue-Xian and Bao-Yun,” 298.



become miserly. By doing such purification, he provides delicious food to Upāsaka (devote Buddhist lay followers) and Śramaṇa (Buddhist monks).  
楚王誦黃老之微言，尚浮屠之仁祠，絜齋三月，與神為誓，何嫌何疑，當有悔吝？其還贖，以助伊蒲塞桑門之盛饌。<sup>115</sup>

The Huang-Lao is known as a combined belief for the emperor Huang (2698 – 2598 B.C.E.) and Lǎozǐ, and respect them as personal gods. The Prince Liu Ying had been assigned to serve the area of Xuzhou (Ch: 徐州) near East China Sea. From the story above, there was a Buddhist temple in Xuzhou and people were practicing Buddhism by offerings, therefore it can be assumed that Buddhism and Buddhist monks had across the country of China and they had lived in the east side of China by the mid first century.

It is reasonable that foreign publications are translated into the local languages of their countries to make their people understand the contents of these publications at the time of the import. When Indian Buddhist publications arrived to China, the translations in Chinese were made from these publications. If these publications were translated word for word, it might be too hard to understand their contents for people in general or even for scholars, therefore the translators put their efforts on how the concepts of Buddhist teachings can be understood by Chinese, and they applied the Géyì (Ch: 格義) conception to translate Indian Buddhist terminologies into Chinese.<sup>116</sup>

Mair states the meaning of the Géyì with his understanding as “the translation technique of the Géyì was used to match Sanskrit Buddhist terms with Sinitic Daoist terms”.<sup>117</sup> It means Daoist teachings were generally accepted and understood by the

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<sup>115</sup> Fan et al., *Hou Han Shu*, 1428.

<sup>116</sup> Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 319.

<sup>117</sup> Mair, “What Is Geyi, After All?,” 227.

majority of Chinese people at the time of the translations, and these Chinese people can understand Indian Buddhist teachings through the Daoist terms and conceptions.

However, Mair argues that there is no historical evidence to support the translation hypothesis after the investigation of the term Géyì. Basically he is saying that there was no significant movement of the Géyì in the publications.<sup>118</sup> A prominent Chinese scholar Lǚ states that the concept of Géyì is historically existed.<sup>119</sup> In the book of the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* Gao Seng zhuan, it also shows the evidence of Géyì.<sup>120</sup> Although Chinese emperors did not establish a training college for translators like Tibet, there are historical evidence of Géyì. Then a question arises what kinds of philosophies had affected these translators?

Approximately, sixty five hundred to eleven hundred years prior (7,000 BCE - 1,600 BCE) to the birth of the historical Buddha, there was the cradle of Chinese civilization as known as one of the first significant civilizations, and later in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E., many philosophers in China had started to share their thoughts and ideologies. These philosophers' movement was called the Hundred Schools of Thought (Ch: 諸子百家) which include notable organizations and groups such as the School of Ying-Yang (Ch: 陰陽家), Confucianism (Ch: 儒家), Mohism or Moism (Ch: 墨家), Legalism (Ch: 法家), Logicians (Ch: 名家), Daoism (Ch: 道家). These groups had

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>119</sup> Lu, *The Compilation of Buddhist Study by Lu Cheng*, 2503.

<sup>120</sup> Hui, Tang, and Tang, *Gāosēng Zhuàn*, 152.

affected each other, and especially Confucianism and Daoism were accepted as the major identities of the ancient China to form the fundamental characteristics of Chinese.

