

Yōkan's *Ōjō jūin*:  
A Translation of the First Section

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Introduction .....	85
Yōkan's Life .....	85
The Nembutsu of Genshin and Hōnen .....	86
The Nembutsu as the Respository of Merits .....	88
Yōkan's Understanding of the Nembutsu .....	90
Conclusion .....	92
Notes on the Translation .....	93
Translation .....	94

## Introduction

The present paper is a translation of the first section of the *Ōjō jūin*, a short treatise on Pure Land Buddhism by Yōkan 永観 (also called Eikan; 1033-1111),<sup>1</sup> a Japanese Buddhist monk of the late Heian period. According to Satō Tetsuei 佐藤哲英, there existed three distinct streams of Pure Land Buddhism in pre-Kamakura Japan, namely the Mt. Hiei stream (*Eizan jōdokyō* 叡山浄土教), the esoteric stream (*Mikkyō jōdokyō* 密教浄土教) and the Nara stream (*Nanto jōdokyō* 南都浄土教).<sup>2</sup> The first refers to Pure Land teachings and practices appropriated and developed by the Tendai sect, whose main monastery was located on Mt. Hiei just a few miles northeast of Kyoto. It was from this stream that there appeared the major Pure Land leaders of the Kamakura period, such as Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212), the founder of the Jōdoshū 浄土宗 (Pure Land Sect), and Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1262), the founder of Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 (True Pure Land Sect). The second line consists of the Pure Land teachings developed by the monks of the Shingon sect, culminating in the works of Kakuban 覚鑊 (1095-1143). The third Nara stream refers to the Pure Land tradition that flourished in the ancient capital of Nara. It begins in the Nara period (710-794) and reaches its highest point of development in the late Heian period. Along with such monks as Kakuju 覚樹 (1084-1139) and Chinkai 珍海 (1092-1152), Yōkan is counted among the representative figure of the Nara stream of Pure Land Buddhism.

### Yōkan's Life

Yōkan's father, Minamoto Kunitsune 源国経 (977-1047), was a Professor of Composition (Monjo hakase 文書博士) before he became a monk. Interestingly, Yōkan was born when his father was 56, in fact, after his father had been a Buddhist monk for a quarter of a century. When he was two years old, Yōkan was “adopted” and raised by the monk Genmyō 元

明 (970–1051), the superintendent (*bettō* 别当) of Iwashimizu Shrine south of Kyoto. Then, when he turned eleven, Yōkan became a disciple of the famous Shingon master Jinkan 深観 (1000–1050; he was a son of Emperor Kazan). The next year, he again changed masters, and this time became a disciple of Yūkei 有慶 of the Tōnan-in 東南院, a sub-temple of Tōdaiji and the major center of Sanron Buddhism in Japan at this time.

Like many monks of his age, Yōkan diligently studied Buddhist philosophy and took part in a number of debates held in connection with major Buddhist ceremonies. But when he was 32, he suddenly left the Tōdaiji and went into retreat at a branch temple (*bessho* 别所) at Mt. Kōmyō 光明山 northeast of Nara. There he began to lead an ascetic life devoted to the nembutsu.

Several reasons have been suggested for this action. For one thing, Yōkan suffered from arthritis, and this may have led him to adopt the life-style of a recluse. Moreover, in Heian Japan, it was generally believed that the year 1052 marked the first year of the Latter Dharma (*mappō* 末法). Yōkan also accepted this chronology, meaning that (for him and the rest of Heian society at least) the world entered the *mappō* when he was 20 years old. The fact that he saw himself living in such degenerate age may also have contributed to his decision to retreat to Mt. Kōmyō.

After eight years, Yōkan accepted the request of the monks of Zenrinji 禅林寺 to come live at their temple, and left Mt. Kōmyō. (The Zenrinji was the temple of his master Jinkan.) Subsequently, he spent the years between 1100 and 1102 as superintendent of Tōdaiji and undertook the reconstruction of many buildings which had fallen into ruin. He died at the Zenrinji reciting the nembutsu.

## The Nembutsu of Genshin and Hōnen

As stated above, Yōkan lived between 1033 and 1111, exactly midway between the two giants of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism: Genshin 源信,

who lived from lived from 943 until 1017, and Hōnen 法然, who lived between 1133 and 1212. This means that Yōkan was born 16 years after Genshin died and died 22 years before Hōnen was born. Let me briefly outline the main points of Genshin's and Hōnen's Pure Land faith, in order to contrast them with that of Yōkan.

Since Genshin's name is so closely associated with Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, it's often forgotten that, institutionally, he was a monk of the Japanese Tendai 天台 sect. The Sino-Japanese Tendai sect (T'ien-t'ai in Chinese) has an elaborate meditation system and Genshin's understanding of Pure Land practice reflects his Tendai background. It is well known that the nembutsu 念仏, literally "mindfulness of the Buddha," is the central Pure Land practice; through the nembutsu, one can gain birth in Amida Buddha's Pure Land (called Sukhāvati) upon death. True to his Tendai background, Genshin basically understands the nembutsu to be a type of meditation practice, specifically as a way of visualizing Amida Buddha while in meditative absorption (or samādhi). In his major work, the *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集, Genshin explains in detail how one should visualize the forty-two marks (traditionally thirty-two marks) adorning Amida's body. However, in the same work, Genshin argues that, if someone is incapable of practicing such visualization, it is possible to be born in the Pure Land through the nembutsu recitation (the recitation of "Namu Amida Butsu" 南無阿弥陀仏) as well.

This second type of nembutsu, i. e., the recitative nembutsu, is central to Hōnen's Pure Land practice. In fact, Hōnen insists that birth in the Pure Land can be achieved simply by the recitation of "Namu Amida Butsu." Moreover, in this work, *Senchaku hongan nembutsu-shū* 選択本願念仏集 (or *Senchaku-shū* for short), Hōnen argues that the power of the nembutsu derives from the fact that it was the practice specifically selected by Amida Buddha in order to lead all beings out of the cycle of rebirth.

## The Nembutsu as the Respository of Merits

Yōkan's understanding of the nembutsu has points in common with those of both Genshin and Hōnen. Yet he presents a distinctive Pure Land discourse that draws explicitly on concepts like emptiness and tathāgatagarbha to explain birth in the Pure Land. Yōkan's views can be found in a short work called the *Ōjō jūin* 往生拾因 (Ten Causes for Birth in the Pure Land). Most of this text deals with the ten reasons why, according to Yōkan, the nembutsu recitation enables one to reach the Pure Land. Among the ten reasons, he includes such things as (to give just four examples): "the nembutsu is the repository of an infinite amount of merit, and by reciting it, one can share in those merits" (reason one), "the recitation of the nembutsu helps annul the effects of evil karma created in the past" (reason two), "people who recite the nembutsu are embraced by Amida's saving light" (reason four) and "people who recite the nembutsu are always protected by an assembly of sages" (reason five).

As stated above, this paper presents a translation of the section dealing with the first of these ten reasons: that the nembutsu contains within itself an infinite amount of merit. By reciting the nembutsu, Yōkan argues, the practitioner can share in its merits and thus be born in the Pure Land. Yōkan begins this section by citing the following passage from the *Amida Sūtra*:

It is not possible to be born in that country (i. e., the Pure Land) by means of a small amount of good roots. Suppose there is a son or daughter of good family who hears an exposition concerning Amida Buddha and holds fast to his name single-mindedly and without distraction, whether it be for one day, two days and on down to seven days. At the end of his life, Amida Buddha with a host of sages will appear in front of this person. When this person dies, his mind will be free of mistaken thoughts, and he will immediately attain birth in the Pure Land.

According to this sūtra, birth in the Pure Land is impossible if one has only a small amount of merit. But if the practitioner recites the nembutsu from one up to seven days, he or she will gain great merit and be born in Amida's world. Yōkan holds that the reason why the nembutsu recitation can bestow such merit is because the name of Amida Buddha itself is a repository of an infinite amount of merit. By reciting Amida's name, the practitioner can share in the unlimited merit contained in the name and achieve birth in the Pure Land.

