# Visions of Sukhāvatī

## Shan-toa's Commentary on the *Kuan Wu-Liang-Shou-Fo Ching*

**Julian Pas**

ıre Land movement focuses on the worship of one particular Buddha, r Amitāyus, who created a paradise named Sukhāvatī, Land of s. The scriptures of this school promise rebirth in that Land to the hat Buddha. It was considered to be an "easy way" to gain salvation with the "arduous path" of self-sacrifice recommended in original

monk Shan-tao was instrumental in the propagation and popularity of al school. He was an ascetic and serious meditator who followed the f visualization explained in the Sutra on Visualizing Buddha Amita, mentary on this text was later considered to be his most outstanding ern authors, however, misrepresent Shan-tao because they follow the nese Jōdō Shinshu masters who deemphasized meditative practices. e that old stereotypes will be dropped, this book lets the Chinese texts emselves.

**Pas** specializes in Chinese Religious Tradition at the University of n, and is formally the editor of the *Journal of Chinese Religions*.

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PAS

Visions of Sukhāvatī

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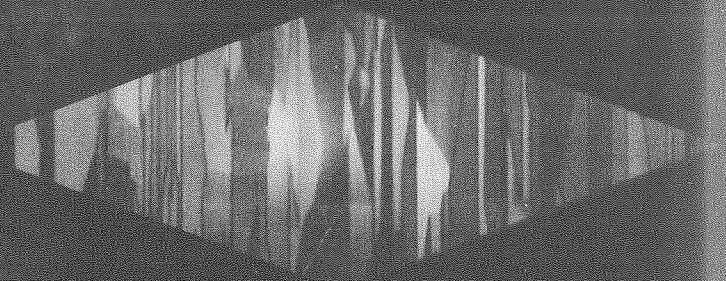

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SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies
Matthew Kapstein, Editor

Figure 1
Master Shan-tao from a stonerubbing found in Wuhan, China

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## Shan-tao's Commentary on the *Kuan Wu-Liang-Shou-Fo Ching*

*Julian F. Pas*

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*To Yü-lin,*
*my life companion,*
*whose wisdom and compassion*
*rank her among the Bodhisattvas*

# CONTENTS


*Preface* *vii*

*Acknowledgments* *xv*

PART 1

Chapter 1 The Emergence of Pure Land Buddhism 3

Chapter 2 The Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching and the Early Development of the Amita Cult 35

Chapter 3 Biography of an Eminent Monk: Ch'an Master Shan-tao (613–681) 67

Chapter 4 Shan-tao's Writings 105

PART 2

Chapter 5 The Human Situation Versus Amita and His Land of Purity 141

Chapter 6 The First Gate: Meditation 163

Chapter 7 The Second Gate: Nonmeditative Action 209

Chapter 8 Recitation of the Name of Amita 253

Chapter 9 Rebirth in Sukhāvatī 277

PART 3

Chapter 10 Shan-tao's Significance 309

Conclusion 337

*Abbreviations* *341*

*Notes* *345*

*Glossary* *409*

*Chinese Glossary* *413*

*Select Bibliography* *429*

*Index* *449*

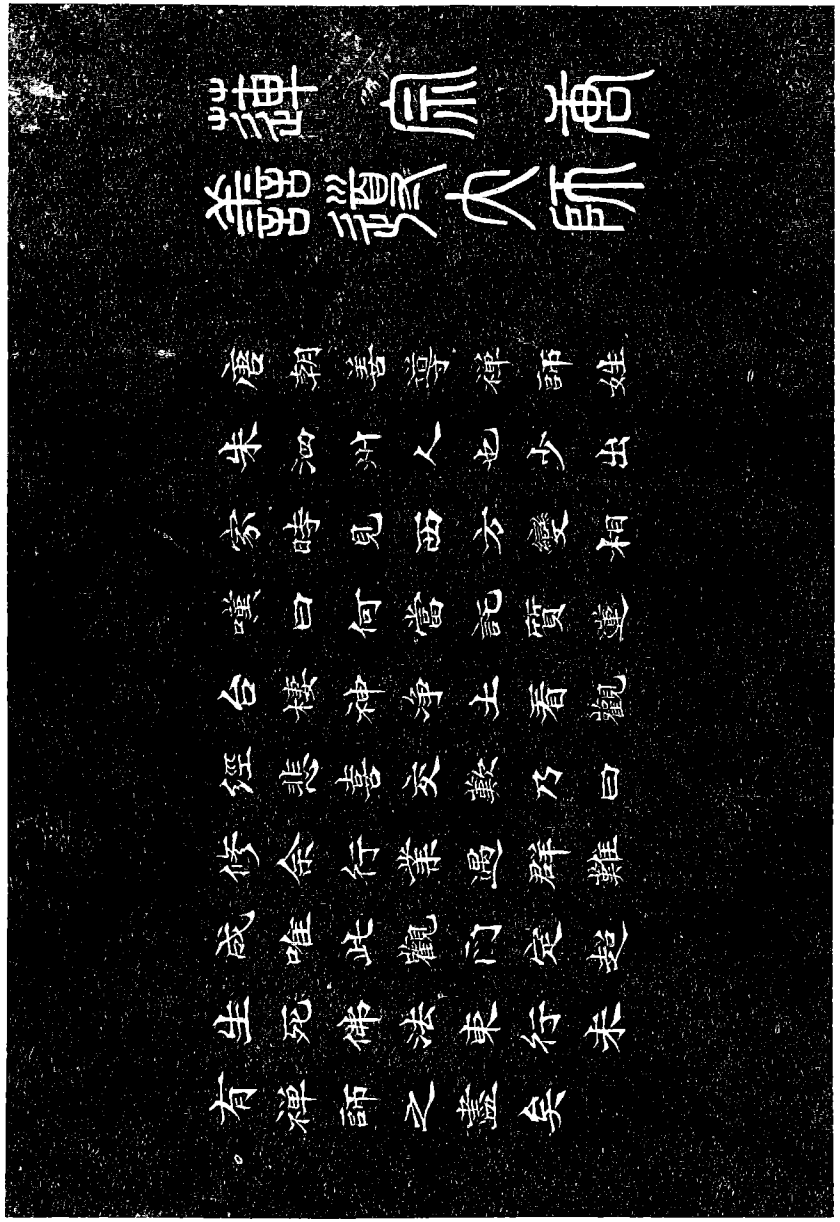



Figure 2
Text underneath the master's picture (contains a short biography)

# PREFACE

Why should one be interested in personalities who lived more than a thousand years ago? Since they are buried and gone, why do we not leave them alone? We could, but we do not because we are curious. We want to explore and understand the coming and going of great movements and the lives of certain personalities who influenced these movements. Shan-tao, who lived during the early T'ang period, is such a person: he had a great influence on the religious development of his time, and still continues to be relevant for many contemporary Buddhist believers, especially in Japan.

In medieval Japan, Master Shinran (1172–1262) selected Shan-tao (Zendō in Japanese) as one of the Seven Patriarchs of his newly established School of Pure Land Buddhism, *Jōdo shinshū* ("True Pure Land School"), thus ensuring the Chinese master a permanent position in the living tradition of Pure Land devotionalism. Strangely enough, in China itself, Shan-tao's memory has faded: there has been no vigorous Pure Land movement during recent centuries, and few Buddhists, I would think, still remember him today. There are exceptions, of course. In Taipei there is a *Shan-tao szu* ("Shan-tao monastery"), but for most Buddhists Shan-tao is only a name. I am not aware of any Chinese biography of the master. In several books dealing with the history of Chinese Buddhism, short passages are dedicated to him, but without great detail or accuracy. Not so in Japan! Because of his *Jōdo shinshū* importance, there is an extensive bibliography concerning his life, his teachings, and his significance within the Pure Land tradition. He is considered to be the greatest of the three Chinese Pure Land patriarchs (the others being T'an-luan, 476–542, and Tao-ch'o, 562–645) whose influence on the growing Amita Cult was most decisive.

In 1981, on the 1300th anniversary of Shan-tao's death, new articles and books were produced in Japan. Delegations of Japanese devotees traveled to China to visit the remains of a temple

where Shan-tao lived and perhaps passed away, and his tomb pagoda near the site of the T'ang capital Ch'ang-an (Xi'an today).

My Shan-tao dissertation was completed in 1973. After fifteen years of "tranquillity" I felt the urge to reactivate my research and make it available to a wider audience than a doctoral thesis usually reaches. One of my inspirations was the unexpected discovery of a stone rubbing of an engraving of Shan-tao that I found in the gift shop of a Wuhan hotel in 1985. The rubbing is 137 centimeters long and 68.5 centimeters wide, and represents Shan-tao seated in full ritual garments on a dais. (See figure 1.) Above the image is an engraved text. Although I found the rubbing in Wuhan, it appeared that it was actually produced in Shensi, although no further details were available.

My dissertation was titled "Shan-tao's Commentary on the *Amitāyur-buddhānusmrti sūtra*": an analysis of Shan-tao's most elaborate and most famous work. Since then I have changed my opinion about the title of the sutra. The above title proposes an alternative instead of the most commonly known reconstruction by Takakusu (*SBE* series): *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*. But to guess what the original Sanskrit title may have been has become irrelevant, since most scholars today are of the opinion there was no Sanskrit original at all. The sutra was most probably written in Central Asia, and has undergone interpolations due to Chinese influence. As a result, I have now chosen the Chinese title *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching*, on which Shan-tao wrote his famous commentary.

The title of this book, *Visions of Sukhāvatī,* indicates my new insight into the basic meaning of this sutra. As the title points out, it is a manual of visualization or contemplation, containing directives on how to obtain a clear vision, not only of the land Sukhāvatī, but also of the ruling "Lord" of that land: the Buddha of Infinite Life, *A-mi-t'a Fo (O-mi-t'o Fo),* and his two assistant Bodhisattvas. To obtain a vision of one's favorite deity—Buddhist, Taoist, or other—seems to have become a matter of serious concern among religious practitioners of the early centuries C.E. This could happen in dreams or in meditative trances, or even through mediumistic flights into the transcendent world. It is comparable to the "vision quest" practiced by North American Indians. It is my firm conviction that the *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching* must be seen as such a manual of vision quest: how to obtain a vision of this Buddha Amita in this life. The final chapters dealing with the nine levels of rebirth



in the land of this Buddha are later interpolations and have somehow obscured the original intention of whoever wrote the basic sutra. Yet it is also true that later devotees have come to consider this interpolation as the crucial part of the sutra. That is not based on sound exegesis, but on changes in devotional practices.

It is therefore hard to believe that a modern translation of the sutra,[1] which in its introduction states that "earlier translations were affected by traditional and sectarian ways of reading the text" (p. vii), nevertheless maintains that the Buddha's discourse on visualization-contemplation is secondary, whereas the "practice of saying the name [of Buddha Amita] apparently is its central message" (p. xi). Such a view has no foundation in the text of the sutra, nor in Shan-tao's commentary.

This is an example of the continuation and uncritical adoption of established stereotypes and even errors. Another example is in the only monograph on Shan-tao in a Western language published in recent years.[2] This work has two major shortcomings: its focus is on *nien-Fo (nembutsu)* and it has a strong sectarian bias.

Not only Japanese authors are to be blamed for the continued existence of stereotypes and errors. In almost all Western-language publications concerning Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, Shan-tao is mentioned and briefly discussed. Although his great influence on the formation of Pure Land Buddhism is recognized, the correct interpretation of his views is missing. Examples can be found in K. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, and more recently in S. Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang*.[3] The influence of the Jōdo shinshū interpretation of the Chinese master's views is unmistakable. Therefore it is necessary to return to the source, Shan-tao's own words as found in the Chinese Tripitaka texts, and make a renewed examination of what he wanted to say.

The present volume tries to do that. Although I have relied on a variety of secondary sources (Western languages, Chinese, and Japanese), especially to reconstruct a reliable biography of Shan-tao, the Chinese texts are my only primary source when the master's teaching is being examined. Only in this way is it possible to achieve a correct understanding of his views, without interference from later interpretations.

*Visions of Sukhāvatī* is divided into three parts. Part 1 offers information necessary to understand the Pure Land movement in general and Shan-tao's contribution in particular. Chapter 1, about the origin of the Amitābha Cult, is a sort of luxury. I hesi-

tated to include it here, but since there is hardly any serious discussion about the origin of this cult available in a Western language, I thought it important, even if as a challenge for future research. Although this chapter leaves many gaps, it is a useful introduction and, I believe, has a certain originality.

Chapter 2 deals with the more immediately relevant topic of the *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching,* on which Shan-tao wrote his famous commentary. In order to understand the commentary, one has to know the sutra itself. Using the method of literary criticism, I try to distinguish various redactional layers in it, and to pinpoint its basic meaning and orientation, which certainly is its particular technique of visualization-inspection. The technique flourished at one time in Central Asia and China, and can be found in a number of so-called *kuan* sutras. This does not mean that Shan-tao understood the sutra in a text-critical way. He took the text as it was without raising text-critical questions, although occasionally one can feel that he is somehow perplexed because of the multiple authorship of the sutra, of which he was not aware.

Chapter 3 deals with the life of Shan-tao in a critical manner. Various traditions and legends are scrutinized, and the legend of two Shan-taos is rejected as a later rationalization. More importantly, in order to understand the full meaning of Shan-tao's message, one has to see it in the context of his own life experience.

Finally, Chapter 4 provides a short discussion of Shan-tao's literary works and a more extensive analysis of his major opus: his commentary on the *kuan* sutra. It provides us with some fundamental insights and basic ideas of the master, preluded in his minor writings but fully expressed in his commentary. This prepares us to tackle the main objective of this study: a detailed analysis of the commentary itself.

Part 2 therefore contains the main substance of my research, and consists of a thematic analysis of Shan-tao's commentary in five chapters. Chapter 5 provides his starting point, which is a common Buddhist acceptance of the human situation: life is sorrowful. Moreover, Shan-tao also shares a particular contemporary vision of Buddhist history, taken over perhaps from the Three Stages teaching: the belief in the final decay of the *dharma,* a sort of latter-day Buddhism. Although he does not overemphasize this gloomy outlook, it still explains his dark image of the human predicament. Left to their own resources, human beings are without hope for salvation and fall into anxiety and despair. However,



since Shan-tao's viewpoint is Mahāyānistic, the antipode of his belief in man's gruesome situation is his belief in human perfectibility: everybody possesses the Buddhanature, and although delusions and passions keep human beings ignorant of their own potentiality, because of the Buddha's compassionate intervention, salvation becomes possible. The way to reach salvation is proper to Pure Land theory and practice: one can be saved through rebirth in the Pure Land of Buddha Amita. In contrast to what other teachers said, Shan-tao vigorously asserts that this Buddha and his "Land of Bliss" are of *sambogha* nature.

According to Shan-tao, there are two different methods ("gates") for entering into Amita's land: meditation (meditative vision) and ethical conduct. In Chapter 6, his comments on the first method are analyzed. Meditative vision or vision quest of Sukhāvatī, and the techniques to perform it, are the basic message of the *Kuan-ching.* In the present version of the sutra, it consists of thirteen successive steps, but more likely in the original text had ten steps. Shan-tao, however, comments on thirteen meditations.

In Chapter 7, his views on the second method are analyzed: the "gate" of nonmeditative (literally: "scattered") action. They are contained in the last three "meditations" of the sutra, and include both ethical conduct and the "threefold mind."

At first, it is rather surprising that Shan-tao would discuss meditation at all, since the Pure Land method is generally considered to be an "easy way" for the ordinary unenlightened person, who would normally have neither the inclination nor the leisure to engage in the difficult practice of meditation. Shan-tao, however, believes that meditation is within the reach of the laity: he claims vigorously that this is the intention of the sutra itself. It is thus clear that Shan-tao does not propagate a cheap way toward salvation; he upholds as an ideal the practice of Amita meditation and strongly emphasizes the importance of ethical conduct, deep faith, and sincerity. If, in the view of some interpreters, his basic teaching consists of a defense of the oral invocation of Amita's name, this is doubtless an oversimplification of Shan-tao's true purpose.

Chapter 8 is consequently concerned with an analysis of Shan-tao's view on *nien-Fo.* The practice of oral invocation of Amita's name does not seem to occupy a place of eminence in his teaching, but is only considered useful and effective for beginners on the path or as a last resort for deathbed converts.

Chapter 9 deals with the question of rebirth. First of all, who is entitled to be reborn in Amita's paradise? This question is closely related with the nine grades of rebirth. Refuting other commentators who claimed that the nine grades should be interpreted as various classes of "holy" or superior beings, Shan-tao firmly proclaims that all of the nine grades are classes of "ordinary" people. Next, there is the controversy about some categories of people who are said to be unable to attain rebirth. Shan-tao again expresses his own views, opposed to those of other commentators. In the third place, there is the controversy about the time of rebirth. Some teachers held that faith in Amita does not lead to immediate rebirth, but Shan-tao again refutes their view and asserts his own conviction that Amita's promises have to be taken seriously and guarantee immediate rebirth.

In Part 3, which consists of only one chapter, some supplementary aspects of Shan-tao's teaching are discussed. First a comparison is made between Shan-tao's program of ethical conduct and the Confucian virtues of filial piety and sincerity. The question of possible contacts between Shan-tao and the Nestorian Christians in Ch'ang-an is also considered. Next Shan-tao's significance for Buddhism in China and Japan is discussed. And finally, it will be interesting to compare Shan-tao and his practices with parallels found in the Christian tradition.

As I mentioned earlier, Shan-tao's memory in China has faded and is almost forgotten. Saints come and go. Very few are remembered and exert a lasting influence on later generations. How many Christian saints have been forgotten today? Saints are individuals who have reached a degree of holiness, but they are also symbols. As long as these symbols are useful for the edification of later believers, they are kept alive; otherwise, they gradually slip into oblivion.

Shan-tao's memory is presently being revived in China. That is mainly because for many Japanese Buddhists he remains a lasting symbol and an eminent teacher of their own Pure Land doctrine. Thus in 1981 the Sino-Japanese Pure Land School Friendship Association celebrated the 1300th anniversary of Shan-tao's death. A group of Pure Land devotees went to visit the master's tomb pagoda (*ling-t'a*) located about 17 kilometers southwest of Xi'an (Shensi province).[4] The original temple where Shan-tao was buried, the Hsiang-chi monastery, originally built in 689 by his disciple Huai-yün, does not exist any longer, but some of the later



reconstructed halls are still there, and fortunately the pagoda built to honor the master has survived the ages. It is a square structure with eleven storeys, 33 meters high. Because of its old age, the top has been damaged. But it does not seem to be the original pagoda where Shan-tao's bones were put to rest.[5]

South of the major pagoda there used to be two smaller ones, and to the east, there was another small pagoda. It is said that these were the tomb pagodas of Shan-tao's disciples and other monks who lived in the same temple later.

After 1949, part of the reconstructed temple was used as an elementary school; another four buildings still served as the monks' residence. Soon after liberation, there was a democratic reform and only eight monks stayed there: eight *mou* of land were given to them for cultivation and self-support; all the remaining land was confiscated. In 1963, the number of monks had risen to nineteen. But during the "Ten Years of Chaos" (inappropriately called the "Cultural Revolution"), four monks died of old age, four returned to lay status, two participated in building a factory, and the remaining nine were assigned to the Hsiang-chi szu production team.

In 1986 there were twenty-eight monks. Part of the land formerly owned by the temple was returned in 1985. The primary school was moved elsewhere, and some of the ancient halls, as well as the entrance gate, were rebuilt at the old site. The project was a joint undertaking of the Japanese Pure Land Buddhists (who donated Yuan 200,000) and the Buddhist Association of China, in cooperation with the provincial and municipal committees of Shensi and Xi'an. Shan-tao's old burial temple has become, once again, a place of pilgrimage.

Although I have not had a chance to visit Shan-tao's burial place, I hope to do so in the future, to pay my respects to a great teacher and a man of awesome realization—in my view, a true Buddhist "saint."

Finally, a few practical remarks are in order. Since my major sources of information on Shan-tao's teaching are found in the Taishō edition of the Tripitaka, I propose the following method of reference: T. stands for the *Taishō Tripitaka*; then follows the traditional serial number of a text in the collection, followed by volume number, page number, column, and line. Thus: T. 2031, 49: 15, B27. (The indication of volume number is necessary; otherwise the page numbers are meaningless and frustrating. I wish

all those who quote the T. would follow this method.) In all cases, page numbers are immediately preceded by a colon.

The major texts quoted are the three Pure Land scriptures; and although I use the Chinese versions, for the sake of convenience I use the abbreviations for the Longer and Shorter Sutra to refer to the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras*, since the Chinese versions are too numerous and would lead to confusion. For the *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching,* I use the abbreviation of the Chinese title (*Kuan-ching*) in contrast to what I did in my dissertation. Whenever I quote from the English translation by J. Takakusu, I use the abbreviation of the English title (*ADS*) or refer to Max Müller's edition *Sacred Books of the East (SBE).*

Whenever the name of the Pure Land Buddha is mentioned in the context of Chinese Buddhism, I have chosen *Buddha Amita (A-mi-t'a Fo* or *O-mi-t'o Fo* in Chinese). It is regrettable that many scholars of Chinese Buddhism continue to speak of Amitābha, whereas they prefer the Chinese name of Kuan-yin or Kuan-shih-yin, rather than Avalokiteshvara. Also, the correct way to cite those names is to mention first the title (Buddha, Bodhisattva, etc.), and then the personal name: Buddha Shākyamuni, Buddha Amita, Bodhisattva Kuan-yin. Of course, to be fully consistent, one should say: Shi-chia-mu-ni-Fo, A-mi-t'a Fo (O-mi-t'o Fo), Kuan-yin P'u-sa. But who can be fully consistent in this age of "decline of the *dharma*"?

The method of transliteration adopted here is the Wade-Giles system, with very few exceptions, such as *yuan* and *hsuan.* Since in these cases diacritics are not necessary to avoid mispronunciation, I have opted for more simplicity. With regards to *i,* I prefer the alternative *yi,* which is less confusing for English readers.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is already over twenty years since I completed my doctoral dissertation at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada). One of the major points of Buddhist teaching, the impermanence of all things, is well illustrated in my own life experience. In the introduction of my dissertation in 1973 I wrote: "My warm thanks are due to my wife for her untiring assistance in typing out the whole manuscript and brush-writing the Chinese characters; and, perhaps even more, for her willingness to adjust her life and the lives of our small children to the needs of the thesis." That was before the computer age. Now I am grateful to my wife and to those no longer "small children" for their assistance in word-processing part of the revised draft.

In all these years I have not forgotten my masters who inspired and assisted me throughout the germination and growth processes of this work. Although I had written dissertations before I came to McMaster, still, working with Chinese texts was a new experience. I appreciate the assistance and encouragement of my adviser, Professor Jan Yün-hua, whose insistence on accuracy in translating Chinese texts and on the necessity of solid historical evidence on which to base any statement has been my leading principle on the "not-so-easy path" of Pure Land research. I also wish to repeat my thanks to Professors John Arapura, Paul Younger, and Klaus Pringsheim, members of my thesis committee; to Mrs. Kawamura, now in Calgary, for her help with Japanese texts; and finally to some old and young friends, solid scholars of Chinese Buddhism, such as Richard Gard, David Chappell, and Raoul Birnbaum, who encouraged me to return to Shan-tao and revise my dissertation for publication.

During the most recent stage of revisions and amplifications, I was most fortunate to receive the encouragement and/or assistance of my department chairman Professor Braj Sinha; the assistance of Professor Man Kam Leung; the active support of my friend and copyeditor William Garner; and the help of two tireless

workers who did most of the word-processing: Dale Rempel and Pauline de Jong. Thank you all for your active support.

I wish to express my gratefulness to the Laurence Research Fellowship Program (administered by the Institute for Advanced Studies on World Religions, State University of New York, Stony Brook) for a modest grant received in the summer of 1987 to enable me to revise the Shan-tao manuscript. To all the friendly people at the institute, Dr. Richard Gard and his personnel: thank you! I likewise acknowledge receiving a partial grant from the publications and research department of the University of Saskatchewan.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge permission received from several publishers to incorporate my previously published articles into the present monograph:

1. "Shan-tao's Interpretation of Meditative Vision of Buddha Amitāyus," *History of Religions* 14 (1974), 96–116.
2. "The *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching*: Its Origin and Literary Criticism," in L. Kawamura and K. Scott, eds., *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization* (Dharma Publishing, 1977), 194–218.
3. "Dimensions in the Life and Thought of Shan-tao (613–681)," in D. Chappell, ed., *Buddhist and Taoist Practice in Medieval Chinese Society (Buddhist and Taoist Studies II)* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 65–84.
4. "Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Comparative Sainthood, Comparative Prayer," *The Pacific World* (Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, San Francisco), New Series, no. 5 (1989), 75–84.

# PART 1

Figure 3
Triad of Pure Land (*Sukhāvatī*) standing on lotus flowers
center: Buddha Amita
right: Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin
left: Bodhisattva Ta-shih-chih

# CHAPTER 1

## *The Emergence of Pure Land Buddhism*

Life is never at a standstill. Individuals and societies grow and develop; their life force pushes them forward to repeat in an endless row the cycle of birth, maturity, and death. Yet there rarely is mere mechanical repetition. There is continuity but also experimentation along new paths. The lives of individuals, although apparently repeating the life cycles of their ancestors, are still personal, and patterns may change according to particular circumstances and influences incurred along the road. Nothing new ever happens, yet nothing is ever the same.

Religious organizations follow a similar pattern. There is a continuous tension between conservative forces opting for what is familiar and traditional, and progressive forces wishing to explore new vistas in response to new influences or circumstances. Christianity is an eloquent example of a religious organization suspended between conservatism and innovation. If Jesus would attend a Sunday morning mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, he would exclaim, "What is going on here?" If the Buddha would be present at a Pure Land ritual in modern Japan, he probably would be totally confused.

Individuals and groups do change, and it is not always easy to explain the exact causality effecting the changes. Very often one can only guess. The emergence of Pure Land Buddhism within the larger framework of Buddhism is an example of evolutionary changes that are difficult to explain. While the changes are taking place, one is not aware of them. It is only after the fact that one wonders and tries to unravel the complicated network of cause and effect that produced those changes.

The emergence of the Amitābha Cult, which eventually would become the Pure Land movement or Pure Land School of Buddhism in East Asia, is an example of a slow but radical shift when compared to the original message of Siddhārtha Gautama. One

may call it an aberration from the Buddha's original intention; one may alternately consider it the highest and purest achievement of Buddhism. It all depends on how one interprets the changes, which depends on one's own stand and beliefs. One will never convince a bona fide Lutheran that he is in fact a heretic within the Christian community.

Returning to our problem at hand, how does one explain, historically, the emergence of the Amitābha worship within the overall Buddhist way of life? There must be some historical factors responsible for this phenomenon, even if one has to admit that such a development is in fact an aberration from the founder's intention. Indeed, that is how it appears if one compares the two extreme poles: on the one hand, Gautama's message; on the other hand, the devotional path of Pure Land Buddhism. The two are in fact mutually contradictory; one has the feeling that worship of Buddha Amitābha is exactly what Buddha Shākyamuni did not wish to happen. His path, revolutionary in his own time, is one of self-reliance: one can only find release from this frustrating life process through a continuous self-effort by following a strict ethical, mental, and spiritual discipline. Nobody can do it for you. It is an arduous process of self-denial that will take many lifetimes to achieve, but there is no shortcut, no substitute, no cheap way of relying on the merits of others. Even the Buddha himself is only a guide, a teacher, a model. By following the path that he discovered, one may be able to reach the same goal of full enlightenment.

Yet, five hundred years later, there is a revolutionary group within the *sangha* claiming just the opposite: one has not after all to follow such an arduous schedule. There is an alternative way, a method both easy and certain, leading without fail to the same ultimate destination: perfect enlightenment. Gautama would have turned over in his grave, if his body had not been cremated.

Is there any standard to evaluate such a radical shift in perspectives? Is there any objective method to judge whether movements like Pure Land Buddhism, or Tantric Buddhism for that matter, are still authentic expressions of the Buddhist way of life? The present study will not try to answer this question. Our main concern is to understand the many factors that contributed to the emergence of the Amitābha Worship, and if possible, to discover the place and time of its appearance.



## THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGIN

The opinions of various scholars who have looked into this problem are greatly divided. The review article by J. Ikemoto in the *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*[1] divides those opinions into three groups. First, several Western scholars assert extraneous religious influences, Persian or Iranian.[2] Others have formulated theories about Hindu influences: either a Vedic origin or a Vaishnavite prototype. Finally, other scholars, mostly buddhologists, interpret the rise of the Amitābha Cult as an inner Buddhist development. These scholars are mostly Japanese, such as Yabuki Keiki and Mochizuki Shimkyō. I feel that the latter's theory, although incomplete, is closest to historical truth. His views have inspired my own theory, which interprets the rise of Pure Land Buddhism in much wider perspectives than any of the above.

According to Ikemoto, the theories suggesting an Iranian origin "lack historical evidence,"[3] but since no analysis is made, one cannot examine the validity of this rebuttal. However, many Western writers have been influenced by these theories.

Many have just taken this assumption for granted or at least as highly probable.[4] For many years Western scholarship has not advanced any significant new interpretations, and Iranian influence seems to be generally accepted as the most likely. Soper's discussion is one of the better modern treatises. He considers the possibility of Christian trinitarian influence upon the formation of the Pure Land Triad, but his conclusions are rather tentative.[5]

Another recent contribution to the controversy, not included in Ikemoto's survey, is M.-T. de Mallmann's monograph on Avalokiteshvara.[6] Taking up the hypothesis formulated by many predecessors, and more recently by one of her own teachers, P. Mus,[7] she has strengthened the old arguments through more scientific research. Her thesis is that the origin of the Amita triad, Amitāyus-Avalokiteshvara-Mahāsthāmaprāpta, can be traced back to Irano-Babylonian Zervanism. On the one hand, Amitāyus-Amitābha would be a Buddhist replica of Zurvān Akarana (Infinite Time) as Amitāyus, and of Iranian light gods (not named by name, but possibly referring to Ahura Mazda) as Amitābha. On the other hand, Avalokiteshvara corresponds to personified Light, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta to personified Power and Wisdom.[8] Without repeating the arguments brought forward, it must be

pointed out that some basic error vitiates the strength of the hypothesis. In fact, the cults of Avalokiteshvara and of Amitābha-Amitāyus may have had separate origins: this is much more probable than a common origin in imitation of a non-Buddhist triad. The main Buddhist text, in which the existence of the Buddhist triad is testified, is the *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching* (hereafter abbreviated as *Kuan-ching*), which is a rather late text (probably fourth century C.E.) and does not justify any assumptions about the beginning of the cult. The older Pure Land scripture, the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra,* does not mention the Bodhisattva's name in the Smaller Version, and the Larger Version mentions the names of the two Bodhisattvas associated with Amitābha, but the information is too vague to allow any conclusion.[9] Besides, the discrepancy among the Chinese translations makes the authenticity of this passage rather doubtful.

The literary evidence available supports the view that the cult of Avalokiteshvara has been only gradually incorporated into or associated with the cult of Amitābha. If this is true, the main thesis of de Mallmann's research might still be acceptable, namely, that the cult of Avalokiteshvara shows dependence on the worship of Iranian deities. If, as seems more probable, the Amitābha Cult originated separately, it becomes a fascinating theory to maintain that these two cults, which were opposed to each other because of great similarity and hence competition, must have clashed at some moment in their development, and were finally harmonized because one defeated the other. Avalokiteshvara became a "Buddha-son," dependent on, or assistant to, Amitābha.[10]

The theories postulating Iranian or Hindu influences, although possibly not totally off the mark, still lack a broad and solid basis: a complex phenomenon such as the Amitābha Cult cannot be explained as the product of just one type of influence. The Japanese theories suffer from a similar kind of weakness. Buddhist influences alone cannot explain the total phenomenon. Most of the materials compiled to prove the case are still valid. If these building blocks are rearranged and integrated, a new and more complete theory can be reconstructed.

After critically reviewing the various arguments brought forward and also after reflecting upon the inner development of Buddhism (its theories and practices) from the early *sangha* to the emergence of Mahāyāna, I propose that the origin and growth of the Amitābha Cult can best be explained as part of a natural



growth within Buddhism itself. Extraneous influences, Iranian or Hindu, may have influenced some details of the cult, but the parallelism so often noticed in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Iranian religions can also be interpreted as a case of simultaneous but independent evolution within different traditions. When time and conditions are ripe, one may see the emergence of similar new developments in several traditions that are not linked geographically.

If one analyzes the essential features of the Amitābha worship from this new angle, one starts to realize that it arose at a time when a fairly large number of conditioning factors had matured. The essential, necessary factors were all present within Buddhism itself, at least in some of the newly developed branches of Buddhism.[11] That does not take away the possibility of some minor extraneous influences. Yet some factors, attributed to outside influence, could equally be explained in reverse order. It may have been Buddhism that inspired the development of devotionalism in Hindu *bhakti*, or the Buddhist trinity could have inspired the Christian model of a trinity. In the absence of definite historical evidence to demonstrate the direction of influences, one should not be too outspoken but rather leave the issue open-ended. To discover parallelism without deciding upon the influences at play is in itself a fascinating study.

How does one identify or isolate the essential conditioning factors that made a movement such as the Amitābha worship possible, or that constitute the essence of the cult? One does it partially through comparison of the differences between primitive Buddhism, as far as we are able to know it, and Mahāyāna Buddhism, and partially through a detailed examination of the basic Pure Land sutras. The joint results of such an exercise are that one can identify five or six essential factors or components that were virtually absent in early Buddhism but gradually emerged within later streams of the Buddhist tradition. Without these factors, Pure Land cannot be explained, and although most of them are possibly observable in other Buddhist schools as separate factors, it is only in the Pure Land stream that all these factors converged to form a totally new movement.

How do we start this exercise? I choose to start with a brief analysis of the sutras, followed by a study of each of the conditioning factors, and will conclude with an attempt to sketch the historical origin of the cult and its early development.

## THE PURE LAND SUTRAS

All Pure Land Buddhists claim three sutras as their basic scriptures:[12] The Longer and Shorter versions of the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* (Longer Sutra and Shorter Sutra, respectively) and a text whose best-known assumed Sanskrit title is *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*. Since only a Chinese text exists (and the existence of a Sanskrit original is highly questionable), it will hereafter be called *Kuan-ching*, although its full Chinese title is *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching*, as mentioned earlier.[13] Since the *Kuan-ching* is definitely of later date than the other two scriptures, it has hardly any significance in the discussion of the origin of the Amitābha Cult; its importance lies in its later development in China. It will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The former two sutras represent the earliest textual formulation of the Pure Land ideology and practice, but are certainly not its starting point. The texts presuppose an already active movement that inspired some devotee(s) gifted with literary talents to compose a book (or books). The spread of these scriptures and their great success must have consolidated the cult and even caused its further propagation and flourishing.

The two *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras* will therefore be our starting point. As can be seen in the study by Fujita, the literary history of these two texts is a very complex problem. Not only have some Sanskrit versions survived, but there are also several Chinese and Tibetan translations. I will not duplicate Fujita's detailed analysis, but I accept some of his conclusions as convincing.[14] The earliest Chinese translation of five still extant translations[15] of the Longer Sutra (seven more are presumed to have been lost) was believed to be the one made by Lokakshema (T. 361) of the Later Han dynasty (between 168 and 188). Zürcher questions and Fujita rejects the authenticity of this claim; the latter attributes this translation to Pai-yen of the Wei dynasty between 248 and 260. This would mean almost one hundred years' difference and could considerably alter the supposed date of the first Sanskrit original. The translation traditionally attributed to Chih-ch'ien (T. 362) of the Wu dynasty is acceptable to Fujita. But once again, this is the middle of the third century: between 222 and 253. A third translation (T. 360), believed to be the work of Sanghavarman of Wei (252 C.E.) is, according to Fujita, to be dated even later: around 421, as the joint work of Buddhabhadra and Pai-yün.



The two extant translations of the Shorter Sutra[16] were introduced to Chinese readers at an even later time: Kumārajīva's translation (T. 366) probably dates from 402; Hsuan-tsang's text (T. 367) dates from around 650. Since the former translation was so excellent, it became and remained the most popular version of this sutra in China. It inspired many commentaries in China, Korea, and Japan.[17] The history of the translation of the Shorter Sutra is rather simple compared to the Longer Sutra, but the relationship between the Chinese versions and the Sanskrit (and possibly other) originals, as well as the mutual relationship between the Sanskrit originals of the Longer and Shorter versions, is extremely complex. Although the Chinese versions are secondary per se, they must have been based on Sanskrit originals older than the extant Sanskrit manuscripts, and therefore could be more reliable and accurate.

Perhaps a definitive solution to all these literary and historical problems will never be found. Therefore, it is more appropriate to employ a different set of criteria, interior literary criticism, and see what results we obtain to settle the question of relative priority of the Longer and Shorter Sutras.[18]

Table 1
The *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras*

*Longer Sutra*

A. Sanskrit original, English translation by Max Müller; *SBE* 49: Part 2

B. Chinese translations (still extant): *Taishō*, vol. 12
- T. 360: Buddhabhadra and Pai-yün (421 C.E.)
- T. 361: Po-yen (248–260) (previously attributed to Lokakshema (168–188?)
- T. 362: Chih-ch'ien (222–253)
- T. 363: Dharmabhadra, Fa-hsien (982–1001)*
- T. 310 (no.5): Bodhiruci (693–713)*

*Shorter Sutra*

A. Sanskrit original, English translation by Max Müller; *SBE* 49: Part 2

B. Chinese translations: *Taishō*, vol. 12
- T. 366: Kumārajīva (402 C.E.)
- T. 367: Hsuan-tsang (650 C.E.)

*T. 363 and T. 310 (no.5) are late translations, which did not influence early T'ang Buddhism.

It is Fujita's view that both versions originated around 100 C.E. But that is not the commonly accepted opinion. Winternitz thinks that the Longer Sutra is without doubt the earlier one,[19] whereas Soper holds the opposite position.[20] What does a comparative analysis of the two texts have to show us?[21]

1. Concerning the audience to which the Buddha preaches: The Shorter Sutra has 1,250 *bhikshus*, of which 16 are named; and many Bodhisattvas, of which five are named; and also Indra, Brahman, and numberless devas. The place of discourse is Shravasti (Section 1), and the dialogue is held between the Buddha and Shariputra (2). In the Longer Sutra the audience consists of 32,000 *bhikshus* (of which 34 are mentioned by name), and many Bodhisattvas, led by Maitreya. The place of the sermon is Rajagriha (1), and the dialogue is held between the Buddha and Ananda (1–39) and between the Buddha and Ajita (40–47).
2. Concerning the vows of Dharmākara: The Shorter Sutra does not relate the "prehistory" of Buddha Amitāyus. The only allusion to time is in (8): ten kalpas have elapsed since his Enlightenment. On the other hand, in the Longer Sutra, great stress is put on the vows of *bhikshu* Dharmākara.[22] His long concentration and achievements are equally emphasized (3–10).
3. The description of the Land of Bliss is rather simple in the Shorter Sutra (3–7), whereas in the Longer Sutra it becomes very elaborate. Most of the elements given in the Shorter Sutra are extended; new details are added (15–24).
4. The presiding Buddha is called Amitāyus in the Shorter Sutra; only once is he called Amitābha: to explain the meaning of this name (9). In the Longer Sutra, the Buddha is usually called Amitābha; sometimes, however, Amitāyus.[23]
5. The conditions for rebirth are an important point of difference. In the Shorter Sutra, rebirth is not a result of good works performed in this life (10),[24] but is the reward for hearing the name of that Buddha and keeping it in mind for one to seven nights (10), or for making a mental prayer for that country (17). The Longer Sutra seems to distinguish between three classes of rebirth: the first class are those who increase their stock of good works (27), and for the other two groups the conditions are rather vaguely expressed (28).
6. In the Shorter Sutra, Amitāyus's country is not unique: there are similar Buddha lands in the other five directions. In the Longer Sutra, Amitābha's land is superior, the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters glorify his name (30), and numberless Bodhisattvas will be reborn there (42).
7. In the Shorter Sutra, there is no reference to the two great Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteshvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. In the Longer Sutra they are mentioned, but they do not have a significant role yet (31, 34).[25] However, the Longer Sutra attaches a much greater importance to the Bodhisattvas in general (26, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 42).
8. Whereas the Shorter Sutra does not have any "buddhophany," in the Longer Sutra a splendorous apparition of Amitābha takes place and is the great climax of the sutra.



From the above enumeration, which is not exhaustive, some conclusions seem to be deducible as to the relative age of the two sutras (but always keeping in mind that a complete analysis should take into account the various Chinese translations). The Shorter Sutra appears to be the earliest in date, since it shows a less developed stage of Amitābha worship. Various reasons can be brought forward. First, the Shorter Sutra is still in a buddhological stage of six Buddhas, whereas for the Longer Sutra, the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters is already a familiar concept.[26] Second, the Shorter Sutra leaves out the (*jātaka*) story of *bhikshu* Dharmākara and his vows (*pranidhānas*). Such an omission can hardly be expected if the *jātaka* had already been created. It is more likely that such an addition in the Longer Sutra points to a later composition. Third, some minor details corroborate the impression of relative lateness of the Longer Sutra: the increased audience; greater emphasis on the Bodhisattvas (in general) and on the two great ones (in particular); and more emphasis on "good works." This last may be a sign that originally the cult was a popular movement that was afterwards "legitimated" by the monastic order but with some revisions. More emphasis is placed on proper

Buddhist practice; a greater stress on meditation[27] may indicate that the sutra is more closely related to the *Pan-chou san-mei ching*,[28] in which a vision of the Buddhas is promised to the meditator. This emphasis on Buddha vision is also evident in the climax of the Longer Sutra: the apparition of Amitābha.

For these various reasons, it seems quite probable that the Shorter Sutra is the earlier of the two sutras. How early is hard to determine: if the terminus ante quem (250 C.E.) is accepted (supposed date of the first Chinese translation), we are still uncertain about the terminus a quo. Most authors either choose or hesitate between the first century B.C.E. and the first to second century C.E.[29] Further historical research is necessary to see whether more accuracy can be obtained.

## THE ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS AND COMPONENTS OF AMITĀBHA WORSHIP

The *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* were the end of a first round in the origin of the Amitābha Cult. Pure Land devotionalism will have a long history yet in Central Asia, China, and Japan. How did this movement arise within Buddhism? What were its conditioning factors, which eventually would also make up the essential characteristics or essential components of Pure Land Buddhism? This has now to be explained in some detail by analyzing the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* and historical literature referring to the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

It appears that the Amitābha Cult is characterized by at least five or six essential components that did not exist in primitive Buddhism but gradually developed after the Buddha's *parinirvāna*. Each of these components was an essential precondition for the rise of the Amitābha Cult. Each developed independently from the others. It is only by their merging together that the new cult took shape. In that sense, it was a unique and probably not repeatable phenomenon in the history of religions.

The components[30] are (1) faith and devotion; (2) a new Buddha concept and the "creation" of Buddha Amitābha; (3) the concept of the Bodhisattva, his vows and transference of merits; (4) the concept of Sukhāvatī, concretization of *Buddha-kshetra*; (5) the practice of invoking the name as an example of mindfulness; also, the desire of seeing the Buddha(s) in this life; and (6) the concept of two Bodhisattvas-attendants or the concept of a Buddhist trinity. This last is perhaps not an essential precondition and is the least



characteristic factor in the early cult because of its relative lateness. Extraneous influences may be responsible for this development, yet there is no clear evidence. It will be left out of our present discussion.

### *Faith*

Faith is an alternative road to emancipation, especially within the context of belief in the corruption of the *dharma*. At first, it seems strange that the factor of faith would be introduced in a religious movement such as Buddhism in its original phase, characterized as it was by a strong rejection of any supernatural or divine help and by an intensive appeal to self-effort. However, it is a historical fact that this happened. What is not so well established is when it occurred: presumably at a relatively early stage in the development of the Buddhist movement.

Faith (*śraddhā*; Pali: *saddhā*) was originally an essential prerequisite for the Path followers. This is shown by the place it occupies in various early lists of spiritual cultivation.[31] At first this term did not mean faith in the sense of the later *bhakti* faith; it was used in the sense of trust in the word and experience of the Buddha and was in fact considered to be a necessary condition to overcome doubt.[32] Through this *śraddhā*, a follower is confident, or has at least tentatively cast aside his hesitation, and is fully prepared to enter the Path to enlightenment.

In an early period after the Buddha's *nirvāna*, faith developed a new meaning. Whereas the Theravādins faithfully kept to the ancient idea of the Buddha as a human teacher, other groups in the community drifted away from this concept and started to idealize Shākyamuni. That this took place within those sectors of the sangha where the lay influence was most decisively at work is not astonishing. The instinctive needs of the common people for a cult object paved the way for a growing *bhakti* movement,[33] of which the end result was the Buddha concept of Mahāyāna. *Śraddhā* became not only trust, but also surrender of the "self," homage and worship. To give expression to this new trend of Buddhist practice, *cetiyas* and *stūpas* were erected and became centers of popular religious practice where circumambulation, offerings, hymn singing, and recitation of the "Three Refuges"[34] took place. The practice was later given canonical sanction, and by the time of Ashoka worship had become a regular aspect of popular Buddhism; it was considered as a means to be reborn in the heavens.[35]

In the period between the Buddha's *nirvāna* and the reign of Ashoka, two trends were growing: among the common people the rise of *bhakti*, with the Buddha (Gautama) as their object; among both monks and more educated laypeople, the development of *śraddhā* with less stress on the strict ascetic rules, which was finally accepted as a simpler and shorter way to the attainment of *nirvāna*.[36]

### *The New Buddha Concept: Buddha Amitāyus-Amitābha*

Although the great push toward *bhakti* seems to have been made in the post-Ashokan period, the evolution had started earlier, with the rise of the first schism within the *sangha*, the Mahāsānghikas.

After this first school became autonomous, it was more likely to develop its own system of thought, its own buddhology. The main argument in this important matter would be as follows: (1) the (already arisen) *bhakti* pushes toward a revision, an amplification of the Buddha concept. The object of the cult is sublimated, not only in the practice of worship, but in the systematic buddhology elaborated by the scholars; (2) the new buddhology in turn gives rise to new forms of cult, of which the concept of Amitābha may be a concrete example. Cult (ritual) and doctrine (myth) influence each other, giving rise to new cult forms and elaboration of new myths. How far foreign examples were required or useful will be discussed along with the main argument.

It is not incidental that both the sublimation of the Buddha figure and the recognition of lay participation in the Buddhist way are found together in the new school, the Mahāsānghika. There is a necessary link between the two. There is also a logical link between the old and the new school in ancient Buddhism:

> In the Pāli Nikāyas, and especially in the Sanskrit Āgamas, one can already notice the tendency to distinguish three bodies in the Buddha: a corruptible body (*pūti-kāya*), born from the chorion, composed of the four elements, subjected to old age and death; spiritual bodies (*manomaya-kāya*) in which he visits the superior worlds, . . . [and] finally and especially a body of Law (*dharma-kāya*), defined by the teaching itself, and venerated above all by the devotees.[37]

These rather unrelated ideas were systematized by the Sarvāstivādins. They attribute three distinct bodies to the Buddha: first a body of retribution (*vipāka-kāya*), also called a material body (*rūpa-kāya*), which is not apparitional but still impure; second, a *dharma-kāya*, a collection of conditioned but pure *dharmas* (*samskrita, anāsrava*) in which the faithful take refuge; and finally, imaginary bodies (*nirmāna-kāya*), which the Buddha produces and multiplies in certain circumstances in the fashion of magicians.[38] These Sarvāstivādin speculations appear to be "a compromise allowing one to reconcile the historical existence of Shākyamuni with the translucent nature with which popular piety invests the Buddha. The Mahāsānghikas and their descendants did not hesitate at all to sacrifice the former to the second, proclaiming the Buddha to be 'transworldly' (*lokottara*)."[39]



As a result of this view, the Buddha's earthly existence, his birth, and all his actions are said to be purely apparitional, pure fiction, because of the Buddha's conformism. He seems to perform the same actions as all human beings, but this is only to conform to the standards of man. In fact, he is transcendent.[40] This 'docetism' was shared by all Mahāsānghika subsects, the Andhaka group, and the northern group (the Uttarāpathaka), as well as the Lokottaravādins.

The various theses held by these (and other Hīnayāna) schools are summed up in three treatises on the sects, written by Vasumitra, Bhavya, and Vinitadeva. Vasumitra is generally identified as the Sarvāstivādin monk who participated in the compilation of the *Mahāvibhasa* during the reign of Kanishka.[41] His treatise has been translated into Chinese by Hsuan-tsang (T. 2031), Kumārajīva (T. 2032),[42] and Paramārtha (T. 2033),[43] and because of the buddhological views attributed to the Mahāsānghika groups, it is important to go into textual detail. The three translations are very similar in their general outline but slightly different in some of the particular views, which shows that they probably go back to slightly different Sanskrit originals. With respect to the doctrines about the Buddhas, the Mahāsānghikas are said to believe the following:

1. According to T. 2031, translated by Hsuan-tsang (662 C.E.), "all the world-honored Buddhas are transcendent. All the Tathāgatas are without impure dharmas . . . The *rūpa-kāyas* of the Tathāgatas are indeed without boundaries. The majesty of their power is equally without boundaries. The length of their life is also without boundaries. Because they are always [immersed] in meditation . . . [44]

2. According to T. 2032 (translated by Kumārajīva (385–413), "the *rūpa-[kāya]* of the Tathāgatas is without boundaries. Their radiance is without measure, the length of their life [equally] without measure."[45]
3. According to T. 2033, translated by Paramārtha (557–569), "the *rūpa-kāya* of the Tathāgatas is without boundaries. The majesty of their power and the strength of their influence is without boundaries. The measure of their life is without boundaries. The mind of the Tathāgatas is continuously [immersed] in contemplation, peaceful, and immovable."[46]

When comparing these three different formulations, one can make several interesting observations. First, the three texts ascribe to the Buddhas various attributes, of which the commonly accepted are that their body (*rūpa-kāya*) is without boundaries, and that their life duration, either *shou-liang* or *shou-ming*, is equally without boundaries. When describing their other related qualities, the texts show some divergence: one text does not refer to "power" but has "light, radiance" instead (T. 2032), whereas the two other texts mention "power" but not "light." This may be due to mistranslation but is more likely due to difference in the Sanskrit sources: "power" (*prabhāva*) and "light" (*prabhāsa* or *prabha*) may have been two variant readings in the original. This brings about a second consideration, namely, the underlying Sanskrit terminology. Lamotte retranslates "life duration" by *ayus*,[47] whereas both Ba-reau and Masuda[48] omit any Sanskrit equivalent. On the other hand, whereas Lamotte does not retranslate "illimités," Ba-reau has *ananta* for "illimité" when referring to the *rūpa-kāya* of the Tathāgatas.[49] The importance of this apparent digression lies in the original doctrines of the Mahāsānghika School and, more concretely, in the exact formulation of these doctrines. As far as is possible to reconstruct or to presume the Sanskrit terminology, it seems certain that this early school of Buddhism expressed some views in its buddhology that may have been either the occasion for the rise of the Amitābha Cult, or had been occasioned by an already existing cult. No matter how the process developed, the links between the two terms in the process are not few.

Taking up again the previously discussed views, and adding some other views from the same and other works,[50] these are the



links between the Mahāsānghika buddhology and the Amitābha Cult:

1. The Buddhas dwell in all the directions (*Kathavatthu*, xxi, 6: Vinitadeva, thesis 27). There are Buddhas in the four directions, in the nadir, the zenith, in the whole universe, . . . everywhere.[51]
2. The longevity of the Buddhas is unlimited, without boundaries.[52] The Chinese terminology used is in one case almost the *same* as the one used for Buddha Amitāyus (*shou-ming wu-liang*) and in other cases very close. Lamotte suggests *ayus* as the Sanskrit original, whereas possibly *amita* expressed the idea of measurelessness.
3. One text (translated by Kumārajīva) has *kuang-ming wu-liang*, the same words as those used for translating Amitābha, only in reverse order. The Sanskrit original was possibly *abha amita*.
4. In Kumārajīva's translation, the two main epithets of Buddha Amita are found together in one verse: *kuang-ming wu-liang, shou-ming wu-liang*: their brightness is without measure, the length of their life is without measure.
5. The Tathāgatas are without impurities: this is a link with the Pure Buddha Lands.
6. Since they have cultivated the way for a long time, they have accumulated inconceivable merits and powers: a link with *bhikshu* Dharmākara.
7. The Buddha's *rūpa-kāya* is limitless. This is explained as being the *sambhoga-kāya*.[53]
8. The Buddhas are eternally immersed in *samādhi*. This may be an early forerunner of the *dhyāni Buddhas*.
9. The power of the Tathāgatas is limitless; the Sanskrit is presumed to be *prabhāva*; the Chinese translators have *wei-li* and *shih-li*. Is there any connection with Mahāsthāmaprāpta?
10. In one Chinese text (T. 2033), Paramārtha's translation, it is said that the Buddhas are continuously absorbed in meditation and that "they are peaceful and immovable,"

*chi-ching pu-tung*.[54] This Chinese expression *pu-tung* (immovable) is the name of another Buddha: Akshobhya.[55] It is possible that both Amitābha and Akshobhya were "born" in the minds of the Mahāsānghikas.[56]

11. The belief in the compassion of the Buddhas is first implied by Vasumitra: "They are never tired of enlightening sentient beings . . ."[57] Explicitly, however, it is formulated by K'ui-chi: "His compassion is limitless . . ."[58] Although compassion is one of the main characteristics of Buddha Amita, it is not clearly enough attested to in the earlier texts to take it into account. The balance is still impressive. As far as the theses of the Mahāsānghika schools can be reconstructed, most of the elements necessary and useful to trigger a popular movement like the Amita Cult were already their property. It is even more justified to accept this view, since neither of the translators seems to have consciously thought of the links between the school and the practice, probably because at that time the link had already been forgotten.

This whole argument of comparing the links between the Mahāsānghika doctrine and the popular Amitābha worship is not a proof of historical fact, but of historical probability. What has been expressed in the form of buddhological theses has no immediate relationship to popular practice. Doctrine is usually aloof from practice, but on the other hand, it is inspired by practice and finds new stimulation in it. Very often new theories and myths are created to rationalize and justify practice. In the particular case of Buddhism, the Mahāsānghika buddhology may be considered a compromise of the monks with the aspirations of the laypeople,[59] as a gradual infiltration of lay ideas into the *sangha*, which in fact was constituted of persons who once were laymen and had already, as such, gone through Buddhist practice. Whereas their minds were trained in the monasteries, much of their emotional (*bhakti*) background remained as it was, and may have given vitality to the development of new ideas.

### *The Bodhisattva, His Vows, and Transference of Merits*

The vows pronounced by *bhikshu* Dharmākara in his early career, and realized when he became the Buddha Amitābha, constitute



one of the basic teachings of the Pure Land School. However, this teaching is not an isolated entity. It is deeply rooted in and connected with the doctrine of Bodhisattvahood, which gradually took shape in Indian Buddhism along with the idealization of Shākyamuni and the growth of *bhakti*.

As a reaction against the ideal of arhatship, the Mahāsānghikas broke away from the Sthaviras and "gradually redefined the ideal type of person whom the follower of the Dharma was bidden to emulate":[60] the Bodhisattva.[61] If it is correct to say that the Bodhisattva doctrine probably originated in the second century B.C.E.,[62] it must be acknowledged that several of the components may have already been active since an earlier time, and especially the basic motive of the program: altruism, compassion.

The Mahāsānghikas again seem to have been instrumental in the formulation of the new ideal. The *Mahāvastu* has some sections about the *bhūmis* that "represent an early stage in the development of the idea."[63]

If we now return to the function of the "vows," they must be understood within the general context of the Bodhisattva aspirations. "A *Bodhisattva*'s career is said to commence with the 'production of the thought of *bodhi*' (*bodhicittotpada*). He thinks of becoming a Buddha for the welfare and liberation of all creatures, makes certain great vows, and his future greatness is predicted by a living Buddha."[64]

The Sanskrit word for "vow," *pranidhāna*, has been variously translated,[65] but "strong wish, aspiration, prayer, or an inflexible determination to carry out one's will"[66] seem to contain the essential meaning. "Vow" and "resolution" are more frequently used,[67] and are said to include "a Bodhisattva's determination to attain Buddhahood, his intention to carry out the altruistic practices of the Pāramitās, and his wish to establish an ideal Buddhaland in order to save other beings."[68]

When comparing these various elements with the vows of Dharmākara, as expressed in the Longer Sutra, one can see that this text offers a perfect example of the Bodhisattva vows. Perhaps it is an unusual example, for the number of *pranidhānas* is rather high: 24 in the Chinese version of Chih-ch'ien, and 48 in Sanghavarman's and Bodhiruci's translations, whereas the Sanskrit text translated by M. Müller has 46. Even if we recognize the number 24 as the most original, it still is high compared to the usual number of vows pronounced by Bodhisattvas.[69]

The vows of Dharmākara cannot be fully understood without consideration of one particular *pāramitā: dāna* (giving, liberality).[70] It is the first of the original six *pāramitās*, and is explained as the perfection of sharing one's possessions with other beings, even to the point of giving away everything one has: "his wealth, his limbs, his life, his 'merit' (*punya*), and also his wife and children."[71] The distribution of material possessions is rather obvious from a Buddhist viewpoint: monastic life can hardly be imagined with substantial bank accounts and large properties. But it seems that giving away something so personal and intimate as one's own spiritual merits cannot be an ancient Buddhist viewpoint. It contradicts the strict law of *karma*. It is much more reasonable to accept that it was one of the "demands" made by the laypeople, who felt themselves incapable of intensive spiritual cultivation but desired to share in the merits of those who performed better. It is, once again, the "logic" of religious development that gave it an important place in later thought, probably starting within the atmosphere of the Mahāsānghika School, where the layinfluence was powerful.

"Transfer of merit" (*parināmanā*) became one of the central elements of the Bodhisattva doctrine. It appears equally heroic to give away all the merits one has accumulated as to postpone one's entrance into *nirvāna* until all sentient beings are brought to emancipation. In the Amitābha Cult, "transfer of merits" is an essential component. All those who rely on this Buddha will be reborn in his Land because of his vast merits.

## *The Concept of Sukhāvatī*

The Land of Happiness, described in both the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras* with ecstatic splendor, may very well be one of the main reasons why the Amitābha Cult, in the end, became the most successful among its competitors. Another important factor was the superiority of Dharmākara's vows.

Although Amitābha's Land appears in many respects to be quite different from the Hindu "heavens," it would be surprising if the authors of the sutras had not undergone any influences in creating their own image of this Buddha Land. The question of literary relationship, not only with other Indian works but with extraneous ideas as well (such as Iranian concepts), is too complex to allow a detailed comparative study. All that can be done is to



point out some affinities and suggest a hypothesis for how the image of *Sukhāvatī* was brought into existence. The points of possible contact are threefold: (1) Hindu cosmology; (2) Buddhist antecedents; (3) non-Indian parallels.

***Hindu Cosmology*** The Buddhists took over many concepts of Hindu cosmological speculation which held that "the universe is very old; its evolution and decline are cyclic, repeated *ad infinitum*; it is immensely large; and there are other universes beyond our own."[72] The earth was considered to be flat, of enormous size, with Mount Meru as its center. Around this huge mountain, there were thought to be four continents, the southern continent being *Jambudvipa*, populated by human beings.[73]

The northern continent is called *Uttarakuru*. In the Sanskrit epics, the *Purānas*, and the classical literature, it is regarded as an earthly paradise[74] where the life span of the blessed is extremely long. Two classical passages describe this land and their inhabitants: *Rāmāyana* iv, 43 and *Mahābhārata* vi, 7.[75] When comparing these two references with the description of *Sukhāvatī*, one sees some striking similarities: rivers full of leaves the color of sapphire and *lapis lazuli*, and lakes filled with lotuses; the land is covered with jewels and precious stones, and trees of gold swarming with birds. (In a Bengal version, it is said that "beautiful maidens hanging down from their branches" grow on the trees.) There is no sorrow whatsoever; one always hears the sound of songs and music, mixed with laughter. These features all appear, in variant ways, in the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*. However, one marked difference is to be observed: although the inhabitants are a race of superior beings, neither divine nor human, "they lead a long life of happiness and sensual pleasures . . ."[76] "all are given to love, all dwelling together with their wives, have their desires fulfilled."[77] This description is in opposition with the Buddhist sutras, which exclude women from Amitābha's Land.