Nakamura argues that there is an influence of an ancient Chinese ethics in the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.<sup>121</sup> The term “sattva” often appears in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* of Sanskrit and it means “living thing or existence” in English. When the term was translated into Chinese, the Chinese term “人民” was assigned as the translation of “sattva”, and the Chinese term means “the people” in English. Nakamura states that according to the ancient Indian ethics, the subject word for the ethical verb or the object is not only limited to human beings, but also it extends to gods and wild animals. For instance, the ancient Indian could say “it is a wild horse, but he is honest”. Nakamura explains that according to the ancient Chinese ethics, it does not make sense to apply non-human forms as the subject word for the ethical contexts. He thinks that the ancient Chinese ethic is based on the teaching of the anthropocentrism which is the Confucianism, and so the translator did not have an idea to assign a Chinese word which simply means existence (which contains any form of existences).

As mentioned earlier, Karashima argues that when the *Amitābha-vyūha* was translated into Chinese, the title of the book was changed, because the term “life” (Snsk: ayus) is more acceptable than the term “light” (Snsk: abha) under the cultural influences of Lǎozǐ (Ch: 老子) and Zhuāng zǐ (Ch: 莊子) in the ancient China.<sup>122</sup> Fujita had a

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<sup>121</sup> Nakamura, *Encounter of Eastern and Western Culture: Thoughts in Japan*, 248.

<sup>122</sup> Karashima, “The Original Landscape of Amitābha,” 4.

similar argument to Karashima.<sup>123</sup> He indicates that Daoism has the idea of Xian (Ch: 仙人) and some Daoists believe Xian lives eternally (no aging) after the person got enlightened. He believes that the idea is similar to the idea of the Infinite Life, so the title of Chinese translation was changed from the *Meditation Sūtra on the Infinite Light*.

There is another influence from Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ. Saito indicates that the term “bodhi” in Sanskrit sūtras means enlightenment, and it was transliterated to Pú tí 菩提 in Chinese, but later it was changed to “way” (Ch: 道) or Dào as a free translation under the influence of Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ.<sup>124</sup>

Yamada points out that there is the term “naturalness (Ch: 自然 or 無為)” in the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.<sup>125</sup> Although the term appears fifty six times in the sūtra, he could not find the term or a similar term which describe naturalness in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* of Sanskrit. Yamada argues that the derivation of the term naturalness is the philosophies of Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ.<sup>126</sup> As Géyì conception, Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ are heavily influenced to translators especially for the *Infinite Life Sūtra*. It is need to explain who they are and the basic knowledge for Dao and Naturalness.

Saito and Yamada’s arguments tell that the *Infinite Life Sūtra* contains the Dao ideology. How their arguments are accurately compared Buddhist terminology and

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<sup>123</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 196.

<sup>124</sup> Saito, “Possibility of the Revival of the Buddhist Thoughts,” 58.

<sup>125</sup> Yamada, “Jinen, Naturalness in the Chinese Translations of the Sukhavativyūha,” 79.

<sup>126</sup> Yamada, “The Meaning of Jinen in Shinran’s Thought,” 219.

Daoist terminology? It is important to know who and how Daoism is constructed. In the next two sections, the founders of Dao, ideologies and historical texts are discussed.

## 2.6. Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ, and the Essential Concept of Dao

The concept of Dao was developed and consolidated by Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ.<sup>127</sup>

There are two fundamental texts for Dao which were written by Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ.

Prior to research on what is Dao, it is very important to know who they are. Lǎozǐ

published his book *Dao De Jing* (Chinese: 道德經). Zhuāng zǐ is known as an author of

*Zhuāng zǐ* (Chinese: 莊子). In this paper, I will focus on the explanation of Dao by Lǎozǐ.

Lǎozǐ's name appears in *The Records of the Grand Historian* (Shiji – Ch: 史記) which

was written by a Chinese historian, Sima Qian. He states:

老子者，楚苦縣厲鄉曲仁里人也，姓李氏，名耳，字聃，周守藏室之史也。  
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It can be translated as, “Lǎozǐ is a person who originally came from Qurenli Village in Li Town of Ku County of the Chu Kingdom. His family name is Li, the given name is Er, and the courtesy name is Dan. He works for the Zhou Dynasty as a record keeper of the library.” Qurenli Village is currently known as Taiqinggong Town in Luyi County of Henan Province.

