

# The Authenticity of Guanjing from the perspective of Cultural Exchange



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This study, which considers the exchange that occurs between civilisations, attempts to re-examine the question pertaining to the authenticity of sutra. The *Guanjing* [*Guan Wulingshou jing* 觀無量壽經 Skt. *Amitāyur Dhyāna Sūtra*; Contemplation Sūtra], which is an influential Buddhist text, immensely facilitated the first transmission of Zen Buddhism that occurred during the Middle Ages, and it promoted the spread of the Pure Land thought.

Because of the modern academic research on the Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha, the discussion pertaining to the authenticity of the *Guanjing* has become prominent, and for more than half a century, issues pertaining to the place in which it was compiled, the time of its establishment and the absence of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts have received research attention. Buddhist texts have spread from India to China. If a general literature and linguistics perspective is adopted, the availability of a sutra in the original Indian language becomes a criterion for determining its reliability and authenticity. In addition, the translator, the place in which the translation occurred, the time of translation and the relationship with similar scriptures are all significant factors that can determine whether a sutra is an allegedly forged manuscript.

**Contribution:** This article contributes to the understanding of the authenticity and counterfeit nature of *Guanjing* through a civilisational exchange perspective. This study differs from previous thinking only in terms of Sinicized sects, and the article analyses the possible Indian and Central Asian sources of the text, pointing out the forms in which the *Guanjing* and *Ajātaśatru* are reflected.

**Keywords:** Guanjing; Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha; civilisation exchange; meditation; sinicisation.

## Introduction

Early Zen Buddhism and its Pure Land ideology were profoundly influenced by *Guanjing*. According to Kōtatsu (1985), with regard to the Sui and Song dynasties, this sutra was notably interpreted in more than 40 texts, and the vast majority of commentaries predate 800 AD. By the end of the Qing Dynasty and by the beginning of the Chinese Republic, 57 commentary books existed (Fukuhara Ryuzen 2017:16). The majority of the authors were the direct founders of various sects or prominent figures within those sects, which indicates the level of influence that *Guanjing* exhibits.

Historically, the Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha represents a certain stage in the development of Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, it reflects the process pertaining to the acceptance and selection of Indian Buddhism by Chinese Buddhist monks. It is clear that the *Guanjing* is a Buddhist text that incorporates elements of Indian and Central Asian thought and culture, and this text has significantly influenced Chinese culture. From the Silk Road to China, the *Guanjing* has immensely facilitated the spread of civilisation; the text linked the cultural, religious and artistic concepts of India and Central Asia to Chinese culture.

Since the introduction of Buddhism into China, the study pertaining to the Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha has evolved. 'Doubtful'疑 indicates a doubt pertaining to the authenticity of the sutras, whereas 'pseudo'偽 indicates that the sutras were created by the Chinese. The term 'Nijing'擬經 is utilised by some Japanese scholars to refer to unresolved sutras. Because of the discovery of the Dunhuang manuscripts, which were retrieved from the ancient temple manuscripts that are located in Japan and Korea, the ancient temple manuscripts have become a prominent field of study in Buddhist studies. The discovery of ancient temple manuscripts has also contributed to

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**Note:** Historical Thought and Source Interpretation.

the discovery of novel scriptures. The authenticity of *Guanjing*, which is discussed herein, has been debated for more than half a century, and multiple approaches, including linguistics, regional studies and edition studies, have been utilised. In comparison with the *Dasheng Qixinlun* 大乘起信論 [Skt. Mahāyāna 'śraddhotpāda], which is associated with China, this scenario is somewhat different. It should be noted that the *Dasheng Qixinlun* was categorised under the 'Doubtful Section' of *Fajing lu* 法經錄 [Zhongjing mulu 眾經目錄, Catalog of Scriptures], and with regard to both the earliest *Dao'an lu* 道安錄 [Zongli zhongjing mulu 綜理眾經目錄, Comprehensive Catalog of Scriptures] and *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 [Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka], it was categorised as a 'translator's anecdote'. Although researchers suspect that the sutra was not translated from a complete text, it was probably obtained from India or one of the larger Buddhist texts that have been widely circulated.

## ***Guanjing's* authenticity in the context of civilisational exchange**

Medieval Chinese scholars applied the translators' processing and understanding of the Indian Buddhist texts to the *Jiejing* 解經 [interpretation of the scriptures] process. After individually studying Chinese culture, these foreign monks analysed Indian Buddhism in relation to Chinese culture; thus, the initial means of communication between Chinese and Indian civilisations was initiated.

We attempt to answer the following research questions: Were the Chinese concepts that were documented in the early texts derived from the results of *Geyi* 格義 [categorising concepts] or were they obtained from India? If they were originally obtained from India, the aforementioned texts should be correlated with other Indian Buddhist texts. However, if a text was not originally obtained from India, did it emerge during the transmission process? Did the idea originate from Central Asia or did it originate from India?