***Buddhist Antecedents*** As Buddhist antecedents of *Sukhāvatī*, one should consider, on the one hand, the "heavens" of Hīnayāna, "for the greater part, adopted and adapted from Brahmanic or Hindu belief,"[78] and, on the other hand, the concept of Pure Buddha fields (*Buddha-kshetra*),[79] which reached its full development in Mahāyāna. For the Hīnayāna schools, the heavens are only temporary abodes; only he can be called "blessed" who enters into

absolute *nirvāna*. The heavens are not rejected altogether, since they are rewards for good actions performed in this life, and more important, "birth in heaven often appears as a progress towards emancipation . . ."[80]

With the growth of buddhology, the multiplication of Buddhas, both in time and in space, appeared. Whereas the Sarvāstivādins held that only one Buddha existed at the same time in the whole universe,[81] other schools, such as the Mahāsānghikas, held the view that many Buddhas existed simultaneously in six directions.[82] Although the technical word *Buddha-kshetra* is not used, it seems implied in the concept of various Buddha worlds. Besides, one of the objects of the Bodhisattva vows is to create an ideal Buddha land. In Mahāyāna terminology, the two opposite Buddha lands are called pure (*parishuddha*) and impure (*aparishuddha*).[83] The impure Buddha lands are the world systems inhabited by beings in all the six states of existence, and the pure Buddha fields are spheres of influence ruled by particular Buddhas. They are "realms which are not natural, but ideal, or transcendent in the sense that they stand outside the 'triple world' of sense-desire, form and formlessness . . . There one sees the radiant body of the Buddha, listens to his preaching, and undergoes further and further purification until Buddhahood is reached by all."[84]

How much is the creation of the concept *Sukhāvatī* dependent on these various Buddhist and non-Buddhist parallels? To start with the end, it is almost tautologous to say that *Sukhāvatī* is a particular exemplification of the "pure Buddha field" idea, but it seems that this concept of *Buddha-kshetra* is presupposed. *Sukhāvatī* could not come into existence without a previous elaboration of *Buddha-kshetra*. In this respect, Amitābha's Land of Purity is essentially a Buddhist creation.

***Non-Indian Parallels*** In the description of its details, however, certain outside influences have very likely been operative. M. Müller suggested a borrowing from Hindu sources, but he probably overestimated this influence when he said that the city of Varuna in the West, called *Mukhyā* (the chief) or *Sukhā* (the happy), is the prototype of *Sukhāvatī*.[85]

Other authors, such as I. Yamada and G. Tucci, have equally been impressed by Indian parallels. Yamada refers to the Kausitaki Upanishad (I, 3, 3–5), where the Brahmaloka is described.[86] Tucci[87] suggests that the paradises known in Buddhism, such as



*Sukhāvatī, Abhirati, Tushita, Trayastrimsha*, and so on, are not peculiar to Buddhism, but are rather a stereotype that is "a common lore of both Buddhists and Hindus. Most probably this stereotype is fundamentally based upon the description of the Uttarakuru, . . ."[88] One element of paradise (the seven walls) is also present in the Hellenistic gnosis, the origin of which should be found in Mesopotamia, but its actual introduction into India is thought to have taken place through an Iranian medium. In his conclusion, Tucci says:

> To come back to the Sukhāvatī it is clear that it does not contain anything new as regards the notion of a paradise and its construction. The Sukhāvatī is the projection into Buddhist soteriology of current ideas concerning paradises, an embellished and amplified repetition of the different divine abodes which Buddhist cosmology placed along the terraces of the Meru up to the very summit of the material existence. They represented successive stages of a progressive bliss and purity, . . . ; they were, so to say, the Buddhist interpretation of a pan-Indian cosmological scheme adapted to the new soteriology. The difference was that the Sukhāvatī (and its derivations . . . ) was a kingdom of perennial bliss. It is not the abode of transient gods, but the realm of a Buddha. It represents a revolution in Buddhism: in so far as the law of karma was ruled out: the grace of God takes the upper hand. This is the only essential novelty represented by the Sukhāvatī.[89]

If Tucci's theory is acceptable, it would mean that it was "probably the consequence of the diaspora of Buddhism towards the North Western regions which, following the events of history, caused a successful contact between India and a foreign cultural world."[90]

Tucci's theory reminds one of a similar suggestion made by C. Eliot:

> The essential features of Amidist doctrine are that there is a paradise of light belonging to a benevolent deity and that the good who invoke his name will be led thither. Both features are found in Zoroastrian writings . . .
>
> Thus all the chief features of Amitābha's paradise are Persian: only his method of instituting it by making a vow is Buddhist. It is true that Indian imagination had conceived numerous paradises, and that the early Buddhist legend tells of the Tushita heaven. But Sukhāvatī is not like these abodes of bliss. It

appears suddenly in the history of Buddhism as something exotic, grafted adroitly on the parent trunk but sometimes overgrowing it.[91]

What conclusion can be drawn from these various speculations? Until a further detailed monograph is written, a tentative theory may be formulated as follows. The *Sukhāvatī* of Amitābha is essentially Buddhist. It is a concrete example of a pure *Buddhakshetra*, which is uniquely of Buddhist origin. It is furthermore created through the vows and merits of a Bodhisattva. It is essentially not a place of enjoyment or of reward for a meritorious life, like the Hindu heavens, but offers an ideal environment for those who want to strive for *nirvāna* but have not the strength to achieve it in this impure world. However, in order to make the idea of a pure Buddha field more attractive for common people, it is not enough to use abstract, philosophical language. The creator of *Sukhāvatī*, therefore, took over elements from various sources, especially from Hindu works, and possibly from Greek and Iranian descriptions as well. It would seem that he wanted to make "his" paradise the most superior of all. The text of the Longer Sutra perhaps alludes to this eclecticism where it says: "That Bhikshu Dharmākara, taking the perfections of all the excellences and good qualities of those Buddha countries, of those eighty-one hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of Buddha country, worshipped with his head the feet of the Bhagavat . . ."[92] In other words, Dharmākara creates his own *Sukhāvatī* after concentrating for a long period of time on all the perfections of other Buddha countries. It may indicate that the author himself selected all the perfections he knew from various descriptions of paradises or heavens, and put them altogether into one new creation. That would explain why various people discover either Hindu or Persian or Greek elements in the *Sukhāvatī*.

### *Invocation of the Name*

In Japan, the oral invocation of Buddha Amida's name (*nembutsu*) reached an extreme development. But the starting point was in India, and, like most of the other components of Pure Land belief, it is linked with other aspects of religious life. Since the present concern is with the origin of the Amitābha Cult, a detailed study on invocation cannot be undertaken. Only those aspects that seem relevant to the present topic will be discussed.



The invocation of the Buddha's name seems to have historical links with the invocation of a god's name in Hinduism. In both cases, they are concrete manifestations of *bhakti* (and therefore it is hard to determine which influenced which). The formula used in Amitābha worship (*Namo-mitābhāya Buddhāya* or *Namo-mitāyushe Buddhāya*)[93] is indeed closely related to Hindu formulas such as *Aum! Namah Shivāya; Aum Namo Nārāyanāya*[94] and is in fact a kind of mantra which is classified as "meaningful."[95] The use of mantras is likely very old,[96] but apart from the dignity attained in Tantrism as vehicles of salvation, ritual or sacred formulas were more or less degraded by the popular success they received because of "the apparent ease with which salvation, or at least merit, could be gained, simply at the cost of repeating *mantras* or *dhāranīs*."[97] Whether this assertion is true or not, it is a fact that repetition of the name of Buddha(s) or Bodhisattvas became a widely accepted popular form of Buddhist devotion. The practice is likely very old, and "probably developed from the formulation of initiation and dedication, the triple refuge: 'I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the dharma; I take refuge in the sangha.'"[98]

Since name invocation was so widely spread, no conclusion can be drawn as to the origin of its use in the Amitābha Cult. It is even uncertain whether this practice was originally a part of the Amitābha worship, since neither the Shorter nor the Longer Sutra has any clear reference to this formula. Their emphasis is on hearing the name of Amitābha[99] and meditating on it or keeping it in mind.[100] The common denominator for all these practices is the concept of *smriti* or *anusmriti*. It is only in the *Kuan-ching* that an explicit mention is made of the name invocation. If any deduction can be made from the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*, it should be that if pronouncing the name of Amitābha is implicitly praised and encouraged, the merit of this practice lies entirely in the mental attitude of the devotee. Only external, mechanical recitation of a formula is of no avail.

To conclude this analysis, it can be repeated with more conviction that the worship of Amitābha must be seen as an essentially internal Buddhist development. It is one of the variables within the new movement called Mahāyāna. Its essential features started to emerge in earlier Buddhist schools, perhaps partially because of external influences, but basically because of the growing input of lay beliefs and practices. Only after these essential fea-

tures had matured in Buddhism could they be joined together to form a new brand of Buddhism, a devotional stream similar to Hindu *bhakti*. In the early cult there was no place yet for a Buddhist trinity, but once the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras* were written, they gave impetus to new developments within the cult. The question naturally arising now is when and where the Amitābha worship sprang into existence.

## SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE RISE OF AMITĀBHA WORSHIP

If the hypothesis of a doctrinal contact between the Mahāsānghikas and the Amitābha worship is valid, a further enquiry about the historical facts concerning the former will be helpful in determining when and where the cult may have originated. Among the various sects of the Mahāsānghika School, the Lokottaravādins came closest to the formulation of doctrines incorporated into the Amitābha Cult.[101] The date of composition of the *Mahāvastu* is hard to determine, but "the nucleus of the work is old, . . . and probably originated as far back as the second century B.C.E."[102] The work is basically Hīnayānistic, but much in it already preludes Mahāyāna, and some passages suggest an active *bhakti* movement:

> The purity of the Buddha is so great that the worship of the Exalted One is sufficient for the attainment of Nirvāna, and that one already acquires endless merit by merely walking round a stupa and worshipping it by means of floral offerings, . . .
>
> . . . from the Buddha's smile, there radiate beams which illuminate the entire Buddha regions (Buddhakshetra).[103]

The Mahāsānghikas[104] are usually connected with the first schism in the Buddhist *sangha* at the occasion of the "council" of Vaishali, a little more than 100 years after the Buddha's *nirvāna*. It seems, however, that the first schism took place after the "council" of Vaishali, about 140 years after the Buddha's *nirvāna*, or around 340 B.C.E.[105] Soon the Mahāsānghikas were subdivided into several subschools, of which the best known is the Lokottaravāda. The date of its origin is toward the end of the second century after the Buddha's *nirvāna*. If we take 480 B.C.E. as the approximate date of the Buddha's death, the Lokottaravāda arose sometime before 280 B.C.E.[106] The reason for the schism seems to have been a disagreement in buddhology suggested by the name Lokottaravāda. Whereas the Mahāsānghikas as a whole spanned a wide geographical area,[107] it appears that the Lokottaravādins had settled in the northwest. "Hsuan-tsang alone informs us about their area of residence. He met several thousands of them living in scores of monasteries at Bāmiyān. It appears therefore, that we owe the giant statues on that site to the Lokottaravādins."[108]



That there was a strong infiltration of Mahāsānghikas into the northwest of India is therefore undeniable. Besides, as Lamotte says, the "docetism" of that school was accepted not only by the Caitikas (in the mountain area of Andhra), but also by the northern Buddhists, known under the vague term *Uttarāpathaka*.[109] These are Buddhists who lived in the Uttarāpatha; they are the fifteenth and sixteenth great regions which in the sixth century B.C.E. did not belong to the Madhyadesha, but formed the "region of the north," or rather of the northwest.[110] They had a turbulent history and often changed masters. For a long stretch of time (559–336 B.C.E.) they were ruled by the Achemenids. Alexander defeated them in 334 and 331, thus conquering Bactria and Sogdia. In 327 he conquered a part of India, but his death in 323 weakened the Greek position. In 317 the northwest was almost independent. A treaty between Seleucos I and Chandragupta returned the northwest to the Indians (305 B.C.E.). A treaty of friendship and matrimony authorized mixed marriages between Hellenes and Indians and safeguarded the social position of the Greco-Macedonians remaining in the reconquered territories.[111] Toward the end of the reign of Euthydemos of Magnesia (205–189 B.C.E.), the Greeks reentered Indian territory. From 182 his son Demetrios was in possession of Kapisha, Gandhāra, and West Punjab (the latter two being already Buddhist areas). Disunity among the Greeks resulted in the formation of two Indo-Greek kingdoms on Indian soil (the areas of southern and central Afghanistan, and northwest India): a western kingdom with King Eucratides from ca. 164 to 90 B.C.E., and an eastern kingdom with King Menander from 167 to 30 B.C.E.[112]

The long domination of northwest India by the Greeks must have had certain cultural effects. E. Lamotte, recognizing the vast problem involved, asserts that nobody denies "the numerous Greek influences on the Indian way of life and thinking."[113] When

it comes to pointing out some concrete instances, he is rather modest. He finds Greek influence exercised on Buddhist prayer, on Buddhist art (image of the Buddha), and on the narrative literature (legends, etc.).[114] Perhaps other examples of Greek influence may be discovered. One instance is the composition of the noncanonical Buddhist text *Questions of Milinda*. According to W. Tarn, there is a reasonable possibility that the book was modeled after a Greek work, the *Letter of Pseudo-Aristeas*.[115] In other fields (such as cosmology and astronomy, the calendar, and even the Sanskrit language) there are also clear indications of Greek influence.[116]

Thus far, almost nothing has been said about the great successors to the Greek dynasties in Bactria and India, namely, the Kushan Empire.[117] There are still many mysteries surrounding the origin and history of the Kushans, but what is known is sufficient to establish their importance for Buddhist history. Probably between the second and first centuries B.C.E., the Kushans conquered Bactria and Sogdiana, and extended their influence as far as the Kabul Valley and Kashmir. Later the kingdom was expanded more to the south and southeast, and its cultural influence reached as far as Benares. During Kanishka's rule, Kushan reached its highest peak of influence. "His rule extended over the Madhyadesha, Ittarāpatha, and Aparānta divisions of ancient India."[118] It is, however, a matter of dispute when Kanishka reigned: various dates are proposed, such as ca. 128–151[119] or 78–101 (or 102) C.E.[120] Kanishka is usually remembered as a great patron of Buddhism,[121] and the Kushan rule as one that favored the dissemination of Buddhism. From here, Buddhism conquered central Asia and traveled further east to China, Korea, and Japan. However, the Kushan rulers did not adopt Buddhism as the official religion. They were tolerant and syncretistic. Various systems of religion coexisted and to some degree must have influenced each other. It is quite reasonable to accept that in a cultural atmosphere where Greek, Indian, Persian, Central Asian, and perhaps even Roman religious ideas coexisted, Buddhism may have undergone some important changes and advanced more speedily in a direction that it had already taken, at least in some of its branches (as in the Mahāsānghikas).

It is not easy to draw a conclusion from all these observations that is mainly from literary and historical evidence. (Iconography



and archaeology have been left out, but should be integrated to complete the research, although it seems that they would not offer much concerning this study, except perhaps negative evidence.) Our conclusion tries to take into account as many aspects as possible and is aimed at giving them a logical and historically correct coherence.

The worship of Amitābha was basically a form of *bhakti* rather than a product of speculative philosophy. Like Mahāyāna Buddhism, it was essentially a lay movement born from the spontaneous needs of the lay community, which asked for its own right of existence because it existed. Philosophers could not outlaw this right, and rather followed the spontaneous movement by providing it with a philosophical justification. Many factors of the cult, some interrelated but others not so closely related, have converged toward its final development. Some elements, such as faith and Buddha worship, appeared early in Buddhist history, very likely before the reign of Ashoka. Once the worship of the Buddha was established, it was rather natural that the object(s) of worship changed. From Shākyamuni, the cult object switched to the various Buddhas in other world systems. One of the earliest of the Buddhas to become the object of a personal cult seems to be Akshobhya, with his *Buddha-kshetra,* Abhirati, in the east.[122] The earlier character of this Buddha appears from the sutra dedicated to him,[123] which is much more linked to Hīnayāna doctrine than either of the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*.

If it is reasonable to make a presumption about the circumstances of time and place with regard to the Amitābha Cult, it seems that the second century B.C.E. and northwest India would be the best choice:[124]

1. Time (second century B.C.E.): The breakaway of the Lokottaravādins took place about 300–280 B.C.E. The Amitābha worship may have arisen shortly afterward either within their sphere of influence or more broadly among the Uttarāpathakas (that is, among the Buddhist communities located in the northwest, who accepted the theses of the Mahāsānghikas). However, since it probably took some time for the cult to spread and gain strength, the sutras were composed later. If the Shorter Sutra would be placed in the first century B.C.E., the Longer Sutra must have been composed toward

the end of the first century B.C.E., or in the first century C.E. The Shorter Sutra is assigned to the first century B.C.E. because of a less developed cult expressed in the text. (The Buddhas are said to be ruling in the six directions, rather than in the ten directions, as in the Longer Sutra; the Jātaka about Dharmā-kara is omitted; no mention is made of his *pranidhānas*, etc. . . . ; no mention is made of assistant Bodhisattvas; and there is more simplicity in the description of Sukhāvatī, and less exclusive emphasis on Amitābha's Buddha land.)

2. Place: Northwest India, and more specifically, the area of Bactria or the Kabul Valley appears to be the most likely area of origin. That some groups of the Mahāsānghikas had settled there is historically certain. Besides, this general area had been influenced by Greek and Iranian ideas, as well as by Hindu and Buddhist speculation. Although a more thorough study of the basic texts is necessary as well as a comparative study of Greek and Iranian religions, as far as a first contact with the Sukhāvatī texts already permits, some Greek and Iranian elements are probably incorporated in them. A negative confirmation is given by the fact that the Amitābha worship did not flourish in India until a later time.

Suppose that in this wide area of present-day Afghanistan or Pakistan some local groups started to worship a newly created Buddha, Amitābha, or elsewhere Amitāyus, just as in a like manner another group chose Buddha Akshobhya as its cult object, the relative successes and spread of each cult finally depended on the skilfullness of those who wrote the basic texts. Although the sutra on Akshobhya appears to be earlier, the competitive group soon produced their Sukhāvatī texts, which proved, in the end, to be more appealing to the majority of believers. The vows of Amita were much more impressive, and the description of his land much more promising. Therefore, it appears that the real success and the great breakthrough of the cult came after the sutras had been written, causing the Akshobhya worship to almost die out. Other cults, such as Maitreya worship and the worship of other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, may have arisen as an imitation of the Amitābha worship.



Worship of Amitābha eventually became one of the most successful religious movements within Buddhism. It became so popular that it was gradually incorporated into other forms of Buddhist devotional practices. The goal of rebirth in Sukhāvatī, originally the *Buddha-kshetra* created by Amitābha as his own sphere of influence, lost its specific ties with the cult and became a generalized goal shared by many other devotional groups within Mahāyāna.[125] In other words, devotees of other Buddhas were also promised rebirth in Sukhāvatī, if they worshiped their own Buddhas faithfully and called their names.

This phenomenon appears in several Buddhist texts, such as the *Samādhi-rāja-sūtras*, which were written in the early centuries of the Common Era. G. Schopen estimates that this process of generalization started soon after the composition of the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*.[126] Yet it is doubtful that the texts supporting his thesis date from such an early period. I would rather believe that it took more time for such a process to develop and become universal; the cult of Amitābha must have already reached a high degree of success, and such movements take time. This reservation, however, does not weaken the essence of Schopen's thesis.

Finally, the question of whether the cult is essentially Buddhist is probably a wrong question. It is Buddhist because it sprouted within the "womb" of Buddhism and, as explained above, its essential characteristics are Buddhist. It is a concretization of buddhological ideas. Besides, what is Buddhism? Is it to be restricted to the exact message of the Buddha? For one thing, what this message originally was is perhaps only a presumption. Buddhism is a movement launched by Shākyamuni, but once launched, it was so successful that it was no longer in his control. It followed its own patterns of development. Like a small seed that becomes a tree, or even a forest, once it starts germinating and growing, Buddhism started developing in various directions from the original message of the Buddha. That it took up and assimilated some extraneous elements is not only possible but natural and even necessary, because, like life itself, it is not isolated but exposed to many influences. Perhaps Buddhism became so vital and widely diffused because it was able to assimilate successfully outside influences along the paths where it traveled.

Of course, the whole argument about the origin of the Amitābha Cult is built on probabilities, but the convergence of so many probable indications toward one central point gives it a

good chance of being historically correct. However, a more critical and in-depth study is required to clarify these various individual components before a final synthesis can be attempted.

Figure 4
From a Japanese manuscript of the *Kuan-ching shu* (Shan-tao's Commentary), dated: 1834

CHAPTER 2

# *The* Kuan Wu-Liang-Shou-Fo Ching *and the Early Development of the Amita Cult*

## THE KUAN WU-LIANG-SHOU-FO CHING

The *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching* (hereafter abbreviated as *Kuan-ching*) is one of the most cherished scriptures of the Pure Land School. The text is very well known in the West through the English translation of J. Takakusu in the *Sacred Books of the East (SBE)* series, in which he adopts *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* as the supposed Sanskrit title.[1] This is a shortening of the title reconstructed by B. Nanjio: *Buddha-bhāshitāmitāyur-buddha-dhyāna(?)-sūtra*.[2] Assuming the correctness of *dhyāna* in the title, many Western and Japanese authors just call it the *Meditation Sutra* or *Kuan-ching*. However, other scholars have adopted an alternative version, *Amitāyur-buddhānusmrti-sūtra*, which would suggest a different English title: *The Visualization Sutra*.

In fact, the whole discussion concerning the original Sanskrit title has lost most of its relevance since recent studies have discovered that the original was most probably not written in Sanskrit. For this reason, it is preferable to use the Chinese title only, even more so because the term *kuan* may open completely new perspectives on the basic intention of the book and may enable us to situate the sutra correctly within the development of Buddhist meditation.

Since the terminology will be thoroughly examined in a later chapter, only a short statement is needed here to point out that the sutra deals with *anusmrti* rather than with *dhyāna*. If the (supposed) original title had included *anusmrti*, then would the Chinese translators not have chosen *nien* instead of *kuan*? Since they obviously did prefer *kuan*, there is serious doubt whether the original title included *dhyāna*. However, this reasoning is not fully

convincing. The term *nien*, usually translated as "commemoration" or "remembrance," was no longer felt suitable to express the new method of visualization-inspection recently developed in particular centers of meditation that gave rise to the *Kuan-ching*. Besides, *smrti* and *anusmrti* have also been translated as *kuan* in reference to special meditation techniques. For example, the "four states of mindfulness" (*szu-nien-ch'u* or *szu-nien-chu*) are individually translated as either *kuan* or *nien*. Among the "ten remembrances," *ānāpāna-smrti* (or *-sati*) is rendered by *nien ju-ch'u hsi* or *shu-hsi kuan*.

Rather than *nien* or *ch'an* (for *dhyāna*), the Chinese translators preferred the term *kuan*, which seemed to them more suitable to convey the specific message of this new meditation technique.[3]

### *Origin of the* Kuan-ching

A unanimous tradition holds that the *Kuan-ching* was translated into Chinese by a monk from the western regions named Kālayashas, between 424 and 442 C.E.[4] At that time, Kālayashas lived in the capital of the southern court of the Liu Sung dynasty in Chien-yeh (present-day Nanking).

Kālayashas' biographer[5] writes that although he was well acquainted with the Abhidharma and the Vinaya, and had a clear understanding of the sutras, Kālayashas specialized in meditation. "When he 'set out on a journey of inspective meditation' it sometimes happened that for seven days he did not rise but stayed continuously raptured in *samādhi*."[6] He propagated Buddhism in various countries. When he arrived at the Sung capital of southern China, he first lived in the Tao-lin monastery at Chung-shan.[7] "A monk, Pao-chih, admired his method of meditation and the Monk Seng-han asked him to translate two scriptures: *Sūtra of 'Inspection' of the Buddha of Infinite Life and Sūtra of 'Inspection' of Yao-wang and Yao-shang*, and he [Monk Seng-han] took the text in dictation."[8] These two sutras were instrumental in disseminating the mysteries of the Pure Land throughout the land of the Sung. Next Kālayashas went to Chiang-ling. In the nineteenth year of *yü-chia* (442 C.E.), he traveled to Szechuan, where he taught meditation (*ch'an*). Later he returned to Chiang-ling, where he died at the age of sixty.[9]

The *Kuan-ching* has allegedly been translated three times. Besides the Kālayashas version, there was one whose translator is



unknown and another attributed to Dharmamitra (356–442 C.E.);[10] but this attribution seems rather unlikely since both translators probably knew each other and would not likely translate the same text. Presently only one translation exists (T. 365) and its transmission is, beyond any doubt, quite reliable.[11] The major historical problem concerning the *Kuan-ching* is that of the place and date (and language) of its original composition. It was traditionally thought that the sutra was written in Sanskrit. However, at the present time opinions are divided between two views: some regard the sutra as a Chinese work, even a forgery;[12] others consider a Central Asian origin more likely.[13]

The criteria used to solve the problem are of different natures. There are external and internal criteria, which together may help us formulate a reasonably solid theory. The external evidence in this case proves to be rather weak, whereas the internal criteria are rather convincing. Among them are two kinds of practical importance: first, a comparison between the *Kuan-ching* and related texts, the so-called *kuan* sutras; second, the critical examination of the *Kuan-ching* text itself.

With regard to external criteria, there is the total lack of any Sanskrit manuscript and the absence of a Tibetan version. This is of course a weak argument if it stands alone. But there is also the fact that the translators of this sutra and of the other *kuan* sutras are all Central Asian monks, apparently belonging to a particular school of meditation promulgated in these texts. Also, as external evidence, there is a Uighur fragment of the *Kuan-ching* discovered by the Ōtani expedition in the neighborhood of Turfan, but the fragment is late and appears to be based on the Chinese version.[14]

To return to a possible Sanskrit origin, it must be taken into account that if the Chinese text of Kālayashas was based on a Sanskrit original, this must have existed and been written around (or before) the beginning of the fifth century. The *Kuan-ching* and the related sutras are all written later. However, there is no indication that such sutras were written in India proper around that time. Kasugai suggests the end of the fourth century in Gandhāra. Nakamura suggests Central Asia.[15] Fujita's view is that the close relationship of the translators with Central Asia can best be explained if the origin of the sutra(s) is located there. Both Kālayashas and Dharmamitra are Central Asians, and the *Maitreya Sūtra* was written around Turfan.

Furthermore, Fujita says, Buddhist art specialists have made a study of the relation between Buddhist art and the *Kuan-ching*. The sutra is a gold mine from an iconographic viewpoint, and surviving Buddhist art also enables us to put a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the sutra. For instance, in Meditation 9, titled "Meditation on the Images," it is said that Amita measures "six hundred thousand *niyutas* of *kotis* of *yojanas* innumerable as are the sands of the River Ganges."[16] It seems that such a description of the Buddha reflects the actual existence of massive Buddha statues, and to speak more concretely, may refer to the colossal stone carvings in Bāmiyān, Afghanistan, of which the approximate date is given as "the relatively late period between 300 and 600."[17] Central Asian statues, carved from stone and of large dimensions, were already made as early as around 400 C.E.,[18] which gives a more accurate *terminus post quem* for the date of the *Kuan-ching*.

There is no decisive evidence to prove that the *Kuan-ching* was actually written in Central Asia, but if India is ruled out, the arguments in favor of Central Asia are stronger than for a Chinese origin. Among the arguments put forward to claim a Chinese origin, there are two main kinds. First of all, there are the similarities between the *Kuan-ching* and the other *kuan* sutras. The literary dependence of the *Kuan-ching* on these other sutras cannot be denied, but the influencing process could have taken place in Central Asia or in China. Therefore, this argument is not convincing.

The second kind of reasoning is based on the presence in the text of Chinese ways of thinking and distinctively Chinese style elements. As will be shown shortly, this merely proves that those parts of the sutra may have been composed by a Chinese author and can thus be considered interpolations. The basic sutra text is not affected by this argument.

Finally, there seems to be another argument against Chinese origination, namely, the long and unanimous tradition that holds Kālayashas responsible for the translation. Even if this attribution proves uncertain, the fact that the text was translated shows that it was not originally written in Chinese.

Some internal criteria have already been mentioned but need further elaboration, especially the inner relationship between the *Kuan-ching* and the other *kuan* sutras. Several texts belonging to this group have been preserved in Chinese, but there is no Sanskrit original for any of them. This group may be considered to represent the final stage in the development of "Buddha vision" or "Buddha inspection," already introduced in the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* and further elaborated in the famous text *Pan-chou san-mei ching*.



A. Soper[19] distinguishes three stages in the development of this method of Buddha-meditation or "visualization," including an elementary stage attested to in a work ascribed to Nāgārjuna (but according to E. Zürcher, certainly not composed by him).[20] In the *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-śāstra*, translated by Kumārajīva as *Ta chih-tu lun* (T. 1509), it is said that "one of the powers achieved through becoming a Bodhisattva" is the ability to see all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, realized in the ecstasy called *pratyutpanna-samādhi*.[21] An intermediate stage is described in the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* (see below), and a third much more advanced stage is represented by the *Kuan-ching*.

This distinction of three stages, aside from its focus on the Amita Cult only, has the weakness of oversimplifying the matter. The first and second stages are not so clearly distinguishable, at least not when the distinction is based on the above-mentioned texts. It is very likely that the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* is older than the *Ta chih-tu lun*, which even perhaps quotes from it, for it mentions a sutra called *Pan-chou sūtra*, which may be an abbreviation of *Pan-chou san-mei ching*.

It seems preferable to tentatively distinguish two main stages in the development of Buddha visualization in meditation. A more detailed analytic comparison of the texts might eventually lead to the establishment of more stages.

### *Stages of Development*

The early stage is characterized by its emphasis on visualizing the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters rather than individual Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. The earliest date for this development corresponds with the period in which the worship of the Ten Buddhas and the belief in their respective *Buddha-ksetras* was already well established. This would mean a time period later than the *Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra*, which shows a less developed buddhology since it still professes belief in the Buddhas of the Six Directions.

Furthermore, there seems to have been another important factor that influenced the development of the whole movement of Buddha visualization. Although early Buddhists took over many

elements of Hindu cosmology, among them the Hindu belief in various heavens, Buddhists could not be attracted any longer by the ideal of rebirth in one of these heavens, not even the highest one, since their ultimate goal was attainment of *nirvāna*. Instead, these heavens were in some way sublimated, inasmuch as they were identified with the various stages of *dhyāna*[22] and could thus be reached in this life. With the elaboration of the theory of *Buddha-kshetras*, it may have been a logical consequence that, in a parallel way, these pure Buddha lands were thought to be reachable through meditation. A vision of these *kshetras,* and even of the respective Buddhas reigning over them, became a highly desirable goal of mental concentration.

Initially perhaps none of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions was preeminent. Several texts show that visualization was directed toward the Ten Buddhas without distinction. In another text ascribed to Nāgārjuna, the *Daśabhūmi-vibhāsā-śāstra*,[23] often quoted to prove that Nāgārjuna was a devotee of Amitābha, there is indeed one reference to the visualization of the Buddhas. It is given in Chapter 9, "On the Easy Practice": "I only wish that the Tathāgatas increasingly bestow on me their compassion, and grant me, in the present life, a vision of themselves before my eyes."[24]

However, the most famous sutra treating this early aspect of Buddha visualization is the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* (*PCS*), of which the reconstructed Sanskrit title is given as *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*,[25] and which E. Zürcher translates as the *samādhi* "during which the Buddhas are made to appear before one's eyes."[26] Elsewhere, he more or less explains this as a "form of mental concentration which enables the devotee to behold all Buddhas 'as if they were standing before his eyes.'"[27]

This was one of the earliest texts translated into Chinese. Two of the four existing translations (of a total of seven) were made by Lokakshema between 168 and 188 C.E.[28] These two versions "pose problems of textual criticism which have not yet been solved."[29] E. Zürcher further reports that Japanese scholars have reached widely divergent conclusions. One view holds that T. 418, the version in sixteen chapters, is the original from which T. 417, the version in eight chapters, was abridged.[30]

The date of the original composition is said to be quite early. Mochizuki suggests the first century B.C.E., since this is the earliest text in which the visualization of the Buddhas is explained.[31] A



special place is given to the vision of Amita, which means either that the author himself was a worshiper of Amita or that he wrote the sutra in a place where the Amita Cult was already practiced. It seems likely that the *PCS* is in fact the earliest document in which the Amita Cult is attested.[32]

On close investigation of the text (especially T. 418), however, it seems possible that the references to Amita have been interpolated. The reason is that the mention of Buddha Amita only, in a context which purports to teach a *samādhi* to visualize all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, seems artificial and out of place.[33] It seems more probable that the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* was composed during the first century C.E.

Whereas the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* was translated into Chinese at a very early date (*ca.* 179 C.E.), the other *kuan* sutras, among which the *Kuan-ching* is one of the most influential, were translated much later, from about the end of the fourth until the middle of the fifth century C.E. It is not easy to give any conclusive results as to the place and date of origin of these sutras.

The existing sutras belonging to the *kuan* group are six in number.[34] The five sutras other than the *Kuan-ching* (T. 365) are arranged below, with explanations, according to their hypothetical dates. T. 409 and T. 643 seem comparatively early. T. 365 (*Kuan-ching*) and T. 1161 are almost certainly among the latest ones. T. 452 and T. 277 are difficult to locate, so it is not unreasonable to relate them to a middle period.

1. *Kuan Hsü-k'ung-tsang P'u-sa ching (KHP)*[35] (Sutra on Visualizing the Bodhisattva Akāsagarbha),[36] T. 409, 13 (Nj. 70). Translated by Dharmamitra between 424 and 442 C.E. (Liu Sung dynasty).

It appears that the sutra is not homogeneous, but is a compilation of various fragments, some with a Hīnayāna tendency and others of a more Mahāyāna character. The interlocutor is Upāli, traditionally considered a compiler of the Vinaya. There is no stress on visualization, more importance being given to a ritual of confession and to *dhāranīs* for healing and forgiveness of "sins." The buddhology of the text is confusing: there are lists of thirty-five Buddhas[37] and of thirty-five Buddhas of the past;[38] of fifty-three Buddhas of the past;[39] of the seven Buddhas and of the six Buddhas of the Six Directions; and later also of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Calling the names of the Buddhas is considered

important. Although Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is named, the Buddha of the West is not Amitābha, but either Tsao-wang shen-t'ung yen-hua Fo (in the list of six)[40] or Ta-pei kuang-ming wang Fo (in the list of ten).[41]

One has the impression that the sutra is not concerned with meditation but rather reflects an atmosphere of magical Buddhism and ritual confession.

2. *Fo shuo kuan-Fo san-mei hai ching (KFSH)*[42] (Sutra on the Sea of Mystic Ecstasy Attained by Visualizing the Buddha),[43] T. 643, 15 (Nj. 430). Translated by Buddhabhadra sometime between 398 and 421 at the southern court of the eastern Chin.

There are reasons to believe that this was one of the earliest *kuan* sutras translated into Chinese and following the Hīnayāna rather than the Mahāyāna tradition. The object of meditation here is Shākyamuni. A great deal of the text is devoted to biographical stories, and "the general effect is not very different from that reached in the latest Hīnayāna narratives."[44] Soper suggests the area around Nāgarahāra as the place of composition. The episode about the Buddha subjugating the evil Nāga king and leaving his own "shadow" in the Nāga cavern betrays the author's special interest in the famous place of Buddhist pilgrimage and carries a resemblance to an Iranian tradition about the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness.[45]

3. *Fo shuo kuan Mi-lo P'u-sa shang-sheng Tu-shuai-t'ien ching (KMST)*[46] (Sutra of Meditation on Maitreya Bodhisattva's Rebirth on High in the Tusita Heaven),[47] T. 452, 14 (Nj. 204). Translated in southern China in 455 by the exiled northern Liang prince of An-yang.

The text was brought from the Central Asian city of Turfan.[48] Although Soper thinks that this sutra is rather late and is based on a variety of sources, it can also be argued that it is one of the earlier sutras of the group. However, the title *kuan* is hardly appropriate because "no technique of visualization is offered."[49] Some similarities with the *Kuan-ching* are striking: the water of eight qualities in the Tusita lakes; the distinction between correct meditation and heterodox meditation; the promise of rebirth in the Tusita heaven if one performs *buddhānusmrti* and calls the name of Maitreya; and the promise of extinction of sins. Although these similarities, strictly speaking, could have been copied from other



*kuan* sutras, it is more likely that the sutra was written before the *Kuan-ching*.

4. *Fo shuo kuan P'u-hsien P'u-sa hsing-fa ching (KPP)*[50] (Sutra on the Practice of Visualizing the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra),[51] T. 277, 9 (Nj. 394). Translated by Dharmamitra between 424 and 442 C.E. (Liu Sung dynasty).

The introduction of the sutra already gives away its Mahāyāna origin. Ananda asks the Buddha, "How will sentient beings after the Buddha's *nirvāna* produce the *bodhi* mind, cultivate the Mahāyāna sutras, [and] practice the right-mindfulness and concentration on the true realms . . . ?"[52] Moreover, several times the text mentions the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The title *kuan* is again not wholly justified. Although the sutra starts off by describing a method of *kuan* practiced in order to visualize the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, the major part is devoted to confession of sins in order to obtain a vision of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Purification of the six sense organs constitutes the basic message.

There are no proofs about the origin of the text, and not much is known about the origin of the cult of Samantabhadra, but Soper suggests Nāgarahāra because of its links with the *KFSH*.[53]

5. *Fo shuo kuan Yao-wang Yao-shang erh P'u-sa ching (KYWS)*[54] (Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on Visualizing the Two Bodhisattvas Bhaisajyarāja and Bhaisajyasamudgata),[55] T. 1161, 20 (Nj. 305). Translated by Kālayashas between 424 and 442 at the southern capital (Liu Sung dynasty).

Nanjio says that this was the second translation; the earlier one was reported lost in the *K'ai-yuan lu*.[56] The relative lateness of this sutra appears evident from its borrowing of ideas from the *Lotus Sūtra* and the Sukhāvatī literature. It also mentions the *KFSH* and demonstrates close links with the *Kuan-ching*.

The conclusions to be drawn from this general review are not too exciting. However, some facts seem to be well established.

First, the general period in which these sutras were composed seems to have been between 300 C.E. (or perhaps somewhat earlier) and 400 C.E. They were all translated into Chinese around the first half of the fifth century. With varied degrees of success, all of these texts purported to teach particular methods of meditation which point to particular centers of origin. However, the *kuan*

method did not arise all of a sudden. Several conditions (for example, the cult of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and Bodhisattvas, and a developed iconography) predetermined its origin. It also seems that the use of *dhāranīs* and the invocation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas through mantras was universally practiced.

Furthermore, one of the aims of meditation had become to achieve a mystical vision of the Buddhas: first, the Buddhas of the Ten Directions in general and later, particular individual Buddhas. For all of these reasons, it would appear that the origin of the *kuan* sutras can be situated around 300 C.E.

Second, there are several useful indicators of the place(s) of origin of the sutras. The area in and around Kashmir seems the most probable choice. It is not pure accident that almost all the translators of the *kuan* sutras are connected with Kashmir. Buddhabhadra[57] studied there; Dharmamitra[58] was born there; and the Prince (or Marquis) of An-yang, while staying in Khotan,[59] studied meditation under *dhyāna* master Buddhasena, who came from Kashmir and was considered one of the most famous *dhyāna* teachers.[60] About Kālayashas, we only know that he was from the western regions, but his specialty having been meditation, it is not presumptuous to believe that he was in some way related to Kashmir.

When analyzing the contents of the various sutras, one concludes beyond doubt that some of them are closer to Hīnayāna (*KFSH*, T. 643) and others are unmistakably Mahāyāna products (*KPP*, T. 277; *KFC*, T. 365) and some are a mixture (*KHP*, T. 409; *KMST*, T. 452; *KYWS*, T. 1161). This seems to add weight to the hypothesis about the area of origin. Kashmir was a stronghold of the Sarvāstivādins,[61] and in many other places of Central Asia, Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna communities lived side by side (for example, Kucha).[62] It would not seem surprising that both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna groups developed this kind of meditation, even in a competitive way, and that various centers chose their own Buddha or Bodhisattva as the particular object of visualization. This method, in fact, has nothing distinctively Mahāyānistic. The sutra which teaches the vision of Shākyamuni could be a further development of *buddhānusmrti*, which was a popular Hīnayāna method of meditation. Similarly, the worship of the Ten Buddhas was not exclusively practiced by Mahāyāna followers. What makes the method more radically Mahāyānistic is the general context in which it moves. That some of the *kuan* sutras



are a mixture of both schools of Buddhism could be explained either through the fact of actual coexistence of both *yānas* in the same areas, resulting in mutual influence and perhaps even in a mixed form of Buddhism, or through resorting to the hypothesis that some of the sutras, originally Hīnayāna in character, were taken over and manipulated by Mahāyāna followers. Both possibilities are acceptable. A more thorough analysis of the texts may bring to light which of the two hypotheses is the correct one.

Coming back to the *Kuan-ching*, a comparison with the other sutras of the group shows that it is the most organized and methodical, even if some interpolations must be recognized. The sutra as a whole suggests that it was built on some preceding texts and that the method of visualization and examination was brought to perfection. Even a superficial comparison of the vocabulary demonstrates its literary dependence on the other *kuan* sutras as well as on the *Pan-chou san-mei ching*. If the latter served as a base for Hui-yuan's Amita worship, the great success of the *Kuan-ching* in China caused the *Pan-chou ching* to gradually lose its place of eminence.

The study of all the texts related to Buddha visualization is very interesting. On the one hand, it may become a source of more information about the development of Central Asian Buddhism. On the other hand, it seems an important link in the development of *dhyāna (ch'an)* in China, not only of Pure Land *buddhānusmrti*, but probably also of the later Chinese school that took the name of Ch'an (Zen in Japan).

### *The Question of Interpolations*

In the above examination of the probable date and place of origin of the *Kuan-ching*, it was mentioned that the sutra has been amplified by interpolations. A detailed study of this problem is very exciting, and will shed new light on the development of the Amita Cult.

As far as is apparent from various studies of the *Kuan-ching*, this question has never been raised by scholars, and obviously no attempt has been made to resolve it. This is not surprising in the case of the Buddhist monks who wrote commentaries on the sutra. They accepted the Buddhist scriptures as they were, with deep respect and great faith. They were apparently neither aware of the question nor interested in it, since each part of the sacred text was

beyond suspicion. It is more surprising in the case of scholars who study the text analytically. However, the solution to this question is very important, since it can illuminate the reasons why various commentators disagreed in some of their interpretations. It can also explain why particular commentators contradicted themselves in various parts of their textual analysis.

In the present study, there is no pretence of completeness, and only the major points of importance will be touched upon. We will try to arrive at some conclusions through a process of gradual exclusion.

*First Step: The (Sixteen) Topics of Meditation* A careful and critical study of the present text of the *Kuan-ching* leads to the conclusion that not all of the sixteen topics are authentic (that is, they do not apparently go back to the first redaction). Reading some passages in the Chinese commentaries strengthens this impression. From the text itself emerges the following fundamental reason: it is evident that the author[63] divided the meditation topics into two separate but parallel sets.[64] The first set is introduced by the appearance of Shākyamuni (in paragraph 4) who enables Queen Vaidehī to see the Sukhāvatī of the West (8). Here the queen says, "O World-Honoured One, people such as I can now see that land by the power of Buddha, but how shall all those beings who are to come after Buddha's Nirvāna . . . see the World of Highest Happiness of the Buddha Amitāyus?"[65]

Thereupon Shākyamuni starts the discourse and explains how one should meditate on the various aspects of Sukhāvatī. This is the first set of topics (Meditations 1–6). After the sixth exercise there is a clear interruption in the discourse, introduced by "Listen carefully, listen carefully. Think over what you have heard"—the same sentence which introduced the first part of the speech.[66] Then there is the climax of the whole sutra, when "Buddha Amitāyus stood in the midst of the sky with Bodhisattvas Mahāsthāma and Avalokiteshvara attending on his right and left respectively."[67] After this "buddhophany," Vaidehī addresses herself again to Shākyamuni: "O Exalted One! I am now able by the power of Buddha to see Buddha Amitāyus together with the two Bodhisattvas. But how shall all the beings of the future meditate on Buddha Amitāyus and the two Bodhisattvas?"[68] Thus far the text offers a perfectly symmetrical parallelism which cannot be explained as accidental and which was consciously intended. Whatever in the



text destroys this original symmetry must be considered a manipulation by a later interpolator. Therefore, since the former set of meditations contained six topics, we can rightly expect six new topics in the latter part of the discourse. However, there are seven, followed by another three—the three levels of rebirth.

If we apply this first (negative)[69] internal criterion to the number of meditations, we have to conclude that the three so-called meditations on the three levels of rebirth are secondary or interpolated. That this first exclusion is valid is supported by several subsidiary considerations. First is the nature of these so-called meditations. From a logical viewpoint, they can hardly be called visualizations. They actually list the various moral conditions for being reborn in the Buddha's paradise, which is essentially different from the former topics. Second, the sutra text states that the Buddha discourses in answer to Vaidehī's questions, which is the usual procedure in Buddhist sutras. The information given in Meditations 14–16 is not really part of his answer. Shan-tao has felt this difficulty. He says that Meditations 1–13 are the answers of the Buddha to the queen's questions but that Meditations 14–16 are a spontaneous explanation.[70] Third, an argument observed in the (Chinese) text itself is that the vocabulary and the use of certain expressions indicate a different authorship.

*Second Step: The Remaining (Thirteen) Topics* After this first exclusion of "Meditations" 14–16, there are thirteen meditations left, which is a rather odd number in Buddhist numerology. It is, however, not impossible that the semifinal redactor of the *Kuan-ching* adopted the scheme of thirteen degrees of *ksānti* as a model of thirteen meditations, since *ksānti* is an important subject throughout the sutra. Still, this similarity does not prove that the original version consisted of thirteen meditations. There are better reasons to presume that ten was the original number. Ten is a holy number in Buddhism, and at one time (comparatively late) it became prevalent in various lists of Buddhist terminology, for example:

a. Ten *bhūmis*: Originally there were seven, but three were added later.[71]
b. Ten *pāramitās*: Originally there were six, but four were added later, and one supplementary.[72]
c. Ten powers (*daśabāla*).

d. Ten (objects of) mindfulness: developed from six to eight, finally to ten.

e. Ten directions, or the Buddhas of the Ten Directions: developed from four to six, finally to ten.

f. Ten objects of meditation: ten *kasinas*, ten kinds of foulness, ten recollections ("mindfulness").

The last group may have inspired the author of the *Kuan-ching* to adopt the number ten for his own scheme of meditation topics, since the text in fact deals with *anusmrti.*

This is all based on assumptions, since no real proof is available. Other alternatives are possible, such as an original number of eight or twelve meditations. As was mentioned above, the first set of topics in the *Kuan-ching* consists of six; if this number is doubled, we arrive at a total of twelve. The other choice, sixteen, also has some arguments in its favor. Since the *Kuan-ching* is doctrinally closely related to the *Pan-chou san-mei ching,* of which two versions exist, one in eight chapters and another in sixteen, it would not seem impossible that it inspired the secondary redactor to double the original number of eight meditations. In this case, however, the presumption is uncertain, since the eight-chapter version might be an abridgement of the sixteen-chapter original work.

When the thirteen remaining meditation topics are considered individually, there are further indications that some are not authentic. First of all, Meditation 13 is suspect. It breaks the symmetry, and, although this argument in itself is not strong enough, in the terminology there appears something unusual. The other meditations are concluded with stereotyped formulas like "Such is the perception of the sun, which is the First Meditation,"[73] and "Such is the perception of the trees, and it is the Fourth Meditation."[74] However, the conclusion of Meditation 13 is "Such is the meditation that forms a joint perception of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, and it is the Thirteenth Meditation."[75] Moreover, the topic presented here is not really a new one, but a repetition of former topics. It would only be acceptable if it were a recapitulation of them. Finally, some of the ideas expressed are not in harmony with the rest of the sutra. For example, the reference to "the ancient prayer" of Amita is the only allusion to Dharmākara's original vows.



Next, when analyzing the contents of Meditation 3, which is called "Perception of the Land," it is hard not to see the patchwork. It appears that some textual disruption has taken place solely to achieve the number of meditations needed. Indeed, no new object of meditation is offered here.

Further, Meditations 10 and 11, with the two Bodhisattvas as respective objects, when carefully compared with the meditation on Buddha Amita, lead to the conclusion that originally there was only one meditation instead of two. The present descriptions of the two Bodhisattvas are so extensive and detailed, and extol the greatness of these Bodhisattvas so much, that their glory exceeds that of Amita himself. The chapter on Amita is rather short (probably augmented with some interpolations, because there are duplications), whereas the chapters on his two attendants are comparatively long. It therefore seems very probable that the original meditation was divided into two at one time when the cult of Avalokiteshvara reached its zenith. Supreme worship of him is already discernible here and hardly agrees with the intention of the original author.

If all of the above assumptions are integrated, the scheme shown in Table 2 appears to be the authentic and original outline of the sutra.[76]

This new division of the sutra topics has the advantage of showing in a more striking manner both the symmetric parallelism of the two groups and the particular method used in this kind of meditation.

The parallelism manifests itself as follows. Meditations 1 and 6 are both introductory: the setting sun directs the mind's attention toward the location of the Land; the throne toward the place where Amita is. Meditations 2 and 7 are parallel inasmuch as both present a first glimpse of the respective realities of the Land and of the Buddha. Meditations 3 and 4 versus 8 and 9 concern the true

Table 2

| *The External Splendors* | *The Internal Splendors* |
|---|---|
| 1. The Setting Sun | 6. The Throne |
| 2. The Land of Amita | 7. The Images of Amita and Bodhisattvas |
| 3. The Trees | 8. The True Body |
| 4. The Lakes | 9. The Two Bodhisattvas |
| 5. General View | 10. General View |

realities of the Land and the Buddha-Bodhisattvas respectively. Finally, Meditations 5 and 10 are both recapitulations, or complete reviews of what was seen in the previous exercises.

The particular method used in this kind of meditation consists of seeing (visualizing and examining) the features of the Land Sukhāvatī and its inhabitants, either through the help of visual aids such as iconographic representations or through mental projection—imagination. Further, the practitioner begins by visualizing the various details of a particular object and gradually arrives at the inspection of its essentials, even to the point of absorption into a state of trance (*samādhi*).

Returning to the dispute about the title of the sutra and reviewing the whole argument in light of the critique just completed, one may conclude that the original sutra probably consisted of ten forms of *anusmrti*, adapted to the needs of Amita worshipers. Later glossarists perhaps first added the three chapters on the grades of rebirth, which then made a further addition of three more meditations necessary just to obtain another meaningful numerical series. However, this later process could have taken place the other way around as well.

The question of interpolations is not yet exhaustively covered through the elimination of the above passages. There seem to be several more passages that may be of later origin. Without detailing the reasons (except to say in general that these passages do not agree with the basic message of the sutra or that they betray its secondary character for reasons of vocabulary, among others), the following passages are likely interpolated: the three "pure actions" necessary for rebirth;[77] the passage after the seventh meditation;[78] the text about the *dharma-dhātu-kāya*;[79] and the passage on the Buddha's mind.[80]

It appears that some of the major interpolations are due to Chinese authorship. Foremost in this respect is the interpolation of the three grades or nine modes of rebirth. The Chinese term used for "modes" is *p'in*, which in ordinary contexts has a variety of meanings: "rank, worth; degree, class, sort; order, rule; attitude, comportment, character, personality; quality."[81] In Chinese history *p'in* has a special meaning in the expression *chiu-p'in*. They are the nine official grades for both civil and military ranks of eminence.[82] This system of nine categories (*chiu-p'in chih-tu*) was instituted during the period of the Three Kingdoms by the Wei dynasty (220–264 C.E.) either by Ts'ao Ts'ao or by his son



Ts'ao P'ei.[83] It was a system of selection of government officials based on the personal abilities of candidates. According to their qualities, they were assigned to one of nine classes.

It seems quite likely that this system of ranking the qualities of individuals, first used for political purposes, was adopted by the Buddhists and applied in the spiritual sphere. The nine modes of rebirth are equally based on personal qualities of the believer.[84] This is in substantiation of the view expressed earlier that this part of the sutra is an interpolation. If the original text was written in Central Asia, this section was inserted by a Chinese.

Another conclusion arrived at through the application of critique is that the *Kuan-ching* reflects a much more developed Pure Land ideology than the two *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* in the following areas, briefly indicated here. The *Kuan-ching* was dependent on the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* since it builds on a previous knowledge of the description of Sukhāvatī and divides the various features into separate units as topics for meditation. The place of the two great Bodhisattvas has become more prominent, and the resulting "triad" perhaps points to Iranian influence,[85] although it seems perfectly possible that Avalokiteshvara already had an earlier and separate cult. The fundamental approach toward Amita and his Buddha land is different from the approach in the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*. The *Kuan-ching* is not a devotional book but a manual of *buddhānusmrti*. Instead of presenting the explicit goal of rebirth in Sukhāvatī as the main message of the discourse, it encourages the practitioner to strive for a more immediate object, the vision of Amita *in this life*: "Those who practice the *samādhi* . . . in accordance with this Sūtra will be able to see, in the present life, Buddha Amitāyus and the two great Bodhisattvas."[86]

## *Conclusion*

The study of the *Kuan-ching* is extremely interesting because it is a document that, under an appearance of simplicity, opens up perspectives of spiritual and mystical experiences. It once occupied a place of eminence among Central Asian and Chinese meditators and still attracts Japanese and Western Buddhists today, although its interpretation in modern times is not always based on the real meaning of the text. Summarizing, it is no exaggeration to say that the *Kuan-ching* is a most interesting document in Buddhist religious literature, for the following reasons:

First, it testifies to the practice of a remarkable method of Buddhist meditation which is unique to Buddhist mysticism and perhaps to mysticism in general. Since the method probably presupposes the development of visual aids such as Buddha images (statues, paintings, mandalas), it has certain similarities to Tantric practices of meditation, and a comparison between the two would be very revealing. More than thirty years ago, Carl Jung, much impressed with this Buddhist meditation text, wrote his impressions about its psychological value.[87] He found striking similarities between this method of *dhyāna* and the methods of psychoanalysis.

Second, the *Kuan-ching* offers a rich field of study with regard to sutra development. On the one hand, it is doctrinally related to several other texts, some of them more general in scope (aiming at a vision of all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters), others emphasizing the vision of a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. On the other hand, the present text of the *Kuan-ching* betrays several layers of composition, and in this respect, again a critical study of the sutra is quite revealing.

In the third place, the text is a representative sample of the study of the history of Buddhist text interpretation, since numerous commentaries on it have been written in both China and Japan.

For these reasons, it is rather surprising that Max Müller hesitated to include the *Kuan-ching* in his collection of the *Sacred Books of the East*. "I was so much disappointed at the contents of the Sūtra, that I hesitated for some time whether I ought to publish it in this volume."[88] However, acquiescing to the wishes of his Japanese Pure Land friends, for whom the sutra is one of the most cherished scriptures, he decided to publish the English translation (by J. Takakusu), with the result that now the sutra is one of the best-known Mahāyāna texts in both East and West.

## EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMITA CULT

### *The Indian "Patriarchs"*

Two aspects of the early Amita Cult will here be developed: first, the relationship of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu to the Pure Land ideology; second, the spread of the Pure Land movement from Central Asia to China, where its early growth up to Tao-ch'o will be briefly discussed.



In contrast with modern people, who believe in novelty and relevance in matters of religion, previous generations of religious authors in the West have very often established their claim of truth on the fact of their being "old," that is, on the apostolicity of their teaching. This principle even became a great stumbling block between the Roman Catholic church and the Anglicans. This need to search for ultimate authority in religious matters is not a uniquely Western phenomenon. Buddhists also have exerted themselves to relate the beliefs of their own school to the founder of the religion, or at least to some great authority besides the Buddha. Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism traces its origin back, via Bodhidharma, to Shākyamuni himself, who is said to have transmitted this particular teaching first to Kashyapa and then to successors, of which Bodhidharma is believed to be the twenty-eighth.[89] The Pure Land adherents have, in a similar way, tried to trace the origin of their own belief back to two famous scholars of Indian Buddhism: Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. In Japan, the *Jōdo Shinshū*, following Shinran, considers these two Indian champions as the first two "patriarchs" of the Pure Land "School."[90] Whether this claim is historically valid has to be briefly examined.

*Nāgārjuna* Many Mahāyāna works of the Mādhyamika School have been attributed to Nāgārjuna.[91] Some of these attributions are rather doubtful but have influenced later Buddhists inasmuch as they were considered to be works of the great philosopher. Among these, two works are selected by Pure Land Buddhists, since they are among the earliest documents testifying to the Amita Cult.

1. The *Daśabhumi-vibhāsā-śāstra*: ch. 9, "On the Easy Practice,"[92] and ch. 5, "Explanation of the Vows."[93]
2. The *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra*: In ch. 50 and 51 there are references to the ability of Bodhisattvas to "see" the Buddhas of the Three Worlds.

The latter text has no explicit value for Amita worshipers, since the *samādhi* is concerned with all the Buddhas without distinction. The most relevant text and the one usually claimed by Pure Land adherents is the former one, especially the chapter on the "easy practice." What does the text say? It is indeed an apology for the "easy practice" (*yi-hsing*), as opposed to the "difficult

practice" (*nan-hsing*). If one follows the latter, it will take a long time before one reaches the stage called *avaivartika*, the stage of nonretrogression:[94]

> The *dharmas* of the Buddhas contain numberless methods. Among the roads of this world, there are hard ones and easy ones. To walk on overland roads is painful; to travel by boat on waterways is delightful. So with the Bodhisattva roads: some require energetic effort [*virya*];[95] some lead easily through the *upāya* of faith toward a fast realization of *avaivartika*.[96]

This "easy method" consists in worshiping the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, upholding them and calling their names.[97] The significance of these stanzas is further explained through an enumeration of the Ten Buddhas.[98] First comes the Buddha of the East: a short description is given of his Buddha world, called *wu-yu* ("without anxiety, sadness"). It is only a rudimentary outline, and it is said that this Buddha land and the achievements reached by believers are the result of the power of this Buddha's original vows: "If a virtuous man or woman hears the name of this Buddha and receives it in faith, then he/she will not fall back from the [stage of] supreme enlightenment."[99] With the nine remaining Buddhas, it is exactly the same. They are all mentioned by name and given a short explanation: the Buddha of the West is called Wu-liang-ming (Infinite Brightness), and his Buddha land is *shan* (virtuous).[100]

Besides these Ten Buddhas, there are many other Buddhas who should be worshiped and invoked. Here, for the first time, we meet Buddha Amita: "If one calls the names of Buddha Amita, etc., and of the great Bodhisattvas, and singlemindedly makes their remembrance [*nien*], one immediately reaches the state of 'nonretrogression.'"[101] The text goes on: "Now they [i.e., the Buddhas] should all be enumerated: 'The Buddha of Infinite Life (Wu-liang-shou-Fo), etc., . . ."[102] The enumeration goes on after Amita, and contains 106 Buddha names. After the list is completed, the conclusion follows:

> These various World-honored Buddhas are presently dwelling in the Pure Worlds of the Ten Directions. One should call their names and keep their remembrance. The original vow of Buddha Amita is the same: "if somebody keeps my remembrance, calls my name, and takes refuge in me, he will immediately enter into [the path of] and certainly attain the supreme enlightenment."[103]



After another hymn follow two new lists of Buddhas, equally to be worshiped: the eight Buddhas (six of the past, plus Shākyamuni and Maitreya)[104] and eleven other Buddhas.[105] At the end of the following stanza, the author prays for a vision of the Buddhas and concludes: "One should always keep remembrance of, honor and worship all the Buddhas of the past, present and future."[106]

After the Buddhas, follow the great Bodhisattvas: 141 are mentioned by name, and their remembrance should also be kept. Kuan-yin and Ta shih-chih (here named Te ta-shih)[107] are almost at the end of the list (132nd and 133rd, respectively).[108] One should pray to them in order to obtain the stage of nonretrogression.[109]

To conclude the discussion concerning Nāgārjuna's relationship to the worship of Amitābha, one can make several points. First, the texts quoted to prove that he was a personal Amita worshiper are certainly not his work. Second, the chapter on the "easy practice" contains interpolations: the mixing up of lists of Buddhas, and so on, shows different authorships; besides, the main objects of worship are the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, among which Amita is designated as Wu-liang-ming Fo. However, he is not preeminent among the Ten. Third, the so-called "easy practice" is not what later Pure Land theorists have claimed it to be. It is an alternative (and easier) method along the arduous Bodhisattva path, leading to the stage of nonretrogression. It is not the simple practice of total reliance on "other-power." Worship of the Buddhas is said to be one of the many requirements of Bodhisattva candidates.