Yōkan emphasizes that stored in the name is an infinite ocean of merit which Amida Buddha accumulated during his practices as Dharmākara Bodhisattva.

Therefore you should know that each and every one of the myriad practices and myriad virtues which the Tathāgata (undertook and gained) from the time he first aroused the aspiration for enlightenment to the time he achieved Buddhahood are all completely contained within Amida's name; nothing is left out.

Furthermore Yōkan claims that, not only does the name embody Amida's merits in its entirety, but, because all Buddhas interpenetrate each other, it also contains the merits of all Buddhas. Thus the recitation of Amida's name in the form of the nembutsu is sufficient to guarantee birth in the Pure Land. Furthermore, he states that if even one recitation of the name can guarantee one's birth there, it is all the more assured if one recites it continuously.

Thus the merit of reflecting on Amida even for one instant is far-reaching and boundless. Even if the Tathāgata should expound on it at length, it would be impossible to explain it completely... Even one instant is so; how much more (should we reflect on Amida for) ten instants. How much more should we reflect (on him) for one day or ten days. How much more if we should reflect (on him) all our lives unceasingly.

Because he considered the nembutsu recitation to have such efficacy,

Yōkan claims that the nembutsu is the supreme practice, surpassing even such practices as the Great Dhāraṇī of the Shingon sect and the Lotus Samādhi of the Tendai sect. In this way, Yōkan argues in this section that the single-minded recitation of Amida's name ensures the practitioner's birth in the Pure Land because it is the repository of Amida's infinite merits.

### Yōkan's Understanding of the Nembutsu

As stated above, Yōkan gives ten reasons why the single-minded nembutsu recitation leads to birth in the Pure Land in the *Ōjō jūin*. Unfortunately, Yōkan does not explain how the ten reasons are related to one another. Some very ingenious theories have been put forth, but they are not very convincing. In my opinion, however, the central points which Yōkan wishes to make are the following: (1) the nembutsu derives its power from the fact that it was established by Amida Buddha as the definitive practice for birth in the Pure Land, and (2) the recitation of the nembutsu enables one to enter samādhi, where one can gain insight into the emptiness of all things, realize one's own pure mind hidden under layers of defilements (*klesās*), realize that one is identical in essence with all Buddhas, including Amida Buddha, and, as a result, attain birth in the Pure Land.

Yōkan's first point, that the nembutsu is the instrument chosen by Amida to ensure salvation, is actually the last of the ten reasons given in the *Ōjō jūin*. Why did Amida choose the nembutsu as the practice to save all beings? In Yōkan's view, this is because it is an easy practice that can be undertaken by any person at any time. In contrast, the doctrines and practices of other Buddhist sects (such as those of the Shingon, Tendai, Sanron and Hossō sects), are hard to understand and difficult to undertake. The emphasis on the nembutsu as the "easy practice" is also found in both Genshin and Hōnen.

Perhaps more interesting is the second point: that, through the nembutsu, it is possible to enter samādhi, and that, by cultivating this samādhi, it is possible to achieve birth in the Pure Land.

In the *Ōjō jūin*, Yōkan repeatedly emphasizes the importance of reciting the nembutsu *singlemindedly*. By “single-mindedness,” Yōkan means a state of intense concentration in which all physical, vocal and mental actions are focused on the nembutsu, i. e., samādhi. He interprets this intensely focused nembutsu recitation as a form of the “single practice samādhi” (*ichigyō zammai* 一行三昧). There is an important reason why Yōkan is so concerned to demonstrate that the single-minded nembutsu recitation results in samādhi. According to Yōkan, the direct cause for birth in Amida’s Land is the realization that one is identical in essence with Amida Buddha. This cannot be gained through ordinary consciousness, but only through the intense concentrated mental state of samādhi.

Using the Sanron concept of the emptiness of all phenomena, Yōkan argues that, once the nembutsu practitioner enters samādhi, he or she can gain true insight into the emptiness of all things, including the emptiness of one’s own self as well as all deluded thoughts. Then, on the basis of such texts as the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, Yōkan next continues that, once all deluded thoughts are eliminated by being perceived as empty, the nembutsu practitioner awakens to his or her “original enlightenment,” the mind of the Buddha long hidden by deluded thoughts in the depths of the consciousness. By realizing that one is originally a Buddha, he or she then discovers the Dharma-body lying hidden within themselves. In fact, quoting the *Sūtra of No Increase and No Decrease* (*Fuzō fugen kyō* or *Pu tseng pu chien ching* 不增不減經), Yōkan claims that “What is called ‘sentient being’ is (actually) the Dharma-body transmigrating through the Five Paths (the realm of transmigration)” (T 84, 99a). Of course, the Dharma-body is everywhere identical. For this reason, when awakens to the Dharma-body within oneself,

one then realizes (because the Dharma-body is identical everywhere) that one is identical with all Buddhas, including Amida Buddha. In this way, the nembutsu practitioner perceives his essential identity with Amida Buddha, and this insight leads to birth in the Pure Land.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, let me outline what I see as the central points of Yōkan's understanding of the nembutsu. Yōkan argues that, in the age of the Latter Dharma when the religious abilities of the people have declined, it has become virtually impossible to obtain salvation through ordinary Buddhist practices. In this age, salvation lies in gaining birth in the Pure Land through the practice of nembutsu recitation. He argues that the nembutsu is an effective instrument for gaining birth in the Pure Land because it has special qualities not found in other Buddhist practices. As stated above, he gives ten such reasons in the *Ōjō jūin*. For example, he holds that the nembutsu contains within itself an infinite amount of merit which the practitioner is allowed to share; that it helps to destroy the practitioner's evil karma which obstruct his or her access to the Pure Land; and that the nembutsu's efficacy is sustained and guaranteed by the power of Amida's Eighteenth Vow. But perhaps most importantly, Yōkan claims that the nembutsu recitation makes it possible for nembutsu practitioners to apprehend the emptiness of all things (including one's deluded thoughts), discover the "original enlightenment" lying hidden within themselves, and recognize their essential identity with Amida Buddha. For these reasons, Yōkan argues that the Pure Land nembutsu practice is the supreme Buddhist practice for the people of his age.

## Notes on the Translation

The following is a translation of the introduction and the first section of the *Ōjō jūin*. In this section, Yōkan argues that “if you single-mindedly call and reflect on Amida Buddha, because (the name) contains extensive good roots (of merit), you will be born in the Pure Land without fail.” The translation is based on the text found in the *Taishō Daizōkyō*, vol. 84, pp. 91a-94a. In undertaking my translation, I have made extensive use of the *kakikudashi* found in the *Kokuyaku issaikyō* (*shoshūbu* 5, pp. 369-379). My annotation also relies heavily on Ryōe’s 了慧 commentary entitled *Ōjō jūin shiki* 往生拾因私記 (*Personal Notes on the Ōjō jūin*), found in vol. 15 of the *Jōdoshū zensho*.

## Translation

### Ten Causes for Birth in the Pure Land

Compiled by Yōkan of the Nembutsu Sect

Now, the practices of the right way for escaping (from the cycle of birth-and-death) are not uniform but the essential path (for attaining birth in the Pure Land) in the west has karmic affinity with the Latter Age (*matsudai* 末代). However, as long as we are attached to fame, it is difficult to conceive of arousing the aspiration for enlightenment. We rush about in the four directions, and no one practices sitting meditation.

Alas! Gone, gone, never to return are my robust years; my remaining days are almost finished. Coming, coming, never to go away is my feeble old age; how many years do I have left? Therefore, I will purify my mind (by reflecting on the fate of) a fish in a small puddle (which evaporates quickly and causes the fish to die),<sup>3</sup> and lament that my life (which is as evanescent as) dew shortens day by day. My thought broods upon the sheep being led to a slaughterhouse<sup>4</sup> and feel sorrow that impermanence (i.e., death) approaches step by step. Moreover, the world is like a dream in which spring has come. How can the flowers blooming (in the dream) bear fruit? Human life is like foam on water. Who can make this floating world remain still? Not even hermits who seclude themselves in the mountains and oceans have yet been able to avoid the sorrows of impermanence. Even people who shut themselves up in stone chambers (in ascetic practices) ultimately encounter the grief of having to bade farewell (to their lives).<sup>5</sup> Truly the human life is a temporary dwelling. How can we hope to live eternally? Now I reflect carefully on what kinds of illnesses I will get and what kind of death I will receive. Grave illnesses and terrible death are equally painful. The herbs of immortality from the snowy mountains have lost their effectiveness and Jīvika, the king of

physicians, has lost his skills. The storm of impermanence do not even exempt hermits, and the ferocious demon that snatches away the life-giving spirit makes no distinction between nobles and common people.<sup>6</sup> Birth and death are inevitable. Who can escape them?