In the transmission of the texts, they are constantly integrated with local cultures, and this is particularly important since they were transmitted to China. As a foreign culture, foreign cultures to develop in China, they must adapt to the local culture. Additionally, local civilisations must absorb and accept foreign cultures; thus, cultural exchange is a necessity. The following research question is intriguing: Did the Chinese countenance *Guanjing*, or were they attracted by the manner in which the text was integrated by Chinese monks?

With regard to the authenticity of *Guanjing*, the ancient scholars did not doubt its authenticity. However, after its translation, monks who were affiliated with various schools were eager to offer commentaries, and thus, they stated: the sutra was exclusively spoken by Buddha.

For nearly a century, American, European and Japanese scholars have debated the authenticity of *Guanjing*. Some

scholars, such as *Daoyuan* 道元 (1885), Kenryu (1971) and Kōtatsu (1985), believe that the Sixteen Visions are derived from the *wuliangshoujing* 無量壽經 [Skt. Sukhāvati-vyūha-sūtra; Sutra of Immeasurable Life]; Blum (1984) and Fukubara Ryoim (1984) discuss the translator's other translations, and they consider the role of compilation. The scholars who identify the Indian source using etymological attribution *Qingjinyechu* 清淨業處 [state of pure karma] and Hirakawa Akira (1984) cite *Guanjing*; however, Kōtatsu (1985) and Fumihiko (1986) oppose the text, and they link it to Abhidharma. Using a parallel Jain text, Jonathan (1997) attempts to ascertain the Indian origin of *Guanjing*.

Antonino Forte (1984) presents a clear understanding of the Chinese tradition:

Over a period of many centuries, they developed a belief that classical Sanskrit texts could be utilized to determine the authenticity of scriptures, as long as they were available. Nevertheless, in regard to the scenario that considers forged classical texts that have been discovered outside of China, this criterion is ineffective. Therefore, the participation of foreign monks was particularly significant. Their knowledge of whether a classical text has ever been transmitted beyond the borders of China is superior to the knowledge that is exhibited by the Chinese. These authentic sutras are at least considered as proof that the texts were translated. However, due to language and cultural barriers, not every foreign monk was afforded the opportunity to participate in numerous translations; thus, it is unlikely that the scholars were involved in some substantial translation process.

This also illustrates the point that the question of whether a sutra has a Sanskrit text or not is not entirely a criterion for judging the question of its authenticity.

Buswell's (Robert Buswell 1990:149–174) book, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, provides a historical overview pertaining to the research on the authenticity of the *Guanjing*. F. Kōtatsu, in this book, analyses the authenticity of the *Guanjing*. Subsequently, Professor Jonathan Silk (1997:234) and Professor *Ji yun* (2016:79–86) presented articles that contained the details pertaining to the authenticity of the text. Herein, we examine this research problem, and we adopt a multi-civilisational exchange perspective. The lack of a Sanskrit text was the initial cause for questioning the authenticity of the *Guanjing* and the place where the sutra was compiled, and the Chinese cultural elements that appear in its contents have all become a source of discussion on the question of its authenticity. So far, these case studies have been confined to sects, texts or Buddhism itself, without placing the object of study in the context of the development of social history and the history of thought in order to consider the issue. Cultural exchange is an important link in integrating different cultures, and previous studies have provided a basis for this study. This paper attempts to reinterpret the issue of authenticity from the perspective of cultural exchange, rather than