A more acceptable view is that later Pure Land devotees have taken Nāgārjuna's assumed words out of their context and reinterpreted them. Nāgārjuna himself may not have known the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* at all, but worshiped the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, and so on, without being a personal devotee of any of them in particular.

*Vasubandhu* To this eminent scholar of the Yogācāra and Vijñāptimātra School is attributed a short commentary on a *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra*: the presumed Sanskrit title is *Amitāyus-sūtropadeśa* or *Aparamitāyus-sūtra-śāstra*.[110] The text was translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci, 529 C.E. (northern Wei): *Wu-*

*liang-shou ching you-p'o-t'i-she yuan-sheng chieh*: T. 1524 (Nj. 1204) (*Discourse on the Amitāyus-sūtra with Stanzas on the Resolution to Be Born [in Sukhāvatī].*)[111] Once again, it is very hard to determine with certainty which works traditionally attributed to Vasubandhu[112] are really his, and in this particular area, whether the *Pure Land Discourse* is one of his authentic works. However, Chinese Pure Land Buddhists have accepted its authenticity (T'an-luan wrote a commentary on this discourse) and Shinshū followers in Japan, after Shinran, consider him to be the second patriarch of the Pure Land School.[113]

The treatise is divided into two parts, one in verses (*gāthās*) and one in prose. The former consists of twenty-four stanzas in which the author, after a profession of trust in Amita, explains the twenty-nine splendorous adornments of Sukhāvatī: seventeen "external" adornments, and twelve "internal" splendors referring to the Buddha and his Bodhisattvas.[114] The prose section comments on the verses and intends to explain how "to visualize-inspect the world Sukhāvatī, [how] to see Buddha Amita, [how] to resolve to be reborn in that land."[115] Although the Chinese title of Vasubandhu's discourse, as well as the later tradition, suggest that the work was based on the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*, the above quotation shows a much more convincing link with the *kuan* sutra, the *Kuan-ching*, which is easily accounted for by his stay in Kashmir.

To achieve his aim of rebirth in Sukhāvatī and of seeing Amita, the devotee is urged to cultivate five kinds (methods) of *nien*, or *anusmrti* (mindfulness):[116] (1) worship (*li-pai*); (2) praise (*tsan-t'an*); (3) resolution, or rather, wish for rebirth (*tso-yuan*); (4) visualization-inspection or investigation (*kuan-ts'a*); and (5) transfer of merit (*hui-hsiang*).

The first four are for self-benefit and are also called methods for realizing the merits of entering Sukhāvatī,[117] whereas the fifth is for benefiting others,[118] also called the method for realizing the merits of exit (from Sukhāvatī) in order to assume a *nirmāna-kāya*, and teach those who are still subject to *samsāra*.[119] Vasubandhu's conclusion is that "if a Bodhisattva thus performs the actions of the five methods, both for self-benefit and for the benefit of others, he will soon achieve the supreme enlightenment."[120]

This leaves no doubt about the author's fundamental intention. The practice of these five methods is part of the Bodhisattva path, and as such offers no justification to claim Vasubandhu as a patriarch of the Pure Land School. It is only through adaptation



of the teaching of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu (that is, bringing it down to the level of the common people) that it can be said they contributed to the development of Pure Land thought.

There is one more detail in Vasubandhu's stanzas that has to be mentioned, since it occasioned some controversy among the Chinese masters. In his description of the adornments of Sukhāvatī, one reads the rather enigmatic verses:

> Within the realm of good roots of Mahāyāna
> [All are] equal; it lacks the despised names
> Of women and sense-defective persons;
> Those of Hīnayāna are not [re]born there.

According to a footnote in the Chinese version,[121] the original text did not have "realm" (*chieh*), but "man" (*nan*); the text was changed by Chih-yi, who considered it a mistake. All later commentators followed this correction. If the original text had been "man," the two verses seem to have contained some parallelism: on the one hand, in Sukhāvatī only male persons with good Mahāyāna roots are reborn; on the other hand, no females or persons with defective roots, or belonging to the twofold Hīnayāna Way (that is, *śrāvakas* or *pratyekabuddhas*), are reborn there. Although the lack of the Sanskrit text forbids any decisive choice, it seems that *chieh* is preferable, since that is how T'an-luan read the text, and he lived before Chih-yi.[122]

### *From Central Asia to China*

It is generally accepted that Central Asia has exerted a tremendous influence on the later condition of Buddhism in the East Asian countries, not only by the mere fact of propagating the religion, but also by assimilating it and producing a new "branch" of Buddhism. Limiting our research to the area of the Amita Cult, it has already been pointed out that the cult most likely started to flourish in the regions northwest of India proper and was integrated later into the meditation school(s) of Kashmir. Further study is required to define the precise role of Central Asia in this development.[123]

The introduction of Buddhism into China started a new era for Buddhism.[124] The first few centuries of the Common Era were characterized by a steady growth and acculturation in which numberless texts were translated into Chinese so that the "word"

could spread around. During this early period, roughly from the first century C.E. until about the Sui dynasty (581–618), it is hardly justified to speak about "schools" of Buddhism in China, except if one understands the term in the sense of "transplantations" of Indian schools to China, such as the Satyasiddhi, Mādhyamika, Nirvāna, Daśabhūmi, and other schools. It was during the Sui-T'ang era that Chinese Buddhism became full-grown and produced several distinctively Chinese schools of Buddhist thought and practice: T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, Ch'an (Zen), and Ching-t'u (Pure Land; Japanese: Jōdo).

With regard to the Pure Land School in China (the name given in China to the worship of Amita), there are several misconceptions or half-truths which have to be clarified. The first half-truth is that Pure Land Buddhism was a real "school" in China. It would be more correct to call it a movement which, during the Sung (if not before) and afterwards, was integrated into all the other schools, even into Ch'an Buddhism. Another half-truth is the lineage of the patriarchs of Pure Land: in Japan, especially in Shinran's Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land School), three Chinese monks have been selected as Patriarchs: T'an-luan (Donran), Tao-ch'o (Doshaku), and Shan-tao (Zendō). It is beyond doubt that these three contributed much to the spread of the movement throughout China. But there were many others, such as Hui-yuan, Chia-ts'ai, Shao-k'ang, Fa-chao, Tzu-min, and so on. The selection of the three mentioned is a simplification of the facts, but it is probably a human weakness to simplify. In Christianity, believers consider the Twelve Apostles to be the pillars of the Church, whereas in fact there may have been fewer or more. But the number twelve was an ideal number to parallel the twelve tribes of Israel.

When did the Pure Land School in China arise? The question is already answered; there was no real "school." Then, when did the movement start? It started as soon as worshipers of Amita from Central Asia entered China and translated the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*. If these texts were translated, it was either because the translators were interested, or because the early converts asked for it. (Probably the two reasons worked together.) In this way, indirectly, we may assume that the Amita worship already found adherents in China from the middle of the third century C.E. on.[125] Once the sutras were available, it was only natural that the worshipers of Amita would grow in number, but in this early period



there was no proper "school" of Pure Land (not even a proper "movement"), nor was the worship of Buddhas restricted to Amita. In fact, various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas enjoyed popularity, such as Shākyamuni, Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara (usually translated Kuan-yin or Kuan-shih-yin), and others. As inscriptions on Buddhist sculpture during the Six Dynasties (280–589) indicate, it seems that initially Shākyamuni and Maitreya were the favorite objects of worship and devotion, with Amita and Avalokiteshvara following behind.[126] Other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Mañjushri, Samantabhadra) were also gradually emerging. "The typical prayers of the period almost always contain as their crucial clause, a statement of hope for rebirth either in the Western Paradise of Amitāyus or in Maitreya's golden age."[127] The author concludes from this that "the claims and counter-claims of the rival Paradise sects" must have been very confusing.[128] The growing popularity of "paradise" cults seems to have been stimulated by the originally Taoist desire for immortality. T'an-luan's conversion (see below) can be considered to be an exemplification of this trend.[129]

That the Amita Cult gradually "defeated" its rivals appears from Buddhist sculpture of later date: during the T'ang era "Amitābha outnumbered Shākyamuni twelve times and Maitreya ten times. Together with Amitābha, Avalokiteshvara also increased in popularity."[130]

Besides iconographic evidence, there also is literary information about individuals who took refuge in Amita.[131] According to K. Ch'en, the earliest (known!) Pure Land devotees were Ch'üeh Kung-tse (d. 265–274) and his disciple Wei Shih-tu (ca. 290–306) from Lo-yang. Both Ch'en and Soper mention next a monk, Seng-hsien (ca. 320 or later), about whom the earliest deathbed story, in which Amita comes out to welcome, is narrated. Soper mentions similar anecdotes about monk T'an-hung (ca. 455), Nun Fa-sheng (493), and monk Hui-ch'ien (ca. 410). Both Ch'en and Zürcher refer to Chih Tun, or Chih Tao-lin (314–316), as one of the earliest Amita devotees.[132] Although he was a philosopher, the most famous representative of "gentleman-monks," adept in "dark learning" and *ch'ing-t'an*,[133] he took refuge in Amita: "This is the first mention in early literature of this kind of ceremony in which the devotee takes refuge in the saving power of the Buddha Amitābha and before an icon of this Buddha, makes a solemn vow to be reborn in the Western Paradise."[134] Zürcher's interpretation,

however, does not seem to be legitimate. The text he quotes does not show this particular kind of ceremony, but merely states Chih-tun's special refuge in Amita and his vow for rebirth in Sukhāvatī.

In the early fifth century, the Amita Cult is taken up by one of the most fascinating characters of Chinese Buddhism, Hui-yuan.

*Hui-yuan's Buddhānusmrti* Shih Hui-yuan of Lu-shan (Mount Lu) (334–416/417)[135] is often considered the founder of Pure Land Buddhism in China.[136] The reason for this is probably twofold. First, there is an apologetic reason: to increase the prestige of the "school" with the authority of an eminent personality;[137] second, there is incorrect historical information,[138] going back at least as far as the *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* (T. 2035), which ranks Hui-yuan as the founding patriarch of the Pure Land "School."[139]

From Hui-yuan's many-sided activities, only his participation in the Amita Cult will here be analyzed in order to determine his correct relationship to the Chinese Pure Land movement in general. But first, some previous consideration needs attention: around 370, Hui-yuan's master Tao-an (312–385)[140] performed with seven of his disciples a ritual before an image of Maitreya consisting of a vow to be reborn in the Tushita Heaven. Maitreya was the special assistant of scholars and textual commentators, and Tao-an, frustrated in his efforts to comment on the *prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*, put his hope on Maitreya, who would solve all his doubts. Although during the T'ang dynasty the Maitreya Cult had been eclipsed by the Amita worship, Hsuan-tsang was still more attracted by Maitreya, probably for the same reasons as Tao-an.

When in September of 402 Hui-yuan assembled more than one hundred monks and laymen to perform a similar ceremony in front of an Amita image, it may have been under the inspiration of Tao-an's example. He changed the object of worship for various reasons. Hui-yuan's concern was not so much for monks-scholars, but for laypeople who, living the lives of householders, were in need of a simpler and more adapted method of Buddhist practice, including meditation. In this respect Amita was a much better choice. Furthermore, Hui-yuan was in close contact with Kumārajīva, who in the same year had translated the Shorter *Sukhāvatī-sūtra*. This new translation may have influenced Hui-yuan's choice. There is still another reason: Hui-yuan's emphasis in worshiping Amita was more on *anusmrti* than on pure devotionalism, which means that for him and his followers Amita was the object of intense concentration, referred to earlier as visualization-inspection (*kuan*) with the clear expectation to "see" Amita in this life, and not only to be reborn in his land after death.[141] The literary base for this practice was either (most probably) the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* or (less likely) an early, now lost, translation of the *Kuan-ching*. But it seems that Hui-yuan had explained the *Pan-chou ching* in a more liberal way, and thus disagreed with Kumārajīva's views on *yoga* practice, which, like the practice of the Hīnayāna theorists, presupposes the possession of supernatural powers, among which the "divine view" is important for meditation.[142]



The reason for this change was the particular need of laypeople who could not practice this difficult *yoga*. At the same time, Hui-yuan may have found support for his new interpretation in the *Kuan-ching*, wherein Queen Vaidehī is enabled to see Sukhāvatī without the "divine view."

To conclude about Hui-yuan's Amita worship, there is no justification in saying that he founded the Pure Land School in China. His Amita worship was in the traditional line of meditational practice, to be taken up by Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao, but not through traditional lines of transmission. "None of his disciples are credited either with any writings or with the formation of identifiable Pure Land groups. This may have resulted from the exclusivistic, other-worldly nature of Hui-yuan's Pure Land group that did not reach out to the larger society for broader support."[143]

*T'an-luan and Tao-ch'o* Some scholars, such as W. M. McGovern and Mukerjee, have proposed an Indian monk Bodhiruci as the real founding patriarch.[144] More "enlightened" scholars do not speak about a real founder, but either view the movement as consisting of several lines of transmission,[145] or consider T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, and Shan-tao as the decisive propagators of Pure Land belief[146] without calling them founders or even patriarchs. Shinran, however, selected these three as patriarchs of the Chinese Pure Land School, and after him most scholars followed his lead.[147]

Without calling these famous monks "patriarchs" (since no formal line of succession has ever existed), it is historically certain

that they were most influential in the early propagation and popularization of the Amita movement in China.

T'an-luan[148] (476–542)[149] was "converted" to belief in Amita at a rather late period in his life, ca. 530. He had traveled to the south in search of a method to achieve immortality and received the Taoist *Sūtra on Immortals*, after which he returned to the north. In Lo-yang, he met Bodhiruci, who gave him a Buddhist text, whereupon he burnt the Taoist scripture and took refuge in Amita. The book Bodhiruci gave him is traditionally said to be the *Kuan-ching*, but this might be an error. It is probable that Bodhiruci handed T'an-luan a copy of his newly translated *Wang-sheng lun* (Vasubandhu's Discourse on Rebirth in Sukhāvatī).

Once won over to the Amita movement, T'an-luan became actively engaged in spreading his newly discovered method for gaining immortality among the whole of society. "The practice of reciting and meditating on the name of the Buddha Amitābha probably originated with him."[150] T'an-luan also wrote several books on Amita devotionalism. A subcommentary on Vasubandhu's *Wang-sheng lun* is the most important one.[151]

That T'an-luan was "a man of keen mind and rich emotion; of intellect and piety"[152] appears mainly from this commentary. He combines in his teachings both Mādhyamika and Yogācāra thought. He quotes from Nāgārjuna when distinguishing the two paths of salvation, but seems to shift the meaning of the distinction. Nāgārjuna's "hard practice" is identified with "self-power," whereas the "easy practice" is said to correspond with "other-power." In other words, whereas Nāgārjuna has the Bodhisattva path in mind, T'an-luan broadens this viewpoint and makes the "easy path" available for the "common" man. The stage of non-retrogression, which originally was the seventh *bhumi* of a Bodhisattva, is identified with Amita's Pure Land.

This Pure Land becomes attainable through reliance on the vows of Amita, so that faith is the most important factor of T'an-luan's teaching, and faith is expressed by means of the five devotional methods (taken over from Vasubandhu), which are ultimately contained in *nien (smrti* or *anusmrti)*:

> *Nien* encompasses all the five devotional paths; it is a form of worship; it is expressed in the oral action of practice; it provides the reason for perception; it is fulfilled in the desire and action for the salvation of all sentient beings. In other words, all the five devotional paths are manifestations of *nien*; and at the same time, *nien* is the ultimate expression of faith. Faith is the "karmic factor" of rebirth in the Pure Land which surpasses the realms of the three worlds and thus enables a person to attain release, salvation.[153]



Tao-ch'o[154] (562–645), born twenty years after T'an-luan's death, was to become the second leader in the popular movement of Amita worship. One extant work is attributed to him: *An-lo chi (ALC)*, T. 1958, 47, pp. 4–22. He became interested in the cult because one day he read the stone tablet in the temple where T'an-luan had lived.

Tao-ch'o grew up and started his teaching career in an era of political turmoil and unrest. Besides, if calculations about the Buddha's prophesy regarding the "decay of the dharma" were correct, the final period was believed to have set in right during the middle of the sixth century (ca. 550 C.E.).[155] Although this idea did not start all of a sudden (for example, T'an-luan had already made use of it), during Tao-ch'o's lifetime the teaching was given a clearer formulation by a monk Hsin-hsing (540–594), who is said to have founded the Three Stages Sect, San-chieh chiao,[156] to provide methods for coping with this sinful and degenerated age, and to provide new methods of salvation. Eventually, the teaching was suppressed by the government because of its antiauthoritarian character. But although different in method from this radical group, the Pure Land movement and Tao-ch'o in particular seem to have accepted the basic belief in this "latter-day pessimism"[157] and consequently exploited it to advance their own fundamental approach to salvation. In this evil period, the old method for emancipation following the difficult Bodhisattva path was no longer applicable. Only faith in the vow and the power of Amita would enable sinful people to achieve the aim of rebirth in Amita's Pure Land. Tao-ch'o formulated this view in his famous distinction between the "Holy Path" (Sheng-tao) and the "Pure Land Gate" (Ching-t'u men).[158] In this period of the corrupt dharma, when no Buddha is living in the world, it is hard to follow the "Holy Path": "there is only the single gate of the Pure Land, that is wide open [for everybody]."[159]

As will be discussed under Shan-tao's biography (Chapter 3), Tao-ch'o emphasized the oral invocation of Amita's name as the easiest practice for the common people. However, he himself

appears to have practiced concentration (*kuan*) as well. Perhaps one of his greatest merits consists in being the direct teacher of Shan-tao, who would bring the Chinese Pure Land movement to the peak of its development.

Figure 4
Master Shan-tao—Text (left): "True image of Great Master Shan-tao of the Kuang-ming Monastery [in Ch'ang-an]" from a Japanese manuscript of the *Kuan-ching shu* (Shan-tao's Commentary), dated: 1834

CHAPTER 3

# *Biography of an Eminent Monk: Ch'an Master Shan-tao (613–681)*

During the T'ang era (618–907) Buddhism reached its highest point of success in China: some would call it the "apogee" of Buddhism,[1] the period of its greatest brilliance[2] or highest prosperity,[3] whereas others speak about the period of independent growth.[4] It was not only Buddhism that flourished. Chinese culture in general made such great strides that this period is referred to as the "golden age" of Chinese culture.[5] Buddhism certainly made some important contributions to this success. Its influence was felt both in the arts (sculpture, landscape painting, architecture) and in the world of ideas (philosophy and literature). But besides its influence on the cultural aspects of the time, Buddhism pervaded all levels of society. Not only was it sponsored by the aristocracy and officials, but the common people in the cities and in the countryside alike paid homage to the Buddha.[6]

The grip of Buddhism on the populace, although not necessarily showing the religion in its best colors, is a sign that it had been completely assimilated. In the T'ang era Buddhism had become a Chinese phenomenon, and although contacts with the Buddha's land of origin were still maintained, several schools of Chinese Buddhist thought and practice were established.

One of these "schools" (rather called a movement) is the Pure Land movement or Amita cult, the Chinese expression of the earlier Amitābha worship.[7] If it would be right to call it a "school," it would not be an exaggeration to situate its "apogee" in the T'ang period[8] and to ascribe the merits of its success to the "evangelistic" endeavors of Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao.[9] However, as is often the case when generalizations are made, the great impact of

Pure Land thought and practice should not be attributed to those two figures alone. Many other teachers, in and outside the Pure Land movement, were actively engaged in spreading the worship of Amita.[10] In the present condition of studies on Chinese Buddhism, when the lion's share of research is contributed by Japanese scholars who are often biased because of their Pure Land background and affiliation, it is probably very difficult to assess the relative merits of each. Since Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao were selected by Shinran among the Chinese Pure Land patriarchs, it is only natural that their merits are proportionately overestimated. To what degree is hard to say.

The present chapter on Shan-tao's biography and writings, and the following chapters, will at least reveal one point: that he was among the greatest. An examination of the facts of his life and an analysis of his writings are the direct sources to prove this, but some facts indirectly throw light on his great influence. K. Ch'en believes that "the increased popularity of these two main deities of the Pure Land School [Amita and Kuan-shih-yin] was immediately reflected in the sculpture at Lung-men."[11]

As a matter of fact, an examination of the dated inscriptions at the Lung-men grottoes near Lo-yang results in the following statistics:

| | |
|---|---|
| Between 500 and 540: | 43 statues of Shākyamuni |
| | 35 statues of Maitreya |
| | 8 statues of Amitābha (Amita) |
| | 22 statues of Avalokiteshvara (Kuan-yin) |
| Between 650 and 690: | 8 statues of Shākyamuni |
| | 10 statues of Maitreya |
| | 103 statues of Amitābha (Amita) |
| | 44 statues of Avalokiteshvara (Kuan-yin)[12] |

This latter period (of which the years 660–680 were the most productive in sculpture: 66 statues of Amita and 23 of Kuan-yin) almost exactly coincides with Shan-tao's most active years. From another source, it is known that the execution of the most magnificent group of Buddhist sculpture near Loyang, the so-called Vairocana group, was supervised by three persons of whom Shan-tao was the head supervisor.[13] These are indications that Shan-tao's influence in Ch'ang-an and surroundings was so strong that his reputation even reached the imperial court.



If early Chinese Buddhism is characterized as a scholarly religion in which abstract speculation was most important, during the T'ang not only the intellectual needs of believers but the emotional ones as well were satisfied, so that Buddhism was able to win the hearts of a great sector of the population. To study the life and teachings of a man like Shan-tao (and others as well) is highly commendable for this very reason. Most studies in the West concern the intellectual side of Buddhism, and the basically religious aspects are rather neglected. The whole Pure Land movement in its various phases (its preparation in India, its rise in Central Asia, its growth in China, and its later development in Japan) needs specialized research, and several monographs are required to cover the whole development. Shan-tao is an important link in the chain of authors on Amita worship, but several other links, some of which have already been studied, need further investigation to make it clear that Buddhism was first of all a religious movement and only in the second place a producer of philosophy.

Thus far no one has attempted to write a critical and detailed biography of Shan-tao in a Western language. The most one can find about him are short notices on a few important dates of his life, usually lumped together with rudimentary expositions of his basic doctrinal tenets.[14] In other cases, Shan-tao is treated as one of the founding fathers of the Chinese Pure Land School, but only inasmuch as he influenced the Pure Land tradition in Japan.[15] Japanese scholars have devoted more attention to this Buddhist master, and both his biography and his teachings have been studied in great detail. Not all the work done seems, however, to respond to the critical standards of modern scholarship, but mostly repeats what former researchers have written, without raising any doubt about the authenticity of the statements. Therefore many former studies in Japan suffer from a lack of critical evaluation of the sources. The 1250th anniversary of Shan-tao's death (1930–1931) occasioned some serious investigations. Among these and later works, three critical contributions to Shan-tao's biography will be used as reference materials.[16] Four or five Chinese texts, which are usually recognized to be among the oldest relevant documentation concerning Shan-tao, will be used as primary sources for the life

of this eminent monk. These four or five sources are rather short and elementary, but have the advantage of "old age." They originated either during the T'ang or the Sung era. After the Sung period no really new materials were written, but most authors merely copied and repeated what had been said previously, sometimes, as will be argued, repeating the mistakes of their predecessors. As complementary evidence to the written sources, there are several T'ang period stone tablet inscriptions which throw light on some facts of Shan-tao's life. They will also be used to reconstruct an overall image of his biography. Since we are mainly concerned with Shan-tao's teaching, the biographical part will not be exhaustive, but only intends to reconstruct as critically as possible the most important events of his life and to offer an interpretation of these events in light of his teaching with the aim to reach a better understanding of his teaching when placed within the historical context of their author. The first part of this chapter discusses the basic sources; in the second part the various traditions are compared, evaluated, and critically pieced together.

## SOURCES

### *Literary Sources*

Several authors agree that the primary source materials for Shan-tao's life are contained in several stone inscriptions (discussed in next section) and in five Chinese Buddhist compilations:

1. *Hsü kao-seng chuan (HKSC)*
2. *Wang-sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u jui-ying shan-chuan (JYSC)*[17]
3. *Ch'iu sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u nien-Fo ching (NFC)*
4. *(Hsü) ching-t'u wang-sheng chuan (WSC)*
5. *Hsin-hsiu wang-sheng chuan (HWSC)*

In addition to these primary sources, Iwai adds sixteen Chinese and seven Japanese works,[18] dating from Sung to Ch'ing times (China) or from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries (Japan). Among these Chinese secondary sources, two are frequently encountered in historical works on Buddhism and will be quoted occasionally:



1. *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi (FTTC)*, by Chih-p'an of the Sung dynasty (T. 2035, 49)
2. *Lung-shu tseng-kuang ching-t'u wen (LSW)* by Wang Jih-hsiu, also of the Sung period (T. 1970, 47)

Among the Japanese works, there is one compilation which is of great importance because it contains *in toto* one of the Chinese original sources, otherwise lost (see note 35). Each of the original sources will be discussed in detail, mainly to establish the historical value of the information about Shan-tao contained in them.

1. *Hsü Kao-seng chuan (HKSC)*, ch. 27, no. 7 (T. 2060, 50: 684, A 11–19), was mainly written by the T'ang monk Tao-hsuan (596–667).[19]

The collection supplements the earlier work by Hui-chiao (*KSC*). Although the preface states that biographies are included up to the year 645, it is evident from the contents that the work was later supplemented, since the record ends at 665.[20] By that time, Shan-tao, who died in 681, was just over fifty, and, although he had probably started to become famous, he had not yet reached the highest peak of his reputation. That is the possible reason why he did not receive a complete biography, although the author did not leave him out altogether. Within the biography of Hui-t'ung there is a short biographical notice on Shan-tao, which hardly deserves the name "biography." It is extremely incomplete and relates only a few scattered facts of his life. It also jumps from one episode to another of much later date. The most detailed story comes at the end; a disciple asks whether rebirth in Amita's Land is possible if one calls the name of the Buddha. After receiving a positive answer, the disciple goes outside and committs suicide.

It would not be surprising if Tao-hsuan himself did not write Shan-tao's biography. Tao-hsuan was less than a generation older than Shan-tao, so they were in fact contemporaries. Shan-tao's success as a popular master must have come after the death of his own master Tao-ch'o, who died in 645, so that in the eyes of Tao-hsuan, Shan-tao did not yet deserve the honor of being included in a memorial work like *HKSC*. Of course, Tao-hsuan himself could have collected additional information on Shan-tao before 665, since between 645 and say 665 Shan-tao's fame was more widely spread. Besides, information on Shan-tao was readily

available to Tao-hsuan since they were contemporaries and occasionally lived in the same monastery (first on Chung-nan mountain, later in Ch'ang-an). However, considering the fact that Shan-tao's biography in *HKSC* is so fragmentary, it is rather doubtful that Tao-hsuan himself wrote it. One important conclusion can be drawn: since the biographies included in *HKSC* extend from the Liang dynasty to 665, the recording of Shan-tao's biography, however incomplete, was probably very close to the facts. Indeed, it is the earliest record of his life, and for this reason, it is a very precious source of information.

2 *Wang-sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u jui-ying shan-chuan (JYSC)*, no. 12 (T. 2070, 51: 105).

As the preface states, this work was a joint composition by two monks: Wen-shen and his disciple Shao-k'ang. There is no information available about Wen-shen, but the disciple Shao-k'ang is better known. His biography is included in *SKSC* as well as in *HWSC*. He is called a patriarch of the Pure Land School and also referred to as the "Later Shan-tao" (*Hou Shan-tao*). He died in 805.[21]

The time of composition of *JYSC* is unknown, but it must have been about a hundred years later than the *HKSC*. However, according to the preface, it seems that the work was based on another source, and is in fact the summary of a section called *Biographies of Eminent Monks* in *Wang-sheng lun (WSL)*. It is not known who wrote this *WSL*, nor when it was written. One hint is given at the end of *HWSC*. It lists several treatises concerning Pure Land doctrine and biographies, among which we find works by Tripitaka master Tz'u-min,[22] master Tz'u-en, and, moreover, a work called *Wang-sheng lun*, in six chapters, by *dharma* master An-yang, and a work *Wang-sheng ching-t'u chuan* in five chapters by Fei-hsi.[23] Besides these works, none of which has survived, the Tripitaka contains a work *Ching-t'u lun*, in three chapters, written by Chia-ts'ai between 648 and 681.[24] It is impossible to find the exact relationship between *JYSC* and any of these works, but it is most likely that one or another of them has been used as a source of information by the authors of *JYSC*. Since Chia-ts'ai's chapter 3 contains biographies of persons who were reborn in the Pure Land, including the biography of Tao-ch'o, it is not unlikely that a biography of Shan-tao, used by the authors of *JYSC*, was also composed soon after Shan-tao's death. If these



assumptions are correct, it becomes very probable that *JYSC* contains biographical material that is much older than the actual date of composition, and comes close to the date of *HKSC*.

According to a phrase in the conclusion of *JYSC*, this work has been revised and augmented by a monk called Tao-hsien of unknown dates, but certainly from the period of the Five Dynasties (907–960). That he augmented the collection appears from the fact that several biographies of monks (such as Ta-hsing) who lived after Shao-k'ang's death are also included.[25]

Thus it appears that the present text has been edited and augmented several times, but the section on Shan-tao, if it was not a part of the original work, was almost certainly included by Shao-k'ang, who was a great admirer of Shan-tao. To have omitted the master's biography would have seemed unforgivable.

If one compares *HKSC* and *JYSC* with regard to Shan-tao, it is beyond any doubt that we have two completely independent sources. This fact, together with the assumed early origin of the material, indicates the great value of *JYSC*. Because more details are listed, it seems even more valuable than the biography in *HKSC*.

3. *Ch'iu sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u nien-Fo ching (NFC)* (T. 1966, 47: 120–133).

Although it is not strictly a biographical work, *NFC* contains various references to Shan-tao[26] which may throw additional light on his life. At first view there is, however, a major stumbling block. Is this Shan-tao the same as the great T'ang master Shan-tao? Leaving the discussion of arguments pro and con aside for the time being, only the conclusion may here be anticipated; otherwise it would be impossible to talk about *NFC* at all. It seems very probable that the Shan-tào mentioned is the same person as Shan-tǎo, with the result that the biographical details found here are to be incorporated into his general biography.

If this assumption is correct, *NFC* is primarily a source of information on Shan-tao's teaching, but secondarily it provides some very interesting biographical anecdotes which are not found anywhere else. The questions to be solved are who wrote the book and when it was written. The first question will be resumed later: however, from the presumed fact that the Shan-tào mentioned here is the same as Shan-tǎo, it does not follow that Shan-tǎo was the formal coauthor of *NFC*. Arguments against this will also be

given later. The most obvious solution is that the author is a monk called Tao-ching whose dates are not known. It seems certain that he was a disciple of Shan-tao. His name, which means "mirror of Tao," might suggest this. Furthermore, great respect for Shan-tao shows in his work. For instance, in Section 3, the question is asked whether the single practice of *nien-Fo*[27] will certainly lead to rebirth. The answer is affirmative, and evidence is given from four sutras and from an event in Shan-tao's life.[28] This shows that the author invests Shan-tao with (almost) supreme authority.

One detail in the book seems to throw some light on the time of composition of *NFC*. In section 4 it is asked how many people have already been reborn in Amita's Land. The answer goes "Recently in the North, there was Ch'an master [Tao]-ch'o; further, the Vinaya master Shan-tao *ācārya*, from the western capital; *dharma* master Huai-kan,[29] and monk Ta-hsing, monk Fa-hui, etc.; more than a hundred monks, who practiced the *nien-Amita-Fo*, were reborn in his Land of Purity."[30] The word "recently" at first seems to mean that the author stands close to the facts; when one checks on the dates of these various persons, however, it appears that there is a span of more than two hundred years between Tao-ch'o and Ta-hsing,[31] so that the word "recently" should not be understood literally unless an alternative date is accepted.[32]

The conclusion to be drawn is that *NFC* is a composition probably dating from the end of the T'ang era, or the period of the Five Dynasties. It shows that the admiration for Shan-tao, who is always called *ācārya*, was very strong and that traditions about him, different from the written T'ang sources, still circulated among the followers of the Pure Land "School." Other conclusions, especially in regard to a "two-Shan-tao" theory, will be considered later.

4. *(Hsü) Ching-t'u wang-sheng chuan (WSC)* (T. 2071, 51: 119, A–B).

This is a work written in 1064 during the Northern Sung period by Chieh-chu[33] (985–1077). Together with the next work, it is used here as representative of a group of Sung and later biographies of Shan-tao. *WSC* records biographies of monks who were "reborn" at the beginning of the Sung dynasty (ca. 968). *WSC* was written in 1064 and is the first sectarian history of the Pure Land School.[34] Chieh-chu resided in Fukien province, and although this



is not so far away from Chekiang (where Shao-k'ang had lived), it seems that *JYSC* had not yet reached the Fukien area, since *WSC* does not draw at all on this source of information. As far as can be seen from the text itself, the only literary source is *HKSC*. This is beyond doubt, since similarity of expressions is found in several places.

Whether other sources have been used as well cannot be verified, but it appears that at least some oral traditions were assimilated, some referring to Shan-tao's success as a teacher in Ch'ang-an, others referring to his death. It is above all with regard to the latter that the *WSC* makes an astonishing change: whereas the *HKSC* tells the story about the suicide of a disciple of Shan-tao, Chieh-chu narrates and enlarges the same story but applies it to Shan-tao himself, thus starting a new tradition that grew strong roots in later times about Shan-tao's suicide. Modern scholars have rejected this theory. The reasons that the suicide story was changed will be discussed in the next section.

5. *Hsin-hsiu wang-sheng chuan (HWSC)*.[35]

This work is a rewriting of the former one by a lay devotee of the Pure Land, Wang Ku, who enlarged *WSC* by adding more materials to it.[36] When he wrote this enlarged version, in 1084, he also had access to *JYSC*. Wang Ku's own performance consisted in adopting material from both sources and, while embroidering on them, adding several new biographies.

Wang Ku is responsible for the creation of two Shan-tao's. He may have done so because he was not able to reconcile two divergent strata in the tradition. Confusion of the traditions about the name and place of origin, as well as the apocryphal story about his death by suicide and other legends which were being spread about the great master, may have encouraged Wang Ku to solve the dilemma by "splitting up" Shan-tao's personality into two. As a result, he wrote two separate biographies in his *HWSC*.[37] The first one, closely resembling Chieh-chu's *WSC*, is about the famous T'ang master Shan-tǎo of Ch'ang-an, who is said to have ended his life by suicide. The other is about a T'ang master Shan-tào, who is said to have ended his life peacefully at the age of sixty-nine. Iwai says that biography *A* was written in order to conform to the idealized image of Shan-tao prevalent among society of that time. This life is said to be rather legendary and dramatized, and this Shan-tao is considered to be an incarnation of Amita. On the other hand,

he says that biography *B* is more factual and realistic.[38] However, when comparing the two biographies, it becomes evident that both contain elements of legend as well as historic facts, leaving no argument whatsoever to claim a two-Shan-tao view.

This interpretation is to be substantiated with good arguments, and since the results will affect the overall picture of Shan-tao's biography, this is the right moment to prove the point. Various reasons can be put forward which, combined together, make a strong case.

1. A textual comparison of the two stories on Shan-tao in *HWSC* (*A* and *B*) and a further comparison between these and the other texts rule out the probability of two different monks, one called Tǎo and one called Tào. The difference in spelling the name is a minor obstacle.[39] So is the discrepancy about the place of origin.[40] The major aspects of Shan-tao's personality and of his work, described in the various sources, point to one and the same man: his affiliation with Tao-ch'o is recognized in *HKSC*, *JYSC*, *WSC*, and both the versions of *HWSC*; so is Shan-tao's activity of sutra copying (in *HKSC*, *JYSC*, *WSC*, *HWSC*, *A* and *B*) and fresco painting (in *JYSC*, *HWSC*, *A* and *B*); his concern with concentration is very clear in both versions of *HWSC*; furthermore, the identity between the Shan-tao of *HKSC* and *HWSC-B* is clarified by the statement that he went to Chung-nan mountain (in *HWSC-B*) and in *HKSC* he is called *shan-seng*: "mountain monk." This reference means "monk from Mount Chung-nan."[41] On the other hand, the identity between the Shan-tao of *HKSC* and *HWSC-A* is also without doubt, since *HWSC-A* depends on *WSC*, which in turn depends on *HKSC*. Finally, both versions of *HWSC* show literary dependence on *JYSC*: some phrases of *A* are exact copies from *JYSC*, whereas a story about Tao-ch'o questioning Shan-tao about his rebirth is, although worded differently, identical in content in both sources. However, in *JYSC* the story is given in the biography of Tao-ch'o. In other words, since both *HWSC-A* and *B* depend on *JYSC*, it must be admitted that there was only one Shan-tao, unless one reverts to the absurd hypothesis that *JYSC* talks about two Shan-taos.

2. The story about two persons called Shan-tao is of relatively recent date, and was not mentioned until Wang Ku wrote his biographies. The lateness of the story makes it more suspect.



3. If the question is asked why Wang Ku invented the story, it seems possible to make a good hypothesis. He was confronted with apparently contradictory information about Shan-tao. His predecessor Chieh-chu had already made up the story about Shan-tao's suicide, which did apparently not agree very well with the man's personality. The different traditions about the birthplace was another confusing element. Besides, there was the fact of two spellings, Tǎo and Tào, the latter of which frequently appears in *NFC*, attributed to a Tao-ching and a Shan-tào. (The authorship of *NFC* will be discussed in the following chapter.) However, if the latter difficulty was considered a reason for a two-Shan-tao theory, it did not help in the least. If there was a second Shan-tao at all, he should have lived much later than the early T'ang monk, as the discussion of the authorship of *NFC* will prove. In fact, both Shan-taos of Wang Ku are supposed to have lived in the same period, and this doubling of personalities does not solve at all the authorship question of *NFC*. However unjustified Wang Ku's creation of two Shan-taos is, it is undeniable that his example influenced later authors.[42]

Only a one-Shan-tao theory can satisfactorily explain the given source materials. Once this point is demonstrated, we must return to a critical synthesis of the information and reconstruct Shan-tao's biography.

### *Stone Tablet Inscriptions*

It is hard to say whether literary sources, such as the ones already listed, or stone inscriptions are of greater historical value. The literary sources are subject to manipulation, editing, or interpolation; the epigraphs are safe in that respect, but subject to erosion and eventual destruction. In most cases there is only one exemplar of the inscription.

Chinese scholars have fortunately appreciated the high value of inscriptions, and preserved many of them either by making stone rubbings or by copying them into large collections. In modern times, Chen Yuan has collected over a thousand stone inscriptions relating to the history of Taoism.[43]

During the Ch'ing period, Wang Ch'ang collected a great number of stone inscriptions and published them under the title *Chin-shih ts'ui-p'ien* (Select Catalogue of Stone Inscriptions)[44]

(*CSTP*). Several of the texts are of particular importance for Shan-tao's biography in that they refer to him either directly or indirectly through some of his disciples.[45]

1. A tomb inscription commemorating Shan-tao's great disciple Huai-yün. The tablet was erected in 743 by Huai-yün's disciple Szu-chuang. His master had been the abbot of the Shih-chi monastery in Ch'ang-an. Iwai states that this inscription provides important details on Shan-tao's biography, especially the date of his death, which is not found anywhere else.[46]
2. There is an inscription at the Lung-men grottoes, near Loyang, in the niche of the Vairocana group. In 672, Emperor Kao-tsu ordered the sculpture of the famous Buddhist statues and appointed Shan-tao to be the chief supervisor. The work was completed in 675, but the inscription of the memorial stone was only executed in 722. This is the only historical document referring to Shan-tao's involvement in this monumental artwork.[47]
3. There is a stupa (tomb) tablet inscription of master Ching-yeh, abbot of the Hsiang-chi monastery. The preface mentions how Shan-tao's disciples wished to be buried near their beloved master, and provides indirectly important historical information.[48]
4. There is a stupa tablet inscription of master Chin of the great Wen-kuo monastery. Shan-tao used to live in this temple, and the inscription indirectly sheds some light on his biography.[49]

There used to be two additional inscriptions providing information of Shan-tao's life, but only the titles have been preserved. Even so, they are important enough to mention. Both the titles are found in *Pao-k'e ts'ung-pien* (General Catalogue of Precious Inscriptions), compiled by Ch'en Szu (fl. 1258). As I. Seah mentions, "The original source of these inscriptions was given as *Ching-chao chin-shih lu* (A List of Inscriptions from the Capital)."[50]

1. There is a stupa tablet inscription of Ch'an master Shan-tao of the Tz'u-en monastery of the T'ang. The text was written by monk I-ch'eng, the calligraphy by Li Chen-fang in 681.[51]
2. There is a stupa tablet inscription of monk Shan-tao of the Tz'u-en monastery of the T'ang. The text and calligraphy were written by monk Chih-yü in 851.[52]



## SHAN-TAO'S LIFE

If it is true that action is born in the mind, it is equally true that the development of the mind is greatly influenced by external factors. The facts of Shan-tao's life, inasfar as they are accessible to us, will prove to be a major support for a better understanding of his teaching. They will, above all, permit us to follow the gradual development of his ideas and see how they sprouted and grew stronger to culminate into fruitful maturity. In other cases a biographical study could be left out. For instance, to understand the solution of a mathematical problem, or a discovery in the field of nuclear physics, no previous knowledge about the life of the scientist is necessary. But in a case like this, where life and teaching are so strongly interrelated, it would be a mutilation to focus attention on the teaching only. For a similar reason, the gospel writers have narrated the facts of Jesus' life. What he *did* and what he *said* were equally important since his very actions were considered a source of teaching for his followers.

It is not easy, however, to write a biography of Shan-tao. First, the sources are not abundant. Second, it is hardly possible to catch a man's personality in words. Perhaps a painting by a genial artist would be much better than a biography: if one would at least concentrate on it and let the imagination wander, a true vision of the person could be attained. (this is the method which Shan-tao himself recommended to "see" the Buddha.)

Finally, when writing a biography, one usually divides the story into several episodes, coinciding with distinguishable periods in the person's life. This method will be generally followed here, although the division into several episodes must be considered quite relative and perhaps misleading. If it is only considered as an *upāya*, it may have some usefulness. Besides this division into the main episodes, some important activities in Shan-tao's life will also be emphasized and become titles of subdivisions, so that one by one the following sections will appear: his early years;

monastic training; contemplative and ascetic life; teaching career; literary and artistic activities; final years and death. Finally, there will be a short discussion of Shan-tao's personality. As mentioned above, the biography will be mainly based on primary Chinese sources[53] complemented with secondary information whenever advisable.

### *Early Years*

Shan-tao was born toward the end of the Sui dynasty in 613. This date is calculated backward, from the year of his death at the age of sixty-eight in 681. His birthplace has been a matter of disagreement. The *HKSC* does not mention it, and accordingly both the *WSC* and the *HWSC-A* explicitly state that the place of his origin is not known. The *JYSC,* however, mentions that he was from Szu-chou, which is in present-day Anhui province. It is more commonly agreed that Shan-tao was born in Lin-tzu, Shantung, and not in Szu-chou, Anhui.[ÃÃ] The two names were confused because of the similarity in both writing and sound of the Chinese characters *szu* and *tzu*. Once this mistake had occurred, the province of origin was equally—by wrong deduction—mistaken.

Concerning his family background nothing is known except his last name. Although the *HKSC* is again silent and the *WSC* and *HWSC* state that his family name is unknown, once again the *JYSC* says he was named Chu. Apparently nobody has contradicted this, so that it is commonly accepted.

A confirmation, however weak it may be, of both his birthplace and family name is given by Iwai, who says that he has checked the local gazetteers of Lin-tzu and found many people named Chu in that area.[55] Another argument in favor of Shantung is that his first teacher, Ming-sheng, lived in Mi-chou, which also is in Shantung, and even not far from Lin-tzu.[56] Although Chinese monks used to travel frequently from one monastery to another, it seems unlikely that they would enter into religious life far away from their hometown.

### *Monastic Training*

Shan-tao entered into the monastic life when he was young (*JYSC*), perhaps even while he was still a boy (*HWSC-B*). "While a boy he presented himself to *dharma* master Ming-sheng and



entered monastic life."[57] At what age Shan-tao entered the Buddhist *sangha* is a matter of speculation. Some Japanese scholars think that he was only about ten years old,[58] in other words, during the middle years of *wu-te* (618–627). The middle years would mean sometime around 623. At that time the prosperity of the *sangha* was threatened because in 621 a Taoist monk named Fu Yi (554–639) had submitted a memorial to the throne "in which he attacked Buddhism on nationalistic, intellectual and economic grounds."[59] Emperor Kao-tsu did not immediately react to the memorial. Only in 626 did he give his final judgment, which would signify a drastic reduction of the Buddhist (and Taoist) community. The *HKSC* reports that "after this severe decree, monks and nuns cried with sadness, and the people looked at each other and sighed."[60] However, because of T'ai-tsung's coup and accession to the throne in 627, the decree was rescinded and never affected the *sangha*. If Shan-tao entered monastic life around 623, at the age of ten, the political turmoil of the war years had already changed into a more peaceful situation,[61] but at the same time some restlessness may have affected the *sangha*. Very likely it never really caused any serious commotion. Buddhism was to flourish as never before in China, at least for two hundred years until the great persecution of 845 would bring permanent damage to the *sangha*, from which it never fully recovered.

Shan-tao's first teacher is said to be a monk called Ming-sheng.[62] Among the Chinese biographies there is no record of him, but Japanese sources refer to a Chinese monk Ming-sheng, who was a disciple of San-lun master Fa-lang (507–581) and others. Ming-sheng is said to have been Shan-tao's master when the latter was still a child, and would even have conferred ordination on him. To admit Shan-tao's San-lun connections seems rather face losing for Japanese Pure Land Buddhists. To solve this difficulty, a two-Ming-sheng theory has been created: one Ming-sheng was a disciple of Fa-lang, and a different one was Shan-tao's master.[63] Iwai holds that both are the same person,[64] which seems more acceptable, since in the Japanese sources Shan-tao is said to be a follower of the San-lun School, as well as a teacher of the *nien-Fo* School, whereas the same passage says that Ming-sheng was a disciple of Chi-tsang.[65]

A corroboration of Shan-tao's early links with the San-lun School can be seen in the special mentioning of two sutras, which were among the first he studied under Ming-sheng: the *Lotus-*

*sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (*HWSC-B*).[66] Although these are not essentially San-lun texts, it is known they were highly respected and studied by famous San-lun masters such as Chi-tsang,[67] and therefore most likely by Ming-sheng as well, who was a codisciple of Chi-tsang. When Shan-tao later on discovered the Pure Land method toward emancipation, he was very impressed and extremely happy. This may be an indication that his former training was rather intellectualistic and highly philosophical.

Whether he was trained in the Confucian classics is nowhere mentioned. From his later works it appears that he was not familiar with the Confucian tradition as written down in the classics. His emphasis on filial piety can be explained by his early education at home, which was probably imbued with many Confucian (that is, generally Chinese) values.[68] If he entered the *sangha* at the age of ten, there was certainly little opportunity to be trained according to the standard methods acceptable at that time. It seems from his works that he was mainly trained in the Buddhist scriptures. That he had a bright mind is beyond doubt, but his inclination was not so much in the field of speculative philosophy as in mystical experience. It is therefore quite reasonable to believe that Shan-tao must have suffered a great deal in the first few years of his monastic training. As he would later say in his *Commentary on the Kuan-ching:* "Among the 84,000 methods, whether gradual or sudden, everyone chooses the method suitable to himself. All those who follow a proper course[69] will become emancipated. However, since the obstacles for sentient beings are heavy, those who choose enlightenment through understanding [intellectual pursuit] will find it very difficult."[70]

This probably reflects his own experience with the Mādhyamika philosophy. However deep he tried to plunge into the abysses of speculation, he could never reach the end. Confronted with his own powerlessness, he must have looked for an alternative way, and, according to tradition, he discovered by chance the liberating "gate" of the Pure Land. There are in fact two apparently different traditions narrating his "conversion." Both of them might be authentic, but it does not seem likely. The *HKSC* is silent about this episode, and the earliest report is in the *JYSC*:

> At one time he saw an image of the western paradise and with a sigh he said: What is more deserving than to present oneself in front of the lotus-throne and rest one's spirit in the Land of Purity! Thereupon he took all the precepts[71] and together with the Vinaya master Miao-k'ai he studied the *Kuan-ching*. With mixed feelings of happiness and sorrow he exclaimed: how wide of the mark and uncertain of success is the cultivation of all other actions! Only through this method of meditation is it possible to become emancipated from the cycle of *samsāra*![72]



After this, the *JYSC* goes on, he went to visit Tao-ch'o.

The other tradition, which is likely later, says that Shan-tao, after a fruitless effort to find inner peace, committed himself to the Tripitaka and, believing that his hand was guided by some supernatural power, by mere accident found the *Kuan-ching*.[73] Then "with joy he read and practiced the sixteen meditations; constantly and attentively practiced *szu-wei*, with sincerity observing all the details of the western quarter, believing it was some mysterious guidance [which had opened up this path for him]."[74] According to the same source, it was still a long time before he went to see Tao-ch'o.

It is possible that Shan-tao's casual contact with the *Kuan-ching* might have triggered a kind of "conversion" in his outlook. But the first version seems to be closer to the truth, not only because it appears to be an older tradition, but because of its inner meaning: Shan-tao, in his later life, attached a great importance to paradise paintings, and this can be easily explained by the fact that such a painting had occasioned a great stir-up in his own life. He himself had an artistic propensity, and the first time he came face to face with the supernatural splendors of the Amita Land as depicted in a paradise painting, he must have experienced something like a state of rapture. Consequently, in order to learn the method of meditation on the Pure Land, he heard about the *Kuan-ching*, which became for him a manual of daily concentrations.

That Pure Land paintings were already being spread around Shantung at that time becomes clear from the biography of Hui-hai, where it is said that a monk Tao-ch'uan from Ch'i-chou (N.E. Shan-tung, Li-ch'eng district, which is about sixty miles from Shan-tao's birthplace Lin-tzu[75]) brought a painted image of Amita Buddha's land to Chiangtu.[76] Moreover, in the same area, Li-ch'eng district, images of Amita and the two Bodhisattvas are said to have been made in the years 588 and 593,[77] so that it is an obvious conclusion that the Amita worship had already spread in Shantung province before Shan-tao's days.

*Life of Contemplation and Asceticism*

After Shan-tao had discovered the Pure Land Gate and consequently abandoned the San-lun philosophical quest, he seems to have spent considerable time in traveling to see various famous masters. However, about this period, roughly between 633 and 649,[78] the sources are rather confused. It is only possible to make an estimate about his various movements. What is reasonably certain are the following points: his visit to and discipleship under Tao-ch'o, his stay on the Chung-nan mountain, and his strenuous efforts in Amita contemplation and ascetic life.

The *HKSC* says that Shan-tao "wandered throughout the whole country, in search for advice on the Way."[79] Both the *WSC* and *HWSC-A* repeat the same. In the *HWSC-B* more details are provided: after Shan-tao discovered the *Kuan-ching* and practiced the described meditations he heard about

> Hui-yuan's superior example, [and] he greatly rejoiced and thereupon went up to Mount Lu, where he attentively contemplated the example [that Hui-yuan] had left behind. Suddenly his understanding was increased. Afterwards he visited successively famous masters in a lonely endeavor to find the "mysterious gate [or method]," but, since the principles were abstruse and the achievements [of those masters] rather minimal, he did not find any who was truly competent in the [practice of] *pan-chou samādhi*. [It was as if] this method had died out.[80]

If one tries to reconstruct a coherent chronological image of Shan-tao's activities, it appears that after his first awakening to the Pure Land ideal through contact with a Sukhāvatī painting, he found, by mere chance or more likely through a conscious search, a copy of the *Kuan-ching*. He studied this book[81] with Vinaya master Miao-k'ai and practiced the sixteen meditations. However, feeling that his lack of experience prevented him from full absorption, he looked for guidance, and set out on a round-the-country journey. Whether he visited Lu-shan is hard to know. The tradition is late (only attested in *HWSC-B*), and can be satisfactorily explained through Hui-yuan's reputation. Lu-shan, where Hui-yuan had long ago practiced Amita contemplation, may have become a model and ideal for later Pure Land followers, especially for those who like Hui-yuan were more interested in the contemplative aspect of the Amita worship. Some Japanese scholars therefore reject the theory of Shan-tao's pilgrimage to Mount Lu.[82]



A firmer base for historical evidence consists in the records about Shan-tao's discipleship of Tao-ch'o. Although here also some records are overgrown with legend, the bare fact that he went to study under Tao-ch'o is beyond dispute.[83]

Tao-ch'o lived at that time in the Hsuan-chung monastery at Hsi-ho, in Shansi province (formerly Chin-yang). Two questions arise at this point: why did Shan-tao visit Tao-ch'o, and how can their relationship be defined? The first question is not easy to answer, although some probability can be attained. According to a secondary work, quoted by A. Bloom, Shan-tao was twenty-nine years old when he met Tao-ch'o in 641.[84] Tao-ch'o was then already eighty, and had only three years to live. This assumption seems to be based on the *WSC*, which says that Shan-tao went to Hsi-ho in the middle years of *chen-kuan*, which is somewhere between 627 and 650. However, this indication is too vague to draw any conclusions. Equally uncertain is the report in *HWSC-B* which states that Shan-tao heard of Tao-ch'o's reputation during his stay on the Chung-nan mountain. It seems more likely that Shan-tao went there after he left Tao-ch'o. If we also take into account the fact mentioned in the *JYSC* that Shan-tao met master Tao-ying[85] during his stay with Tao-ch'o, we have at least a terminus ante quem. Since Tao-ying died in 636,[86] the meeting must have occurred before 636. As a terminus post quem, monk Ryōchū points out that it must have been after the seventh year of *chen-kuan* (634)[87] but before the nineteenth (645), since in that year Tao-ch'o died. Considering these two termini together, we almost have an accurate dating: between 634 and 636, when Shan-tao was between twenty-one and twenty-three years old, whereas Tao-ch'o had reached the age of seventy-one to seventy-three.

The second and more basic question is about Shan-tao's exact relationship with Tao-ch'o. The sources are confusing, mixing historical facts with legend, and it is not always easy to separate one from the other. Tao-ch'o was a devout Pure Land practitioner, emphasizing the recitation of Amita's name and counting the number of recitations with the help of beans. But at the same time he was a meditator: he is usually called Ch'an master, and one text says that in the Hsuan-chung monastery he lectured on the *Kuan-ching* two hundred times.[88] The *HWSC-A* just says that he lectured on the *Kuan-ching*, whereas in the *HWSC-B* there is a discordant note, saying that he lectured on the Longer *Sukhāvatī-sūtra*. This, however, does not seem to be accurate. Shan-tao went

to visit Tao-ch'o and became his disciple because of Tao-ch'o's understanding of the *Kuan-ching*. Several stories with regard to the relationship between Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao are given in the sources. The *HWSC* is silent.

1. According to the *JYSC*, Shan-tao arrived at Tao-ch'o's residence and asked whether attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land is certain if one practices *nien-Fo*. The answer Tao-ch'o gives is not totally clear but involves a kind of divination. Each of us, he said, will take a lotus flower and perform religious rituals for a whole week; if in the meantime the lotus has not withered, rebirth is attainable.[89] The report in the *WSC* is more modest as far as supernatural signs are concerned. When Shan-tao arrived at Hsi-ho, he practiced a ritual of confession called *fang-teng ch'an*[90] and another ritual called "the nine degrees of the Pure Land" (*ching-t'u chiu-p'in tao-ch'ang*).[91] He was greatly delighted and said: "I have now discovered the true entrance to the Buddha-Path."[92] Then with great diligence he suffered hardships, as if his life was in danger.

Biography A in the *HWSC* adds more information, apparently in relation to this period. "When Shan-tao entered the sanctuary, he folded his hands, knelt down, and singlemindedly practiced *nien-Fo*. Unless having exerted his efforts to the utmost he did not stop. Even during the cold season transpiration broke out. In his external demeanor he gave an example of extreme sincerity."[93] The traditions seem to agree that Shan-tao in his twenties already led a life of extreme austerity and deep concentration. This agrees with what is known about his later life. Such a reputation as a "model student" may have even impressed the master. That is the only explanation of the other story related to this period of Shan-tao's life.

2. Both the *JYSC* and *HWSC-B* report an event that seems at first view rather legendary because it runs counter to the great respect for teachers that we would expect among Chinese. It is very possible that the *HWSC-B* derived this information from the *JYSC*, although it is rather strange that there is almost no literary similarity. However, since the *JYSC* mentions the story and in fact includes it in Tao-ch'o's biography, not in Shan-tao's, this may be an indication that the tradition is rather old. The story goes that toward the end of his life, Tao-ch'o was very afraid that he might



not obtain rebirth in Amita's Land. To relieve his anxiety he asked Shan-tao to question the Buddha about this matter. Shan-tao in *samādhi* had a vision of a large Buddha image, and referred the question to the Buddha. The instruction to be communicated to Tao-ch'o was that he should confess three offenses before he would be eligible for rebirth: first, he should confess in front of all the Buddhas his little respect for the images and sutras in the temple, whereas he himself lived safely inside his apartments; second, he should confess in front of the whole *sangha* that he abused his authority by making religious personnel perform various worldly tasks; third, he should confess in front of all sentient beings the injury he had caused to living beings through his construction works.[94]

Tao-ch'o must have accepted this verdict, for on the day of his death auspicious signs were observed by the people, and three rays of light illuminated his room. The *HWSC-B* is more explicit: Tao-ch'o publicly recognized his past offenses, purified his mind, and made the confessions, after which Shan-tao said that the master was ready for rebirth.[95]

Some Japanese authors have rejected the authenticity of this story as being too improbable.[96] But it can be argued that just this kind of improbability is an argument in favor of its authenticity. Such stories are not likely to be completely invented, and it agrees with the character of Shan-tao, who, judging from his writings as well as from his biographies, strikes us as a man of integrity and great sincerity. Besides, his renown as a practitioner of *samādhi* must have increased his authority, even at this early age.

A final episode in Shan-tao's formative years is his stay at the Wu-chen monastery, which was located in Shensi province, on the Chung-nan mountain. It is not clear from the sources whether he went there before going to see Tao-ch'o or afterwards. It seems more probable that he went there after he stayed with Tao-ch'o. There are no convincing proofs, only indications. First, the author of the *HWSC*, who omits both his name and place of origin, calls Shan-tao *shan-seng* (mountain monk). Not only does *shan* (mountain) here refer to Chung-nan mountain,[97] but it shows that Shan-tao, later in the capital, was known as having come from that place rather than from Hsi-ho, residence of Tao-ch'o. It seems to indicate that the Chung-nan mountain was his last residence, before he settled in Ch'ang-an. Second, if the episode about Shan-

tao's reproval of his master is true, it seems unlikely that he would have stayed there much longer. Furthermore, after Tao-ch'o died in 645, it is equally unlikely that Shan-tao would have stayed on. The reason why he went there in the first place was the fact that Tao-ch'o lectured on the *Kuan-ching*. Once there is nothing more to learn, there is no reason to linger on. Thirdly, after Shan-tao left his master, or left the place after his master's death, where did he go next? He arrived in Ch'ang-an only around 649, which is four years after his master's decease. Fourth, in 645 Shan-tao was about thirty-two years old and needed more personal experience in the Buddhist way of life before he would venture into a life of active teaching. These reasons, which are not strict arguments, seem to indicate that Shan-tao, after being instructed in the meaning and methods of the *Kuan-ching* by Tao-ch'o, finally withdrew to the solitude of the mountain, to practice with even more dedication and self-denial than before the profound contemplation leading to the vision of Amita and his Pure Land.

Since the Sui dynasty, the Chung-nan mountain had become a famous center of Buddhist monasticism.[98] The Wu-chen monastery was built in the Wu-chen valley in the eastern part of the mountain. Founded by monk Ching-yeh of the Sui, it was later greatly expanded by monk Fa-ch'eng. According to the *HKSC*, it must have been a spot of exceptional scenic beauty.[99] In the short period since its existence, the monastery had attracted several famous monks.[100] It does not seem extraordinary that a promising ascetic like Shan-tao would take up residence there.

The *HWSC-B* is the only source to report explicitly Shan-tao's stay in the Wu-chen monastery. However, it says that it was before his visit to Tao-ch'o:

> Afterwards he withdrew himself in the Wu-chen monastery on Chung-nan mountain: nobody has excelled his numerous records of concentration and control of anxieties. He realized this to a deep and astonishing degree. When during his concentrations he inspected in methodical order the jewel-pavilions, the clear and precious lakes, the golden thrones, they seemed to appear as if in front of his eyes, so that his tears ran down in abundance. He raised his body and threw himself down on the floor; he achieved the most excellent [degree of] concentration. According to the given opportunity he [also] made himself useful to others.[101]



After a long period of training and self-cultivation, Shan-tao felt ready to go forward and engage in the direct spreading of his *dharma*. Since Ch'ang-an had become a very strong center of Buddhist life, it was natural that he settled there: as will appear, his career as a teacher would be long and successful.