The *Ālaṃkāra Treatise* says, “Suppose that a person, when faced with death, is assailed by shortness of breath and breathes roughly. The throat and tongue are so parched that it is impossible to swallow water. He or she is unable to speak and see clearly. The muscles and tendons are ruptured. Severe pains attack the body and the joints have become disconnected. The bodily functions have ceased. He or she is unable to move or roll about and the entire body is racked with pain as if being pierced with needles. When the person dies, he or she will see a vast darkness, (be sucked into it) as if falling from a high cliff, and wander about alone through the wilderness without any companions.”<sup>7</sup> (End of quote)

If this is so, then there is no permanent master in our bodies. There is only a demon that looks over this corpse. There is no eternal home for the spirit. It wanders about alone in the intermediate state (between death and rebirth in the next life).<sup>8</sup> How pitiful! We wander in total darkness without anyone to accompany us. Over and over again, we are tormented; who can we ask about what is right and what is wrong?<sup>9</sup> All the more, once we fall into the evil paths, we will be subject to endless suffering. Truly, who will fail to apply themselves to practices for escaping (from the cycle of birth-and-death)?

Fortunately I have now encountered Amida's vows. It is like finding a boat at a ferry or like the people acquiring their king.<sup>10</sup> A large stone, when placed on a ship, can cross a vast ocean ten thousand leagues wide. Mosquito and horseflies, when they attach themselves to a phoenix, can soar through the nine regions of the sky.<sup>11</sup> How much more so if the practitioner, in sincerity, (practices the nembutsu) in conformity with the (requirements of the) Original Vow? However, days and months appear to

rush by and the path of darkness (i. e., death) remains close at hand. If you do not endeavor to devote yourself (to the nembutsu practice), when will you encounter the Pure Land teachings again? You should promptly abandon your worldly concerns and quickly seek (to recite the nembutsu) single-mindedly. Following Tao-ch'o's 道綽 testament, you should begin reciting the name at once.<sup>12</sup> Following Huai-kan's 懷感 venerable method, we should urge on our voices in practicing the nembutsu.<sup>13</sup> At times you should prostrate yourself on the ground and recite the nembutsu (*shōnen* 称念), and at another time, you should place your palms together at the forehead and exclusively reflect (on Amida Buddha). At all times and places, you should single-mindedly recite the nembutsu. Do not fall away from a great matter because of a minor cause. (Although it is) difficult to come upon (the Buddha's teachings), you have encountered it once. Why should you concern yourself with life?

(Although) the nembutsu is a single practice, it is opened up to become ten causes (for birth in the Pure Land).

1. Because (the nembutsu contains) extensive good roots (of merit).
2. Because (the nembutsu) eradicates a multitude of transgressions.
3. Because the karmic affinity (between Amida Buddha and beings in the age of the Latter Dharma) is deep and indissoluble.
4. Because (Amida's) light embraces (all who recite the nembutsu).
5. Because the multitude of sages protect (the nembutsu practitioner).
6. Because (Amida) is the teaching lord of the Land of Supreme Bliss.
7. Because the three karmic actions are in conformity with one another.
8. Because one attains samādhi (through the nembutsu).
9. Because the dharma-body is identical.
10. Because it conforms to the Original Vow.

**(Section One)**

First, if you single-mindedly call and reflect on Amida Buddha, because (the name) contains extensive good roots, you will be born in the Pure Land without fail. The *Amida Sūtra* says,

It is not possible to be born in that country (i. e., the Pure Land) by means of a small amount of good roots. Suppose there is a son or daughter of good family who hears an exposition concerning Amida Buddha and holds fast to his name (*myōgō* 名号) single-mindedly and without distraction, whether it be for one day, two days and on down to seven days. At the end of his life, Amida Buddha with a host of sages will appear in front of this person. When this person dies, his mind will be free of mistaken thoughts, and he will immediately attain birth in the Pure Land. (End of quote)<sup>14</sup>

Question: Even if the mind is concentrated, just reflecting on the Buddha's name does not count as great good. How can we attain birth in the Pure Land (through such action)?

Answer: The *Sūtra in Praise of the Pure Land* states,

One is able to hear this name of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life with its immeasurable, limitless inconceivable (amount of) merit, etc." (End of quote)<sup>15</sup>

The *Hsi-fang yao-chüeh* 西方要決 (*Determining the Essentials of the Western Direction*) says,

The Buddhas, through their vows and practices, have actualized this name of the fruit (of Buddhahood). Just by reflecting on the name, inasmuch as it contains a multitude of merits, one achieves great merit and does not repudiate the attainment of birth in the Pure Land. (End of quote)<sup>16</sup>

Therefore you should know that each and every one of the myriad practices and myriad virtues which the Tathāgata (undertook and gained) from the time he first aroused the aspiration for enlightenment to the time

he achieved Buddhahood are all completely contained within Amida's name; nothing is left out. This is not the case simply with the merits of the single Buddha, Amida. (Amida's name) encompasses the merits of all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is because all the Tathāgatas do not exist apart from the letter A (*aji* 阿字).<sup>17</sup> For this reason, nembutsu practitioners are protected by the Buddhas. Although there are just a few letters in this Buddha's name, it contains a multitude of merit. It is like the wish fulfilling jewel which is small in size but rains down unlimited wealth. How much more so if the merits of the forty-two letters<sup>18</sup> are perfectly interfused without obstruction. Each letter encompasses the merits of the other letters. Amida's name is also like this. It is composed of an unlimited amount of inconceivable merit. Once you call out "Namu Amida Butsu," you gain extensive and inexhaustible merit. It is like a round incense. Even if just one part of it is burned, it gives out a multitude of scents. It is also like a large net. If you pull one mesh even slightly, all the meshes move. Therefore the *Two Fascicle Contemplation Sūtra* (i. e., *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*) says,

If a person hears the name of that Buddha and dances with joy for even one instant of thought, you should know that this person has gained great benefit. He has come to completely possess supreme merit."<sup>19</sup> (End of quote)

Suppose a practitioner who is a common mortal (*bonbu* 凡夫) recites "Namu Amida Butsu" just once in a defiled womb. That one sound is superior to all other sounds. It is like the case of a *kalaviṅka*,<sup>20</sup> whose cry while still in the egg is superior (to the cry of) all (other) birds.

Question. Good and evil karma are constituted by the perfuming (*vāsana*) of past actions. Even if the name should completely contain the myriad virtues, how can we come to possess supreme merit by reflecting (on the Buddha) just once?

Answer. That is not necessarily so. Even if one takes the merit (gained by) practicing the first five perfections<sup>21</sup> over a period of eighty

trillion *nayutas* of *kalpas* to attain supreme enlightenment, and compare it with the merit (arising from) hearing for one instant about (Śākyamuni's) life span, (the former) merit would not be equal to 1000 trillionth (of the latter merit). Therefore that verse explains:

Furthermore, (suppose that) for innumerable *kalpas*,  
 One resides in an desolate quiet place  
 (And,) whether sitting or walking about,  
 Always concentrate her mind (except) when sleeping.  
 Due to such causal connection,  
 She will be able to give rise to various meditative states.  
 And for eighty trillion *kalpas*  
 She will firmly abide (in these meditative states) without distraction.  
 [One example is given; the others are deleted.]<sup>22</sup>  
 (But) if there are sons or daughters of good families  
 Who hear me (i. e. Śākyamuni) preach about my life span  
 And arouse faith even for one instant (*ichinen* 一念),  
 Their merit (*fuku* 福) will surpass the above. (End of quote)<sup>23</sup>

Once you cut your finger, anxiety attacks your entire body, but when an instant of faith arises, the myriad good are set into motion. Therefore, the relative superiority of merits does not depend on the length of time or *kalpa*. The merits (arising from hearing and believing) Śākyamuni's life-span is like this. How can the merits (arising from believing the life span of) the Buddha of Immeasurable Life (i. e., Amida Buddha) be any different?