**TABLE 1:** Author's summary based on buddhist texts.

Vinaya	<i>Sifen lv</i> 四分律 [Skt. Dharmaguptaka-vinaya; Four Part Vinaya] <i>Genbenshuoyiqieyoubupinaiye</i> 根本說一切有部毘奈耶破[Skt. Mūla sarvāstivāda vinaya vibhāṅga] <i>Shisonglv</i> 十誦律 [Skt. Daśa-bhāṅavāra-vinaya; Ten Recitations Vinaya] <i>Mohe sengqi lv</i> 摩訶僧祇律 [Skt. Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya] <i>Pinimu jing</i> 毘尼母經 [Skt. Vinaya-mātrkā; Sutra on the Source of the Vinaya]
Scriptures and treatises	<i>Foshuo Guangmingtongzi Yinyuanjing</i> 佛說光明童子因緣經 [Skt. Jyotiṣkāvadāna; The Causes and Conditions of Sutra on the Luminous Youths] <i>Dazhi da lun</i> 大智度論 [Skt. Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra; a commentary on the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra] <i>Apidamo da piposha lun</i> 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 [Skt. Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣā-śāstra; Treatise of the Great Commentary on the Abhidharma] <i>Shizhu piposhalun</i> 十住毘婆沙論 [Skt. Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā; A commentary on the Daśabhūmika-sūtra] <i>Foshuo weishengyuanjing</i> 佛說未生冤經 [Skt. Ajātaśatru sūtra] <i>Chang ahan jing</i> 長阿含經 [Longer Āgama-sūtra] <i>Jizhiguojing</i> 寂志果經 [Skt. Srāmanyaphala sūtra] <i>Zengyi ahan jing</i> 增壹阿含經 [Increased by One Āgama Sutras] <i>Fenbie shane baoying jing</i> 分別善惡報應經撰集百緣經 [Skt. Avadānaśataka] <i>Da banniepan jing</i> 大般涅槃經 [Skt. Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra/Sutra of the Great Decease] <i>Pusabexingjing</i> 菩薩本行經 [Sutra of the Collection of the Original Acts of the Bodhisattva] <i>Da fangbian fo baoen jing</i> 大方便佛報恩經 [Great Skillful Means Sutra on the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness] <i>Xianyu jing</i> 賢愚經 [Skt. Damamūka-nidāna-sūtra; Sutra for the Wise and the Foolish] <i>Da baoji jing</i> 大寶積經 [Skt. Mahāratnakūta-sūtra; A collection of Mahāyāna sutras that were based on sermons given by the Buddha at forty-nine assemblies] <i>Da ban niepan jing houfen</i> 大般涅槃經後分 [The Latter Portion of the Sutra on the Great Decease] <i>Mohemoyejing</i> 摩訶摩耶經 [Skt. Mahāmāyā-sūtra] <i>The Shouhu guojie zhu tuoluoni jing</i> 守護國界主陀羅尼經 [Skt. Āryadhāraṇīśvararāja-sūtra; Sutra for Safeguarding the Nation, the Realm and the Chief of State] <i>Asheshiwang Wenwuni Jing</i> 阿闍世王問五逆經 [The king of Ajātaśatru asks about the five heinous crimes Sutras]

simply defining the *Guanjing* in terms of authenticity or falsity. The cultural value of the *Guanjing* and its influence on Chinese society is much greater than the debate over its authenticity.

## Cultural perspectives on Indian and Central Asian cultures

The story of the *Weishengyuan* 未生怨 [skt. Ajātaśatru], which is recounted in the *Guanjing*, is associated with the entire sutra and the creation of the Sixteen Views, and it focuses on King Ajātaśatru's father, King Bimbisāra 頻婆娑羅王 [monarch of the ancient Indian kingdom of Magadha]. It states that King Bimbisāra, fearing that there would be no one to inherit the throne after his death, asked a magician to perform divination. According to the warlock, a practitioner would reincarnate after the death of King Bimbisāra. To ensure that the prince would inherit the throne sooner, the king assigned someone the task of going to the mountain and killing the practitioner, after which he reincarnated the practitioner in the womb of the queen. This is the origin of the *Weishengyuan*,<sup>1</sup> which was formed even before birth. Besides *Guanjing*, this story has appeared in the following texts:

1. In regard to the scriptures, this text is also referred to as *asheshii* 阿闍世, *asheduosheduolu* 阿闍多設咄路.

We observed that the storyline appears in 25 Buddhist texts, and although the specific plot may differ slightly, the main plot remains constant. There are three kinds of sutras in these above texts. Herein, three types of texts are included: sutras, vinaya and discourse, which range temporally from the period in which the early Buddhist classical texts were written to the period pertaining to the compilation of the Mahayana Buddhist texts. It is worth noting that karmas such as killing one's father with poison were regarded as unrepentant; however, with regard to the Mahayana period, the sutras began to emphasise the repentability of evil karmas and the importance of repentance. With regard to structure and content, the *Guanjing* is closely correlated with the Jain texts that were obtained from northwest India; thus states Professor Silk, who analysed the elements of various stories, which were obtained from Buddhist and Jain texts. Therefore, it is apparent that the prologue [the story of *Weishengyuan*] is directly derived from Jain literature (Silk 1997:181–256). With regard to determining whether the story that is documented in the *Guanjing* is derived from these ancient texts, neither the early parallel texts pertaining to Buddhism nor the Jain texts can be utilised.

Although the texts may have been written during a later period, they may contain ancient concepts. With regard to India, Jainism and Buddhism emerged as non-orthodox sects, and they emerged within the same period; furthermore, their mutual influence is evident, and they naturally absorbed ideas and literature from the Brahmins who predated them, which indicates that they may share a common textual source that predates both Jainism and Buddhism. This phenomenon is evidenced by many parallel texts pertaining to Jainism and Buddhism, of which numerous examples can be obtained. '*Weishengyuan*', which is an alias, refers to Ajātaśatru rather than to Buddhism or Jainism, but rather to Yudhisthira (or 'invincible') from the earlier Indian religious literature by Mahābhārata. Additionally, Max Müller (1879) notes that the name Ajātaśatru also appears in the Upanishads.

