

Article

The Absence of Women in the Land of Bliss

Jiefeng Lu 

School of Marxism, Nanjing University, Nanjing 210023, China; lujiefeng@nju.edu.cn

Abstract: In *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, the descriptions of “no women” and “transforming the female body” cause criticism and defense among modern researchers. However, “woman” as the central discourse has not been clarified. In the Buddhist gender myth, the fundamental distinction between men and women is the realization of “sexual difference”, which means that the subject orientates its desire and ways to satisfy the desire in the world of the conditioned co-arising. Therefore, what the Land of Bliss negates is more desire itself than women. “No women” eliminates the desire and ego-grasping of male Buddhists, and “transforming the female body” enlightens female Buddhists as to the emptiness of herself and the impossibility of desire. As a result, all sentient beings are liberated from sexuality and practice the act of truth.

Keywords: pure land; feminine; sexual difference; desire; *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*

1. Introduction

With the rise of research on gender in Buddhism, scholars began to question the situation of women in Buddhism under the declaration of “all sentient beings are equal” (Collett 2006; Wang 2017). It seems to imply gender discrimination in Buddhism referring to the large number of negative depictions of women in the early Buddhist scriptures and the interruption of the bhikkhunī inheritance in South and Southeast Asia. However, gender discrimination in history cannot negate women’s religious aspirations. With the revival of bhikkhunī groups in Asia and the establishment of Western female Buddhist groups, the religious practice of female Buddhists further requires a comprehensive examination of the views of women in Buddhist teachings, the situation of women in Buddhist monastic discipline, and the spiritual cultivation of women in realistic beliefs (Gross 2013).

Pure Land Buddhism, which is the devotion to Amitābha Buddha, has become one of the focuses of Buddhist gender studies. It was formed in northwest India in the early period of Mahāyāna Buddhism (Schopen 1987; Fussman 1999). Although it was not popular in India, it flourished in China and was highly favored by a large number of Buddhists. Today, its influence is still very significant in East Asia. When the Land of Bliss (Sukhāvātī) is described magnificently in *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, the believers of Pure Land Buddhism accept the sacred world of Amitābha Buddha that is very different from the Sahā World, especially without women. Despite the spreading process of Pure Land Buddhism in history or the religious practice of contemporary Buddhists, it is also widely accepted that “no women in the Land of Bliss”. However, it is prone to arouse suspicion and needs further explanation.

Although the scriptures about Amitābha Buddha do not deny the possibility of women being reborn into the Land of Bliss, implicit gender discrimination is unavoidable. On one hand, the critical point of view is that Amitābha Buddha’s discourse on salvation after life actually expresses the hatred of patriarchal ideology toward women (Paul 1985, pp. 169–70; Gómez 1996, p. 232, note 26; Faure 2003, pp. 117–18). Women’s bodies are excluded from the Land of Bliss. If a woman wants to be reborn into the Land of Bliss, she must hate her female body and become a man. This undoubtedly implies the imperfection, ugliness, and ignorance of women and the perfection, beauty, and wisdom of men. Today’s Buddhists must be liberated from this patriarchal discourse. On the other



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hand, the defenders hold that Pure Land Buddhism is aimed at the salvation of the situation of favoring boys over girls and misogyny in the real society, and Amitābha Buddha's great vows provide consolation for women's liberation in a surreal way (Gross 1992, p. 66; Shi 1997, pp. 134–36; Yang 2004, pp. 51–52). The possible way out of this debate is to return to the discourse on gender in Buddhist literature. As Buddhist literature researchers have pointed out, there are significant differences between the multiple versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīyūha* on the question of whether there are women in the Land of Bliss (Harrison 1998; Fujita 2007, pp. 339–40; Xiao 2014).

In this paper, I re-examine the expressions of “women” in different versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīyūha* and illuminate the Buddhist standpoint that transcends gender and desire reflected in different versions from the existence of women themselves, the sexual positions in the structure of desire, and the way of liberation of “transforming the female body”.

2. The Absence of Women

The scriptures that deal with women's issues are found in Dharmākara's vows of becoming a Buddha in *The Larger Sukhāvātīyūha*. There are five Chinese translations of this sūtra, as well as the Sanskrit version and the Tibetan translation. There are obvious differences among these versions, and the most significant one among them is the number of Dharmākara's vows. It is the same as the 24 vows of *Amituo Sanyesanfo Saloufotan Guodu Rendao Jing* 阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛檀過度人道經 (referred to as ASSGRJ) and *Wuliang Qingjing Pingdengjue Jing* 無量清淨平等覺經 (referred to as WQPJ). The translator of ASSGRJ is entitled Zhi Qian 支謙 in the Wu Kingdom, while the translator of WQPJ is entitled Lokakṣema in the Eastern Han Dynasty. However, according to the style of translation, ASSGRJ should have been translated earlier than WQPJ, and they might have been switched translators (Shi 1994, p. 762). There are 48 vows in *Wuliangshou Jing* 無量壽經 (referred to as WJ) by Saṃghavarman in the Wei Kingdom, which should be of the fifth century.¹ The WJ is closer to *Wuliangshou Rulai Hui* 無量壽如來會 (referred to as WRH) of *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, vol. 17, which was translated by Bodhiruci between 706 and 713 A.D. (Kagawa 1984, p. 31). There are 47 vows in the Sanskrit *Sukhāvātīyūha (vistaramātrkā)* and 49 vows in the Tibetan translation *'Phags pa 'od dpag med kyi bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*. These two versions are close to WJ and WRH. The latest translation is *Dasheng Wuliangshou Zhuangyan Jing* 大乘無量壽莊嚴經 (referred to as DWZJ) by Faxian 法賢 from 991 A.D., with 36 vows in total (Kagawa 1984, p. 31).

The depiction of “no women in the Land of Bliss” appears in the second vow of ASSGRJ, as follows:

第二願：使某作佛時，令我國中無有婦人，女人欲來生我國中者，即作男子；諸無央數天人、蜎飛蠕動之類，來生我國者，皆於七寶水池蓮華中化生，長大皆作菩薩、阿羅漢，都無央數。得是願乃作佛，不得是願終不作佛。(Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō T12, p. 301a27–b3)²

“The second vow: When I become a Buddha, may there be no women in my country. Women wishing to come and be reborn in my country will forthwith become men. All the countless gods, human beings and species that flit and wriggle in the countless heavens who come to be reborn in my country will be born through spontaneous generation in lotus flower in pools made of the seven precious substances, and they will grow up and all become Bodhisattvas or Arhats, quite beyond counting. If this vow is fulfilled, then I will become a Buddha. If this vow is not fulfilled, I will never become a Buddha” (Harrison 1998).

