Pure Land Buddhism as an Alternative Mārga

MARK L. BLUM

1. MAIN ISSUES IN CONSIDERATION OF A PURE LAND MĀRGA

The soteriological message of Pure Land thought has typically been presented in modern scholarship by utilizing a paradigm built on such theories as the three stages of the Dharma, the Buddha's vows of compassion, and the immense popularity of the Pure Land movement among the masses.[1] But, by ignoring the context of the sudden versus gradual debate in China pervasive at the time of the Pure Land movement's ascendancy, as well as other relevant soteriological issues such as nonretrogression and the mārga implications of samādhi experience, such presentations generally fail to lay out a proper hermeneutic required for modern understanding of the Pure Land Buddhist experience. It appears, rather, to have been the stress on faith in figures such as Shinran that has attracted many Western scholars to the study of Pure Land history and thought. Much of this research can be traced to the active scholarship of individuals associated with one of the branches of Shinran's school, the Jōdo Shinshū. Their work in Western languages has tended to focus on either the issue of man's religious standing vis-à-vis the salvific vows of Amitābha Buddha or the experiences in Shinran's life that led him to his own realization.[2] Yet, how-

* The author wishes to thank Dr. G. M. Nagao for his careful reading of the manuscript and suggestions for improving it.

[1] W. T. de Bary, ed., *The Buddhist Tradition* (New York: Modern Library, 1969), pp. 198–99; see also p. 316.

[2] A case in point is the posthumous translation of Shinran's *magnum opus*, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証 prepared by D. T. Suzuki and edited by the staff at the

ever subitist the soteriological message of Pure Land Buddhist thought appears in figures even as radical as Shinran, it is nonetheless doctrinally grounded in the Indian gradualist concepts of mārga from which it emanated.

This discussion seeks to explore the major recurring themes in what is, in fact, an often complex and obscure relationship between these two notions of mārga. In the process I hope to shed some light on the manner in which the Buddhist tradition attempted to rationalize some of the inevitable doctrinal inconsistencies that accompanied the rise of this Chinese subitist alternative to the more gradualist assumptions of the Indian mārga schemata.

The notion of a path to liberation is basic to all Buddhist doctrine. Usually known under the rubric of the Sanskrit term *mārga*, the concept of path has generally reflected two aspects of practice: 1) *performative:* the delineation of required praxis (i.e., the exhortation of work to be done); 2) *attributive:* the relative value placed on particular spiritual attainments (i.e., the recognition of work that has been done).

How one is to reach the goal of nirvāṇa, the ultimate goal in all Buddhism, is the key reference point in any mārga discussion. The noble eightfold path, perhaps the earliest mārga message, may also be the best example of a purely performative mārga. Here eight different dimensions of an individual's life are discussed and the appropriate Buddhist guidelines explained for each. The other well-known early Buddhist mārga notion is the list of four stages of spirituality—stream-winner, once-returner, nonreturner, and arhat. In this scheme, there is an attempt to hermeneutically split the four stages into performative praxis and attributive attainments, thus we find a conscious attempt to clarify both dimensions of mārga by a dualistic division into "approach" (*pratipannaka*) and "fruit" (*phala*). In Chinese this is known

Eastern Buddhist Society. For many years this was the only reliable book in English on Pure Land thought and its notes were used as a reference work. It may only be an accident of history, but in his translation Suzuki was only able to finish the first four of what are actually six fascicles of the original. Since it provides the basic source material for the issues of faith, practice, and the grace of the Buddha, many considered this invaluable translation to be complete. In fact, what was inadvertently omitted in the final chapters was Shinran's exegesis on the multifaceted problem of *mārga*. Fortunately, this lacuna has been filled by the new translation of this text from the Shin Buddhism Translation Series in Kyoto.

as *ssu-hsiang ssu-kuo* 四向四果. This distinction expresses an awareness of both the performative and attributive phases of the path quite early in the tradition.

As the religion grew through individual experience and its interpretation in terms of established doctrine, the concept of mārga also expanded into myriad forms. It is quite beyond the intentions of this brief essay to identify the core mārga schemata of Buddhism, but it is worth mentioning some of the common mārga notions found in the Mahāyāna, some of which originate much earlier. One of these early comprehensive descriptions that remained resonant within the Mahāyāna is that of the so-called three learnings: morality (*śīla* 戒), meditation (*samādhi* 定), and wisdom (*prajñā* 慧). The eightfold path was often interpreted in terms of these three categories, but this tripartite conception proved useful in later Buddhist descriptions of praxis where the eightfold path no longer functioned as mārga referent. The Mahāyāna doctrinal system in its complexity added many new notions of the path, refining the discussion and adding the new element of choice. Mahāyāna sūtras refer to Buddhist adepts with an assumption these individuals had chosen which type of path to follow. Thus the Mahāyāna initially outlined four basic paths: that of the ordinary person and/or deity (*pṛthagjana*), that of the "listener" (*śrāvaka*), that of the "solitary buddha" (*pratyeka-buddha*), and the path for those "attached to enlightenment" (*bodhisattva*). Although the category of "listener" represents followers of the pre-Mahāyāna teachings and was often belittled as an inferior path that led to an inferior goal, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra* and the *Ta chih-tu lun* recognize the listeners' abilities and together with the solitary buddhas they are encouraged to practice the so-called thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakṣa*) (三十七道品)."[3] This is actually a list of various practices,

[1] Other Chinese translations include *San-shih-ch'i chüeh-fa* 三十七覺分 and *San-shih-ch'i fen-fa* 三十七分法. Most of the basic mārga issues defined in the Abhidharma texts in both Pali and Sanskrit continue to play an important role in the Mahāyāna as well. One such tradition divides practice into four sets of mārga. According to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, these are defined as: (1) *prayoga-mārga* 加行道, preparation practice for the destruction of mental afflictions (*kleśas*); (2) *ānantarya-mārga* 無間道, actual cutting off of individual mental afflictions; (3) *vimukti-mārga* 解脫道, the path of liberation resulting from the confirmation of truth seen after the removal of the afflictions; and (4) *viśeṣa-mārga* 勝進道, the path of further progress, indicating continued

including the noble eightfold path, and appears to reflect a basic Mahāyāna expansion of earlier notions of mārga. Bodhisattvas also practice the thirty-seven *bodhipakṣa* but in addition are supposed to practice the six (later ten) so-called "perfections" (*pāramitā*).

If we look at the issues in the seven different lists that make up the thirty-seven *bodhipakṣa*, we find outlined some performative practices (the four foundations of mindfulness, the four exertions, the noble eightfold path), and others appear instead to express attributive attainments (the five powers, the four supernatural powers, the seven limbs of awakening). It should be noted that many qualities associated with mārga attainment can be both performative and attributive. In this *bodhipakṣa* list of lists, for example, the "five powers" (*pañca-bala*) and the "five faculties" (*pañca-indriya*) is in fact the same: faith, energy, attention, samādhi and wisdom; but the former list embodies an attributive implication which the latter does not. Thus acquiring these powers is not a final goal, as these now empowered faculties must be used to push the seeker further toward his goal. While this and other lists may seem to present an incongruous blend of different messages, in fact the

practices directed toward the removal of more stubborn afflictions.

With the Mahāyāna a number of mārga categories are also added which are neither prescriptive nor descriptive, and can only be described as idealistic. One such scheme is the basic description of practice under the heading of "with and without *āsrava*" 有漏 無漏. *Āsrava* are outflows of mental impurities or intoxicants, sometimes translated as fluxes (cf. Collett Cox, "Attainment through Abandonment," in *Paths to Liberation*, p. 67) and glossed by Edgerton (quoting Johnston) as "the influences which attach a man to saṃsāra" (p. 111b). The path of one who still has these impure outflows (*sāsrava-mārga*) is also called the worldly path (*laukika-mārga*). In Abhidharma literature, kleśas can be cut off by someone in *sāsrava* status, although the *Yogācārabhūmi-mārga* denies this. There is also an *anāsrava*. Thus, in the pre-Mahāyāna analysis, *anāsrava* status meant a stage where the more subtle *kleśas* are removed, like the *viśeṣa-mārga* above. One who has reached the *anāsrava* status is said to be beyond learning, known as the *aśaikṣa-mārga* (the "path beyond instruction"), which is also used as a synonym for the stage of Arhat. This issue is confusing precisely because the term is used in both performative and attributive sense: performatively speaking, the *anāsrava-mārga* includes *darśana-mārga* and *aśaikṣa-mārga*.

These are just some of the schemes offered in Indian Buddhist doctrine. For a useful list of basic mārga schemes, see the introduction to Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello, eds., *Paths for Liberation: The Marga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), pp. 7–9 (unfortunately without any source references!) and the following essays.

combination of both performative and attributive dimensions of the path is not uncommon in Buddhism. Another example can be seen in the word *bodhisattva*. Denoting a being "attached to enlightenment,"[4] the word can represent both someone who is committed to the path but is at its early stages, i.e., a person aspiring to bodhi, as well as a fully accomplished person, standing one short step before Buddhahood.

It should also be mentioned that in contrast to the traditional Buddhist emphasis on meditative experience as the fundamental arbiter of religious value, with the rise of the Mahāyāna certain nonempirical sources of authority emerged that competed with or even superseded individual experience. One such source is the cult of the book. By exhorting their own unique platform for the experience of truth, Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, Prajñāpāramitā, Laṅkāvatāra, Saṃdhinirmocana, Mahāparinirvāṇa,* etc., created loci of spiritual authority that became standards by which each practitioner was to judge his own religious experience.

The emergence of a lineage of teachers also served to define the limits of acceptable religious understanding. The impact of lineages is particularly strong in Tibet, where lineage mandalas display important personages equal to the authority of the Buddha and an entire subdivision of literature is devoted to this concern.[5] The lineage charts of the Chinese Buddhist schools as written in the Sung dynasty are also well known for establishing the authority of contemporary teachers and became the basis for sectarian orthodoxy in Japan as well. Within the Ch'an school, the so-called spiritual encounter with one's master, in both verbal and nonverbal expression, also became a well-respected measure of mārga proficiency; in extreme cases it was the only measure of attainment.

In the case of Pure Land Buddhism, we also see both performative and attributive descriptions of the path. The notion of the six or ten perfections of the Mahāyāna path, while not entirely abandoned, has disappeared as the focus of performative norms. This is replaced by an elevation of a number of devotional, ritualistic and meditational prac-

[4] From K. R. Norman, "Buddhism and Sanskritisation," lecture presented at Kyoto University, May 17, 1994.

[5] See "Thob-yig or gSan-yigs" in *Tibetan Historical Literature* by A. I. Vostrikov, translated by Harish Chandra (Calcutta: Indian studies, 1970) pp. 199–204.

tices falling under the rubric of *nien-fo/nembutsu* 念佛 (*buddha-anusmṛti*), most of which cannot be found in Indian mārga schemes. The issue of faith, which can be found in the early stages of the path as defined by the *Hua-yen* (*Avataṃsaka*) and *P'u-sa ying-lo pen yeh* sūtras,[6] indeed functions in both performative and attributive aspects. What distinguishes mid-thirteenth-century Japanese Pure Land Buddhism is that faith has completely lost its performative dimension and is redefined as the ultimate soteriological attainment possible in this life. It is from this point of view that scholars needed to present a convincing argument to their contemporaries. This is the fuel driving Kamakura Pure Land exegetics.

Despite the often encountered assumption that the salvific myth surrounding the Buddha Amitābha/Amitāyus reflects a mature Mahāyāna statement, a quick look at the history of sūtra translation in China reveals that Amitābha-centered texts comprise some of the earliest material in the Mahāyāna corpus. Although there appears to be some borrowing of material within these early works, if we accept the dates recorded for Tao-an's lost catalog (as quoted in Sêng-yu's *Ch'u san tsang chi chi* 出三藏記集), according to the *Han-lu* Lokakṣema translated the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra* and the *Akṣobhya-tathāgatasyavyūha sūtra* between 147 and 186 during the Later Han, and two translations of the *Pratyutpannabuddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi sūtra* (a.k.a. the *Bhadrapāla sūtra*) were made as well. Most of this work was completed a full century before the first translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra* was completed by Chih-ch'ien in 286.[7] While we cannot infer that an earlier date of translation in China necessarily means an earlier date of composition in India, and the lack of corroborating textual references to these texts and practices in Indian sources is problematic, the early transmission of texts mixing samādhi and devotional practices does imply the prevalence of soteriological movements surrounding mythical Buddhas quite early in the Mahāyāna movement. There is the general consensus that the cult of Amitābha Buddha and his realm

[6] 菩薩瓔珞本業經 J. *Bosatsu yōraku hongō-kyō*, T. 20.1010.