There was another famous Chinese thinker, Kong Qiu (Chinese: 孔子). Kong Qiu is known as Confucius for people in the western and European countries. He developed

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<sup>127</sup> Kohn, *Introducing Daoism*, 23.

<sup>128</sup> He, *Historical Study of Thoughts and Rules*, 255.

the principles of moral and ethics within the family, society and politics. The principles are known as Confucianism, and it remains, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, as one of the social backbones of China.

In the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Sima Qian recorded the encounter of Lǎozǐ and Kong Qiu. He states:

孔子去，謂弟子曰：「鳥，吾知其能飛；魚，吾知其能游；獸，吾知其能走。走者可以為罔，游者可以為綸，飛者可以為矰。至於龍，吾不能知其乘風雲而上天。吾今日見老子，其猶龍邪！」<sup>129</sup>

It can be translated as, “Kong Qiu leaves and he talks to his disciple: A bird, I know it can fly. A fish, I know it can swim. An animal, I know it can run. A running creature can be captured by a net. A swimming creature can be caught by a fishing line. A flying creature can be hunted by an arrow. However, the Dragon, I have never seen before, but it rides on clouds and flies up to the heaven. I saw Lǎozǐ today, and he was like a Dragon!” The story tells that Kong Qiu fully respected Lǎozǐ, not just as a special person, but treated him as one of the extraordinary figures in his lifetime.

There is no record which indicates when Lǎozǐ was born or when he died. For Kong Qiu, both the date of birth and the date of death are recorded. He was born in 532 BCE, and died in 479 BCE. If it supposes that Lǎozǐ was an actual person, he might have left his footprints circa 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The historical Buddha might be lived almost same century which Lǎozǐ and Kong lived.

The detailed biography of Zhuāng zǐ is recorded in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, next to the record of Lǎozǐ. It states,

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<sup>129</sup> Sun, *Lǎozǐ's Daodejing--From Philosophical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, 317.

莊子者，蒙人也，名周。周嘗為蒙漆園吏，與梁惠王、齊宣王同時。其學無所不闢，然其要本歸於老子之言。故其著書十餘萬言，大抵率寓言也。<sup>130</sup>

It can be translated as, “Zhuāng zǐ was born in Meng, and his given name is Zhou. Zhou once worked for the lacquer tree garden of Meng as an officer. He lived during the time of King Hui of Liang and King Xuan of Qi. He mastered all of educations, and his fundamental knowledge is based on the sayings of Lǎozǐ. He wrote and left more than one hundred thousand words, however, most of these words are stories to explain the teachings of Lǎozǐ.”

The *Dao De Jing* or the *Lǎozǐ* (the book of Lǎozǐ) is a short Chinese text of about 5000 words, and 81 chapters.<sup>131</sup> It has two volumes. *Dao De Jing* means the sūtra of Dao and Virtue. In the first chapter of the *Dao De Jing*, the concept of the Dao is explained by Lǎozǐ. He states,

道可道、非常道。名可名、非常名。無名天地之始、有名萬物之母。故常無欲以觀其妙、常有欲以觀其徼。此兩者同出而異名。同謂之玄。玄之又玄、衆妙之門。<sup>132</sup>

Each sentence contains a deep understanding and thinking of Lǎozǐ for the Dao, so they need to be explained per sentence.

道可道、非常道。 - A road (道) or way can (可) be called the road or way, but is not (非) the great or everlasting (常) road or way.<sup>133</sup>

If the philosophy or thought of Lǎozǐ can be explained by one word, the response would be Dao. The Chinese character of Dao can be translated as a path or way. The Dao is

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<sup>130</sup> Lǎozǐ, *Lǎozǐ*, 5.

<sup>131</sup> Kohn, *Introducing Daoism*, 19.

<sup>132</sup> Lǎozǐ, *Lǎozǐ*, 24.