ASSGRJ clearly mentions that there are no women in the Land of Bliss, and women transform their bodies into men when they are reborn. However, some researchers believe that the second vow about “no women” in ASSGRJ is revised by the translator from other texts (Xiao 2014). WQPJ does not have the vow of “no women” but later mentions that “his country is full of Bodhisattvas and Arhats, and there are no women” (T12, p. 283a19–20).

In addition, *Aṅgulimāliyasūtra*, vol. 3, says: “There are no 5 dregs, women, śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha in the Land of Bliss, and there is only one vehicle and no other vehicles” (translated by Guṇabhadra, T2, p. 535c12–13). Vasubandhu’s *Sukhāvātīvyūhopadeśa* also says: “It is the world of sentient beings with Mahāyāna virtuous power, and there are no bad names at all; women, physically disabled, śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha will not be born there” (translated by Bodhiruci, T26, p. 231a13–14). Therefore, it shows that there is indeed the description of “no women in the Land of Bliss” in India. Ancient Chinese monks and modern researchers are often influenced by these scriptures, and thus they believe that there are no women in the Land of Bliss. With the classical basis, “no women” seems to be an immovable “fact” of faith and even become one of the symbols of the Land of Bliss that has absorbed 21 billion Buddha lands and surpassed them.

However, it is not the case with other versions. *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions all involve the vow of women abandoning their female bodies, but there is no explicit mention of “no women in the Land of Bliss”. These four versions are very similar.

The 35th vow of *WJ*: 設我得佛，十方無量不可思議諸佛世界，其有女人，聞我名字，歡喜信樂，發菩提心，厭惡女身，壽終之後復為女像者，不取正覺。(T12, p. 268c21–24)

The 35th vow of *WRH*: 若我成佛，周遍無數、不可思議、無有等量諸佛國中所有女人，聞我名已，得清淨信，發菩提心，厭患女身，若於來世不捨女人身者，不取菩提。(T11, p. 94b14–17)

The 35th vow of Sanskrit version: “sacem me bhagavan bodhiprāptasya, samantād aprameyāsaṃkhyeyācintyātulyāparimāṇeṣu buddhakṣetreṣu yāḥ striyo mama nāmadheyam śrutvā, prasādam saṃjanayeyur, bodhicittaṃ cotpādayeyuḥ, strībhāvaṃ ca vijugupseraṇ, jātivyativṛttāḥ samānaḥ saced dvitiyaṃ strībhāvaṃ pratilabheran, mā tāvad aham anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambudhyeyam” (Fujita 2011, p. 22, ll. 8–13).

The 36th vow of Tibetan translation: “bcom ldan ‘das gal te bdag byang chub thob pa’i tshe/ kun tu sangs rgyas kyi zhing grangs ma mchis bsam gyis mi khyab mtshungs pa ma mchis/ tshad ma mchis pa dag na bud med gang dag gis bdag gi ming thos nas rab tu dang ba skyes te/ byang chub tu sems bskyed par gyur la/ bud med kyi lus la smod par gyur te/ de dag tshe brjes nas/ gal te bud med kyi lus lan gnyis thob par ma gyur pa de srid du/ bdg bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa’i byang chub tu mngon par rdzogs par ‘tshang rgya bar mi bgyi’o //” (Öta 2005, p. 67).

English translation: “Blessed One, may I not awaken to unsurpassable, perfect, full awakening if, after I attain awakening it is the case that women in measureless, countless, inconceivable, incomparable, and limitless buddha-fields in all regions of universe upon hearing my name have serene thoughts of faith, generate in their mind the aspiration to attain awakening, feel disgust at their female nature, and yet are born again as women when they leave their present birth” (Gómez 1996, p. 74).

These vows are aimed at the women from the innumerable Buddha lands. Although these women can transform their female bodies (strībhāva) in the afterlife, the scriptures do not mention their being reborn into the Land of Bliss. In other words, “transforming the female body” does not have to take place in the Land of Bliss. Secondly, the conditions for these women to transform their female bodies include aversion to the female body, in addition to hearing the name of Amitābha Buddha, obtaining pure faith, and arousing bodhicitta, which seems to mean that if a woman does not hate her own body, it is unnecessary to change her female body. In Nāgārjuna’s *Daśabhūmikavibhāśāśāstra*, vol. 3, it is said that if a woman does not have karmas and conditions mentioned above, and the karma of her female body is not exhausted, she will not have met the Buddha who vows to transform the female body (translated by Kumārajīva, T26, p. 32c28–29). Generally, it is believed

that *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions were modified, added, and deleted based on *ASSGRJ* and *WQPJ* (Harrison 1998; Fujita 2007, pp. 339–40).

In *DWZJ*, the reference to women appears in the 27th vow:

世尊！我得菩提成正覺已，所有十方無量無邊無數世界一切女人，若有厭離女身者，聞我名號，發清淨心，歸依頂禮，彼人命終即生我刹，成男子身，悉皆令得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。(T12, p. 320b8–12)

“Lord, after I have attained bodhi and achieved perfect awakening, as for all the women in all the countless, boundless numberless worlds in the ten quarters, if any of them are disgusted with the female body, and hear my name, have pure thoughts and take refuge in me with prostrations, those persons shall at the end of their lives be born in my kṣetra assuming male bodies, and they shall all be made to achieve anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi” (Harrison 1998).

Many of Faxian’s translations contain excerpts, paraphrases, deletions, and corrections of other previous versions (Shibata 1966). Through comparison, it can be seen that the 27th vow of *DWZJ* is a mix of *ASSGRJ*, *WQPJ*, *WJ*, and *WRH*. Hence it is not discussed further below.

It is doubtful whether the proposition “no women in the Land of Bliss” has a reliable textual basis. Moreover, the textual evidence of the existence of women in the Land of Bliss can be found in *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions. These four versions, at the end of Amitābha Buddha’s appearance, similarly refer not only to the sentient beings who are reborn by transformation on a lotus flower but also to the viviparous sentient beings (garbhāvāsa) living in the border city (T12, p. 278a18; T11, p. 100a22; Fujita 2011, p. 68, 1.5; Ōta 2005, p. 269). “Viviparous” means the existence of women as mothers. Because the sentient beings in the border city never see Amitābha Buddha and never hear his teachings, it should have been added to expand the belief in the Land of Bliss, but it did not fit with Dharmākara’s vows. In addition, Paul Harrison pointed out that Sanskrit and Tibetan versions also mentioned seven thousand nymphs (apsara) in describing the lives of sentient beings in the Land of Bliss (Harrison 1998). It reads as follows.