[7] The same Chih-ch'ien's translation of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra*, also dated as 286, was already the third in China. He also translated a number of sūtras in the third century which contain elements that are thematically based on faith in the Pure Land: 菩薩生地經, 慧印三昧經, 無量門微密持經, etc.

called Sukhāvatī probably arose during the first century A.D. in India and there is even evidence of Sukhāvatī functioning as an otherworldly ideal in texts unrelated to the Amitābha cult as early as the second century; that is, from evidence available, predating Nāgārjuna (~150–250 C.E.).[8]

But unlike Mādhyamika or Yogācāra, we know of no mention of a "school" of study and practice centered around the Pure Lands of Akṣobhya, Amitābha/Amitāyus, Bhaiṣajyaguru and other Buddhas in either India or Central Asia.[9] The emergence of a Pure Land path or "gate" (*men/mon* 門) in Chinese writings coincides with the so-called *p'an-chiao* 判教, or evaluation of the teachings, debate that ensued in late sixth-century China. I believe the term *men* assumes some conceptualization of mārga, or path, and is thus to be distinguished from "school" (*tsung/shū* 宗), which rather implies a lineage of doctrines, practices or teachers. Among the writings of so many brilliant Buddhist thinkers of this golden age, the works of figures like Chih-i 智顗 (538–597) and Fa-tsang 法藏 (643–712) are notable for also bringing their interpretive and systematizing genius to bear upon sūtras and doctrines that we now associate with the so-called Pure Land tradition. Although not normally included in the standard list of the Pure Land patriarchs,[10] the commentarial efforts of these men, particularly those of Chih-i, have proved extremely influential throughout the development of the Pure Land movement. Indeed the notions of mārga that developed within all the major schools of Chinese Buddhism also undoubtedly affected writers considering a Pure Land path.

[8] Fujita Kōtatsu 藤田宏達, *Genshi Jōdokyō shisō no kenkyū* 原始浄土教思想の研究 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1968), concludes that the sūtra materials can begin as early as 100 C.E.; cf. p. 224. G. Schopen, in "Sukhāvatī as a generalized religious goal in Sanskrit Mahāyāna sūtra literature," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 19.3–4 (August, September 1977), p. 204, following Régamey, also concludes the second century as the lower limit for the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* as well as "for the period during which rebirth in *Sukhāvatī* became a generalized religious goal open to the Mahāyāna community as a whole."

[9] Schopen suggests this may be due to a "process of generalization and dissociation from Amitābha" (p. 204), and this is an important point to remember when trying to outline the hermeneutical context for the widely-practiced cult in East Asia.

[10] Hōnen's list of five patriarchs in his *Jōdo goso den* 浄土五祖傳 (*Hōnen shōnin zenshū* 857) excludes both Chih-i and Fa-tsang. Even Gyōnen's extended list of nine patriarchs does not include either of them; see his discussion of Pure Land patriarchs in his *Jōdo hōmon genrushō* 浄土法門源流章 (T. 84.195a18–c21).

PURE LAND BUDDHISM AS ALTERNATIVE MĀRGA

At this point it might be helpful to outline just what modern scholars mean by phrases such as "Pure Land tradition" or "Pure Land thought." Perhaps the most salient feature of this branch of Mahāyāna is the important role played by Amitābha Buddha as omniscient teacher and source of spiritual compassion (*mahākaruṇā*). Doctrinally speaking, Pure Land thought is based on the pan-Buddhist concept that every Buddha has an impact on his environment by "purifying" (*pariśuddhi*) the space he inhabits, his *Buddha-kṣetra*, usually translated as "Buddha-field." Associated with the rise to prominence of the Mahāyāna movement is the concomitant growth in the number of Buddhas throughout the universe, each conceived of as dwelling in his own pure Buddha-field devoid of the distractions and defilements common to our own world. Just as the stūpas built to Śākyamuni Buddha attracted followers of the teaching because they became religious domains embodying the spirit of enlightenment, so, too, the mythologized regions wherein Buddhas dwelled became idealized realms of truth and beauty to which religious pilgrims aspired. Of these so-called "cosmic" Buddhas, none attracted so large a following as one known either by the name of Amitābha ("infinite light") or Amitāyus ("infinite life").

The "Pure Land" teachings refer only to the doctrines surrounding Amitābha Buddha, whose forty-eight bodhisattva vows contain the promise to make it possible for all beings to reach his Buddha-kṣetra and hear his elucidation of the Dharma if they decide to turn over their store of merit to achieving this end. In addition to his identity as provider of a universally accessible land of bliss, this Buddha also became the object of the popular Mahāyāna practice of recollection samādhi (*anusmṛti-samādhi*).[11] The precise relationship between these apparently disparate roles should be less obscure if seen in light of the relationship between the Pure Land mārga and the traditionalist mārga.[12]

The doctrines of Pure Land thought are often collectively referred to today under the rubric, "other-power." This term refers to the force of

[11] Rendered into Sino-Japanese both as 念佛三昧 *nien-fo san-mei, nembutsu zammai*, and 観佛三昧 *kuan-fo san-mei, kambutsu zammai*.

[12] See Paul Harrison, "*Pratyutpanna-Buddhasaṃmukhāvasthita samādhi sūtra*," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 6 (1978).

the Buddha's compassionate resolve to extend his hand from somewhere outside the practitioner's experience and by doing so lift him to higher spiritual attainments, specifically birth in the Buddha-kṣetra of Amitābha where one is promised swift progress to the highest enlightenment.[13] The concept of self and "other-power" in a Pure Land context was broached in China by T'an-luan 曇鸞 (476–542). Following T'an-luan's usage, "self-power" (*tzŭ-li/jiriki* 自力) and "other-power" (*t'a-li/tariki* 他力) gradually took on specific denotations in Buddhist literature, representing two divergent approaches to religious practice: self-power as the model of liberation by self-cultivation, other-power as the path to enlightenment openly dependent upon the compassionate assistance of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Though not explicitly stated as such in the classical texts of the Pure Land tradition in either China or Japan, it is nonetheless important for us today to recognize that the hermeneutical context of a term like "other-power" can only be understood properly when seen against the background of some notion of mārga. In effect, self-power and other-power are statements about two approaches to mārga. Given the variety of mārga schema existing in Buddhist doctrine in sixth- and seventh-century China, the creation of the notion of a *jiriki* mārga was indeed a simplification, yet it was one that helped establish the identity of the movement devoted to practices based on the great variety of scriptural sources for the Amitābha cult by affirming a raison d'être for the shibboleth *tariki*. Since the purpose here is to outline the identity of the Pure Land mārga, and since the term "self-power" only has meaning within the *jiriki/tariki* hermeneutic employed by the Pure Land tradition, I will refer to previous mārga schemes, particularly those originating in India, by the phrase "traditional mārga." Although the Pure Land path can certainly be described as unorthodox, it seems inappropriate to use the word orthodox to describe previous schemata of mārga simply because there were so many conceptions of the path that no one system appears to have ever sustained that degree of authority. Thus, though insufficient, I have selected the terms "traditional" and "alternate" to represent these two positions. "Alternate" mārga seems

[13] Shinran reinterpreted the notion of Birth in the Buddha's Pure Land not as a means to unrestricted progress toward final enlightenment, but as the final enlightenment itself.

appropriate because the Pure Land path was dependent on Indian mārga assumptions for its validity, thus presuming the authority of other, more established and more traditional concepts of mārga.

Expressed as *jiriki* and *tariki*, these two paths in a Japanese context parochially imply mutual exclusivity today. Such an assumption, however, is largely the outcome of powerful sectarian forces operating in Japan since the eighteenth century and should not be taken as representative of how the overall Buddhist tradition attempted to understand their relationship. Seeing the hermeneutic of self-power/other-power in the context of mārga affords us an opportunity to clarify the very ground of their relationship, for questions of mārga represent the primary soteriological concerns of any Buddhist system.

One important theme embedded in mārga discussions in East Asia is the hermeneutic of "sudden" (*tun/ton* 頓) versus "gradual" (*chien/zen* 漸) teachings and practices. This method of assessing teachings and experience is pervasive in the scholastic writings of fifth- to seventh-century China, but should properly be seen as reflecting a problematic basic to all of Buddhism outside India. The debates at Sam-ye and Lhasa in Tibet focused on this as the central issue in the establishment of Buddhism in that land, the Pure Land exegetes of China also found the distinction compelling, and in Japan Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) used the hermeneutic to clarify his thesis as well. The subitist/gradual assessment of teachings and experience is pervasive in the scholastic writings of fifth- to seventh-century China. The range of connotations of these adjectives is in fact quite broad, and recent work has begun to pinpoint

[14] It has been pointed out, for example, that *ton* may imply simultaneity rather than immediacy; cf. R. A. Stein, "Sudden Illumination or Simultaneous Comprehension: Remarks on Chinese and Tibetan Terminology," in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987). See also G. Foulk's review of *Sudden and Gradual* in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 16–1 (1993), p. 135.

We should also look at the political context of such writings. The logical inconsistency of many of the arguments only strengthens the smell of polemics. In the focus here merely on Pure Land writings, the exegetical, nay even polemical context, of the critical periods in which the "major" treatises were composed (sixth-seventh century China; twelfth-thirteenth century Japan) were rife with debate and controversy. Particularly in the case of Japan, where Hōnen and his disciples suffered political suppression of their movement, the societal and doctrinal environment must be considered in any evaluation of the literature.

their implications in particular contexts.[14] It is worth noting the difference in classical usage between sudden enlightenment (*tun-wu* 頓悟) and sudden doctrines or teachings (*tun-chiao* 頓教), the former being associated with the Ch'an master Shen-hui 神會 (684–758) and the latter perhaps best illustrated in the usage of Chih-i and Fa-tsang. The writings of Chih-i, particularly his *Tz'u-ti ch'an-men* 次第禪門 (T. 1916) and *Mo-ho chih-kuan* 摩訶止觀 (T. 1911), proved quite influential and reflect a particularly creative expression of Buddhist teachings and practices in an orderly system after reassessing their relative merit vis-à-vis progression of the mārga. The *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, a more mature work, was widely quoted in China and Japan.[15]

The clearest statement among the Chinese Pure Land masters on the subject of *tun* (sudden) versus *chien* (gradual) is that of Shan-tao 善導 (613–681) in his commentary on the *Kuan wu-liang shou ching* 觀無量壽經: "Question: Concerning this sūtra, in which of the two canons is it to be contained? In which of the two [types of] teachings is it to be included? Answer: This *Kuan ching* 觀經 is included in the bodhisattva canon and the sudden teachings."[16] Here we see that by the second half of the seventh century in China, Pure Land sūtra doctrine was already defined in terms of the meta-doctrine of sudden and gradual. Hōnen adds to the sudden/gradual issues of teaching and enlightenment by addressing the evaluation of nembutsu in this way as well. He thus categorizes the *tariki nembutsu* 他力念佛 as "the sudden of the sudden (頓中頓)." In his commentary on the *Wu-liang shou ching*, Hōnen uses this phrase as a gloss on a passage from the *An-lo chi* 安樂集 by Tao-ch'o 道綽 (562–645) commenting on the same sūtra:

> Dhyāna master Tao-ch'o explains the sūtra's phrase, "*Cutting off the possibility of rebirth in the five tainted realms*"

[15] Cf. John McRae, "Encounter Dialogue and Transformation in Ch'an," in *Paths to Liberation*, p. 343 ff., for details on the contents of these systems. John McRae's work has overcome centuries of sectarian entrenchment that exploited the pejorative label of gradual enlightenment hurled at the northern school of Ch'an by Shen-hui and his lineage to show the inappropriateness of this description; but how are we to understand any religious experience as a "gradual" event? The extant discussions in fifth- and sixth-century China between "sudden" and "gradual" soteriological positions have been excellently covered in P. Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual*.

[16] T. 37.247a20. The two canons here refers to the śrāvaka and bodhisattva canons; the two types of teachings are the sudden and gradual.

(T. 12.274b22–23), by saying: "If by cultivating this cessation, one first cuts off his mistaken opinions, and leaves behind the causes . . . by separating oneself from the causes [leading to birth] as man or deva, the results of such causes are stopped. These are all gradual methods of removal and are not called "cutting off." If one achieves Birth in Amida's Pure Land, the five paths [of possible births] are abandoned at once, and this is called "cutting off." [Thus] "cutting off the five tainted realms" is to cut this karmic fruition. "*The tainted realms are naturally closed*" (T. 12.274b23) means closing off these causes.