<sup>133</sup> Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, 59.

generally known as the philosophy or thought of Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ. When people practice the Dao and its ritual, the philosophy or thought becomes religion and it should be called Daoism. Then a question arises. What is the Dao?

Lǎozǐ explains, Dao, in the beginning of the *Dao De Jing*. It is complicated to understand because Dao contains various meanings. In the first sentence, Lǎozǐ thinks that Dao cannot be defined, so he states that anything is defined as Dao, is not Dao. In other words, Dao cannot be explained by language or words.

Any definition made by language or words, can be understood and recognized. The definition of the Dao is set prior to language or words. The foundation or source of all which includes the universe, whole nature, metaphysical and scientific things, can be called the Dao. Hence, Dao is not explainable by language or words.

If Dao is described from the religious aspect, it may be close to the concept of the creator. However Lǎozǐ tries to explain Dao without using the concept of the god. Lǎozǐ was concerned if he uses the term god instead of the Dao, people do not properly understand the idea of the Dao. For instance, in the beginning of the Genesis of the *Old Testament*, all things are started by the creation of God.<sup>134</sup> If so, a question arises that what God was doing before the creation.

God is generally explained as a personified idol or concept.<sup>135</sup> Dao may be defined as a universal principle or law, however, it should not be limited to that only. There should be the cosmological principle through the whole universe, which is not Dao itself,

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<sup>134</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 1.

<sup>135</sup> Ekeke and Ekeopara, "God, Divinities and Spirits in African Traditional Religious Ontology," 214.



but the artificial understanding of the partial energy flow which came from Dao. Lǎozǐ expressed the foundation or source of the pre-existence as Dao.

There is a contradiction. Dao is there prior to the language, and so it cannot be explained by language. Without using language, however, things cannot be explained, therefore Lǎozǐ called it Dao. In the *Dao De Jing*, Lǎozǐ explains the concept of Dao in words. It is not a road like a freeway or a service road. To avoid the misunderstanding of the meaning of Dao, it should not be translated as a road when people try to understand the essence of the Dao. The term Dao in Chinese should be translated as a road or way, only when people make the transliteration from Chinese into English. Hansen states that whenever a Daoist uses the term, the meaning of it changes.<sup>136</sup>

名可名、非常名。 - You can (可) label or name (名) something, but it is not (非) the true or permanent (常) name.<sup>137</sup>

In the English language, there are grammar and the eight parts of speech.<sup>138</sup> Most important is the noun, which is a name of things. All things are named to be recognized or identified individually. For convenience, all things are named. Naming the things can be called the relative concept. It is a relative, so people can name things whatever they want. For instance, people can call a rabbit, monkey. Under common knowledge, these people would say it is a monkey, when they see a rabbit. No matter what people name rabbit, that name is not permanent.

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<sup>136</sup> Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, 204.

<sup>137</sup> Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, 59.

<sup>138</sup> Weaver, *Teaching Grammar in Context*, 20.

無名天地之始、有名萬物之母。 - There was no name (無名) when the world (天地) was created (始). After all things (萬物) were created (母), they were named (有名).<sup>139</sup>

Dao as the beginning of the heaven and earth, originally, did not have a name. Dao is the absolute concept which includes everything, and it is impossible to give a relative name to Dao. Once the formed and formless things are occurred from Dao, it is necessary to assign a name to each individual to distinguish one from another. The Dao and the Name can be understood in the following.

< Dao > = the source or essence of all = absoluteness (no name)

< Name > = things occurred from the Dao = relativity (named)

故常無欲以觀其妙、常有欲以觀其徼。 - Thus (故) if (以) you are disinterested (無欲), you can see (觀) profound forms of all things (其妙). If (以) you are greedy (有欲), you can see (觀) only the surface (徼) of things (其).<sup>140</sup>

There are two significant terms. One (常無) means always empty. The other (常有) means always fulfilled. How should these two terms be understood? The previous sentences are describing absoluteness and relativity. These are comparisons between the absoluteness of Dao and the relativity of the all things from Dao. Thus, the concept of always empty can be understood as the absolute principle, and the concept of always fulfilled can be understood as the relative phenomena.