For this reason, the *A-mi-t'o ssu-wei ching* 阿弥陀思惟經 (*Amida Reflection Sūtra*) states,

Suppose a universal wheel-turning monarch takes all the seven treasures that can fill the four quarters of the world and presents them to the Buddhas of the ten directions over a period of ten million years. This does not equal the merit of a bhikṣu, bhikṣuṇī, upāsaka or upāsikā who sits in meditation for as short a time as it takes to snap

one's finger and, with a mind of equality, reflects on Amida Buddha while feeling compassion for all sentient beings. (End of quote)<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, in its explanation (of birth into the Pure Land) of a person of the lowest grade, the sūtra states,

Even if a person reflects on that Buddha (i. e., Amida) even for an instant and desires in sincerity to be born in that land, at the moment of death he will see that Buddha in a dream and attain birth (in the Pure Land). (End of quote)<sup>25</sup>

Therefore the merit of (reflecting on) Amida even for one instant is vast and boundless. Even if the Tathāgata should expound on it at length, it would be impossible to explain it completely. If that were not the case, how can we quickly attain birth (in the Pure Land)? Even one instant is so; how much more (should we reflect on Amida) for ten instants; how much more should we reflect (on him) for one day or seven days; how much more if we should reflect (on him) all our lives unceasingly.

Before the Thousand Armed Kannon preached the Completely Fulfilling Dhāraṇī<sup>26</sup>, he first urged us to reflect on Amida, his original state (*honji* 本地).<sup>27</sup> Similarly Samantabhadra Bodhisattva appeared to Meditation Master (Tai-) hsing (大)行禪師 and taught him to reflect on Amida Buddha.<sup>28</sup> Truly you should know that Amida's name pretty much surpasses the merits of the Great Dhāraṇī and is also superior to the practice of the Lotus Samādhi.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the simple recitation of the Buddha's name leads directly to the seat of enlightenment (*dōjō* 道場). How can there be any difficulty in gaining birth in the Pure Land?

What good acts (have we done) in the past which have fortunately allowed us to encounter this Buddha's name now? Without seeking for it, we have naturally gained unsurpassed merit. The actions (leading to birth in) the Pure Land have been fulfilled. You should know that (such people) are like white lotus blossoms among humans.<sup>30</sup> Thus each of the Buddhas of the ten directions as numerous as the number of sand in the Ganges extend their broad, long tongues and urges (us to seek birth in the Pure

Land).<sup>31</sup> This represents true words. They should be taken in faith. The wonderful Dharma (preached on) the Vulture Peak is verified by a single Buddha, Prabhūtaratna.<sup>32</sup> Also the golden scripture (taught) at Rājagṛha is preached by all the four Buddhas of the four directions.<sup>33</sup> (The teachings preached by the Buddha at) the seats of enlightenment of the assemblies of various places do not equal the present sermon in which the mark of the tongue is at the height of proving its sincerity. How can even the skeptical person from a world called “Suppression of Malice”<sup>34</sup> not receive (this teaching) in faith? For this reason, at the assembly under the twin śāla tress during which doubts were settled, no one had any doubts about, or asked for clarification concerning, this one gate of the Pure Land.<sup>35</sup>

As the *Great Treatise* (*Ta lun* 大論)<sup>36</sup> states,

A king of a brahman's city issued a prohibition (which declared) “If there should be a person who gives alms to the Buddha or listen to the Buddha's words, he will be fined five hundred gold coins.” Subsequently, the Buddha arrived in that country and entered the city to beg for alms. The people closed their gates and (the Buddha) went away with his begging bowl empty.

At that time, there was an old woman. Carrying a broken earthenware pot filled with foul smelling water used to wash rice, she stepped out of the gate and was about to throw (the water) away. Seeing the Buddha gradually approaching with his begging bowl empty, she thought, “This supernatural being has stooped down to engage in begging because he feels pity for all (beings).” (The woman's) faith became pure and with a feeling of remorse, she said to the Buddha, “I wanted to give you alms but was unable to find anything. If it is all right, take this coarse food now.”

The Buddha knew her thoughts, received her offering of food, smiled and set forth a ray of five-colored light that completely illuminated the heavens and earth. He declared to Ānanda, “Because this old woman offered food to the Buddha, she will receive happiness

for a period of fifteen *kalpas* in the company of beings up in the heavens. After (enjoying) her bliss, she will receive a male body, leave home, study the way and become a pratyekabuddha.”

At that time, a brahman at the Buddha's side stood up and declared in verse:

You are of the seed of the sun, of the nature of a kṣatriya,  
And the crown prince of King Śuddhodana.  
However, since you received food, you lie greatly.

How can the results of (offering) such foul smelling food be so great?

At that time, the Buddha stuck out his long broad tongue. It covered his face and touched his hairline. Then the brahman suddenly put his hands together in prayer and said to the Buddha, “If a person is able to cover his nose with his tongue, his words are not false. How much less so if it touches his hairline!” Understanding arose in his heart. He threw his five limbs to the ground, and repented his transgression profoundly.

Then the Buddha preached the Dharma to him in various ways, and he attained the first fruit of the way.<sup>37</sup> Then he raised his arms and declared in a loud voice, “The nectar (*amṛta*) gate<sup>38</sup> for all people has opened. How can we not exit!” All the brahmans within the city delivered five hundred gold coins. Together with the king, they welcomed the Buddha and presented him with offerings. They broke the prohibition and took refuge in the Buddha forever. (Abridged)<sup>39</sup> When I copied out this passage, tears ran down my brush. In order to testify to such small matter, Śākyamuni alone extended his tongue to his hairline. Right now, to expound this great matter, the Buddhas completely cover the major thousand-world system (*daisen* 大千)<sup>40</sup> with their long tongues. Even the king of that brahman city repudiated his heretical views and took refuge in the Buddha Dharma. Who among nembutsu practitioner would not receive it in faith?

Furthermore, even worldly good acts like providing marvelously effective medicine to a single bhikṣu, or caring for one's parents and serving one's masters and elders, or keeping the eight precepts of abstinence (*hassaikai* 八齋戒)<sup>41</sup> and śrāmaṇa's precepts<sup>42</sup> for one day and night result in birth (in the Pure Land).<sup>43</sup> How much more so if one should hear Amida Buddha's inconceivably meritorious name and recite it single-mindedly. How can those trivial good acts (listed above) compare with this sublime cause? Cultivate your own mind and bring forth profound faith and understanding.

A doubter says, "As for the quotations above, the teaching and the principle are as you say. However, I have a doubt that I cannot put to rest. It's this. How can a person physically laden with karmic evil be born into the Pure Land at once?"

(My reply is as follows.) As for your doubts about this body of karmic evil, does it refer to karma created in the past or karma created in the present lifetime? If your doubts concerns past karma, how was (the nembutsu practitioner) able to gain a human body that is so difficult to gain, or to encounter the Buddha Dharma that is so difficult to encounter? If the past evil was so weighty, it would have been difficult to be born in a human body. How much more (difficult it would be to encounter) the Buddha Dharma!

The doubter replies, "Even if the past evil is weighty, if a person has excellent karma, evil cannot obstruct (his or her being born as a human). Once the retribution as a human has come to an end, he or she will receive the fruit of suffering."

(I answer as follows.) Hearing your doubt now, (I find that) my faith increases all the more. Past evil cannot obstruct a person's being born in the realm of humans. How much less (can it obstruct) his birth in the Pure Land! If your doubt concerns karma created in the present lifetime, (even) those who have committed the five grave offences<sup>44</sup> can eradicate their evil karma and attain birth (in the Pure Land) by reflecting (on the

Buddha) for ten instants. How much more so other evils!