### *Teaching Career in Ch'ang-an*

No direct information is given about the time when Shan-tao left his mountain seclusion and went to settle in Ch'ang-an, the great T'ang-capital,[102] situated in Shensi province. The *HWSC-A* indirectly gives some information about his stay in Ch'ang-an: "For over thirty years he did not have his own separate living-quarters . . ."[103] This may be explained in two ways: Shan-tao either moved frequently from one temple to another, or, more likely, he was happy to live in a common dormitory. This would agree very well with his characteristic of extreme asceticism. But since this detail, in the context of the *HWSC-A*, refers to his stay in the capital, it seems therefore reasonable to believe that he was in Ch'ang-an for more than thirty years. If we further accept 681 as the year of his death (as will be shown later), we may conclude that he arrived in Ch'ang-an around 645 or somewhat later. A date after 645 seems more probable. If Shan-tao left Tao-ch'o several years before the latter's death, say around 642, and stayed on the Chung-nan mountain six or seven years, the time of his arrival in the capital would have been 648–649. That his stay on the mountain lasted that long is quite probable since, if it was too short, he would hardly enjoy the reputation of "mountain-monk."

If we accept 648 or 649[104] as the date of his entry into a teaching career, Shan-tao was about thirty-five or thirty-six years old. The capital was full of Buddhist activity. A few years before, in the spring of 645, Hsuan-tsang had returned from his long journey to the "western regions"[105] and in 648, the newly built Tz'u-en monastery was solemnly inaugurated.[106] Within its compounds an institute for the translation of sutras was organized and directed by Hsuan-tsang. This temple also had some relationship to Shan-tao. It was erected by the crown prince, the future Emperor Kao-tsung, in commemoration of his mother, Empress Wen-te, who had been a personal disciple of Tao-ch'o:[107] in fact, the temple was intended to be an expression of gratitude toward Tao-ch'o,

through whose prayers the empress's health had once been restored.[108] At the inauguration of the new temple, fifty monks "of great virtue"[109] were invited to take up residence there, and it seems probable that Shan-tao, once a famous disciple of Tao-ch'o, was among their number, especially because an inscription was found in Ch'ang-an which says: "Stupa tablet inscription of the T'ang Ch'an master Shan-tao of the Tz'u-en monastery."[110] This inscription indicates that Shan-tao at one time lived at that temple. A further guess, but there is no proof for it, would be that this great celebration in 648 was the occasion for Shan-tao to take up residence in Ch'ang-an.

The biographical sources are more explicit when pointing out another temple in Ch'ang-an as the center of Shan-tao's energetic teaching activities. The *HKSC* says that he preached in the Kuang-ming monastery. Whereas the *JYSC* omits the reference to this temple, both the *WSC* and the *HWSC-A* connect the incident of Shan-tao's suicide with the Kuang-ming temple. According to these latter sources, the temple was only renamed "Kuang-ming temple" after Shan-tao's death. Emperor Kao-tsung (r. 650–684) changed the original name into "Kuang-ming" to commemorate the "fact that each time when Shan-tao recited the name of Buddha Amita, light [*kuang-ming*] came out of his mouth." That this is a later legend not only appears from the intrinsic character of the story, but also from the above-mentioned reference in the *HKSC*, which proves that the temple in question was already named "Kuang-ming" during Shan-tao's lifetime.

There is one more temple in Ch'ang-an with which Shan-tao was affiliated: the Shih-chi monastery. It is nowhere mentioned in the biographical sources, but is known only from an inscription in the Lung-men caves,[11] which says that Emperor Kao-tsung of the great T'ang ordered that a sculptured image be made of Buddha Vairocana eighty-five feet high, together with statues of two Bodhisattvas each seventy feet high, and so on. This order was issued in 673 and the whole work was completed in 675. The text explicitly states that the execution was to be supervised by a "monk from the Western capital: Ch'an master Shan-tao from the Shih-chi monastery" and two others.[112] Shan-tao's artistic activities will be resumed later. The only conclusion made here is that at some time later in his career, around 673, he belonged to the Shih-chi temple in Ch'ang-an.



From all the above-mentioned evidence, Iwai concludes that Shan-tao, as far as is recorded, lived in four different monasteries: in the Wu-chen temple (on Chung-nan *shan*) he practiced meditation; in the Kuang-ming and Tz'u-en temples he preached while at the same time cultivating his own monastic ideals; and finally, in the Shih-chi temple, he died. This conclusion has a certain degree of probability, but from other vague references in the biographical material, one has the impression that Shan-tao lived in quite a few more monasteries, probably within Ch'ang-an. But thus far there is no way to give definite dates and places.

Next we have to delve into Shan-tao's "evangelical" activities while he resided in the T'ang capital. There is no lack of information in the sources. First of all, the *HKSC* records that after his arrival in Ch'ang-an "he extensively converted the people [to the practice of *nien-Fo*] . . . Numberless men and women respected him [as their teacher]."[113] The *WSC* is more detailed: "Thereupon he went to the capital, where he vigorously spread his teaching among the four classes of believers,[114] without distinction of higher or lower class. Under his great impact, even butchers and wine-sellers realized some religious awareness."[115] From the *HWSC-A*, we learn that "he went out to lecture to the people about the Pure Land *dharma*.[116] He instructed many members of the *sangha* and lay disciples, effecting in them an awakening toward the bodhi-mind and [inspiring them] to cultivate the Pure Land actions. There were none who did not obtain even temporarily some benefit . . . he instructed all those who were well disposed."[117]

These quotations show the great zeal with which Shan-tao spread his message. Other places in the *HWSC-A* describe how he dealt with people:

> Sometimes people would pay him an unexpected call and listen to the explanation of some doctrine, or even obtained the satisfaction of joining him in the sanctuary, in this way continuing the teaching in a very intimate manner; or if they did not have any previous experience, they would open their minds and ask him to explain; or, turning over in their minds, he would transmit to them the methods of the Pure Land . . . In the capital and all the districts, among monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, some threw themselves from a high mountain range; some took their lives by jumping into a deep well; some piled up wood and set themselves on fire in an act of self-immolation. One generally hears that within the four directions over one hundred persons

all cultivated the "noble action"[118] and renounced wife and children.[119]

In his *HWSC-B*, Wang Ku only says that "Shan-tao equally instructed the various classes of people in the capital: the monks and laymen who submitted [to him] in their minds were as numerous as those going to market."[120] A later source, the *Lung-shu ching-t'u wen*[121] by Wang Jih-hsiu, records that "after three years all the people in the city had become invokers of the Buddha."[122] H. de Lubac is equally enthusiastic when he says that Shan-tao "had won the whole capital for amidism."[123]

Although religious suicides were not exceptional within Buddhist circles,[124] it is questionable whether laymen engaged in this supreme self-sacrifice. It seems that the above report from the *HWSC-A* is rather colored by legend, and likely an amplification of one historic fact of suicide committed by a follower of Shan-tao and recorded in the *HKSC*. This reservation made, it seems beyond doubt that Shan-tao had an enormous impact on the population of the city. Almost all the sources emphasize this aspect of his career. When we ask ourselves what exactly his message consisted of, the answer has partially to be postponed until Shan-tao's writings and especially his commentary on the *Kuan-ching* will be analyzed. However, judging from the biographies alone, one has the strong impression that his approach was very simple. He recommended the practice of *nien-Fo*. Taken in its most commonly understood meaning, which is not the only meaning, this stands for oral recitation of Buddha Amita's name. Whereas this interpretation explains Shan-tao's influence on the common people, it does not do justice to the needs of the cultivated people who came to him, including both members of the *sangha* and laypeople of the upper classes. Since Shan-tao himself, from the moment of his "conversion" to the Pure Land Gate, combined name invocation not only with a rigorous asceticism but also with the practice of *kuan-Fo* (Amita visualization-inspection), it seems beyond doubt that he also tried to communicate these ideals of a higher spirituality to his followers, laypeople as well as monks. If the biographer's statement about one hundred laymen renouncing their families is reliable, this cannot be based on the mere practice of calling the name of a Buddha.

Moreover, whereas Tao-ch'o's biographer Chieh-chu in his *WSC* narrates how the master advised his followers to record the



number of their invocations with the help of beans, grains of hemp or wheat, no similar anecdote is found in any of Shan-tao's biographies. Although he is said to have made numberless daily invocations of Amita's name, he apparently did not resort to counting. Only in *HWSC-B* do we find a reference to numbers: "every day he pronounced the name of Buddha Amita between 15,000 and 100,000 times, and attained the *nien-Fo samādhi*."[125] This mentioning of numbers is suspect and might have been copied from Tao-ch'o's biography. But because of the final section of the phrase "he attained the *nien-Fo samādhi*," it seems that for Shan-tao *nien-Fo* was more than purely vocal chanting of the name. This also corresponds with an anecdote narrated in *WSC*: "Someone asked Shan-tao: If I practice the *nien-Fo*, will I obtain a good rebirth in the Pure Land?"[126] The question is centered around the quality of rebirth; among the nine grades of rebirth, some are higher, some lower. Is it possible that *nien-Fo* ensures a high grade of rebirth? Shan-tao's answer is hard to translate; it is poetical and very rich in meaning. Literally he says: "According to your *nien* [or *nien-Fo*] will be your *yuan* [wish]."[127] In other words, according to the quality or excellence of your *nien-Fo* will be the realization of what you desire. Or again, the degree of excellence in Amita's Land depends on the degree of perfection of the *nien-Fo*. This implies that Shan-tao's idea of *nien-Fo* is not just mechanical or magical. Everything depends on the inner attitude and, as will be shown later, on the degree of sincerity and faith with which *nien-Fo* (as well as all other actions) is performed. It seems therefore obvious that Shan-tao, in his contacts with people, used certain *upāyas* to lead them to an ever-increasing perfection of Pure Land practice. Whereas for the beginners and uneducated persons a mere oral invocation may be sufficient, the more advanced and sophisticated disciple was encouraged to reach greater heights by practicing, after Shan-tao's own example, the more demanding method of *kuan-Fo*, leading to complete absorption. It seems therefore quite justified to interpret Shan-tao's "evangelical" activities as based on a "double standard," or perhaps better, a "multiple standard." One standard applied to himself and his more advanced disciples; the other, less demanding, applied to the commoners and those of shallow faith, who were encouraged to start with the easy practice of name invocation but always urged to progress on the path. Whether this "double standard" theory is valid will be further investigated when interpreting Shan-tao's

works, especially his *Kuan-ching shu*. In the meantime, one example may be cited showing Shan-tao's *upāyas*. In the *SKSC*, Tsan-ning narrates the biography of Huai-kan, a disciple of Shan-tao. Before he entered the Pure Land School under Shan-tao, he had been trained both in the *Fa-hsiang* (*dharma-laksana*) philosophy and in the Vinaya. Perhaps because of this background, it was hard for him to accept the belief that a short-time practice of *nien-Fo* would lead him to rebirth. One day he went to see the master, who tried to dispel his doubts and urged him to go to the sanctuary for the practice of *nien-Fo*. After three weeks, Huai-kan had not attained any spiritual experience and, feeling that the obstacles of his evil karma were too deep to overcome, wanted to kill himself. However, Shan-tao restrained him. After three years, Huai-kan reached the *nien-Fo samādhi*.[128] The story is a significant example of Shan-tao's spiritual directorship. His *upāya* shows from the way he directed this young monk: starting with a simple *nien-Fo* (recitation) he made him reach the highest stages of *kuan-Fo*.

### *Literary and Artistic Activities*

Shan-tao was not only concerned with teaching and preaching, but also with literary and artistic activities. The traditions concerning this aspect of his career are quite early and stubbornly persistent. First, the *HKSC* reports that he copied the *Amita-sūtra* several ten thousand times.[129] The *JYSC* repeats and details this statement, saying that "he copied the *Amita-sūtra* a hundred thousand times, and painted more than two hundred Pure Land frescoes.[130] Whenever he noticed a temple or pagoda in bad condition he never neglected to repair it."[131] As usual, the *WSC* is a source of more information: "[Shan-tao] made a hundred thousand copies of the *Amita-sūtra* and distributed them among the people to be upheld. As a result, within the capital and neighborhood, people practiced *nien-Fo* according to the sutra, thus following in Shan-tao's footsteps."[132] The *HWSC-A* is merely repetitious, adding only one more detail: "To all those who brought him a personal offering, he would give a copy of the *Amita-sūtra*, of which he made over a hundred thousand copies. He made over three hundred wall paintings of the Pure Land.[133] Wherever he resided, when he noticed a monastery or pagoda in decay, he would always repair it."[134] In the second biography of this book, *HWSC-B*, although it claims to relate to Shan-tao number two, we read: "Afterwards in the monasteries where he resided, he painted Pure Land images.[135] He put pressure [on his assistants] and made them complete the work in a short time. Some people asked him why [he was in a hurry] and he answered: because there are only two or three days left before I will be reborn!"[136]



The oldest traditions, *HKSC* and *JYSC*, are unanimous about Shan-tao's work of sutra copying, and equally unanimous about the title: the Shorter *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra*. Since this is indeed a short sutra, containing in a nutshell the basic principles of Pure Land devotionalism, it was very adequate as a means of religious propaganda. The enormous number of copies, produced in a period long before block printing was invented,[137] cannot have been Shan-tao's own work. Perhaps he himself wrote quite a high number,[138] but the greater part were certainly executed under his instructions. The great number of copies also suggests that he had the text spread among non-Buddhists to arouse in them the desire for rebirth. In other words, the Shorter Sutra was a handy instrument for Shan-tao to implement his policy (*upāya*) of gradual instruction and progress: then after a first call to conversion and easy practice, he would introduce the *Kuan-ching* as a tool for further and complete indoctrination.

An almost equally strong tradition speaks about Shan-tao's artistic creativity. He is said to have made two or three hundred wall paintings of the Pure Land: the Chinese terms used are always the same: *Ching-t'u pien-hsiang*. There is some controversy among scholars about the exact meaning of *pien-hsiang*, but usually it is recognized that the term correlates with the literary term *pien-wen*. As A. Waley suggests, this term most likely means (etymologically) "incident," or "marvels," or even "miracles." In that case, *pien-hsiang* would mean "pictures of incidents," that is, "wondrous happenings in the scriptures."[139]

This interpretation of *pien-hsiang* would explain why many of the wall paintings in Tun-huang are indeed painted stories of marvellous events taken from the Buddha's life, from the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the *Kuan-ching*, and so on. It also gives a clear indication of how to imagine Shan-tao's paintings: they were painted (marvellous) stories from the Pure Land scriptures; in other words, they were more than paradise paintings of *mandalas*[140] but included a story or stories of "supernatural events" and most likely, as the Tun-huang paintings point out, the

stories about Ajātashatru and Vaidehī, either as the main topic of the painting or as side scenes around a central paradise painting. The Tun-huang caves have in this way indirectly thrown a clear light on Shan-tao's artistic creations. According to A. Waley, the links are even very close (see below). Among the paradise paintings listed in his catalogue, twelve are representations of Amita's Sukhāvatī, and in the side scenes the legend of Ajātashatru is on one side and the "meditations" of Vaidehī on the other side.[141] These paintings are mostly on silk or linen. However, according to B. Gray,[142] in the Tun-huang caves several frescoes have also been preserved showing Amita's Land together with side panels, in a way similar to the silk paintings.[143]

Is there any direct relationship between these various paintings and Shan-tao's? A. Waley thinks there is. "The paintings with side-scenes representing the legend of Ajātashatru and Vaidehī, do not, as would appear at first sight, illustrate the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* [*Kuan-ching*] but rather the commentary on the sutra by Shan-tao (613–81)."[144] Only a detailed study of the various paintings can lead to a decision in this matter. As the descriptions in Waley's catalogue show, the side scenes are not always the same or in the same number, so certainly not all of them have a direct relationship with Shan-tao. It is, however, very probable that Shan-tao influenced later outlines of the paintings. A famous example is the "Taima Mandara" in Japan, supposedly woven in 763, and in which Shan-tao's inspiration is recognized. "Thus the *Hōnen Shōnin Gyōjo Gwazu*, by the priest Shunshū (A.D. 1255–1335) recognizes that the Taima Mandara is based on the Commentary, but says that this fact was not realized in Japan until 858 . . . when Shan-tao's text was first imported from China. Thus the three clouds, symbolizing the three sorts of spiritual obstructions, were unintelligible to those who knew only the text of the sutra itself."[145]

Shan-tao's paintings have probably been both frescoes and scrolls. If the Tun-huang frescoes had nothing directly to do with Shan-tao, it is certain that some were already existent in his time. The Chinese texts seem to contain linguistic traces as to the nature of the paintings. In the *JYSC* we have the term *p'u*, here used as a classifier for paintings which refers to frescoes. The other text, *HWSC-A*, has another classifier for paintings: *tu*, which among other things also signifies "wall." In that case, the paintings indicated in the text refer almost certainly to frescoes. The *HWSC-B* leaves out any such indication, but on the other hand says that Shan-tao "painted Pure Land images *in the monasteries where he resided.*"[146] This latter addition would seem to be useless if it only referred to scroll paintings, which could much better be painted in his own residence. But to create frescoes, the artist had to displace himself. However, since these texts are not too early, a convincing argument cannot be drawn from them. It is reasonable, however, to accept that he did both murals and scrolls, the former because he had to travel to create them and because of his reputation at the court as a man of great artistic skill. (Otherwise the court would not have appointed him to direct a great work like the above-mentioned one at Lung-men.) He probably also painted scrolls, describing not only the Pure Land in all its splendid features, but the whole text of the *Kuan-ching*.[147] It is not likely that Shan-tao executed all this work by himself, since he was too involved in his own meditations and in preaching to the masses. It seems quite natural that he hired artists to work under his general directives. It is probable that he created several paintings himself. That he attached a great importance to these "visual aids" appears from a quotation in one of his works, the *Kuan-nien fa-men*, to be discussed in Chapter 4. Moreover, as Shan-tao's personal experience leads us to believe, his own "conversion" to the Pure Land method and his subsequent endeavor in Amita contemplation must have made him sharply aware of the rich possibilities hidden in the recourse to these Pure Land paintings.[148] No wonder he strove with all his energy to spread them among his more advanced disciples. It can be said that his paintings were the concrete results of his own mystical experiences.

That Shan-tao was a famous artist, even when his art seems to have been primarily educative, is corroborated by the above-mentioned fact of his imperial appointment to supervise the execution of Buddhist sculpture in the Lung-men caves. His relationship to these caves is historically certain through the inscription mentioning the great work executed in the Feng-hsien[149] cave during the years 672–675. The inscription was made under Hsuan-tsung (713–756) in 722, about fifty years after the work was done. According to P. Swann,[150] "Most authorities, on the basis of an inscription dated A.D. 723, identified it as Vairocana . . ."[151] However, the author doubts that at this comparatively early period (672–675) such a huge statue of Vairocana would have been made, while the Amita worship was still most popular: "W.

Willets has suggested that what was originally an Amitābha group when created in the mid-seventh century at Lung-men may have been dedicated afresh when Vairocana became a popular belief in the first decades of the eighth century."[152]

This interpretation would provide a much better explanation of why Shan-tao was chosen to supervise this work. His fame as an artist must have reached the court, and his artistic reputation as a meditator and mystic must have enhanced his reputation. During his frequent mystical experiences, he obtained visions of Amita and his Pure Land, which he likely tried to express in vivid colors on scrolls and murals. From similar accounts, we know that the court circles were well informed about what happened in the area of religion, especially in the capital.

### *Shan-tao's Final Years and Death*

Information about the later years of Shan-tao's life is very scanty. The only event that can be dated is his above-mentioned activity in connection with the Lung-men sculptures, which were executed in the years 672–675. It is not known whether he was very active until the end of his life.

How he ended his mortal existence has been long obscured by the apocryphal story, created by Chieh-chu in his *WSC*, in which Shan-tao commits suicide by jumping from a willow tree near the temple where he lived. This is an incredible distortion of the facts, which needs some explanation. Why did Chieh-chu create this story? First of all, we read in the *HKSC* that the suicide narrative was not told about Shan-tao, but about a disciple. The text remains silent about Shan-tao's own death because the biography was written before Shan-tao died. Furthermore, in the *JYSC* there is no reference at all to Shan-tao's later years and death. However, if it had been a known fact that the master killed himself, it is rather unlikely that Shao-k'ang would have omitted to mention it. On the other hand, it is also strange that nothing at all is said about the master's final days. An admirer such as Shao-k'ang might easily have added some supernatural events to glorify Shan-tao's memory, because in the same work Tao-ch'o's biography is concluded in such a way. It appears that for some reason Shan-tao's biography in the *JYSC* has been reduced. This can be seen from the almost sudden conclusion at the end of the story. After describing Shan-tao's work as a copyist, painter, and restorer of



temples, the final sentence is: "Ever since the Buddha's *dharma* spread to the East [China], no *dharma* master has flourished more [than Shan-tao]."[153]

Chieh-chu narrates Shan-tao's suicide in the following way:

> Shan-tao was disgusted with all the sufferings and persecutions of this life; feelings are unreal and changeable; there is no way to rely on them even for a short time. So he climbed into a willow tree growing in front of the temple where he lived. Turning toward the west he pronounced this wish: "May the glorious Buddha at once welcome me; may Kuan-yin and Ta-shih-chih equally come to my help, to make my mind neither lose the right mindfulness (*cheng-nien*), nor become frightened and slide back from the Amita-*dharma*." After completing this prayer he threw himself down from the tree and took his life. At that time, the higher classes in the capital "poured out" sincerity and were converted to the faith. They received his bones for burial.[154]

In the *HWSC-A* we find the same story, literally repeated, with a few minor modifications. Later biographies (*FTTC*, *LSCT*, etc.) accepted this version of Shan-tao's death and thus contributed to the continuation of the legend.

As a contrast, in the *HWSC-B* a different story is told. To invest his two-Shan-tao theory with a better claim to authenticity, the author had to avoid the suicide anecdote. Here is the other alternative:

> Later, when he [Shan-tao] was painting a Pure Land fresco in the temple where he was staying, he urged [his assistants] to speed up the completion. When he was asked the reason, he answered that within two or three days he would be reborn (or pass away). Then unexpectedly he was taken ill.[155] He remained secluded in his room where he peacefully started out for the long journey. He was sixty-nine years old. His body was soft and his facial complexion was normal. Only after a long time did the unusual fragrance and music die away. It was the second year of *yung-lung* (681), the fourteenth of the third month.[156]

Apart from the supernatural "touch" present in the story, quite common in the hagiographies of Buddhist (and Taoist) masters, the main facts reported are quite acceptable, and most scholars agree that Shan-tao's death took place in 681.[157]

A final question to be answered is why Chieh-chu created the suicide legend. Both Chieh-chu and Wang Ku must have known

the real facts.[158] It seems that they consciously altered them. There must have been some serious motive for doing so. Of course, it may be argued that Chieh-chu changed the story because he had evidence that Shan-tao had indeed committed suicide. However, this seems very questionable. As already reported above, Shan-tao once stopped his disciple Huai-kan from killing himself. If he considered suicide to be an infraction against Buddhist morality, he probably would have not taken his own life. Besides, when Shan-tao was already sixty-nine years old, it does not seem possible that he possessed the physical strength to climb into a tree high enough to get killed. He would have preferred another way of suicide, examples of which are reported in several biographies of Chinese monks, and which were considered to be proofs of outstanding virtue.[159] If it does not seem probable that Shan-tao jumped from that willow tree, his death by suicide is still not completely impossible. After all, Shan-tao was an extraordinary character.

The precedents for a Shan-tao suicide story are various and may have been confused in the later transmissions of the tradition. First there is the suicide story in the *HWSC-A*;[160] then there is the strange anecdote about various kinds of suicide by his followers, monks, nuns and laypeople, who jumped from mountains, jumped into wells, or set themselves on fire. Although this could be a mere legend, or amplifications of the original story in the *HKSC*, it adds to the confusion of the traditions. After Chieh-chu and Wang Ku wrote their biographies, the legend grew even stronger. In the *FTTC*, it is written that because of Shan-tao's deep impression on the city dwellers of Ch'ang-an, the whole city abstained from eating meat. One butcher, enraged at losing so much business, took his knife and stormed to Shan-tao's temple in order to kill him. However, the master showed him a Pure Land painting and the butcher, deeply impressed, made the vow for rebirth, called the name of the Buddha, jumped from a tree, and killed himself.[161] This legend again could be merely an amplification of the original. It shows, however, that Shan-tao's preaching moved the people to the marrow of their bones, so that acts of suicide followed from mere enthusiasm or from the unbearable desire to be reborn in Amita's paradise.

This may be a psychological reason why Chieh-chu created the legend and later authors so easily took it over. Another reason is that religious suicide, in exceptional cases of highly virtuous persons, was considered to be heroic and not sinful. The Confucian view of life also made provisions for such acts of high merit, as in the case of widows who killed themselves after their husbands' death. It could very well be that Chieh-chu found this literary invention too attractive to omit. By attributing such a dramatic and even heroic end to Shan-tao, he may have intended to heighten the respect for the master.



Concerning the date of Shan-tao's death, the third month of 681, there is no serious disagreement. The tablet inscription of monk Huai-yün[162] reports that he entered monastic life in 668. He became Shan-tao's disciple and received personal instruction from him for over ten years. (From 668 till 681, there was a period of thirteen years.)

The same inscription further reports that Huai-yün took charge of Shan-tao's funeral arrangements and burial. The master was buried at Shen-ho-yuan on the Chung-nan mountain and a new temple was built by the grave, on which a great stupa was erected. The name of the temple must have been Hsiang-chi monastery, since a stone tablet inscription about the master Ching-ye, abbot of the Hsiang-chi temple, mentions that he wished to be buried near the grave of Shan-tao.[163]

The historical sources do not mention a great number of Shan-tao's disciples by name, but it is generally acknowledged that he was a successful preacher and spiritual leader in Ch'ang-an, with a large following both among the monastic community and among the laity. S. Weinstein has established that the Pure Land movement did not have a great attraction for the imperial court at first.[164] Perhaps because of Shan-tao's reputation, this trend gradually changed. At least three events indicate that Weinstein's evaluation has not to be taken so literally. Tao-ch'o was in contact with the mother of T'ai-tsung, when he was still a crown prince. Shan-tao was sent to supervise the Lung-men sculptures, and his disciple Huai-kan had received an imperial order to shave his head and enter monastic life under Shan-tao. The rather apocryphal story about one temple of Shan-tao's residence being renamed *Kuang-ming* temple by Emperor Kao-tsung, even if it is not historical, still indicates the court's interest in the growing Pure Land movement.

The known disciples of Shan-tao are three in number: Huai-kan (dates unknown), Huai-yün (639–701), and Ching-yeh (d. 712). However, Shao-k'ang may also have once been his student, and was certainly a great admirer. He became known as the

"Later Shan-tao"; many years later still, the monk Fa-chao also became known as "Later Shan-tao."

These appellations must have been creations of the popular imagination, but it is very interesting to see in them a forerunner of what in Lamaism would become a theological doctrine: the belief in reincarnations of famous holy men. Shan-tao was seen as a reincarnation of Buddha Amita. Two later monks, Shao-k'ang and Fa-chao, were believed to be reincarnations of Shan-tao. Apparently no systematic thought was underlying these views, yet in Tantric Buddhism we see the Panchen lama and the Dalai lama as reincarnations of, respectively, Buddha Amita and Avalokiteshvara. Is there perhaps a link between Pure Land popular practice and Tantric Buddhism? The point of contact between the two could easily have been Ch'ang-an during the T'ang, where both schools of Buddhism were active and flourished.

### *Shan-tao's Personality*

Although the biographies, especially the later ones, have preserved several bits of information about Shan-tao himself, this part of his biography is still a presumptuous one. Even if historical data would be as numerous as in the case of B. Russell, to write about a man's inner personality can only be very partial, superficial, and subject to many reservations. However, a biography is not complete if this last part is left out altogether.

First of all, what do the sources tell us about Shan-tao, his personality, his way of life, and so on?[165] The *HKSC*, as usual, is quite modest in its information. The *JYSC* yields more: "The Ch'an master [Shan-tao] led a simple life, and always preferred to beg for his food. Everyday he would reprove himself saying: 'If even Shākyamuni did not have a proper dwelling-place, why should I, Shan-tao, live comfortably, and wait for others to bring me offerings?' He did not even permit his novices to accept gifts."[166] Next, the *HWSC-A* emphasizes the utmost sincerity in his behavior, and continues:

> For more than thirty years [Shan-tao] did not have special living quarters. He slept very little. He never undressed except for bathing. He considered the "ritual of Buddha vision"[167] and Buddha worship a personal commitment. He observed all the details of the discipline without the slightest transgression.[168] He never raised his eyes to look at a woman. All concern for reputation and profit was dispelled from his mind. He laughed at refined (and superficial) words . . . Wherever he went, he insisted to bring some offerings. When [at the occasion of] the four seasons, food and clothing were abundant, he did not stock them up but gave them away. Good quality food he sent to the central kitchen, while he only used the most coarse food for himself, so that he barely supported his health. Milk and cream or milk-liquor[169] he never used . . .
>
> His lamp kept continuously burning for many years without interruption. He did not allow anyone to take away his three robes and alms bowl for cleaning. Till the end he did not change this.
>
> He always walked on his own and never in the company of others, since he was afraid that when walking with others, there would be talk about worldly matters which would hinder him in his spiritual cultivation.[170]



Finally, there is one more document, which has hardly been utilized till now, the *NFC*, which by chance conserves an interesting event in Shan-tao's life. It occurred in Ch'ang-an, possibly when Shan-tao was already aging:

> Ācārya Shan-tao held a contest about the excellence of *nien-Fo*, with *dharma* master Ching-kang.[171] [It took place] in a temple of the western capital [Ch'ang-an]. [Shan-tao] ascended the podium and pronounced this vow: "According to various scriptures, the World-honored One has said: through the single method of *nien-Fo*, one will obtain rebirth in the Pure Land. If for one to seven days, one repeats [the name of] Buddha Amita, from one to ten times, one will certainly be reborn in his Pure land.[172] If these words are true and authentic, and do not deceive sentient beings, then I will that the two images in this sanctuary emit light; if [on the contrary] this method of *nien-Fo* is empty and does not lead to rebirth, but deceives and misleads sentient beings, then I will that I myself, Shan-tao, be immediately plunged down from this podium into the abysses of hell, and forever suffer pain without release!" Thereupon, according to his words, pointing his *ju-yi* scepter[173] toward the images in the sanctuary, they [indeed] started to radiate light.
>
> These are the circumstances of ācārya Shan-tao's solemn vow (or oath).[174]

Whatever is decided about the authenticity of this interesting event,[175] it can hardly be denied that it throws a special light on Shan-tao's personality: his extreme sincerity, his great concern to

convince people of the validity of the Pure Land approach, and his romantic-dramatic character. This latter aspect has not yet been pointed out, but it seems beyond doubt that Shan-tao was a romantic, emotional person, fond of dramatizing for apologetic purposes. This will become clearer from his writings. That he was romantic and emotional agrees with his artistic nature and his sensitivity to the visual representations of the Pure Land truths, which were for him the bridge toward mystical experience. It further agrees with his aversion toward rationalism. The path of philosophical exploration was discarded by him in his early youth.

The integral image of Shan-tao that emerges from the various traditions about him is that of a saint, almost in the sense that the Catholic Church defines sainthood: someone who has cultivated the (Christian) virtues in a heroic way. To be more specific, one can easily make a list of virtues, which were the warp and woof of Shan-tao's personality: faith, humility, self-denial, sincerity, concern for all sentient beings, and so on.[176]

Being a "saint" also made Shan-tao a strange, even somehow amusing man. Robinson called him "a holy eccentric,"[177] which is partially true, since for him the natural, human world, the sphere of this-worldly values, did not seem to exist. Although in this respect he inherited the world-rejecting attitude of Indian Buddhism, at the same time, for the sake of his fellow men, he integrated humanistic values (basically Chinese and equally truly Mahāyānistic), with the result that his influence on the people of his time seems to have been enormous.

In Buddhist circles, Shan-tao's memory certainly lived on. He has been called "the *nirmāna-kāya* [apparitional body] of Amita," and it has been said of him that "Buddha Amita's *nirmāna-kāya* came to Ch'ang-an [in the person of Shan-tao] to teach the practice of *nien-Fo* . . . Within three years everybody in the whole city of Ch'ang-an called the name of the Buddha."[178]

Both Shan-tao's *deeds* and *words* have influenced Chinese (and Japanese) Buddhism to a great degree. After considering his deeds, we must return to his words, transmitted to later generations by means of his writings.

# CHAPTER 4

# *Shan-tao's Writings*

Traditionally five literary compositions (in nine "scrolls") are attributed to Shan-tao,[1] of which the *Kuan-ching shu* (*KCS*) or *Commentary on the Kuan-ching* is considered to be the most important. No exact dates of composition have been recorded, but some Japanese authors have tried to determine the relative chronology of the writings through an analysis of their contents.[2] Although no absolute certainty can be obtained thus far, some reasons can be adduced to propose a viable hypothesis. Each of the works will be discussed in turn according to the most probable chronological order.[3]

## EARLIER WRITINGS

1. *Kuan-nien A-mi-t'a-Fo hsiang-hai san-mei kung-te fa-men* (Meritorious Methods of the *Samādhi* [existing in] Contemplating the Sea of Characters of Buddha Amita), T. 1959, 47: 22–30. Usually abbreviated as *Kuan-nien Fa-men* (*KNFM*).

As the title suggests, this work is related to both the *PCS* and the *KFSH* (which were discussed above under the *kuan* sutras), and therefore a rather early date in Shan-tao's career is suggested. Shan-tao does not yet seem concerned with the salvation of the common person. His methods are for the benefit of meditators, who desire to obtain a vision of Buddha Amita.

The introduction indicates that the author intends to write four sections:

1. Clarification of the method of the *kuan-Fo-samādhi* according to the *Kuan-ching*
2. Clarification of the method of the *nien-Fo-samādhi* according to the *PCS*
3. Clarification of the method of the *nien-Fo-samādhi* (when entering into the sanctuary), according to the sutras

4. Clarification of the method of confession and vow [for rebirth] within the sanctuary, according to the sutras

However, it appears that the outlined program is not followed. After point 3 is developed, there is a lengthy interpolation which appears to be a completely different work and is, in fact, sometimes quoted as another work of Shan-tao: *Yi ching ming wu-chung tseng-shang-yuan* (Clarification of the Meaning of the Five Kinds of Predominant Conditions,[4] according to the sutras).[5] There are good reasons to reject Shan-tao's authorship: some of the sutras he quotes are never quoted in his other works, and the ideas and even some of the terminology are not his own. Besides, this interpolated text does not have a close doctrinal relationship with the main body of the text and destroys its unity. This becomes even clearer when looking for the final section 4, announced in the introduction but not clearly identifiable in the text. Some manipulation has taken place and has obscured the logical coherence of the text.

Shan-tao's own ideas are best expressed in sections 1 to 3. In section 1, he explains how to perform the visualization-inspection of Amita and his Land. He stresses the right body posture and describes at great length how all the thirty-two "characters" of the Buddha have to be "imagined" (*hsiang*) (mentally constructed so that they become as clear as if they were in front of one's eyes). The visualization of the Buddha's concealed sex organ is specially encouraged: "If either a man or a woman has strong sexual desires, then they should 'imagine' the Tathāgata's sex organ, whereupon the desiring mind will come to rest; the hindrances of transgressions are destroyed, [with the result of] long life and happiness and being forever free from sickness."[6] In section 2, Shan-tao comments on the method of seeing the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, explained in the *PCS*. A long hymn is included here, explaining the various ethical and spiritual conditions to be fulfilled if one wants to obtain this *samādhi*.

Section 3 is more practical. It outlines the ritual prescriptions for entering into the sanctuary and preparing oneself to practice the *samādhi*. This passage is very interesting, also in view of the *KCS*, where these inner and outer preparations, although presupposed, are not explained with such great detail.

When he is about to enter the sanctuary to practice the [*kuan-Fo*] *samādhi* [the practitioner] must according to the Buddhist methods— first of all put the sanctuary in order, arrange the holy image(s)[7] and sprinkle it with perfumed water. If there is no Buddha-hall, a clean room will also do. When it has been duly sprinkled, one should bring in a Buddha image and set it up against the western wall. A practitioner may start off in any month, from the first till the eighth, or from the eighth till the fifteenth, or from the fifteenth till the twenty-third, or from the twenty-third till the thirtieth. These four periods of each month are all suitable; each practitioner takes into account the amount of work at home.

[After choosing a suitable time] he purifies himself and starts his exercises from one to seven days. It is extremely important to wear clean clothes; socks and shoes also must be spotless. During these seven days, he should always keep to vegetarian food: soft cakes and coarse rice, pickled vegetables, according to the season [but always] in great simplicity and with limitation of the quantity.

While [staying] day and night in the sanctuary, he should continuously control his mind and with single-minded attention recollect (*nien*)[8] Buddha Amita while mind and voice are in mutual correspondence. He may only sit down or stand up, and should abstain from sleep during these seven days. It is not required to worship the Buddha and recite the sutras according to the normal time schedule,[9] nor is it necessary to count the beads on a "rosary." What only counts is to fold one's hands and to practice *nien-Fo* while moment after moment "imagining" the Buddha [in order] to see him.[10] The Buddha says: "If you 'imagine' and observe the recollection of Buddha Amita, the incomparable radiance of his truly-golden *rūpa-kāya* [sitting in] the right position, will shine penetratingly in front of your mind's eyes." When making the "right *nien*" of the Buddha, if [the practitioner] is standing, he should repeat [his name] 10,000 or 20,000 times, remaining in that position; if he is seated, he should repeat [his name] 10,000 or 20,000, while remaining seated. While in the sanctuary, he should not lower his head and fluster. At either the three periods or the six periods of day and night, he should address himself to all the Buddhas, to all the sages and saints, to all the officials in the netherworld, all the officers of the earth, and all the spirits who watch the deeds of men,[11] and make a confession of all his past transgressions committed by actions, words, or thought. When [thus] a truthful confession has been made, he should return to the *nien-Fo* according to the method [explained above].

He should not irreverently talk [with others] about the object of his visions. He knows himself the good [he has done]; and should confess the evil [he has committed].

He should make a solemn vow neither to touch nor to consume wine, meat, and the five forbidden roots;[12] if he violates this vow, he truly wishes to contract malignant boils all over the body and in the mouth.

Some practitioners wish to recite the *Amita-sūtra* [the Shorter Sutra] a full hundred thousand times or to invoke the Buddha['s name] ten thousand times a day, or to recite the sutra fifteen times a day. Others want to recite the sutra twenty or thirty times daily, according to their strength. [In all these ways] they [express their] wish to be reborn in the Pure Land and to be received by the Buddha.[13]

Although the introduction announces a fourth section, it is not clear where it is to be found because of the manipulation of the text by an interpolator. From the above translation it seems that section 3 already includes the theme which was to be developed in section 4.

2. *Chuan-ching*[14] *hsing-tao*[15] *yuan wang-sheng ching-t'u fa-shih tsan* (Hymns [used] in the Ceremony of Chanting, Circumambulation and Resolve of Rebirth in the Pure Land), T. 1979, 47: 424–438. Usually abbreviated as *Fa-shih tsan* (*FST*).

This second work is a liturgical manual in which readings from the scriptures and hymns alternate with moral instructions and exhortations. Confession of transgressions also occupies an important place. The major part is the actual text used in a special Pure Land ceremony, in which readings from the scriptures and the singing of hymns are indicated by technical formulas mentioning who has to perform the action (e.g., *kao-tso*, the presiding monk, and *hsia-tso*, the presiding monk's assistant(s)).

As will be pointed out later, this and other texts throw an interesting light on Shan-tao's activities as a liturgist. He takes great care to express Pure Land thought in action, and more concretely, in an esthetically satisfying action, and in this way he gratifies the emotional need of Pure Land devotees. As the text indirectly shows, these ceremonies are primarily intended for the community of monks, but it seems possible that laypeople were equally invited to join.

The introduction of the *FST* breathes the same spirit as the one used in the *KCS*. Both are lyrical compositions, different in meter



from Shan-tao's usual style, and describe in beautiful colors the salutary message of Buddhism and in particular the message of the Pure Land. Shan-tao probably liked this kind of prelude so much that he repeated the literary style in his commentary.[16]

In connection with the wish for rebirth in the Pure Land, great emphasis is placed on confession of past transgressions. Once again, confession takes place before the Buddhas and all the holy beings.[17] This is followed by a deterring description of the Buddhist hells and a more detailed confession.[18] All these are part of a long sermon spoken by the presiding monk in front of those present at the ceremony. The final part is the text of the vow for rebirth.[19]

In the second "scroll" there is another ritual of confession, performed after a long alternation of chanting and scripture reading. This time it is a kind of "general confession" (*tsung ts'an-hui*), in which all past sins are recollected in detail and repented.

The conclusion of the ritual contains various prayers, among which a triple prayer for the prosperity and well-being of the emperor, the empress, and the crown prince is most remarkable.[20] The text ends with the chanting of a sevenfold worship.[21]

3. *Yi kuan-ching-teng ming pan-chou san-mei hsing-tao wang-sheng tsan* (Hymns [used] During the Circumambulation at the Rebirth [Ceremony] Explaining the *Pan-chou-samādhi* according to the *Kuan-ching*), T. 1981, 47: 448–456. Usually abbreviated as *Pan-chou tsan* or *Pan-chou san-mei tsan* (*PCST*).

This is another liturgical text in which, after a short exhortation to faith in the Buddha, Shan-tao says that Shākyamuni "is truly a father and mother full of compassion."[22] He then answers two questions about Pure Land practices.

If the purity of the three actions (*shen*, *k'ou*, *yi*; body, mouth, and mind or intention) is the true cause for rebirth, how can one reach such a purity? The answer is through breaking away from all evil actions and through mutual correspondence of the three actions and rejoicing in the welfare of others.

What is the meaning of the formula "joy of the *pan-chou-samādhi*" (*pan-chou san-mei le*)?[23] Shan-tao gives three explanations. First, he says, the Sanskrit word *pan-chou* (the full Sanskrit word is *pratyutpanna*) in Chinese means *ch'ang hsing tao* or "prolonged *samādhi*,"[24] which means a practice of seven to ninety days without interruption. *Samādhi* is a foreign word; in Chinese

it means "concentration" (*ting*). Because the three above-mentioned actions are uninterrupted, the mind reaches what it induces. Since the Buddha realm appears before one's eyes, body and mind inwardly rejoice. This is the meaning of "joy." It is also called "to see the Buddhas within one's concentration (*li-ting chien chu Fo*)."[25]

Next follows a very long hymn with the refrain *Pan-chou san-mei lo* frequently recurring at irregular intervals. The hymn is composed of verses of seven characters each, alternatingly followed by the two subrefrains: *yuan wang-sheng* (I wish for rebirth), and *wu-liang-lo* ([in] the [Land of] immeasurable happiness).[26]

There is a short conclusion after the hymn.

4. *Wang-sheng li-tsan chieh*, (Hymns of Praise [used in] the Rebirth Ceremony), T. 1980, 47: 438–448. More often titled *Wang-sheng li-tsan* (*WSLT*).

According to R. Fujiwara,[27] this third liturgical text betrays its relatively late composition through its close doctrinal resemblance with Shan-tao's *KCS*. In this text, less emphasis is placed on liturgical prescription; instead the attention is focused on the methods of Pure Land practice in general. However, there are also valid reasons to dissociate the *WSLT* from the *KCS*. Although we find for the first time in Shan-tao's works mention of the "threefold mind," this theme, which will become very important in the *KCS*, is still far removed from its later development, and could have been written in a much earlier period. Besides, Shan-tao explains the "five methods of *nien*" of Vasubandhu, whereas in his commentary these are not stressed anymore. Instead he has created his own "five right actions" (*wu cheng-hsing*) as guidelines for rebirth. This seems to point to a major shift in his thinking, which can hardly be justified by a chronological closeness of the two writings.

The main body of the text (six hymns of praise) will be discussed first, and the other themes will be taken up afterwards. The six hymns are selected for use during the six daily periods of worship and praise:

1. For *sunset*, a hymn adapted from the Longer Sutra, in praise of Amita's twelve titles of light: nineteen salutations[28]
2. For *early night*, a hymn composed by Shan-tao himself, adapted from the same sutra: twenty-four salutations[29]



3. For *midnight*, a hymn by Nāgārjuna: sixteen salutations[30]
4. For *dawn*, a hymn by Vasubandhu: twenty salutations[31]
5. For *morning*, a hymn by *dharma* master Yen-tsung (557–610): twenty-one salutations[32]
6. For *noon*, a hymn again by Shan-tao himself: twenty salutations based on the sixteen "meditations" in the *Kuan-ching*[33]

Although in Buddhist literature there are frequent references to these "six periods of day and night" (*liu-shih*),[34] this seems to be one of the very first instances where a liturgical usage is made of them, except for the case of Hui-yuan, who is said to have practiced *samādhi* at the six times, and Hsin-hsing, who had a ritual of vows following the same time schedule.[35]

The origin of this time division is not very clear. It is mentioned in many sutras in a casual manner as something natural and obviously known to the reader. Examples are found in the *She-li-fei hui-kuo ching*,[36] and in several of the *kuan* sutras.[37] It is described by Hsuan-tsang in his *Hsi-yü chi*.[38] T. Watters explains that the six "times" are distributed equally between the day and the night.[39] But the non-Buddhist people of India divided the day and night each into "four times."[40] This information is found in Hsuan-tsang's general introduction about India, in his second chapter. However, this chapter actually contains the report of his travels in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan (the regions of Lampaka on the Kabul River, Nagarahāra and Gandhāra), so that it is hard to determine whether particular items discussed in this chapter relate only to these northwestern regions or to India as a whole. It might be that the division into six periods may have been particular to the northwest areas, whereas Hsuan-tsang's eightfold time schedule might have been in use in India proper. If this assumption is correct, it is possible to explain the origin of this custom through Greek influence. In an article on the Greek calendar, Rose states that the ordinary way of measuring time was, if any accuracy was required, by the water clock. The popular divisions of time were, for the day: dawn (including morning twilight), midday, and late afternoon; and for the night: lamplighting, the dark hour before dawn, and cock-crow, which was the laborer's hour of rising. Such a division of time, though very

rough, corresponded to objective natural phenomena and to the routine of daily life, and did well enough for popular use.[41]

This similarity between the Greek division and the Buddhist division[42] is very striking. Both have three periods for day and night, the same terminology, and the same order. Of course, similarity does not prove dependence, but on the other hand, when compared with other systems of day division, the exceptional character of the above scheme is corroborated: in the Persian calendar, the day was divided into five parts, the night into four.[43] In the late Avestian period, there was a very elaborate system of ceremonial worship: "Each day was divided into five parts, and at each division a special prayer, . . . was uttered."[44] The Chinese day division was into twelve "hours," each "hour" corresponding to two of our present hours.[45] The significance of time in ritual worship has received much attention from scholars in the phenomonology of religion.[46] In the Roman Catholic church time is especially sanctified through celebrations of the liturgical year, and each day is sanctified through the recitation of the "holy office," which presently consists of eight "hours." However, two of them (Prime and Compline) did not come into use before the end of the fourth century, so it seems that originally there were only six periods of the day in which special prayers were recited.[47] If the hypothesis of Greek influence on the Buddhist liturgical practice is accepted, it would be one more argument in favor of the theory formulated in Chapter 1 that devotional (Mahāyāna) Buddhism, and the worship of the Buddhas in particular, originated in the area northwest of India, where Greek influence has been observed. It would explain the references to "six daily periods" in texts like the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* and others.[48]

This "excursion" not only has historical interest, but also shows Shan-tao's deep concern with worship and meditation. Convinced of the "sacredness of time," he tried to inculcate the same feelings into his followers; by means of artistic representations, he appealed to the esthetic-emotional nature of humans, which in the end has a greater impact than mere philosophical analysis.

5. *Nien-Fo-ching* (*NFC*) (Mirror of *Nien-Fo*), T. 1966, 47: 120–133.

The extant text in the *Tripitaka* mentions two authors: Tao-ching and Shan-tào. Some of the aspects of authorship have



already been touched upon in the previous chapter. Now some more evidence has to be given. The following points are adopted but must be further substantiated.

1. The Shan-tào indicated as coauthor of the book is meant to be the same as the great teacher Shan-tǎo (613–681).
2. However, Shan-tao can be neither the author nor the (formal) coauthor. His name has been added for a special reason.
3. The work dates probably from the end of the T'ang era, or from the period of the Five Dynasties (907–960).
4. The author is a monk Tao-ching, about whom nothing seems to be known except his name connected with this book.

That the person Shan-tào indicated as the coauthor is the same as Shan-tǎo of the early T'ang is beyond doubt, since in the *NFC* the latter's name is mostly spelled in the same way: Shan-tào.[49] Only one case of the variant character *tǎo* occurs,[50] which means that the two characters are used interchangeably. That this Shan-tào or Shan-tǎo is the great T'ang master follows from the epithet "from the western capital" or "in the western capital" combined three times with the name.[51]

A confirmation is seen in the mentioning of a lost work of Shan-tao, *Nien-Fo chi* (Collected Articles on *Nien-Fo*), which is acknowledged by Mochizuki to be a (lost) work of Shan-tao.[52] Therefore, unless one would claim still another, completely unknown Shan-tao, it is practically certain that the coauthor in this case is the T'ang master of Ch'ang-an.

Then why was his name added after that of the author Tao-ching? About this latter nothing is known, but from the context it may be surmised that he wrote the book toward the end of T'ang or shortly later. He mentions the names of monks who probably lived about that time (e.g., Ta-hsing, who lived ca. 875, and Fa-hui, of unknown dates, but probably after Ta-hsing). If there was a two hundred years' difference between the lifetimes of Shan-tao and Tao-ching, it seems almost ludicrous to add his name as coauthor. The reasons for this attribution are probably twofold. One is expediency: the authority of a great master would add weight to the book. The other reason is honesty: the author quotes from

Shan-tao's works several times, and by making Shan-tao his coauthor he acknowledges his contribution.

However, the work as a whole is different from Shan-tao's thought. One section in particular does not agree with the master's usual style and ideology, for it is too apologetic: the author tries to persuade the reader to take refuge in Amita and stresses the superiority of the Pure Land method above six other "schools": the "Three Stages School," the Maitreya "School," the Ch'an School, the Discourse (?) School (*chiang-shuo men*), the Vinaya school, and the [*prajñā*] Pāramitā school (*liu-tu men*).

As mentioned above, Tao-ching quotes from Shan-tao's lost work *Nien-Fo chi*. He enumerates twenty-three benefits obtained through the practice of *nien-Fo*:

1. The removal of the obstacles caused by great transgressions
2. Brightening up of the reception [into Sukhāvatī]
3. The protective "remembrance" of great teacher(s)
4. The mysterious help of the Bodhisattvas
5. The protection of all the Buddhas
6. The guardianship of the eight classes of supernatural beings[53]
7. The precious accumulation of merits
8. Frequent hearing of wisdom
9. Nonretrogression from *bodhi*
10. Audiences with the "great heroes"[54]
11. Influencing the welcoming descent of the Holy Ones
12. The light of the Compassionate One radiating and touching [the body of the dying devotee]
13. Holy friends joining in praise
14. Holy friends joining in the welcome
15. Spiritual powers and the ability to travel in space
16. A body of extraordinary beauty
17. A duration of life during long kalpas
18. Rebirth in a superior place
19. Face-to-face vision of the Holy Ones



20. The constant hearing of the wonderful *dharma*
21. Realizing the *anutpāda-dharma-ksānti*
22. Successive traveling to other places and receiving the prophecy
23. Return to one's own land and receiving *dhāranīs*

On the basis of this apparent quotation (or summary) from Shan-tao's *Nien-Fo chi*, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether it really was Shan-tao's work. The odds are against authenticity. There is no emphasis on the benefits of *samādhi*, and one would at least expect it to be mentioned. Furthermore, too much importance is attached to para-normal powers: such is not Shan-tao's usual style.

6. Other Works

Besides the above-mentioned lost *Nien-Fo chi*, Mochizuki lists two other works by Shan-tao which are also lost: *Mi-t'o yi* (The Meaning of Amita); and *Ta-ch'eng pu-sa fa* (Bodhisattva Method in Mahāyāna).[55]

From an unexpected source, another lost work of Shan-tao came to my attention: *Hsi-fang hua-tao wen* (Essay About Techniques for Converting People to the Western Paradise).[56] It has to my best knowledge never been listed among Shan-tao's works, but it occurs in the biography of Shao-k'ang,[57] where it is said to have caused Shao-k'ang's conversion to Pure Land Buddhism.

Furthermore, some hymns are attributed to Shan-tao which are either included in works by other Pure Land teachers or have been discovered in manuscript form in Chinese Central Asia and Tun-huang:

1. A hymn called *Hsi-fang li tsan-wen* (Hymn [used in] the Ceremony of the Western Land). The hymn is mentioned in a work by Fa-chao,[58] was discovered at Tun-huang, and was published in T. 85. The hymn text is reproduced and attributed to monk Shan-tao.[59]
2. Manuscripts of fragments from Shan-tao's works have been discovered in Chinese Central Asia, near Toyuk in the years 1910–1911.[60] One of the manuscripts is titled *Hsi-fang tsan*[61] and is in fact the same hymn as the one above, taken over by Fa-chao.

Another manuscript, probably from Shan-tao's own hand, contains a supplement to the Chinese text of the Shorter Sutra, and is titled *Fa-yuan wen*. This manuscript fragment has been reproduced in print in *Monumenta Serindica*,[62] and is translated as follows by S. Ogasawara:

> Priest Shan-tao, aspiring to obtain rebirth, earnestly wishes to make copies of the Smaller *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* . . . dispelling ignorance and disease, wishing happy and long life . . . If a man wishes to be born in the Pure Land through this sutra, immeasurable numbers of apparitional Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas as many as the sands of Ganges, . . .
>
> A man does not . . . Various evils. Gaining cross-wise, he will indeed see the Buddha at the instance of the end of his life and will enter into the highest class.
>
> Attaining the highest class of birth with the concentration of mind, they are all equally reborn into the same class.[63]

Both S. Ogasawara[64] and Mochizuki[65] believe that this is a text handwritten by Shan-tao himself. This is of course hard to prove but very attractive to believe, especially because the text contains Shan-tao's own signature. If the supplement was indeed Shan-tao's own work, it must be considered a personal dedication which he composed for a dear friend or disciple, since the text of the sutra itself was likely brushed by a copyist.

## COMMENTARY ON THE *KUAN-CHING*

The Chinese title *Kuan Wu-liang-shou-Fo ching shu* (*KCS*) literally means Commentary on the Scripture of Visualizing the Buddha of Infinite Life (or in short: Commentary on the Visualization Sutra, or Commentary on the Kuan-ching),[66] T. 1753, 37: 245–278. It is Shan-tao's most influential work and one of the most inspiring works within the Pure Land School as a whole. It contains a complete Pure Land ideology. The basic message of Buddhism is explained from within Pure Land perspectives, for use by both the laypeople or Buddhist disciples living in the world, and by Buddhist monks and nuns who are "professional" meditators.

Since a detailed analysis of the contents is presented in Chapters 5 to 9, this introductory section will deal first with the historical aspects of the work, and then with its literary aspects.



### *Historical Aspects*

As a matter of fact, Shan-tao's commentary is not only the result of his own mental and spiritual development and the ultimate ripening of his Buddhist outlook, but also a link in the long chain of Pure Land thought. Influenced and conditioned by previous links, such as the basic Pure Land sutras or Indian and Chinese masters before his time, he in turn influenced and conditioned new links in China, Korea, and Japan. His commentary on the *Kuan-ching* was neither the first nor the last of its kind. In fact, before him at least three others were written, and after him at least two more in China. In Japan many more commentaries and numerous subcommentaries have seen the daylight.[67]

From the time that the meditative practices from Central Asia started to gain popularity in China, the need for new translations, together with the need for meditation masters who could transmit the method by oral teaching, became more urgent. In the fifth century, as was already mentioned, several "visualization" sutras were first translated into Chinese. The *Kuan-ching* was rendered into Chinese toward the middle of the fifth century. But it is quite probable that the sutra was already known earlier, since a translation by Dharmamitra (356–442)[68] has possibly existed.

Famous masters, not considered to be formal Pure Land teachers, wrote commentaries on the *Kuan-ching*: Hui-yuan (523–592), Chih-yi (538–597), and Chi-tsang (549–623) are the three who wrote before Shan-tao; after him there were Chih-li (960–1028) and Yuan-chao (1048–1116). Besides these five commentaries (together with Shan-tao's work incorporated in the *Taishō Tripitaka* 37), some other manuscripts have been discovered at Tun-huang: two manuscripts, of which one is entitled *Wu-liang-shou kuan-ching tsan-shu*, are dated from the early T'ang period, but not later than Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi*, since Tao-ch'o quotes from it.[69]

Another commentary on the same sutra is preserved in the British Museum.[70] Some scholars attribute it to Ling-yü (518–605) of the Nan-tao branch of the Ti-lun School; others to Tao-yin,[71] a disciple of Tao-ch'o. The thought patterns, however, indicate a strong influence of Hui-yuan's commentary. "In the history of doctrinal development, this commentary occupies the position between Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi* and Chia-ts'ai's *Ching-t'u lun*. It is clear that the author was versed in the philosophy of the She-lun and the Hua-yen schools."[72]

A Japanese scholar, Ryūkai Etani, has reconstructed another commentary on the same sutra according to quotations selected from secondary Japanese works: the title is *Kuan wu-liang-shou ching shu.* This commentary was written by Tao-yin, but is lost as a separate work.[73] One may wonder whether it is identical with the one previously mentioned, attributed to Tao-yin by some scholars.

Other lost commentaries are said to have been written by Ling-yü, Fa-ch'ang (567–645), Hui-ching (dates unknown), Lung-hsing (dates unknown), and others.[74]

To conclude the series, the work written by Tao-ch'o, *An-lo chi,* should be added. Although the title does not indicate that it is a commentary on the *Kuan-ching*, in fact it is one, at least partially.[75] Therefore it should be discussed together with the other works of the set.

Taken together, we thus know about the existence of at least nine different commentaries, all written during the Sui-T'ang era. Besides these, two others were composed during the Sung dynasty (by Chih-li and Yuan-chao). This is ample proof of the great popularity of the *Kuan-ching* during this period.

Since Shan-tao often refers in his book to "other teachers," it seems certain that some of his literary predecessors are intended. They are in fact Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, and Chi-tsang,[76] and perhaps also Tao-ch'o.

1. Hui-yuan (523–592) is often called Ching-ying (Ta-shih),[77] since he lived in the Ching-ying monastery. Born in 523 at Tun-huang, he stayed in the Ching-ying monastery of Ch'ang-an from 587 till his death. Besides his commentary on the *Kuan-ching* (T.1749, 37: 173–186) he wrote commentaries on the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* (T. 1745), the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* (T. 1776), the *Wen-shih hsi-yü chung-seng ching* (T. 1793), and the *Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun* (T. 1843). He also wrote another work, not a commentary: *Ta-ch'eng yi-chang.*[78] He belonged to the Nan-tao or southern branch of the Ti-lun School.
2. Chih-yi (538–597) is the founder of the T'ien-t'ai School. Although a total of fifty-six works, of which thirty-five are preserved, are attributed to him,[79] he considered himself a practitioner of meditation rather than a philosopher.[80] Indeed, "in the course of his eight years' residence at the Wa-kuan szu,(starting in 560) Chih-yi seems to have become increasingly concerned about the importance of contemplation and increasingly dissatisfied with the super-intellectualized Buddhism which he saw about him in the capital."[81] His interest in meditation becomes obvious when one looks at the great number of works he devoted to it. Among the thirty-five surviving works, fifteen titles show an explicit reference to meditation. Another aspect of the great teacher is his practice of Pure Land devotion. Four of his surviving works explain his views on the subject: his commentary on the *Kuan-ching* (T. 1750, 37: 186–194), *O-mi-t'o ching yi-chi* (T. 1755), a commentary on the Shorter Sutra, *Ching-t'u shih-yi lun* (T. 1961), and finally *Wu fang-pien nien-Fo-men* (T. 1962). His biography shows that in his devotional life he was also a Pure Land practitioner.[82]
3. Chi-tsang's (549–623) father was of Parthian origin, and his mother was Chinese. At the age of six, his father, a devout Buddhist, committed him to the care of Fa-lang of the San-lun School. He became "one of the great figures . . . to disseminate the doctrines of Nāgārjuna in China."[83] Born in southern China, he spent the last years of his life in Ch'ang-an. *Hōbōgirin* lists twenty-three works attributed to him (one wrongly: T. 1751). Most of these works explain the Mādhyamika philosophy, but he also commented on the most popular Mahāyāna sutras, such as the *Lotus sūtra*, the *Hua-yen sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, and so on. He wrote two Pure Land commentaries, one on Sanghavarman's translation of the Longer Sutra (T. 1746), the other his commentary on the *Kuan-ching* (T. 1752, 37: 233–245).