People live in the world of relative phenomena, and do not live in the world of absoluteness. The real world can be called the completely relative world.<sup>141</sup> For instance, in such world, things which people can see visually are under the influence of the relative

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<sup>139</sup> Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, 59.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>141</sup> Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 671.

phenomena. Things which people cannot see visually, such as heart and mind, are also under the same influence. Under such influence, peoples' thoughts and emotions change frequently, by the individual social status, position, circumstance, mentality and other social conditions.

此兩者同出而異名。 - The source (出) of both of them (兩者) is the same (同). I named (名) it differently (異).<sup>142</sup>

Both of them indicate the profound form and the form of surface, which was discussed in the previous sentence. Each of them have a different name, but both of them are the appearance of the Dao as the source, and so they are fundamentally the same things. It is important to identify that both of them are same.

同謂之玄。玄之又玄、衆妙之門。 - And (同) I named (謂) the source (門) the abstruse mystery (玄). The source of the real world occurred from (門) the abstruse mysteries (妙) of (又) the many (衆) abstruse mysteries.<sup>143</sup>

In chapter one of the Dao De Jing, Lǎozǐ tries to explain Dao, which is an indescribable term, by language. He uses the word Xuan (玄). Xuan is one of the colors and it is almost black, with a few drops of red. By using Xuan, Lǎozǐ wants to express Dao as the source of deep and abstruse mystery. Moreover, he repeats the term Xuan twice in the sentence and he emphasizes the depth of the absoluteness of Dao. There is no English term to fully explain the world of Dao by Lǎozǐ, but we have to sense that how he wanted to express Dao by his poetic explanations. As mentioned in the section 2.4., Saito indicates that the term “bodhi” in Sanskrit sūtras means enlightenment, and it was transliterated to Pú tí 菩提 in Chinese, but later it was changed to “way” (Ch: 道) or Dào

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<sup>142</sup> Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, 59.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 59.

as a free translation under the influence of Lǎozǐ and Zhuāng zǐ. The term Bodhi or enlightenment contains various meanings and each Buddhist tradition may have a different interpretation on Bodhi, and so it is indescribable. In Chinese Mahāyāna tradition, Bodhi generally means Wisdom as a result of the historical Buddha's enlightenment. Wisdom is a cognitive skill to see, recognize, analyze, and understand things as they are. When Bodhi is understood as the cognitive skill as Wisdom, in one sense, the meaning of Bodhi can be matched with the word Dao as described in this section. It seems that Saito's argument is valid and acceptable.

## **2.7. Naturalism - Live as You are in Buddhism, and Wuwei in Dao**

Being natural, naturalness or naturalism is one of the essential ways of living especially in the Pure Land tradition. The concept heavily influences to the Japanese Pure Land Teaching and its tradition. The founder of the Japanese Shin Pure Land Buddhism, Shinran writes on Naturalness in his letter.<sup>144</sup> He explains that it can be translated as “as such” or “suchness”. As Yamada stated, the concept of naturalism is often appeared in the *Infinite Life Sūtra*. How does naturalism in Buddhism differ from Wuwei in Dao, how it is similar to Wuwei?