The doubter replies, “It was due to the strength of his or her past good acts that the person who committed the five grave offences encountered a good spiritual guide at the moment of death, reflected (on the Buddha) for ten instants and gained birth (in the Pure Land).”

(I reply:) Again, due to your doubts, my faith increases all the more. The past good acts of a person who committed the five grave offences but reflected (on the Buddha) for ten instants is still strong. How much (stronger) is that of a person who reflect on the Buddha unceasingly throughout his life! Therefore, the *Nien-fo san-mei ching* 念仏三昧經 (*Buddha Reflection Samādhi Sūtra*) states,

If there should be a son of good family or daughter of good family who hears the name “Buddha reflection samādhi,” you should know that this person has planted good roots not only in the presence of one, two, three, four or five Tathāgatas on down to the presence of innumerable *asaṃkhyas* of Tathāgatas. (It is because this person) has planted good roots and accumulated abundant merit in the presence of an undetermined number of Tathāgatas, more than innumerable *asaṃkhyas* altogether, that he or she has been able to hear ever so slightly the name of this king of samādhis. How much more if he has accepted (this samādhi), recited it, practiced it in accordance with the Dharma and preached it to many people. (Abridged)<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, if a poor person of humble birth should find something auspicious and present it to the king, the king would reward him handsomely in celebration, and (the poor person) will suddenly become wealthy.<sup>46</sup> How can we be sure that a poor and humble person would not become wealthy? Auspicious things of the world can have such effects. How much more so are the merits of Amida’s Treasure Name (*hōgō* 宝号)! Therefore the practitioner should not harbor any doubts.

Moreover, among the five inconceivable things,<sup>47</sup> the Buddha Dharma is most inconceivable. Within the Buddha Dharma, Amida’s name is

particularly inconceivable. Why do you try to fathom the inconceivable Dharma with your calculating mind? Don't let your foolish knowledge allow you to have doubts about the Tathāgata's realm. Even those who have ascended to the four fruits<sup>48</sup> by practicing the path still forgot about the pearl sown into their clothes. Even those who have reached the rank of the tenth stage still find their view of the moon is obstructed by a translucent silk. It is all the more so with common beings of the lowest rank (*hakuji bonpu* 薄地凡夫)! It is all the more so with the lowliest among ordinary beings (*ishō* 異生).<sup>49</sup> Oh, how sad! You doubt the sincere words that cover the great thousand world systems and believe in the speculations of your small foolish mind.

Here a doubter suddenly attained enlightenment, put his hands together in prayer, became speechless and shed tears (of joy). I then taught him a passage from the *Ku-yin ching* 鼓音經 (*Drum Sound Sūtra*), which states, "If you believe deeply and have no doubts, you will surely attain birth in Amida Buddha's country" (End of quote).<sup>50</sup>

Truly, a doubtful mind and laziness are the most serious obstacles to birth (in the Pure Land). If you obtain faith and diligence, you will naturally be endowed with mindfulness, concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom. Nembutsu is mindfulness. Single-mindedness is concentration. Loathing the defiled (realm) and seeking the pure (realm) is wisdom. Once the five faculties<sup>51</sup> have been firmly established, how can you remain within the six realms (of transmigration)<sup>52</sup>? Furthermore, to remain circumspect with regard to the three actions (*sangō* 三業)<sup>53</sup> and to refrain from being dissolute is the mind of precepts. It is (also) the mind of observance. To vow to seek the Pure Land is the vow mind. To transfer the merits of reflecting on the Buddha to enlightenment and turn it over to sentient beings is the mind of charity. It is (also) the mind of merit transference. Once you have come to possess the bodhisattva's ten faiths<sup>54</sup> completely, how can you not rise up onto the lotus dais of the nine grades?<sup>55</sup>

Now, although we lament morning and evening that we have not yet escaped from the burning house of the triple realms of existence,<sup>56</sup> the fact that we have now encountered the name replete with immense good is cause for great rejoicing in life. How can you not cast away your various concerns and reflect on the Buddha's name? If you pass this life in vain, when will you gain release from the cycle of rebirth?

I have heard that there was a holy man (*hijiri* 聖) who practiced the nembutsu without wasting an instant. If a person came to discuss some important matter concerning himself or others, the holy man would say, "Now I have an extremely urgent matter which troubles me morning and evening." He closed his ears, practiced the nembutsu and finally achieved birth (in the Pure Land).

Therefore you should recite and reflect on (Amida's name) without slackening for an instant both while awake and asleep [uninterrupted cultivation], pay reverence during the six watches and refrain from acting disrespectfully in all the four modes of action<sup>57</sup> [reverent cultivation], make reflection on the Buddha your essential practice and refrain from mixing it with other actions [exclusive cultivation] and practice it unceasingly until the end of life [long-term cultivation]. If the single practice of Buddha-reflection already encompasses these four modes of cultivation (*shishū* 四修)<sup>58</sup>, no practice for birth (in the Pure Land) can surpass this. The *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* states,

At that time, Bhadrupāla Bodhisattva, hearing that Amida Buddha resides in that land, frequently fixed his thoughts (on Amida). As a result of these thoughts, he beheld Amida Buddha. Thereupon he asked, "What dharma should I practice to attain birth in that land?" Amida Buddha spoke to him saying, "If you wish to come and be born in my land, you should constantly reflect on my name. You should reflect exclusively on it frequently without rest. In this way, you will come and be born in my land." [End of quote]<sup>59</sup>

For this reason, recite and reflect on (Amida's name) at all times and in

all places. Continue it without interruption, both during the day and night, both while awake and asleep.

Question: The mind of a practitioner who is a common being is like a wild horse. Although he or she may exclusively reflect on the Buddha's name, how can he or she continue it without interruption?

Answer: Who says that a novice practitioner should not mix and arouse other thoughts at all. Master (Shan-) tao (善)導和尚 says, "Whenever defilements like greed and anger come (forth), repent as soon as you commit it. Do not let a moment of thought, any time or day elapse. To maintain purity at all times is also called uninterrupted cultivation." [End of quote]<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, since it is difficult for a person of unfocused mind to practice contemplation, the Great Sage, out of his compassion, encouraged the practice of the recitation of the name. Because the recitation of the name is easy, one can recite it continuously day and night without rest. Is this not uninterrupted (practice)? Moreover, (the recitative nembutsu) makes no distinction between (people who are) pure and impure in body and does not demand that the mind either be exclusive (in reflecting on Amida) or not. As long as the recitation of the name is done unceasingly, you will attain birth without fail. If you carry on in this way for a long time, why should you doubt that you will be led to the Pure Land by a host of sages at the moment of death? Furthermore, it is because perpetual action is the act of samādhi.

In these ways, there is plenty of evidence that a person who simply practices the nembutsu attains birth in the Pure Land. One such person is the śrāmaṇa (*shami* 沙弥) Kyōshin 教信 of Banshū 播州.<sup>61</sup> During the reign of Empress Kōken 孝謙 of our country,<sup>62</sup> (there was a woman who was) the wife of Tokihara Sukemichi, the secretary of the county administrator of the Left Division of the Headquarters of the Outer Palace Guards of the province of Settsu.<sup>63</sup> She was the daughter of Fujiwara Yoshiie, the Deputy Governor of the province of Dewa.<sup>64</sup> However, for many years she

lamented that she did not have a son. On the fifteenth of every month, she performed ablutions, fasted and visited temples and pagodas to pray for a son. After three years, she became pregnant and on the fifth day of the fourth month of Ten-ō 天応 1 [*kanoto tori* 辛酉] (781), she safely gave birth to a son. When the son became seven years old, the mother began to neglect her housework and she appeared stricken with sorrow. Wondering what was the matter, her husband asked, “Why do you appear so different from usual?” The wife answered, “My son has finally grown up. I now wish to become a nun and practice the nembutsu exclusively. However, since I must obey my husband’s wishes, I have passed my days vainly in reflection.” Hearing these words, the husband replied, “Your wish is quite reasonable. I will likewise shave my head and practice the nembutsu with you. As for our boy, let’s ask someone to take care of him.” The child, straining his ears, heard this. Tears welled up in his eyes as he gazed at (his parents’) faces, and henceforth he stopped playing.