Sanskrit version: “te teṣu mano’bhinirvṛteṣu vimāneṣu saptasaptāpsaraḥsahasraparivṛtāḥ puraskṛtā viharanti, kṛḍanti ramante paricārayanti” (Fujita 2011, p. 43, ll. 22–23).

Tibetan translation: “de dag rin po che’i gzhāl med khang grub pa de dag gi nang na/ lha’i bu mo bdun stong bdun stong gis yongs su bskor cing mdun gyis bltas nas ’khod de/ rtse zhing dga’ la dga’ mgur spyod do//” (Ōta 2005, p. 167).

English translation: “And in those delightful palaces they dwell, play, sport, amuse themselves, each of them surrounded and honored by seven thousand nymphs” (Gómez 1996, p. 89).

“Nymph” means there are women in the Land of Bliss. However, this sentence is the only one missing from the corresponding paragraphs in *WJ* and *WRH*, probably because the last three words imply pleasure associated with sexual lust. It can be seen that there are obvious differences among multiple versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* on the question of whether there are women in the Land of Bliss.

In addition to *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, many other Mahāyāna sūtras also mention that there are women, lust, or even their names in other Buddha lands.³ It may represent a common belief of pure land in the early Mahāyāna Buddhism, although there are still women in the lands of Śākyamuni, Akṣobhya Buddha, and Maitreya. The central question is, what is a “woman”? Or, in what sense do we speak of “woman”? The discourse “woman” or “gender” at the heart of the controversy has never been clarified.

3. Women as Desire Itself

Querying the speakers and the audiences of the discourse is a (post-)modern way of asking questions with which Buddhist literature is not always in conversation. However, just as Buddhism advocates the view that “in dependence on the ear and sounds there arises ear-consciousness” (Feer 1894, p. 68; Bodhi 2000, p. 1172), it would also agree that the discourse does not have a real and invariable nature but contains the speakers, the action of the discourse itself, and the audiences as its associated conditions. Therefore, it is useful to analyze the gender discourse in Buddhist literature with the tools of the (post-)modern gender theories in order to explore the teachings of “no women in the Land of Bliss” for its audiences—the good men and women.

“Gender” in the usual sense refers to the biological “sex”, with sexual organs and secondary sexual characteristics as the standard to distinguish between men and women. However, the mere physical bodies that we are born with do not identify our gender. It is only in the production of the relational situations that we encounter others and ritually repeat the practice of gender norms to interpellate the sexualized subjectivity, which is referred to as “social gender”. It is “gender” with obvious historical and cultural characteristics that make “sex” produced and established as “prediscursive nature” (Butler 1999, p. 11). However, gender is just a consequence of being produced, and the further question is how we identify ourselves with others we encounter, which involves the third division of gender—“sexual difference”. That is, we identify “who I am (male or female or otherwise)” in the process of orientating our desire and how it is realized in the symbolic order. “Sexual difference” results in two different sexual positions: in the man’s position, a man wants to possess the desire, imagines it as a whole object, and replaces this object with the body part of the other, in order to confirm his subjectivity; in the woman’s position, through masquerade, a woman becomes the desire itself that the other wants to have so as to obtain the identification of their subjectivity from the other (Lacan 1993, p. 177). These two sexual positions do not necessarily correspond to the biological sex. It can be seen from the above distinction of gender that it is necessary to further clarify the meaning of “gender” in the corresponding context of Buddhist literature before explaining the controversy over female issues in various versions of the scriptures.

The use of “gender” in Buddhist literature is very complex and generally based on the conditioned co-arising of gender as “hypothetical being” rather than “real being” (*Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, vol. 9, translated by Xuanzang 玄奘, T27, p. 42a25). From the perspective of ultimate truth, “gender” is just a concept that is established by convention without any real, unchangeable, and eternal essence. In the pragmatic situation, “gender” is always an expression of a mutual relationship. There are a lot of terms for “gender pairing” in Buddhist literature, such as bhikkhu and bhikkunī, sāvaka (male disciple) and sāvika (female disciple), upāsakā (layman) and upāsikā (laywoman), etc. (Skilling 2001). However, the exact meaning of “gender” is not synonymous, which can be found in different contexts.

Generally, the use of biological sex and social gender is easy to distinguish. In the Buddhist monastic discipline, the distinction between men and women is based on the biological sex, namely the male and female faculty. For example, in the process of “inquiring to stop and dissuade” when monks receive the full precepts (upasaṃpadā), they are asked whether the sexual organ is normal; if a monk has intersex or abnormal genitalia, they are not allowed to receive the full precepts.⁴ When referring to men and women in the family, Buddhist literature constructs the social gender to conform to the secular ethical norms. For example, *Sīṅgālovāda-suttanta* teaches that the husband and wife should treat each other with respect and love.⁵

However, the use of “sexual difference” is veiled, subtle, and at the same time fundamental, which is embodied in the myth of gender creation in *Aggañña-sutta*.⁶ It is said that: at the beginning of a new cycle, sentient beings were born in the Ābhassara Brahmā world, and their bodies were glorious without gender. When going from there to this world and tasting the savory earth (rasa-pathavī), they were taken with craving, and their bodies became coarser with differences in looks (vaṇṇa). After that, they ate fungus

(bhūmipappaṭaka), creepers (badālatā), rice (sāli), and then male and female characteristics began to emerge.

“And these beings set to and fed on this rice, and this lasted for a very long time. And as they did so, their bodies became coarser still, and the difference in their looks became even greater. And the females developed female sex-organs (itthi-liṅga), and the males developed male organs (purisa-liṅga). And the women became excessively preoccupied with men, and the men with women. Owing to this excessive preoccupation with each other, passion (sārāga) was aroused, and their bodies burnt with lust. And later, because of this burning, they indulged in sexual activity” (Walshe 1995, p. 411; Davids and Carpenter 1911, p. 88).