In the *Dao De Jing*, Lǎozǐ often uses the term Wuwei (無為). For instance, the chapter thirty-seven of the book, it states:

道常無為、而無不為。<sup>145</sup>

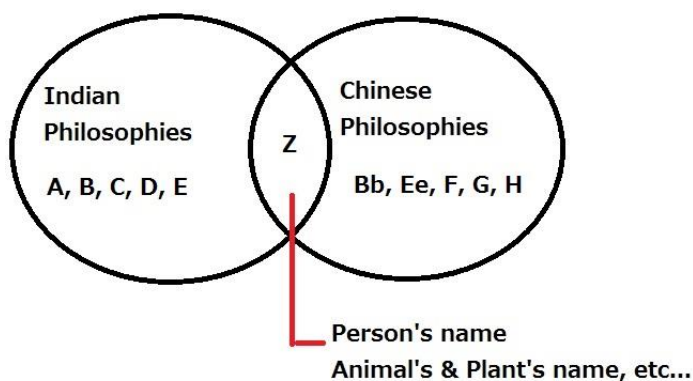
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<sup>144</sup> Jodo Shinshu Kyogaku Dendo Center, *Service Book of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism*, 768-769.

<sup>145</sup> Lǎozǐ, *Lǎozǐ*, 70.

Although Dao will not do anything voluntary, it can accomplish everything. As stated earlier, Yamada argues that Wuwei and Naturalism in the sūtra can be identical from Gényì stand point of view.<sup>146</sup>

In the Lǎozǐ's book, Wuwei means there is neither intention nor act.<sup>147</sup> It does not mean people do not do anything. It means people do not do things against the flow of nature. For instance, heaven and earth do not have intention or will, but are actually in the condition of Wuwei. Although there is neither intention nor act, the cause and effect of heaven and earth apply to the whole world. By heaven and earth, the seasons change, the sun shines on the land and gives warmth, and the cloud provides water as rain. The plants, insects, and animals are benefited from these climates and they can grow and sustain their lives. Thus heaven and earth do everything without making extra efforts or adding extra intentions. Wuwei in the *Dao De Jing* tells people to stay away from their intentions, opinions and subjectivity, and rely on the natural actions of heaven and earth. Such natural actions are called Dao. Lǎozǐ emphasizes that Wuwei is the way of ideal human life. Therefore Yamada's argument is a reasonably agreeable.



It is natural to use local common terms for explaining foreign terms. If the ancient Indian philosophies (IP) can be described with a formula, it can

<sup>146</sup> Yamada, "Jinen, Naturalness in the Chinese Translations of the Sukhavativyuha," 79.

<sup>147</sup> Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, 101.

be  $IP = A + B + C + D + E + Z$ . ABCDE represents various philosophies which construct the ancient Indian philosophy. If so, the ancient Chinese philosophies (CP) can be described as  $CP = Bb + Ee + F + G + H + Z$ . Each letter represents unique philosophy and “Z” represents proper nouns. As long as the nouns are not used for describing a metaphor (in some culture, an ocean can be a metaphor of a mother, but in other culture it may not), Z can be freely transliterated by sound (ex. Snsk: Buddhābhadrā = Fótuóbátuólúó (Ch: 佛陀跋陀羅)<sup>148</sup> or completely different sound (for instance, horse = Snsk: aśvaḥ = ma (Ch: 馬)).

B and Bb, or E and Ee can be considered as a similar philosophy or meaning they have, so that B (IP) and Bb (CP) can be translated each other easily, however, when the Indian philosophy of “D” is needed to translate, a translator has to pick which Chinese conception can be fit for describing “D”. Maybe the Chinese philosophy of “Ee” can be considered as most similar conception or idea, but if the translator is not familiar with “Ee, then he may use “F” or “G” for the explanation of “Ee”.

As examined in the earlier section, each possible translator of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* had similar educations, such as studying chanting, memorizing sūtras and practicing foreign languages. It is very hard to trace what exactly each translator studied and mastered, however, it was able to reveal that many Chinese local philosophies affected to the thoughts of these translators and their word selection process for their translation in the sections of 2.5 to 2.7.

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<sup>148</sup> Mochizuki and Tsukamoto, *Mochizuki Buddhist Dictionary*, 4470.

## 2.8. Literal Translation and Free Translation

As discussed in the previous section, it is most likely not traceable that the educational background of the translators, however, it is traceable on the translation style of each translator by reading their translation works. Prior to discuss the style, it is important to know what kinds of the environment they were tackling on their translation work.