The next morning, a monk stood outside the gate seeking alms. After gladly inviting him in and giving him alms, the lady of the house requested him to allow her to take the tonsure. The monk said, “You have not yet reached feeble old age nor are you confronted with illness. To seek the tonsure now is most meritorious.” Hearing this, (the wife) grew even happier, and both she and her husband shaved their heads. At this time, the husband was forty-one years old and the wife was thirty-three years old. Next, the seven year old child likewise asked to take the tonsure. After receiving the precepts together, the practicing monk remained to teach them the sūtras and encourage them to practice the nembutsu. The young monk’s name is recorded as having been Shōnyo 勝如.<sup>65</sup> (The monk) taught (them how to recite) the *Amida Sūtra* as well as how to perform the Never Disparaging ritual (Fukyō sahō 不輕作法).<sup>66</sup> Three years passed in this way but it is not known where the above-mentioned monk went afterwards.

On the morning of the eighteenth day of the second month of Enryaku

延曆 14 [*kinoto-i* 乙亥] (795), the householder monk (*nyūdō* 入道) and the nun both performed ablutions, read the sūtra and practiced the nembutsu; at midnight they both passed away. Meanwhile, the servants and maids in the household remained unaware of what was happening. Shōnyo remained at their side, striking a gong and saying the nembutsu. Hearing it, the people in the neighborhood were surprised and inquired about it. Furthermore, after the first memorial service, Shōnyo undertook the Never Disparaging practice and was able to pay obeisance to over one hundred sixty-seven thousand six hundred people and turned over the merit generated by this wisdom practice to the two parents. While undertaking the Never Disparaging practice, whenever he approached a gate (of a house), a fragrance spontaneously came forth, leading all those who experienced it, both clerics and lay people, to marvel.

(Shōnyo) later ascended to Katsuo Temple 勝尾寺, became a disciple of Venerable Shōdō 証道 (Shōdō shōnin), and studied the correct teachings, both exoteric and esoteric. After seven years had elapsed, he finally chose a secluded site through divination, built a separate hermitage, and cultivated the Buddha reflection samādhi for over fifty years. Savoring the taste of the Way and forgetting his fatigue, he ate only one meal every five days. For twelve years, he did not allow himself to utter a word. He and his fellow disciples (of Shōdō) saw each other only rarely.

During the night of the fifteenth of the eighth month of Jōgan 貞觀 8 (866), music was heard in the sky. While (Shōnyo) was thinking how strange it was, someone knocked on the door of his hut. By just coughing, he let it be known that he was inside. The person outside the door announced, “I am śrāmaṇa Kyōshin who live in the northern vicinity of the Kako 賀古 post station in Kako county in Harima province. It is time for me to attain birth in the Land of Supreme Bliss. On this night of this month next year, you will be welcomed (to the Pure Land). I came in order to inform you of this.” During this time, a faint light filtered into the hermitage and soft music gradually receded towards the west. Astonished

and bewildered, the next morning Shōnyo sent the monk Shōran 勝鑑 to look for that place. Shōran went off to that province, (walking) both day and night. Whenever he encountered a traveller, he asked about Kyōshin's birth (in the Pure Land), but there was no one who could give him any answer.

Finally he saw a small cottage north of the Kako post station. Hawks and crows were flying above the cottage. Upon gradually coming closer, he saw a pack of wolves fighting with one another in eating a human corpse. Nearby, on top of a large stone, was a skull. The face was undamaged. Its eyes and mouth seemed to be smiling, and it emitted a pleasant fragrance. Furthermore, looking inside the cottage, (Shōran saw) an old woman and a child sobbing together. He asked why they were sad. The old woman said, "The corpse is that of my husband, śrāmaṇa Kyōshin. He passed away on the night of the fifteenth, and it has been three days now. Throughout his life, he made it his practice to recite Amida's name day and night without rest. His employers called him Amida-maru 阿弥陀丸. Since he decided to pass his days in this way, thirteen years have elapsed. This youngster is his child. Now both of us, mother and child, have lost our means of livelihood. We don't know what to do!" Hearing the reason for Shōran's visit, the men and women of the village as well as monks and lay people who were passing by ran like stars and gathered like clouds to circumambulate the skull, singing praises to it.

Shōran quickly returned and related the aforementioned matter (to Shōnyo). Hearing it, the saint declared, "My silence, which I have practiced for many years, is inferior to Kyōshin's vocal recitation. I am afraid that I have been negligent in others-benefiting practice." On the same day, the twenty-first, he made it a point to visit the village to practice the nembutsu together with others [and so forth].

On the first day of the eighth month of the next year, (Shōnyo) secluded himself in his original place. On the appointed day, he left the

hall to perform ablutions. He told his disciples, “Tonight is the night of Kyōshin’s prediction. This will be my last conversation with you during this lifetime.” Holding back his tears, he entered the hall and fixed it up with incense and flowers. Tying a string to the Buddha’s hand, he reflected on and recited (Amida’s name) as usual. Meanwhile, the moon and the Milky Way appeared motionless in the sky and the sound of the wind in the pines filtered into the hall. As the time gradually passed and it began to approach midnight, music was faintly heard and an extraordinary fragrance arose. The holy man chimed in and reflected on the Buddha. The joy of those who heard it was not small. Suddenly (the hall was) filled with bright light and a purple cloud filled the sky. The holy man faced west, formed a *mudrā* with his hands, sat upright and passed away. He was then eighty-seven years old. The disciples he left behind and the others experienced sadness and joy in turn, and tears ran down both eyes. Over two hundred people, both nobles and commoners, formed karmic links with him. For three weeks, day and night, they circumambulated his corpse, constantly reciting the *nembutsu*. During this time, the fragrance did not disappear. After the end of the ritual, when he was cremated, his hand, formed into a *mudrā*, remained unburned in the ashes. A stone pagoda was quickly constructed for interring him. It is the one now called *Hiuchi no sekitō* (Flint Pagoda). The details are recorded in the holy man’s biography.

Although (Kyōshin) was a lay *śrāmaṇa*, he surpassed the wordless holy man. This is due to the inconceivability of Amida’s name. Who is this Kyōshin? Why don’t you be diligent (like him)? Polish your mind and recite the name without falling back. By constantly reflecting on Kannon, we can escape from the three poisons so difficult to escape.<sup>67</sup> How much more can we gain birth into the Pure Land, so easy to gain birth into, by constantly reflecting on Amida.

If you cannot practice the everyday *nembutsu* with fortitude and diligence, you should undertake the special practice based on the *sūtra*’s

teaching.<sup>68</sup> Be sure to choose a quiet place. Prepare the hall by first placing a statue of Amida at the western wall. Whether it be for one day or for seven days, adorn it as much as your means allow and present offerings to it to the extent you are able. Be pure in keeping the precepts and behave with decorum. Three times a day, or four time a day, or five times a day or six times (a day), (recite Amida's name) thirty thousand times, or twenty thousand times, or ten thousand times, or five thousand times at each appointed hour. Depending on the practitioner's inclination (it is also possible to) arouse vows, transfer merit or practice with single-minded intent. In the case of Tao-ch'o, he was able to achieve one million (recitations) by (reciting the) nembutsu for seven days.<sup>69</sup> If you practice with fortitude and diligence for seven days and nights, when you reach the twilight of your life, you will be protected by Amida. Why do you not work hard at practicing the seven days of austerities for the sake of peace and happiness lasting eternal *kalpas*?

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The characters for this monk's name can be read both "Yōkan" and "Eikan." Older Buddhist dictionaries such as Tsukamoto, *Mochizuki Bukkyō daijiten*, 1: 251-2 and Washio, *Nihon bukke jinmei jiten*, 62 give his name as Eikan. In contrast, most recent dictionaries give his name as "Yōkan." They include Ui, *Bukkyō jiten*, 1018; Nakamura et. als., *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 67, and Hiraoka, *Tōdaiji jiten*, 457. In Japan, names of Buddhist monk and Buddhist technical terms are traditionally read using the "go-on" 吳音 or "Wu dynasty pronunciation." Since the go-on pronunciation of this monk's name is "Yōkan," I will use this pronunciation throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Satō, "Eizan ni okeru Jōdokyō," 1051-1076. See also Satō, *Eizan Jōdokyō no kenkyū*, 3-18.