The historical context of Shan-tao's commentary can only be clearly understood if this relationship to the "other teachers" is taken into account. Although several works have not survived, the three important ones are all extant and offer a significant source of comparative study. But not only against these three did Shan-tao react; it is certain that his commentary is also directed against some viewpoints of the She-lun and the Ti-lun Schools.[84]

*Literary Aspects*

Under this heading a short discussion will take place of what may be called elements of literary form: structure; style and vocabulary; method of exegesis. Next, a first introduction to Shan-tao's thought will be given to throw light on the fundamental ideas expressed in his commentary. All these aspects will prove to be most interesting, and will, from the beginning, familiarize us with the basic insights of the master, demonstrating where and how his views of the *Kuan-ching* are contrary to the view of his predecessors.

***Structure*** Shan-tao divides his commentary into four parts (*chüan*) or chapters. In the first part he discusses the basic message of the sutra as a whole. He calls it the "Profound Meaning" (*hsuan-yi fen*) and subdivides it into seven sections. In many respects these sections already announce some of the author's fundamental theses, in which he takes a stand against views expressed by his predecessors. After this exordium, written in treatise form, the following three parts are commentaries in the strict sense of the word (a textual exegesis of the sutra). Shan-tao splits the text into three major parts and a conclusion, and then comments on them verse by verse, or combining some verses together. In this way the whole content of the sutra is covered.

In part 2, he comments on the introductory part of the *Kuan-ching*. This part is titled "The Meaning of the Introduction" (*hsü-fen yi*) and subdivided into five sections. Here, however, there is some inconsistency in the structure, for these five subdivisions encompass in fact the whole of the sutra:

1. Introduction (*hsü-fen*)
2. The basic teaching (*cheng-tsung fen*)
3. Explanation of the obtained benefits (*cheng-ming te-yi fen*)
4. Propagation of the teaching (*liu-t'ung fen*)
5. The second assembly (on Mount Gridrakuta), which once more is broken into three points
   a) Introduction (*hsü-fen*)
   b) Basic teaching (*cheng-tsung fen*)
   c) Propagation (*liu-t'ung fen*)

Only point (1) is in fact discussed in Shan-tao's second part, and point (2) forms the contents of parts 3 and 4. All the remaining points are shortly developed at the end of part 4, as a final conclusion. Having clarified this detail, which shows Shan-tao's meticulous concern with completeness, we look again at the subdivision of part 2. It exists in two inequal sections:



1. Proof of credibility (*cheng-hsin hsü*)
2. Setting the scene (*fa-ch'i hsü*)

Whereas the first section is merely a rather far-fetched explanation of the introductory words of the sutra, "Thus have I heard" (*ju shih wo wen*), the second section is more significant. It discusses the various historical factors (the causal factors as Shan-tao sees them), which taken together form the necessary precondition for Shākyamuni's discourse.[85] After the concrete circumstances of the sermon have been pointed out, there follows an explanation of *hua-ch'ien hsü*, "before the Buddha's discourse": six causal factors or conditions:[86]

1. The king's imprisonment (*chin-fu chih yuan*)
2. The queen's imprisonment (*chin-mu chih yuan*)
3. The queen's aversion to suffering (*yan-k'u yuan*)
4. The queen's delight in purity, or in the Land of Purity (*ch'in-ching yuan*)
5. The goodness of the nonmeditative state as revelation of practice (*san-shan hsien-hsing yuan*)
6. The goodness of concentration as explaining inspection (*ting-shan shih-kuan yuan*)[87]

As the sutra text narrates, the Buddha's discourse was occasioned by events taking place in the royal palace of King Bimbisāra of Rajagriha. The king's son, Prince Ajātashatru, arrested his father and put him in jail, in the hope that the king would die of starvation. Queen Vaidehī, however, went secretly to visit her husband and brought him food. When the prince heard about his mother's action, he was very angry and wanted to kill her on the spot, but, restrained by his ministers, he jailed her instead.

In confinement, Vaidehī felt miserable and depressed. She started to pray to the Buddha, asking him to show her a place of happiness to be reborn. She thought: ". . . what former sin of mine

has produced such a wicked son?"[88] After the Buddha had shown her all the Buddha Lands in the Ten Directions, Vaidehī chose Amitāyus's Land Sukhāvatī to be reborn in, and further asked the Buddha to teach her how to visualize that Land.

Although the sutra text does not discuss the reason for the prince's outrageous behavior, other texts give an explanation:

> King Bimbisāra, worrying because he was without an heir, went to a soothsayer who predicted that a certain holy man would die and be reborn as the crown prince. Bimbisāra, however, could not wait for this holy man to die; he had the holy man killed, and soon afterward Queen Vaidehī became pregnant. But since the soothsayer also warned that the crown prince would harbor a hatred for his parents and be an enemy to his father, the royal parents decided to drop the newborn baby from a high tower. Escaping death and breaking only a finger, Ajātashatru gained another epithet: "broken finger."[89]

Shan-tao says that the prince's correct name in the western country is A-she-shih, but is translated as *wei-sheng-yuan* in China.[90] This name means "before birth hatred" and is rather ambiguous since it could be that the son had a reason to hate his father, who had attempted to kill him at birth; it could equally refer to the king's hatred after he learned from the soothsayer that his son would plot to kill him. Shan-tao comments on these events in his commentary.[91] The episode illustrates the mysterious network of karmic causality operating in the lives of people according to Buddhist principles. In this instance, it provides the occasion for the Buddha to teach Vaidehī the correct method of visualizing the Land of Bliss of Buddha Amita.

Although this part 2 of Shan-tao's commentary is the least doctrinally important, it offers an eloquent illustration of how Chinese Buddhists wrote commentaries. Examples will follow later.

In part 3, Shan-tao follows the logical division indicated by the sutra itself. Because of the self-evident nature of the division, he does not make the effort to announce the sixteen subsections, since in fact each separate "meditation" forms the topic of one section. However, in this part, only thirteen meditations are discussed, since part 4 will continue the "basic doctrine," commenting on the last three "meditations," the three levels of rebirth in the Pure Land of Amita.



Analyzing the structure of Shan-tao's commentary presents two advantages:

1. It is important in order to familiarize oneself with the author's method, and with the general outline of his work revealed by it.
2. It gives a first opportunity to compare Shan-tao's work with the works written by his predecessors.[92] It shows both Shan-tao's dependence on them and his own personal approach: although there is a certain logical sequence in the commentaries of Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, and Chi-tsang, a clear division such as found in Shan-tao's commentary is absent.[93]

***Style and Vocabulary*** Shan-tao's literary style has to be seen within the framework of Chinese Buddhist literature as a whole. Since the time when the enormous work of translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese started, the translators created their own literary styles, or rather took them over from Indian and Central Asian Buddhism and in this way contributed to the enrichment of Chinese literature.[94] The style usually adopted in the T'ang era by Buddhist authors is what later was called *p'ien-wen* or *p'ien-t'i wen*, variously translated as "parallel prose,"[95] "balanced prose,"[96] "antithetical prose,"[97] or "Kunstprosa."[98] "The basic pattern was the creation of two sentences or clauses in parallel form with characters in one strictly matching the corresponding characters in the others."[99]

However, during the early T'ang, when Shan-tao wrote his works, the *p'ien-t'i* style was not yet subjected to the rigid rules which were created later. It seems that his style is freer and does not always follow the rule of strict parallelism. In fact, the nature of his writings, which is, at least for his commentary, exegetical, does not always permit strict application of formal rules. There is apparently one exception to this. His preface to the commentary and his preface to the *FST* are written in a more formal style than the main body of the text. The style is strictly parallel, with each of the twin verses antithetical to the other. The number of characters used is either four or six in each sentence (although this is not always strictly applied), so that the whole passage appears as a piece of classical prose.[100]

Besides Shan-tao's usual style, he frequently recurs to another literary genre taken over from Indian Buddhism, *gāthās* or poems. Three of his minor works were composed for ceremonial usage and contain many hymns, but also in his commentary, which is a doctrinal work, many *gāthās* are included, not only by way of introduction but, as in many sutras, within the text itself. They are, in fact, mainly to be found in his third "scroll," in the context of meditation on the features of Sukhāvatī.[101] This, of course, underlines the function of the *gāthās*: "Whenever an exciting scene or a touching emotional experience was described, these would be rehearsed in verse to deepen their impression on the reader's mind."[102]

As far as Shan-tao's technical vocabulary is concerned, it shows many similarities with other Buddhist writers of the period. The division of a sutra into three parts—*hsü* (introduction), *cheng* (true teaching), and *liu-t'ung* (transmission)—was standard, and the special terms also appear in the commentaries on the *Kuan-ching* by Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, and Chi-tsang. The same is true about terms like *tsung* and *t'i*. Sometimes accepted clichés are adopted, such as the enumeration of persons who pronounce the discourse. Shan-tao says that there are no more than five: "the Buddha himself, his holy disciples, devas, spirits, and *nirmāna*-bodies (apparitional bodies)."[103] The same explanation appears almost word for word in Tao-ch'o's *ALC*,[104] and earlier in Hui-yuan's *KCS*,[105] which mentions that the quotation is from Nāgārjuna.

In all this, Shan-tao is not standing alone. He uses the same tools as his predecessors and contemporaries, even to the point of apparent plagiarism, at least as far as terminology is concerned. Ideas which are commonly accepted by most Buddhist commentators are adopted by him without hesitation. Restricting this comparison to only a few other Buddhist writers, what he calls "the other teachers" (Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, and Chi-tsang) and to his master Tao-ch'o, one sees how much Shan-tao is indebted to them while at the same time—as will be clearly explained later—asserting his independence in ideas.

Shan-tao's personal style can be described as concrete. He loves the use of concrete examples rather than abstract, philosophical language to illustrate his teachings. These concrete examples are sometimes in the form of parables (such as the famous parable of the White Path; see Chapter 5). At times he is exhortative even to the point of overdoing it, as when he stresses an absolute faith in the Pure Land methods which should not be shaken by assaults from nonbelievers. Although he frequently attacks the positions of other Buddhist teachers and explains his own viewpoints with strong conviction, so that his commentary could be considered an apologetic work, he is still not essentially a "propagandist" who uses cheap and questionable arguments to make his point. His controversy is dignified and solid, although between the lines one can sometimes feel his emotional commitment and even his indignation at the unacceptable opinions of others, or their lack of sincerity with regard to the Pure Land doctrine and practice. All these considerations will become clearer when the various elements of his teaching are analyzed one by one.



***Method of Exegesis*** In his method of exegesis Shan-tao again is not unique. He shares his methodology with his predecessors and contemporaries. But it will be useful to demonstrate some concrete personal characteristics which appear in his commentary.

Shan-tao is very meticulous and has a great sense of order and structural clarity. When commenting on the text of the sutra (in his second, third, and fourth "scrolls"), he divides it into small units of one or more verses. He then explains each unit separately, quoting the beginning and the end of each unit. For instance, when he comments on the first "meditation," he says that there are five points to be clarified: first, the words from "Buddha said to Vaidehī" up to "imagine the Western Quarter" rightly clarify the Buddha's general announcement and general advice; second, the words from "You will ask how to imagine . . ." up to "all see the setting sun" clarify the putting forward of the object to be visualized. He goes on like that for each unit of the sutra, commenting on each of them.[106] By doing so, he implicitly divides the whole sutra text into chapters and verses.

This method, of course, has some drawbacks. In several cases, no real commentary is offered, but only a dry enumeration of material details.[107] For instance, in the "meditation" on Kuan-yin we read:

> Point five: [the words] from "the soft hair between the eyebrows . . ." until ". . . compared with the color of a red lotus" clarify that the rays emanating from the white hair between the eyebrows turn around and universally fill the Ten Quarters. Magically created attendants are projected in great numbers; their appearance is similar to the color of red lotuses. There are

five clarifications: (i) the mark of white hair consists of the colors of seven jewels; (ii) the number of rays emanating from the white hair-tufts; (iii) the number of created Buddhas within these rays; (iv) the number of attendants; (v) the changing appearances of the created attendants fill universally the Ten Quarters.[108]

Such a descriptive analysis of details, which occurs quite often in the text, is perhaps intended as a methodical help for the meditator. It shows him how to fix his mental attention on each detail separately in systematic order. However, frequently special questions arise which do not fit into the pattern of textual exegesis. In those cases, Shan-tao reverts to the question-and-answer technique,[109] which was a common procedure in Buddhist literature.[110]

Since Shan-tao's commentary was written to prove something or, in other words, to refute erroneous conceptions about Pure Land doctrine and practice, he needs strong arguments to make his points. He takes these arguments from the Buddhist scriptures. This again was a common practice among Buddhist authors. Even the *Platform Scripture* of the Ch'an School, which traditionally does not hold the scriptures in such a high esteem, often quotes from Buddhist texts. Shan-tao refers very often to the sutras and *śāstras*, among which, of course, the three basic Pure Land writings come first: the *Kuan-ching* and the Longer and Shorter *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*. But a great number of other writings are cited as well: the *Hua-yen sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the *Lotus sūtra*, the *Mahāprājñā-pāramitā-sūtra* (T. 223), the *Kuan-shih-yin P'u-sa shou-chi sūtra* (T. 371), the *Ta-ch'eng t'ung-hsing sūtra* (T. 672), and so on. The majority of the quotations occur in the first part, which is the most apologetic in nature, since there he defends the basic meaning and intention of the *Kuan-ching* against the interpretations of others. In his second part, he apparently draws on other texts, not mentioned, but which he must have consulted to explain the story of Bimbisāra and Ajātashatru.[111]

What is particular in his use of the scriptures is that he does not give exact references, so that it is sometimes very difficult to countercheck his use of them. Another characteristic, which is rather surprising within a Buddhist context, is that the authority of the scriptures is final. After he quotes from a sutra, the argument is over, although the exact meaning of the quotation is not explained: it is supposedly self-evident.



From Shan-tao's use of the Buddhist canon, not only in his commentary but in his other writings as well, it appears that he had studied them very well. This is clear not only from his formal use of the scriptures (as in part 1 of his commentary) but also from their use as a source of general information and interpretation (for instance, in part 2, as already mentioned, and in part 3, where he comments upon the methods of "meditation," and which presupposes a serious knowledge of several *kuan* and/or *dhyāna* sutras).

A final characteristic of Shan-tao's method of commentary has to do with his exegesis of terms. This again is not his own method only, but is proper to many (most?) Chinese Buddhist commentators. The way they interpret transliterated Buddhist terms and certain common clichés strikes us as rather amusing. The basic reason lies in the very character of the Chinese language, which is essentially monosyllabic (and in a lack of knowledge of Sanskrit). Two examples from the commentary will illustrate this: 1) Shan-tao's interpretation of the title of the sutra and 2) his comment on the cliché introduction of most sutras: *ju shih wo wen* ("Thus have I heard," literally translated "like this I heard").

1. The title of the sutra is *Fo shuo wu-liang-shou kuan ching, i-chüan* (Buddha Speaks the Sutra of Visualization-Inspection on [Buddha] *Amitāyus* = Measureless Life, [in] One Chapter). The most interesting part concerns the exegesis of *wu-liang-shou* ("measureless life"). *Wu-liang-shou* is the Chinese sound for the correct pronunciation (*Namo Amit'a Fo*) used in the western countries: *Namo Amita Buddha.*

*na:* "to entrust, to commit"
*mo:* "life" (or "fate")
*a:* "without"
*mi:* "measure"
*t'a:* "longevity"
*fo:* "enlightenment" (or awakening, awareness)

Therefore, [the whole expression] says: "[I] entrust my life to the Enlightened One (Buddha) of Measureless Life."[112]

The process used here is, from a linguistic viewpoint, senseless. A title like this, which is a transliteration from Sanskrit, cannot be broken up into character units, but it pleases the Chinese

commentators. Here again, Shan-tao does not stand alone. Other famous monk scholars, like Fa-tsang, used the same procedure.[113]

After his introductory title exegesis, Shan-tao continues: "The words *wu-liang-shou* [measureless life] stand for '*dharma*'; *chüeh* [awakening] stands for 'man.' Because 'man' and '*dharma*' are widely manifested [in the sutra], therefore [the title has] *A-mi-t'a-Fo*."[114] Again, this way of interpretation is embroidery and has nothing to do with the basic meaning of the characters.

2. The initial words *ju shih wo wen* (thus I have heard):

The initial words [of the sutra] consist of two [groups]: first the two characters *ju shih* (like this): they generally refer to the Lord of the teaching, the person who gives the discourse; second, the two characters *wo wen* (I heard) specially indicate Ananda, the person who listens. Therefore [the expression] *ju shih wo wen* has a twofold meaning.

Furthermore, *ju shih* indicates the two Buddhist methods (gates) of concentration and nonconcentration. *Shih* stands for concentration; if one acts according to one's capacity, there will certainly be a good result. This explains that the words spoken by the Buddha do not contain any falsehood; therefore it is said: "like this" (*ju shih*).

Again, *ju* means according to the intention of sentient beings. Whoever joyfully responds in his own mind [to the Buddha] will be immediately saved by the Buddha [so that] potentiality and teaching correspond to each other. This again is called *ju shih*. Finally the words *ju shih* clarify the teachings of the Tathāgata: when he [wants to] speak about gradual teaching, his words [exactly] explain the gradual teaching; when sudden, then sudden, when characters (*laksana*), then characters, when emptiness, then emptiness, . . . [etc.] There are a myriad different *dharmas*, but the Tathāgata thoroughly knows them all one by one and in full details—whoever follows his own mental [capacity] obtains his own distinct benefit. Action and result naturally correspond without any confusion: this again is pointed out by *shih* (this). Therefore it is said *ju shih*.

Next, [the characters] *wo wen* (I have heard) clarify that Ananda was the Buddha's personal attendant. He always followed the Buddha, heard numerous discourses and possessed a broad knowledge. Seated at the feet of the master, he heard [his discourses] and upheld them. He thus personally inherited the message and transmitted it without the errors of oral tradition. Therefore it is said: *wo wen*.[115]



This long sample is sufficient to show what kinds of liberties Shan-tao (and Chinese commentators in general) took when explaining technical words or commonplace expressions. When he comes to the real message of the *Kuan-ching*, he shows a deeper understanding, leaving the impression that the other type of exegesis (word exegesis) is rather a game of oratorial ability.

***Basic Ideas*** If the results of the text criticism about the literary composition of the *Kuan-ching* (discussed in Chapter 2) are sound and reliable, a major difficulty can be foreseen with which all commentators will have to struggle: how will they be able to harmonize the sutra's authentic teaching (i.e., "Meditations" 1–13) with the interpolated or secondary message as expressed in "Meditations" 14–16? If the original intention of the sutra writer was to present a method for Buddha vision, then the description of nine modes of rebirth with their respective moral conditions appears as a strange body within the text. In fact, the two themes are rather contradictory. A manual for meditation has not much in common with a code of ethics. Moreover, within "Meditations" 14–16, there is another inner contradiction: the lower modes of rebirth do not outline any moral actions as preconditions for rebirth, but bluntly state that even the worst "sinners" have a chance to be reborn if they call upon the Name of Amita at the moment of death. This is, objectively speaking, comparable to strange bodies in the blood, threatening the very existence of life. It cannot be explained how three different themes, as they are found in the present sutra, can be objectively harmonized. Subjectively, in an attitude of faith, harmonization may be possible, with some maneuvering at least.

That this problem is not imaginary but real can be seen in the various commentaries on the sutra. And here we come to the first point of dispute between Shan-tao and the "other teachers": what is the fundamental doctrine of the sutra? Chinese Buddhists make a distinction between two concepts: *t'i* and *tsung*. In the context of Buddhism *t'i* can be described as "essence, the essentials, substance,"[116] whereas *tsung*, as it appears here, is translated as "summary, main doctrine, . . ."[117] *Tsung* is sometimes combined with *chih*, and the compound *tsung chih* would mean the "main thesis, or ideas" of a given text.[118] This is not a particularly Buddhist expression, but has a general meaning of "requirements, standard, aim, purpose, contents, principle, general scope, plat-

form of principles."[119] To illustrate more clearly what both terms mean, a few examples from the commentary are relevant:

> The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* considers the ineffable emancipation as *tsung*, while the *Mahāprajñapāramitā-sūtra* considers "emptiness of wisdom" as *tsung*. These two are not the same. Now, this *Kuan-ching* considers the *kuan-Fo samādhi* as *tsung*, and also regards the *nien-Fo samādhi* as *tsung*, while it considers the single-minded vow (or desire) for rebirth in the Pure Land as the *t'i*.[120]

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the exact meaning of Shan-tao's *tsung* and *t'i*, one needs a comparison with parallel texts from other commentators. In Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi*, we read, "The *tsung-chih* of various sutras are not the same: in the *Nirvāna-sūtra*, the Buddha-nature is *tsung*; in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the ineffable emancipation is *tsung* . . . Now, in this *kuan* sutra, the *kuan-Fo samādhi* is *tsung*."[121]

However, in a later passage of the *ALC*, Tao-ch'o seems to contradict himself, or at least, instead of limiting his argumentation to the *Kuan-ching*, he includes various other sutras, and says that the important method (*yao-men*) is *nien-Fo samādhi*: "This and those various sutras frequently clarify the *nien-Fo samādhi* as *tsung*."[122]

Next in Hui-yuan's commentary, one reads: "One should [next] know the *tsung ch'ü*[123] of the sutra. The *tsung-ch'ü* differentiated in various sutras are all different. (For example, in the *Nirvāna-sūtra*, *nirvāna* is the *tsung*; in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* the ineffable emancipation is *tsung* . . . In this *Kuan-ching* the *kuan-Fo samādhi* is the *tsung*.)"[124]

When turning attention to what Chih-yi says about this, we observe that he is more meticulous. At the very start of his book, he writes: "Therefore we know that if one desires to be born in the Land Sukhāvatī, he must practice the sixteen wonderful meditations-visualizations (*kuan*); if one wishes to see the World-honored One Amita, he has to practice the three kinds of pure actions."[125] Further he says: "In this sutra mental visualization-inspection (*hsin-kuan*) is the *tsung*; the true *laksanas* are the *t'i*."[126] However, a little further Chih-yi wants to explain the sutra in general, and here he distinguishes five items: the name, the *t'i*, the *tsung*, the *yung*, and the particular school in which this teaching is accepted:[127]

> *T'i* means "basic stuff" (matter, substance) *chu chih*. The Buddhist *śāstras* say: except for the true *laksanas* of the *dharmas*, everything else is unreal (*mo-shih*). The Mahāyāna sutras consider the true *laksanas* as their imprint [of authenticity], as their correct *t'i* . . . As the stars have the North star as their revolving point, as the 10,000 streams have the Eastern Sea as their destination, in the same manner the sutras have the true laksanas as their *t'i*.[128]



Next Chih-yi discusses the *tsung* of the sutras. First of all, he comments upon *tsung* and *t'i*; next he clarifies the meaning of *tsung*.

> Some people would say that *tsung* is the same as *t'i*; *t'i* is the same as *tsung*. However, I say that this is wrong. Why? Because *tsung* is twofold, whereas *t'i* is only one. If *t'i* was twofold, it would not be *t'i* anymore. If *tsung* was not twofold, it would not be *tsung* anymore . . . Now the *tsung* of this sutra is through mental visualization (inspection) of the Pure [Land], [to arrive at the vision of] the Purity of the Buddha and his Land . . .
>
> Therefore through mental cultivation of the wonderful meditations (inspections), to induce [a vision of] the Pure Land, that is the *tsung* of this sutra.[129]

Chih-yi further discusses the *yung* (function, use) of the *Kuan-ching*. *Yung* means usefulness (*li-yung*): To produce goodness and to destroy evil is the *yung* of this sutra . . . To be reborn in the Pure Land is the great usefulness of this sutra.[130]

Finally in Chi-tsang's commentary a diametrically opposite view is expressed:

> With regard to the difference between *tsung* and *t'i*, I consider *tsung* as *t'i* and *t'i* as *tsung*. There is no difference between the two . . .
>
> This sutra [*Kuan-ching*] first reveals to Vaidehī the wonderful Pure Country, arousing in her a longing mind. Next it clarifies three kinds of conditions for supreme happiness. Finally it manifests the sixteen kinds of *kuan* as conditional actions. Within these sixteen, first of all the Pure Land is explained, next the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, and finally the meaning of the three levels of rebirth. In summary, because the three great intentions only manifest the conditional actions for rebirth, it does not do to argue that the causal conditions of the Pure Land are the sutra's *t'i*, while to urge beings to cultivate these conditions toward rebirth is the *tsung*.[131]

Returning to Shan-tao's position in this controversy, one cannot easily escape the impression that he is an eclectic. He combines

various views expressed before him, and settles for a compromise. Recapitulating all the viewpoints, we notice that for Tao-ch'o there is only *tsung* (no *t'i*), which is *kuan-Fo-samādhi* (secondarily, however, also *nien-Fo-samādhi*). Hui-yuan similarly only discusses *tsung* (or *tsung-ch'ü*), which is *kuan-Fo-samādhi*. Chih-yi is the first dissenter. He distinguishes clearly between *tsung*, which for him is mental inspection (*hsin-kuan*) climaxing into mental vision, and *t'i*, which, in common with all Mahāyāna sutras, exists in the true *laksanas*. Besides *tsung* and *t'i*, Chih-yi also adds *yung*. It consists of being reborn in Amita's Land. In his turn, Chi-tsang reacts against this splitting up into *tsung* and *t'i*. Both are identical and consist in the various conditional actions for rebirth which are the three pure actions and the sixteen meditations.

It seems that this whole debate is partially academic. Whether there is an essential difference between *tsung* and *t'i* might be only a problem in the order of logic. *Tsung* could be considered as the tendency, the general scope or purpose of the sutra, whereas *t'i* is the actual subject matter. But in practice it seems that such a distinction loses relevancy: after all, what the *Kuan-ching* purports to communicate to the reader is what counts most of all. The discussion only arose because of the multiple authorship of the book. In Shan-tao's commentary, the solution adopted is both eclectic and amusing. He cannot deny that the sutra outlines a practical schedule for Amita vision (*tsung* is *kuan-Fo-samādhi*), but at the same time he is concerned with *nien-Fo-samādhi*: the exact meaning which Shan-tao gives to this expression is not quite clear yet, but it appears that it is different from the former. Shan-tao probably took it over from Tao-ch'o.

It seems to be the general consensus of *Jōdo Shinshū* theorists in Japan that Shan-tao reacted violently against his predecessors, who had explained the *Kuan-ching* only in terms of monastic life as a way of strict meditation. Shan-tao wanted to return the sutra to the common people. Without fully subscribing to this very outspoken exegesis, one might say that it seems probable that Shan-tao indeed wanted to make a bridge toward the laity, not reducing the meaning of the *Kuan-ching* to merely extolling the name invocation, but in two distinct ways: first by emphasizing both meditation and ethical conduct as a method of spiritual life *for the Buddhist layperson*; second, by equally advocating the wider practice of *nien-Fo*, which includes oral invocation as another



adequate way for rebirth in Amita's Land. That this is Shan-tao's real intention can be proven in several ways.

1. He emphasizes *t'i*. Although *kuan-Fo* and *nien-Fo-samādhi* are said to be the *tsung* of the sutra, Shan-tao adds that the singleminded vow for rebirth is the *t'i*. This seems rather a logical artifact and illustrates Shan-tao's eclectic character. If the difference between *tsung* and *t'i* is valid at all, it would make more sense to say that the *t'i* or "substance" of the *Kuan-ching* consists in "meditation" exercises, with additional moral requirements, whereas the *tsung* or purport would be to awaken the desire for rebirth. Meditation and ethics would then be two distinct ways or gates to attain the unique goal of rebirth.
2. Shan-tao selects *ting* and *san* as the true doctrine (*cheng-tsung*) of the *Kuan-ching* and goes into great length of detail to prove that these two are indeed the main gates toward Pure Land emancipation. (See Chapters 6 and 7.) However, when he arrives at the point of the relationship between faith and practice, he also emphasizes the importance of name invocation. He seems to feel that there is some contradiction here. How he solves the difficulty will be discussed in Chapter 8. It is sufficient to mention the fact here.
3. Shan-tao's biography has brought to light his success as a Pure Land preacher in Ch'ang-an. His followers did belong to all strata of T'ang society, including the highest classes. It would be hard to believe that educated people with true spiritual concern would be satisfied with a message of mere mechanical invocation of the name of a Buddha. Shan-tao's influence on the higher levels of society must be attributed to something more profound in his approach. He stimulated laypersons to adopt a way of life in imitation of the monks and nuns, a life of meditation and ethical conduct adapted to their own needs.
4. Finally, one may wonder why Shan-tao wrote a commentary on a sutra mainly concerned with meditation practice. If he wanted to propagate an attitude of faith resulting only in the practice of *nien-Fo*, he should have chosen the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*, especially the Longer Version, with its

emphasis on the original vows of Amita. The bare fact that he preferred the *Kuan-ching* shows that in it he discovered something more substantial and more essential than name invocation.

Our conclusion about Shan-tao's view concerning the basic aim of the *Kuan-ching* is that he considers both *kuan-Fo* and *nien-Fo-samādhi*, and the sincere wish for rebirth in Amita's Land, as belonging to the heart of the sutra. Whether in his subsequent exegesis he will always be consistent with his own theory is another matter. This will be taken up at the proper moment.

During this initial consideration of the general tendency of the *Kuan-ching* according to different commentators, it has become obvious that this text was a focal point of controversy during the Sui-T'ang era. Japanese scholars,[132] for whom Shan-tao is an important authority on Pure Land doctrine, have made studies in which Shan-tao's viewpoints are compared with the viewpoints of his predecessors: the articles by R. Etani and R. Yūki are especially noteworthy. According to Etani, two main tendencies are noticeable. The first one is the tradition established by Hui-yuan (523–592) and more or less followed by Ling-yü, Chi-tsang, Fa-ch'ang, Hui-ching, Tao-yin, and others. Although their ideas are often conflicting, their basic concern is with abstract speculation, whereas the other tradition, transmitted by Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao, is characterized by practical considerations such as coping with the period of the corrupt *dharma* and the entrance of the common mortals into the *sambhoga* land of Amita. In other words, the two streams of thought are on the one hand "idealism" and on the other hand "existentialism."[133]

R. Yūki's supplements Etani's study by making a detailed scrutiny of the main points of conflict, especially between Shan-tao and the others. Yūki follows the view of a Japanese scholar, Reiō (1774–1851), who discovered twenty-two points of conflict.[134] However, when looking closer at all these items, one sees that some are not really important and are related to material divisions of the various commentaries, or are rather repetitions, even duplicates. What it really comes to are the conflicting interpretations about the basic teaching of the *Kuan-ching*, which was discussed above, and which results in only a few major conflicts. For instance, if the basic intention of the Buddha is to teach a method of concentration in order to see Amita and his Pure Land, does it necessarily follow



that this method is only given for the use of monastic life? In other words, is it for the exclusive benefit of Bodhisattva candidates? The "other" teachers think so, but Shan-tao disagrees. It is equally given to "common mortals," like Vaidehī.

Moreover, if the *kuan-Fo-samādhi* is the basic teaching of the sutra, what about Shan-tao's so-called emphasis on the recitation of Amita's name, even to the exclusion of other practices? This point deserves particular attention, for it appears that Pure Land followers have partially misinterpreted Shan-tao's viewpoint. Other points of dispute have to do with the nature of Amita and his Pure Land and with the interpretations of the nine grades of rebirth. All these points will be taken up in detail in the appropriate chapters.

This introduction about Shan-tao's commentary has at least given some insights into the problems connected with the *Kuan-ching* and has shown that the interpretations of one and the same sutra can be very subjective, and arise from the basic (sometimes a prioristic) predispositions of a person. As often was (and is) the case with the interpretation of the Bible, one uses the Holy Word to prove one's own fundamental beliefs, instead of taking the Word, listening to its message, and adapting one's beliefs according to it.

# APPENDIX I

Text 1
*KCS* : T. 1753, 37: 246, A 17–24.

稱以真如廣大。五乘不測。法性深而千聖莫窮其際。真如之體眞址性不出蠢蠢之心。法性無邊邊際則元來不動。無盡法界凡聖齊同。兩垢如如則普談於含識。恒沙功德寂用湛然。但以垢除覆深淨體無由顯照。故使大悲隱於西化。慈人火宅之門。流甘露雨於群萌。鮮智炬則朗。重昏於永夜。三檀等備。四攝齊收。開示長劫之苦因。悟入永生之樂果。不留群迷性隔樂欲不同。雖無一實之機。等有五乘之用。致使布慈雲於三界。注法雨於大悲。莫不等洽塵沙。普沾未聞之益。菩提種子稀此以抽心。正覺之芽念念因茲增長。

Text 2 *FST* : T. 1979, 47: 424, C 3–24.

又言一時者。或就日夜十二時。年月四時等。此指世如來隨機說化時也。言處者隨彼所宜。如來說法。或在山林處。或在王宮聚落處。或在曠野塚間處。或在多少人天處。或在聲聞菩薩處。或在八部人天王等處。或在純凡若多一二處。或在純聖若多一二處。隨其時處如來觀知不增不減。隨緣授法各稱所宜。斯乃洪鐘雖響必待扣而方鳴。大聖乘慈必待請而當說。故名一時也。又一時者。阿闍世正起逆時。佛在河處當此一時。如來獨與二衆在彼菩提。此即以下形上意也。故曰一時。又言一時者。佛與二衆於一時中在彼菩提。即阿闍世起此逆因緣。此即以上形下意也。故曰一時。

Text 3 *KCS* : T. 1753, 37: 252, B 7–21.

# PART 2

Figure 6
Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin (stone rubbing from China).
Text: *Nan-hai ta-shih* ("Great Hero of the South Sea")

# CHAPTER 5

## *The Human Situation Versus Amita and His Land of Purity*

Although the *dharma* preached by the Buddhas is eternal and unchangeable, it is still, at least as practiced by human beings, and like everything else in the contingent world, subject to decay. Predictions about the "corruption" of the *dharma* may have been formulated since ancient times and have been repeated frequently in later times. Their influence on the history of Buddhism has been very significant.[1] In China, the theory was especially taken up and propagated by the "Sect of the Three Stages," initiated by Hsin-hsing (540–594). Shan-tao may have taken over this belief from his master Tao-ch'o, but whereas Hsin-hsing distinguished three stages in the gradual process, Tao-ch'o seems to have believed that there were five periods of five hundred years each:

> The *Ta- fang-teng ta-chi yüeh-tsang ching*[2] says: After the Buddha's *nirvāna* the first five hundred years my disciples will strive for (study) wisdom and gain strength [in it]; the second five hundred years they will strive for concentration, and gain strength; the third five hundred years they will strive for frequent listening and recitation and gain strength; the fourth five hundred years, they will construct temples and pagodas, cultivate merits and confession and gain strength; during the fifth five hundred years, the clear *dharma* will be obstructed; many will dispute, and few will possess the *dharma* and gain strength.[3]

He further quotes from the same sutra where it explains that the Buddhas display four methods to save sentient beings:

1. By preaching the twelve divisions of the canon.
2. By making sentient beings concentrate on and inspect their body marks and minor marks of infinite brightness.
3. By recurring to their immeasurable supernatural powers and various transformations.

4. Since they possess an infinite number of names, if any sentient beings call these with undivided attention, they will all be (re)born in the presence of the Buddhas.[4]

Since we now live in the fourth five hundred years, it is the age of repentance and confession, of practicing merits and calling the names of the Buddha(s).[5]

In a later passage, Tao-ch'o mentions the more customary view of a triple division: five hundred years of the true, correct *dharma* (*cheng-fa*), a thousand years of simulated or counterfeit *dharma* (*hsiang-fa*), and ten thousand years of corrupted *dharma* (*mo-fa*).[6]

It is not difficult to harmonize these contrary views. According to the first view, the age corresponding with the corruption period is the fourth, which was supposed to have started fifteen hundred years after *nirvāna*. If the second view is followed, the third period equally would have started fifteen hundred years after *nirvāna* (i.e., after five hundred years of correct *dharma* and a thousand years of counterfeit *dharma*). In Tao-ch'o's opinion, he lived in the period of decay, which was believed to have started in 550 C.E.[7] or, according to another view, in 610 C.E.[8] His age is therefore, in his eyes, a period of the five defilements, without a Buddha in the world, so that the difficult practice is not adapted to the needs of the people. Instead there is the easy practice, which consists of faith in the power of the Buddha and a desire for rebirth in the Pure Land. Because of the Buddha's vows, one can be immediately reborn.[9] In other words, this is the method of "other-power" (*t'a-li*), as opposed to the method of "self-power" (*tzu-li*),[10] or to use the terminology created by Tao-ch'o himself, the difference between the "Holy Path" or "Path of the Holy Ones" (*sheng-tao*) and the "Path of (Rebirth in) the Pure Land" (*wang-sheng ching-t'u*).[11] Since we are now living in the period of decay (*mo-fa*), the age of the five defilements, there is only the one Pure Land gate to enter into paradise.[12]

These are some of the ideas which Shan-tao may have inherited from his master, with one reservation. This pessimistic outlook on the corruption of the times does not seem to have affected his personal life-style so much as it did his work of spreading the *dharma* among the people. He himself followed the "Aryan Path," or the "Path of the Saints," of Bodhisattvahood, involving strict



asceticism and energetic concentration. When he wrote the *Kuan-ching shu*, he had the masses of people in mind, who were not so well prepared to follow the "Difficult Path."[13]

Anticipating his teaching for the masses, this is, in short, what Shan-tao said. Man lives in an age of decay; there is no hope for salvation from the endless misery of *samsāra*. However, a light shines in the darkness. The Compassionate One, the Buddha, has entered our world and pointed out for the masses of people of the future generations the most effective means toward emancipation. Indeed, the doctrine contained in this sutra (the *Kuan-ching*) as explained by Shan-tao, is a message of hope and salvation.

In his commentary Shan-tao dramatizes the human situation to a point that the two poles of tension reach a climax. On the one hand, there is the absolute hopelessness of the human predicament, resulting in a sense of being radically lost. On the other hand, there is the saving voice of Shākyamuni and the saving hand of Amita, through which, almost unexpectedly, emancipation lies within the reach of everyone.

## THE HUMAN SITUATION: DESPAIR VERSUS HOPE

The hopelessness of the human situation is one of the basic axioms of Buddhism, and is stressed even more emphatically in the Pure Land School.[14] In the *Kuan-ching*, the Buddha speaks in this way: "Listen with attention and remember carefully. The Tathāgata will presently explain for the benefit of all sentient beings of the future generations, harassed by the robbers that are the passions-delusions, the pure actions [necessary for rebirth in the Land of Purity]."[15] And further, Vaidehī addresses the Buddha: "World-honored One, through the power of the Buddha I have been enabled to have a vision of that Land; but how will all the sentient beings, after the Buddha's *nirvāna*, corrupt and evil and without goodness, and compelled (pressed) by the five sorrows, be able to obtain a vision of that most Happy Land of Amita?"[16]

Shan-tao explains that when the Buddha incarnates himself it is only with the purpose of saving all sentient beings, who are forever drowning in the sea of mortality. Their obstacles are very serious. They are deeply deluded by false attachments and so are not even aware of the fiery pits of the three evil destinies lying hidden beneath their feet.[17]

> So heavy is the burden of their past *karma*, that they are blind to whatever reality they are confronted with: they consider as far the distance between the hand palm and the fingers; what is only separated by a bamboo splint, is considered to be miles apart. How much less are ordinary persons, who are outside the realm of the Buddhas, able to pry into the mind [of the Buddhas]?[18]

Shan-tao unquestioningly accepts the idea of the corrupt *dharma* in his outlook on life. The feelings of the masses in the period after the Buddha's *nirvāna* will become superficial and rude. They will have no place for refuge and will stupidly turn around in great alarm, while in their confusion they will enter into the evil destinies.[19]

That human beings will be "depraved and evil and without goodness" means that they are living in a period of five corruptions or impurities:[20]

> The first is the *kalpa*[21] in decay; however, the *kalpa* is not depraved in fact, but when a *kalpa* is shortened, all evils will increase. The second is the decay of all sentient beings: at the beginning of a *kalpa*, all will commit the ten evils in full abundance. The third is the decay of views: for all the evils man commits himself, he finds a justification; when others commit them, they are blamed as wrongdoers. The fourth is the decay of passions-delusions: when at the present moment the end of a *kalpa* has arrived, it has become very hard to love the evil nature of sentient beings. They blindly follow the inclinations of the six senses with the result that desire and hatred arise in emulation. Finally, the fifth is the decay of human life: because of the above two kinds of corruption (decay of views and decay of passions-delusions), killing and harming of others will prevail, while there is no kindness, no gratefulness or altruism. Once the painful cause of cutting off life has been created, how would it be possible to receive the blessing of longevity? Once corruption has set in, the essence cannot be considered good any longer.[22]

Explaining the compulsion by the five sorrows, Shan-tao says that these five are different from the eight sorrows. The five mentioned in the sutra are the sorrows of birth, old age, sickness, death, and separation from beloved ones. Adding to these the ills of the five *skandhas*, the suffering of unattained goals, and the suffering of meeting with those one hates, there are altogether eight kinds of suffering, to which all sentient beings within the six *gati* are subjected. These eight, together with the above fivefold kinds



of decay, form the reality of the human situation. There is no single exception to it. If somebody is not harassed by these sufferings, he or she does not belong to the number of "ordinary human beings."[23]

When Shan-tao in the context of meditation speaks about the need of singleminded attention, he explains the reason for this necessity. All sentient beings are mentally scattered and changeable; their ideas change as fast as monkeys; their minds wander everywhere among the six sense objects and are not for one moment at rest. Since the spheres of their senses are not unified, as soon as something strikes the eye, desires and confused thoughts arise.[24]

This passage comes almost literally from T'an-luan: "It seems not difficult to achieve ten continuous thoughts. However, the minds of sentient beings are like wild horses, their ideas change even faster than monkeys, jumping among the six sense objects without one moment's rest."[25] If life in the three worlds is considered to be a mixture of suffering and happiness, Shan-tao personally does not believe that this earthly life provides any real happiness. What people usually call happiness is in fact indulgence in idleness and attachment to worldly realities. These are sources of great bitterness, and ultimately there is absolutely not a moment of true happiness in them.[26]

In one sentence, Shan-tao summarizes the human situation; he lives "in an evil age when the five impurities are flourishing, which are the evil world, evil sentient beings, evil views, evil *kleshas*, and unbelief."[27]

Against this rather black image of man's actual corruption, there is the equally fundamental view of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Shan-tao's thinking, the actuality of man's perfectibility. Man's original nature is Enlightenment, Buddhahood. There is no essential distinction between a sage and a fool; "within the dustless *dharmadātu*, ordinary beings and holy beings are equally perfect; if both the defiled and undefiled are like the Buddha nature, then both must exist within all sentient beings."[28] Shan-tao's basic optimism is, however, limited by the human inability to achieve one's natural potential through one's own effort. "Because screens of delusions deeply cover [man's] essential purity, this purity has no way to manifest itself and to shine forth."[29] Humans are thus caught in a hopeless predicament, from which there is no way out. The possibility for Enlightenment is given as a seed, but there is no

way for growth, since the initial power is lacking. Man's outlook on his existence is hopeless. From birth to birth, he drowns in the sea of mortality. However, there is one reason to rejoice: the compassion of the Buddha, who will provide the initial power to launch suffering man onto a path of emancipation.

> For this reason the greatly compassionate One was sent forth, concealing himself in a *nirmāna-kāya* in the West [India]. To alarm [those inside] he entered the gate of the burning house, sprinkled sweet dew and wisdom, and brightened the heavy darkness of the eternal night. The three *dānas*[30] were [thus] equally perfected, and the four all-embracing virtues[31] acquired, [whereupon] he revealed the painful origin of endless *kalpas*, and [made men] aware of the blissful fruit: to enter into eternal life . . . [32]
>
> A cloud of benevolence is being spread out over the three worlds, the rain of the *dharma* is made to pour down with great compassion, and without distinction all afflicted beings are saturated, [so that] they universally receive the benefits of the unheard [teaching]. The *bodhi* seed relies on this [water] to pull out the essence;[33] because of this [water] the sprout of *sambodhi* grows and increases moment after moment.[34]

Buddha Shākyamuni is thus presented as the one who saves sentient beings from their hopeless situation. He shows the Path to emancipation, but besides this function, he has another role to perform for the Pure Land followers. He points toward Buddha Amita and his Land of Purity, and teaches the practice of salvation through faith in this Buddha. Shan-tao never forgets Shākyamuni's importance. Whereas in the daily practice of the Pure Land devotees the name of Buddha Amita is almost uniquely praised and invoked, Shan-tao, at least in his written works, points to the historical Buddha as the source of this teaching. This is in accordance with the basic scriptures of Pure Land Buddhism.

> Concerning the great Vows, the Longer Sutra says: "All ordinary beings, good or evil [wishing to] obtain rebirth, must absolutely avail themselves of the karmic power of Buddha Amita's great Vow, as the decisive condition [for rebirth]." Moreover, the secret intention of the Buddha is vast and deep: the gate of knowledge[35] is hard to understand: [even the beings within] the three virtuous positions and the ten stages of perfection[36] are unable to fathom what they have secretly experienced. How much less dare we, who are light as feathers [if] without faith, [to pretend] to know the essential meaning! Our only hope is that Shākyamuni from this world will send us forth, and that Amita in that Land will welcome us. If from there we are called, and from here we are sent forth, how could we say that it is difficult to go there? If only with a diligent mind we can serve the *dharma* till the end of our life, [then] when we lay down this body of defilement, will we immediately realize the eternal happiness of that *dharma* nature.[37]



Whereas Buddha Amita is the One who saves in the other world, Shākyamuni directs man in this world. He is "the most supreme among all the holy ones. When he utters words, they become authentic teaching, [so that] all those who foster delusions may be nourished, and all those who hear may benefit from it."[38]

To illustrate man's existential predicament of both despair and hope in a dramatic way, Shan-tao created the famous "Parable of the White Path," also called "Parable of the Two Streams and the White Path."[39] Although the parable is most likely Shan-tao's own creation, it is quite possible that the initial inspiration was drawn from T'an-luan's *LAC*. Previously the remark was made that this work inspired Shan-tao in another context. Explaining the "Ten Uninterrupted Thoughts," T'an-luan uses the following simile:

> It is like a man who is crossing the wilderness on his way home, and hits robbers on his path. Drawing their swords to attack, they rush forward to kill. The traveler, running hard to escape, considers [his chance] for crossing the river: "If only I can cross over, I may save my head!" Right then he only thinks of a means to cross the river: "When arriving at the bank, shall I keep on my clothes, or take them off? If I keep them on, I would probably not be able to cross; if I undress, I may not arrive in time." He only has this single thought without any other consideration. He only thinks how to cross the river.[40]

Although the context is different in Shan-tao's parable, there is a certain similarity. Both are situations of crisis, of a dilemma with only one way of escape—crossing to the other side—but this is impossible because of a paradoxical choice. Shan-tao has enlarged the simile and made it into a formal parable, exemplifying the existential crisis of human beings in the age of decay of the *dharma*. Therefore his parable has a much broader scope than T'an-luan's simile, since it depicts the essential quality of human

life: a desperate need for salvation, in which only intervention by the Buddhas can bring relief.

The scene of the parable is a wilderness in which a lonely traveler is on his way home. A confrontation takes place. He is attacked by robbers and wild beasts rushing forward from the east side. A crisis exists and there is no way out. The east is blocked by the assailants, who want his life. Running toward the west, he sees two rivers: the one flowing toward the south is a river of fire; the other stretching north is a river of water. Both rivers are only a hundred steps across, but immensely deep and long. The only way out is toward the west, for across the two rivers there is a very narrow path, the White Path, only four or five inches wide, leading to the western bank. How is it possible to cross over?

Left to his own power, the traveler is condemned to die. At the moment of deepest anxiety and terror, he makes the decision that the narrow white path should be tried; even though it seems a desperate attempt, there is no other choice. Right then "supernatural" help is offered: from the east side, there is Shākyamuni's urging voice; from the west bank there is Amita's encouragement. The traveler makes up his mind and with determination shakes off all doubts and proceeds forward. Although tempted by the robbers on the east side, he continues with attention on his narrow Path, and in no time arrives at the other shore.[41]

Shan-tao himself explains the meaning of the parable:

> The east bank symbolizes the "burning house," which is this Sahā world. The west bank symbolizes the precious Land Sukhāvatī. The robbers and evil beasts with their promises of friendship symbolize the six sense organs, the six consciousnesses, the six sense objects, the five *skandhas,* and the four elements which constitute sentient beings. The wilderness without people symbolizes the frequent company of evil advisers. The two rivers of water and fire symbolize human greed or desire (water) and hatred (fire). The white path in the middle, four or five inches wide, symbolizes [the possibility of] producing in the mind a pure wish for rebirth, even amid the delusions and passions of greed and hatred. Because greed and anger are strong, they are symbolized by water and fire; since the goodness of the mind is feeble, it is symbolized by the white path. Besides, the waves constantly sweeping over the path symbolize the continuous stirring up of desires within the mind so that the noble mind is defiled. The flames constantly scorching the path symbolize the feelings of anger and hatred in the mind, which burn up the spiritual treasure of merits. The man marching forward toward the west symbolizes the dedication of all one's actions toward [rebirth in] the western Land. The voice on the east bank urging to pursue the march to the west symbolizes Shākyamuni, who, although not visible anymore to men since his entering into *nirvāna*, can still be reached through his teaching of the *dharma*, which is comparable to his voice. The calling for return by the robbers after only a few steps on the path symbolizes the persons of evil views holding unorthodox ideas and practices, who spread their false opinions around to create confusion, with the result of loading guilt upon themselves and sliding back on the path. The voice calling from the west bank symbolizes the intention [contained in] Amita's vows. The instantaneous arrival at the west bank and the joy of being greeted by good friends symbolizes the sentient beings who have been drowning for ages within [the sea of] *samsāra*, forever returning to the wheel and caught in their own delusions without any means for deliverance. Now they have heard Shākyamuni's call and his message pointing toward the west; moreover, they have relied on the merciful call of Amita. Putting their faith in the interventions of the two Honored Ones, without regard for the two rivers of water and fire, but moment after moment without desisting, they mount the path of power of [Amita's] vows. After their life ends, they obtain rebirth in his Land, where they see his glorious features and rejoice beyond measure.[42]



For Shan-tao the picture of human suffering is dark, but he does not overstress it. He only uses it to make people aware of their situation and stir them into a frame of mind in which they would welcome Amita's rescue. In fact, Shan-tao's emphasis is more on the positive values of Pure Land Buddhism: hope-faith-effort-sincerity, and joy. Deep and sincere faith in Amita's promises was the occasion for him to insert this parable.

That his outlook is positive and optimistic will appear more clearly when his views on the nature of Amita and his Pure Land are discussed.

## AMITA AND HIS SUKHĀVATĪ

In the Shorter Sutra, Shākyamuni addresses himself to Shāriputra: ". . . after you have passed from here over a hundred

thousand kotīs of Buddha countries there is in the Western part a Buddha country, a world called Sukhāvatī (Happy Land). And there is a Tathāgata, called Amitāyus, an Arhat, fully enlightened, dwells now, and remains, and supports himself, and teaches the Law."[43] In the Longer Sutra, the Blessed One speaks to Ananda in this manner:

> Not indeed . . . has that Tathāgata passed away, nor has he not yet come, but the Tathāgata, the holy, after having obtained the highest perfect knowledge, dwells now, remains, supports himself, and teaches the Law, in the western quarter, in the Buddha country, distant from this world by a hundred thousand niyutas of kotīs of Buddha countries, in the world which is called Sukhāvatī, being called Amitābha, the Tathāgata, holy and fully enlightened.[44]

In the Longer Sutra, the creation of Amita's Buddha Land is attributed to the extraordinary vows which he pronounced as monk Dharmākara and to the realization of these vows after numberless eons of practicing the virtues of a Bodhisattva.[45] The sutra goes on to say that the life span of that Buddha is immeasurable. One cannot possibly say how many "hundred thousands of niyutas of kotis of kalpas" it will last.[46]

The sutra implies in these descriptions that Amita's Sukhāvatī was created as a reward for his merits. It also implies that Amita's life span will, at some faraway moment in the future, come to an end. That his life span cannot be measured does not mean that it is measureless in absolute terms. These considerations have to be kept in mind if an objective judgment has to be formed with regard to the controversy about Amita and his Land among the Chinese Buddhists.

In Chinese, the term *Sukhāvatī*, after an initial stage of transliterations, was usually translated as *Chi-lo kuo-t'u* (Land of Extreme Happiness) or *Chi-lo ching-t'u* (Pure Land of Extreme Happiness). "Pure Land" means: Pure Buddha Land or Pure *Buddha-kshetra* and is very often abbreviated to *Ching-t'u*, Pure Land,[47] as in *Ching-t'u Tsung* (Pure Land School), *Ching-t'u Men* (Pure Land Gate, Doctrine), and so on.

### *The Nature of Amita and Sukhāvatī*

Leaving the terminology aside, what is the nature of the Pure Land of Amita? What is the nature of Amita himself? These questions



are more important for Pure Land followers, since they are right at the heart of their faith. Besides, some of the essential conceptions of Pure Land doctrine have been attacked and rejected by other schools.

That differences of viewpoints arise is not astonishing: different sutras explain things in different ways. Besides, an additional cause of opposed views is that the same original sutras have been translated in various ways, which are at times contradictory.[48] The Han and Wu texts[49] are less developed: although Amita's life is described as infinite, his body is considered to be a *nirmāna-kāya*; after his enters into *nirvāna* his two Bodhisattvas will take his place. This view is also expressed in other texts, such as the *Kuan-shih-yin P'u-sa shou-chi ching* (T. 371). In the Wei text[50] no passing into *nirvāna* is mentioned, whereas in the T'ang[51] and also in the Sanskrit texts Amita is described as endless and almost beginningless. The Sung text[52] distinguishes two bodies of Amita: his *dharma-kāya* and his *sambhoga-kāya*. However, this latter translation was too late to be influential in the dispute during the Sui-T'ang period.

The controversy took place after T'an-luan's time, with on the one hand followers of the Ti-lun and She-lun Schools, and on the other hand Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao. The Ti-lun School,[53] a forerunner of the Hua-yen School, was founded on the basis of Vasabandhu's commentary (T. 1522) on the *Daśabhūmi-sūtra* (T. 287), translated by Bodhiruci and others between 508 and 512. Hui-yuan (of the Ching-ying monastery), a follower of the southern branch of the Ti-lun, commenting on the object of *kuan* in the *Kuan-ching*, distinguishes two bodies of Amita, which may become the object of *kuan*. One is the true body (*chen-shen*); and the other is the incarnation body (*ying-shen*).[54] The true body of the Buddha is his *universalized dharma-kāya* (*p'ing-teng fa-men chih shen*),[55] whereas his incarnation body is the Tathāgata's common worldly body (*kung-shih chien shen*), or in other words, his *nirmāna-kāya*.[56]

The reason why it is Amita's *nirmāna-kāya* that becomes the object of visualization in the *Kuan-ching* is that the *Kuan-yin shou-chi ching* says that, although Amita's life is very long, it still will come to an end. The true body of Amita is like *śūnyatā* and ultimately endless, whereas his *nirmāna-kāya* is limited in time. That his life is described as "without boundaries" (*wu-pien*) only

means that it cannot be fathomed by ordinary men or *śrāvakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas*, and not that it is boundless in fact.[57]

Hui-yuan's exegesis is not convincing. His only authority to prove his point is the sutra on Kuan-yin's prophecy. But further on in his commentary, he seems to contradict himself when he expresses the view that Vaidehī is not a common person, but a great Bodhisattva since she receives the fourth degree of patience (*wu-sheng fa*), which is normally attained by Bodhisattvas of the seventh to ninth *bhūmi*.[58] However, if she is indeed a holy person, she would be able to see the glorious body of the Buddha, his *sambhoga-kāya*, since this is the body in which the Buddhas appear to the Bodhisattvas. Hui-yuan himself implies this in a negative way, when he says that ordinary persons are not able to see the Buddha and Bodhisattvas (in their glorious bodies).[59]

Chi-tsang closely follows Hui-yuan's exegesis, but adds Mādhyamika speculations to the discussion of the two bodies: *chen-shen* and *ying-shen*.[60] A little further he changes his terminology and uses *fa-shen* (*dharma-kāya*) as opposed to *sheng-shen* (physical body)[61] and says that the object of *kuan* in the *Kuan-ching* is the *samādhi* which consists in the remembrance of the Buddha's physical body, and not of his *dharma* body. An example of the latter is when Subhūti concentrates on the true characters of the *dharmas*. The former, on the other hand, consists in concentrating on the Tathāgata's thirty-two marks and eighty minor marks.[62]

Chi-tsang also follows Hui-yuan's explanation about Amita's life span. Amita is called *wu-liang-shou* (infinite life) but in fact his life will come to an end, after which Kuan-yin will take his place; when Kuan-yin enters into *nirvāna*, Ta-shih-chih will in turn take over.[63]

Chi-tsang has some considerations of his own, which are quite revealing about diversities of views among his contemporaries. In his introduction, when he explains the meaning of *Ching-t'u*, he asks the question: "Is the world of 'Peaceful Nourishment' [*an-yang shih-chieh*] [i.e., the Pure Land of Amita] a *sambhoga* land (*pao-t'u*) or a *nirmāna* land (*ying-t'u*)?" He answers by saying that the opinions are divided. The teachers of the south hold the view that it is a *sambhoga* land because, while refuting the theory of the *hsing-k'ung* teaching,[64] they hold that it was created through the forty-eight vows of *bhiksu* Dharmākara. The northerners also believe that it is a *sambhoga* land created through vows, but that it is of the eighth *bhūmi* and of the rank of *dharma-kāya*.[65]



Although this Pure Land is a *sambhoga* land, still Chi-tsang considers it to be inferior:

> When the Buddha shows Vaidehī the whole range or pure *kshetras* of the Ten Directions, why is it that Vaidehī wants to be reborn in the Western Quarter of Amita? According to the *Hua-yen sūtra*, the Western Land of Amita is the most inferior among the innumerable [Buddha] lands. If this is so, why does she want to be reborn there? The explanation is that when in the beginning one renounces the impure [world] and enters the pure [world] it is not easy to go up to other Pure Lands. For that reason one can only obtain rebirth in the Pure Land of the west.[66]

The She-lun School,[67] which was the forerunner of the Fa-hsiang School, was based on Paramārtha's translation in 563 of Asanga's *Mahāyāna-samparigraha*, annoted by Vasubandhu (T. 1592–1597). "According to this text, the Buddha has a threefold body: (1) The *dharma* or ideal body, whose nature is principle and wisdom; (2) the *sambhoga*, enjoyment or reward body, which appears only to the Bodhisattvas; (3) the *nirmāna* or transformation body, which manifests itself to ordinary persons for their worship.[68]

The She-lun School had a great following among the Sui-T'ang Buddhists; Hsuan-tsang belonged to it before his departure for Central Asia and India. Although the school was mainly philosophical, it clashed with the Pure Land adherents because of a special teaching, which was also accepted by Fa-ch'ang (567–645) and Hua-yen master Chih-yan (602–668). It held the view that there are four classes of Pure Lands:

1. *Nirmāna* Pure Land
2. Not-true-*sambhoga* Pure Land
3. True-*sambhoga* Pure Land[69]
4. *Dharmadhātu* Pure Land[70]

Although both the second and the third are of *sambhoga* nature, only the third is of superior quality, whereas the second is only temporary, so that further rebirth is necessary. A similar distinction was advocated by Chia-ts'ai in his *Ching-t'u Lun*.[71] According to the She-lun teaching, Amita's Pure Land is a true *sambhoga* land, but "rebirth there is only gained through the 'wisdom of non-discrimination' (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) and various practices with

regard to the single practice of the recitation of Amita's name by ordinary men, as being expounded provisionally in the sutra of Meditation on the Buddha of Eternal Life [*Kuan-ching*]. It is insufficient for certain rebirth in his Land."[72]

Since Amita's land is thus considered a real *sambhoga* Pure Land, rebirth there can only be attained by beings of the Bodhisattva rank. Ordinary beings can only hope to be reborn in an imperfect and temporary realm of Amita, whereas their practice of *nien-Fo* assures them a later rebirth in the true *sambhoga* Pure Land. This is the viewpoint called *pieh-shih yi*[73] ("intention toward another time"), by which She-lun teachers claimed that the simple practices of Pure Land devotees do not result in immediate rebirth, but generate a causal condition toward a rebirth at a later time.