[Hōnen comments thusly:] "Tendai and Shingon are both called 'sudden teachings,' but since they are based on the principle of cutting off mistaken opinions, they are still gradual teachings. Because this [Pure Land] teaching is devoted to enabling ordinary people who have not yet cut off such errors to directly transcend the long night of transmigration in the triple-world, it is the sudden of the sudden (頓中頓) teachings."[17]

Well-trained in what had become an entrenched hermeneutic tradition affords Hōnen a rhetorical method of distinguishing this particular experience as unique among other religious experiences of immediacy. By raising *nembutsu* to a plane of higher soteriological value, Hōnen has also changed the topic from the evaluation of teachings and the practices they extol to the evaluation of *nembutsu* itself. Here the phrase *tariki nembutsu* designates more than a chosen practice and refers to an experience of awakening itself. After all, engaging in any practice, even *nembutsu*, involves an act of will and thus reflects a *jiriki* position. But by clarifying this as *tariki nembutsu,* Hōnen is instead referring to the sudden realization of the truth of the doctrine of Amida Buddha's grace. This is necessarily a *tariki* event; thus it is both *subitist* and *tariki*. The passage below from the writings of Seikaku 聖覚 (1167–1235), one of Hōnen's disciples, indicates a typical thirteenth-century Pure Land *p'an-chiao:*

[17] In his *Daikyōshaku* 大経釈 (*Kurodani Shōnin gotōroku kandaiichi* 黒谷上人語燈録巻第一, *Jōdokyō zensho* 浄土教全書 9.314b12–315a2). The *An-lo chi* text can be found in *Jōdoshū zensho* 1.704a8 ff.

> Insofar as the faculties [of men] are sharp or dull, there are teachings that are gradual or sudden. Insofar as their capacities are broad or narrow, their practices can be difficult or easy. It should be understood that all gates for saints [=*tariki* path] are of the gradual teachings and are difficult practices. The single school/lineage (*shū* 宗) of the Pure Land, is a sudden teaching and an easy practice. The Shingon and *śamathā-vipaśyannā* [Tendai] practices are difficult to cultivate for those with a mind like a monkey's; the teachings of Sanron and Hossō easily bewilder those with eyes like cows and sheep.[18]

The fact that the label of gradual (漸) in a Pure Land context is always used pejoratively in Japan means that in equating the self-power/other-power dichotomy with a gradualist/subitist one, Seikaku obviously violates the self-designated sudden doctrines and practices of these traditional Chinese Buddhist schools, including his own Tendai sect. On the other hand, we also find definite gradualist aspects in the soteriological reflections of most Pure Land thinkers, as, for example, the patience to postpone final enlightenment until the next life when born in the Pure Land, or waiting for the experience of *ōjō* 往生 (Birth) to happen on one's deathbed.

When referring to the traditional mārga, Kamakura Pure Land exegetes generally rely on the soteriological scheme delineated in the *Hua-yen ching* or *P'u-sa ying-lo pen yeh ching*. Although believed to be apocryphal today, the *Ying-lo ching*, with its mārga scheme of a fifty-two-stage bodhisattva path to Buddhahood, seems to have been accepted as the standard referent and thus will be the point of reference in the discussion below. These fifty-two steps are organized into five main subheadings of ten, plus an additional two final stages. These may be translated as: 1) the ten stages of faith (*shih hsin* 十信); 2) the ten tages of abiding (*shih chu* 十住); 3) the ten stages of practice (*shih hsing* 十行); 4) the ten stages of merit transfer, or *pariṇāmanā* (*shih hui-hsiang* 十廻向); 5) the ten bhūmis (*shih ti* 十地); 6) veritable enlightenment (*teng chüeh* 等覺); and 7) sublime enlightenment (*miao chüeh* 妙覺). The Pure Land commentarial tradition came to regard everything be-

[18] *Seikaku Hōin hyōbyaku mon* 聖覺法印表白文, in *Teihon Shinran shōnin zenshū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1980), Vol. 6, p. 217.

low the ten bhūmis as indicative of *pṛthagjana* (J. *bombu* 凡夫) status, i.e., the locale of ordinary beings. Beings at the ten stages of faith may also be referred to as "putative bodhisattvas" (*ming-tzu p'usa/myōji bosatsu* 名字菩薩) because they are so low in their attainment they may be bodhisattvas in name only.

Within this outline, there are two aspects of the traditional bodhisattva path that are particularly relevant to Pure Land reformulations of Mahāyāna soteriology. One is the position on the mārga of the so-called "ordinary beings," and the other is the notion that some rankings in the higher stages of the mārga cannot regress to a lower spiritual level. As mentioned above, the first forty stages of the mārga were considered to designate those who were still regarded as "ordinary" as opposed to the "saints" (*ārya*) located within the ten bhūmis. Progressing from an ordinary stage to that of a saint brought with it the question of backsliding from this exalted position, and nonbacksliding is thus a commonly promised feature concomitant with many attainments in practice. In addition to the promise of nonretrogression, this quality was explained as also meaning that completion of the mārga, however conceived, was not too far off in the future. In this way, the idea of attaining a particular stage in one's praxis that had been defined as nonbacksliding came to assume enormous spiritual consequences, evidenced by such terms as *anjin* 安心 (pacified mind) in Mahāyāna Buddhism—unfortunately this also led to disagreement among the sūtras as to precisely which stage in the mārga holds this promise. But this disparity is generally confined to one of the ten stages of the bhūmis, thus precluding "ordinary beings" as defined in both the *Ying-lo ching* and *Hua-yen ching*.

Well aware of this restriction, Pure Land exegetes, most notably Shan-tao, nevertheless argued forcefully that the Pure Land mārga indeed offered nonbacksliding status to ordinary beings. This is an absolutely crucial point in the study of Pure Land doctrine that has received scant attention thus far. And it is vital to our understanding of the historical development of Pure Land Buddhism that we realize the soteriological significance of this claim and its direct contribution to the growth of the Pure Land movement in East Asia. The other side to this very *religious* of claims is that such an unorthodox idea inevitably created controversy among the Buddhist communities of China, Korea and Japan.

Considering the relative unimportance placed on faith in the standard mārga schema, where it is relegated to the early stages of attainment in which seekers are described as bodhisattvas in name only, the Pure Land alternative mārga appears to be turning the usual set of Buddhist soteriological priorities upside down. "Alternative mārga" may not be the most appropriate term for this discussion because the Pure Land path does not really attempt to substitute an entirely new soteriology for any of the traditional bodhisattva paths. It is thus important to keep in mind that while the Pure Land mārga does demand an alternative prioritization of practices and goals to those found in the traditional path, it does not deny the ultimate religious values embodied in the original Mahāyāna conception of the path and the ultimate Buddhist goal of nirvāṇa.

As a result of this relationship wherein the Pure Land path is limited in its soteriological concerns by the more common and traditional *jiriki* paths, the content and significance of bodhi itself does not become an issue but the importance placed on its rapid spiritual attainment in the Pure Land conception of mārga does lead to a reassessment of how bodhi should be best approached.[19] The emphasis in Pure Land literature is everywhere on the ease, the immediate access, the very *obtainability* of the goal of birth in the Pure Land. Pure Land Buddhist writers frequently speak of "leaping crosswise" (J. *ōchō* 横超)[20] for expressing precisely the radical promise of progressing from the ten stages of faith, the first ten of the fifty-two steps of the mārga, directly up to a nonbacksliding position somewhere within the ten bhūmis, i.e., stages 41-50. This has been glossed also as "turning to the side" (J. *tenbō* 転傍), which means turning away from and thus abandoning the usual procedure of trudging along the path in a straightforward fashion, ascending step by step. Instead, by facing the Buddha directly and gaining his intercession, one "leaps" to a stage close to that of the Buddha's own attainment. For Shan-tao, the originator of this phrase,

[19] The *bodhi-citta* concept was, however, more problematic. Hōnen mentions in his *Senchakushū* the four kinds of *bodhi-citta* of Tendai, the three kinds of *bodhi-citta* in Shingon, etc.

[20] This phrase can be traced to the *Hsüan-i fen* 玄義分 section of Shan-tao's commentary to the *Kuan wu-liang-shou ching* (T. 1753), where he writes of the "leap crosswise that cuts off the four streams."

this sideways leap meant experiencing *bodhi-citta*, which he equated with *darśana-mārga*.

Following Shan-tao, the Pure Land position is thus to reformulate the bodhisattva path by postponing at least the sections called the path of insight (*darśana-mārga*) and the path of meditation (*bhāvanā-mārga*) (viz., the stages of the ten bhūmis) until after one has realized what is conceptualized as either a rebirth physically or a regeneration spiritually in the Sukhāvatī of Amitābha Buddha. This reshuffling of the order of this process is alluded to in Hōnen's *Ōjōdaiyōshō* 往生大要抄:

> Next we will [discuss] the Pure Land Gate. First one [must be in a position to] loathe and abandon this Sahā world. He is [then] quickly born in the Sukhāvatī Pure Land and in that land practices the Buddha-mārga. For that reason it is imperative that one attain this Birth (*ōjō*) by immediately cultivating the desire that leads to the Pure Land.[21]

Hōnen reflects here the standard Pure Land mārga imperative of first reaching the proximate goal of birth in the Pure Land before accomplishing the ultimate goal of completing the path to Buddhahood. However, this in turn necessitates yet another mārga—namely, that for attaining birth in the Pure Land. Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262) and his followers, however, appear to understand this attainment of Birth both as the attainment of *bodhi-citta* as well as the attainment of *bodhi* itself. This ambiguity in the tradition has led to significant controversy down to the present day over the interpretation of the implications of the term Birth (*ōjō*) among the different branches of the Jōdo Shinshū school."[22]

[21] *Hōnen Shōnin zenshū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1956), p. 49. This is one of Hōnen's commentaries to Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*.

[22] Even D. T. Suzuki's writings on Shinshū reflect this doctrinal contradiction. In endnote 325 to his translation of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*, he explains the term *ōchō* by stating, "it indicates the way in which the true faith in *nembutsu* is imparted from the other-power, resulting in the severing of illusion and the attainment of Buddhahood in the Pure Land. Based on this idea, Shinran analyzed *bodhi-citta* in this way" (p. 304). But elsewhere in the same work Suzuki shows his assumption that, "Ultimately, Pure Land is equivalent to Nirvāna or Enlightenment." Taken together, these statements imply that the experience of Birth in the Pure Land includes the destruction of the *kleśas* and the attainment of Nirvāṇa. This ignores, however, Shinran's line in the

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PURE LAND PATH IN CHINESE BUDDHISM

The notion that there indeed exists a separate Pure Land path, however loosely defined, as something inherent in directing one's praxis toward reaching Amitābha's Pure Land should be seen as a process evolving over roughly three hundred years which begins with the translated works of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu and is brought to maturity in the writings of T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao. The two key areas in which Pure Land thought has sought to extrapolate the adept's new mārga status are the experience of birth in the Pure Land and the attainment of faith in the fact that this event is destined to occur in one's future.

One of the earliest non-sūtra [commentary, śāstra, etc.] sources to play a major role in the development of a Pure Land path in China is an Indian text regarded by the Pure Land tradition as its first major authoritative treatise. This is the *Shih chu p'i p'o sha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 (T. 1521), which survives as a partial commentary to the *Daśabhūmika sūtra*, and was attributed to Nāgārjuna and translated by Kumārajīva (344–413) early in the fifth century.[23] We find here the first reference to an alternative mārga conceived as being in direct contrast with the traditional mārga, both now distinguished under the rubric, "path of easy practices/path of difficult practice":

> Question: If the various Buddhas have [also] expounded a means to quick attainment of a nonbacksliding (*avinivartanīya*) stage by *a path of easy practice*, I beseech you to explain this to me as well."

Shōshinge 正信偈 in which he quotes T'an-luan: "One attains Nirvāṇa without destroying the *kleśas*." This is an important theme in Shinshū mysticism; see, for example, Kakunyo 覺如 in his *Kaijashō* 改邪鈔 (*Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3, p. 85, line 14), where he lists it alongside other such attainments as nonbacksliding and joining the group of those rightly assured.

[23] It is an unresolved debate at this point in history as to whether or not the author of this text is the same Nāgārjuna of the Mādhyamika school. Since that dispute revolves around different opinions on the same topics as found in the *Ta chih-tu lun*, which is itself of controversial origins, we will not pursue such discussion at this time.

> Answer: The Buddha's teaching has immeasurable approaches. Just like the paths of the world, some are difficult and some are easy. Some demand diligent practice and vigorous pursuit (*vīrya*). To travel the roads of the earth on foot is painful; to travel the water by boat is easy. Some lead quickly to the stage of nonbacksliding with an easier practice based on the skillful means of faith. . . .[24]
>
> If a Bodhisattva wants to be able to gain the nonbacksliding stage in this body and then attain the highest enlightenment (*anuttarasamyak-saṃbodhi*), he should keep in mind (*nien* 念) the Buddhas of the ten directions and chant their holy names (*ming-hao* 名號).[25]

I wish to draw particular attention to the fact that the major role played by this text in the evolution of Pure Land soteriology lies primarily in introducing not only the conception of a path of easy practice but also the legitimization of that path by pegging it to the doctrine of nonbacksliding. This is a theme to be repeated throughout the history of Pure Land thought, where Nāgārjuna's commentary served as a primary referent. This is one example of how Pure Land thinkers utilize a seminal concept from the traditional mārga to support the authority of their radical views, which are in fact subverting that mārga.