<sup>3</sup> This alludes to a verse which appears several times in the *Ch'u-yao ching* 出曜經 (Chinese translation of the *Udānavarga* by Saṃghabhadra and Chu Fo-nien 竺佛念 made in 399), for example at T 4, 616b and 621b and c.

Once this day has passed,

Your life diminishes (by that much).

(You are) like a fish in a small pool of water.

What happiness can you find in such circumstances?

It may be mentioned that this verse is also cited in Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* (T 84, 39a).

<sup>4</sup> Alludes to a passage in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, which likens the human life to cows and sheep being led to a slaughterhouse. See T 12, 589c.

<sup>5</sup> These two lines allude to the following story from the *Fa-chü p'i-yü ching* 法句譬喻經 (*Verses of the Doctrine and Parables Sūtra*). There were four brothers, all of whom had mastered the five supernatural powers. Realizing that their lives would end in seven days, they all tried to hide from death. One hid in the ocean, another hid in Mt. Sumeru, the third hid in the sky and the last hid in the marketplace. However, they were ultimately unable to conceal themselves and met their death. See T 4, 576c-7a. An English translation of this story is found in Willemen, *The Scriptural Text*, 13-5. The "stone chamber" refers to Mt. Sumeru, in which the third brother hid himself. Incidentally, the *Ōjōyōshū* also alludes to this story. See T 84, 39a.

<sup>6</sup> This is a quotation from Kūkai's 空海 *Sangō shi'iki* 三教指歸 (*Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings*). See Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūsho, comp., *Kōbō Daishi Zenshū*, vol. 3, 349. Cf. Yoshito S. Hakeda's translation of this passage found in Hakeda, *Kūkai: Major Works*, 132.

<sup>7</sup> Loosely based on a passage found at T 4, 266a.

<sup>8</sup> This passage alludes to the *Benevolent Kings Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, which states, "There is no eternal lord to our physical form. There is no eternal home to the spirit. We will necessarily be separated from our physical forms and spirits. How much more so do we have our countries?" (T 8, 830b).

<sup>9</sup> Alludes to a passage in Chih-i's *Mo ho chih kuan*, a detailed outline of meditation according to the T'ien-t'ai (J.: Tendai) sect: "In vain, the property in our possession becomes the possession of another. We head alone into darkness; who can we ask about what is right and what is wrong?" (T 46, 93c).

<sup>10</sup> Alludes to a passage from the *Lotus Sūtra*, T 9, 54b.

<sup>11</sup> These two sentences, from "A large stone," are based on Kūkai's collection of Chinese poetry and prose works, the *Shōryōshū* 性靈集 (*Collection of Miraculous Nature*). See Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūsho, comp., *Kōbō Daishi Zenshū*, vol. 3, 452.

<sup>12</sup> In his *An lo chi* 安樂集 (*Collection of [Passages on the Land of] Peace and Bliss*), Tao-ch'o states, "The recitation of the name is also like this. If you can only

exclusively continue (the nembutsu) without interruption, you will definitely be born in the Buddha's presence" (T 47, 11b).

<sup>13</sup> In his *Shih ching-t'u ch'ün-i lun* 釋淨土群疑論 (*Treatise Resolving the Myriad of Doubts concerning the Pure Land*), Huai-kan calls on Pure Land practitioners to "simply urge on your voices in practicing the nembutsu; (then) samādhi is easy to accomplish" (T 47, 76c).

<sup>14</sup> T 12, 347b.

<sup>15</sup> T 12, 350a.

<sup>16</sup> T 47, 107b-c.

<sup>17</sup> The first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. It is frequently used as a symbol of emptiness.

<sup>18</sup> The forty-two letters that comprises the Sanskrit alphabet.

<sup>19</sup> T 12, 272b.

<sup>20</sup> A bird with a wonderful song.

<sup>21</sup> Charity, keeping the precepts, forbearance, vigor and meditation. When wisdom is added to these five perfections, it becomes the six perfections, which constitute the basic practices of bodhisattvas.

<sup>22</sup> This is Yōkan's note. Apparently this verse continues with similar examples, but Yōkan indicates in this note that he has omitted them all.

<sup>23</sup> This verse is unidentified.

<sup>24</sup> This sūtra is included in the second fascicle of the *T'o-lo-ni chi ching* 陀羅尼集經 (*Dhāraṇī Collection Sūtra*). This passage is found at T 18, 800b.

<sup>25</sup> According to a passage found at the beginning of the second fascicle of the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*, there are three levels of people who aspire for birth in the Pure Land. The lines quoted here are from the passage explaining the lowest level of aspirants. See T 12, 272c. For an English translation, see Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, p. 360.

<sup>26</sup> Refers to the dhāraṇī of the Thousand Armed Kannon.

<sup>27</sup> The *Ch'ien-shou ch'ien-mieh kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa kuang-tai yüan-man wu-ai tai-pei-hsin t'o-lo-ni ching* 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無碍大悲心陀羅尼經 (*Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī of the Extensive, Completely Fulfilling and Unobstructed Mind of Great Compassion of the Thousand Armed and Thousand Eyed Kuan-yin*) states, "After arousing this vow, sincerely recite and reflect on my name. Also you should exclusively reflect on my original teacher Amida Tathāgata. Subsequently you should recite my dhāraṇī spell" (T 20, 107a).

<sup>28</sup> This story is found in the *Wang-sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u jui-yin-ch'uan* 往生西方淨土瑞應伝 (*Biographies of Miraculous Response of People who Achieved Birth in the Pure Land in the West*), a Chinese biographical work recounting the lives of people who achieved birth in the Pure Land compiled by Wen-shen 文諗 and Shao-k'ang 少康 sometime after 774. According to this biography, Meditation Master Tai-hsing, when practicing the Lotus samādhi, gained a vision of Samanatabhadra in which the bodhisattva instructed him to reflect on Amida Buddha. See T 51, 105c.

<sup>29</sup> One of several kinds of meditative practices described in Chih-i's *Mo ho chih kuan*. The Lotus Samādhi is based on two texts: the "Encouragement of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra" (chapter 28) of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra*. Practitioners who undertake this samādhi are said to gain a vision of Samantabhadra seated on a six-tusked elephant. This samādhi is described in Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi," 67–72, as well as Donner and Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation*, 261–269.

<sup>30</sup> Alludes to a passage in the *Contemplation Sūtra*. See T 12, p. 346b. For an English translation of the passage in question, see Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 268–70.

<sup>31</sup> This passage is based on the *Amida Sūtra*. See T 12, 347b. For an English translation, see Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 356–358.

<sup>32</sup> The Buddha who, according to the "Apparition of the Jeweled Stūpa Chapter" of the *Lotus Sūtra*, appears wherever this sūtra is being preached in order to attest to the truth of its teaching. See T 9, 32c. In English, see Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 184.

<sup>33</sup> The "golden scripture" refers to the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* (*Sūtra of Golden Light*). At the beginning of this sūtra, it is stated that people who hear this sūtra and reflect on its profound teaching will be protected by the Buddhas of the four directions: Akṣobhya to the east, Ratnaketu to the south, Amida to the west and Dundubhiśvarā to the north. See T 16, 335b. For an English translation from the Sanskrit, see Emmerick tr., *The Sūtra of Golden Light*, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> This world is mentioned in the *Nien-fo san-mei ching*. See T 13, 841b.

<sup>35</sup> Refers to the final sermon delivered by the Buddha at Kuśinagara. According to the *Hsi-fang yao-chieh* 西方要決 (*Determining the Essentials of the Western Direction*) attributed to Kuei-chi, it is argued that the Pure Land teaching is not an

*upāya* (i.e., that it is not a provisional teaching) for two reasons: (1) because no doubts were presented concerning it at the time of the Buddha's decease, and (2) the Buddhas of the ten directions attest to its truth by extending their tongues to cover the universe. Kuei-chi bases his first point (that no one raised any question about the Pure Land at the time of the Buddha's death) on his reading of the *Hsiang-fa chüeh-i ching* 像法決疑經 (*Sūtra Resolving Doubts about the Counterfeit Dharma*). At the beginning of this sūtra, the Buddha first announces that he has already preached both the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the teachings concerning the Buddha lands of the ten direction, and then invites the audience to ask if they have any questions concerning these two topics (T 85, 1335c). However, no one asks any question concerning the Buddha land in the sūtra. Hence Kuei-chi states that no doubts were presented concerning the Pure Land at the time of the Buddha's decease.