This myth was used to explain the origins of four castes so that it can be read in the legal and political context (Collins 1993; Huxley 1996). According to the narrative, social order can be traced back to mutual attraction between the sexes (Engelmajer 2015, pp. 11–33). But what is often overlooked is that there is a psychoanalytic structure of desire behind sexual attraction. In this myth, it is a process of continuous degeneration from the sentient beings living in the Ābhassara Brahmā world with no distinction between men and women to the appearance of male and female bodies. The root of gender is eating the food produced by the earth, and their bodies become increasingly coarse. “Earth” (pathavī) means negative, material, and desire, whose irresistible temptation makes sentient beings into the symbolic structure of desire. In the process of orientation and realization of desire, the material bodies are differentiated into two sexes, and the sexual organs of men and women eventually begin to perform their functions so that the desire is fulfilled.

In the Buddhist understanding of fertilization as an embryo, the difference between love and hate, in the beginning, determines the biological sex. *Garbhāvākraṅtinirdeśa* describes the formation of an embryo’s sex as follows. During parental sexual intercourse, sentient beings become fertilized embryos from the intermediate state between life and death, before which two reversed minds arise. It becomes a man if it loves its mother, hates its father, and thinks its father’s sperm is its own when it comes out; it becomes a woman if it loves its father, hates its mother, and thinks its mother’s egg is its own when it comes out. Love and hate are the prerequisites for fertilization.⁷ This means that sentient beings have been falling into the fulfillment of desire since they became fertilized eggs, and “sexual difference” has made men and women show their fondness of the opposite position and hatred of the same position. Namely, it is the “Oedipus complex”. Because of its power, each sentient being is born again, and the biological sex is formed when the body is achieved. Therefore, in the Buddhist detailed discussion of gender, “sexual difference” is fundamental and active, while biological sex is secondary and passive. “Sexual difference” is a symbol of the cycle of life and death in the conditioned co-arising.

In the majority of Buddhist literature with men as the main subject of discourse, “sexual difference” is concentrated in the man’s position, and women are equated with desire itself and objectified as their bodies. In the gender myth, the distinction between men and women depends on where it is orientated in the structure of desire. It is said in *Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 34, that those sentient beings who have much desire become women when they come into this world from the Ābhassara Brahmā world (T2, p. 737a18–19). In other words, the desire itself becomes a woman, and the other person who wants to possess the woman as desire becomes a man.

Obviously, “sex difference” and biological sex can be inconsistent. This is reflected in a Buddhist legend in *Jiu Za Piyü Jing* 舊雜譬喻經, vol. 2, as follows. Once upon a time, venerable Aniruddha had become an Arhat, but he was beautiful as a woman. One day, he was walking alone in the grass while a frivolous young man thought he was a woman and tried to have intercourse with him. After finding out that Aniruddha was a man, the young man saw himself changed into a woman. He felt ashamed, depressed, and afraid to go home and then fled to the mountains for some years. His wife did not know where he was, thought he was dead, and wailed restlessly. One day, when Aniruddha passed by the young man’s house begging for food, the young man’s wife was crying and

hoped Aniruddha would help her. Aniruddha silently did not respond, feeling pity for her, and thus he went to the mountains to see the young man. Then the young man was full of remorse, recovered his male body, and returned home (T4, pp. 516c23–517a3). In this story, the logic of women’s existence equated with desire itself is obvious (Li 1999). Though Aniruddha looked like a woman, he had no desire and was not a woman after all. In contrast, the frivolous young man became a woman because his desire overflowed and occupied the woman’s position. Only after repenting the faults of desire did he return to his true self. Here the man’s position is still dominant, and a woman is the object of a man’s desire. A similar story can be found in *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, with a young man named Soreyya and the great Arhat Mahākaccāyana as the main characters, but the shift in gender is also due to lust, of which the woman is a symbol (Norman 1970, pp. 325–32). It is said in *Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 30, that the question of “what do women want” really depends on what men want, and women desire men, beautiful jewelry, freedom, and sweet love (T2, p. 714c1–3). Therefore, much of Buddhist literature dealing with women’s issues is less about women than about men’s desire.

Although Buddhism does not approve of the ascetic practice of extreme physical mutilation, desire is a way for sentient beings to enter the flow of the conditioned co-arising, to cause various karmas, and to receive retribution. It becomes a formidable obstacle to liberation. In order to overcome male Buddhist desire, Buddhist spiritual cultivation is devoted to deconstructing women as the object of men’s desire and the ego in men’s erotic experience. It begins with the physical bodies of women. There is “the meditation of impurity” (aśubhā-smṛti) for lust, that is, to observe the filth of women’s bodies. The attractive sensual beauty of women is only a temporary illusion, but in fact, women’s bodies are full of impure fluids from head to foot (*Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 27, T2, p. 700c19–22). What is more, everything is impermanent, changeable, and cannot be maintained for a long time. The seemingly attractive bodies have to go to old age, disease, death, decay, flesh and blood pollution, bones scattered, eventually mixed with the soil.⁸ Thus women’s bodies that men want to possess are the results of illusory imaginations. Secondly, desire represented by women is a hideous fault, which, like a viper, makes men fall into an endless abyss. Buddhist literature summarizes “the five evils”, “the eight ugly mentalities”, “the nine evils”, and other faults imposed on women, including filth, two tongues, jealousy, anger, non-reflection, evildoing, viciousness, and so on.⁹ Thirdly, to touch a woman means to fall into the structure of desire, to cause various karmas, to be entangled in afflictions, and ultimately to go to hell (*Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 12, T2, p. 608c6). However, the deconstruction of women is not enough to eliminate men’s desire. For some bhikkhus still engaging in sexual immorality, the Buddha formulated the “un-Brahman behavior” (abrahma-carya) as the first of the four pārājika to compulsorily regulate the desire of monks. It is not only because the deconstruction of women is incomplete but also because men can find other substitutes for women as objects of desire. For example, the “un-Brahman behavior” was due to a bhikkhu’s sexual intercourse with a female monkey.¹⁰ It is impossible to overcome men’s desire to manipulate their sexual organs without deconstructing their subjectivity, which is identified by the desired objects in the erotic experience. Before nirvāṇa, the Buddha told Ānanda not to see women, not to talk to women, and to hold his mind (Davids and Carpenter 1903, p. 141; *Dirghāgama*, vol. 4, T1, p. 26a22–26). This is the elimination of men’s grasping at ego that wants to own their desired objects. At this point, the spiritual goal of overcoming desire is accomplished.