There were, of course, inherent problems concerning how the universality of the Pure Land path could be squared with this claim; in other words, how is every individual, regardless of the amount of his religious training, to be brought to the same plane as a bodhisattva immediately destined for Buddhahood? One of the most confusing aspects of this issue is the fact that this nonbacksliding status is promised sometimes before and sometimes after birth in the Pure Land. We can even find both meanings within the same sūtra, such as the *Fo-shuo A-mi-t'o ching* 佛說阿彌陀經 (T. 366).[26]

[24] T. 26.41a13–14 and 41b2–6.

[25] T. 26.41b15–17.

[26] To wit, "Śāriputra, the sentient beings born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are all nonbacksliding. Among them there are many who will become a Buddha in one more lifetime (*eka-jāti pratibaddha*)" (T. 12.347b4). "Śāriputra, there are sentient beings who have either already hoped, who or now hoping, and who will hope to be born in

After consideration of this path of easy practice and its dependence on the pivotal role of Amitābha Buddha, T'an-luan further clarified the Pure Land mārga by giving it the terse designation "other-power" (*t'a-li/tariki* 他力). The *locus classicus* for the concepts of *jiriki/tariki* is thus found in T'an-luan's *Commentary on* (*Vasubandhu's*) *Treatise on Birth* (*in the Pure Land*), the *Wu-liang shou ching yu-p'o-t'i-she yüan-sheng chieh chu,* commonly known as the *Ching-t'u lun-chu* 淨土論註 (T. 1819):

> Giving examples, I shall explain the characteristics 相 of *jiriki* and *tariki*. It is just like the case of someone who accepts and maintains the precepts because he fears he may fall into the three tainted realms. And because he accepts and maintains the precepts he is [thus] able to practice dhyāna and samādhi. Because of his dhyāna he therefore cultivates the supernatural powers (*abhijñā*). Because of his abhijñā, he can move around freely in the four continents. These are called (the working of) self-power (*jiriki*).
>
> On the other hand, there are those who are as if inferior, who may be able to climb up onto a donkey but cannot climb up into the sky. If they are able to join the retinue of a cakravartin, however, they will reach the sky and be able to move freely among the four continents without impediment. This is thus called other-power (*tariki*). . . . Alas, how foolish the students of this later age are! However, if you hear that you may *climb up* onto the other-power (*tariki*) [of the Buddha], you should arouse the mind of faith (*shinjin*). Never abide in your own partiality.[27]

Apparently aware of the need to clarify the soteriological implications of the *tariki* path even before he expounds it, in the very beginning of his essay T'an-luan chooses to emphasize its links to the promise of nonbacksliding. Glossing Nāgārjuna's phrasing, he explains:

the land of Amitābha Buddha. All of these people attain nonbacksliding from *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*, and they have either already been born in that land, they are now being born there, or they will be born there" (T. 12.348a13).

[27] T. 40.844a21–27.

> The *path of easy practice* is . . . maintained by the force of the Buddha's [will such that] one thus enters "the group of those rightly established" (*cheng ting chü/shōjōjū* 正定聚)[28] in the Mahāyāna. Being rightly established is none other than nonbacksliding. . . . This *Upadeśa on the Wu-liang shou ching* (i.e., this *Ching-t'u lun ch'u*) is the ultimate extension of the Mahāyāna: a boat driven by the wind of nonbacksliding.[29]

Later scholars writing on Pure Land doctrine in East Asia made great use of T'an-luan's hermeneutic glossing of the attainment of "the group of those rightly established" as indicative of nonbacksliding status. Even Shinran, who stands out as one of the few Pure Land thinkers who asserts one can reach the highest bodhi in this life by means of the Pure Land path,[30] filled his writings with frequent references to the attainments of such goals as nonbacksliding, *anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti,* and joining "the group of the rightly established" as proof the Pure Land path was in no way inferior to the traditional path.

The elaboration of what I am calling the alternative Pure Land mārga existing alongside the traditional mārga schemata is given probably its clearest explication in China by Tao-ch'o in his *An-lo chi.* Living approximately one hundred years after T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o is thought to have combined the "difficult/easy path" distinction of the *Daśabhumika sāstra* commentary with T'an-luan's "self-power/other-power" construct into what he termed the Path for Sages (*sheng-tao men/shōdōmon* 聖道門) and the Pure Land Path (*ching-t'u men/jōdo-mon* 浄土門). Since the phrase *sheng-tao* was the common translation for *ārya-marga*, an early term denoting simply "the Buddhist path," Tao-ch'o at

[28] The other usage of 正定 as *samyak samādhi* notwithstanding, T'an-luan elsewhere glosses it as *avaivartika* (T. 40.826b9). In this instance we should take 定 as *niyata* or *niyāma*. Paramārtha's translation of the *Abhidharmakośa bhāsya* renders *samyaktva-niyato-rāśiḥ* as 正定聚.

[29] T. 40.826b7.

[30] This point is still hotly debated among the different branches of Shinshū, the sect he founded, with the Ōtani or Eastern Honganji taking the opinion I have expressed above and the Ryūkoku or Western Honganji doctrine maintaining the experience of Birth and the subsequent completion of the mārga, though simultaneous, occur after death.

once creates an entirely new interpretative framework with his dichotomy. By adding the word *men* to *ārya-mārga*, *the* Buddhist path became *a* Buddhist path, one whose length and difficulty was only reinforced by the overlay of the pre-Buddhist implications of the Chinese word *sheng*—an accomplished sage.[31] Drawing from sources recently translated into Chinese elaborating the *mo-fa/mappō* 末法 concept—that Buddhism had entered an age of decline or degeneration in which enlightenment was no longer possible—Tao-ch'o suggests a *p'an-chiao* of sorts that leads not to one particular text as ultimately authoritative but rather to the Pure Land mārga itself as the apex of his hermeneutical scheme. Also known as a scholar on the *Nirvāna sūtra*, Tao-ch'o is just one of many religious figures in East Asia whose study of Tathāgatagarbha doctrines brought them to an appreciation of the Pure Land path. In Tathāgatagarbha thought, not only is there a Buddha-essence in all sentient beings, but all sentient beings are said to be contained within or "embraced" (*shē/shō* 攝) by the Buddha as well. This doctrine led to the inference that conscious contact with a Buddha was not at all impossible, and brought into proximity Amitābha and his Pure Land. Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi* speaks from this perspective, incorporating within it a sense of urgency arising out of the *mo-fa* doctrine.[32]

[31] The word *ārya* in phrases like *ārya-aṣṭāṅga-mārga*, "the Noble Eightfold Path," probably meant something like "ideal" or "excellent" (=the path of excellence) or simply "Buddhist" and functioned primarily to exalt the Buddhist path as something worth pursuing. However, the common use of the Chinese *sheng* 聖 for *ārya* implied something more rare, even exclusive. *Sheng* denoted someone who has obtained sagely status after long years of cultivation, someone said to be accomplished in all fields. Thus used as an epithet for emperors, *sheng* functioned to glorify their special, even shamanistic powers, which were thought to have accrued from their unusually vast knowledge.

[32] This is how Tao-ch'o explained the two paths: "One may also ask: '[Since] all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature, we should have had meetings with many Buddhas since kalpas long past. What is then the cause of why we have instead been revolving in saṃsāra [and continue to do so] up to the present moment, unable to emerge from this burning house?' "

Answer: "According to the holy teachings of the Mahāyāna, it is truly because you are unable to master either of the two excellent teachings for ridding yourself of saṃsāra. That is why you cannot escape from the burning house. What are the two? The first is called the Path for Sages; the second is called Birth in the Pure Land. The first kind, the Path for Sages, is difficult to realize in this age. One reason is that it has

As the Pure Land movement developed, Tao-ch'o's carefully constructed apologetic, so heavily based on sūtra quotations, provided scholars within the Pure Land tradition with a useful and convincing argument for affirming the Pure Land position. Pertinent to our discussion here, as a work of central authority it became *de rigueur* to cite the *An-lo chi* as the authoritative statement of the Pure Land path as an alternative mārga fully commensurate with traditional mārga schemata.

3. BASIC THEMES OF THE PURE LAND PATH

Beginning as early as Nāgārjuna's commentary, we can now perceive a litany of four basic themes that appear pervasively in Pure Land treatises written throughout China, Korea and Japan: 1) The traditional path takes an extremely long time to complete, is fraught with difficulties and is beyond the abilities of most people, particularly in this historical milieu. 2) There is another, alternative path outlined by the Buddhas which is easier to travel and which will bring quicker results—specifically, reaching the nonbacksliding stage of a bodhisattva. 3) The key to this alternative path is some type of mental concentration on one or more Buddhas and recitation of the Buddha's name. 4) This is the latter stage of the Buddha's teachings (*mo-fa/mappō*) and therefore traditional *jiriki* practices no longer have the same efficacy. The Pure Land path is quicker, easier and therefore the only real choice.

Discussion of the Pure Land tradition as an alternative mārga must address all four of these points, and contemporary misunderstanding of the Pure Land message often stems from less than full appreciation of the fact that Pure Land doctrine depends on all four legs of this

been a long time since the Great Sage [Śākyamuni] left [this world]. A second reason is that the doctrine is profound but the comprehension [of people at the present time] is slight. Therefore the *Ta-chi yüeh tsang ching* 大集月藏經 says: 'During the final stage of my Dharma (*mo-fa*), hundreds of millions of people may endeavor to practice by cultivating the [traditional] path, but there will not be a single person who attains it. In the final stage of the Dharma, the world will show itself to be an evil place filled with the five pollutions (*pañca kaśāyāḥ*). There will be only the one gate leading to the Pure Land and it is the path you should follow'" (T. 47.13c2ff).

thematic structure. At the same time, the writings of all the so-called Pure Land patriarchs (T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, Shan-tao, Chia-ts'ai, Genshin, Hōnen, Shinran, etc.) reaffirm the position that this alternative path is soteriologically dependent on the traditional bodhisattva mārga. That is, any discussion of Pure Land doctrine without the presupposition of the *ārya-mārga* severs it from the ground that gave it birth, removing its hermeneutical context. While one must never lose sight of the fact that such a radical counter-path only has meaning insofar as it embodies partial or total rejection of the approach, methods and assumptions of the authoritative orthodox path, the final goals of both positions remain the same. If the Pure Land mārga went so far as to reject the goals of the traditional mārga, then its very Buddhist identity at that point could be called into question. Indeed, these are precisely the questions raised with regard to some of the so-called new religions in postwar Japan that are heavily Buddhist-based, such as Agon-shū and Sōka Gakkai. Much like the Vajrayāna, the Pure Land yāna is a statement about methods rather than goals; the teachings of the *ārya-mārga* are not denied, simply assumed to be unavailable existentially.

This mārga relationship can be seen, for example, in the structure of the sūtra that played perhaps the most pivotal role in the Pure Land tradition: *Fo-shuo Wu-liang-shou ching* 佛說無量壽經, translated by Saṅghavarman in 252.[33] In its discussion of the Buddha Amitābha/Amitāyus and his Pure Land, this text is best known for the forty-eight vows (*praṇidhāna*) of the Buddha, which center on the explication of his paradise of Sukhāvatī and his promise of welcoming all beings who aspire to attain it. But there is more to be learned from its story. In the first fascicle of the sūtra we are given the story of Dharmākara Bodhisattva's elucidation of his famous forty-eight vows, his struggle over many kalpas to complete the Buddha-mārga, and his success in doing so when he becomes the Buddha Amitāyus. In the second fascicle we have the efficacy of his vows of compassion confirmed by a reiteration of how easy it is to gain access to Sukhāvatī. My point here is that the sūtra's narrative structure presupposes important elements of doctrinal

[33] *The Larger Sūtra of Eternal Life*, a.k.a. the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* or simply the *Larger Sūtra*. The translation completed by Saṅghavarman in 252, is the standard text of the East Asian tradition.

authority that are based on the traditional mārga concept. To wit, both the power of Amitābha as a Tathāgata as well as the force of his vows to set up a magico-realistic Pure Land and invite everyone to join him there are only meaningful given the truth value of the traditional mārga, for it is in the context of the traditional mārga that a bodhisattva becomes a Buddha and the significance of his vows, both general and specific, is realized. This entire event has its authority further confirmed by the fact that the story's narrator is Śākyamuni Buddha, whose own religious career is described in terms of the same bodhisattva mārga attainment.