Summarizing the various unorthodox views (the theories undermining the Pure Land faith and practice), it appears that there are two main tendencies:

1. The tendency to consider Amita and his Buddha country as *nirmāna*, or inferior
2. The opposite tendency, which regards him to be of truly *sambhoga* nature, but therefore not immediately attainable by the common man

Against these "heretical" views Shan-tao, after his master Tao-ch'o, puts up his defenses, vindicating his understanding of the true nature of Amita and his Sukhāvatī, and asserting that, because of Amita's great vows, rebirth in his Land is immediately offered.

Shan-tao formulates the question in clear and unambiguous terms: "Is Amita [and his] Pure Country to be considered as *sambhoga* or as *nirmāna*?" His answer is equally unambiguous and definite: "It is *sambhoga*, not *nirmāna*."[74] The justification of his viewpoint is drawn from the scriptures, first from the *Ta-ch'eng t'ung-hsing ching*,[75] next from the Longer Sutra, and finally from the *Kuan-ching*.

1. The Sukhāvatī of the Western Region is a *sambhoga* Land and Buddha Amita is a *sambhoga* Buddha.[76]
2. When *bhiksu* Dharmākara practiced the Bodhisattva discipline under Buddha Lokeshvararāja, he pronounced forty-eight vows, of which the essence is as follows: "If I become a Buddha, and all the sentient beings of the ten directions call my name wishing to be reborn in my [Buddha] Land, even giving me only "ten thoughts," if they would not be reborn, may I not obtain true Enlightenment!" Since he has realized Buddhahood, his body is [consequently] a body of reward.[77]
3. The *Kuan-ching* [speaking about] the three grades of the Highest Level, [says that] when the end of their life is nearing, Buddha Amita together with *nirmāna*-Buddhas (magically created Buddhas) will go out and welcome them. Since [Amita's] *sambhoga-kāya* together with [these] *nirmāna-kāyas* go and stretch out their hands, therefore the word "with" is used. Since these texts give evidence [of the thesis], therefore we know that it is *sambhoga*.[78]



Up to now Shan-tao has always used the term *pao* for *sambhoga*: literally it means "reward body." However, probably because he foresees doubts, he explains the relationship between *pao* and *ying*, which is another term sometimes used to express the *sambhoga-kāya*, although as seen above, Hui-yuan and Chi-tsang used it for *nirmāna-kāya*. Shan-tao chooses the former meaning and says that *sambhoga pao* and *sambhoga ying* are only different words like *yen* and *mu* (both signifying "eye"). For him the *ying* body means "responsive" body, in the sense that an action will certainly have a result, or a response. This response, *ying*, in the present case of agelong Bodhisattva training, is a reward response. Therefore Amita's body is called a *pao-shen* (reward body) and also a *ying-shen* (responsive body).[79]

If Amita is a *sambhoga-kāya*, and if it is true that a *sambhoga-kāya* eternally subsists without birth and without extinction, why does the *Kuan-yin shou-chi ching*[80] say that Buddha Amita will also have a time of entering into *nirvāna*? Shan-tao gives a twofold answer. The first sounds more like a rebuttal, and is similar to answers one finds in Christian circles with relation to the hard-to-believe doctrine of the trinity: this is God's own mystery which human minds cannot fathom. Shan-tao says: "Whether [Buddhas] enter or do not enter [into *nirvāna*], this is the exclusive realm of the Buddhas [themselves]. It is not even proper that the three *yānas* with their shallow wisdom pry into it. How much less will small and ordinary people be able to understand!"[81]

However, although it seems presumptuous to ask for explanations, Shan-tao is willing to oblige. His early Mādhyamika background gives him a good opportunity to raise the problem to a higher level of understanding, so that what appears to be true on a lower level of truth is only relative truth when considered from a higher level. That Amita's life is measureless is true from the level of common truth. On the absolute level of truth it becomes untruth: "Since you really want to know the answer, I dare to quote from the Buddhist scriptures to find evidence. What is it? The *Mahāprajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*,[82] in the chapter on '*nirvāna* is noncreated' says":

> The Buddha said to Subhūti: "What do you think about this? If a magician would create a human being, would this product possess true reality or would it rather be empty?" Subhūti said: "It would not be real." The Buddha said: "*Rūpas* are created, and so are *vedanā, samjñā, samskārah,* and *vijñāna;*[83] even all the kinds of wisdom[84] are created." Subhūti said: "If all the worldly *dharmas* are created, then also the world-transcending *dharmas* are equally created. What we call 'the four stages of mindfulness,' the fourfold right effort, the four steps of *rddhi*, the five spiritual organs, the five faculties, the seven characteristics of *bodhi*, the eightfold Holy Path, the three gates of emancipation, the ten powers of a Buddha, the four kinds of fearlessness, the four [Bodhisattva] powers of understanding, the eighteen characteristics of a Buddha, even all the *dharma*-fruits, and what [with reference to] the sages and saints are called the four stages of arhatship, *prateyka*-buddhas, Bodhisattvas-*mahāsattvas*, all the world-honored Buddhas, are all these *dharmas* also created?" Buddha said: "All the *dharmas* are created . . . whenever there is a transformation.[85] Only the formless[86] *nirvāna* is noncreated (nontransformed) *dharma* . . . The voidness of nature, that exactly is *nirvāna*."[87]

From this higher level of understanding, only the nonconditioned *nirvāna* is true; only the Buddha's *dharma-kāya*, which is *śūnyatā* and equals *nirvāna*, can be considered to be ultimately real, and this is symbolically expressed by the statement that at some time in the future they will enter into *nirvāna*. However, and here Shan-tao makes his final points, there is a strategy involved consisting in gradually bringing this truth home to the minds of Path followers. Still quoting from the same sutra, Shan-tao concludes with the Buddha's words to Subhūti:



> "[However] if newly aroused Bodhisattva candidates would hear that all the *dharmas* are ultimately void in their nature and that even *nirvāna* is a creation, their minds would be greatly frightened. For their sake the distinction is made: *dharmas* which have a rising-and-ceasing are created; *dharmas* that neither arise nor cease, are not-created."
>
> Now, through the examination of the sacred teaching, we know for sure that Amita is a *sambhoga*-[*kāya*]; even if at some time in the future he will enter into *nirvāna* there is no contradiction. All those who possess wisdom, should understand![88]

Once this point of the controversy has been clarified, there is the other objection from the side of the She-lun School. If Amita's Land is of *sambhoga* nature, it cannot be within the reach of ordinary beings. This point will be discussed in Chapter 9.

### *The Features of Amita's Buddha Land*

In the two *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras* the transcendent features of Amita's Buddha Land, its splendors, adornments, and excellences, are described with great detail in order to arouse in the mind of the reader faith and especially longing and hope, resulting in the vow, wish, or determination for rebirth. In the *Kuan-ching* the approach is different, because the basic aim of the sutra is not the same. The various adornments are systematically grouped to provide the adept with a climaxing group of meditation topics intended to lead him toward a final vision of the Buddha himself. The way of presenting the realities of Sukhāvatī is thus purely a function of this particular meditation method, whose immediate aim is to see the Buddha in this present life, without emphasizing the eventuality of later rebirth.

The *Kuan-ching* divides the various adornments into two major groups, which may be called the accidental and essential splendors. In the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* there is no such systematic organization. The fact that Vasubandhu is the first commentator who enumerates the adornments of Amita's Land may indicate that he was familiar with the *Kuan-ching* as well as with the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras*. When describing the various splendors, he starts with the term *kuan*, and one by one he enumerates twenty-nine characteristics:

1. Seventeen "meritorious adornments" characterize the Land itself: its purity, its measurements, its nature, its

external appearance, its objects [such as lakes, pavilions, trees, etc.], realities (phenomena), its wonderful colors, its touch, its splendor, its flower rain, its brilliance, its sounds, its Lord, his attendants, its happiness, its absence of suffering, its gate of the "Great Principle," its fulfillment of all wishes.[89]

2. Eight adornments concern the Buddha: his throne, his body, his voice, his mind, his congregation, its leader [a Bodhisattva], his lordship, his efficiency.[90]
3. Four adornments concern the Bodhisattvas: they always preach the *dharma*, everywhere simultaneously, everywhere without discrimination, even in realms without a Buddha.[91]

There is thus a total of twenty-nine adornments, which are one by one distinguished by the author of the commentary on the *gāthās*. It seems, however, that the distinctions are rather artificial and, in some places, more or less forced.[92]

The division in the *Kuan-ching* is much clearer, as it ought to be if it was intended as a directive for meditation. However, the description of the individual adornments is not always so clear that they can be easily imagined: one has the impression that the scenes described here were born from mystical visions, states of rapture and trance. The hyperboles, the fantastic numbers, and the imagery used reflect the experiences of the meditator, who, once he came back to his senses, was unable to describe his transcendent "flights" in a clear and consistent way. Therefore the whole description is sometimes vague, rather suggestive than concrete, and only significant as a signpost toward the same mystical trances from which they originated.

Shan-tao does not help much to improve the understanding of the concrete images of Sukhāvatī. His commentary here is purely descriptional: dividing, subdividing, and labeling each division and subdivision. That he was not alone in doing so already appeared from Vasubandhu's *gāthā* commentary, taken over by T'an-luan. Closer to Shan-tao, Hui-yuan distinguished within the sixteen "meditations" two separate groups: "The first seven are concerned with [Sukhāvatī's] 'resultant rewards' (*yi-pao*); the last nine with its 'true rewards' (*cheng-pao*)."[93]

Chih-yi uses almost the same terms but applies them in a different way: "Meditations" 1 to 6 are concerned with the "resultant effects" (*yi-kuo*), and 7 to 13 with the *cheng-pao*. In other words, the last three meditations are left out.[94]



Chi-tsang's terminology is slightly different, although basically the same viewpoint is held. The sixteen meditations (*kuan*) are divided into two groups: from 1 to 13 are meditations on Amita; from 14 to 16 are the meditations on the three levels of rebirth. "Why should one meditate on these nine grades? Because to meditate on Amita is to meditate on the results (*kuan-kuo*), while to meditate on the nine grades is to meditate on the causes (*kuan-yin*). Because one meditates on the cause and effect of the Pure Land, therefore two sections are distinguished."[95] He further subdivides the former section:

> First there are six meditations for meditating on the Land of Amita; secondly there are seven meditations for meditating on the body of Amita: the former consist of meditations on the trees, the lakes, etc. within the Land; the latter of meditations on Amita Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Again, the former are the "resultant effects" (*yi-kuo*); the latter are the "true effects" (*cheng-kuo*).[96]

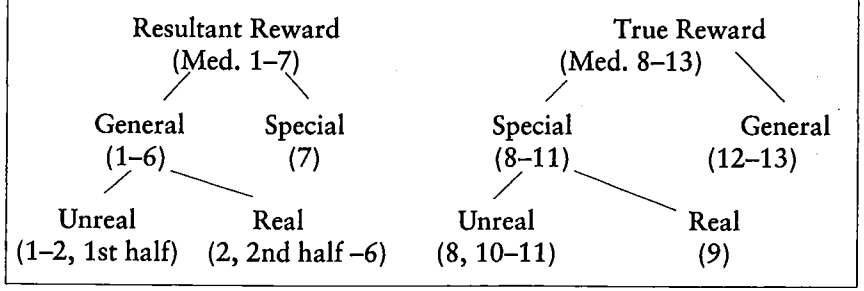
Finally, within the former six topics, Chi-tsang distinguishes two further groups: 1 to 5 are called "special," and the sixth is called "general." Within the five former topics, one and a half are called *upāya* (i.e., Meditation 1 on the sun, and part of Meditation 2 on the water). The second half of Meditation 2 (on the lapis lazuli) is called true meditation.[97]

The second group of topics (7 to 13) is also subdivided into two. One is called *upāya*, and another is distinct inspection of the true essence. Within the topics concerning the true essence, again "special" and "general" are differentiated.[98]

Shan-tao was probably quite impressed by this display of logical categorizing. He likes to imitate it and improve on it, so that the system he builds up about the different adornments of Sukhāvatī, although very much dependent on his predecessors, is brought to greater perfection. Also, instead of discussing these elements in a scattered way, he organizes them together in his introductory part. But, after all, one can ask oneself what use this all is for meditation!

The difference between *true* and *resultant* reward is that the former consists of the essential "realities" of Sukhāvatī. They are Buddha Amita himself and his two assistant Bodhisattvas, who

Table 3: Shan-tao's Scheme[99]




became what they are through their eonlong practicing of the arduous Bodhisattva discipline. The other adornments, the "material" elements of the Buddha land, are accidental. They were created by the Buddha after he became fully enlightened. "They are all faultless and real superior characteristics of Amita's Pure Land."[100]

The special reward, the Lotus throne, is Amita's personal adornment, whereas the other splendors are general or common and are enjoyed by all those who obtain rebirth. The real adornments, such as the jewel trees, jewel palaces, and so on, are called real because they can only be seen within Amita's real and faultless country. The unreal characteristics, the sun, the water and ice, are called unreal because they are similar to objects visible in the human world.

Within the essential or true reward, there also is a distinction of real and unreal. The latter are the images of Amita and the Bodhisattvas. They are called unreal because they are only images.

> Because the obstacles of sentient beings are serious and their *kleshas* deep, the Buddha was afraid that within a short time his real face would have no way to become visible. Therefore he orders real images to be unreally set up in order to fix the mind's imagining.[101]
>
> With the help of this unreal but true reward [which is the Buddha image], the mental confusion can be gradually stopped, the eyes of the mind are opened and the meditator perceives vaguely at first the pure adornments of Sukhāvatī, so that disorderly passions are eliminated. Once the obstacles are removed, one is then able to perceive the features of that realm in their true reality.[102]

Nowhere in his commentary does Shan-tao explicitly state that the Land Sukhāvatī is only a temporary abode. But this



seems to be implicit in his teaching. "Once reborn in that Land, there is nothing to fear anymore; one starts forever to practice the supreme fruit of *bodhi*."[103] The inference seems to be that Shan-tao sees in the whole setup of Pure Land faith and practice a powerful *upāya* to lead the people toward the highest realization of the Buddhist religion: the achievement of Buddhahood.

Recapitulating the main ideas expressed in this chapter, it is justified to say that, on the one hand, Shan-tao's views on the hopeless situation of man are basically Buddhist (and specifically Mahāyānist), while, on the other hand, his expectation of salvation is more narrowly founded on the Pure Land tradition. Shan-tao does not formally explain his views about the two opposite poles of human existence: despair and hope. In this chapter the various passages that deal with the topic have all been brought together and interrelated. There is one great exception to Shan-tao's procedure, but since it belongs to the literary genre of the parable, it does not seem to be a real exception. It is the Parable of the White Path, in which Shan-tao allegorically paints the total existential situation of humanity.

According to the original tradition of Buddhism, life is characterized by sorrow, unsatisfactoriness, and transitoriness, from which there is hardly an escape. Only a heroic effort can lead one to enlightenment and *nirvāna*. In Mahāyāna, and especially in its more popularized branch, an alternative road is offered: reliance on the vows of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, who have promised to rescue and ferry across the ocean of *samsāra* all those who do not have the power to do it on their own. In Shan-tao's work, great stress is laid on the saving influence of Shākyamuni. He is the Buddha who came to this Sahā-world to reveal this wonderful method of the Pure Land. He is the one who, for the benefit of all common mortals living in the age of decay, brought the message that in the west there is a Buddha and a Buddha realm of purity without any of the defilements of this world, where all those who follow the Pure Land methods can be reborn. Once reborn there, nothing can stop the ascent toward higher perfection, finally culminating in total enlightenment.

Shan-tao frequently insists on this idea of mutual correspondence between Shākyamuni and Amita. This should not be astonishing. In fact, this is a basic theme in the Pure Land sutras. However, it seems that in the subsequent practice, this point of doctrine was gradually overlooked. Amita became the center of worship

since, after all, he was the ultimate savior. However, that such a development took place was not unavoidable. This becomes evident if compared with the Christian tradition. All basic doctrinal differences left aside, Shākyamuni is somehow comparable to Jesus Christ, and Amitābha to God the Father. Both Shākyamuni and Jesus are considered to be incarnations of the Eternal, the Absolute: both point to the Eternal and their glorious abode as the ultimate destiny of humanity. But, whereas in the Pure Land tradition the function of the revealer, Shākyamuni, was obliterated in some schools, in Christianity his human and divine personality remains the center of the cult.

In this respect, Shan-tao stands closer to the Christian attitude. He has not forgotten Shākyamuni, and is deeply conscious that it is only through his revelation that man knows about the realities of Amita and his Pure Buddha Land.

Though humans are in a hopeless predicament because of their own inner delusions and passions and equally because of the corruptions of the times, still there is hope to be released from this situation. Shākyamuni has opened the Gates of the Pure Land; whoever heeds his words and puts his trust in Amita is sure of ultimate salvation. All he has to do is to awaken himself and follow the methods pointed out by Shākyamuni in the Pure Land sutras. For those who want to follow a higher course of action, there are the methods of meditation and of ethical discipline. For those who are not so generous, and even postpone their recourse to Amita until the end, there is still hope, through a sincere practice of *nien-Fo*. The following chapters will deal with these two main "gates" and one minor gate to Amita's Land in respective order.

# CHAPTER 6

## *The First Gate: Meditation*

If for most Pure Land adepts the essential attraction of their faith is to be reborn in Sukhāvatī, for a minority of Amita worshipers there is a more immediate goal which can be reached in this present life: a spiritual vision of that Land and of the Buddha who created it. This constitutes a foretaste of rebirth at the end of this life. The dissimilarity with other religions is obvious. Whereas in Christianity redemption is said to take place here and now if one converts to Christ, a vision of God "like He is" has to be postponed until after death. Visions are exceptional in this life, and even in the highest mystical experiences, "beatific vision" is not attained. This shows both the similarity and difference between Buddhism and Christianity. This difference of viewpoints is reflected in the approach to religious cultivation. Whereas in the Christian context prayer (worship, praise, petition,) is the central practice, in the originally Buddhist way of life meditation[1] is all-important. Meditation is the heart of Buddhism. Shākyamuni's Enlightenment was attained through meditation, and those who follow his path with the hope of their own ultimate Enlightenment soon discover how essential meditation is as the means toward the goal.

If the world around us is suffering (*duhkha*), it is also bliss (*sukha*). Everything depends on one's insight. There are not two distinct realities called *samsāra* and *nirvāna*. This is only an erroneous mental construct, ignorance (*avidyā*) which results in wrong reactions: desires, attachment, and so on. These in turn strengthen ignorance so that it becomes a "vicious" circle indeed. On the other hand, the correct view, right insight into the nature of life and reality, is the only source of bliss. It is bliss itself. It is the culmination of the Buddhist Path. It is Enlightenment, consisting in a "discriminative awareness" (*prajñā*) which breaks the circle of ignorance and attachment. Reality is not changed, but the outlook is radically different.

The path toward bliss has two aspects. One is both negative and positive (*śila*); the other is predominantly positive (*samādhi*).

But a precondition to follow the path (precondition, because otherwise one would not even try to engage oneself) is some rudimentary insight. It is not complete insight, which comes later, but a beginning consciousness that something is wrong and that somewhere there is a solution.

The negative side of the Path is the removal of the obstacles which increase bondage and dissatisfaction with life. It is refraining from actions born out of delusion and attachment. It consists of purifying the "three actions," of body, mouth, and mind. They are perhaps the least essential aspect of the Path, and could be rather called "conditions."

The positive aspect is directly concerned with the rectification of views. It consists in cultivating methods to obtain correct insight into the nature of reality. It engages the mind and mental activity directly, but since the mind is greatly influenced by emotions, these also become the object of cultivation.

The Buddha himself discovered this Path and communicated it to his followers. In later times his message was schematized. The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Noble Path, are essentially the Buddha's teaching, but the categorizing may not have been his. Within the Noble Path, parts 3 to 5 (Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood) refer to the rather negative process of purification, 6 to 8 (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration) are the more positive and most essential part of the Buddhist Path, and 1 and 2 (Right Insight, Right Determination), although coming first on the list, are in fact the culmination of the Path: the realization of the right awareness, which only "changes" reality.

The negative and positive aspects of the Path are in mutual dependence. Without mind control, abstaining from wrong actions as such has no value. Without abstention from evil deeds, the mind will be hard to control.

Followers of the Path have developed these various aspects with great detail. The predominantly negative side was embodied in the Vinaya rules, whereas the rather positive aspect found expression in an elaborate system of mental discipline or meditation. What characterizes Buddhism as a spiritual path most of all is this system of meditation, which is, in different modalities, common to all the three *yānas*.

A history of Buddhist meditation has not yet been written and would be an immense undertaking. But some characteristics of meditation seem to recur in several Indian schools of meditation



(e.g., the Yoga school, Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism) and have to be described first in order to situate the method presented in the *Kuan-ching* in its historical context. However, when writing on meditation, and especially on Buddhist meditation, one is immediately confronted with a major difficulty: the terminology. There seems to be much confusion and even contradiction among Western authors on this topic, which is not surprising considering the elusiveness of such deeply spiritual and personal matters as meditation and mysticism.

The confusion is caused not only by the topic itself, but also by the literary heritage of Buddhism. The original terminology (Sanskrit, Pali, etc.) is not always unanimously or unambiguously translated. Many Buddhist texts have not survived in the original language and are available only through Chinese and/or Tibetan translations. How accurate are these translations? Moreover, the same original terms may have been translated in different ways by successive Central Asian, Indian, and Chinese translators, not only because their understanding of the terms was different, but also because the terms, in the original, had eventually undergone changes of meaning. Besides, once translated into Chinese or Tibetan, the characters or words used to render technical terms may again have changed in the course of time. Or, as often was the case during the earlier translation period in China, terms with Taoist connotations were used to express Buddhist ideas. All these facts combine to make a deeper study of a subject like meditation very difficult and perhaps questionable, at least if these knotty problems are not solved first.

However, these obstacles should not be a complete deterrent. With the tools available, and with a careful and critical use of these tools, something valuable can still be achieved, be it only tentative.

This chapter has two objectives: first, to analyze and synthesize the teaching of the *Kuan-ching* on meditation, which requires a short review of some basic categories of Buddhist meditation; second, to analyze and synthesize Shan-tao's understanding of the particular method of Amita meditation expressed in this sutra.[2]

## AMITA VISION ACCORDING TO THE *KUAN-CHING*

Buddhist meditation practices did not develop in a vacuum. There was a period of time, before any particular school was formalized,

when practices were shared by all. At a later stage only each school, such as the Hindu Yoga school, the Buddhists, and the Jains, developed their own techniques and goals, distinct yet sharing common characteristics.

Although the Buddha's Enlightenment was the fruit of meditation, he learned about meditation practices from other masters. The similarities between what later became the school of *Yoga* and Buddhist meditation are striking and have to be briefly reviewed.[3]

According to Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtras*, there are eight accessories to yoga:[4]

1. *Yama*, restraint(s)
2. *Niyama*, observance, discipline
3. *Āsana*, posture, bodily attitude
4. *Prānāyāma*, regulation of breath
5. *Pratyāhāra*, withholding of senses, sense withdrawal
6. *Dhārana*, fixity, concentration
7. *Dhyāna*, meditation
8. *Samādhi*, perfect concentration

When one analyzes the contents and purpose of these various stages, it is obvious that some are indirectly concerned with meditation, whereas others are immediately related. *Yama* and *niyama* are preparations. *Yama* is rather negative, and consists in the purification of one's actions by restraining from certain deeds thought to be incompatible with spiritual life. They are *ahimsā* (harmlessness),[5] *satya* (truth), *asteya* (abstention from stealing), *brahmacharya* (continence), and *aparigraha* (nongrasping, abstinence from avariciousness).[6] *Niyama* seems to be a more positive preparation to meditation and consists of five disciplines: (ritual and moral) purity; serenity or contentment with the immediate necessities to maintain life; asceticism, austerity (*tapas*); recitation and study of the texts; and surrender to Ishvara. This last point is of later origin, but brings in a very interesting development: the element of faith.[7] With *āsana*[8] the immediate preparation to meditation takes place: the right bodily posture is conducive to concentration. Breath control (*prānāyāma*)[9] is another technique necessary for successful meditation. When these two immediate prerequisites are fulfilled, the actual technique of concentration can take place. Negatively it starts with the withdrawal of the



senses from their objects (*pratyāhāra*);[10] positively it is through fixing the mind's attention on one single point (*ekāgratā*). This is still technique, practice in skillfullness but directly necessary for the success of the three subsequent stages, which are the real functions of the mind: *dhārana*,[11] *dhyāna*,[12] and *samādhi*,[13] which together are called *samyama*.[14]

The Buddhist method of meditation has much in common with yoga practice, and striking similarities between Yoga, Buddhism, and Jainism in some of their basic principles confirm the existence of historical links between the three schools. At first view, it would seem quite natural that Buddhism adopted some ideas and practices from the Yoga school, since it is narrated in the Buddha's biography that he initially studied under various masters, who seem to have been yogins: "The future Buddha studied first with two great yogins, who had obtained important supernormal psychic powers. But none of them could satisfy him, because their teaching did neither lead to true peace, nor to spiritual deliverance. For that reason he left them after he had completely assimilated their teaching."[15]

From the fact that it is not clear to what "school of thought" the Buddha's teachers belonged, as well as from the presumed date of the *Yoga-sūtra*,[16] which was not written before the second century B.C.E., one conclusion can be drawn: at the time of the Buddha's "Great Renunciation," a formal Yoga school did not yet exist. But the ideas and practices, which later on were to be developed and formally systematized, seem to have been common property of many "wandering ascetics" of that time. In some Upanishads there are clear indications of yogic ideas, and very likely both the Buddha and Jainism went back to this common source of knowledge and practice, which links the two new movements to the Upanishadic tradition. In other words, instead of claiming that Buddhism (and Jainism) assimilated elements of the Yoga school, it seems more accurate to hold that the (later) Yoga school, Buddhism, and Jainism all go back to a common tradition, or a common matrix, but that each of them, while drawing inspiration from that earlier tradition, changed and interpreted it according to their own particular viewpoints.

This interpretation explains both the similarities and differences between the three movements. Leaving aside their differences, a short review of the connections with the Upanishads and a comparison of some common points will be useful to understand

the historical milieu in which Buddhist meditation and ethics originated.

In some of the Upanishads one can already see traces of yogic ideas. For example, the *Maitrāyana* Upanishad, which is believed to be rather late, though not among the latest ones,[17] speaks of six accessories, which, all except one (*tarka*, argumentation, to be replaced by *āsana*), are found in the later *Yoga-sūtra*.[18] That subsequently the *yamas* and *niyamas* were added is an indication that initially yoga, asceticism and ethics were not necessarily connected. The introduction of the five *yamas* probably took place in a period when there was not yet any friction between the rival schools of Yoga, Buddhism, and Jainism.[19]

A passage in the *Katha* Upanishad is equally reminiscent of yoga. Whereas the *ātman* is the master of the chariot and the body is the chariot itself, the *buddhi* is the charioteer, and the mind the reins. The senses are the horses, to be controlled; if not, release is not possible.[20] The idea of sense control forms an important element of yoga. It is expressed both in the restraints, which are preparatory to concentration, and in withdrawal of the senses, which initiates the actual meditation process.[21]

Similarities between Yoga, Buddhism, and Jainism are very significant. The most obvious ground for comparison is the five *yamas*, which becomes clear from the following table:

Table 4
Comparison of Buddhism, Yoga, and Jainism

| | *Buddhism*[22] | *Yoga*[23] | *Jainism*[24] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To abstain from taking life (*ahimsā*) | Ahimsā | Ahimsā |
| 2. | Not to take that which is not given (*asteya*) | Satya | Sūnrta |
| 3. | To abstain from misconduct in sensual actions (*brahmacharya*) | Asteya | Asteya |
| 4. | To abstain from false speech (*satya*) | Brahmacharya | Brahmacarya |
| 5. | To abstain from liquor | Aparigraha | Aparigraha |



As the above table points out, the closest similarity exists between Yoga and Jainism: it is, in fact, nothing less than identity (item 2, *satya* and *sūnrta,* having the same content). Buddhism is somehow divergent. Not only has the order been changed, but also item 5 (*aparigraha*) has been replaced. Also, in Buddhism the five ethical rules have been partially integrated into the *śila* group of the Eightfold Path.[25]

Moreover, Yoga and Buddhism share some basic doctrinal principles. In both, *duhkha* produced by *avidyā* and *samsāra* are central ideas:

> Another important charateristic of Yoga is its thoroughly pessimistic tone. Its treatment of sorrow in connection with the statement of the scope and ideal of Yoga is the same as that of the four sacred truths of the Buddhists, namely suffering, origin of suffering, the removal of suffering, and the path to the removal of suffering. Again, the metaphysics of the samsāra (rebirth) cycle in connection with sorrow, origination, decease, rebirth, etc. is described with a remarkable degree of similarity with the cycle of causes as described in early Buddhism. Avidyā is placed at the head of the group; . . . it is an avidyā of the Buddhist type . . . Yoga avidyā is the ignorance of the four sacred truths . . .[26]

Finally, one more area of similarity is to be mentioned: meditation. As a mental condition for (and an object of) meditation, the three schools have emphasized the four *brahma-vihāras* (Sublime States). In the *Yoga-sūtra*, i. 33, one reads: "The mind becomes serene by the cultivation of feelings of amity, compassion, goodwill and indifference respectively towards happy, miserable, virtuous and vicious creatures."[27] Here the four are mental conditions rather than objects for meditation. In Jainism, their significance has changed: "In order to make the mind steady by *dhyāna* one should think of *maitri* (universal friendship), *pramoda* (the habit of emphasizing the good sides of people), *karunā*(universal compassion) and *mādhyastha* (indifference to the wickedness of people, i.e., the habit of not taking any note of sinners)."[28]

Buddhism has equally made the four Sublime States into meditation topics:

> (1) extending unlimited, universal love and good will (*mettā*) to all living beings without any kind of discrimination, "just as a

mother loves her only child;" (2) compassion (*karunā*) for all living beings who are suffering, in trouble and affliction; (3) sympathetic joy (*muditā*) in others' success, welfare and happiness; and (4) equanimity (*upekkhā*) in all vicissitudes of life.[29]

Also with reference to meditation, both the Yoga school and Buddhism have developed a system of various stages to be attained in succession. However, here the differences are more obvious than in the previous fields. In Yoga, *samādhi* (unifying concentration) is a further development of *dhyāna*.[30] Whereas Buddhism has distinguished four *dhyānas* and four *samāpattis*, which finally merge into a ninth stage, the last *samāpatti*,[31] Yoga has differentiated the stages of *samādhi*: there are basically four states, of which the first and second have two varieties each.[32] There is one final stage of *samādhi* "called the *asamprajñāta* or *nirodha samādhi*, in which the mind is without any object."[33]

Considered together, these various similarities strengthen the hypothesis that the three systems, Yoga, Buddhism, and Jainism, go back to a common matrix. Although a striking similarity of practice (ethics and meditation techniques) can be observed, as time went on, the three systems became more and more diversified because of differences in doctrinal outlook.

This rather long digression makes it easier to understand how Buddhist meditation is prescribed and described in the *Kuan-ching* (and later on in the *Kuan-ching shu*). As the analysis will show, there are some marked differences as well as similarities with the above given yogic components of early Buddhist meditation.

Several of the yogic preliminaries for meditation are implicitly contained in the sutra. When Queen Vaidehī is confined in prison, she starts to feel disgust for this world of suffering and a strong longing for a pure world. This is the first awakening, the basic condition for all spiritual cultivation. She then prays to the Buddha and worships him, recognizing her past offenses and asking for guidance: "Teach me how to concentrate my thought, teach me how to reach the [*kuan-Fo*]-*samādhi*."[34] The terms used are *szu-wei* and *cheng-shou*.[35] The former term, *szu-wei*, is the translation of the Sanskrit *cintanā*[36] and is explained as "to consider or reflect on an object with discrimination,"[37] but seems to relate more to concentration of thought than to actual meditation. It is one of the ten kinds of Buddhist practice: it figures ninth in



the list, and is followed by *bhāvanā* (*hsiu-hsi-hsing*), which refers more immediately to meditation practice.[38] The other term, *cheng-shou*, renders the Sanskrit *samāpatti* and refers to the ultimate state reached in *samādhi* "when body and mind are in total harmony through the power of *samādhi*."[39] Therefore, it seems that Vaidehi's prayer summarizes two aspects of meditation, to fix her mind or mental attention so that ultimately she might be able to reach a total vision of Sukhāvatī and of the Buddha.[40]

As the above remarks point out, the sutra implicitly refers to several preconditions for meditation. The *yama* requirements are basically met because of the queen's imprisonment. The *niyama* requirements are more clearly expressed: inner purity through confession of past transgressions; refuge in the Buddha through worship and prayer. Once these general conditions are satisfied, Vaidehī is ready to listen to the Buddha's instructions on how to concentrate and perform the proper meditations. As will be shown, the Buddha's instructions refer to and summarize, in a simplified manner, the other *yoga* stages of meditation, except *prānāyāma*, which is left out here altogether. But one new element is introduced: the "supernatural sight" (*divyacaksus*). Whereas in Yoga and in Hīnayāna Buddhism this is a special power attained by saints,[41] and in Mahāyāna Buddhism by Bodhisattvas,[42] in the *Kuan-ching* it appears to become a gift of the Buddha. "It is by the power of Buddha only that one can see that pure land (of Buddha) as clear as one sees the image of one's face reflected in the transparent mirror held up before one."[43]

Just a moment before, the Buddha had smiled upon Vaidehī and five-colored rays issued forth from his mouth, touching the head of King Bimbisāra: "At that moment the mental vision of that exalted king was perfectly clear . . . and he could see the World-Honoured One from afar . . . ," whereupon he immediately gained the third fruit (*anāgāmin*).[44]

These two passages clearly indicate that the Buddha himself supplies the supernatural faculty of "seeing." It is not obtained through one's own efforts. However, another passage seems to contradict this:

> Buddha said to Vaidehī: "Thou art but an ordinary person: the quality of thy mind is feeble and inferior. Thou hast not as yet obtained the divine eye and canst not perceive what is at a distance. All the Buddhas, Tathāgatas, have various means at their

disposal and can therefore afford thee an opportunity of seeing (that Buddha country)." Then Vaidehī rejoined: "O World-Honoured One, people such as I, can now see that land by the power of Buddha, . . ."[45]

The apparent contradiction may be simply due to inaccurate translation. If we read as follows: "Since you are but an ordinary person, . . . without receiving the divine sight, you cannot see . . . But the Buddhas have special *upāyas* which can make you obtain divine sight, . . ." then the contradiction is not only taken away, but the whole passage is in perfect agreement with the above-quoted texts. That this exegesis makes more sense is also clear from the final phrase in the above quote, "I can now see," which means that the Buddha has granted her divine sight.[46]

The formal instruction on the method of meditation starts with the "visualization of the sun." Only a casual remark is made on bodily posture, *cheng-tso hsi hsiang*,[47] which means "in a correct position and facing west." Nothing more is said about posture, nor about breath control, which strengthens the impression that the sutra was not written for professional meditators but for laypeople, who had neither the time nor the ability to start with the more complex technical preparation.

Arriving now at the heart of the matter, the actual practice of meditation, a careful examination of terms is required. First of all, the word "meditation" itself, which has been used till now in a general, almost commonsense meaning, has to be clearly defined. Selecting from Webster's definitions, one understands the term here as "a spiritual exercise consisting in deep continued reflection on a religious theme."[48] As defined in this way, "meditation" is rather a generic word that is wide enough to encompass various ways of meditation but is clearly distinguishable from the term "concentration," which means, following Webster, "a directing of the attention or of the mental faculties toward a single object."[49]

This first classification corresponds with the two main divisions of mind development pointed out by C. Humphreys, concentration and meditation. "By the former we mean the preliminary exercises in onepointedness of thought which must of necessity precede success in the latter, while Meditation will be considered under three sub-divisions. The first of these consists of the early exercises in the right use of the instrument thus prepared, and will be described as Lower Meditation. Following this comes the realm



of Higher Meditation, which in turn merges into Contemplation."[50]

This scheme has the merit of offering clear distinctions and definitions, and will be adopted here. But one term needs further elucidation: "contemplation." It is often used as more or less synonymous with meditation, and even concentration. Here one definition is selected, and seems to accord with Humphreys' schema. Contemplation means "a state of mystical awareness of God's being or presence: an ecstatic perception of God, a state of rapture . . . in which the soul is freed from its senses and organs and lost in Pure contemplation."[51] This definition is based on a theistic context, but if that is changed (the Absolute, Ultimate Reality, the Infinite, etc., instead of "God"), the definition can be successfully taken over in the Buddhist context, since the essence of the definition refers to a psychic state rather than to an object.

Humphreys' scheme has one limitation in that it makes a clear distinction between concentration (technique) and its application in meditation (on an object). This distinction is useful, but does not always apply. Pure concentration (without any doctrinal content) is rather limited, and very often concentration and meditation coincide in fact, and might be called concentrated meditation.

How does the *Kuan-ching* describe the actual process?

Buddha said to Vaidehī: "You and all sentient beings should concentrate your mind (*chuan-hsin*) and fix your attention on a single point and visualize (*hsiang*) the western quarter. How should that be done? All sentient beings, except if they are born blind, have the sense of sight and [are able to] see the sunset. When you start to visualize, you should sit in the correct posture, directed toward the west. Searchingly inspect (*t'i-kuan*) the sun, keep your mind firmly fixed (*ling hsin chian-chu*), so that the concentrated visualization stays motionless. Then you perceive (*chien*) the sun when it is about to set and has the appearance of a suspended drum. When you have perceived the sun, whether you close your eyes, or open your eyes: [the perception] should be equally clear and distinct. This is the visualization of the sun which is called the first inspection (*ch'u-kuan*)."[52]

This first instruction of the Buddha, which sets the example for all the following exercises, deserves a careful analysis of the various elements included in the process of meditation. The preparatory stage—necessary for all meditators—is briefly indicated: *āsana*, and *ekāgratā*. The former is supposedly known. The latter

is emphasized several times: first as an initial condition, and then during the process of *concentration* itself.

The instruction of the Buddha seems to point out three distinct mental activities, which the meditator has to perform step by step in order to reach the state of absorption (*samādhi*). First is the act of *imagining* the object (*hsiang*); next is the act of *inspecting* the object very carefully (*kuan*); and finally there is the act of mentally *perceiving* (*chien*) or fixating the object so that it stands clearly before one's mental eye. This leads then to the state of *samādhi*, as in stated in the ninth meditation: to have reached a vision of all the Buddhas is called *nien-Fo samādhi*. (Its Sanskrit equivalent may have been *Buddhānusmrti-samādhi*.)

Although these three mental activities can be clearly distinguished in the sutra text, yet their use is not very rigorous. Moreover, often terms are used in combination with other terms (examples are *ti-kuan, hsiang-chien*), which appear to be confusing. The most confusing use of terminology is the double meaning of *chien*. In the first meditation, it refers obviously to ordinary sense perception: seeing the setting sun. But *chien* is also used to indicate an activity far beyond this common perception. It is step 3 in the visualization process and refers to *mental* perception and clear vision after an object has been inspected. In other instances the expression *hsiang-chien* illustrates the confusion by stating that objects are "seen through imagining." In these cases *chien* is not the common act of perception, but is a purely mental activity synonymous with *hsiang*. It refers to perceiving through an act of imagination.

With this caution in mind, each of the terms must be further clarified; their use in the sutra must be checked and analyzed, for here lies the key to understanding this particular meditation method, called *kuan*, or "visualization-inspection."

### *Imagining (Hsiang)*

The ancient meaning of the Chinese character *hsiang* already used in this way in the *Chou li* is "to think, imagine."[53] The significance was extended and became "to think, reflect; imagine, conjecture; expect; desire, long for."[54] The composition of the character is suggestive. The top means "outside appearance," and the bottom means "mind." When the outside object is grasped by the mind, one has the subsequent action of either thinking or imagining. That the second meaning is to be selected here follows from the whole context of this particular meditation method.



Once the term "to imagine" is chosen, its content should be clearly understood. According to Webster, "to imagine" means "to form an idea of; create a mental image," and "imagination" is defined as "an act or process of forming a conscious idea or mental image of something never before wholly perceived in reality by the imaginer (as through a synthesis of remembered elements of previous sensory experience or ideas as modified by unconscious mechanisms of defense)."[55]

The Chinese *hsiang* also stands for "visualization." For in fact, "to visualize" is defined as "the act or power of forming mentally visual images of objects not present to the eye."[56] When one compares both definitions, it is obvious that they largely coincide, although there is some difference. (Foe example, the object of visualization is not present to the eye, whereas the object of imagination is something not only absent, but never wholly seen before; it is, partially, a mental construction.)

Throughout the *Kuan-ching*, the same process of meditation is repeated. Each time the first phase consists in the formation of a mental image. The nature of the objects mentally formed makes it clear that in most cases "imagination" is the better choice, since the objects (the adornments of the Pure Land) have never been seen before unless through visual aids. Perhaps only in the first and second exercises is "visualization" more suitable. In any case, the Chinese *hsiang* stands for both, and furthermore seems to presuppose that there is not necessarily a visual aid actually in front of the meditator, although it is not excluded either. Even in the first exercise, the text does not clearly say that one has to look at the setting sun itself. This was probably optional and depended on the moment of time one had available for meditation.

This first phase in the meditative process, following immediately after *ekāgratā*, seems to correspond with what in other schools is called "access."[57] It is the grasping of the object, effected through the technique of concentration and attention. The second phase will be to study, analyze, and inspect the object.

### *Inspection (Kuan)*

Once the mental image is clearly formed, the meditator should study it in all its details. The Chinese term *kuan* expresses the idea

of looking at something intently. In old Chinese literature it already has a variety of meanings: "to look, regard; cause to see, show; aspect, scene; a sight; lookout tower; embellish oneself."[58] Later it is described as "to look, to view, inspect; to display; sight, view; lookout; a lookout, high building; Taoist monastery."[59] The composition of the character is suggestive: the left part is a stork, and the right part is the radical "to see." Therefore it suggests the idea of looking very attentively, like a stork (standing in the water, watching for fish). In the *Kuan-ching* this basic meaning is intended: with full concentration of the attention, to look closely at the visualized object, to analyze it mentally, or to inspect it. This latter word "inspection" expresses the action most adequately. Indeed, inspection is defined as "the act or process of inspecting: a strict or close examination," and "inspect" is defined as "to view closely and critically; examine with care."[60] Although the word "to inspect" has other meanings in modern language, the meaning chosen here is close to the etymology "in-spicere," to see internally.

The *Kuan-ching* sometimes uses another compound with *kuan*: *ti-kuan*, to inspect searchingly, which intensifies the meaning of *kuan*, and is similar to a compound used later by commentators, *kuan-ch'a*, to inspect and examine.

In several of the exercises described in the *Kuan-ching* the method of *kuan* is further clarified. It consists of a systematic and detailed viewing of all the various elements of the mental image, one by one. The term used is *yi-yi-kuan-chih*, "to inspect one by one," and the method is explained as follows in the "meditation on the trees": "When inspecting the jewel trees, you should inspect [the details] one by one: visualize seven rows of trees, each of them is 8000 *yojanas* high and consists of seven-jewel flowers and leaves all perfect . . ."[61] The process further includes inspection of the various colors of flowers and leaves, the nets of pearls spread over the trees between which numberless flower palaces are to be found, etc.[62]

Such a complex imagination-inspection can hardly be expected from the average lay meditator, and may presuppose some iconographic representation of Sukhāvatī, although this material support was only a help. The meditator, trained in concentration, may have started off looking at the visual aid but gradually left it behind. Once the inner image was strong and clear enough, the external object was discarded and the inspection took place of the mental image only.



### *Vision (Chien)*

Although the Chinese word *chien* signifies "to see, to perceive, to observe,"[63] the term seems to be used here in a more esoteric meaning: "to obtain a conscious vision of something." In ordinary usage *chien* is distinguished from other words, as *k'an*. The latter means to "see," but expresses the quasi-automatic or involuntary sense reaction of the eye when confronted with an object. The former, *chien*, means conscious perception; after the stimulus has been registered, the seer reacts to it in a more conscious manner. This process of visual sensation is expressed in the compound *k'an-chien* (to see and perceive) or *t'ing-chien* (to hear and perceive).

In the present case, *chien* refers to conscious vision, but the esoteric meaning is implied by the fact that the object of vision is a mentally constructed image. Therefore, *chien* seems to be very close to another Chinese term, *hsien*, which means "the glitter of gems" and thus "to manifest, to appear, to see."[64] After one artificially constructs a mental object and impresses it on the mind through close inspection,the object suddenly or slowly manifests itself, appears (mentally) in front of the meditator, as if it were really present. That this is most likely implied here can be substantiated by the actual use of *hsien* in other places (e.g., in the *KFSH)*. Explaining in great detail the similar method of *kuan*, the text explicitly states that "following the visualization, [the object] appears"[65] or "in response to the visualization, [the object] appears."[66] And further, "to obtain this visualization, is called the *samādhi*-of-the appearance-[of the Buddhas]-in front-[of the mental eyes]."[67]

Another confirmation is found in the *Kuan-ching* itself. In the ninth exercise, the visualization of the Buddha's body marks, the author says: "He who sees [i.e., obtains a vision of] Buddha Amita, also sees the innumerable Buddhas of the Ten Quarters. Because he obtains a vision (*chien*) of the innumerable Buddhas, the Buddhas appear in front of him (*hsien-ch'ien*) and he receives the prophecy [of future Buddhahood]."[68]

### *Samādhi (San-mei)*

The vision of the Buddha, or of the other visualized features of Sukhāvatī, is not the ultimate experience to be expected in this

kind of meditation. Several times the text points to *samādhi* as the supreme experience. As early as in Meditation 3 (the visualization of the water), there is a reference to it. "To have realized [this] is called: dim vision of Sukhāvatī. If one [however] reaches [the state of] *samādhi*, he will see that Land in full clarity and distinctively, which is inexpressible in words."[69] At the conclusion of Meditation 8, it is said: "He who performs this visualization, . . . will, during this present life, obtain the *nien-Fo-samādhi*."[70] Within the following exercise, it is said that after one has seen the body marks of Amita, "one will also see all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters. For this reason it is called *nien-Fo-samādhi*."[71]

Finally, recapitulating the doctrine of the sutra, Buddha Shākyamuni says to Ananda, "Those who practice this *samādhi* will in their present life obtain a vision of Buddha Amita and his two great Bodhisattvas."[72]

What *samādhi* really signifies is not explained in the sutra. It is only suggested by the addition that one will obtain in the present life a vision of the Buddha and his two Bodhisattvas. It is self-evident that this ideal must have excited and attracted Buddhist adepts. To wait for a "heavenly vision" is after all a great risk and a question mark. To experience ecstatic vision right here is, according to the testimonies of the mystics, like "heaven on earth."

The analysis of the contents of the *Kuan-ching* is not fully completed, but enough is already explained to compare Shan-tao's exegesis with it. A synthetic view of both the sutra's teaching and Shan-tao's comment on the practice of meditation will follow in the next section. The only aspect to be emphasized now is that the analysis of the *Kuan-ching* shows that this method of meditation was not only, and perhaps not mainly, recommended to monks and nuns, but to all those serious laypeople who were willing to undergo some amount of ascetic life, sufficient to enable them to concentrate their minds, but not too demanding as far as the technical aspects of meditation were concerned. That Chinese commentators like Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, Chi-tsang, and others interpreted the sutra as directed to the members of the monastic order was not wrong in itself. Their mistake was to explain the text exclusively in that way. Shan-tao's view certainly agrees better with the text: the Buddha teaches ordinary beings, and proposes a method of meditation which is simpler than the highly sophisticated practices of monastic professionals.



## SHAN-TAO'S INTERPRETATION OF AMITA VISION

The third part of Shan-tao's commentary is concerned with meditation and intends to clarify the teaching of the *Kuan-ching* with relation to the particular method of Amita vision. In Shan-tao's eyes, there are two great gates or methods (*men*) promising entrance into Sukhāvatī. The first one is meditation, which he calls *ting*, and the second one is ethical conduct, which he calls *san*, literally "dispersion, distraction," but here meaning nonmeditative action. The latter will be discussed in Chapter 7. Here we are only concerned with meditation.

The term *ting*, in a non-Buddist context, means "to fix, to settle; to arrange; to decide; decided; certainly."[73] In Buddhist usage, it was used for meditation (*Versenkung*), and could signify both *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.[74] In fact, the use of these two Sanskrit terms is not always clear-cut. They are often used for each other,[75] unless the four psychic states, the four *dhyānas*, are discussed: in this context, only *dhyāna* is used.[76] It seems, however, that *ting* most frequently stands for *samādhi*, as in such compounds as *cheng-ting*, the right *samādhi* (eighth in the Noble Path), *ting-li*, (*samādhibala*).[77] The use again is not absolute: the fifth *pāramitā*, which is *dhyāna*, is translated as *ch'an-ting*.[78]

It seems, therefore, that in a few cases *dhyāna* only is used, in few a *samādhi* only. In the majority of cases both seem to be practically synonymous. The Buddhist translators in China have not done much to clarify the confusion; in fact, they have aggravated it. There is only one certain way to understand the significance of the terminology: the context. That is the method which will be applied when Shan-tao's views on meditation are analyzed.

These views are not developed in any systematic way, but because of the nature of his textual exegesis, they are expressed gradually as the commentary proceeds. Here they will be sifted out and brought together in a more coherent system, without, hopefully, doing violence to Shan-tao's ideas.

A preliminary remark has still to be made. Although Shan-tao, like most Buddhists, does not question in the least the sacredness of the sutra and never directly touches its authenticity, he indirectly suggests that there is something irregular about it. The result is his personal view about the actual extension of meditation exercises taught by the Buddha. He considers that among the sixteen meditation topics, only 1 to 13 are concerned with *ting*,

meditation, whereas 14 to 16 are concerned with *san*, nonmeditative action. Here again he disagrees with former masters Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, and Chi-tsang.

Hui-yuan explains Vaidehī's initial prayer[79] as follows: *szu-wei* and *cheng-shou* are two different methods (gates): the former consists in the three pure actions, performed with a "scattered mind," whereas the latter are the sixteen meditations.[80] Chi-yi makes the same distinction: as an answer to Vaidehī's request about *szu-wei*, the Buddha explains the three pure actions; answering her prayer about *cheng-shou*, he teaches the sixteen meditations.[81] Finally, Chi-tsang, when discussing *t'i* (essence) and *tsung* (basic teaching, purpose), says that the essence of the sutra consists in the cause and effect of Sukhāvatī.[82] Although he does not explain the terms *szu-wei* and *cheng-shou*, he unambiguously states that *kuan* comprises both the effect (Amita's Land) and the cause (the nine grades). In other words, the sixteen topics are both equally objects of meditation.[83]

Shan-tao disagrees with all of them.[84] In his introductory chapter he points out that in the sutra Shākyamuni opens up two distinct gates to enter the Pure Land of Amita: meditation (*ting*) and nonmeditative action (*san*). They are, in other terms, the twofold goodness of *ting* and *san*. After quoting some passages to prove his statement, he asks the question: what is called "the goodness of meditation" [*ting-shan*]; What is called the "goodness of nonmeditative action" [*san-shan*]?[85]

> The answer is: meditations 1 to 13 [are about] the "goodness of meditation;" from 14 to 16 [about] the three [kinds of] merits and the nine degrees [of rebirth]: these are called "goodness of nonmeditative action."
>
> A further question: what is the difference between the two? Where does the sutra mention them? The *locus* in the text is: "teach me *szu-wei*, teach me *cheng-shou*." Now about the difference between the two: (i) *szu-wei* is the *upāya* used before the [proper] visualization-inspection starts: the mind visualizes the essential and accidental adornments of that Land. It is, as the sutra says with reference to meditation 3: "this is called a dim perception of Sukhāvatī, and corresponds with the above words "teach me *szu-wei*."
>
> (ii) *Cheng-shou* [is obtained] when the mental process of imagination is at rest; and [even] all rational thinking has ceased:[86] it is the total mersion of object and subject [called] *samādhi*.[87] It is as the sutra says with reference [again] to meditation 3: "if one reaches the state of *samādhi*, one will see that Land in full clarity and distinctively," and corresponds with the above words "teach me *cheng-shou*."[88]



Shan-tao clearly distinguishes the two terms *szu-wei* and *cheng-shou*. They are, in his view, the initial phase of concentrated visualization (the emphasis seems to be on concentration), and the final state of *samādhi*. He goes on to say that this exegesis differs from what other teachers have said:

> These teachers relate *szu-wei* to the three [kinds of] merits and to the nine degrees [of rebirth] and consider these as "the goodness of nonmeditative action." They relate *cheng-shou* to the sixteen meditations and consider them as "the goodness of meditation." This explanation is not right. Why? The *Hua-yen sūtra* says that "*szu-wei cheng-shou*" is only a different name for *samādhi*: this agrees with the text from meditation 3 and proves my point. How can it be identified with "the goodness of nonmeditative action"?[89]

That Shan-tao discovers within the *Kuan-ching* two clearly distinct themes or two "gates" to the Pure Land is obviously founded on the text as it was available to him (i.e., in its final redaction, augmented with the various interpolations). These two "gates," corresponding with the monastic *śila* and *dhyāna* (moral discipline and spiritual cultivation), are not for the first time called *ting-shan* and *san-shan*.[90] There is no Sanskrit (or Pali) equivalent for the term *shan* when combined with *ting* or *san*. The Sanskrit *kuśala* is used as an adjective, whereas the Chinese *shan*, in the compounds *ting-shan* and *san-shan*, is used as a noun. Perhaps it was intended as an abbreviation of *shan-ken* (*kuśala-mūla*), "good roots." If it was not meant to be an abbreviation, the idea that both meditation and moral conduct produce good roots seems to be implicit in the expressions.[91]

After these preliminaries, a methodical examination of Shan-tao's views on *ting-shan* can take place. Two main headings will be discussed in turn: preparation and actual meditation.

### *Preliminaries to Meditation*

It is not the first time that Shan-tao discusses the preliminary stage of meditation. As was discussed in Chapter 4, his *KNFM* contains

important instructions for those who want to practice the *nien-Fo samādhi*.[92] Further, his *FST*, although mainly liturgical in nature, emphasizes the importance of confession. In the *KCS*, the liturgical preparations seem somehow misplaced. Instead of describing them right at the beginning, Shan-tao places them within the first exercise, meditation on the sun disk, and says that they should take place if the right perception is hindered. However, logically, as the *KNFM* shows, they must come right at the start.

> [The practitioner] should in great earnest decorate his "sanctuary," display a Buddha image, purify himself by bathing and put on clean clothes. Next he should burn incense, and in front of the Buddha image declare to all the Buddhas, to all the saints and sages: "In this present life I regret and confess all my transgressions committed from the beginningless past till now, by actions, words and thoughts; the ten evils, the five deadly sins, the four serious offenses (*pārājikās*),[93] [the transgressions of] slandering the *dharma* and unbelief."[94]
>
> It is most important that tears of sadness flow down as raindrops, and that a feeling of deep sorrow is produced from deep inside, penetrating to the mind and the marrow of the bones in self-reproach.[95]

In this first preliminary, which must be supplemented by the prescriptions given in the *KNFM*, it is easy to discover Shan-tao's equivalent for the yogic *niyama*, including purity, both ritual and moral (the latter attained by sincere confession), as well as some practice of *tapas*, especially with regard to food and sleep, and worship of the Buddha.

A more immediate preparation is *asana*, the right posture. Since the Buddha wants to offer sentient beings a concrete mental object on which to concentrate, he first of all points out where Amita's Land is situated. It is precisely in the west, exactly where the sun sets in spring and autumn. One should not try to localize the west during winter or summer time, since only in spring and autumn does the sun rise exactly in the east and set exactly in the west. Amita's Land lies straight westward at a distance of ten billion *ksana*.[96]

There is, however, another reason why the sun is presented as the first object of concentration. The Buddha wants all beings to become vividly aware of how serious are the hindrances on their spiritual path caused by their evil *karma*. How can this awareness



be obtained? Exactly by inspecting the sun with a concentrated mind.[97]

> When the practitioner is getting ready to concentrate his mind, he should sit straight in the lotus position: the right foot resting on the left thigh, on the same level; the left resting on the right thigh, on the same level, the two hands joined together. The body should be in an upright position; mouth and teeth should neither be open nor tightly closed; the tongue should touch the palate in order to keep the air channels of throat and nose unobstructed.[98]

What Shan-tao has exactly in mind when clarifying the reason of taking the sun disk as the first object, will soon be explained. First, however, another "ritual" is described, which appears to be unique among the commentators of the *Kuan-ching* and, as a matter of fact, is not found in the *sutra* itself. Shan-tao must have adopted it from another tradition, but considered it to be a very useful mental preparation, even adapted to the spiritual capacity of laypersons.

> Next [the practitioner] must inspect (*kuan*), the *four elements* of the body, and their inward and outward emptiness and complete absence of substantiality. [First] his mind imagines (*hsiang*) the *earth* element of the body: skin, muscles, tendons, bones, etc. He scatters these toward the west as far as the extreme western limit in such a way that not even the form of one particle remains visible. Next he imagines through mental imagination (*hsin-hsiang*) the *water* element of the body: blood, sweat, saliva, tears, etc. He scatters them toward the north as far as the extreme northern limit, in such a way that not even the form of one particle remains visible. Next he imagines the *air* element of the body and scatters it toward the east as far as the extreme eastern limit, in such a way that not even the form of one particle remains visible. Next he imagines the *fire* element of the body, and scatters it toward the south as far as the extreme southern limit, in such a way that not even the form of one particle remains visible. Next he imagines the *space* element (*k'ung*) of the body, which corresponds with the emptiness (*hsü-k'ung*) of the ten directions, in such a way that not even the form of one spaceless particle remains visible. Next he imagines the total emptiness of the *five elements* of the body [and realizes that] only consciousness exists, pure and unchanging, as a round mirror, both inside and outside brightly reflecting clear and pure.

> While performing these imaginations, all confused imaginations are discarded; the mind gradually becomes concentrated, which slowly, slowly turns the attention toward a searching inspection of the sun.[99]

As was already mentioned, around the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. there was a great interest in *dhyāna* among the Chinese Buddhists. Several treatises had been translated, some of them purely Hīnayānist in character, and still others of a mixed nature, others predominantly Mahāyānist:

> In the Chinese texts of the first centuries especially discussing Yoga, there is a noted tendency to complement the technical data of Hīnayānist Yoga by Mahāyānist developments. Among the Han translators of the second century, there are on the one hand purely Hīnayānist texts (e.g., An Shih-kao's translations), and on the other hand purely Mahāyānist texts (e.g., *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra* and *Śūrangama-samādhi-sūtra*). A short time later . . . one finds among the translations of Dharmaraksa, toward the end of the third century, besides the small Hīnayānist texts, . . . our *yogācārabhūmi* by Sangharaksa with its Mahāyānist appendix. A century later, with Kumārajīva and his contemporaries or immediate successors, there is a whole series of works in which the Yoga methods or docrines of both Vehicles are jointly explained, evidently with the effort to respond to the demands of a double clientele, with a predominance of either Hīnayānist elements or Mahāyānist elements.[100]

One example of those fifth-century versions is Buddhamitra's *Wu-men ch'an-ching yao-yung-fa*,[101] translated between 424 and 442 by the Kashmirian *dhyāna* master Dharmamitra, in which the practice of *nien-Fo* is strongly emphasized, whereas Hīnayānist exercises are only briefly developed (the contemplation of impurity, of the skeleton, of the four elements, etc).[102] The relevant consideration in this connection is that Shan-tao during his training years had ample opportunity to become familiar with several traditional techniques of meditation, among which was the meditation on the four elements. He selected this practice among the many others that he must have come across probably because of its psychological value. This can be clarified by referring to some parallel ways of using the same basic technique.