For the debate on “no women in the Land of Bliss”, the previous critics and defenders mainly discussed “women” in terms of biological sex and social gender. However, the Land of Bliss is a pure land that is very different from the Sahā World, and one needs to follow the transcendental teachings of Amitābha Buddha in order to be reborn there. It means that all secular social identities and corresponding norms are no longer in play there, including the social gender identity. With the exception of a small number of viviparous sentient beings living in the border city, which were added to expand the belief in Pure Land Buddhism, the vast majority of sentient beings in the Land of Bliss are reborn by transformation on

a lotus flower, which means that the reproductive function of biological sex is no longer necessary. Therefore, the remaining question is how to overcome the temptation of desire and achieve inner purity, which is related to “sexual difference”.

Looking back at the text of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, “no women in the Land of Bliss” is for transcending gender and the desire of Buddhist practitioners. When *ASSGRJ* and *WQPJ* describe the scenes of the Land of Bliss, it is mentioned, “There are Bodhisattvas and Arhats in his country, and there are no women. Their life expectancy is unlimited. Women wishing to come and be reborn in his country will forthwith become men” (T12, p. 303c8–9; T12, p. 283a19–21). In this description, women are contrasted with Bodhisattvas and Arhats, who do not have the body of a woman. In other words, women are the desire itself that men want to possess, and at the same time an obstacle to bhikkhus’ liberation and to becoming a Bodhisattva or an Arhat. Therefore, gender and desire must be overcome in the process of spiritual cultivation. In different versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, *ASSGRJ* and *WQPJ* emphasize that overcoming desire is one of Dharmākara’s vows (T12, p. 301b25; T12, p. 281c3); accordingly, *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions do not explicitly refer to desire but to not grasping at one’s own body, ego, and things that belong to oneself (T12, p. 268a9; T11, p. 93c5; Fujita 2011, p. 16, l.17; Ōta 2005, p. 49). Furthermore, *ASSGRJ*, *WQPJ*, and *WJ* emphasize that the first condition for superior sentient beings being reborn in the Land of Bliss is to stay away from their wives and desire (T12, p. 309c27; T12, p. 291c17; T12, p. 272b16); accordingly, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions just refer to cultivating the virtuous power (*kuśala-mūla*) for a long time (T11, p. 97c27–28; Fujita 2011, p. 48, l.9; Ōta 2005, p. 185). In *ASSGRJ* and *WQPJ*, “no women in the Land of Bliss” is about deconstructing the object of men’s desire into an impossible existence, and men’s subjectivity then becomes impossible. If so, bhikkhus will be liberated from the man’s position in the structure of desire and reborn in the Land of Bliss. Therefore, in the process of overcoming desire, “no women in the Land of Bliss” not only means the absence of women in the structure of desire but also the absence of men engaged in desire. However, *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions obviously dilute the importance of overcoming desire and no longer emphasize the absence of women. “Seven thousand nymphs” in Sanskrit and Tibetan versions even mean that desire is not different from enlightenment from the perspective of ultimate truth (*paramārtha*), but it may be related to the *prajñāpāramitā* thought of the early Mahāyāna Buddhism and the teaching of “the equal suchness of all phenomena without a difference” of Mañjuśrī because the ego fulfilled by secular desire is still criticized. Moreover, “transforming the female body” mentioned in all versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* should also be re-examined in “sexual difference”.

4. The Liberation of Women

As the audience of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, although the good women are not as important as the good men, they are still guaranteed liberation in Dharmākara’s vows. The question is: How can women be liberated from desire and reborn in the Land of Bliss? In contrast to the traditional Indian ambivalence toward women, Buddhism fully affirms that women can be Buddhist saints if they are steadfast in their faith and go forth from the household life into homelessness.¹¹ One of the ways Dharmākara offers women relief is “transforming the female body”. *ASSGRJ* and *WQPJ* clearly refer to women becoming men, while *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions refer to abandoning female bodies.

However, apart from the brief text, *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* offers no further explanation of “transforming the female body”. This makes it necessary to resort to the theoretical contexts beyond the text of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* for a precise understanding of the meaning. According to the comparison between the Chinese translations and other ancient sūtras, *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, one of the older sūtras in early Mahāyāna Buddhism, was formed around 100 A.D. (Fujita 1970, p. 224). Although it emphasizes bodhisattva and *prajñāpāramitā*,¹² it advocates monasticism and does not deny the realized attainment of śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha, which shows that it represents the bodhisattva thought of early Mahāyāna Buddhism and accepts the tradition of early Buddhism (Shi

1994, p. 802). Given this, similar descriptions in early Buddhism (Theravāda Buddhism) and early Mahāyāna Buddhism are helpful to further understand the specific meaning of “transforming the female body” in *The Larger Sukhāvātīyūha*.

The proposition of “transforming the female body” also needs to be clarified in the context of gender distinction. There are descriptions of the transformation of biological sex in Buddhist literature. For example, in *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, a bhikkhunī who had grown male genitalia (purisa-liṅga) was categorized into the bhikkhu groups; a bhikkhu who had grown female genitalia (itthi-liṅga) was categorized into the bhikkhunī groups.¹³ It is worth noting that Gopikā, a female disciple of the Buddha living in Kapilavatthu, observed Buddhist precepts scrupulously, rejected women’s mind (itthi-citta) for men’s mind (purisa-citta), and after death was reborn as Gopaka, the god’s son living in the heaven of the Thirty-Three; in contrast, three monks, although observing the Buddha’s teaching, lived indulging in the pleasure of the five senses and after death were reborn as gandhabbas who served the gods.¹⁴ In this story, changing the biological sex is a result of pure cultivation and elimination of desire, and the accomplished god’s son is different from men in general. It shows that changing the biological sex is only a visual representation, and changing the gender lies in the transformation of “sexual difference” in the structure of desire. On one hand, according to the above analysis, in the Buddhist understanding of gender, the formation of “sexual difference” is the foundation for the function of sexual organs. However, even without sexual organs, “sexual difference” will still give the gender distinction to sentient beings in other forms. On the other hand, from the perspective of liberation, it is not important whether the sexual organs are changed or not. For example, *Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 22, mentions that Sumagadhi made a vow in her previous life to obtain the pure dharma eyes without changing her female body (T2, p. 665a22–23). Therefore, the deep connotation of “transforming the female body” is to release from the woman’s position in the structure of desire and stop being the woman that men want to own as the embodiment of lust.

