

# On the Various Aspects of *Xuepen-jing* Textual Descriptions in China

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The *Xuepen-jing*, a Buddhist scripture formed in China, explains that women, due to the belief that bleeding at childbirth or menstruation pollutes the earth and water, will go to a hell after their death called “The Bloody Pond” (Ch., *Xuepenchi* or *Xuehu*; J., *chi no ike*), where they must undergo numerous great hardships until they are saved by a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. The scholarly research on this scripture began with an excellent paper by Michel Soymié, and following this achievement, many additional studies appeared regarding the Japanese reception of the text. However, although we find many references to the *Xuepen-jing* or “The Bloody Pond” in studies of Chinese folklore and Taoist rituals, there are almost no studies on the state of the Chinese popular belief associated with this scripture. In this paper, we will examine the various aspects of the Chinese *Xuepen-jing* textual genera, and then present some fundamental views on them taking the lead of existent studies on the Japanese reception of *Xuepen-jing*.

The paper will consist of three parts.

1, Classification and arrangement of materials. In contrast to the case of Japan, the Chinese varieties of *Xuepen-jing* include various texts that fall outside the Buddhist textual tradition. Therefore, we must first classify these materials. In accordance with their form and content, we can arrange

the various texts into three general categories: *Xuepen-jing* texts in the narrow sense (i.e. Buddhist scriptures), *Xuehu* ceremonial manuals (Taoist ritual writings), and quasi-*Xuepen-jing* materials. In this section, we will also introduce some new materials for examination.

2, The causes for falling into “The Bloody Pond” and the types of people who took the fall. Here we will examine whether childbirth alone was the cause for women descending into “The Bloody Pond”, or if menstruation was involved as well. We also will investigate the issue of whether it was exclusively women who took the fall, or if men also descended into this ghastly hell.

3, Women’s original sin and the gratitude due to mothers. In this section, we will present the hypothesis that in China the *Xuepen-jing* existed as a “filial piety” scripture which combined the original sin of women with the sanctity of the mother, according to “the gratitude due to the mother”.