Vowing to bring imperfect sentient beings into a perfect environment to help them reach their spiritual goals presupposes an inherently corrupt world filled with deluded, confused individuals. But however attractive the Sukhāvatī may be by contrast, it is not a heaven. It has been created expressly for mārga practice precisely because conditions in this Sahā world inhibit the spiritual progress of so many. This point is easily understood from reading through the vows themselves, where we find promises such as "if men and devas in my realm do not reside among the group of the rightly established who inevitably attain Nirvāṇa, may I not attain full enlightenment" (Vow 11)[34] or "if men and devas in my realm cannot attain [the *abhijñā* of] knowing the thoughts of others (*para-citta-jñāna*) to the point where they are aware of the thoughts of sentient beings in other Buddha realms one hundred thousand hundred million *nayutas* in number, may I not attain full enlightenment."[35] Thus the soteriological fundament of the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra* rests squarely on attainments defined by the traditional mārga, and it is the unspoken acceptance of, or belief in, the reality of that mārga that raises this book from mere legend to salvific myth. By promising significant mārga stages after reaching the Pure Land, the presumption of postponing the completion of the path to a holy other time and place, the mārga itself has been somewhat mythologized.

[34] T. 12.268a11.

[35] T. 12.268a3. It is not entirely clear how the phrase 下至 *geshi* should be read. If we take this as equivalent to 乃至 *naishi* it is thus a translation of *antaśas* in Sanskrit. However, *antaśas* is problematic. Possible translations are *so much as, at least, even, up to, including,* etc.

The issue of the traditional path being arduous and beyond the reach of most people is not a doctrinal matter per se, at least within Indian Buddhism, although we may look to this as a possible cause of the doctrine of the three periods of the law. This element of the mārga experience represents something akin to a "transmission beyond the scriptures," stemming from a common feeling of existential crisis within individuals regarding their expectations and internal sense of achievement. Insofar as we have no historical confirmation that anyone has actually ascended from one stage to another in the order prescribed in any of the Buddhist mārga schemata, it is difficult to assess the general level of expectation toward the bodhisattva path within any particular Buddhist community. But it certainly should come as no surprise to read about individuals who felt a sense of frustration, if not despair, at what they saw as a lack of progress after years of dedicated practice. Particularly in East Asia, where the notion of progress on the mārga over many lifetimes never achieved the same *de facto* acceptance as it did on the Indian subcontinent, the temporal dimension of the mārga concept inevitably evolved into something new.

The emergence of the subitist movements in Sinitic Buddhism is the most obvious testimony to this fact. Add to this the eschatology of the *mo-fa/mappō* concept wherein true understanding of the Dharma by conventional means was interpreted to be beyond anyone's reach, and it should not be difficult to see how so many people were receptive to new definitions of mārga and praxis that might be easier than the complex systems of both demanded in the Indian Buddhist tradition. It might also be helpful to remember that in the Pure Land religious equation the option of choosing the Sukhāvatī goal is couched in the most alluring language in the sūtras, with both Śākyamuni and Amitābha Buddhas urging their listeners to cast aside all doubt and proceed quickly in this direction. The appeal from the Dharma-side is thus equal to the intensity of aspiration from the sattva-side (which probably indicates their common origins). While the sūtras emphasize the unfailing compassion of the Buddha, the many interpretative treatises manifest a more emotional appeal. The best known and probably most dramatic example of the latter is the White Path allegory by Shan-tao, which depicts an individual standing at the beginning of a narrow path between two raging rivers of fire and water. With bandits pursuing from behind, the Buddha's calm voice urges him forward down the nar-

row, precarious path to the other side where peace and security await him.[36]

People become committed to religious paths from many different sources of motivations. The persistent appeal of Pure Land Buddhism in East Asia down to the present day presumes many adherents who accepted its premises and promises without dithering. But there have also been many for whom this alternative mārga became appealing only after a sense of frustration or even failure as mentioned above. The Chinese tradition developed an interesting concept to express the notion of an individual's spiritual capacity: the term *chi/ki* 機.[37] Having no apparent Sanskrit counterpart, *chi* is perhaps best known from that favorite phrase in *p'an chiao* discussions: *tui-chi shuo-fa/taiki seppō* 對機說法, "the Buddha's preaching is shaped to correspond to the ability of his audience to understand him."[38] This expression can often be found as a hermeneutic tool in East Asian writings to justify new slants on old teachings because it allowed the authority of the word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*) to be molded by later commentators into doctrines that were seemingly never intended by the author(s) of any particular sūtra. Not surprisingly, Shan-tao uses it in his *Hsüan-i fen* 玄義分 section of his commentary to the *Kuan wu-liang shou ching*.[39] But the popularity of this term in the commentarial literature also points to conscious attention being paid to the meaningful *differences* in the abilities and motivations of students of the Dharma. Given this orientation, it should come as no surprise, therefore, to see something close to personal confessions of inadequacy in the writings of the Pure Land masters, particularly in Japan.

While Shinran is better known outside Japan for such spiritual honesty, it was Hōnen, renowned as a scholar, teacher and Vinaya preceptor, who is said to have been the first to have the courage to

[36] Shan-tao's parable is contained within his commentary on the *Kuan wu-liang-shou ching*. The parable has been translated in full in Wm. de Bary, ed., *The Buddhist Tradition*, pp. 205–207.

[37] See Ozawa's article, *Ki no go o megutte* 機の語をめぐって, in *Bukkyō daigaku Daigakuin kenkyū kiyō* 13 (1985), in which he argues that *chi* 機 can equal *vineya*.

[38] In Tendai doctrine, this term is used to explain how the first four periods of teachings are only *upāya*, while the fifth period of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and *Nirvāṇa sūtras* is the direct truth.

[39] T. 37.246b26; p. 3.16 of 浄土学選書 text.

come forth publicly with an admission of having confronted his own limitations. The religious movement that followed him began when he started preaching dependence on the Vows of the Buddha after having had a spiritual transformation wherein he found liberation in his ignorance. By the end of his life, Hōnen's impact on society was so vast it reached a level probably unsurpassed by any other religious individual in Japanese history.[40] As his fame as a teacher grew, Hōnen's self-awareness of his own lack of enlightenment seemed to grow as well. Hōnen's Pure Land message was not simply that the Pure Land mārga was more genuine than the traditional mārga because it was truly universal in application. He also clarified the need to first commit to the traditional mārga—only then could one appreciate the meaning of failure in praxis as an expression of the existential truth of knowing the limitations of one's own capacity. In other words, the adept must set out to conquer the bodhisattva mārga and push himself/herself with maximum effort in order to confront his/her spiritual limits. It is precisely this confrontation with what we may call "the meaning of nonattainment" that is the key to understanding the profound significance of the Buddha's message of prajñā-infused compassion. Thus one is required to ascend the path only to be able to descend it. For Hōnen, this realization meant that despite differences in our spiritual capacities, we are all nonetheless ordinary beings: any individual attainment is dwarfed by the stature of the Buddha's willpower. Hōnen's mārga thus may be classified as a kind of *pṛthagjana-mārga*, a path for ordinary people, where ordinary means admitting one will never become a sage or a saint, though he himself was anything but ordinary. The reason for the overwhelming response to Hōnen's message seems to lie not only in its promise of instant access to liberation at a time of great so-

[40] Of course there have been many influential spiritual leaders throughout the history of Japanese Buddhism, but Hōnen stands unique as someone who generated such an overwhelming response that in addition to lists of hundreds of his disciples, we also have records of the divided loyalties he created among many at court when his banishment was considered. Critiques of him appear in the writings of all the *other* major Buddhist schools (Hossō, Kegon, Shingon, Tendai, Zen, Nichiren, Ji). Gyōnen's *Genrushō*, which will be discussed briefly below, illustrates that a great many of Hōnen's students came from other schools; indeed this may have been the origin of much of the criticism lodged against him.

cial upheaval, but also in the charismatic but genuine humility of its chief spokesman.

4. THE ROLE OF SAMĀDHI IN PURE LAND SOTERIOLOGY

The issue of which practices were considered proper for the attainment of the proximate goal of birth in the Pure Land is also an important one, for it played a major role in carving out the identity of the Pure Land movement. Although the recitation of the Buddha's name in the phrase *Nan-wu a-mi-t'o fo/Namu amida butsu* is the centerpiece of practice in the East Asian Pure Land tradition, it does not exhaust the range of that practice. Despite its reputation to the contrary, Hōnen's *Senchakushū* (*Collection* [*of Passages*] *on the Selection* [*of Nembutsu*]) includes a number of standard Tendai practices, reflecting a broad-minded view of practice. For example, although he argues for the unique significance of the recitation nembutsu practice, Hōnen also cites the authority of Vasubandhu's *Ching-t'u lun* for the scheme of the five kinds of *nen* (mindfulness) practice, only one of which is recitation.[41]

Concerning the efficacy of recitation in general, it should also be noted that there is a long tradition in the Mahāyāna wherein many sūtras contain lists of names of buddhas and bodhisattvas to be held in the mind or chanted. Also overlooked is the broad range of practices under the rubric of *nembutsu*. Nembutsu practice could encompass a wide array of potential meanings, from a ritual enactment of the "holy name," to single recitation at the moment of religious transformation, to Hōnen's 70,000 recitations a day, to Vasubandhu's fivefold *nien* (*smṛti/anusmṛti*) praxis, to a whole set of samādhi practices, to Shinran's expression of gratitude, etc. Genshin's *Collection of Essentials on Birth in the Pure Land* (*Ōjōyōshū*) is essentially a nembutsu manual illustrating the full range of practices inherent in this term.

[41] Hisao Inagaki has translated these *wu nien-men* 五念門 (*go-nen mon*) as "the five practice-gates of mindfulness: worship; praising his virtue by invoking his name; aspiration for birth in the Pure Land; contemplation on Amida, the Pure Land and the bodhisattvas dwelling there; and *pariṇāmanā*, transferring merit to other sentient beings there in order to save from suffering." Cf. H. Inagaki, *A Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist Terms* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1984), p. 77.

The origins of the Pure Land movement in East Asia can be traced to an early visionary meditative tradition in which the practice of *buddhânusmṛti-samādhi* (*nien-fo san-mei/nembutsu zammai* 念佛三昧) merged with the ritual invocation of the Buddha's name. One important aspect of Hōnen's mass following that has not been mentioned outside Japanese studies is that his reputation was supported by the widely-held belief during his lifetime that he had achieved *nembutsu samādhi*.[42] Although dhyāna and prajñā have always been closely linked from early in the Buddhist tradition, in Mahāyāna we also find the assumption that the attainment of certain designated states of samādhi *de facto* gave the adept the attainment of certain stages of prajñā as well.[43] This notion then conveyed the implication that the experience of these samādhi states by themselves signified certain stages on the mārga. Nowhere is this view of the importance of samādhi experience more evident than in the writings of Chih-i, whose fourfold samādhi practice forms an important goal in his meditative system. At least one of these, the *ch'ang hsing san-mei/jōgyō zammai* 常行三昧, or "constantly moving samādhi," based on the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra,* was aimed at achieving a vision of Amitābha Buddha, which was interpreted as indicating nonbacksliding status.

Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi* also stressed the value of reaching samādhi states that produce a vision of, or even an encounter with, a Buddha.

[42] This is the subject of the *Sammai hottoku-ki* 三昧發得記 which is contained in *Hōnen Shōnin zenshū* pp. 863–67. Tradition holds this work to reflect a secret transmission from Hōnen to his disciple Genchi 源智 (1183–1238), which the latter made public only after Hōnen's death, but it is probably a thirteenth-or fourteenth-century compilation of stories about the master, collected perhaps by a student in Genchi's lineage.

[43] At this point in the discussion it might be helpful to remember that there arose a tendency in Mahāyāna Buddhism to stress samādhi attainment as the apex of praxis. Funahashi Issai in *Bukkyō to shite no Jōdokyō* 佛教としての浄土教 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1973), (pp. 66–67), believes there appears to have been a subtle shift in the relationship between prajñā and samādhi whereby their simultaneous cultivation is overshadowed by a later approach which implied that the achievement of certain states of samādhi itself was tantamount to realization of the fundamental truths of Buddhism. *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is frequently mentioned in this context as providing the practitioner with the benefits of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* and reaching the first bhūmi. This attitude can be contrasted with earlier notions of mārga focusing on prajñā where having reached a designated stage on the path one then had the ability to pass in and out of a particular type of samādhi.

His essay devotes a considerable amount of space to this discussion of what he termed either "visualization" samādhi (*kuan-fo san-mei/kambutsu zammai* 觀佛三昧) or what may be termed "recollection" or "mentation" samādhi (*nien-fo san-mei* 念佛三昧). These two terms share a relationship that is too complex to delineate here, but Tao-ch'o appears to use them interchangeably.[44] In his *An-lo chi,* Tao-ch'o quotes a number of texts, including the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra, Hua-yen ching, Ta chih-tu lun* (**Mahāprajñāpāramitośupadeśa*), etc., to build a persuasive argument that experiencing this samādhi is a guaranteed means to the attainment of birth in front of the Buddha in the Pure Land. But Tao-ch'o is only following the position held much earlier by Hui-yüan 慧遠 (334–416) who led his group of followers in buddhânusmṛti practice before an altar to Amitābha Buddha in hopes of realizing the same goal. Shan-tao also clarifies the central themes of the *Kuan wu-liang shou ching* to be both *kuan-fo san-mei* and *nien-fo san-mei* (T. 37.247a18). Much later, Hōnen worked to establish a distinction between these two types of samādhi, as he needed to isolate the nembutsu-samādhi in order to build his theory that nembutsu was the Buddha's chosen practice for the Pure Land path.