In the early Mahāyāna sūtras, when women acquire anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, they are described as “transforming the female body into the male’s”.¹⁵ However, it does not mean the gender discrimination or patriarchal discursive hegemony because from the perspective of ultimate truth, the own-being of all phenomena in the flow of the conditioned co-arising is empty, temporary, and unreal, and the suchness (tathatā) transcends any dual distinction, including gender differences. Any obsession with the distinction between men and women is just an inverted illusion. In *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, when Śāriputra asked the goddess who lived in Vimalakīrti’s house what prevented her from transforming herself out of the female body, the goddess employed her magical power (adhi-ṣṭhāna) to cause Śāriputra to appear in her form and to cause herself to appear in his form. Then the goddess, transformed into Śāriputra, said to Śāriputra, transformed into a goddess, “what prevents you from transforming yourself out of the female body?” When Śāriputra was at a loss, the goddess said, “As Śāriputra is not a woman in reality but appears in the form of a woman, all women appear in the form of women in just the same way. Although they appear in the form of women, they are not women in reality. With this in mind, the Buddha said, in all phenomena, there is neither male nor female” (vol. 2, translated by Kumārajīva, T14, p. 548b22–c5). In the *Lotus Sūtra*, Śāriputra questioned the daughter of the nāga king Sāgara (sāgara-nāga-rāja-duhitṛ) on the rapid attainment of Buddhahood with the “five obstacles” (pañca sthāna); that is, women could not become the Brahma heavenly king, the lord of gods (Śakra), the devil king, the wheel-turning sage king, and the Buddha. The daughter of the nāga king Sāgara suddenly became a man with her magical power, fulfilled all the practices of a Bodhisattva, and became a Buddha in the unsullied world of the south (vol. 4, translated by Kumārajīva, T9, p. 35c6–19). In both of these scriptures, Śāriputra represents the early Buddhist monks’ attitude of avoiding women and overcoming lust. In contrast, Mahāyāna Buddhism uses the magical power to express “transforming the female body” and resolve the crisis brought by desire (Schuster 1981), and the rationale behind the magical power is the idea of equality of all phenomena. The own-being of

all phenomena is the same, empty and undifferentiated, and all phenomena arise only with sufficient conditions of association. There is no real permanent and unchanging essence or representation but the unreal impermanent changeable phenomena, just like the illusion created by the illusionist. Therefore, “desire”, “woman”, “female body”, and so on have no real own-being, and “to transform” and “not to transform” are both empty and indistinguishable from the perspective of ultimate truth.¹⁶ In describing the various conditions for the fulfillment of “transforming the female body”, it is held in *Strīvīvartavyākaraṇa* that one can get rid of a woman’s body and become a man in a short time if one achieves the only condition of the deep pursuit of full enlightenment (translated by Dharmamitra, T14, p. 918c6–8). It can be seen that “transforming the female body” is equivalent to obtaining anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Since “transforming the female body” means women’s liberation, the result of women’s transformation should not be to become a man in the man’s position, nor a man in the sense of biological sex, because women are still subject to the structure of desire if they move from the woman’s position to the man’s position or from the male genitalia to the female genitalia. Although the way of orientating one’s own desire or the function of sexual organs is different, they are still tortured by their desire and cause various karmas in the world of the conditioned co-arising, instead of moving toward pure spiritual cultivation and liberation. It is not consistent with the purity and peace of the Land of Bliss, which is “second only to nirvāṇa”.¹⁷ Therefore, the result of “transforming the female body” is not to become an ordinary man but a saint of full enlightenment and liberation—“the great man”. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, “the great man” is synonymous with “Buddha”.

The distinction between the great and the non-great lies in the complete elimination of afflictions and liberation from the sexual positions caused by “sexual difference” and is not directly related to the biological sex. In *Samyutta-Nikāya* 47.11, it is said that one with a liberated mind (vimutta-citta) is the great man (mahā-purisa), and one without a liberated mind is not the great man. A liberated mind means to remove covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world and become dispassionate by non-clinging when one dwells contemplating the body in the body, feelings in feelings, mind in mind, and phenomena in phenomena (Feer 1898, p. 158; Bodhi 2000, p. 1640). This scripture emphasizes that “the great man” describes the achievement of Buddhist practitioners who transcend the structure of desire and are free from all kinds of afflictions. It is used to refer to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, and other saints who achieve liberation. Therefore, even bhikkhus with male genitalia are not the great man until they are liberated; even bhikkhunīs who do not have male genitalia are the great man after their liberation. A classic example of this is Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the Buddha’s aunt, who preceded the Buddha in nirvāṇa. The Buddha said that although she was a woman, she had removed all women’s faults and become the great man without any afflictions.¹⁸ Obviously, the process of “transforming the female body” has nothing to do with female genitalia. Once a woman is liberated from the woman’s position and becomes the great man of full enlightenment and liberation, female genitalia no longer play any role even if they are still retained.

The further question is, how can a woman accomplish the transformation? It has to go back to the woman’s position in the structure of desire. A woman disguises her body as the object of men’s desire, which is actually used to cover up the irreducible impossibility of her own existence because a woman cannot identify her subjectivity with any symbolic signifier unless she “becomes” the object of men’s desire and fulfills her desire in them to confirm her subjectivity. However, a woman in the world of the conditioned co-arising has to experience the capricious afflictions of birth and death, and the identification of her subjectivity she wants in the structure of desire is only the identification of the emptiness (śūnyatā) of her own existence. In *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* 7.48, to transcend her femininity (itthatta), a woman should not take delight in her inner feminine faculty, comportment, appearance, aspect, desire, voice, ornamentation, and corresponding characteristics of the opposite sex; in the same way, a man’s transcendence of masculinity (purisatta) should not take delight in the various masculine and heterosexual characteristics (Hardy 1899, pp. 58–59). In short, any

gender characteristics must be transcended in the process of disengagement from desire. However, the key obstacle to enlightenment is not “gender” but “clinging” to one’s own gender identity, or “the grasping at ego” as Buddhism often calls it. And releasing clinging is about approaching “egolessness” with an equanimous mind (Gross 2018, p. 106).