It is also probable that similar concepts may be obtained from the Indian Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhist texts as well as in the *Guanjing*. With regard to the visualisation *Guanjing* pertaining to the *Shangpinshangsheng* 上品上升 [highest of the highest stage], there are three types of sentient beings who can be reincarnated by *Liunian* 六念 [six kinds of mindfulness]. The Buddha-viewing meditation that is documented in the *Guanjing*, which focuses on the Buddha's majesty and the Western Pure Land of pristine virtue, is conceptually similar to the *Nianfo* 念佛 [Buddha-recollection] concept that is documented in the *Liunian* of early Buddhism. The following examples provide a comprehensive depiction of the aforementioned observation.

Furthermore, sentient beings who perform evil deeds, speak evil words and harbour evil thoughts can, if they die, contemplate the merits and virtues of the Buddha and be liberated from the *San equ* 三惡趣 [three evil paths]; thus, they can ascend to heaven by contemplating the merits and

virtues of the Buddha. This provision enables the *Ji e* 極惡 [sinful] person to be destined for heaven as well, which constitutes the sixth merit and virtue of the Buddha. 複次, 眾生身、口、意行惡, 彼若命終, 憶如來功德, 離三惡趣, 得生天上; 正使極惡之人, 得生天上, 是謂第六如來功德。<sup>2</sup>

The *Guanjing* states that if sentient beings perform wrong actions, express wrong words and harbour wrong thoughts, at the end of their lives, if they remember the merits and virtues of the Buddha, they will not fall into the *San e qu* 三惡趣 [three evil destinies, Skt. *durgati*]; thus, they will be reincarnated in heaven. By reciting Buddha's merits in early Buddhism, Buddha's merits can be recalled. The text states that the *Ji e* person can be reborn in heaven if he remembers Buddha's merits, and it states that the lowest class of people can create bad karmas, and that if they recite Buddha's merits at the end of their lives, they can be reborn.

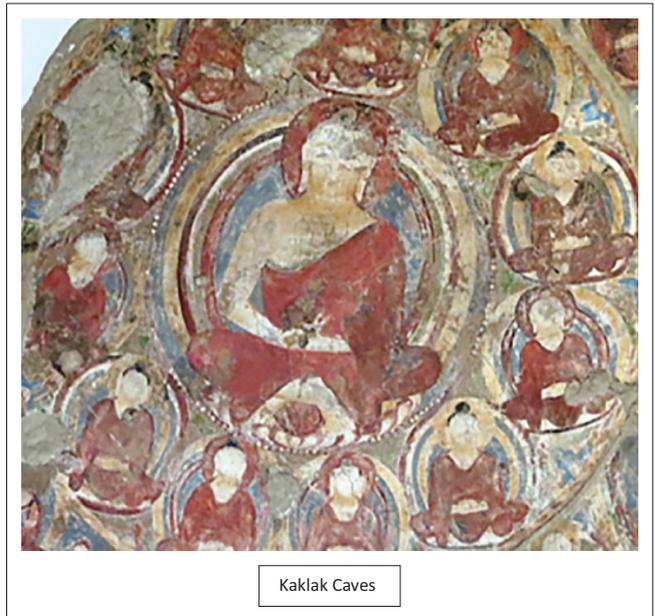
The *Guanfo* 觀佛 [meditate upon or visualise the Buddha] appearance, the Pure Land and rebirth in the West concepts, which are documented in the *Guanjing*, permeate Indian Buddhist literature. Many of these scriptures state that one can enter *Guanfo* *samādhi* through performing *Guanfo*. Early *Chanjing* 禪經 [meditation sutra] advocate *Guanfo* as a form of repentance and meditation, and it is believed that one first needs to perform *Guanfo*. For example, two-thirds of *Shiqin's* 世親 (i.e., Vasubandhu) that are documented in *Wangshenglun* 往生論 [Skt. *Sukhāvativyūhōpadeśa* Treatise on Rebirth] are dedicated to Buddha-viewing and the Pure Land. Texts such as *Dachengbaoyiyaolun* 大乘寶要義論 [Skt. *Sūtrasamuccaya*; A Collection of Sutras and Sermons on the Practice of Mahayana Buddhism], *Pusabenshengmanlun* 菩薩本生鬘論 [Skt. *Jātakamālā*; The one who praises the austerities of the Buddha's previous life.], *Shizhupiposhalun* 十住毗婆沙論 [Skt. *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*; A commentary on the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*] and the *Dazhidulun* 大智度論 [Skt. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*; a commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*] highlight the importance of *Guanfo* in Bodhisattva practice. In addition, the *Guanjing* contains references to the Vedic texts that are associated with ancient Indian religions, which indicates that the text may be associated with India. Moreover, with regard to this context, the discussions, both domestic and foreign, pertaining to the *Qingjinyechu* that is documented in the *Guanjing* are varied. Because of word-count limitations, we will not be able to discuss this topic further.