<sup>36</sup> Refers to the *Ta chih tu lun* 大智度論 (*Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise*), a 100 fascicle commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* translated by Kumārajīva.

<sup>37</sup> The stage of *srotāpanna*, the first of the four stages on the path to enlightenment. At this stage, the practitioner attains insight into the way (*darśana-mārga*).

<sup>38</sup> *Amṛta* is the nectar of immortality drunk by the gods. Here, the "nectar gate" refers to the path to *nirvāṇa*.

<sup>39</sup> This story is found at T 25, 115a-b.

<sup>40</sup> According to Buddhist cosmology, one thousand world systems constitute a minor thousand-world system, one thousand minor thousand-world systems constitute an intermediate thousand-world system and a thousand intermediate thousand-world system constitute a major thousand-world system.

<sup>41</sup> Precepts which lay Buddhists are obliged to keep during six fixed days each month. They are (1) not to kill, (2) not to steal, (3) not to engage in sexual intercourse, (4), not to lie, (5) not to drink alcoholic beverages, (6), not to wear jewelry, put on perfume or to enjoy singing and dancing, (7) not to sleep on a raised bed, and (8) not to eat after noon.

<sup>42</sup> Ten precepts which *śrāmaṇas* (novices who are still too young to be admitted into the Buddhist community as full-fledged monks) must keep. The first five are identical to the first five of the eight precepts of abstinence above. The rest are (6) not to wear jewelry or put on perfume, (7) not to enjoy singing and dancing, (8) not to sleep on a raised bed, (9) not to eat after noon, and (10) not to handle money.

<sup>43</sup> These acts are included among the ten acts which, according to the *Shih*

*wang-sheng a-mi-t'o fo-kuo ching* 十往生阿弥陀仏国経 (*Sūtra on the Ten Ways of Attaining Birth in Amida's Country*), leads to birth in the Pure land. See Nishi and Tamaki, *Dainihon Zokukōkyō*, vol. 1, p. 365b-c.

<sup>44</sup> The most serious offences in Buddhism. They are (1) killing one's father, (2) killing one's mother, (3) killing an arhat, (4) causing blood to flow from the Buddha's body and (5) causing discord within the Buddhist order.

<sup>45</sup> T 13, 863c-4a.

<sup>46</sup> This passage derives from Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi*. See T 47, 10b.

<sup>47</sup> Five things which are impossible to comprehend: (1) the number of sentient beings, (2) the fruits of karma, (3) the supernatural power of people who practice meditation, (4) the power of dragons, and (5) the power of the Buddhas. They are treated in the *Ta chih tu lun*, T 25, 283c.

<sup>48</sup> Four stages on the path to Buddhahood: (1) *srotāpanna*, (2) *sakṛdāgāmin*, (3) *anāgāmin*, and (4) *arhat*.

<sup>49</sup> Common beings are called *ishō* (literally "different births") for two reasons: (1) because they differ from sages, and (2) because they are born into different realms of existence in accordance with their karma. See Nakamura, *Bukkyōgo daijiten*, vol. 1, 36c.

<sup>50</sup> T 12, 353a. The full title of this sūtra is *A-mi-t'o ku-yin-sheng wang t'o-lo-ni ching* 阿弥陀鼓音声王陀羅尼経 (*Sūtra of Amida's Kingly Drum Sound Dhāraṇī*). Neither the translator or the year of its translation are known. It teaches birth in Amida's Pure Land through the recitation of the Kingly Drum Sound Dhāraṇī. In this text, Amida is described as having a father named Yüeh-shang 月上, a mother named Shu-sheng-miao-yen 殊勝妙顏 and a child named Yüeh-ming 月明.

<sup>51</sup> Five spiritual faculties which lead to the attainment of enlightenment: faith, diligence, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

<sup>52</sup> The realms of hell, hungry ghosts (*pretas*), animals, titans (*asuras*), humans and heavenly beings.

<sup>53</sup> Physical, vocal and mental actions.

<sup>54</sup> The ten faiths (*jisshin* 十信) refers to the ten minds (*jisshin* 十心) found in the *Benevolent Kings Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (T 8, 826b): (1) mind of faith, (2) mindfulness, (3) mind of diligence, (4) mind of wisdom, (5) mind of concentration, (6) mind of charity, (7) mind of merit transference, (8) mind of observance, (9) mind of precepts and (10) mind of vow.

<sup>55</sup> Nine grades of birth in the Pure Land found in the *Contemplation Sūtra* (T 12,

345a-346a).

<sup>56</sup> This line alludes to a famous passage from the *Lotus Sūtra*: “There is no peace within the three realms; it is like a burning house” (T 9, 14c). For an alternate English translation of this verse, see Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 72. The three realms refer to the realm of desire, the realm of form and the formless realm. Together they constitute the realm of transmigration.

<sup>57</sup> The four modes of action are walking, standing, sitting and lying down.

<sup>58</sup> The four modes of cultivation are (1) uninterrupted cultivation, (2) reverent cultivation, (3) exclusive cultivation and (4) long-term cultivation, all mentioned in the text above. They are discussed in several Chinese Pure Land works, including Shan-tao's *Wang sheng li tsan chieh* 往生礼讚偈 (*Verses in Veneration and Praise of Birth in the Pure Land*; T 47, 439a-b), and Kuei-chi's *Hsi fang yao chieh* (T 47, 109c-10a). They were also important in Japanese Pure Land thought and are discussed in detail in Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* (T 85, 57c-58a) and Hōnen's *Senchaku hongan nembutsushū* (T 83, 12b-13b). For an English translation of the latter passage, see *Senchaku-shū* English Translation Project tr., *Hōnen's Senchakushū*, 113-117.

<sup>59</sup> There are two different Chinese translations of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*, one in three fascicle and another in one fascicle. This quotation derives from the three fascicle version. See T 13, 905b.

<sup>60</sup> This passage derives from Shan-tao's *Wang sheng li tsan chieh*. See T 47, 439a.

<sup>61</sup> Also known as Harima 播磨. Now part of Hyōgo prefecture.

<sup>62</sup> Kōken reigned from 749-758.

<sup>63</sup> The translation of this title is tentative. Settsu comprises the southern section of present-day Osaka prefecture.

<sup>64</sup> Present-day Akita and Yamagata prefectures.

<sup>65</sup> The text is difficult to follow here, but apparently Shōnyo was the monastic name given to the seven year old child when he took the tonsure. A short biography of Shōnyo is found in Yoshishige Yasutane's 慶滋保胤 (931-997) *Nihon ōjō gokuraku-ki* (Inoue and Ōsone, *Ōjōden, Hokke genki*, 31-2).

<sup>66</sup> Practice based on the “Bodhisattva Never Disparaging” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*. This chapter relates the story of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who paid obeisance to all Buddhist monks, nuns and lay people he met, worshipping them because (according to the One Vehicle doctrine of the *Lotus Sūtra*) all beings will eventually attain Buddhahood. Although Never Disparaging was reviled and even

physically attacked, he persevered in this practice and eventually attained Buddhahood. See T 9, 50b-51a. For an English translation, see Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 279-285. In the Never Disparaging ritual, the practitioner follows the bodhisattva's example and pays obeisance to everyone he meets.

<sup>67</sup> The three poisons are anger, folly and greed.

<sup>68</sup> Refers to the *Amida Sūtra*, which states that one can be born in Amida's land by holding fast to this Buddha's name for a fixed period of time, such as one day, two days, three days and so on down to seven days. See. T 12, 347b.

<sup>69</sup> This is mentioned in Chia-ts'ai 迦才 *Ching-t'u lun* 淨土論 (*Treatise on the Pure Land*). See T 47, 103c.

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