In the story of Ānanda and Mātāṅgī, women’s cultivating journey of the enlightenment and liberation is fully illustrated. When seeing Ānanda begging for food, Mātāṅgī from caṇḍāla (the lowest and most despised of the untouchable) fell in love with him deeply and asked her mother to force him to comply with witchcraft, but Ānanda resisted the temptation and escaped successfully with the help of the Buddha. In order to marry Ānanda, Mātāṅgī followed him to the Buddha’s residence and promised the Buddha to shave her hair. Then the Buddha pointed out that Ānanda had tears, mucus, saliva, earwax, excrement, sperm, and sperm led to birth, which again led to death, tears, and so on. After that, Mātāṅgī attained enlightenment and became an Arhat by contemplating the impure fluids in her body.¹⁹ In this story, it is Mātāṅgī’s own desire that leads to her becoming a bhikkhunī. And in the process of her liberation, what she realized was not the filth of Ānanda’s body, but the illusory nature of her own desire. The impermanent body cannot become the object of men’s desire and, accordingly, cannot confirm its own subjectivity. Therefore, the woman (and at the same time the man) position in the structure of desire collapses. The Buddha finally pointed out that Ānanda and Mātāṅgī were married in their 500 previous lives and now “met as brothers”.²⁰ It means that Mātāṅgī had been liberated from the woman’s position and become the great man.

After “transforming the female body”, a woman will obtain a pure and perfect body and be no longer bound by desire and the female social norms. Even though her body still has female genitalia, she will not use them for sexual gratification. In the story of Bhikkhunī Somā, Māra the Evil One first seduced her by becoming an amorous and handsome youth (*Samyuktāgama*, vol. 45, T2, p. 326a21–29) and later attacked her with the difficulty of being liberated from “the two-fingered wisdom” (dvaṅgula-paññā refers to housework). Bhikkhunī Somā saw through his trick and replied to him, “What does womanhood (itthi-bhāva) matter at all when the mind is concentrated well when knowledge flows on steadily as one sees correctly into Dhamma. One to whom it might occur, ‘I’m a woman’ or ‘I’m a man’ or ‘I’m anything at all’—is fit for Māra to address.” (*Samyutta-Nikāya* 5.2, *Bodhi* 2000, pp. 222–23; *Feer* 1884, p. 129). It can be seen that the liberated woman has completely transcended all gender distinction—whether the biological sex, social gender, or “sexual difference”—and has achieved the perfect pure sagehood.

In *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, which focuses on depicting the glorious achievements of Amitābha Buddha, when a woman is reborn in the Land of Bliss, she breaks away from her gender-specific body and acquires an undifferentiated, pure, golden body with 32 major marks of a Buddha.²¹ In Dharmākara’s vows of becoming a Buddha, “transforming the female body” is a visual description of full enlightenment and liberation. It is a popular metaphor for Buddhist spiritual cultivation, which points to the fulfillment of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and finally becoming a Buddha.

5. Conclusions

From the above analysis, it is obvious that there are still clear differences in the multiple versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*. While *ASSGRJ* and *WQPJ* explicitly emphasize that there are no women in the Land of Bliss, *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions do not definitely indicate this, and even mention the viviparous sentient beings living in the border city and seven thousand nymphs. However, they should be added to expand the belief in the Land of Bliss, which are not suitable for Dharmākara’s vows of becoming a Buddha.

The gender discourse in the text of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* can be understood from the perspective of “sexual difference”. In the process of orientating their own desire and the way to fulfill it, women make themselves into the desire itself that men want to possess by masquerade so as to obtain the identification of their own subjectivity from men. However,

sentient beings' determination of their gender also means that karmas are worked out with retribution and afflictions, and thus the full enlightenment and liberation must transcend desire and gender. "No women in the Land of Bliss" not only deconstructs men's lust and the grasping at ego but also separates women from desire and makes them move toward liberation. And behind the differences in the existence of women in the multiple versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* is a change in attitude toward desire. Influenced by the firm rejection of desire in early Buddhism, *ASSGRJ* and *WQPJ* emphasize the importance of transcending gender and overcoming desire. Perhaps influenced by the *prajñāpāramitā* thought of the early Mahāyāna Buddhism and the teaching of "the equal suchness of all phenomena without a difference" of Mañjuśrī, the attitude toward gender discussion in *WJ*, *WRH*, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions is obviously relaxed, and thus there is the depiction of "a following of seven thousand nymphs".

The multiple versions of *The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* all mention "transforming the female body" as a way of liberation offered to women by Pure Land Buddhism but do not explain it further. By comparing similar descriptions in early Buddhism and other sūtras of early Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is clear that women's enlightenment of their own endless cycles of birth and death reveals the impossibility that men want to own women as the embodiment of desire. As a result, they are freed from the bondage of the structure of desire and become the fully liberated great man who does not fall into any gender distinction. The existence of the body with female genitalia has become irrelevant because the male and female genitalia are no longer functional outside the structure of desire.

In conclusion, Dharmākara's vow on women expresses the transcendence of Buddhist liberation over desire and gender in the world of the conditioned co-arising and depicts a pure, solemn, magnificent scene of the Land of Bliss. This wisdom from Buddhism may provide a guide for thinking about gender issues in the current context.

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Notes

- ¹ Mochizuki Shinkō believed that *WJ* was translated by Baoyun 寶雲 in 421 A.D. (Mochizuki 1986, p. 30). Kagawa Takao agreed with Mochizuki Shinkō (Kagawa 1984, pp. 24–30). Jan Nattier argued that *WJ* was not translated in the third century and should have been translated after the end of the fourth century (Nattier 2008, p. 159). Karashima Seishi, based on vocabulary and grammar, dated the translation to the fifth century (Karashima 2016, p. 344).
- ² T. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切經刊行會, 1924–1934.
- ³ For example, Dharmarakṣa's translation of *Aṣṭabuddhaka* (T14, p. 73c4), *Ratnajālīparipṛcchā* (T14, p. 106b3), *Avaiartikacakra*, vol. 1 (T9, p. 208c25), *Ratnacūḍa* (T11, p. 672a4–5); Kumārajīva's translation of *Pañcabhikṣuśatavyākaraṇa* and *Bhaisajyārājapūrvayoga* in *Lotus Sutra* (T9, p. 27c25; p. 53a16), *Vikurvāṇarājapariṇcchā*, vol. 2 (T13, p. 934c4–5), *Brahmaviśeṣacintīparipṛcchā*, vol. 2 (T15, p. 45a16); Dharmakṣema's translation of *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka*, vol. 3 (T3, p. 183c22–23), and so on.
- ⁴ See *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, vol. 23 (translated by Buddhahadra and Faxian 法顯, T22, p. 413c2); *Dharmaguputakavinaya*, vol. 60 (translated by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, T22, p. 1014a19–20); vol. 48 (T22, p. 926c18–29).
- ⁵ See *Dīgha-Nikāya* 31 (Davids and Carpenter 1911, p. 190). It also appears in *Dīrghāgama*, vol. 11 (translated by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, T1, pp. 71c26–72a4).
- ⁶ See *Dīgha-Nikāya* 27 (Davids and Carpenter 1911, pp. 84–89). It also appears in *Dīrghāgama*, vol. 6 (T1, pp. 37b28–38a4), *Madhyamāgama* vol. 39 (translated by Saṃghadeva, T1, pp. 674b16–675b2), *Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 34 (translated by Saṃghadeva, T2, p. 737a5–19), *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, vol. 2 (T22, p. 239b18–c14), *Mūlasarvāstivādinayavibhaṅga*, vol. 2 (translated by Yijing 義淨, T23, p. 635a19–c8).