Although the practices of samādhi and ritual recitation may result in different cognitive experiences, they merge religiously in the promise of the Buddha Amitābha to visit the practitioner at the end of his life to lead him to the Pure Land. It is unclear in the sūtras if this refers to the last moments of consciousness in this life or an experience after one has crossed over the boundary into the next, but many ancient biographies are replete with stories of portentous signs such as flowers falling from the sky, the presence of sweet aromas or purple clouds, etc., to indicate to those left behind that the hoped-for religious encounter did indeed occur.[45] This blending of the two forms of practice associated Amitābha Buddha was enhanced when early Pure Land exegetes took advantage of the ambiguity inherent in the term *nien* 念. As a term of translation, *nien* was used to represent *smṛti* (memory), *anusmṛti* (recollection), and *manasikāra* (attention); that is, the mental concentration of holding something in one's consciousness, and at times even

[44] At least this is the opinion of Takagi Akiyoshi in his *Shichiso Kyōgi Gaisetsu* 七祖教義概說 (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1968), p. 159.

[45] Such events spawned a genre of literature known as *wang-sheng chi/ōjōki* 往生記.

stood for *citta,* or mind/thinking itself. As a Chinese term, however, *nien* also had a secondary meaning of recitation, probably the result of semantic borrowing from a similar glyph pronounced *nien* or *tien* 唸, which, adding the mouth radical, means "to hum."

It is also important to point out that the soteriological significance of experiencing a visual confrontation with a Buddha is not a phenomenon limited to, or defined by, the so-called Pure Land tradition. Tao-ch'o's reliance on the scriptural authority of the *Ta chih-tu lun, Hua-yen ching,* etc. for such samādhi states as mentioned above enabled him to go outside textual material based solely on the Amitābha cult in supporting his thesis.[46] For example, one of Tao-ch'o's quotes of the *Hua-yen ching* reads:

> What is the gate of *nien-fo san-mei?* Within the gate of this samādhi one is able to gaze at all the Buddhas as well as their retinues and the splendid, pure Buddha-kṣetra, enabling sentient beings to leave behind their conceptual errors (*tien-tao* 顛倒; *viparyāsa*). *Nien-fo san-mei* is a subtle realm in which one sees the realm of freedom of all the Buddhas and attains to an error-free state (*pu tien-tao*) over numerous kalpas. *Nien-fo san-mei* is able to bring forth all Buddha-kṣetras without their destruction [wherein] one sees all the Buddhas everywhere and one attains this error-free state over the triple-world.[47]

But the *locus classicus* for buddhânusmṛti-samādhi practice remained the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra* throughout the Pure Land tradition. It is a curious fact that, judging from the writings of the Pure Land patriarchs, later developments in the conception of a Pure Land mārga designed for people who could admit their inability to succeed

[46] There are six sūtras whose translated titles began with the character *kuan* that appeared in Chinese translation in the fourth and fifth centuries (e.g., Taishō numbers 643, 649, etc.). It is assumed this genre was based on visualization meditation, and sought visionary parapsychological experiences. These are listed and explained in *The Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life as Expounded by Śākyamuni Buddha* (Kyoto: Ryūkoku University, 1984), p. xvii.

[47] T. 47.15b15–20. This is not a direct quote from the *Hua-yen ching*, but rather a collection of phrases from a section in chapter 46 of the Buddhabhadra translation, see *T* 9.690a15–b4.

on the traditional path did not obviate interest in samādhi practice. Perhaps most striking of all is that we have a monograph specifically on the subject of visionary samādhi, the *Kuan-nien fa men* 觀念法門,[48] a meditation manual of sorts, written by, of all people, Shan-tao. Shan-tao is, of course, best known for his unorthodox interpretation of the *Kuan wu-liang shou ching*, wherein he states that its sixteen different meditations on the forms of the Buddha and his Pure Land are only an introduction to the Buddha's real intention in the sūtra, which is the encouragement of recitation nembutsu practice. Modern discussions of how he became the most influential philosopher of continental origins in Kamakura Pure Land thought have tended to remain fixated on this latter point and its further promotion by Hōnen. As mentioned above, he also defined the central themes of that scripture as *kuan-fo* and *nien-fo* samādhi. His writings on samādhi practice, however, particularly his attempts at harmonizing the samādhi teachings of *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra* and the *Kuan wu-liang shou ching* are frequently quoted in Kamakura texts. Here Shan-tao identifies his taxonomy of the *Amitābha buddhânusmṛti-samādhi:* "The teaching of the visualization of the Buddha samādhi (*kuan-fo san-mei*) is based on the *Kuan ching*, the teaching of the recollection of the Buddha samādhi (*nien-fo san-mei*) is based on the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra*."

Our understanding of Shan-tao's perspective on practice must therefore take into consideration his commitment to samādhi practice in addition to his advocacy of recitation. Some have found these two aspects of Shan-tao irreconcilable and concluded that his samādhi writings predate his *Kuan ching* commentary, where his affirmation of recitation nembutsu expresses his "final statement." But this interpretation assumes the two doctrinal statements are mutually exclusive, a position reflective of Japanese sectarian concerns but not demonstrable. Does it not make more sense to seek the rapprochement of these two positions within the thought of Shan-tao as a whole? A better way to view Shan-tao is from the perspective of the mārga problematic. That is, his acceptance of the value system of the traditional mārga is reflected in his concern with samādhi and his implicit recognition of the mārga sig-

[48] T. 1959.47.22. Full title: *Kuan-nien a mi t'o fo hsiang hai san-mei kung-te fa-men* 觀念阿彌陀佛相海三昧功德法門.

nificance of samādhi practice. His advocacy of recitation nembutsu is thus not a rejection of the value of samādhi but instead manifests his search for a means by which ordinary beings can attain it. Whether it be recitation practice (稱名) or visualization practice (觀佛), the *tariki* aspect is similarly reflected in the intercession of the Buddha's vow of compassion toward the practitioner: to help any being to attain buddhânusmṛti-samādhi.

In the *Ta chih-tu lun*, there is one discussion of *nien-fo san-mei* which offers a similar perspective to that of Shan-tao:

> In addition, by profound concentration on the Buddha, one is joined with the Buddha throughout. By cultivating [the practice of] *nien-fo san-mei* 念佛三昧 time after time [lit., age after age], one thus does not lose one's *bodhi-citta*. Never separated from the Buddha's vows [of compassion], one therefore desires to be born in the Buddha's world. Having planted the karmic seed of encountering a Buddha, this relationship is one whose continuation will never be cut off, up to the point of reaching unsurpassed perfect enlightenment. [In this sense] one is never separated from seeing the Buddha.[49]

Here we have a definite link between the attainment of buddhânusmṛti-samādhi, the desire for the proximate goal of birth in the Pure Land, and the attainment of the ultimate goal of final enlightenment. The formula given here thus combines nembutsu visualization samādhi with desire for birth in the Pure Land, while the phrases "not separate from the Buddha" and "not separate from the Buddha's vows" affirm the reality of the promised aid of the Buddha as well. The "encounter with the Buddha and the effect of His deeds" expound the spiritual importance to the individual of contact with the omniscience (*sarvajñā*) of a Buddha while also affirming the active participation of Amitābha in the practitioner's particular experience.

Although buddhânusmṛti-samādhi could be applied to any Buddha, in East Asia it was generally linked to Amitābha, as is found in the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra*. As an orthodox Mādhyamika text, the *Ta chih-tu lun* illustrates a synthetic conception of Amitābha Buddha's

[49] T. 25:333b24–28.

two roles as the savior of ordinary beings and the object of samādhi practice. The adept is thus instructed to combine samādhi practice with aspiration for the interim goal of birth in the Pure Land in order to reach his ultimate goal along the mārga. Particularly in the phrase, "because one practices well this nembutsu samādhi, he is not separated from the Buddha's vows," the *Ta chih-tu lun* confirms the interpretation offered above regarding Shan-tao's interest in samādhi practice: namely, buddhânusmṛti-samādhi based on nembutsu practice was understood as encouraged and assisted by the Buddha himself. Thus nembutsu samādhi is extolled as a means of ensuring or confirming the relationship with Amitābha's Primal Vows. We should therefore understand the importance of a "deathbed vision" of the Buddha as the quintessential sign of salvation to be based in the high soteriological value placed on the buddhânusmṛti-samādhi experience. From this point of view it is easy to see why the achievement of this visionary state during meditation under healthy conditions was thought indicative of the ultimate empirical confirmation that birth in the Pure Land and subsequent ascension to final enlightenment were part of one's future.

In terms of mārga, this experience of encountering a Buddha is also significant because it was said to be indicative of nonbacksliding status. In the *Wu-liang shou ching,* the Nineteenth Vow promises an appearance of the Buddha before the dying believer, and the Forty-seventh and Eleventh Vows (by the traditionally accepted interpretations of T'an-luan, Chia-ts'ai and others) signify the nonbacksliding status of the inhabitants in the Pure Land.[50] Even in the *Shih-chu p'i-p'o-sha lun* it is stated that at the first bhūmi "there are sentient beings who will see the Buddha, which thereupon means they reside in the nonbacksliding stage [with regard to] *anuttarasamyak-sambodhi.*"[51]

By the Kamakura period in Japan, the equivalence of buddhânusmṛti-samādhi with a nonbacksliding rank within the ten bhūmis had become orthodox. In both his *Senchakushū* and *Amidakyōshaku,*

[50] Chia-ts'ai 遊才 (ca. 627) in his *Ching-t'u lun* 淨土論 (T. 47.19b3) outlines four types of nonbacksliding. The first three are identical to those outlined by Chi-ts'ang 吉藏 (549–623) in his *Fa hua yi shu* 法華義疏 (T. 34.1721); Chia-ts'ai adds nonbacksliding from the Pure Land.

[51] T. 26.32c.

Hōnen makes the soteriological value of buddhânusmṛti-samādhi quite explicit, perhaps reflecting concern about ambiguities prevalent in the minds of his audience. In a section discussing who should and should not be considered within the lineage of the Pure Land patriarchs, Hōnen offers a system of judgement based on one factor only, the attainment of samādhi:

> Question: There are many patriarchs [in our tradition], such as Chia-ts'ai of Hung-fa ssu and Tz'u-min san-tsang 慈愍三藏; are you not relying on them but solely on Shan-tao 善導?
>
> Answer: Among all of these teachers, although they take the Pure Land [teaching] as their center point, they have not attained samādhi. Venerable Shan-tao is a person who has attained samādhi. With regard to the path, there is [thus] already proof [of his success].[52]

And when then asked why he has chosen Shan-tao first instead of Shan-tao's teacher, Tao-ch'o, Hōnen replied:

> Tao-ch'o, although he was Shan-tao's teacher, had not yet [reached the state wherein] samādhi had arisen. Therefore we do not know if he attained Birth in the Pure Land.

In this passage we see that Hōnen has taken the position that without the experience of samādhi, understood to be buddhānusmṛti-samādhi, even an individual's birth in the Pure Land could not be confirmed. This is yet another example of how the Pure Land mārga, despite its best intentions to represent the goal of universal salvation, simply was unable to cut itself loose from its moorings to Chinese notions of orthodox Mahāyāna mārga. Hōnen, arguably the most significant figure in defining the Japanese conception of the Pure Land mārga, vilified and persecuted for proposing that it is possible to reach the Pure Land without the bodhi-citta experience, nevertheless determined that the

[52] *Hōnen shōnin zenshū* pp. 157.15 (*Amidakyō shaku* 阿彌陀經釋). Also in the *Senchakushū:* "Question: 'The masters of Kegon, Tendai, Zen, Sanron, and Hossō schools have composed treatises on the Pure Land tradition. Why is it you do not rely on these teachers, but only stand on the one master Shan-tao?' Answer: 'All those teachers, although they have composed . . . , do not take the Pure Land as their main focus.' " The next line is identical to the *Amidakyō shaku* text above.

ultimate measure of an individual's chances for liberation is his achievements in meditation.

In orthodox Pure Land doctrine, nonbacksliding status is interpreted as resulting from not only the attainment of buddhānusmṛti-samādhi, the accomplishment of joining the group of those who are rightly established,[53] but also experiencing one of the forms of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti,* or "acquiescence to the nonproduction of all dharmas" (*mushōbōnin* 無生法忍).