Apart from the aforementioned Indian concepts, the *Guanjing* also exhibits Central Asian ideals. Translators who have been associated with other visualisation scriptures (e.g., the *Guanjing*) originated from Central Asia, and they include *Jiumoluoshi* 鳩摩羅什 [Skt. *Kumārajīva*] and *Tanmomiduo* 曇摩密多 [Skt. *Dharmamitra*]. *Guanjing* states the following:

*Zhuyinluo* 諸瓔珞 [all the accessories] holding grape pulp, give it to the king in secret. 諸瓔珞中盛葡萄漿, 密以上王。<sup>3</sup>

2. *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經 32, T.125:2:725a29-b3.

3. *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 1, T.365:12: 341a7.



Kaklak Caves

Source: Benjamin Rowland, Jr. *The Wall-Paintings of India Central Asia & Ceylon*. Boston: Merrymount Press, 1938

FIGURE 1: Meditation on the Ten Buddhas at Kaklak Cave.



*Guanjing bianxiang* 觀經變相

Source: Dunhuang Mogao Caves, 25th Cave

FIGURE 2: *Guanjing bianxiang* 觀經變相 (paintings on the Visualization Sutra).

Generally, the Asian custom of drinking grape pulp or wine was influenced by the Mediterranean-style civilisation which was introduced following the conquest of Asia by the Greek King 'Alexander' in 329–323 BC. The ancient historical Chinese books indicate that wine was mainly produced in regions that are located in North India and Central Asia, such as *Xiyuzhuan* 西域傳 [Chronicle of Western Regions] in the Book of *Hanshu* 漢書<sup>4</sup> written by *Ban Gu* 班固.

Images of meditation Buddhas in the 10 directions can also be viewed in the Kaklak Caves of Central Asia, and these images are associated with *Guanfo*. Mahayana *Guanfo*

4. Biography of the Western Regions in the *Book of Han*.

scriptures,<sup>5</sup> which are documented in the *Guanjing*, discuss Mahayana meditation and the contemplation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Academics believe that these texts originated from Central Asia. With regard to meditation, one of the most common forms entails meditating on the Buddhas of the ten directions. Thus, one can deepen their meditation, expel sins, and even become reborn into the Western Pure Land.

The existence of a musical instrument known as the *Bichao* 箏 is also mentioned in the Dunhuang *Guanjing bianxiang* 觀經變相, and numerous caves that are located in Xinjiang depict the *Bichao*. Traditionally, this instrument has been an integral part of *Qiuci* 龜茲 music. Via the historical Silk Road, which passed through Central Asia, *Hu* 胡 music [e.g., *Guzi* music] was introduced.

To understand the concept of text, researchers must transcend the rational that pertains to the text. To effectively understand the communication differences that existed between civilisations, the text must be restored to its original state, which reflects the original culture.

## Indian and Chinese culture perspectives

The history of Chinese culture has witnessed the emergence of numerous different schools of thought, which became prominent after the *Chunqiu* 春秋 Dynasties, and these schools of thoughts have permeated dynasties such as the *Han* Dynasty, the *Wei-Jin* and Northern and Southern Dynasties and the *Sui* and *Tang* Dynasties. Foreign cultures were constantly introduced, and the different cultures and concepts permeated native worldviews. The concepts were constantly clashing, merging and evolving; although some concepts persisted, others waned or became absorbed.

Because some of the concepts that are documented in the *Guanjing* are compatible with traditional Chinese values, the text gained popularity in China. Firstly, with regard to the *Guanjing*, there are three blessings of *Jingye*, one of which is '*Xiaoyangfumu* 孝養父母 [Honouring one's mother and father] and *Shifengshizhang* 侍奉師長 [respecting one's elders]'. According to *Guanjing*, this *Jingye* is *Sanshizhufo jingyezhenyin* 三世諸佛淨業正因 [pure karma direct cause of Buddhas of the three times]. With regard to traditional Chinese culture, elements of filial piety and rituals exist, and these elements can be observed in both Confucian and Taoist cultures. With regard to Confucianism, we can observe:

Teaching three types of ethical behavior: first, filial piety, which entails honoring your parents; second,

5. In regard to the early translation period that characterised the Buddhism sutras, there was a group of Buddhism scriptures whose introduction corresponded with the period in which the Chinese meditation sutras were introduced; due to the transmission process, these scriptures incorporated elements of Indian and Central Asian thought and culture. These scriptures are generally referred to as the 'Guan XXX', and they are also known as the 'XXXX Guan'; furthermore, the scriptures focus on contemplating the image of Buddha and Bodhisattva and considering their Pure Land world, which can be accessed via meditation)

friendship, which enables one to honor the virtuous; third, obedience, which enables individuals to serve their teachers and elders.