- ⁷ It appears in *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, vol. 55, translated by Bodhiruci (T11, p. 322b9–14), and another version was translated by Yijing 義淨 in *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, vol. 56 (T 11, p. 328b18–20). Also, see *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinayaśūdrakavastu*, vol. 11 (translated by Yijing 義淨, T24, p. 253c1–3).
- ⁸ See (Trenckner 1888, pp. 88–89). It also appears in *Madhyamāgama*, vol. 25 (T1, pp. 585c20–586a12) and *Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 12 (T2, pp. 605b22–606a14).
- ⁹ “The five evils” are slightly different in different texts. See *Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 27 (T2, p. 700c11); *Anan Tongxue Jing* 阿難同學經 (translated by An Shigao 安世高, T2, p. 874b22–c3); *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinayaśūdrakavastu*, vol. 7 (T24, p. 235c21–23). “The eight ugly mentality”, see *Fajū Piyū Jing* 法句譬喻經 (translated by Fajū 法炬 and Fali 法立, T4, p. 604a20–23). “The nine evils”, see *Ekottarikāgama*, vol. 41 (T2, p. 769c10–15).
- ¹⁰ See (Oldenberg 1881, pp. 21–22). It also appears in *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, vol. 1 (T22, p. 233b22–c2), *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, vol. 1 (translated by Buddhajīva and Zhu Daosheng 竺道生, T22, p. 3c11–17), *Sarvāstivāda vinaya* vol. 1 (translated by Punyatāra and Kumārajīva, T23, p. 2a2–27), *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya vibhaṅga* vol. 11 (T23, p. 629c3–28).
- ¹¹ It happened when Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī asked the Buddha for women to become monks. See (Hardy 1899, p. 276; Oldenberg 1880, p. 254). It also appears in *Madhyamāgama* vol. 28 (T1, p. 605b11–16), *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, vol. 29 (T22, p. 185c16–18), *Dharmaguputakavinaya*, vol. 48 (T22, p. 923a22–24), *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinayaśūdrakavastu*, vol. 29 (T24, p. 350c7–9).
- ¹² Amitābha Buddha said *The Larger Sūtra of the Wisdom of All Modes* (“*Daozhi Da Jing* 道智大經”, see T12, p. 307a24–25; T12, p. 287b23) for the disciples in the Land of Bliss, which is probably the most original *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the first chapter of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Shi 1994, pp. 562–68).
- ¹³ See (Oldenberg 1881, p. 35). It also appears in *Mahīśāsakavinaya*, vol. 17 (T22, p. 119a11–22), *Dharmaguputakavinaya*, vol. 35 (T22, p. 813b15–21), *Sarvāstivāda vinaya* vol. 23 (T23, p. 295a24–29).
- ¹⁴ See (Davids and Carpenter 1903, pp. 271–72). It also appears in *Dīrghāgama*, vol. 10 (T1, p. 63c3–8) and *Madhyamāgama* vol. 33 (T1, p. 634b5–10).
- ¹⁵ For example, *Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā*, vol. 4 (translated by Dharmarakṣa, T15, p. 153a16), *Fo Sheng Daolitian wei Mu Shuofa Jing* 佛昇忉利天為母說法經, vol. 3 (translated by Dharmarakṣa, T17, p. 797b15), *Qianshi Sanzhuān Jing* 前世三轉經 (translated by Fajū 法炬, T3, p. 449a8), *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, vol. 7 (translated by Kumārajīva, T8, p. 568b16), *Drumakinnararājaparipṛcchā*, vol. 3 (translated by Kumārajīva, T15, p. 381b17).
- ¹⁶ See *Buddhasaṅgītisūtra*, vol. 2 (translated by Dharmarakṣa, T17, p. 768b26–27), *Śuraṅgamasamādhisūtra*, vol. 1 (translated by Kumārajīva, T15, p. 635a12–13), *Sumatidārikāparipṛcchā* (translated by Bodhiruci, *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, vol. 98, T11, pp. 548c29–549a1).
- ¹⁷ It appears in ASSGRJ (T12, p. 305a4; p. 313b20–21), WQPJ (T12, p. 284c5; p. 295b8), and WJ (T12, p. 271c5; p. 275c12–13). It is not found in WRH, Sanskrit, and Tibetan versions.
- ¹⁸ See *Da’aidao Bannihuan Jing* 大愛道般泥洹經 (translated by Bai Fazu 白法祖, T2, p. 869a28–b1), *Fomu Bannihuan Jing* 佛母般泥洹經 (translated by Huijian 慧簡, T2, p. 870b20–21), *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, vol. 90 (T27, p. 463c26–27) and vol. 145 (T27, p. 746a29–b3).
- ¹⁹ See *Mātaṅgīsūtra* (translated by An Shigao 安世高, T14, p. 895a6–c1; another version without a translator, T14, pp. 895c21–896b14) and *Binaiye* 鼻奈耶, vol. 3 (translated by Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, T24, pp. 863b16–864c4).
- ²⁰ See *Mātaṅgīsūtra* (T14, p. 895c12; another version without a translator, T14, pp. 896b23–24) and *Binaiye* 鼻奈耶, vol. 3 (T24, p. 864c8).
- ²¹ It appears in ASSGRJ (T12, p. 301c11–12; p. 302a5–6), WQPJ (T12, p. 281a20–23; c12–13), WJ (T12, p. 267c21–23; p. 268b6–7), and WRH (T11, p. 93b18–20; p. 94a3).

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