Outside of Pure Land dogmatics, *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* is a term used with a variety of mārga implications throughout the Buddhist tradition. However, it is clearly linked with nonbacksliding status in Pali literature,[54] in the Prajñāpāramitā literature,[55] and in the *Ta chih-tu lun*.[56] The latter also confirms the attainment of Buddha-vision samādhi (*pratyutpanna-samādhi*) as signifying a nonbacksliding bhūmi.[57] Even within the purview of sūtras focused on Amitābha Buddha, it is written that this is attained in some instances before and in others after one's Birth in the Pure Land. The *A mi t'o fo ching,* for example, mentions this attainment by beings both prior to reaching the Pure Land as well as by beings residing in the Pure Land.[58]

Rigorous discernment of the precise nature of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti,* particularly its mārga implications, is not easy. *Kṣānti* itself is an important virtue throughout the Buddhist tradition, with a variety of psychological implications. Sometimes translated as "patience," "forbearance," or "acceptance," *kṣānti* originally referred to a state of mind wherein insight into the truth results in the meditator's being unperturbed by either external threats or internal suffering. There are lists in various places throughout the literature of two, three, four, five, six and even ten types of *kṣānti.*

It is common to see a threefold *kṣānti* set in Chinese Buddhist literature, but even this grouping can reflect two distinct sets of meaning. One parallels the early definition given above and is based in the *kṣānti-*

[53] See note 27 above. See also Inagaki, p. 317.
[54] Cf. Funahashi Issai, *Bukkyō toshite no Jōdokyō*, pp. 96–108.
[55] See *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra* 大般若經 (T. 7.264b26–27).
[56] T. 25.263c6.
[57] T. 25.86c3.
[58] T. 12.348a.

pāramitā. This state is said to result from understanding of the nonarising and nondisappearing of dharmas, creating a special patience toward 1) external sources of anxiety, 2) internal sources of anxiety, and 3) the world in general. Another threefold scheme, and the one relevant to Pure Land doctrine, is in reference to a state of acceptance linked to, but just prior to *jñāna*, spiritual knowledge.

The presentation of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* also appears to have been quite influential on the Mahāyāna tradition. Here the threefold list presented above is glossed as patience (*marṣaṇa* and *adhivāsana*) and spiritual knowledge (*jñāna*), with this usage of *jñāna* explained as *dharma-nidhyāna* (reflection on the nature of dharmas). This can be traced to the Pali Canon, where we find the phrases *dhamma-nijjhāna-kkhanti* (M.i 140) and *diṭṭhi-nijjhāna-kkhanti* (S.ii 115, M.ii 170, 218, 234, etc.). The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* statement notwithstanding, Vasubandhu decided in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* that *kṣānti* should be taken as a form of *dṛṣṭi* rather than a form of *jñāna*.[59]

Edgerton renders *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* as "intellectual receptivity" (p. 27). His explanation of the basic Mahāyāna sense of the three forms of *kṣānti* also corresponds well to the usual Chinese usage: 1) acceptance of the oral teachings of the Buddha (*ghoṣānuga-kṣānti* 音響忍), 2) feeling intellectually comfortable with the Dharma (*ānulomika-kṣānti* 柔順忍), 3) direct insight into the truth that dharmas do not originate from anywhere or from anything (*anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* 無生法忍).[60]

The *Wu-liang shou ching* confirms the attainment of these same three *kṣānti* as listed by Edgerton. But it also specifically links this attainment to other mārga goals: "The trees of this sacred ground . . . when even a slight wind blows, it raises the immeasurably beautiful

[59] For this discussion, see Sakurabe Hajime, *Bukkyōgo no kenkyū* 佛教語の研究 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1975), pp. 58–59. The gloss for *kṣānti* in the *Kośa* itself is *samīrana* (judgement). Yaśomitra's gloss on *samīrana is upanidhyāna*, meaning "consideration" or "observation." In the Pali Abhidhamma, *santīrana* is the last stage of investigation of an object, a kind of discriminating observation before the object is recognized (*voṭṭhapanna*).

[60] Edgerton also illustrates that, as a result of insight into the nonarising of dharmas, *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* is usually linked with *anirodhadharma-kṣānti*, the "acceptance of the nondisappearance of dharmas"; see Edgerton, pp. 55–56.

sound of the Dharma which spreads throughout the entire kingdom. Those who hear this sound will obtain the profound *dharma-kṣānti*, reside in a nonbacksliding state, and [eventually] attain the Buddha-mārga."[61] In addition to confirming the link between *kṣānti* attainment and nonbacksliding status, here we also see both attributive mārga qualities linked specifically to final attainment of Buddhahood. This linking of the first two achievements with "the completion of the Buddha-mārga" thus confirms the felt need of the authors of this early Pure Land sūtra to clarify the significance of religious attainment of birth in the Pure Land in terms of the traditional conception of the path. The term "profound *dharma-kṣānti*" here can be understood as *anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti* because elsewhere in the sūtra a distinction is made between the achievement of the "two *kṣānti*" by those whose faculties are dull and the *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* by those whose faculties are sharp.[62]

In its discrimination of nine different grades of being in the Pure Land, the *Kuan ching* manifests a usage of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* that is also clearly attributive of mārga attainment. Here the particular spiritual achievements of those who reach the Pure Land are described in detail for each stage—the highest stage being where one will not only be able to perceive the physical attributes of the Buddha and bodhisattvas present (*Buddha-anusmṛti*) but, mirroring the *Wu-liang shou ching,* will "immediately awaken to *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*" upon hearing the sound of the Dharma in the jeweled trees.[63] In the case of those rated one step below this highest rank, however, although it is assured they will attain to a nonbacksliding status, they will need one small kalpa before their samādhi practice will yield the obtainment of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*.[64]

It was the *Kuan ching* that inspired the composition of commentaries by major figures in late sixth-century and early seventh-century Buddhism, such as Chih-i, Hui-yüan and Shan-tao, which had the biggest impact on the important T'ang period development of Pure Land doc-

[61] T. 12.271a2–9.
[62] T. 12.273b29–c1.
[63] T. 12.344b25–345a2.
[64] T. 12.345a19–21. See the chart illustrating the five usages of the term *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* in *The Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life as Expounded by Śākyamuni Buddha*, p. 126.

trine. Shan-tao's interpretation of the implications of this term as expounded in his commentary, the *Fo-shuo Kuan wu-liang shou ching shu* (T. 1753) had particular resonance in Japan after Hōnen laid so much stress on it. Quite different from what one sees in the Indian tradition, Shan-tao refers to what appears to be a new tripartite scheme of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti:* joy (*hsi-jen* 喜忍), realization (*wu-jen* 悟忍), and faith (*hsin-jen* 信忍).

The *Kuan ching* itself discusses the process of Birth in the Pure Land in terms of nine grades of spiritual ability without identifying them in terms of their relative positions on the bodhisattva mārga. In glossing the meaning of the accomplishments of the top three categories of people described in the sūtra, Shan-tao discusses the prevalent interpretation in China regarding *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti:*

> Let us take up the issue of how the various teachers have first explained the three kinds of people of the upper group. Those of the highest rank of the highest grade are bodhisattvas from the fourth bhūmi up to the seventh bhūmi. The reason we are able to know this is that upon reaching that [Pure Land], they immediately attain *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*. Those of the middle rank of the highest grade are bodhisattvas from the first bhūmi up to the fourth bhūmi. The reason we are able to know this is that upon reaching that [Pure Land], they attain *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* after the elapse of one small kalpa. Those of the lowest rank of the highest grade are bodhisattvas of lineage (i.e., the ten stages of settlement, *shih chu* 十住) up to the first bhūmi. The reason we are able to know this is that upon reaching that [Pure Land], they commence their entrance into the first bhūmi after the elapse of three small kalpas. These three grades of people are all born into ranks [in the Pure Land] as Mahāyāna sages.[65]

Although Shan-tao then critiques this reasoning, his inclusion of it in his treatise affords us a look at what is at least his own understanding of the standard view of his contemporaries in the seventh century. In the context of this discussion, the linking of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* with certain specific stages on the ten-bhūmi path is most interesting,

[65] T. 37.247c22.

particularly with respect to the amount of time it takes (e.g., three small kalpas) to reach this insight after reaching the Pure Land. Shan-tao's own interpretation is, of course, somewhat different. He first reminds his readers of the significant fact that the Buddha comes to greet anyone on their deathbed if so requested, regardless of their spiritual capacity. He then offers the opinion that this means all nine grades of beings must be considered *pṛthagjana*.

After the sermon is finished, it is written that the interlocutor of the sūtra,

> Queen Vaidehī and five hundred attendant-women, having heard the Buddha's exposition, suddenly saw the broad form of Sukhāvatī and achieved a vision of the Buddha's body and his two bodhisattvas (in attendance), experienced a welling up of joy in a way they felt was unprecedented, and suddenly attained to a great enlightenment, acquiring *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*. The five hundred attendant-women put forth the *bodhi-citta* of unsurpassed enlightenment as well as the desire to be born in that land. The World Honored One then predicted that all would [attain] Birth (*ōjō*) and after their birth in that land would attain *pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi*. . .

Though clearly two separate psychological events, attaining a vision of a Buddha and attaining *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* happen as consecutive experiences for the actors in the sūtra drama during the epiphany of their comprehension, implying that they are indicative of the same state of mind, if not the same stage on the mārga. Since elsewhere the sūtra promises the attainment of this *kṣānti* only "one small kalpa" after reaching a stage of nonbacksliding, it was naturally interpreted that the Queen had attained a nonbacksliding status as well.

Thus Shan-tao's assertion that the Queen does not represent an advanced stage bodhisattva but rather has only *pṛthagjana* status seems to imply a contradiction: how can someone who is only capable of understanding things through their form achieve the highest *kṣānti* whose content is of the nonarising (i.e., formlessness) of dharmas? Is not such a distinction of spiritual ability the reason why the *Kuan ching* divides

[66] T. 12.345a27.

the world into nine grades of beings? Shan-tao sees things in a different way:

> If you look at the meaning of the passages in the *Kuan ching* concerning good behavior with a focused mind and the different levels of the three grades of beings, [this illustrates] these are all ordinary people with the five defilements living after the Buddha has left this world. It is simply the result of different encounters that they are different, causing them to be discriminated into nine categories. What are these? The three ranks of people of the highest grade are ordinary people who have encountered the Mahāyāna. The three ranks of people in the middle grade are ordinary people who have encountered Hīnayāna [teachings]. The three ranks of people of the lowest grade are ordinary people who have encountered evil.[67]

Shan-tao has thus switched the paradigm for interpreting the sūtra in which distinctions in the type of meditation the adept can perform no longer determine how one is born into the Pure Land but rather the presence or absence of the appropriate occasion for spiritual advancement is affirmed as the determinate factor. In other words, the distinctions this and other sūtras make regarding how one enters Sukhāvatī is not based on one's inherent capacity (*gotra*) but the opportunities made available to the individual. Therefore, the identification of Vaidehī as an ordinary person who nonetheless experiences mārga attainments such as the enlightenment of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* normally reserved for people located somewhere within the ten bhūmis is central to the entire soteriological framework of the Pure Land path. The axis of this approach as an alternative mārga is thus the self-consciousness of oneself as not of saintly status and yet capable of saintly achievements given a fortunate encounter with the right teacher or teachings.

[67] T. 35.249a29–b3.

5. CONCLUSION: THE PURE LAND PATH WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF BUDDHISM

The purpose of this essay has been to situate properly the Pure Land Buddhist tradition within the soteriological framework of the Mahāyāna Buddhist mārga. In that the ultimate goal of the so-called Pure Land path is none other than the same final enlightenment of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* similar religious issues pertain as would likely be found in any form of Mahāyāna Buddhism: *bodhi-citta*, moral cultivation, appropriate praxis, samādhi attainment, the realization of what the tradition designates as spiritual understanding, and nonbacksliding from these achievements until the final goal is achieved. What I have tried to show is that a reading of the experiences possible after one has reached Sukhāvatī in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra* should leave no doubt in the reader that any emphasis on the proximate goal of Birth in Buddha Amitābha's Sukhāvatī did nothing to obviate the primary goal of completing the ten bhūmis, the bhāvanā-mārga, the fifty-two stages, or however the Mahāyāna path is defined. But despite efforts by influential scholars such as T'an-luan, Shan-tao and Hōnen to declare the Pure Land version of this mārga as "the subitist of the subitist," the fact remained that two of the three major sūtras in the Pure Land tradition discriminate the manner in which one is born into Sukhāvatī into different grades or classes of people. This is the undeniable element of particularism found at the very core of the most authoritative scriptures that inevitably creates tension with the crucial message of universalism so vital to the school's identity.