In the Hīnayāna tradition, "the Analysis of the Body into the Four Elements has always enjoyed a very high esteem in Buddhist



tradition because it serves as a very effective breaking-up of the seeming compactness and substantiality of the body."[103] In the *Visuddhimagga*, the meditation on the four elements is compared to a butcher who cuts a cow into pieces and reviews the cow's body as consisting of the elements of earth, water, fire, and air. The butcher who had always thought of the living animal as "cow" does not view it as such any longer after it is cut up. In the same way, a monk clings to the idea of "living being" or "man" or "person" until "by resolution of the compact into elements" he reviews his own body as having no real consistency.[104]

In the Tantric tradition, there is a similar exercise, called *bhūtaśuddhi*, "purification of the elements," which is said to have parallells in Hindu worship:

> The oldest and most tenacious form of *mantric* identification is the process of *bhūtaśuddhi*, "purification of the elements," which is an obligatory observance for such disparate worshippers as the vedic priest and the Buddhist tantric. The *Mantramahodadhi* calls it a rite preliminary to the worship of a *deva*, but this is misleading as it covers only the formal, and in this context the least important, aspect of *bhūtaśuddhi*. It is actually a step-by-step dissolution of grosser into subtler elements in the cosmographical hierarchy, and culminates in a visualized merger with whatever supreme being or state the particular tradition postulates. In this rite, which is a congeries of thoroughly standardized *mantras* and *mudrās*, a process of gradual involution is thought to take place whereby at first the body is identified with its various elementary sources; earth is associated with the sense of smell, water with taste, fire with sight, air with touch, and ether with sound: these individual functions of the subtle body (*lingaśarira*) are "merged," one by one, into their sources, the practicant then identifies the last element (ether) with the element-principle (*tanmātra*) sound, and with the ego (*ahamkāra*), the ego with *mahat* (the cognitive totum of the cosmos), and this into *prākrti* (total nature); finally *prākrti* is identified with the Brahman, the supreme absolute neutral deity. Then, to eradicate the negative, all sins are driven out through a special *mantra* aimed at the sins anthropomorphically visualized as a black man or another uncanny phantom; thus, partial, gradual, progressive merger leading to the final identification which is tantamount with the target of each tradition respectively is the ultimate purpose of *mantra* . . .[105]

The reference to Hindu practice seems to point out that this technique, although it developed in various directions, probably goes back to a common tradition in ancient times.

In the Mahāyāna tradition the practice returns in similar but different modalities. The *Śūrangama-sūtra* (T. 945)[106] has a whole chapter about scattering the illusion that the five aggregates, the six entrances (five senses and intellect), the six sense organs and six sense data, as well as the seven elements (earth, fire, water, wind, space, perception, and conciousness), have real subsistence. The author devotes another passage more particularly to meditation on the seven elements. Several Bodhisattvas come to the center, each attesting that meditation on one of these elements is the ideal way to emancipation:

> According to my opinion, the best consists in looking into the nonexistent heat in my body and mind[107] In my opinion the best consists in looking into the power of the element of wind, which has nothing (real) on which to rely, thereby awakening to the Bodhi mind so as to enter Samādhi and [then] to unite with the profound One Mind expounded by the Buddhas in the ten directions[108] . . . the best consists in the close examination into boundless space, leading to entry into Samādhi.[109]

In these latter quotations, the final aim of the meditation on the elements is to realize unity with the Buddha mind, or to realize Buddhahood through *samādhi*.

A final example is from the already mentioned text translated by Buddhamitra (T. 619). The passage contains various considerations of the water element in the body which culminate in the complete elimination of it: "'It has entirely drained away from my body, which is now only an empty hide like a bundle of straw that has caught fire and burnt right out,' that means that he has completely eliminated the concept of Self."[110]

All these examples from Buddhist and other[111] similar but not identical traditions share a common belief: meditating on the elements of the body, separating and reducing them to nonbeing, is a powerful device to break down the wrong view of *ātman* and prepare the meditator for subsequent mystical experience, even to union with the Absolute.

Although this exercise of "scattering" the elements of the body through a sharp analysis of their nonsubstantiality is rooted in the solid Buddhist doctrine of the impermanence of all *dharmas*, its purpose and result can be compared with what in Christian piety is achieved by contemplating the "presence of God." This is a mental preparation before meditation proper is started. Meditators concentrate their attention on the fact that they find themselves before the majesty of God, who sees, knows, and loves them. Reaching a feeling of presence as strong as possible makes the Chistian meditator fully aware of his or her own sinfulness, insignificance, and "nothingness," which purifies his or her whole personality to the extent that he or she becomes totally receptive to divine grace. Although Buddhist spirituality has developed more complete techniques to achieve a similar result, the parallelism with the Christian practice cannot be denied. At the same time, of course, the doctrinal background of the two systems is radically different.



After the "scattering of the elements" has taken place, the mind slowly changes its attention toward visualizing the sun-disk. Whether this will succeed quickly or gradually depends on the karmic disposition of the practitioner:

> If he has "sharp roots," then as soon as he sits down, he will see appear before him the bright features [of the sun]. When the object appears, it may be either as small as a coin, or as big as the circumference of a mirror. According to the brightness [of the object] he will perceive the degree of gravity of his own *karma* hindrances. It may appear either as a black screen, as if a dark cloud was screening the sun; or as a yellow screen, as if a yellow cloud was screening the sun; or as white screen, as if a white cloud was screening the sun. Just as various clouds may obstruct the sun, so that it cannot manifest its brightness, so the *karma* hindrances of sentient beings conceal the object of the pure mind, so that they do not allow the mind to reflect brightly.[112]

As was already mentioned in Chapter 3, these three clouds are found in some Pure Land paintings, as the Taima Mandara in Japan. They symbolize "the three sorts of spiritual obstruction"[113] which hinder the meditator from having a clear image of the sun. What each of these three exactly symbolizes is not explained by Shan-tao, but they are likely thought of as the three obstacles for meditation, rather than the three obstacles hindering Path followers in general.[114] If the practitioner perceives this phenomenon, he must stop his meditation right away. He should realize that he is not fully prepared. Here Shan-tao advises him to start with a ritual

of purification and confession (as was already noted above). When the ritual is completed, a new start should be made:

> The practitioner must sit down again in the same way as before and should with a calm mind (*an-hsin*) try to grasp the object [of visualization: the sun disk]. If it appears, and if the three screens mentioned before are completely removed, so that the visualized pure object shines forth bright and pure, then this is called a person of "sharp roots." If after one confession only the black screen is removed, or only the yellow and the white screens, or still, only the white screen, this is called the gradual removal [of the obstacles] and is not called a sudden destruction.
>
> If one becomes aware that one's own *karma* characteristics are such, then one should only with diligent mind make confessions; at the three periods or six periods of day and night one should recall [one's transgressions] and repent: this truly is a person of "superior roots" and superior action, just like somebody who as soon as he becomes aware that hot water or fire burns his body, immediately removes the cause.[115]

### *Actual Meditation*

Once the spiritual hindrances are cleared away, the meditation proper can be undertaken. It seems to be justified to distinguish various stages in the process, but since Shan-tao does not treat them methodically and often jumps from one stage to another within the same passage, it is better first to follow him in his descriptions and to analyze them afterward.

The first meditation is visualizing the sun disk. This is in fact only an *upāya* used by the Buddha to attain the real purpose, which is a conscious knowledge of the adornments of Sukhāvatī. This is beyond the normal capacity of the believer, but since the disk of the setting sun offers some kind of analogy even though the splendors of Sukhāvatī exceed the sun's brightness a billion times, the meditator should persist in his effort and follow the prescribed method; then he will soon be able to concentrate his mind and see the happy features of Amita's Land.[116] The correct method of inspection[117] is as follows: "The practitioner, with erect body, with dignified demeanor, the face directed toward the west, [should] hold on to the object with fixed mind and firm grasp: whatever he expects will follow accordingly."[118]



When the mind perceives the sun clearly and distinctly, it means that the inspection has been successful, and is an invitation to proceed to a more advanced stage: the state of *samādhi*.

> [The mind] should keep the imagination under control and remove all causes of distraction; each single moment [the mind] should remain unwavering while the pure features appear distinctly.
>
> Further, when the practitioner for the first time in his concentration perceives the sun, he immediately obtains the joy of *samādhi*; both inside and outside, his body and mind reach a state of complete harmony which is inexpressible in words. While this perception takes place, it is of great importance to control the mind and keep it concentrated to avoid that desires grasp the mind. If a desiring mind arises, the "water of the mind" is stirred and because of this mental disturbance, [the perception of] the pure object is immediately lost. Whether [you call it] lost [perception] or darkening [of the object], whether it is a black or a yellow-green or only a white [screen that appears], it is impossible to quiet and settle [the mind].
>
> When [the practitioner] perceives this fact, he should say to himself: that the characters of this object are stirred and not quiet is due to the stirring thoughts of my desiring mind, which caused the pure object to be stirred and destroyed. If I bring my mind to rest and foster the right mindfulness I may start all over again; the stirring characters will disappear and a quiet mind will reappear. Since I am aware of my fault, I must certainly not once again let mental desires arise.[119]

In all the subsequent meditations, the right and wrong method, the winning or losing of the pure object, are all identical with this first one. When the practitioner wishing to inspect the sun actually perceives the sun, so that mind and object are in mutual correspondence, it is called the right inspection (*cheng-kuan*). If he inspects the sun and does not perceive it but instead perceives various other objects, then mind and object do not correspond; this is called wrong inspection. Among the objects within our reach in the dark house of this Sāha world there is no other example (no better symbol) than the brilliant sun, which may help the imagination to reach the distant goal of Sukhāvatī.[120]

Commenting on the first exercise, as explained in the sutra, Shan-tao has already touched upon the various stages of meditation. He even has anticipated the state of *samādhi*, which is not referred

to in the sutra until the third exercise (and even there appears to be an interpolation). However, this interpretation is perfectly justified. There is no reason why *samādhi* should not be realized at the end of the first meditation if the prescribed method is adhered to and the conditions are fulfilled, especially the removal of the obstacles. It seems, though, that *samādhi* would not be reached by everybody so soon. It rather reflects Shan-tao's own experience, since he was more mystically oriented than the average person.

Shan-tao now continues his discourse with another lengthy discussion of Meditation 2, the introductory inspection of Amita's Land. Although the title here is "Inspection of the Water," water is only a temporary device leading to the heart of this exercise, which is to see the jewel ground of Sukhāvatī. Why should one meditate on water next? Shan-tao says it is in order to rectify our wrong ideas about Sukhāvatī. Although the meditation on the sun is an ideal way to manifest our personal spiritual hindrances, it might lead to an erroneous conception of the nature of Sukhāvatī. One would perhaps think that it is uneven, with highs and lows, mountains and valleys, just like this unclean Sāha world. That would be totally wrong. The Land Sukhāvatī is perfectly smooth and even. This idea of evenness is only reached by meditating on water, and furthermore on the water "frozen" into a perfectly flat surface of lapis lazuli, of which the ground of that Land consists.[121]

Before describing the concrete method of performing this meditation, Shan-tao removes another doubt from the reader's mind: water as we know it in this world is wet and besides soft. Would that mean that the lapis lazuli ground of Amita's Land is also like that? The evenness of water in this world corresponds with the absence of highs and lows in that Land. When we meditate on water turning into ice, this corresponds to, or symbolizes, the penetrating brightness of the *lapis lazuli* ground there. This illustrates that Amita's (Bodhisattva Dharmākara's) actions throughout the past *kalpas* were all equally perfected and his right cultivations had come to their full maturity, so that he could produce his own Land (literally, earth-disc) of penetrating illumination.[122]

We find the main message next in the commentary: what is the exact method to make the object(s) of this meditation appear before the mind? As far as the body position is concerned, it is the same as described before. What is different, however, is the new concrete object on which one has to concentrate to obtain mental tranquillity.



The practitioner must go to a quiet spot, fetch a bowl of water, and fill it to the brim. He puts it on the floor in front of his bed. He himself sits down [on the bed]. Between his eyebrows he places a white object, the size of a bean. Lowering his head close to the surface of the water, he watches the white spot [in the water] with fixed attention, without permitting any distracting thoughts at all. At first the water below shows ripples and is not at rest, [so that] when lowering the face to inspect, he cannot perceive the image of his face. If he keeps inspecting without ceasing, gradually the face will appear. In the beginning the features of the face are not fixed: sometimes it will be long, sometimes short, sometimes broad, sometimes narrow, now he will see it, then again it is gone. When this happens, it is very important to concentrate one's mind to the utmost. Not long afterward, the ripples on the water seem slightly to move and not to move. The features of the face gradually become clearly visible. Although he perceives [the reflections of] his eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc., still he must neither grasp nor reject (oppose) [them], but only relax his body and mind, [while] knowing that [these features] are present, without being attached to them. He has only to grasp the white spot and inspect it clearly and distinctly. He must retain and protect [this] right mindfulness without losing his concentration. While perceiving this, the mind gradually becomes still, and the clear nature of the water appears.

Further, if the practitioner wants to know consciously whether the waves of the water in his own mind are at rest or not, he only has to visualize the moving or not-moving character of this water, and he immediately knows whether his mental object manifests itself in characters of brightness or not.

Further, while waiting for the water [to become] quiet, [the practitioner] takes, for instance, a grain of rice, and holding it over the bowl, casually drops it in the water; immediately ripples appear all over the bowl. When he lowers his face and closely watches, he immediately notices that the white spot is moving; if he then takes for instance a bean and drops it, the ripples become bigger; the white spot on his face may be visible or may not; if he finally throws a date into the water, the waves become great, the white spot on his forehead and even his own head are altogether hidden and become invisible, because the water is stirred.[123]

[Explanation of the Similitude]

The bowl symbolizes the body; the water symbolizes the mind [literally, the mind-water]; the ripples and waves symbol-

ize the confused thoughts [imaginations] and passion-delusions. The gradual coming to rest of the ripples symbolizes the control and rejection of all distractions and concentration of the mind on one object. The appearance of the object through tranquillization of the water means that the mind keeps control of distractions and is without confusion.

When the conditioned object is not stirred, the tranquillity which he had looked for through inward and outward [effort] becomes manifest.

Further, if deliberate thoughts or casual imaginations [arise], the mind-water is stirred and as it is stirred, the object is lost. Further, whether a small object or a big object is thrown into the tranquil water, it is stirred and ripples are formed.

The practitioner has only to observe the features of moving-or-not-moving of this water, in order to be conscious whether his own mind is concentrated or not.

Just as in the first meditation, on the sun, here also there is a true (correct) and a false method, depending on whether the object appears and [if so, whether it] is again lost or not.

[To quote] from Vasubandhu's "Praises":
"I inspect the characters of that world
which transcend the paths of the three worlds.
Ultimately it is as empty space,
Vast and without boundaries."[124]

When the surface of water (either in a bowl, or on a lake, etc.) is motionless, the water is transparent and objects in the water are clearly visible. If the water is stirred (or polluted) the object is not clearly visible. So with the mind: stirred by sense objects, it is in continuous motion and concentration on mental images is hard to achieve.

Shan-tao's comparison of water and mind is very significant. It is one of the only two similes which he describes with great detail and follows up by a formal explanation. (The other one is the Parable of the White Path; see Chapter 5.) Although it is hard to prove that Shan-tao adopted this simile from the Chinese classical literature, the almost exact counterpart is already found in Hsün-tzu's writings:

The mind may be compared to a pan of water. If you place the pan on a level and do not jar it, then the heavy sediment will settle to the bottom and the clear water will collect on top, so that you can see your beard and eyebrows in it and examine the lines of your face. But if a faint wind passes over the top of the water, the heavy sediment will be stirred up from the bottom and the clear water will become mingled with it, so that you can no longer get a clear reflection of even a large object. The mind is the same way. If you guide it with reason, nourish it with clarity, and do not allow external objects to unbalance it, then it will be capable of determining right and wrong and of resolving doubts. But if you allow petty external objects to pull it about, so that its proper form becomes altered and its inner balance is upset, then it will not be capable of making even gross distinctions.[125]



Another parallel is found in the *Chuang-tzu*: "Confucius said, 'Men do not mirror themselves in running water—they mirror themselves in still water'. Only what is still can still the stillness of other things."[126]

When Shan-tao next explains the third "meditation," there is no novelty as far as the ritual or the concrete method is concerned, since the general principles explained under Meditations 1 and 2 are applicable in all further meditations, and only the concrete objects of visualization change at each further step. Here, however, he summarizes the principles to be followed, and indirectly points out the successive stages of meditation:

1. When the mind sets up a single object, it should not inspect it in a general or confused way.
2. As soon as the mind concentrates on [this] single object, it will immediately appear before [the mind]; when it thus appears, [the mind] must see it clearly and distinctly.
3. When the object appears before the mind, one has to keep it and not let it disappear, whether one's eyes are kept open or closed.
4. In either of the four positions of the body, whether day or night, one should always be mindful of that object. Except when sleeping, one should keep it fixed in the mind and not let it go.
5. If the mind is thus consolidated (concentrated) and does not forsake its object, it will immediately perceive the characters of the Pure Land. This is called the perception within the imagining mind, since one is still conscious (aware) of one's imagining.

6. The mental imagining gradually diminishes, [until] suddenly the conscious mindfulness vanishes: object and subject are merged (*cheng-shou*) and *samādhi* is realized. When one truly perceives the subtle aspects of that realm, how would it be possible to give a detailed description? This is because that Land is vast and without boundaries; the jewel banners are numerous; various gems are glittering in ever-changing colors. Therefore I persuade all beings to incline their minds and keep [this image] constantly as if before their eyes.[127]

This is the best analysis given so far of the various stages of meditation, and although the two successive steps which were discussed above (*hsiang* and *chien*) are included here and clearly distinguished, Shan-tao goes byond them when he describes the state of mystic trance or *samādhi* as the culmination of meditation. Another text taken from the seventh meditation (on the Buddha throne), although repetitious in some places, summarizes in another way many of the essential points of Shan-tao's teaching on meditation. First he observes again the basic impossibility for sentient beings to elevate their minds above the ordinary darkness of this world. If the practitioner would try to set up the Pure World of the West as an object for imagination, he would be powerless. Only with the help of the Buddha will he be able "to perceive whatever he inspects" (*suo kuan chieh chian*).[128]

> Through what method will he be able to fix his mind and obtain a perception? The practitioner who wants to follow the method must first of all with a sincere mind in front of a Buddha image make a confession and reveal all the transgressions he has committed. He should produce extreme shame and repentance and weep bitterly with tears flowing down. After confession he must mentally and verbally address Buddha Shākyamuni and the numberless Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, while mindful of the original vows of Buddha Amita, and say: "Your disciple (so and so) has been blind from birth and his transgressions are heavy while at all sides hindered by screens of deep [delusion]. I pray that the Buddhas' compassion will receive [me], keep me in their protective remembrance and teach me [the way to] awakening. I wish to realize the object of my inspection. If today my life would suddenly come to an end, I hope to belong to Amita. Whether I will reach a perception or not, this wholly depends on the power of the Buddha's favors." After finishing this prayer he should with an even more sincere mind make his confession. Then he should go to a quiet spot, direct his face to the west, and sit upright in the lotus position, just as has been explained before. When the mind has been settled, he should slowly, slowly turn the attention and imagine clearly and distinctly the various features of that jewel land. If the first [effort in] imagining is not successful, and [instead] numerous objects are confusedly imagined, it will be difficult to obtain concentration. He should then only inspect one square inch or one foot, etc., either one day, two days, three days, or four, five, six, seven days, or one month, one year, two or three years, etc. Whether it is day or night, he should always concentrate on all his actions of body, speech, and mind, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying. Only when he has completely renounced the myriad things [of the world] and has lost interest in them as if he were blind or deaf or mentally ill, that state of concentration will become easy to attain. If this is not the case, viz. if the three actions follow their own uncontrolled course, the concentrated visualization will consequently become an illusion, and the *dharma* eyes will not be opened, though he may live a full thousand years.
>
> If [on the contrary] the mind reaches concentration, [there are two possibilities]: either the bright characteristics [of Sukhāvatī] will first appear; or [the practitioner] will at first perceive clearly and distinctly the jewel ground with its numerous ineffable [adornments].
>
> There are two kinds of perception: one is a visualizing perception (*hsiang-chien*). Because there still is consciousness [of the object], although there is perception of the pure object, it is not yet clear and distinct. In the second case, inner and outer consciousness are lost, and one immediately enters into *samāpatti* (*cheng-shou san-mei*): this perception of the pure object is not at all comparable with the former one.[129]



Meditation 7, "Perception of the Lotus-Throne," is the first meditation in the second series, which promises a vision of the "essential" (or true) rewards of Sukhāvatī: the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Shan-tao is very earnest about the approach, and seems to establish a new set of rules, or at least resumes the rules applied to the first series and makes them more urgent. Confession of past transgressions should be accompanied with tears pouring down; absolute reliance on the power of the Buddha, who alone can grant a vision of himself, should be deeply imprinted in the meditator's consciousness. Strong control of the mind, ability to

concentrate, is endorsed more than previously. If necessary, months and years have to be spent in the practice of mind control, and detachment from worldly matters is the only way to achieve that mental state. This latter point seems to be exaggerated. If Shan-tao offers a way of meditation for laypeople, why is he so demanding? It must be that he considers this second series of Amita visions to be not commonly available to the laity, except to those who live an almost monastic life within society.

Meditations 8 and 9 form the essential nucleus of the sutra. They offer two distinct ways of meditating on Buddha Amita himself: first on his image, next on his body marks. This logical procedure expressed in the sutra is therefore quite clear, considering also the fact that Meditation 7 (on the throne) already prepared the way for 8 and 9. Now when reading the sutra text, it becomes quite obvious that interpolators have tampered with the original version of Meditation 8: "Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehī: after you have seen the [throne], you should next visualize the Buddha. How should this be done?"[130]

The explanation which follows does not answer the question, but it looks rather like the notes added by a glossarist and later inserted into the text: they are philosophical in nature and even contradict the main tenets of the sutra, since the idea of *dharmadātu-kāya* (*fa-chieh shen*) is introduced. From the literary viewpoint, the question asked would be immediately followed by this answer: "When you [want to] visualize the Buddha, you should first visualize his image. Whether your eyes are closed or open, you should [try to] see a jewel image, . . . seated on that flower throne."[131]

In Shan-tao's commentary, the interpolated passage is also explained, and since here he expresses some important doctrinal ideas, it is necessary to give the passage from the sutra first:

> All the Buddhas Tathāgathas are [identified with] *dharmadhātu-kāya*: they universally enter into the minds[132] of all sentient beings. Therefore, when your mind visualizes the Buddha, this [very] mind is [identified with] the thirty-two body marks and the eighty minor marks. This mind "creates" the Buddha; this mind is the Buddha. The ocean of true and universal knowledge (omniscience) of the Buddhas arises from the mind. Therefore you should with singlemindedness and close mindfulness thoroughly inspect that Buddha Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully Enlightened One.[133]



Shan-tao explains that this passage recommends a careful step-by-step visualization and inspection of the major and minor marks of Amita.

> [First] I will only explain [the words] "to create the Buddha." This is to visualize mentally without interruption [the body marks], starting from the top of the head down to the feet, and inspect them one by one without a moment's rest. One first visualizes the mark of the top of [the Buddha's] head, next the mark of the white hair-twist between his eyebrows, and so on down to the mark of the thousand-wheels imprint on his footsoles. While performing this visualization (*hsiang*), all the major and minor marks of the Buddha image will appear (*hsien*) perfectly clear with propriety and majesty. Just because the mind conditions the marks one by one, they will one by one become visible. If the mind does not condition them, the marks will not be visible. Only if they are created by the mind's imagination will they respond to the mind and become visible. That is the meaning of the words "this [very] mind is [identified with] the thirty-two body marks." When the Buddha marks appear, all the minor marks will follow. This clarifies the Tathāgatha's teaching that when visualizing one should fully inspect [all details] and explains the words ". . . and the resulting eighty minor marks."
>
> The words "This mind creates the Buddha" signify that when [the meditator], relying on a mind of self-faith, conditions the marks, it is as if he creates them [himself].
>
> The words "This mind is the Buddha" signify that when the mind visualizes the Buddha, then relying on this visualization the body of the Buddha appears: this is a mind-Buddha (or a mental Buddha). Outside this mind [-Buddha], there is no other Buddha.
>
> The words "The [ocean of] true and universal knowledge of the Buddhas . . . clarify that the Buddhas have obtained perfect and all-pervasive (literally, unhindered) wisdom. Whether consciously or not consciously aware, they possess at all times a universal knowledge of the *dharmadhātu* mind. You have only to perform this imagination, and out of this imagination of the mind he will appear [to you] as if truly alive.
>
> Some practitioners interpret the meaning of this method to be "inspection of the *dharma-kāya* according to the consciousness-only theory" or to be the "concentration on the Buddha nature according to the theory of the 'self-nature-is-originally-pure.'" These interpretations are completely wrong; they do not have the slightest similarity to truth. When we say, "to visualize

the image [of the Buddha]," [it is] to erect empirically the thirty-two marks. How can the Tathāgata's *dharmadhātu-kāya* possess external characters, which can be conditioned, or a body that can be grasped? Indeed, the *dharma-kāya* is immaterial (*arūpya*) and escapes from being presented to sight; even less can it be analyzed [i.e., classified according to its various components]. Just for that reason the term *śūnyatā* is chosen in order to symbolize the essence of the *dharma-kāya*. Moreover, the present method of inspection only points to the [western] quarter and establishes [Amita's] marks to concentrate the mind and thus grasp the object. It does certainly not mean formlessness [*animitta*],[134] which is separated from mindfulness.

In his prophetic vision the Tathāgata knew that the sin-defiled ordinary beings of the decayed age would not be able to fix their minds, even if characters were established. How much less would they succeed if they tried without characters! They would be like unskilled persons who tried to live and build houses in the air.[135]

This passage from the *Kuan-ching shu* poses several difficulties. First, it is correct to say that if the meditator "creates" a mental image of the Buddha, there is no real existence of this Buddha outside the mind. But Shan-tao seems to say more. "Outside this mind [-Buddha], there is no other Buddha!" Does it mean that neither Buddha Amita nor any other Buddha is thought to have real existence? Is Sukhāvatī only a product of the mind? This does not fit in with Shan-tao's buddhology. What he says here must be that no objective reality corresponds to the mind-Buddha, although the (normally following) conclusion does not follow. That no objective reality corresponds to the mental vision of Amita is implied in the use of "as if," which occurs twice in this passage: "it is *as if* he creates [the marks] himself," and further: "he will appear *as if* truly alive." In other words, although a vision is obtained, it is not a vision of Amita himself but of an image of him.

Another possible interpretation is that the sutra words "this mind is the Buddha" explained by Shan-tao as "this is a mind-Buddha, beside which there is no other Buddha" would mean that, within the process of meditation, the adept becomes conscious of his own true nature, his Buddhahood. In other words, he becomes one with Buddha nature: no essential difference between subject and object exists anymore. This is a basic teaching of



Mahāyāna Buddhism, but it is doubtful whether it is implied here. In fact, it does not seem probable, since this would only happen in the highest form of *samādhi*, which is not implied in the present passage. Furthermore, the former interpretation makes more sense, since it agrees better with the text.

Another point is Shan-tao's objection to incorrect views on the real nature of this experience. He seems to react against two schools of Buddhism (Vijñānavāda and possibly Ch'an Buddhism) which explain the *kuan* method as directed toward a vision of the *dharma-kāya* of the Buddha. Shan-tao is rather vehement in his reaction. This is absurd, he says, because the true nature of the Buddha transcends all external forms and cannot be grasped by a human mind.

After this rather philosophical digression followed by a defense of the true nature of Amita vision, Shan-tao becomes practical again and further explains the technique of visualization-inspection.

1. [In any] of the four postures of the body, whether the eyes are open or closed, one perceives a golden image [of the Buddha] as if appearing before one's eyes; one should continuously hold on to that imagination.

2. Since one has arrived at an inspection of the image, it must have a sitting-place. One must thus imagine the flower throne, mentioned formerly, and imagine that the [Buddha] image sits upon it.

3. After imagining and perceiving the sitting image, the mind's eyes will be opened.

4. When the mind's eyes have been opened, one will perceive a golden image and all the splendors of that Land of Happiness. That empty space above the Land will become clear without hindrance.

Further, the method of inspection of the image and of mental concentration is the same as has been explained above: one should visualize (*hsiang*) one by one [all the body marks] starting from the top [of the Buddha's head]: the mark of eyebrows and white hair [between the eyebrows], eyes, nose, mouth, ears, throat, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers. Then draw the mind['s attention] upwards [and] imagine breast, abdomen, navel, [concealed] male organ, shinbones, knees, heels, feet, the ten toes, the thousand wheels [on the footsoles], etc. [This] one-by-one-imagining from top to bottom is called inspection in

straight order; from the thousand wheels below going upward, this is called inspection in reverse order. If in this way [the practitioner tries to] settle his mind using these two methods, straight and reverse, after a short time he will certainly succeed.

Furthermore, he must thoroughly inspect the Buddha's body, the flower-throne, the jewel ground, etc., both in downward and upward order, since among the thirteen inspections, those of inspecting the jewel ground [Med. 3], the jewel flowers (the jeweled flower throne) [Med.7] and the golden [Buddha] image [Med. 8] are the most important ones. If you want to teach other people, then you have to teach them this method. If this one method succeeds the other inspections will naturally become clear.[136]

In one of the next lines of the sutra a new dimension is opened for the meditator, inasmuch as the sense of hearing becomes involved: "When this visualization has been realized the practitioner should listen to the wonderful *dharma* expounded by the flowing water, the radiant light, the jewel trees, wild geese, and mandarin ducks."[137] Strangely enough, almost no notice is taken by Shan-tao of this new aspect, although the sutra not only suggests visions of the Land, but, as in the present passage, also hearing, and likely smell, taste, and touch as well (as in Meditation 5: inspection of the jewel lakes, which contain water of eight qualities).

When comparing the sutra text of Meditations 8 and 9 with Shan-tao's commentary, it becomes evident that some misinterpretation has occurred. The sutra clearly prepares the meditator for a gradual climax in his visions: Meditation 7 on the lotus throne of the Buddha; Meditation 8 on the images, first of Amita, next of both Kuan-yin and Ta-shih-chih; and Meditation 9 on the body marks of the two Bodhisattvas. Shan-tao makes a jump in his commentary: the inspection of the body marks of Amita already took place in Meditation 8 (as shown and explained above). Although he titles this exercise correctly "inspection of the image(s)" (*hsiang-kuan*), the following exercise is not correctly titled: instead of "inspection of the body marks" (as in the sutra) he changes the title into "inspection of the true body" (*chen-shen kuan*), which is certainly misleading.[138] Besides, Meditation 9 has almost no content anymore. Although according to the original intention this is the moment of climax, yet Shan-tao's commentary is merely repetitious, and a poor paraphrase of the sutra text. Even



such important mystical matters as the vision of the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, which follows from the vision of Amita, or the Buddhas' prophecy of future Enlightenment, are practically passed over with some casual remarks.

The reason that Shan-tao made such an evident misinterpretation is, as was already mentioned above, the interpolation occurring in the text of Meditation 8: although it is highly philosophical, it also mentions the thirty-two body marks and the eighty minor marks of excellence. Shan-tao was misled by this intrusion, and although he should have noticed the irregularity in the sutra text, he did not see it or chose to ignore it.

Another possible excuse is that Shan-tao did not want to mislead his readers. It is understandable that the vision of the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters and the subsequent prophecy of future Buddhahood are almost obscured if one sticks to the thesis that Shan-tao wrote mainly for cultivated laypeople. Although he convinced them that they were entitled to mystical experiences, he did not want them to overreach. Indeed, receiving the prophecy of Buddhahood was normally a result of many *kalpas* of Bodhisattva training.

In the last exercise, the thirteenth (which in my view is an interpolation), the text reminds the reader that since the body measurements of Amita are boundless, they cannot be grasped through the limited power of the human mind. But because of the power of Amita's ancient vows, all those who visualize him with concentrated mind will be successful. This means, says Shan-tao, that

since the object is great and the mind small, it is ultimately difficult to succeed. This saddens the Holy Mind; so he urges people to inspect small [objects]. However, although the mind of ordinary persons is narrow and small, still the holy capacity [of Amita] is vast and large. Since there is no way to fix the imagination without the Buddha's help, it is to be feared that success is hard to obtain. It is not because of the smallness [of the human mind] that the goal is hard to achieve; neither is it because the great power [of the Buddha] does not appear; it is just because the [power] of Amita's vows is strong, that all those who imagine [the Buddha and his Pure Land] will meet with success.

If visualizing the Buddha image already brings the meditator immeasurable happiness, how much more will the inspection of his true [body] result in even greater benefits.[139]

## SYNTHESIS

In the first section, a study of the terminology used in the *Kuan-ching* brought about the suggestion that the author distinguised three or four essential stages in the meditation process. Leaving aside preliminaries, he successively spoke about a first stage of *hsiang*, imagination-visualization; a second stage of *kuan*, inspection, or close, attentive viewing of what has been visualized; and a third stage of *chien*, perception, vision, "seeing," when the mentally constructed or visualized image, after being closely inspected, appears in all its clarity to the mind's eye as if it were an objective reality. The extreme degree of such a vision, mentioned only a few times in the sutra, and which may be defined as a fourth stage, consists in the state of *samādhi*, when the objective vision is lost. The meditator loses consciousness of seeing at all and is unified with the object of vision. The boundaries of man's limited consciousness are broken and he merges with the "ineffable."

A careful reading and analysis of Shan-tao's comments has clarified many points which in the sutra had been only casually touched upon. It has also shown that Shan-tao's views were not always in accordance with the sutra text (see his interpretation of Meditations 8 and 9). It also makes one feel that his interpretation is one among others, which perhaps are equally congruent with the meaning of the sutra. But more than anything else, one has the strong impression that Shan-tao's explanations are based on a long series of personal mystical experiences. In this manner both his biography and his works tell the same story, that he was a man who followed the strict rules of discipline and was often absorbed in *samādhi*.

This analysis also shows that the hypothetical exegesis of the sutra, as far as the various stages of meditation are concerned, seems to be basically correct, for it also corresponds with Shan-tao's insight. The terminology used by him is richer than in the sutra itself but follows the same distinct catetories of *hsiang, kuan, chien,* and *samādhi*. Concerning the first one, *hsiang*, Shan-tao may not always differentiate it so clearly from *kuan* as would seem logical, but basically, as in the sutra, the function of *hsiang* is to construct a mental image. Shan-tao introduces a new term in this connection which is clearer than just *hsiang*. This new term is *hsin-hsiang,* to imagine in one's mind. Throughout his commentary, Shan-tao emphasizes the absolute necessity of concentration.



He uses a variety of different terms, almost synonymous, and stresses the importance of a concentrated mind during all the stages of visualization and inspection, and also during the stage of vision. When *samādhi* is reached, concentration becomes superfluous. It is transcended because the mind is so absorbed and identified with the object that to talk about distraction is senseless.

When modern authors discuss the *Kuan-ching* and related texts, they call them *kuan* sutras: such a characterization is not wrong,[140] but rather inadequate (it is *pars pro toto*: a part is taken for the whole); in other words, *kuan* does not cover their complete teaching, but is only a convenient way to point out the particular method used. There was apparently no unambiguous Chinese term available to precisely indicate the proper method of this meditation. Probably *kuan* was the most suggestive, for, although strictly limited to the aspect of attentive investigation, it calls for other activities to go with it. If these sutras are called visualization sutras, this title is not adequate either, and is even less suggestive than *kuan*, (inspection). One example will clarify this.

> *Kuan* means a systematic building-up of visual images, each as complete and precise as possible, in a sequence from the simple toward the complex . . . If these mental pictures were correctly formed, on the basis of iconographic rules, they were already approximations of the truth; and so to cross the frontier from reason to ecstasy brought not absolute change, but rather an immense widening of the field of vision, and *seeing* instead of mere visualizing.[141]

Although the description of "building-up of visual images" is accurate enough, this activity is not *kuan*, but is expressed by *hsiang*. The author confuses the terms and makes *kuan* signify both *hsiang* and *kuan*. Further, he blurs the difference between the meditator's personal effort and the subsequent *seeing*. Although this previous effort is necessary, the vision does not seem to follow necessarily. If the Buddha's help is required, it certainly applies here. The "divine eye," a result of long ascetic practices both in Hīnayāna and in the Bodhisattva-yāna, is here supplemented by the Buddha's own power.

What is the relationship between *kuan-Fo-samādhi* and *nien-Fo-samādhi*?[142] According to Shan-tao, both express the *tsung* (basic message, intention) of the *Kuan-ching*, and therefore seem to be used in a synonymous way. Confirmations can be found in

other *kuan* sutras, such as the *KFSH* (T. 643), which says: "If someone inspects (*kuan*) with concentrated mind one pore [of the Buddha's body], this person is said to practice the *nien-Fo-samādhi*."[143] Or elsewhere: "broadly explain the method of inspecting the Buddha and the *nien-Fo-samādhi*."[144] Although the author of this sutra uses the verbs *nien* and *kuan* in a different way,[145] when he speaks about *samādhi*, it appears that the same experience is pointed out. Therefore, it is correct to say that *kuan* is not *nien*, and *nien* is not *kuan*; both verbs indicate a distinct mental activity. When they are used together with *samādhi*, however, both point to the same mystical experience. Whereas *kuan* is used as *pars pro toto*, *nien* seems to describe the double range of activities: *hsiang* and *kuan*. Therefore the two are not fully but partially synonymous.

Since *kuan* thus expresses the most characteristic activity in this method of Amita vision (and in the other *kuan* sutras as well), a further study of the term is required as well as a comparison with *kuan* in other Buddhist contexts. Shan-tao, explaining the title of the sutra, gives the following interpretation of *kuan*. "*Kuan* means *chao*:[146] [this is] with the 'hands' of a pure and believing mind to hold the torch of wisdom and to let it continuously illumine (i.e., make clearly visible) the true and resultant realities of that Buddha-[Land]."[147] Although this is a beautiful (poetic) interpretation of *kuan*, it does not seem to convey the total meaning, at least not explicitly, since it only refers to "making clear," and not to the proper action, which is "to watch attentively, to inspect."

In Buddhist spirituality the term *kuan* has another important connotation: it is often used in the compuound *chih-kuan*. Two different ways of interpreting these terms are possible. The first consists of going back to their Sanskrit (Pali) originals: *śamatha-vipaśyanā*; the second is studying the special connotations of the terms in Chinese Buddhism, especially in the T'ien-t'ai system, elaborated by Chih-yi.

The Sanskrit-Pali terms *śamatha-vipaśyanā* (P. *samatha-vipassanā*) are usually translated as "tranquillity-insight."[148] They are explained as follows:

> There are two forms of meditation. One is the development of mental concentration (*samatha* or *samādhi*), of one-pointedness of mind, by various methods prescribed in the texts, leading up to the highest mystic states . . .



> . . . the other form of "meditation" [is] known as *vipassanā* (Sanskrit, *vipaśyanā* or *vidarśana*): "insight" into the nature of things, leading to the complete liberation of mind, to the realization of the Ultimate Truth, Nirvāna. This is essentially Buddhist "meditation," Buddhist mental culture. It is an analytical method based on mindfulness, awareness, vigilance, observation.[149]

The former one is not uniquely Buddhist in origin or in character but existed before the Buddha and is, at least partially (leaving aside the *dhyānas*), a prerequisite for all types of meditation.

In Chinese Buddhism the most notable use of *chih-kuan* appears in the works of Chih-yi.[150] According to his system, *chih* is concerned with preparations by means of four kinds of *samādhi*, whereas *kuan* consists of contemplation proper (*cheng-kuan*). The *samādhis* are preceded by twenty-five *upāyas*, five groups of five, which are all intended to prepare for concentration. The four *samādhis* are also explained in detail. One of the four, "the constantly walking *samādhi*," during which the practitioner spends as much as possible of his ninety days in perambulation, appears to be close to Shan-tao's practice of *kuan-Fo*. Indeed, "While circling, he is to keep Amita constantly in mind and repeat his name aloud in uninterrupted continuity. As an aid to the contemplation of the Truth he must think of Amita's person and his thirty-two distinguishing marks, beginning at the crown of his head . . ."[151]

That in Chih-yi's system of meditation Amita contemplation is only ranked among the *samādhis* and thus is part of *chih*, "tranquility," shows the essential difference between him and Shan-tao. In the latter's view Amita vision is more than *chih*. It leads up to a complete vision of Amita's reality. Although in Shan-tao's system one also can—with a special effort—distinguish *chih* and *kuan*, it is still misleading to use these terms in the context of Pure Land practice. Shan-tao's *kuan* (like the *kuan* of the *Kuan-ching* and other sutras) is altogether a different type of meditation. It is aimed at a "view" or rather a "vision" of Amita and his Sukhāvatī, and not at a sort of metaphysical contemplation, which appears to be the case with Chih-yi's "Ten Modes of Contemplation."[152]

In other words, the *kuan* method, as proposed in the *kuan* sutras and in the *Kuan-ching* as one among them, can best be explained as a simplified way of meditation, but still promising a very high degree of mystical experience to the practitioner. The physical and moral requirements demand an energetic effort, and

the practice of *kuan* itself presupposes the faculty of intense concentration. Yet this way of reaching *samādhi* is thought to be within the reach of the serious layperson.

Compared with Hīnayāna meditation, it appears that the Amita meditation consists in selecting one particular topic of meditation (*Buddhānusmrti,* the first of the ten *anusmrtis* or *anussatis*) and developing it to the extreme. It summarizes, or assimilates, many of the other formal meditation topics of Hīnayāna (e.g., the *kasinas,* mindfulness of the body) and offers these as centralized around one main subject. In this the whole meditation process was simplified so that it became better adapted to the needs of a less technically trained laity.

Figure 7
Popular brochure freely distributed in Taiwan temples.
Caption: "Buddha Amita welcomes virtuous persons who practice *nien-Fo* to be reborn in the Western Region (paradise)."
Buddha Amita stands at the top. Below is a boat, controlled by Kuan-yin, steering devotees toward the "World of Extreme Happiness (*Sukhāvatī*)." The great number of white dots (circles) have to be colored in by devotees: each time they chant or recite *Na-mo Amita Fo* to a certain number, they may colour in one circle.
This is popular Buddhism.

# CHAPTER 7

# *The Second Gate: Nonmeditative Action*

After becoming acquainted with Shan-tao's views on the practice of meditation according to the *kuan* method, we have eliminated some of the misconceptions with regard to his Pure Land practice. Statements like: "Shan-tao established the practice of calling Amita's name as the cause for the rightly established state, and other practices, such as meditation, were excluded by him,"[1] or "Shan-tao's originality lay in his claim that the recitation of the name of Amitābha was the *single* direct cause of attainment of supreme enlightenment"[2] are totally lacking in textual evidence. Such interpretations derive from an apologetic tendency, from the need to defend one's own ideas and practices by means of a unilateral use of established authorities. The present chapter explains Shan-tao's views on ethical conduct and will further challenge the erroneous conceptions prevalent among many Pure Land practitioners and Buddhist scholars.

It is true that in some circles of Pure Land Buddhism the importance of ethical conduct is less emphasized than in most other schools of Buddhism. For example, Shinran's interpretation of Buddhism puts an extreme emphasis on the "grace" of the Buddha: his message has been called a "gospel of pure grace."[3] However, if the sutras on which the Pure Land followers base their beliefs are carefully read and studied, one cannot but conclude that we find in them a serious endorsement of the rules of discipline and of meditation. Upholding the name recitation as the only and exclusive practice is not in accordance with the basic scriptures.

## ETHICAL CONDUCT IN THE PURE LAND SUTRAS

The text analysis which follows is based on a comparison between the English translations, as published in the *Sacred Books of the*

*East*, and the Chinese translations contained in the Chinese Tripitaka (*Taishō* edition).

The Shorter Sutra says:

> Then again all beings, O Śāriputra, ought to *make fervent prayer* for that Buddha country. And why? Because they come together there with such excellent men. Beings are *not born* in that Buddha country of the Tathāgata Amitāyus *as a reward and result of good works performed in this present life.* No, whatever son or daughter of a family shall *hear the name* of the blessed Amitāyus, the Tathāgata, and having heard it, *shall keep it in mind* for one, two, three, four, five, six or seven nights,—when that son or daughter of a family comes to die, then that Amitāyus the Tathāgata, . . . will stand before them at their hour of death, and they will depart this life with tranquil minds. After their death they will be born in the world Sukhāvatī . . . Therefore . . . every son and daughter of a family *ought with their whole mind to make fervent prayer* for that Buddha country [*emphasis added*].[4]

Toward the end, the same sutra again says:

> Whatever sons or daughters of a family shall *make mental prayer for the Buddha country* of that blessed Amitāyus, the Tathāgata, or are making it now or have made it formerly, all these will never return again, being once in possession of the transcendent true knowledge. They will be born in that Buddha country, have been born, or are being born now. Therefore . . . *mental prayer is to be made* for that Buddha country by faithful sons and daughters of a family [*emphasis added*].[5]

If the conditions for rebirth expressed here are summed up, it appears that there are three conditions, of which two are positive, one negative:

1. Make fervent prayer (with the whole mind) for that country.
2. Hear the name of Amitāyus and keep it in mind.
3. Rebirth is not a reward of good works performed in this life.

Since this last statement apparently contradicts the basic Buddhist principles of "right speech, right action, right livelihood," a further examination is necessary. The translation by M. Müller was



based on Sanskrit texts discovered in Japan and China.[6] He does not mention how old these manuscripts were. But as far as the Chinese Pure Land School is concerned, the Chinese translations of the sutra have been most important. If we compare the two Chinese versions, by Kumārajīva (T. 366) and Hsuan-tsang (T. 367), we find the following:

1. With regard to "prayer," T. 366 has: "Sentient beings who hear [this], should pronounce a vow and wish to be born in that Land (*fa-yuan yuan-sheng*)"[7] or "should make the vow to be reborn in that Land."[8] In its critical apparatus, the *Taishō* gives the Sanskrit *cittapranidhāna*. The same expression, "making a vow" (*fa-yuan*), is repeated several more times.[9] The other Chinese version, T. 367, similarly has "to make a vow."[10]
2. With regard to "hearing the name," T. 366 has: "If a virtuous man or woman hears [others] speak about Buddha Amita and holds on to his name, one day, two days . . . or seven days, with singlemindedness and no distractions . . ."[11] The other version, T. 367, has: "If virtuous men or women of pure faith come to hear about the name of this Buddha of Measureless Life, which [name] is of measureless, boundless, and ineffable meritorious power, and after hearing [this name] concentrate on it (*szu wei*), either one day and night, or two, . . . or seven, with fixed mindfulness and without distractions, then . . ."[12]
3. With regard to the third (negative) condition, T. 366 says: "Shāriputra, one cannot obtain rebirth in that Land if one is [only] provided with few roots of goodness gained by good deeds."[13] Hsuan-tsang has: "Shāriputra, among the sentient beings who are reborn in that Buddha-land and realize the merits [worthy of that] immeasurable and boundless [Land], are not those sentient beings who have few roots of goodness (or those sentient beings with not few good roots), and will obtain rebirth in . . ."[14]

The correspondence of the two Chinese translations on this essential point against M. Müller's admittedly uncertain interpretation leads to the conclusion that the latter was incorrect. M. Müller says in a footnote that "the intention of the writer seems to inculcate the doctrine, that salvation can be obtained by mere

repetitions of the name of Amitābha, in direct opposition to the original doctrine of Buddha . . . here 'vain repetitions' seem all that is enjoyed [*sic*]."[15]

The sutra indeed puts stress on the power of Amita's name, but it is a prejudice to call this "vain repetitions." What the sutra encourages is not "calling" of the name (the word "name-invocation" is nowhere mentioned), but "meditation" on the name with undivided attention and mental concentration. Furthermore, if faith is proposed as a way to rebirth, it is hardly credible that the author would go so far as to exclude cultivation of good roots in such an obvious and scandalizing way, unless the statement was qualified. Therefore, M. Müller's translation—of which he himself was unsure—has to be rejected, and all the later interpretations (in numerous Western books) which relied on his translation and perpetuate the gross error should be revised.

This reinterpretation of the Shorter Sutra, which I believe to be older than the Longer Sutra, accounts better for the fact that this latter text stresses the necessity of good roots. If they had been positively excluded in the older version, it would have been more natural that the new version had followed the example. Instead in the Longer Sutra, according to Sanghavarman's Chinese translation (T. 360), faith in Amita does not replace ethical effort, but according to the degree of merits in this life, three groups of persons are distinguished.[16] A common quality of the three groups (*san-pei*) is their sincere wish for rebirth. The highest class are those who left the household life and have become monks; having produced the *bodhi* mind (*bodhicitta*), they concentrate with their whole mind on Buddha Amita, practice all meritorious virtues, and wish to be reborn in his Land. Even during the present life they may obtain a vision of that Buddha.[17] This last part of the sentence, emphasizing meditation practices, is usually ignored by Pure Land scholars, although it clearly is a prelude to the *Kuan-ching*, and shows that in the early Pure Land movement the double focus on rebirth *and* meditation was already present.

To the intermediate class belong those who, although unable to enter monastic life, produce the supreme *bodhi* mind and practice the virtues as much as they are able to. They follow the precepts of fasting, contribute to the building of pagodas and images, and sustain the monks through food offerings, etc.[18]

The lowest class, although unable to perform virtuous actions, still should produce the supreme *bodhi* mind. Directing their single-minded attention toward a tenfold mindfulness, they are mindful of Buddha Amita and wish to be reborn in his Land. If they hear the deep *dharma*, they rejoice without fostering doubts. With a most sincere mind they wish to be reborn in that Land.[19]



The three Chinese translations (Sanghavarman's version, T. 360, as well as the earlier ones by Chih-ch'ien, T. 362, and Lokakshema, T. 361) all clearly distinguish between these three classes of people who are reborn. Besides, although the details are somehow different, the basic descriptions are the same: (1) group of monks; (2) group of laypeople who are rather wealthy and should support the *sangha* financially, as well as practice other virtues; (3) group of laypeople who are not wealthy but should still practice the other virtues.

Compared to these three Chinese versions, the English translation, made from a Sanskrit original,[20] is much more confused, even muddled. Although three groups of adepts are apparently indicated (but not called *san-pei*) as in the Chinese versions, the various requirements demanded from each of them are not clearly distinguished, so that the division into three groups is almost meaningless. In addition, the vision of Amita in this life, promised to the highest class, would become unintelligible if the Chinese versions had not thrown light on it.

The result of the text study with regard to the Longer Sutra is that the moral conditions imposed on Amita devotees are not at all below the usual level of Buddhist ethics. All the rules of morality are upheld and maintained as the ideal to follow. Amita vision in this life is said to be only granted to those who renounce worldly life and follow the monastic discipline. Even in the English text (based on the Sanskrit), the practice of calling the name of Amita is not even mentioned.

Taking up the third Pure Land text, the *Kuan-ching*, we are treading on familiar ground, since the sutra as a whole was already studied in Chapter 2. The sections in which the conditions for rebirth are enumerated belong to two different contexts: the introduction and the "meditations" on the nine modes of rebirth (see Appendix II).

### *The Introductory Part*

Queen Vaidehī, feeling miserable and distressed in her captivity, has asked Buddha Shākyamuni to teach her how to concentrate her

mind (*szu-wei*) and how to obtain the state of *samādhi*, or *samāpatti* (*cheng-shou*). In response the Buddha explains to her how to visualize and inspect one by one the various adornments of Sukhāvatī. But surprisingly, there is still a delay in the teaching: the Buddha first explains three groups of "pure actions" (*ching-yeh*) which make rebirth in Sukhāvatī possible. This interruption is rather misplaced, since the question was not how to obtain rebirth, but how to see Sukhāvatī and Amita right here and now. Therefore, this passage is certainly interpolated. However, once incorporated into the text, its authority became sacred; Shan-tao and others have commented on it. What are these three recommended "pure actions"?

> Those who wish to be reborn in that Land should cultivate three kinds of meritorious actions (*hsiu san-fu*),[21] [which are]:
>
> first, to be filial toward one's parents;
> to respect one's teachers;
> to be compassionate and abstain from injuring;
> to observe the ten virtuous actions (*shih shan-yeh*).[22]
>
> second, to receive and uphold the Three Refuges;
> to take all the precepts;[23]
> not to offend against the rules of decorum.[24]
>
> third, to produce the *bodhi* mind;
> to believe deeply in [the principle of] cause and effect;[25]
> to read (study?) and chant the Mahāyāna [sutras];
> to encourage fellow practitioners.[26]

The eclectic character of this list of requirements is quite clear. It is a mixture of non-Buddhist elements (first group), with rules that bind only those who enter monastic life common to both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna (second group); and finally a set of norms which are (mostly) Mahāyānistic, although the second and fourth equally apply to Hīnayānists. The group as a whole is hardly comparable to the three classes of rebirth which were found in the Chinese versions of the Longer Sutra. The inspiration giving rise to this list is rather derived from other *kuan* sutras, such as the *KFSH* and the *KPP*.

In the former sutra, the Buddha says that his disciples should cultivate three methods: (1) to chant the sutras; (2) to uphold purely the prohibitive precepts and not offend against the rules of decorum; (3) to concentrate the mind with fixed mindfulness and not allow it to be scattered and confused.[27] In the *KPP* there is a



different context. The whole sutra emphasizes more than anything else the necessity and methods of confession. In the final section, the author distinguishes five kinds of confession. The context refers mainly to the ruling class (kings and ministers, *ksatriyas*, etc.) and their duties towards the *sangha*. If they commit the five "deadly sins," slander the *vaipulya-sūtras*, and so on, they are bound for hell, unless they repent and correct their behavior. The first way is called the confession of a *ksatriya*:

> He should correct his mind, not slander the Three Jewels, not hinder anybody to enter monastic life and not make it hard for those who follow the *brahmacarya* way; he should with concentrated mindfulness cultivate the six *anusmrtis*; he equally should make offerings to the *sangha* and uphold Mahāyāna; it is not necessary for him to worship, [but] he should concentrate his mindfulness on the first principle of the *dharma* (expressed in the deeper sutras) which is *śūnyatā*, and think about it.
>
> The second way of confession is to be filial toward his parents and respectful toward his teachers.
>
> The third way of confession is to rule the country in the correct way and not to deprave the people.
>
> The fourth method is to issue an edict that on the six monthly fasting days[28] nowhere in his territory where he has effective power should killing take place.
>
> The fifth method is to believe deeply in [the principle of] cause and effect, believe in the one true Path and know that the Buddha(s) do(es) not perish.[29]

The interpolator of the *Kuan-ching* was most likely inspired by these (and perhaps similar) texts and made up his own new set of rules for the Pure Land adepts. That he puts rules of a not essentially Buddhist character at the head of his list may point to a Chinese concern. In particular, to give filial conduct such a place of eminence was an efficacious strategy to reconcile a common Chinese anti-Buddhist sentiment (see Chapter 10).

### *The Nine Modes of Rebirth*

Although this whole section is of secondary origin (see Chapter 2), it gained extreme importance in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, and should destroy the misconception that Amita worship is a cheap way to salvation. Within the first section, the highest level of rebirth, a second interpolator seems to have added another list

of conditions besides the requirement of the threefold mind. It is also possible, however, that this latter was added after the three moral conditions. The only conclusion is that both sets do not likely come from one author.

*Highest Level: Highest Grade*[30] There are two sets of conditions: the first is the threefold mind; the second set contains three more rules. All should be conjointly realized to attain birth at this highest level. The text says that there are three further classes of beings who will obtain rebirth, and from a final remark it appears that these conditions are intended to be cumulative. The most logical way of combining the two sets would be that candidates for the highest level should fulfil these three latter conditions (conjointly) and at the same time produce the threefold mind. However, the text neither says nor suggests this, which is a confirmation of different authorship.

First, the *threefold mind* (*san-chung hsin*) is explained as consisting of a "most sincere mind" (*chih-ch'eng hsin*), a "deep mind" (*shen-hsin*) (i.e., a deeply motivated, or strongly determined mind), and a "mind which produces the vow to direct [all actions] toward [rebirth]" (*hui-hsiang fa-yuan hsin*).[31] The text adds that "whoever has this threefold mind cumulatively will certainly be reborn in that Land."[32]

It is not clear how and when this three-mind formula originated, but it seems that it first appeared in the *Kuan-ching* as an interpolation within an interpolation. If a Central Asian origin is accepted for the *Kuan-ching*, the interpolations most likely took place when the sutra was on its way to China (i.e., in a Central Asian locality influenced by Chinese culture), or soon after it arrived there, because the idea of *ch'eng* (sincerity), although apparently not new in Buddhism, received a new emphasis here and may be ascribed to a Chinese preoccupation (see Chapter 10).

There are some elements in earlier Buddhist writings which were influential in shaping the three-mind formula. In fact, there are several sets of "three minds" in various sutras,[33] but it would be difficult to determine which was the earliest one. Most probably there were two or three sources from which the interpolator drew his inspiration: the *Ch'i-hsin lun*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, and the earlier Pure Land sutras.

Two Chinese versions of the *Ch'i-hsin lun* (*Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra*) are extant. The first one (T. 1666, Nj. 1250) is



attributed to Paramārtha (499–569), who translated it around 550; the other one (T. 1667, Nj. 1249) is attributed to Siksānanda (652–710) from Khotan, who made his translation between 695 and 700. The lateness of these translations does not allow any assumption with regard to a possible influence on the *Kuan-ching*, but the possibility of an influence cannot be excluded with regard to the period before the texts were brought to China. It is by no means certain that the *Ch'i-hsin lun* should be considered a Chinese composition, and to claim a Central Asian origin might be just as reasonable.[34] Whatever the conclusion is, the *Ch'i-hsin lun* has its own set of "three minds" which are partially identical with and partially different from the threefold mind in the *Kuan-ching*:

> In developing the aspiration for enlightenment through the perfection of faith, what kind of mind is to be cultivated? Briefly speaking, three kinds can be discussed. The first is the mind characterized by straightforwardness, for it correctly meditates on the principle of Suchness. The second is the mind of profoundness, for there is no limit to its joyful accumulation of all kinds of goodness. The third is the mind filled with great compassion, for it wishes to uproot the sufferings of all sentient beings.[35]

The terms, as translated by Y. S. Hakeda, are interpretations rather than translations. Literally, they seem to mean (1) a straight (or straightforward) or sincere mind (*chih-hsin*),[36] (2) a deep mind (*shen-hsin*),[37] and (3) a greatly compassionate mind (*ta-pei hsin*).[38] However, if these terms are disconnected from their Sanskrit-Pali antecedents, quite different and even wrong connotations may slip into them. An examination of their original meaning is therefore necessary, especially for the first two terms, which recur almost literally in the *Kuan-ching*.

1. *Chih-hsin* is said to correspond to the Sanskrit *rjucittah*,[39] which means "a straightforward, upright, honest mind." However, there is some confusion here. According to E. Lamotte,[40] *chih-hsin* is the rendering of the Sanskrit *āśaya* or *kalyānāśaya*. At least this is how Kumārajīva translated the term in his version of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (T. 475). The term *āśaya* means "bonne disposition, désigne tout un ensemble de bons propos s'associant au *cittotpāda* pour le faire progresser."[41] The same Sanskrit term is

translated as *ch'un-yi le* by Hsuan-tsang (T. 476), which means, according to Lamotte, "sentiment pur."[42] However, at least within the Chinese context, there is reason to translate the term as "pure, simple, sincere thought or intention, sincere determination,"[43] and although a near-synonym of *adhyāśaya*, it may be not far from the truth to define *āśaya* and therefore *chih-hsin* as a quality of the "thought of enlightenment" (*bodhicitta*), which emphasizes the purity-sincerity of this mental disposition.

2. *Shen-hsin*, literally "profound mind," and further explained (e.g., by Shan-tao) as a mind of deep faith, has as its Sanskrit antecedent the term *adhyāśaya*.[44] Hsuan-tsang renders the term as *tseng-shang-i le* ("haut sentiment"), whereas Kumārajīva has *shang-i le*. Lamotte translates *adhyāśaya* as "haute résolution" and says that it is almost a synonym of *cittotpāda*. Another description gives "mental disposition; (strong) purpose, intent, determination (especially religious)."[45] The prefix *adhi* would express the idea of "superior": superior thought, will, inclination, which is also suggested in both Chinese translations: *shang* or *tseng-shang*. In its declined forms (e.g., *adhyāśayena*) the meaning is "with one's whole heart, wholeheartedly," or "with resolve."[46] Therefore, combining all the above together, it seems that the (production of) the thought of enlightenment, which is the basic decision made by a Bodhisattva candidate, is characterized by various qualities, among which *āśaya* (sincerity, honesty, purity of intention) is one, and *adhyāśaya* (strong determination, wholehearted purpose) is another. Although these qualities are closely similar to the *cittotpāda*, there is some shade of difference.