教三行,一曰孝行,以親父母;二曰友行,以尊賢良;三曰順行,以事師長.<sup>6</sup> With regard to Taoism, we can observe the following: 'Filial piety is the most significant thing in the world'. 天下之事,孝為上第一.<sup>7</sup> 'The first commandment entails obeying parents, teachers and elders, and disobedience is unfiliality'. 第一戒者,不得違戾父母師長,反逆不孝.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, the *Guanjing* also mentions that individuals who indulge in *Wuni* 五逆 [five heinous crimes] can be reborn in the Western Pure Land and become saints. With regard to the traditional Chinese culture, everyone can be *Yao* 堯 and *Shun* 舜. Pro. Phyllis Granoff and Shinohara (2012:203–204) state the following: Although King Ajātasātru was a vicious sinner who killed both his father and the Buddha, he was glorified as the most devout follower of the Buddha. Because of his deep faith in the Buddha, his ministers attempted to prevent him from dying of grief when he heard of the Buddha's nirvana.

Thirdly, the *Guanjing* mentions that *Shixinshifo Shixinzufo* 是心是佛,是心作佛 [the mind is Buddha; the mind becomes a Buddha]. Consequently, this statement is consistent with the tendency of the traditional Chinese patriarchal system to turn from the Way of Heaven to the Way of Humanity. With respect to traditional Chinese culture, humanity is defined by the phrase 'everyone can be *Yao* and *Shun*', which emphasises human initiative and the value of each individual. With regard to *Guanjing* philosophy, *Shixinshifo Shixinzufo* represents a crucial concept, and the teachers who lived during the *Sui* and *Tang* dynasties interpreted this statement as follows: the human heart and the Buddha's heart are one. Consequently, the Chinese belief system acquired a humanistic and Confucian character.

With respect to China, following the introduction of *Guanjing*, its authenticity was not questioned; however, the text received widespread attention, and it immensely permeated the Chinese society. Because Chinese and Indian worldviews exhibited were highly correlated, the text was generally accepted despite the differences pertaining to the two worldviews. Throughout the period in which the Chinese and Indian civilisations were in conflict, the method that was utilised by Chinese civilisation was, firstly, the early translation and interpretation of classical texts (e.g., comparisons and *geyi*), and, The content of the *Guanjing* reflects these two aspects. One is that many commentaries on the *Guanjing* were produced in medieval China. The second is that a number of conceptual expressions representing local Chinese culture also appear in the *Guanjing*.

6. The Rites of Zhou 周禮

7. *Taipingjing* 太平經

8. *Yunjiqiqian* 雲笈七籤

## A Chinese Buddhism perspective

*Guanjing* is the short-form of the word *Guan wuliangshoufo jing*, and this Chinese translation is also known as *Wuliangshoujing*. Generally, it is believed that *Jinliangyeshe* 曇良耶舍 translated the sutra during the *Liu Song* Dynasty. These 16 teachings primarily focused on meditation and specific rebirth practices. No Sanskrit or Tibetan version of the sutra (Tachibana Zuicho 1921:21–41) exists; only a reduced version that was obtained from a remnant Uighur script has been discovered.

Despite being translated into Chinese and becoming a fundamental classical text pertaining to Pure Land Buddhism, the *Guanjing* was closely related to *Dachenchan* 大乘禪 [great vehicle meditation]. Furthermore, this text was particularly associated with a form of meditation that is known as *Guanfo*, which was widely practiced by early Zen monks, and this form of meditation was classified under a separate category along with the five gates or approaches to *dhyāna* (wumen chan 五門禪) which characterised early *Chanjing*. The details pertaining to the aforementioned claim are described in the previous article. The existing literature states that Jinliang Yeshe may not have translated this sutra for the first time. By the end of the Western Jin Dynasty, the sutra had already been in circulation. Ven. *Sengxian* 釋僧顯, who is mentioned in the *Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳 (i.e., the biography of an eminent monk), practiced meditation in his early days; however, upon recovering from illness, he began to contemplate the Western Pure Land and Buddha. The *Jintu wangsheng zhuan* 淨土往生傳 [Biography of rebirth in the Pure Land] by Song Ven. *Jiezhu* 戒珠 directly refers to the *Guanjing* as the source of *Sengxian*'s contemplation.

With regard to previous studies, a number of problems have been identified: (1) inadequate research has been conducted on the *Jinglu* 經錄 [scripture catalogue]; (2) less attention has been directed towards the *Xu* 序 [preface] and *Zan* 讚 ([praise]; (3) with regard to historical sources such as the *Gaosengzhuan*, not enough attention has been directed towards the documents that are associated with the *Guanjing*. With regard to the examination pertaining to the *Jinglu*, which considers different eras, several historical accounts that consider the translator and the translation location of the *Guanjing* are presented. Additionally, with regard to the transcription process, confusion and misjudgement pertaining to the translation location, translator and name of the sutra were prevalent. However, an examination of the *Jinglu* reveals no doubts pertaining to *Guanjing*'s authenticity. It should be noted that with regard to the *Angong yiji lu* 安公疑經錄 [Ven. Daoan Doubtful Scriptures of Contents], which is included in the '*Chu sanzang jiji*', *Sengyou* 僧祐 did not include the *Guanjing*; however, the author included it in the '*Shiyi*' 失譯 [translator unknown], and no details pertaining to the date and translator are included.