It is known that when a translation project is planned, multiple persons generally involve the project as a co-project. The project is called Yichang (Ch: 譯場).<sup>150</sup> For instance, when the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammkhavasthita-Samādhī Sūtra* (Ch: 般舟三昧經, Abbr: *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*) was translated into Chinese, at least four persons were involved for the translation, although only one person's name was credited to the translated sūtra. In the *Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka*, these four persons are mentioned as:

Zhu Shuofu is an Indian Buddhist monk. During the reign of the emperor Huan of Han (132-167 C.E.), Zhu brought Daoxing jing Sūtra (Ch: 道行般若經) to Luoyang, and immediately he translated it from Sanskrit to Chinese. When a person translates a book, it is natural to lose some sorts of the essence of the book. Zhu carefully translated it word for word and avoided to translate it freely and so he was able to translate the essence of the sūtra into Chinese translation. In 179 CE, Zhu started the translation project of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* in Luoyang during the reign of the emperor Ling of Han (156-189 C.E.). Lokakṣema was assigned as a Sanskrit-Chinese translator. Two local Chinese from Luoyang, Mengfu and Changlien transcribed Lokakṣema's words in Chinese.

沙門竺朔佛者。天竺人也漢桓帝時。亦齎道行經來適洛陽。即轉胡爲漢。譯人時滯雖有失旨。然棄文存質深得經意。朔又以靈帝光和二年。於洛陽譯出般舟三昧經。時識爲傳言。河南洛陽孟福張蓮筆受。<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Funayama, *Making Sutras into Classics*, 55-57.

<sup>151</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2145\_.55.0096a02.

Although Lokakṣema is the only credited translator of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*, the *Compilation* indicates that at least another three persons involved for the translation project. It is assumed that Zhu Shufo was a reader/chanter of the sūtra, so Zhu chanted a loud of the sūtra in Sanskrit, and Lokakṣema listened to Zhu's chanting and translated it into Chinese. Two Chinese writers transcribed Lokakṣema's translation.

There is another example in the same *Compilation*, it states:

Samghabhadra (fl. 385 C.E.) brought the Vasumitra of Sanskrit. The following year, Zhaozheng (unknown) requested him to translate it into Chinese. Samghabhadra formed a chanting group of three with Dharmanandi and Samghadeva. A monk, Zhu Fonian (fl. 399-416 C.E.) of the Former Qin, translated their chanting from Sanskrit into Chinese. Huisong (fl. early 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.) was assigned as a transcriber. Angong (314-386 C.E.) and Fahe (fl. 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.) worked as revisers.

初跋澄又齋 婆須蜜胡本自隨。明年趙政復請出之。跋澄乃與曇摩難提及僧伽提婆三人。共執胡本。秦沙門佛念宣譯。慧嵩筆受。安公法和對共校定。<sup>152</sup>

For first example, although Zhu Shufo brought the *Daoxing jing Sūtra* of Sanskrit to Luoyang and he chanted it for translation, the translator for the *Daoxing jing Sūtra* is as credited Lokakṣema. The translation project members of the *Daoxing jing Sūtra* might decide to credit the actual translator's name to show as their respect. For second example, Samghabhadra brought *Vasumitra* of Sanskrit. He asked two other monks to form a chanting group and four other persons were assigned to the translation project. The actual translator was Zhu Fonian and there were two other chanters, but only one chanter, Samghabhadra's name was credited as the translator. His translation project members might consider keeping his name as a translator and as a project leader.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0099b01.



Miyajima indicates that multiple persons had involved for each translation project since the initial project occurred in the later Han Dynasty (2<sup>nd</sup> Century C.E.) and there were discussions frequently with visitors and audiences.<sup>153</sup> She argues that it depends on each project group to decide who should be credited as a translator. By comparing two examples of the translation projects, her argument is reasonable and agreeable.