To understand the evolution of Pure Land Buddhist doctrinal system properly, it is therefore essential to appreciate the fact that the universalism of its appeal did not remove its soteriological grounding in the traditional mārga and its concomitant recognition of individual differences in spirituality. At least by the Kamakura period in Japan, there was a clearly conceived alternative mārga available to Pure Land exegetes. After accepting (existentially or otherwise) the conclusion that one cannot reach traditional mārga goals and turning instead to the task of achieving the goal of Birth in the Pure Land, the key signposts along that path were nonetheless samādhi attainment, particularly buddhānusmṛti-samādhi; *kṣānti* attainment, namely, *anutpat-*

tikadharma-kṣānti; and the promise of reaching a nonbacksliding status; and finally the concept that we are all ordinary beings. Without necessarily resolving these tensions, the assumption of this approach to bodhi nonetheless played an important role in the spread of the various Pure Land lineages in China and Japan. However, by trying to assert that ordinary beings, not advanced bodhisattvas, were capable of attaining these difficult practices, the important thinkers in the Pure Land movement were, in a word, trying to do the impossible. Perhaps we should look upon the figure of Hōnen as the quintessential paradoxical Pure Land figure: having experienced a vision of the Buddha in samādhi and carefully kept the monastic precepts, he is the prototype if not the archetype of someone who claims "ordinary being" status and yet experiences all the attainments associated with a nonbackslider destined for the Pure Land. But to recognize Hōnen as a successful Tendai monk weakens the sectarian consciousness, so in keeping with the *tariki* point of view, modern scholars often state that Hōnen's samādhi attainments were not the result of reaching any specified goal on his part, but occurred "naturally."

Psychologically, the Pure Land soteriological conception adds a third category to the more usual bipolar valence of Buddhism usually defined as knowledge and purification. This is faith, which perhaps may be defined in a Pure Land context as 1) a sincere acceptance of the working efficacy of the pledges to help made by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas (*praṇidhāna*) as elucidated in the sūtras, and 2) the personal realization that one cannot attain bodhi by oneself in this lifetime. There is always an inevitable tension in any subitist approach between immediacy of purpose on the one hand and the value of cultivated meditative insight and the accumulation of wholesome karmic roots on the other. Faith as the basis for a subitist school shakes up this formula somewhat by stubbornly insisting any soteriological discussion must accommodate the problem of *chi/ki*, the spiritual potential of the individual. The Pure Land position based on the lineage of T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, Shan-tao and Hōnen is that the appropriate attitude for an individual to take, the one most spiritually fruitful, is that he or she is only an ordinary being, capable of only limited progression on the mārga by his or her own efforts. This is the core assumption of the Pure Land mārga, and all discussions of this "other" mārga come back to the fact that it is a mārga designed for ordinary people. When thus con-

fronted with the Pure Land mārga as an alternative, the individual is forced to take stock of himself and somehow affirm that he is indeed more than "ordinary" in order to reject it completely. At the same time, even within the Pure Land soteriological conception, the traditional focal points of knowledge and purification continue to play a vital role. A figure such as Gyōnen 凝然 (1250–1321) is a good example of what we might call the mature Japanese harmonization of the conflict between the two approaches that first appears in Kamakura Buddhism. Gyōnen's phenomenal literary output and social recognition as one of the eminent monks of his time (he was one of the few national teachers, *kokushi* 国師, so designated during his lifetime) cannot be questioned. As a scholar of Hua-yen and the Vinaya literary traditions he embodied the values placed upon knowledge and purification that one would expect from someone of his stature within the *jiriki* path. At the same time, however, his Pure Land writings show he felt a great deal of resonance with Hōnen's teachings, which, among other things, manifests Gyōnen's personal admissions of humility regarding his own spiritual abilities.

Without any clear-cut resolution in China regarding this conflict between the demands of faith and the competing forces of knowledge and purification, the Pure Land doctrinal tradition was transmitted to Japan. This is just one example of how the Japanese and Koreans absorbed intact from their Chinese mentors the internal contradictions within the continental Buddhist traditions. Concomitant with and somewhat dependent on the sudden versus gradual debate and indeed the entire *p'an-chiao* evaluation of sūtras, doctrines, and their chronology were the various mārga schemata worked out in the commentarial traditions in India and China. In seeking an acceptable vehicle for their personal insight into Pure Land thought, Hōnen and his students seemed to have found the Chinese development of a Pure Land mārga concept to be insufficient. Instead they chose the hermeneutic tool of *p'an-chiao* to subsume the traditional mārga under a new formula wherein the legacy of their learned doctrine could be kept intact but with the three central Pure Land sūtras now elevated to a higher authority such that traditional Mahāyāna teachings and practices were given a new soteriological valence. In so doing, Hōnen gave new clarity to the concept of an alternative mārga as instigated by Tao-ch'o, yet never gave up his identity as a Tendai monastic.[68] This is perhaps best illus-

trated in Hōnen's *Senchakushū* where his existential choice of accepting the primacy of the nembutsu practice never entirely excluded other practices but rather demoted them to secondary status. This shows us that *p'an-chiao* was a more fluid concept than mārga. In other words, the relative significance of certain concepts coupled with the relative efficacy of certain practices leading to their comprehension could be reorganized by Kamakura thinkers, but the goals of the traditional mārga itself were never really redefined. This may be due to the fact that even Chinese speculations on mārga were based on Indian models perceived to be authoritative, but the attribution of relative degrees of importance to specific doctrines and practices through a *p'an-chiao* type of classification was something inherently Chinese and therefore more contiguous with the Japanese exegetical tradition.

The experience of the Ch'an/Zen schools in Kamakura Japan suggests many comparisons with Pure Land Buddhism of the same period. In terms of mārga, Zen seems to suffer the same fate as Pure Land in its offer of a subitist goal that is more obtainable than the traditional goal of Buddhahood or nirvāṇa. Both, for example, are forced to hedge their new formulations of the path by equally affirming the traditional goal of attaining Buddhahood. In Zen the ultimate goal of Buddhahood and proximate goal of *satori* are collapsed into the same event. In the Pure Land mārga the ultimate goal remains, by virtue of postponement, distinguished from the proximate goal of birth in the Pure Land. Both schools thus appear to gain and lose in their protestant stances. Zen gains by offering accessibility to the ultimate goal by means of the enlightenment experience of *zazen* and, in doing so, effectively denies the constraints implicit in any of the Indian mārga schemata. It loses by cheapening that ultimate goal, for enlightened Zen masters, despite their "living Buddha" status, clearly do not possess many of the mental or physical qualities of a Buddha as described in the sūtras, a fact readily admitted by at least the Japanese Zen tradition. In the case of Pure Land, the gain is clearly the universality of a practice so simple anyone can perform it, even without a focused mind. The proximate goal of birth in the Pure Land, moreover, can be rationalized as occur-

[68] Hōnen died in his Tendai monastic robes with a traditional Tendai ceremony, except that he refused to have a string tied from his hand to the Buddhist statue before him.

ring immediately after death, thus removing the need for empirical evidence of attaining any or all mārga goals. The ultimate goal is instead removed to another place and time, but the position of man vis-à-vis this final goal of Buddhahood can only be seen as having been pushed even more remote from him because of man's stark dependence on a previous achiever of that goal, i.e., a Buddha, to enable him to reach even his proximate goal. Thus while Pure Land sacrifices the mārga's ultimate goal by relocating it to a "holy other" realm and in doing so effectively defines it as unobtainable in this world, the Zen tradition similarly sacrifices the same ultimate goal by idealizing it out of our existence in its substitution of the lesser but possible experience of *satori*. In both cases, the ultimate goal is replaced by a more accessible proximate goal. A by-product of both these new approaches to the mārga, then, is the dramatic increase in the distance between the Buddha and ourselves.

The role of ritual in Zen and Pure Land practice also suggests some interesting parallels. If we can take *zazen* as having a chiefly ritualized function in Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) in the sense that it is not a means to anything but a kind of mystical participation in the Buddha's own enlightenment experience, then it is not difficult to see recitation nembutsu working in the same way. The consensus that nembutsu is the chosen practice for Pure Land followers does not imply that it is the actual cause for attaining birth in the Pure Land any more than sitting Zen actually causes enlightenment. Nembutsu in the Kamakura age has a definite ritual function in that one is called to perform it by the Buddha; and as the "true" or "proper" practice (*shōgyō* 正行), participation meant recognition and acceptance (*kṣānti*) of the Buddha's attitude toward sentient beings. Thus there is a faith in the truth of the teachings and a reenactment of that faith each time the nembutsu is uttered. Zazen seems to fulfill a very similar role for Dōgen: the student is asked to accept on faith the historical truth of the Buddha's experience of enlightenment, the genuine transmission of the truth through a centuries-old lineage of teachers, and his own practice of zazen is a reconfirmation of his faith in that truth with every sitting.

The utilitarian dimension to zazen as a specific means to attain enlightenment is, moreover, quite parallel to the use of samādhi in Pure Land thought. As I have tried to show above, commitment to the *tariki* path did not obviate the value of samādhi for those engaged in Pure

Land practices. Not only did such meditative experiences serve to confirm one's Birth as assured, they also brought about a different kind of birth in the Pure Land. Though everyone can be born in the Pure Land, not everyone is born in the same place in the Pure Land or at the same stage on the mārga. This is why there are three grades (*Wu-liang shou ching*) or nine grades (*Kuan wu-liang shou ching*) of beings discussed in Pure Land sūtras, all of whom can achieve Birth in Amitābha's realm, but may achieve it differently. One can even be born on the outskirts (*henchi* 辺地) of the Pure Land, which the *Wu-liang shou ching* defines as referring to those who doubt the truth of the Buddha's wisdom but are born in the Pure Land nevertheless.[69] Not only are they born on the outskirts of the Pure Land, they are born into an unopened lotus flower where they cannot see the Buddha or hear the Buddha's preaching for five hundred years. In Gyōnen's *Jōdo hōmon genrushō,* we read that Ryūkan 隆寛 (1148–1227), one of Hōnen's disciples, believes this happens to those who have practiced with a *jiriki* attitude.[70] Gyōnen also discusses how different kinds of practice can result in different births in different Pure Lands, some presided over by a *saṃbhogakāya-kṣetra* of the Buddha, others expressing a *nirmāṇakāya-kṣetra* of the Buddha. Considering thus the possibility of different types of births in different Pure Lands, the experience of *ōjō* 往生 can encompass a broad variety of meanings, much as the experience of *satori* can.

What remains unclear is the relationship between *ōjō* and samādhi. While *ōjō* is frequently discussed with specific mārga references, nembutsu-samādhi is not, other than its nonbacksliding implication mentioned above. Shinran's denunciation of any reference to *jiriki* practice precludes him from commenting on the topic meaningfully. For Hōnen's disciple Kōsai 幸西 (1163–1247), for example, the terms *ōjō*, *samādhi* and *shinjin* 信心 (the attainment of faith) all appear to be used synonymously; namely, they denote one moment of life-changing religious experience when one's own mind is a mirror image of the Buddha's mind.[71] In this instant, one not only sees the Buddha, one becomes the Buddha. This is precisely the manifestation of the

[69] T. 12.275c14.
[70] T. 84.198a2–4.
[71] T. 84.196b18-197c19.

Buddha-nature within the kleśa-ridden mind of the ordinary human being. In the Pure Land tradition, it would never be said that having experienced such an event, the person was "enlightened" or had become a "living Buddha." Rather, the terminology is that he has achieved *anjin* 安心, or reached nembutsu-samādhi, or even that he has "attained immediate Birth" (*sokutoku-ōjō* 即得往生). The latter is found in the *Wu-liang shou ching,* where we also find this attainment as indicative of nonbacksliding, thus the mārga is never left behind.

Just as zazen is spoken of in Kamakura times as the "preferred practice," Zen is also said to be the true orthodox Buddhism. That is, all Buddhist goals can be achieved through Zen, all Buddhist teachings and practices flow from Zen, all seekers must ultimately find their liberation through the Zen path. Kamakura Pure Land thinkers express no less certainty in the significance of their own path. Most importantly, Amitābha Buddha is understood not as a new Buddha introduced in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra,* but as the primordial Buddha from whose lineage Śākyamuni himself emerged and his introduction by Śākyamuni in this sūtra is but another form of *upāya.* As Kōsai explains, the entire canon can be thus understood as various forms of *upāya* created to bring all sentient beings eventually to this path selected by the Buddha. Hence the notion that Zen is the foundation of all Buddhism because it reflects the Buddha-mind of enlightenment is exactly paralleled in Pure Land thought, where seeking the interim goal of birth in the Pure Land reflects the Buddha's true intention for everyone. In this sense, the importance of the role of *mo-fa/mappō* doctrine of the latter stage of the Dharma in Pure Land thought, while playing a crucial role in East Asia until the appearance of Hōnen, becomes largely irrelevant in Kamakura Pure Land doctrine. To wit, if the Pure Land path is the only true path to follow, it makes no difference what age we are in. The circumstances in this degenerate age only make that alternative mārga more accessible. One must then wonder if there is not the notion of an "alternative mārga" within the Zen tradition as well.