To maintain their prominence, monks generally write a preface to accompany Buddhist scriptures that are more popular or significant. *Ren Jiyu* 任繼愈 (2018) states the

following: 'During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, many sutra prefaces, which enabled readers to follow the original sutras, were developed; by contrast, the treatises were able to be referenced independently'. The preface to a sutra summarises the basic points of a particular sutra; however, owing to differences in understanding, some prefaces may not necessarily reflect the original purpose. Generally, sutra prefaces provide information pertaining to the Sanskrit sources, and they provide information pertaining to the translations. This offers a reference through which researchers can determine the authenticity of the texts. With regard to the Lotus Sutra, for instance, there is not only one imperial preface that applies to the entire text but also a separate imperial preface that can be utilised by the *PuMenPin* 普門品 [Guanshiyin pusa pumen pin 觀世音菩薩普門品, One chapter of the Dharma Lotus Sutra]; thus, the significance of the text is exhibited. Furthermore, the famous preface, which was written by Emperor *Taizong* of the *Tang* Dynasty, adopted the following title: 'Preface to the holy teachings of the *Tang* Dynasty in the Tripitakatak Sutra.

Moreover, some sutras, such as the *Boreboluo miduo jing* 般若波羅蜜多經 [skt. prajñā pāramitā; Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom] and the *Lanqie jing* 楞伽經 (skt. Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra), were prefaced by imperial authorities, and this occurrence may be occasioned by the Emperor's preference. The following scenario is plausible: rulers, in an effort to consolidate their authority, gathered monks, compelled them to compose apocryphal sutras, and wrote prefaces to accompany the writings. The version that was translated by *Jingliang Yeshe* contains an imperial hymn that appears as a verse, and this hymn exhibits insufficient chronological or historical information. Furthermore, the end of the hymn is not signed. By observing the interaction between Emperor *Wen* and *Jingliang Yeshe*, and the importance that the emperor attached to the author, the aforementioned occurrence is probable. Although there is no evidence that clearly points to Emperor *Wen* of *Song* as the author of this *zan*, it is undeniable that the *zan* was written by (or falsely attributed to) one of the emperors. This all seems to add to the social acceptance of the *zan* from one point of view. A total of three prefaces to the *Guanjing* remain, namely the one that was written by *Zhiyi* 智顛 (538–598), the one that was written by *Jizang* 吉藏 (549–623) and the one that was written by *Zongze* 宗曠. *Zongze* is the author of the *Chanyuanqinggui* 禪苑清規 of the *Song* dynasty.

Although the preface to the *Guanjing* that was signed by *Zhiyi* is suspected to be a counterfeit, its content still interprets the contents of the *Guanjingshu* [it exhibits Tiantai philosophy]. Because the concepts that are contained in this preface to the sutra are not contrary to those contained in *Zhiyi*'s other writings, it is likely that the sutra was written by *Zhiyi*. Furthermore, *Zhiyi* wrote a commentary on the *Guanjing*, and this commentary is contained in the catalogue of *Chuanjiao dashi jianglailu* 傳教大師將來錄 [Dengyō Daishi of Catalogue of Articles Obtained], which was written by *Saichō* 最澄 (767–822); furthermore, this commentary is recorded in the *Dongyuchuandenglu* 東域傳燈錄 (i.e., Record of the Transmission of the Lamp to the Eastern Regions), which was

written by *Yongchao* 永超. During the final moments of his life, *Zhiyi* recounted the Amitbha and *Guanjing* names in song, praised the beauty of the Western pure land and vowed to be reborn and meet the saints. The Dharma disciple, *Zhi Li* 知禮 (960–1028), wrote a six-volume commentary on the commentary that was written by *Zhiyi*; thus, the extent to which the Tiantai disciples appreciated and recognised this usage of the commentary is demonstrated.

With regard to *Jizang's* preface to the sutra, one of the reasons why the *Guanjing* is suspected of being a forgery entails the absence of any corresponding Sanskrit or Tibetan texts. Furthermore, scholars have observed that the sutra's content is similar to that of other sutras, such as the *wuliangshoujing* and the *guanfosanmeihaijing*. Based on the Sanskrit meaning and the Chinese meaning, *Jizang* frequently made conceptual distinctions and discernments in his writings. Sutra names were especially significant when explaining the meanings of the sutras. In several cases, *Jizang* discussed these meanings.