Miyajima also indicates that there were discussions on literal translation and free translation in the *Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka*.<sup>154</sup> She quotes three sentences from the *Compilation*:

Indian archaic writings are fundamentally simple therefore there is no way to fully understand the significance of the writings in a short time.

天竺古文。文通尚質。倉卒尋之。時有不達。<sup>155</sup>

Sanskrit sūtras are written with simple sentences although Chinese readers prefer the refined writing style.

胡經尚質。秦人好文。<sup>156</sup>

In former days, many of the sūtra translators did not like the simplicity of Sanskrit, and they modified their translations to suit the inclination of Chinese readers.

昔來出經者。多嫌胡言方質而改適今俗。<sup>157</sup>

From these three quotations, it is assumable that in the early stage on the transmission of Buddhism to China, translators mainly deliberated how easily Chinese readers understand or grasp the outline of the Buddha's teachings, and the assumption is consistent with the Géyì conception which used Chinese conceptions to understand Indian conception. In

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<sup>153</sup> Miyajima, "Establishment and Development of the Chinese Buddhist Publications," 98.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>155</sup> *Taisho Tripiṭaka*, T2145\_.55.0046b16.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0052b25.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., T2145\_.55.0073c16.

fact, in the middle stage (5 to 7 century) on the transmission of Buddhism to China (after the severe criticism on the Géyì by Dào ān who is mentioned earlier as the monk who describes the concept of the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha), translators carefully avoided to use the Géyì conception to explain Buddhism, and the Géyì conception gradually ceased afterwards.

## CONCLUSION

From this study, it is revealed that there are multiple external and internal influences to the each translation project of Buddhist texts. Especially it is very important to know that who involved to a project because it makes a huge influence to a content of a translation therefore it is understandable to have five different versions of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* which are published under five different translation projects. There may be some other possible influences to a project which are not discussed in this study, so they need to be discussed in the future study.

As discussed in the section 2.4., Fujita and others argues that Kāṅg Sēngkǎi was not the translator of the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.<sup>158</sup> After this study, it is agreeable that Kāṅg Sēngkǎi was one of the members of the *Infinite Life Sūtra* translation project. Several sources show that he was from India. It is assumable that he was the chanter of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* as a native speaker and there are several translators and transcribers. The translation was completed around 252 C.E. At the time of publishing the translation, the contents of the translation did not attract Chinese readers. About 50 years later of 252 C.E., Fǎ hù found Kāṅg Sēngkǎi's translation and he revised and edited its content to suit the inclination of Chinese readers by using the Gényì methodology. After Fǎ hù made the revision of the *Infinite Life Sūtra*, Dào ān's severe criticism is occurred<sup>159</sup> as discussed in the section 2.8.

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<sup>158</sup> Fujita, *A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism*, 62.

<sup>159</sup> Saito, "Possibility of the Revival of the Buddhist Thoughts - Sutra, Translation and Current Situation," 58.

Sengzhao (Ch: 僧肇, 374-414 C.E.) made a critic on Fǎ hù in his Preface to the

*Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. He states:

The translations of Zhī qiān and Fǎ hù are both do not logically make sense.  
而恨支竺所出理滯於文。<sup>160</sup>

Zhu possible uses too much free translation technique on his translation works.

About 120 years later from his revision of Kāng Sēngkǎi's *Infinite Life Sūtra* has been published, Buddhahadra and his disciple Baoyun read the revision. They realize and notice that the essence of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* has been lost in the translation, and so they decide to re-revise the sūtra to recover the original essence of the sūtra. Although they made all the re-revise work, they preserved Kāng Sēngkǎi's name as a translator to show their respect to him. Four of the possible translators are all involved to the translation project of the *Infinite Life Sūtra*.

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<sup>160</sup> *Taisho Tripitaka*, T2145 55 58b10.

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