The Preface to *Jizang's* *Guanjing* states the following:

Both Hu and Chinese versions exist; therefore, the text is known as *Foshuo Guanwuliangshoufo jing*. 胡、漢兩存, 故云《佛說觀無量壽佛經》。<sup>9</sup>

The word 'Hu' here refers to the Sanskrit text. *Jizang*, like other commentaries, restores the original Sanskrit meaning of the words when interpreting the sutra names. Both F. Kōtatsu (1990:168) and *Jiyun* 紀贇 (2016:82) have restored the name of the sutra in their papers, and *Jiyun* indicates that the Sanskrit equivalent of 'contemplation' is *Vipaśyanā*; however, after restoration, the word *Dhyāna* is utilised. Since the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism, Buddha-viewing has been considered to be a form of meditation or a means of entering meditation, and this worldview is plausible. Because *Jizang* is a monk from central Asia who studied with *Zhendi* 真諦 (499–569), any writing (i.e., preface) and commentary on the *Guanjing* might also reflect his personal opinion. Apparently, *Jizang* read the Sanskrit text of the *Guanjing*, or he did not doubt its authenticity. While interpreting the sutras, he adopted the same interpretation that was contained in the other sutras. According to the preface to the sutra, *Jizang* clearly states that there is a Sanskrit version of the sutra. According to *Zongze's* preface in *Guanjing*:

When the sutra arrived in China, few people circulated it, and fewer people were able to comprehend it. Only people such as *Changshan Bhikkhu Qiongan* 長山比丘瓊安 promoted the sutra. 經傳此土, 人罕流通, 不有圓機, 誰陳法施, 常山比丘瓊安等。<sup>10</sup>

The aforementioned observation is consistent with the scenario following the translation of the *Guanjing* by *Jingliang Yeshe*, who stated that the *Guanjing* did not initially receive

9. *Guan wuliangshou jingshu* 觀無量壽經疏 1, T.1752:37: 233c7-8.

10. *Lebangwenlei* 樂邦文類 2, T.1969:47: 167a27-28.

considerable attention upon its arrival in China and that it was less widely possessed and circulated. This phenomenon was not occasioned by any shortcomings of the sutra; however, it was occasioned by the shortcomings of the Chinese population, namely that there were a limited number of highly enlightened people who had realised the importance of the sutra. Herein, the people who initially promoted the *Guanjing* included *Changshan bhikshu Qiongan*; however, his life is not available in the existing sutra records and monastic biographies. The basic attitude of the author can be deduced from the record that is referred to herein, and it is expressed by the following statement: the *Guanjing* emerged from India or Central Asia, and it was not written by Chinese monks. The anonymity of the Sanskrit texts is also evidenced by the records of the monks who travelled to India to seek Dharma. The *Faxian* 法顯 (418–423) records state the following:

*Fa Xian* originally sought the precepts; however, with regard to the Northern India Kingdoms, the precepts were orally transmitted by teachers, and there was no developed text. 法顯本求戒律, 而北天竺諸國, 皆師師口傳, 無本可寫, 是以遠涉乃至中天竺。<sup>11</sup>

The precepts are also orally transmitted by the master, and not via writing. We can observe that during that period, Buddhist texts were transmitted throughout the region, and that different methods were utilised. For example, the monks that resided in northern India transmitted their teachings orally, without translation. Upon returning to China, the Chinese monks, in most scenarios, would transcribe and record their teachings in the Sanskrit. Consequently, with regard to the same period, even in India, the most critical precepts pertaining to Buddhism were not listed in any visible texts. In addition, an official Sanskrit transcription pertaining to all the classical texts was not feasible. As we have previously indicated, judging the authenticity of the classical texts solely on the basis of their anonymity is not plausible. According to an examination of the content that is contained in the *Guanjing*, many aspects of the storyline and concepts that are contained in the sutra also reflect some elements of Indianisation.

## Conclusion

There is only one existing version of the *Guanjing*; Tibetan and Sanskrit versions do not exist. Thus, scholars have always attempted to establish the location in which the text originated, the period when it was recorded, as well as its authenticity. A comprehensive and detailed examination of *Guanjing* has been conducted by numerous scholars. Specifically, with regard to ideology, the concepts are presented in the sutra, and those pertaining to the parallel texts that have been discovered in China and India are highly correlated.

With regard to the preface of the sutra, the imperial praise, or other related documents that are contained in the Chinese

11. *Zhangxun* collation and annotation 章巽校注. 2008. *Faxianzhuàn* 法顯傳, Beijing Chinese Publishing House, p119–120.

context, the evidence for fabrication is not apparent. Chinese Buddhist scholars have considered the Guanjing since it was translated. From the Sui and Tang dynasties to the early stages pertaining to the Republic of China, extensive interpretive literature has been dedicated to the commentary pertaining to the Guanjing. During this period, its authenticity was never doubted. This notwithstanding, the debate pertaining to its authenticity permits us to reconstruct and comprehend the translation process that characterised the Middle Ages from various exegetical perspectives. For foreign civilisations to be successful in China, several factors are required, and these factors include adapting to the local culture, communicating with other cultures, integrating different cultures and developing selectively and innovatively.

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X.L. is the sole author of this research article.

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### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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