   Furthermore, as Lamotte stresses, the "haute résolution" (*adhyāśaya*) has an essentially altruistic character: the will to become enlightened is a function of the salvation of all sentient beings.[47] This latter remark brings about the third kind of mind mentioned in the *Ch'i-hsin lun*, "the mind of great compassion."

3. *Ta-pei hsin*, greatly compassionate mind or mind of great compassion (*mahākarūnacitta*), is another explicitation of the *bodhicitta* content, and does not need any further comment here, since it does not figure among the threefold mind of the *Kuan-ching*.



The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* has been preserved in three Chinese and two Tibetan translations.[48] The Chinese translations are attributed to Chih-ch'ien (T. 474), made between 222 and 229; to Kumārajīva (T. 475), made in 406; and to Hsuan-tsang (T. 476), made in 650.[49] The date of composition of the Sanskrit text, because of its influence on the Mādhyamika philosophy, cannot be later than the second century C.E.[50]

When the three extant Chinese translations are compared, it appears that the Sanskrit originals used for each translation may have had differences and may have passed through various stages of development. This is quite obvious when one compares the passages dealing with the conditions of the mind, as already discussed above, regarding the *Ch'i-hsin lun*.

In the first chapter of the sutra, which is about the "purification of the *Buddha-kshetra*" by Bodhisattvas, seventeen items are enumerated in all the three translations (as well as in the Tibetan text) but variously rendered in Chinese, although the basic idea appears to be quite similar in all of them. The Bodhisattva practices seventeen "virtues" in order to create his own Buddha field. Among these seventeen, probably only four or five are directly related to the "threefold mind":

Table 5

| T. 474[51] (Chih-ch'ien) | T. 475[52] (Kumārajīva) |
|---|---|
| 1. *wu-ch'iu yü kuo* | *chih-hsin shih p'u-sa ching-t'u* |
| 2. *shan-hsing yü kuo* | *shen-hsin shih p'u-sa ching-t'u* |
| 3. *hung ch'i tao yi* | *p'u-t'i-hsin shih p'u-sa ching-t'u* |
| 4. *hsing szu-teng hsin* | *szu wu-liang-hsin p'u-sa ching-t'u* |
| 5. *fen-liu fa-hua* | *hui-hsiang-hsin p'u-sa ching-t'u* |

T. 476[53]
(Hsuan-tsang)

1. *fa-ch'i wu-shang p'u-t'i hsin t'u*
2. *ch'un-yi le t'u*
3. *shan chia hsing t'u*
4. *shang-yi le t'u*
5. *szu wu-liang t'u*
6. *hsiu hui-hsiang t'u*

As far as the exact formulation is concerned, the terminology used in the *Kuan-ching* comes closest to Kumārajīva's version (Hsuan-tsang's translation was too late to exert any influence). In T. 475, we find some of the terms already dealt with above: *chih-hsin* and *shen-hsin*. Among the three remaining expressions, *p'u-t'i hsin* has been incorporated within another series of the *Kuan-ching*, so that it should not be repeated here again, whereas *szu wu-liang hsin* are in fact the "four *apramānas*" or "*brahma-vihāras*,"[54] of which *karunā* is an important aspect, which again was already integrated in the list of three "pure actions," The remaining term, *hui-hsiang hsin*, was another very attractive and useful idea to make up the threefold formula. Although in itself, and within the context of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, it expressed the idea of altruism, namely, through "application of merits," the interpolator changed the emphasis slightly by adding *fa-yuan* to it, thus rather expressing the idea of "wishing to be reborn" in Sukhāvatī.

A final remark with regard to the terms used in both the *Ch'i-hsin lun* and the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*: from the context of both works it is quite evident that we are moving in the realm of the Bodhisattva practice, whereas the context of the *Kuan-ching* is completely different. The ideal of Bodhisattvahood is now made accessible to "ordinary beings." The consequence of this seems to be that although technical terms are used in the *Kuan-ching*, with a long background of Buddhist erudition behind them, the fact that they are now popularized and somehow "brought down" to the level of the common person means that these terms should no longer be interpreted in the light of their past history, but in a simpler way, understandable by those for whom the sutra was written.

The earlier Pure Land texts, the Shorter and the Longer Sutras, contain, in a rather loose and unsystematic manner, some of the terms or ideas later on systematized in the threefold formula in the *Kuan-ching*. In the Shorter Sutra occur such expressions as "pronounce a vow and wish to be born . . ." (*fa-yuan yuan-sheng*), etc. *Fa-yuan* became part of the third component of the three-mind formula. In the Longer Sutra there are even more antecedents: in T. 360 (Sanghavarman), one finds expressions such as *chih-hsin hui-hsiang yuan-sheng*,[55] or simply *chih-hsin yuan-sheng*,[56] which are said to apply to all beings who desire to be reborn in Sukhāvatī.

Further, in the same context, but applied to the lowest group of rebirth candidates, the expression *chih-ch'eng hsin*[57] is used,



and although apparently only one instance of the expression occurs in the text, the interpolator of the *Kuan-ching*, even more if he was a Chinese, may have been particularly struck by the idea and may have incorporated it into his formula. Whether this expression is equivalent to *chih-hsin* is hard to say, but if the above interpretation of *chih-hsin* (pure, sincere mind) is correct, then *chih-ch'eng hsin* appears as a practical synonym of *chih-hsin*, more strongly emphasizing the idea of sincerity of the mental disposition.

The expression *shen-hsin* is not emphasized in the Longer Sutra; it occurs at least once, but within a context of various mental attitudes.[58] It seems that its inclusion into the threefold formula can have hardly been influenced by this passage.

The *other three conditions* for rebirth on the highest level are:

1. [To be of] a compassionate mind, not to kill, and observe all the precepts.
2. To read (study) and chant the Mahāyāna *vaipulya-sūtras*.
3. To cultivate the six remembrances (*anusmrtis*),[59] to produce the vow to direct [all actions] toward rebirth in that Buddha land.

If someone performs these meritorious actions jointly for one day up to seven days, he will immediately obtain rebirth.[60]

The conditions for rebirth on all the other levels are only briefly stated.

***Highest Level: Middle Grade*** "They must not necessarily receive and uphold [the precepts] nor read and chant the *vaipulya-sūtras*; they [should], however, understand their deeper meaning. Their mind should not be disturbed concerning the first principle; they should deeply believe in [the principle of] cause and effect and should not slander the Mahāyāna. Through these meritorious actions, they wish to be reborn and direct [their actions] toward Sukhāvatī."[61]

***Highest Level: Lowest Grade*** "They also believe in [the principle of] cause and effect: they do not slander the Mahāyāna, but only produce a mind [aspiring toward] the supreme path (*wu-shang tao*). [All] these meritorious actions, they direct toward rebirth, hoping to be reborn in Sukhāvatī."[62]

*Middle level: Highest Grade* "They are those beings who receive and uphold the five precepts,[63] the eight precepts with the rules of fasting,[64] and observe all the precepts; they neither commit the five "deadly sins," nor any of the extreme evils.[65] All these good roots they direct toward [rebirth] wishing to be reborn in the Sukhāvatī of the Western Quarter."[66]

*Middle Level: Middle Grade* "They are those beings who during one day and night uphold the *shrāmanera* (novice) precepts, or during one day and night observe all the precepts, and do not offend against the rules of behavior. All these meritorious deeds they direct toward [rebirth] wishing to be reborn in Sukhāvatī."[67]

*Middle Level: Lowest Grade* "These are the virtuous men or women who are filial toward their parents and practice the worldly 'benevolence' (*jen*) and 'righteousness' (*yi*).[68]

*Lowest Level: Highest Grade* "These are those beings who commit all the evils except slandering the *vaipulya-sūtras*. These stupid persons, although they perform evil, feel no compunction."[69]

*Lowest Level: Middle Grade* "These are the beings who transgress the five, the eight and all [the other] precepts. These stupid persons steal the goods belonging to the *sangha* or to individual monks; they give incorrect discourses on the *dharma* and feel no shame; rather they take pride in all their evil deeds."[70]

*Lowest Level: Lowest Grade* "These are the beings who commit such evil deeds as the five "deadly sins" and the ten evils and do not practice any goodness."[71]

Various Chinese commentators have explained these nine groups of people who obtain rebirth in Amita's Land in different ways (see below, Chapter 9.) But considering only the sutra text itself, it is clear that many of the conditions here overlap with the conditions stipulated in the introduction. Besides, a clear-cut labeling seems impossible. It is not correct to say that the highest level refers to Mahāyāna, while the intermediate level would point to Hīnayāna followers. Whereas in the former, Mahāyāna elements are clearly present, in the latter, the reference to observance of the precepts is not uniquely a Hīnayāna practice. It is better to say that they apply to monastic life in general. Besides, the lower-middle group is neither Mahāyāna nor Hīnayāna. They are the people outside the Buddhist faith, or (as those belonging to the lowest level, middle grade) evil members of the *sangha*.



What can be concluded is that ethical standards are strongly emphasized and represented as the ideal of Buddhist life. In the actual context, these moral conditions have no relationship to meditation. They are only indicated as preconditions of rebirth in Sukhāvatī, and gain importance almost uniquely if they are combined with a strong desire for rebirth.

## SHAN-TAO'S INTERPRETATION OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Shan-tao characterizes ethical conduct as *san-shan*, literally the "good of scattering, of distraction, the good of being scattered, distracted goodness in (or although) being scattered," etc. The compound can hardly be translated literally, but has to be paraphrased to make sense (e.g., virtuous actions performed while the mind is distracted, or is not in the actual exercise of meditation, which may signify all actions, performed by either laypeople or monks and nuns, when they are not engaged in meditation). It could also mean the meritorious life of a householder, who observes the various rules of ethical behavior which are relevant to his state of life. In the present context, however, ethical conduct does not seem to be so strictly separated from meditation. Together they are the two wings on which any serious Buddhist, including the laity, heads toward Sukhāvatī. Or, they are the two gates through which an adept has to pass in order to enter Amita's Land.

It seems that the terms *ting-shan* and *san-shan*[72] have been coined by Hui-yuan,[73] but Shan-tao was the first to use them extensively and apply them to clarify the two Great Gates leading to Sukhāvatī.

Originally the character *san* did not have an altogether good connotation in Chinese Buddhist language. Before the advent of Buddhism, the term meant "disperse; undisciplined; useless." It was also used as a loan word for *san*, a kind of ritual vessel.[74] In later times it meant "to break up, separate, scatter; dismiss, leave; broken, powder."[75] The modern meanings of *san* are "to scatter, to disperse, to break up or separate for a time, to dismiss; also: to fall to pieces."[76] In Buddhist literature it is often used in this general meaning as, for example, in *san-hua* "to scatter flowers."

Besides this general usage, it also has a more specific significance, often used in Buddhist works: "scattered, dispersed, disturbed, restless" (as in the compound *san-luan*),[77] applied to a state of mind in which there is no concentration (e.g., *san-hsin, viksipt-acitta*),[78] a distracted or unsettled mind, wandering off in various directions, pursuing the sense objects, and resulting in desires and attachments.

The term *san-luan* was chosen by the Buddhist translators in China to render to Sanskrit *viksepa*, distraction, which is one of the *upakleśas* (minor evils, defilements) within the system of one hundred *dharmas* of the Fa-hsiang School.[79] In this connotation, *san* has a pejorative meaning; it is an obstacle to concentration.

As mentioned above, the technical compounds *ting-shan* and *san-shan* were created by Hui-yuan. In his commentary on the nine levels of rebirth, he says that the various levels are determined by the different practices of those reborn:

> Sinful people have two ways of practice: *ting* and *san*. *Ting* consists in *kuan-Fo-samādhi*, while *san* consists in cultivating the remaining good roots. The power of *san-shan* is minimal: it is not strong enough to destroy the five "deadly sins" and the great transgressions, and cannot lead to rebirth. For that reason the Longer Sutra says that they are not reborn. The power of *ting-shan* is strong: it is able to wipe out the deadly sins, and easily leads to rebirth.[80]

Although Hui-yuan's explanation contradicts the real meaning of the sutra, the text is quoted to show how he used the terms. In another passage, explaining Vaidehī's prayer, he writes:

> With reference to *szu-wei* and *cheng-shou*, there are two ways of distinction: first the distinction between *ting* and *san*: the below three pure actions [produced from] the considerations of a distracted mind, are called *szu-wei*; the sixteen right concentrations are called *cheng-shou*.
>
> Secondly, the distinction according to meaning: the first two meditations are *szu-wei*; from Meditation 3 onward till Meditation 16 inclusive, cultivated in concentration, these are *cheng-shou*.[81]

Afterwards, he explains in greater detail what he understands by these pure actions. They are the three groups of precepts or moral discipline, as enumerated in the *Kuan-ching*: the first group of rules are common to all ordinary beings; the second group are



to be observed by all the followers of the two Vehicles; and the third series is exclusively applied to Mahāyāna. All together they are called the method of rebirth by means of "nonconcentrated goodness" (*san-shan wang-sheng*), whereas the practice of the sixteen meditations is called the method of rebirth through "concentration-goodness" (*ting-shan wang-sheng*).[82]

Chih-yi uses almost the same terms as Hui-yuan, when he writes that "the considerations of a distracted mind are called *szu-wei*, while the sixteen correct meditations (*kuan*), clarify *cheng-shou*."[83] Toward the end of his commentary, he uses the technical expressions *ting* and *san-shan*: "With regard to action, there is *ting* and *san*: the *kuan-Fo-samādhi* is called *ting*; to cultivate other good actions is called *san*."[84] Although Chih-yi contrasts the two terms as *ting* and *san*, he does not use the formula *ting-shan*, but only goes on to say that the power of *san-shan* is weak.[85]

Chi-tsang follows the same line of argument, but he is not so explicit as Hui-yuan and Chih-yi. He only suggests the same distinction, but uses more general terms: "There are three kinds of goodness which are effective (productive) causes (*yin*) of [birth in] the Pure Land; there are [also] sixteen kinds of meditation which are the productive cause of the Pure Land."[86] The formal expressions *ting-shan* and *san-shan* are not used by him.

Shan-tao's exegesis is in radical opposition to the three masters: "What is called *ting-shan*? And what is called *san-shan*? From Meditation 1 till 13, *ting-shan* [is discussed]; from 14 to 16 [are discussed] the three kinds of meritorious actions and the nine grades [of rebirth]: these are *san-shan*."[87] Shan-tao's interpretation is certainly the correct one. It would not do to restrict the goodness of nonmeditative action to the ethical rules stipulated in the introduction of the sutra, while considering the other set of rules, which are partially duplicates of the former, as the object of meditation.

Before starting with the analysis of Shan-tao's views, one final question may be asked. If Shan-tao borrowed the terms *ting-shan* and *san-shan* from Hui-yuan (and Chih-yi), can their origin be traced back to earlier Buddhism? As already mentioned, the word *san* corresponding with *viksepa* (distraction) had a pejorative ring. How and why was the term converted to include a positive meaning? Although the answer is not exhaustive, a hint is given by Shan-tao's master Tao-ch'o. In his *An-lo chi*, he writes:

> If sentient beings continuously call the name of the Buddha with a virtuous mind *shan-hsin*, . . . the merits they obtain are immeasurable; nobody is able to measure them. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* says: "If somebody with distracted mind (*san-hsin*) recollects the Buddha[s] (*nien-Fo*) until he ends his suffering, his happiness will be limitless; if somebody casts flowers and recollects the Buddha[s] (*san-hua nien-Fo*) until he ends his suffering, his happiness will be limitless." Therefore we know that the benefits of recollecting the Buddha are great and inexpressible.[88]

In this quotation from the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* the term *san* is used in a very interesting manner. On the one hand, it still has the rather pejorative meaning of "distraction"; on the other hand, it already shows its potentiality of amplification toward a positive value. However, no reference to its later use as the contrary of *ting* is even suggested here.

Most likely the new significance given to the term *san* derived from a purely Chinese preoccupation. Whereas Taoist recluses had withdrawn from life in society to spend their days in contemplation and "wandering through the universe," the Confucian tradition preferred the active life within society. Chinese Buddhists did not renounce this basic humanistic concern and found in the ethical principles of Buddhism a way suitable to laypeople. Although meditation could also be practiced by the more gifted among the laity, the other way of ethical conduct must certainly have had more appeal to the majority. The elite, moreover, could be encouraged to practice both action and quietness, and in this way, realize a harmony which agreed with their own cultural heritage.

What are the necessary conditions for rebirth in Amita's Land of Happiness? Various groups of Amita devotees have given opposite, even contradictory answers. The *Kuan-ching* itself seems to lack consistency and offers several answers which are hardly reconcilable. As was explained in Chapter 6, the meditation on Buddha Amita and Sukhāvatī was the original message of the sutra. In later additions to the text, the observance of ethical precepts appears as an alternative method. There is a double list of moral requirements, and among them there are points of agreement, but strong differences as well. Moreover, considerable stress is also laid on the right mental conditions, which are sincerity, determination (faith?), and the desire for rebirth. Only within the lowest class of rebirth is there the explicit recommendation of calling the



name of Amita as the last resort for depraved persons, who, in view of their imminent death, are urged to take refuge in Amita. At any rate, calling Amita's name is not the favored practice either according to the *Kuan-ching* or according to the two versions of the *Sukhāvatī-sūtra*. This will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

Shan-tao's views on the "goodness of nonmeditative action," or on ethical conduct, are explained in two different contexts, for he follows chapter by chapter the present text of the *Kuan-ching*. He himself felt the difficulty arising from the duplication of ethical rules, but he only makes a slight effort to coordinate the two sets. In fact, he does not succeed in achieving an intrinsic coordination. His views will be analyzed under two separate headings, (a) ethical conduct, and (b) mental dispositions, as conditions for rebirth.

### *Ethical Conduct as a Condition for Rebirth*[89]

The *Kuan-ching* contains two lists of ethical requirements which will be discussed together with Shan-tao's views on them. Since several items within the second group are duplicates, both sets will be combined, but the first set will be followed primarily for its more logical outline. It consists of three groups of meritorious actions, called *san-fu*, which are sometimes distinguished as "worldly merits" (*shih-fu*), "merits of discipline" or merits gained through observance of the precepts (*chieh-fu*), and "merits of [higher] practice" (*hsing-fu*), which in fact means to follow the Mahāyāna path.[90] These three are called the "pure actions" (*ching-yeh*) and are considered the true causes for rebirth. However, as such, they do not manifest any particular Pure Land character; it is rather astounding that no reference at all is made to either remembrance of the Buddha (*nien-Fo*) or to name invocation (*ch'eng-ming*). The three groups manifest a certain gradation from good to better to perfect. Group 1 (worldly merits) outlines the basic precepts of moral behavior which are not essentially Buddhist but seem to be universal in character. However, this moral law is clothed in a rather Chinese dress, for in the first place, filial piety and respect for teachers are inculcated. The mentioning of the "ten good actions" (*shih shan-yeh*) poses a problem. Although J. Takakusu translates this compound as "the ten virtuous actions," he explains in a footnote that what is meant is the observance of "the ten prohibitive precepts."[91] Now, these two are not the same.

In their original version the ten precepts (*daśa śila*) were said to have been given by the Buddha for novices and more serious laypersons (and included the practice of celibacy).[92] If understood in that way, they should not figure under the category of "worldly merits." It seems that in Mahāyāna the ten precepts were changed "to accord with the new environment of the monk . . . : not to kill, not to steal, to avoid all unchastity, not to lie, not to slander, not to insult, not to chatter, not to covet, not to give way to anger, to harbor no scepticism."[93] That this new set of prohibitive precepts can equally be applied to monk and layperson is obvious. Moreover, there is nothing distinctly Buddhist in them, so that rather this version of the "ten good actions" is to be preferred here.

The next group goes one step higher in the hierarchy of ethical values. If observing the ten precepts is good and meritorious, accepting the Buddhist precepts is better. This group does not specify which precepts should be taken; it probably ranges from the elementary Three Refuges to full acceptance of all the precepts prescribed in monastic life. Therefore this second group also comprehends both laypersons and monks.

Finally, the most ideal followers of the Buddha should go higher and awaken the *bodhicitta* in themselves and strive toward the greatest perfection possible. Again, within this group no distinction is made between layman and monk; in fact, from the simplicity of the conditions, it appears that they are rather intended for the laity.

Shan-tao starts his commentary on the goodness of ethical conduct by saying that there are two groups of people: some are rather inclined to meditation; others are inclined to action (nonmeditation). "Those who rely upon the practice of concentration, will need a whole lifetime and still not attain the end. Therefore the Tathāgata skillfully revealed the threefold merits, in order to respond to those who have the natural inclination toward nonconcentration."[94] This means that ethical conduct is explained as an alternative and perhaps easier road to Amita's Land. Shan-tao has realized that there was a basic contradiction in the sutra text, but has skilfully explained it away by introducing his solution of two roads. A further analysis of his views on ethical conduct will show whether the way of morality is in fact much easier than the other one.

***Worldly Merits*** Shan-tao analyzes one-by-one four requirements: filiality, respect for teachers, compassion, and the ten good actions.



Filiality (*hsiao-yang fu-mu*)

> All ordinary beings are born from conditioning causes.[95] What are these causes? Some are born through direct transformation;[96] some are born from water; some are born from eggs; [finally] some are born from a womb. Each of these four classes of generation is again subdivided into four kinds of birth, as the sutras broadly explain. There are parents only when there is birth through cooperation of causes (*hsiang-yin*). Since there are parents, there is a great favor. If there was no father, the causative element of generation would be lacking; if there was no mother, the condition for generation would be unmatched. If both persons alike would be missing, there would be no place for birth. The conditioning of both parents is necessary; otherwise there is no place where a body can be received. If a conception is about to take place, the self-consciousness of past *karma*[97] is the inner cause (*nei-yin*), while semen and blood of both parents are the external conditioning agents (*wai-yuan*). When cause and conditions work together, a body is produced. Because of this, the favor bestowed by the parents is so important.
>
> A mother's pregnancy lasts ten months: walking, standing, sitting, and lying are often very painful. She is further worried about risk of death at the time of childbirth. After birth, [her son] constantly for three years soils his bed so that bedding and clothes become unclean. After he has grown up, he loves his wife and cherishes his [own] sons, while he returns hatred toward his parents. Those who do not practice filiality, show no difference with the brute animals.[98]

The subject of filial piety returns once more in a later passage. Those who are reborn in the lowest grade of the Middle Level are those who "are filial to their parents and support them." Shan-tao comments: "This clarifies filiality and respect for the six family relations[99] and corresponds with the above first kind of worldly merits. The persons of this grade have not heard of the Buddhist *dharma*, neither do they understand the wish for rebirth. They only spontaneously practice filial piety."[100]

This argument to reinforce the duty of filial piety is drawn from common human experience, and as a whole is inspired by a rather Chinese outlook. Next, however, follows another proof, which is drawn from Buddhist sources. Shan-tao states that in this life parents are the most valuable "field of merits" (*fu-t'ien*),[101] whereas the Buddha is the most valuable "other-worldly" field of

merits.[102] To illustrate this point Shan-tao narrates the story of a monk who offered a bowl of rice to the Buddha, who had not obtained even a spoonful of food for three days because of a famine. In order to buy the rice, the monk went to sell his three robes. However, the Buddha refused to accept the rice and told the monk to offer it to his parents. This emphasizes the necessity of filial behavior toward one's parents.[103]

A final example of filial conduct is again taken from the Buddha's life. Seven days after he was born, his mother Māyā died and was reborn in the Trāyastrimśas heaven.[104] After his enlightenment, the Buddha ascended during the rainy season to the heaven where his mother resided, to preach to her the *dharma* in return for the favor of carrying him in her womb for ten months.[105] "If the Buddha showed filial piety toward his parents for favors bestowed on himself, how then would ordinary beings dare not be filial!"[106] Shan-tao concludes: "For these reasons we know that the favors [received] from parents are profound and extremely important."[107]

Although several sutras insisted on the duties of children toward their parents, Shan-tao was one of the few Buddhist writers who took up the theme and impressed it on his disciples. In Chapter 10 this aspect of his teaching will be discussed with greater detail.

### Respect for Teachers (*feng-shih shih-chang*)

> This clarifies [on the one hand] the teaching of the rules of *li* (etiquette, propriety), [on the other hand] the application of oneself to knowledge and the completion of one's virtue. Because [a teacher's] action is perfect, then, even when one realizes Buddhahood, it must be attributed to the influence of friendly relations with one's teacher. Such a great favor must be highly estimated.
>
> This attitude toward one's parents and teachers is called the superior practice of respect [for one's seniors].[108]

### A Compassionate Mind and No-Killing (*tz'u-shin pu sha*)

> All sentient beings regard life as the root. If they run into danger, they are frightened and rush to hide themselves, while their only consideration is to protect their life. The sutra[109] says, "All sentient beings without exception cherish a long life. [Therefore]: do not kill, do not beat. *Shu*[110] can be considered as a good illustration." This proves my point.[111]



The theme of compassion returns once again when dealing with the lowest grade of the Middle Level. Persons who practice worldly benevolence and righteousness (*hsing shih jen-yi*)[112] are characterized by Shan-tao as follows: "The nature of such persons is harmonious, gentle, and good; they make no distinction between self and others; when they notice that other people encounter suffering, they feel compassion."[113]

When commenting on the highest grade of the Highest Level, "those who are possessed of a compassionate mind, who do not kill any beings," Shan-tao writes:

> Those who have a compassionate mind and do not kill [other beings]. Now there are many actions by which one may kill: killing through words, through deeds, through thoughts. (1) Killing through words: [e.g.,] to condemn to execution or to approve of it. (2) Killing through deeds, [i.e.,] through one's physical actions. (3) Killing through thoughts, [e.g.,] to conceive convenient mental plots.
>
> Speaking about the action of killing, no matter whether it refers to [any of] the four forms of life,[114] they all cause sin[ful *karma*] and hinder rebirth in the Land of Purity. On the other hand, those who produce a compassionate mind toward all forms of life bestow the peace and happiness of longevity upon all sentient beings, which also is the supreme and most excellent precept, and corresponds with the above "Worldly Merits." It consists of a twofold goodness: desisting and acting.[115] Not to harm others oneself is called "desisting goodness"; to teach others not to harm is called "acting goodness." [Or explaining the terms in another way] if oneself and others start to desist [from killing], it is called "desisting goodness"; if one till the end forever eliminates [killing], it is called "acting goodness." Although there is a twofold goodness, desisting and upholding,[116] they [both] ultimately indicate the completion of the inferior practice of compassion.[117]

### The Ten Virtuous Actions (*shih shan-yeh*)

> Among the ten evils, killing is the worst. Therefore it comes first in the list. Among the ten virtuous actions, prolongation of life is the best; for that reason [worst and best] are mutually contrasted. The subsequent nine evils and nine virtuous actions will be later on, when the nine grades [of rebirth] are discussed, broadly described in the proper order.
>
> The above clarifies worldly goodness, and is also called the inferior practice of compassion.[118]

***Merits of Discipline (chieh)*** These consist in taking the Three Refuges, in observing all the precepts, and in not transgressing the rules of dignity.

The Three Refuges (*san-kui*)

> Worldly merits do not have much weight and their resulting reward is not perfect, whereas the power of the precepts is so great and excellent that it will produce *bodhi* as a result. However, when sentient beings are converted to the [Buddhist] faith, they [gradually proceed] from shallow toward deep: they first receive the Three Refuges and only later are taught all the precepts.[119]

The Rules of Discipline (or Precepts) (*chü-tsu chung-chieh*)

> In fact there are many categories of precepts:[120] there are first the precepts of the Three Refuges; next the five precepts, the eight precepts, the ten precepts, the two hundred and twenty precepts, the five hundred precepts, the precepts of a *śrāmanera*;[121] and finally the three "cumulative precepts"[122] and the ten "boundless precepts."[123] Therefore it is said: "perfectly observing all the moral precepts." Further, with regard to each separate precept, there also is a degree of intensity [in observation]: a lesser degree, a higher degree, and the perfect degree of observation.[124]

Among the conditions for rebirth in the highest grade of the Highest Level, the sutra mentions: "those who . . . accomplish all virtuous actions according to the Buddha's precepts." Shan-tao comments:

> If precepts are binding for humans and devas of the Two Vehicles,[125] they are called "small precepts"; if they are binding for humans of a great mind and great practice, they are called "Bodhisattva precepts." If one classifies these precepts according to the stages [of spiritual cultivation], then the present three stages of the Superior Level are called Bodhisattva precepts. Because the stages of humans are determined, [someone who follows the Bodhisattva career] spontaneously turns from one [set of precepts] to another.
>
> This corresponds with the good roots of discipline mentioned within the above second group of merits.[126]

Again, one of the conditions for rebirth within the highest grade of the Middle Level is "to receive and uphold the five precepts, the eight precepts with the rules of fasting, and to observe all the precepts." Shan-tao explains that the text refers to "all the



Hīnayāna precepts, whose power is rather weak: they are incapable to wipe out the five deadly offenses. Although one upholds the precepts without violation, and there are still some transgressions [from former habits], then one should constantly confess them till one is wholly purified. This corresponds with the second part of the above merits of discipline."[127] He concludes: "Although the period of observing the precepts is not fixed (sometimes a whole lifetime, sometimes one year, one month, a day and night, one hour), what is generally intended is till the end of one's life not to commit [the offense of] slander."[128]

Finally, the observance of Buddhist discipline is again mentioned among the conditions for rebirth to the middle grade of the Middle Level: "those who during one day and night uphold the *śrāmanera* precepts, or during one day and night observe all the precepts." Shan-tao's comment does not add much new insight but probably shows his personal scrupulous observance of the monastic discipline: "Even the smallest shortcomings, they would consider as extremely serious offenses!"[129] He concludes by saying again that this corresponds with the above second group of merits.

Rules of Behavior (*pu fan wei-yi*)

> This clarifies that all the actions of body, mouth, and mind (walking or standing, sitting or lying), will be in agreement with the rules of discipline if one follows the convenient rules of behavior. Whether [these rules] are easy or difficult, rough or smooth, they all help to observe [the discipline]. If one breaks them, one has to make a confession. Therefore it is said: "not transgressing the rules of behavior."
>
> These are called the "merits of discipline."[130]

One of the conditions for rebirth in the middle grade of the Middle Level is "not to offend against the rules of behavior." Shan-tao discusses this passage together with the observance of the precepts. No special comment is made.

***Merits of [Higher] Practice*** This third group contains four elements.

Arising the Bodhi-mind (*fa p'u-t'i hsin*)

> All sentient beings should set out for Mahāyāna with a joyful mind and should not cheaply start forward on the small project

(Hīnayāna).[131] If one does not broadly produce a magnanimous mind, how would one ever be able to reach *bodhi*?

I only wish that my body be bodily united with *śūnyatā* and my mind assimilated with the *dharmadhātu*. From my utmost nature as a sentient being, *with deeds* I pay homage, make offerings, and worship; I welcome the coming and send off the going, until they are completely carried [to the other shore]. Further, *with words* I praise, and preach the *dharma*, [so that] all will be exposed to my work of conversion. Those who, after hearing me, realize the Way, I will make them [realize it] completely. Finally, *with thoughts* I enter into concentration and inspection. I multiply my body throughout the *dharmadhātu*, and responding to the capacity and/or circumstances [of sentient beings] will save them: there will not be a single one left behind.

I pronounce this vow and transfer it everywhere, multiplying it throughout infinite space. There will be no place where it will not prevail. Until I have completely performed this work of propagation and fully penetrated to the ultimate limits of the future, my body will never know fatigue, and my mind never be satisfied![132]

If arhatship is the ideal state of achievement in Hīnayāna, in Mahāyāna it has been replaced by Bodhisattvahood. The start on the long career to enlightenment is made when a candidate produces the *bodhi* mind, or "Thought of Enlightenment" (*bodhicitta*), which means the determination and vow to attain final enlightenment, *bodhi*.[133] "Śūnyatā and Karunā are the two principal features of the Bodhicitta."[134]

If Shan-tao's comment on *bodhicitta*, which in reality reflects his own dedication to enlightenment and salvation of others, is read in that light, it becomes evident that this is not intended as a piece of information only, or not as an encouragement for others, but as a testimony of his personal commitment. The text is in this respect unique in the whole *Kuan-ching shu*. It shows Shan-tao as a Bodhisattva candidate, who has taken on himself the heavy burden to strive for full enlightenment via the hard path. He is a person "with one foot in the Absolute and the other in phenomena,"[135] which appears from his determination to be one with *śūnyatā*, while simultaneously being prepared to postpone his own entrance into *nirvāna* until all sentient beings are led to the "other shore." The spirit of Shan-tao's vow reminds one of the equally heroic and more poetically expressed vows of Shāntideva, in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.[136]



That Shan-tao vows to multiply his body throughout the *dharmadhātu* and save everybody according to his responsive potentiality may explain why later monks such as Fa-chao (who was active in Ch'ang-an between 763 and 804)[137] and Shao-k'ang (d.805)[138] were considered to be Shan-tao's "after-body" (*hou-shen*) or his reincarnations.[139]

Among the necessary prerequisites for being reborn in the lower grade of the Highest Level is mentioned "to produce a mind [aspiring toward] the supreme path." Shan-tao writes about this:

> All the above given [kinds of] goodness seem to be as if without merit. One only needs to produce the single thought of aversion to suffering and of joyfulness to be reborn in the realms of the Buddhas, [the thought of] fulfilling quickly the greatly compassionate Bodhisattva vows and actions, to return to the cycle of birth and death and to save universally all sentient beings. Therefore, it is called "to produce the *bodhi* mind."[140] This point has already been exhaustively clarified when speaking about the third kind of merits.[141]

### Firm Belief in [the Principle of] Cause and Effect (*shen-hsin yin-kuo*)[142]

> There are two points to explain:[143] the first clarifies the causality of worldly suffering and joy. If one puts a cause of suffering, then one induces a sorrowful effect; if one puts a cause of joy, one induces a joyful effect. Just as when someone uses a seal to make an imprint on wax: when the seal is broken, without doubt, the imprint remains.[144]

On two other occasions the requirement to believe in the doctrine of cause and effect is given in the *Kuan-ching* as a condition for rebirth in the middle and lowest grades of the Highest Level: (1) "they should deeply believe in [the principle of] cause and effect"; (2) "they also believe in [the principle of] cause and effect." Shan-tao comments on the first text as follows:

> [This] clarifies to believe deeply in two kinds of causality: worldly and transworldly sorrow and joy. One does not raise any doubts on this point nor any other doctrine. If doubts arise one cannot achieve any meritorious action. If one cannot even obtain worldly rewards, how much less will one obtain rebirth in the Pure Land?
>
> This corresponds with the above third kind of merits.[145]

About the second text, we read:

> Their belief in [the principle of] cause and effect is not certain: some believe, some do not; therefore, it is said "also." Or it is possible that "also" refers to the same "deep faith" as above? Further, although they believe, their faith is not strong: the goodness of their mind decreases, while evil *dharmas* increasingly arise. This is because they do not deeply believe in the causality of sorrow and joy. If they deeply believed in the sorrowfulness of *samsāra*, they would ultimately never again commit evil actions. If they would believe in the transworldly[146] happiness of the Pure Land, they would never again fall back, once they had produced the good mind.[147]

Chanting the Mahāyāna [Sutras] (*tu-sung ta-ch'eng*)

> This clarifies that the teaching of the sutras is like a mirror: if one often studies and searches them, one's [mind] will open up to wisdom. When the eyes of wisdom are opened, one may start detesting sorrow and rejoicing in *nirvāna*.[148]

One of the conditions for rebirth in the highest grade of the Highest Level is "to read and chant the Mayāyāna *vaipulya-sūtras*." Not exactly the same condition, but one closely related, refers to rebirth in the middle grade of the Highest Level: "They must not necessarily read and chant the *vaipulya-sūtras*, but understand their deeper meaning. Their mind should not be disturbed concerning the first principle."

Shan-tao writes about the first text:

> In temperament and habit sentient beings are different from each other, and again in their grasp of the *dharma* everybody is not equal. The first group of people [mentioned in the sutra] have only the ability to cultivate compassion and to observe the precepts; this second group considers merely reading and chanting the Mahāyāna sutras as the right thing to do. However, the precepts of discipline are able to uphold the right moral principles of the five vehicles and the three Buddhas,[149] whereas the *dharma* "perfumes" [i.e., influences] toward the realization of wisdom through the myriad practices related with the Bodhisattva program.[150] If one compares them on the point of the functioning of their power, each of them has its own capability.
>
> This corresponds with the above third part of the third kind of merit which says: "chanting the Mahāyāna sutras."[151]



Concerning the second text, Shan-tao comments:

> People are not equal in their reception of the *dharma;* some recite the sutras, some do not. With regard to the correct understanding of the Mahāyāna doctrine of *śūnyatā*: some when they hear about the *dharmas*, [realize that they] are all *śūnya*, that *samsāra* and *nirvāna*[152] are also *śūnya*, that the brightness of saints and the darkness of ordinary beings is also *śūnya*. When they consider the essential nature of the six worldly paths and the world-transcending Bodhisattva stages, [they understand that these are] ultimately nondual. Although they hear this explanation, their mind stays confident and no doubts arise.[153]

Encourage Other Practitioners Toward Progress (*ch'uan-chin hsing-che*)

> Sorrowful *dharmas* are like poisons, evil *dharmas* like knives: their spread throughout the three states of existence[154] harms all sentient beings. However, good *dharmas* are like bright mirrors and like sweet dew [or ambrosia]. Now mirrors illumine the right path in order to take refuge in the Truth, while sweet dew is the endless flowing down of the *dharma* rain, which makes all living beings receive moisture and everywhere equally assembles together the flow of the *dharma*. For this reason, it is necessary that [practitioners] mutually exhort each other.[155]

Thus far, Shan-tao's comments are neither enlightening nor very inspiring. They are plain and simple paraphrases of the sutra text. His discussion of the moral duty of filial piety and his personal vow to reach *bodhi* in order to save all beings are exceptions. That Shan-tao addresses himself mainly to the laity can be inferred from his lack of interest in philosophical speculation. Even when an opportunity occurs to discuss philosophical problems, he does not fully exploit it but seems to be satisfied with some general remarks. An example is his comment on the principle of cause and effect. In fact, this principle, both in the *Kuan-ching* and in Shan-tao's commentary, has nothing to do with the "interdependent origination" (*pratitya-samutpāda*), but merely refers to the law of *karma*: good and evil actions produce respectively good and evil results. It suffices for a layperson to believe in this principle sincerely but without complication and without fully grasping its philosophical foundation, which ultimately relates to the *pratitya-samutpāda*.

In his next section, Shan-tao shows more originality. One of the most impressive parts of the whole *Kuan-ching shu* consists of his exegesis on the threefold mind.

### *Mental Dispositions as Conditions for Rebirth*

After the thirteen meditations on Amita and his Land of Bliss have been completed, the sutra adds three final chapters on the three levels of rebirth in that Land. In order to be reborn on the highest level (i.e., the higher grade within the Highest Level) special mental conditions are required from the adept: a most sincere mind, a deep mind, and a mind which produces the vow to direct all one's actions toward rebirth.

It seems at first that what the sutra asks from the Pure Land adept are the simple requirements of sincerity, unshakable faith, and the desire for rebirth. These three may be called characteristics of faith, and show that some trends in the Pure Land movement emphasized faith in Amita and his Land as the essential conditions. In the *Kuan-ching*, however, they do not seem to be in their proper context, since all the previous and subsequent conditions for rebirth center around the fulfilment of ethical precepts.

In the Chinese Pure Land School, however, and particularly in Shan-tao's commentary, both aspects are developed. Only when ethical conduct and faith are cultivated together is there any hope for rebirth. After studying Shan-tao's views about ethical conduct, it is even more revealing to see how he considers these mental attitudes with regard to rebirth.

### A Most Sincere Mind (*chih-ch'eng hsin*)

> [The character] *chih*[156] means *chen;*[157] [the character] *ch'eng*[158] means *shih.*[159] [The expression *chih-ch'eng hsin*] intends to clarify that the cultivation of understanding and practice[160] of all sentient beings through deeds, words, and thoughts must necessarily be performed from within an extremely (thoroughly) authentic (sincere) mind. They [sentient beings] should not [merely] manifest the outward appearances of sagely virtue and unfailing progress,[161] while in their hearts are cherishing the falsehoods of lust, hatred, and stupidity[162] in a hundred ways. Their evil nature is hard to conquer; it resembles snakes and scorpions. Although they produce the three actions [i.e., deeds, words, thoughts], they are called goodness mixed with poison, or also called actions of hypocrisy; they are not called actions of true sincerity. If a person rests his mind and starts practicing in this way, in spite of vigorous effort of body and mind, in spite of energetic activity and works throughout the twelve hours of day and night, he is just as one who puts fire on his head. All this is called goodness mixed with poison. If someone directs such a practice mixed with poison and wishes to be reborn in the Pure Land of that Buddha, it will be absolutely impossible. Why? Exactly because, when that Buddha Amita was still in the causal process of practicing Bodhisattvahood, he [himself], at every single thought and every single moment, cultivated the three actions from within a most sincere mind. [Therefore] whatever he offers to strive for must similarly be [striven for] with extreme sincerity.[163]



When one compares the other commentators before Shan-tao, one is impressed by the great emphasis Shan-tao puts on sincerity and faith. Chi-tsang even overlooks this passage of the *Kuan-ching* altogether. Hui-yuan and Chih-yi have only a few words to say about the threefold mind.[164]

Shan-tao's determination to elaborate on these mental conditions for rebirth is further evidenced by the occurrence of a similar passage in one of his other works.[165] However, we must first return to his text to collect more complete information on the subject. Continuing his explanation of the first mental attitude, extreme sincerity, he says that there are two kinds: one is for self-benefit; the other is for the benefit of others.

> Speaking about "extreme sincerity for self-benefit," this again is of two kinds. First, [it means] to restrain and forsake, with a most sincere mind, all evil [within] oneself and others [as well as] in the impure world.[166] It also means to restrain and forsake, [in imitation of] the Bodhisattvas, all evil egoism, whether walking or standing, sitting or lying or in thinking. Second, [it means] to cultivate with diligence, with a most sincere mind, both for oneself and for others, all kinds of goodness, ordinary [as well as] perfect (saintly). [This means]: to praise in words, with a most sincere mind, that Buddha Amita and his twofold [i.e., essential and accidental] reward; further, to defame and deplore in words, with a most sincere mind, the sorrowful and evil facts of the essential and accidental retribution relating to oneself or others, [inherent in] the three realms,[167] and the six ways of sentient existence,[168] and also to praise all the good performed by sentient beings by means of the threefold actions [deeds, words, thoughts]. If their actions are evil, [they should] be respectful but remain at a distance, as well as abstain from rejoicing.

It further [includes], by deeds, with a most sincere mind, to pay homage with folded hands, and to present the four offerings[169] to that Buddha Amita and his twofold reward. Again, [it includes] by deeds, with a most sincere mind, to despise and reject with disgust the twofold retribution concerning oneself as well as others, of the three realms of *samsāra*.[170]

It further [includes] by thoughts, with a most sincere mind, to visualize, to inspect, and hold the remembrance of that Buddha Amita and his twofold reward, as if he were appearing before one's eyes. Again, [it includes] by thoughts, to despise and reject with disgust the twofold retribution, both concerning oneself and others, of the three realms of *samsāra*. If there are evil actions of any of the three kinds, they must be forsaken with a most sincere mind. If any of the three good actions arise, they must be performed with a most sincere mind.[171]

## A Deep Mind (*shen-hsin*)

A deep mind means a mind with [of] deep faith (*shen-hsin chih hsin*). It also is of two kinds: (1) To believe deeply and with determination that one's own person is presently a sinful ordinary being [subject to] *samsāra*; that since numberless *kalpas*[172] it has been drifting and turning within the sea of *samsāra* without any occasion to escape from it.

(2) To believe deeply and with determination that the forty-eight vows of that Buddha Amita embrace and receive all sentient beings: if one is without doubt or anxiety, one "rides" on the power of these vows, [and] one will certainly obtain rebirth. Further [it means] to believe deeply and with determination that [when] Buddha Shākyamuni preached the threefold happiness, the nine grades, and the twofold goodness of concentration and deconcentration of this *Kuan-ching*, he testified and praised the double reward of that Buddha [Amita] in order to make human beings rejoice. Again [it means] to believe deeply and with determination, that the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, innumerable as the sand of the Ganges, of which the *Kuan-ching* speaks, testify and encourage all ordinary beings [that they will] certainly obtain rebirth.

Considering again [the meaning of] *deep faith*: [it signifies] to hope and wish that all practitioners singlemindedly put their unique trust in the words of the Buddha, and without concern for their physical life put [them] into practice with determination. Whenever [whatever] the Buddha sends [wants] them to forsake, they do it; whenever [whatever] the Buddha sends [wants] them to go somewhere, they go. This is called obedience to the Buddha's teaching, obedience to the Buddha's will; this is called obedience to the Buddha's desire, and true discipleship of the Buddha. [It] also [means] that all practitioners only rely on this sutra.



Practitioners with deep faith will certainly not mislead [or interfere with] sentient beings. For what reason? Because the Buddha is of great compassion toward humanity, and is truthful in his words. Before he returned to earth, his practice of wisdom was not yet completed; on the stages of learning [i.e., of bodhisattvahood], the two hindrances[173] had not yet been eliminated through wisdom and practice; [therefore] the fruits of his vows were not yet perfect. Ordinary and holy beings of such a degree, even if made to fathom the meaning of the Buddha's teachings, are not able to understand them clearly: although they can make judgments by themselves, they still have to ask the Buddhas for an ultimate pronouncement. If one is in accord with the Buddha's intention, then one can with assurance say: "So it is, so it is!" If one is in disaccord with the Buddha's idea, one will say: "The explanation which you have given is not correct." Those words not approved [by the Buddha] are like words without prophetic "effect," without any advantage or benefit. If [on the other hand] words are approved by the Buddha, then they are in full accordance with the Buddha's correct teaching. Whenever the Buddha speaks, [his words] are the right teaching, right doctrine, right practice, right understanding, right action, right wisdom. Whenever Bodhisattvas, men, or devas, no matter how many, teach, what they teach is not [necessarily] the truth. Whatever the Buddha teaches, that is decidedly the truth. What the Bodhisattvas teach is after all [only] partial truth. One should know that.

For that reason all sentient beings who are in the right condition for rebirth are in the present time with great expectation urged to put their sole faith in the Buddha's words, and to carry out their devotion with special attention. They should not give any credit to the teachings of Bodhisattvas which are not in agreement [with the Buddha's]; rather they should consider those as delusive obstructions as fostering delusions and self-deceit, [resulting in] the loss of the great benefit of rebirth.

Finally, speaking of a deep mind and deep faith, it means to assert with determination one's own mind, to follow the right teaching and put it into practice, forever to cast out doubts and mistakes, and not to step back or to waver because of different interpretations, different methods, heretic learning, heretic views, or heretic attachments.[174]

This long quotation shows that Shan-tao attaches extreme importance to the attitude of faith. Yet it is a surprise that he interprets the expression *shen-hsin* as *shen-hsin chih hsin*. The text of the sutra does not imply "faith": *shen-hsin* (as was already explained) means "strong determination" to proceed on the Bodhisattva path.

The change is made by Shan-tao himself. None of the "other teachers" (Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, Chi-tsang) interprets *shen-hsin* as "deep faith." The reason may be that Shan-tao was not aware of the Sanskrit term or its antecedent in Buddhist literature. It is also possible that he remembered "deep faith" mentioned in the sutra a while ago: *shen-hsin yin-kuo*.[175] Whatever his reason may have been, Shan-tao made an "exegetical" mistake, although not a "theological" one. The influence of this emphasis on faith on later Pure Land Buddhism was tremendous, especially in the *Jōdo Shinshū*.[176]

Shan-tao's emphasis on the need for an unshakable and strong faith is probably based on his life as a preacher. During his long years of pastoral care, he must have met many people, lay Buddhists, who had been challenged in their simple acceptance of the Pure Land faith, or even had lost their faith altogether as a result of various criticisms. Shan-tao asserts that a devotee of Amita should never listen to their reasoning, and even less be influenced by it. To imprint this unshakable faith into the minds of his followers, Shan-tao goes into great detail to answer the following objection:

> The wisdom of an ordinary man is shallow while the obstacles of his delusions are deep. Sometimes he happens to meet other people, whose insights and practices are different, who abundantly quote the sutras and *śāstras* and bring forward various objections, arguing as evidence [in the following way]: "Ordinary beings are all hindered by their numerous transgressions, and [therefore] will not obtain rebirth." How will he refute this objection, remain steadfast in a believing mind and go forward with determination, without lapsing into a frightened retreat?[177]

Shan-tao's answer to this basic difficulty is extensive. Only the general line of his reasoning is here pointed out, while occasionally quoting some key elements. If the opponent quotes from the scriptures to argue that rebirth is impossible, the Pure Land adept should equally draw from the scriptures to prove the contrary.



Indeed, the Buddha's discourses were pronounced in different circumstances and adapted to the particular needs of the hearers. The *Kuan-ching* was pronounced for the benefit of Queen Vaidehī and all ordinary people of the future time, after the Buddha's *nirvāna*.[178] "Even if you claim a hundred times, or a thousand, ten thousand or a hundred thousand times that there is no such thing as rebirth, it will only increase and bring to perfection my mind of faith in rebirth."[179]

Further, even if Bodhisattva candidates (in the early stages), arhats, or Pratyeka-Buddhas in endless numbers, would quote the scriptures and declare that there is no rebirth, the devotee would not foster a single moment of doubt.[180] Why? "Because the words of the Buddha are decidedly realization of the whole truth[181] which cannot by any means be destroyed."[182]

Furthermore, even if Bodhisattva candidates (in the final stages) would point out the absurdity of Amita faith, this would only increase the adept's faith.[183] Why? "Just because the words of the Buddha are most sincere and decisive about the revelation of the whole truth. The Buddha is [the one who] really knows, really understands, really discerns, really testifies."[184]

Finally, even if *nirmāna* Buddhas or *sambhoga* Buddhas in limitless numbers would in miraculous ways proclaim the absurdity of belief in rebirth, still the adept's faith would not be shaken.[185] Why?

> Because one Buddha [equals] all the Buddhas. The wisdom and insight, understanding and practice, realization and enlightenment, fruits and stages of attainment, great compassion, and so on of one Buddha are exactly the same for all the Buddhas. There is no difference of degree. Therefore what one Buddha has determined, all the Buddhas have determined together . . . [186]
>
> . . . [Thus] we clearly know that the Buddhas do not contradict each other in words or actions, so that, when Śākyamuni points out and urges all ordinary people to exert themselves in their present life in singleminded remembrance, and singleminded cultivation, [with the result that] after parting from this life, they will certainly be reborn in that Land, then all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters join him in praise, in encouragement and testimony. For what reason? Because all the Greatly Compassionate Ones have the same identical essence: whatever one Buddhas teaches, all the Buddhas similarly teach; whatever all the Buddhas teach, that one [single] Buddha similarly teaches.[187]

Having thus in great detail established the reliability of the Pure Land faith, Shan-tao goes on to show how this faith ought to be put into practice:

> Practices are of two kinds: first, the right practices (*cheng-hsing*); secondly, the miscellaneous practices (*tsa-hsing*). The right practices consist in acting solely according to the practices [recommended in] the sutras of rebirth. These are called the right practices. Of what do they consist? (1) With singleminded attention ***recite*** this ***kuan*** sutra, the *Amita* sutra, and the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra;*[188] (2) with singleminded attention mentally ***visualize, inspect, and keep in mind*** the twofold reward of that Land; (3) with singleminded attention ***worship*** Buddha Amita; (4) with singleminded attention ***invoke*** Buddha Amita (*k'ou-ch'eng*); (5) with singleminded attention ***praise and bring offerings.*** These are called the right practices [emphasis added].
>
> In these right practices are further contained two kinds: right and determining actions (*cheng-ting chih yeh*) and auxiliary actions (*chu-yeh*). The former is with singleminded attention to *nien* the name of Amita (*yi-shin chuan-nien Mi-t'a ming-hao*), whether walking or standing, sitting or lying, without concern for the length of time, at every single moment without desisting. This is called the right and determining action because it is in accordance with the vows of Buddha Amita. If one relies on worship and recitation, these are called auxiliary actions.
>
> Beside these two [kinds of] actions, right and auxiliary, all the other kinds of goodness are called miscellaneous actions.
>
> If one cultivates the former two practices [i.e. right and auxiliary] the mind is always intimate with and close [to the Buddha] and mindfulness is without interruption: this is called continuous [action] (*wu-chien*). If [on the other hand] one cultivates the latter, miscellaneous actions, the mind is often interrupted. Although one can also direct oneself toward and obtain rebirth, these are called scattered and miscellaneous actions (*shu-tsa chih hsing*).[189]

In Chapter 8, there will be a detailed discussion of how in Shan-tao's teaching the various practices of the Amita Cult are linked together. However, a few words are necessary to point out how Shan-tao in this last passage seems to make a shift in his interpretation. When enumerating the five right practices, he clearly distinguishes between oral invocation (fourth place) and meditation or visualization-inspection (second place). Only a few lines later he seems to merge these two together: *nien-Fo-ming* is the



essential practice, opposed to the auxiliary practices, and is called "right and determining action." This means that Shan-tao either contradicts himself, or at least is not consistent when he explains the difficult practice of meditation in terms of oral invocation, unless Shan-tao's use of *nien-Fo* (or *nien-Fo-ming*) does not necessarily mean just oral invocation.

After having developed his theory of Amita vision through visualization-inspection (in part 3 of his commentary) and his theory of ethical conduct (in part 4), this would be, to say the least, a very surprising conclusion, and even a paradoxical statement, which has to be examined and balanced in comparison with the whole of his soteriological theory.

The same passage has also led some Buddhist scholars to misinterpret Shan-tao's teaching. If one relies on this short passage, it is easy to distort the totality of his Pure Land vision.[190] A solution will be offered in Chapter 8.

### The Vow for Rebirth (*hui-hsiang fa-yuan hsin*)

> The expression "a mind which produces the vow to direct [all actions] toward rebirth" means: from within a most sincere mind and a mind of deep faith, to direct the good roots which one has cultivated for oneself or for others toward rebirth, and to vow to be reborn in that Land. [These good roots are] worldly and transworldly roots[191] cultivated in past and present lives by deeds, words, and thoughts for the benefit of others [i.e. all the ordinary and holy beings].
>
> Further, those who direct [their actions] and produce the vow for rebirth must certainly, with determination and with a most sincere mind, wish to obtain rebirth.[192] Because this deep faith of the mind is [strong] as diamond, it will not be shaken or destroyed by persons of heretic views, heretic learning, or different interpretations and different practice. Only with such determination and singlemindedness is there straightforward progress in the right direction. There will not be immediate hesitation, as soon as one hears the words of these people; nor will the mind produce fear, nor will one, looking back, lose the way, so that the great benefit of rebirth is forfeited.[193]

In this passage, Shan-tao combines the three mental dispositions necessary to be reborn in Amita's Land: sincerity, faith, and a positive, active hope for rebirth. But just as faith is often exposed to the temptation of doubt, so also the desire and hope for rebirth

may be undermined through considerations of the frightening effects of one's own *karma*. In fact, opponents of the Pure Land School must have attacked the simple hope of the adepts. Shan-tao shows them how to refute their attacks and in this way restores their hope in the possibility of rebirth.

> If heretic and confused people, whose understanding and practice are different, come to confuse you, either bringing forward all kinds of doubts and difficulties, with the affirmation that there is no rebirth, or saying: "All of you, sentient beings, have since innumerable *kalpas* and in this present life, both as ordinary and as holy persons, committed through deeds, words, and thoughts the ten evils, the five deadly offenses, and the four strict prohibitions;[194] [furthermore, you have committed] the sins of slandering the *dharma*, the *icchantika*-sins, and the transgressions of breaking the precepts and destroying the [right] views. It is impossible to get completely free from them, since these kinds of sins chain [you] strongly to the evil *gati* of the three worlds. How can you then say that through one lifetime of cultivating merits and *nien-Fo*, you will immediately enter into that Land, where there is neither imperfection nor rebirth, and will forever obtain 'the realization of awakening and the stage of no-retrogression?"[195]

Shan-tao's answer is as follows:

> The teachings and practices of the Buddhas exceed in number the grains of sand. They are different for each sentient being according to the respective conditions of their endowment and understanding. For instance, the eyes of people in the world have the ability to see and to believe that light breaks darkness; empty space contains [a variety of] beings; earth sustains and nourishes; water produces moisture; fire destroys. All these things are called *dharmas* of relations,[196] and although they are visible to the eye, there is an enormous difference between them. How far more then do the inconceivable powers of the Buddha's *dharma* possess all kinds of benefits! If someone accordingly leaves one school of thought, he leaves a school of delusion; if someone accordingly enters a school, he enters a school of wisdom toward emancipation. Therefore, each person follows a course of action which is favorable to himself, with the final aim of emancipation in view. Why then do you take up this irrelevant practice to confuse and hinder me? Indeed, the practice I like, that is the one relevant to me; it is not the one you look for. The practice you like, that is the one relevant to you, and is not what I look for. Therefore, everyone cultivates a practice to his own liking, and will certainly soon obtain emancipation.
>
> [However] the practitioner should know, that if he wants to apply himself to [the way, method of] understanding, he must acquire an all-pervasive knowledge from [the stage of] ordinary being up to that of holy being and finally up to the Buddha fruit. If [on the other hand] he wants to apply himself to practice, he must necessarily rely on methods that are relevant; then, although the efforts are less demanding, the obtained benefits are more numerous.[197]



Shan-tao gives another interpretation of the expression *hui-hsiang*; "Once someone has completed the cycle [of *samsāra*][198] and is reborn in that Land, he becomes inflamed with great compassion and returns to the world of *samsāra* in order to instruct and convert all sentient beings. This is also called 'to turn towards' (*hui-hsiang*)."[199]

As a final conclusion concerning the three mental dispositions necessary for rebirth, Shan-tao writes: "When the three [dispositions of the] mind are all complete, there is no practice that is impossible. When vow and practice are [thus] perfected, it would be absurd if there would be no rebirth."[200]

One last warning is added in order to relate these three mental dispositions to the practice of concentration: "These three [dispositions of the] mind also thoroughly apply to the 'goodness of concentration' (*ting-shan*). This should be clear!"[201] This means that the mental attitude just explained is equally important when practicing the thirteen meditations. When meditating, sincerity, deep faith, and desire for rebirth are as important as when cultivating the other good roots. Although this is only casually mentioned, Shan-tao has built a bridge between the two main parts of his commentary. The method of meditation and the method of following the moral precepts are linked together through the three mental dispositions, which are equally necessary for both.

To conclude this chapter, some clarifications have to be made. The passages in the *Kuan-ching* in which ethical rules are prescribed are certainly characterized by their eclectic nature. They seem to be derived from various traditions within Buddhism itself, but also occasionally suggest a Chinese preoccupation. Shan-tao's comments do not really synthesize these various currents. He explains them one by one, and only casually, almost hesitantly, indicates his personal view of priorities among these many pre-

cepts. He distinguishes the right practices from the miscellaneous practices. The former are recitation of the Pure Land sutras, visualization-inspection, worship, oral invocation, and praise-and-offering. These five are the practices, Shan-tao says, recommended in the Pure Land scriptures. He considers the other practices as miscellaneous. They are interrupted, because the mind is often distracted. He does not clearly say what these practices are, but one may guess what they are: all the other precepts enumerated in the sutras, such as the "worldly merits" and the "merits of discipline," perhaps even the "merits of higher practice," since some of them do not belong to the limited group of the five right practices. This interpretation is not satisfactory because Shan-tao also said that these five right practices are the ones recommended in the Pure Land sutras. In fact, *all* the practices on which he comments belong to this category.

Although Shan-tao is thus rather confusing on this point, what he really seems to mean is that the correct practices are those which are immediately related to Buddha Amita and could be summarized as *nien-Fo* with its various connotations. Ethical behavior, on the other hand, is not directly related to Buddha Amita and therefore seems to be inferior in quality, although it also enables practitioners to be reborn in Sukhāvatī.

What has happened in the Pure Land School is thus a shift in the interpretation of ethics as a means to rebirth.[202] In primitive Buddhism, the ideal of attaining *nirvāna* was considered the exclusive privilege of those who had left the household life and entered the *sangha*. The layperson, on the other hand, could only hope to be reborn in one of the heavens. The way to obtain rebirth was to take the Three Refuges and to observe the moral precepts. However, the conception of rebirth in the *deva* worlds, being pre-Buddhist and commonly accepted by other religious groups, could not tempt the Buddhists, since it was still conditioned by *samsāra*. The Buddhist Path was thought of as a method to transcend this cycle. When, in the centuries after the Buddha's *nirvāna*, the alternative road to emancipation, the "easy path" of faith, became accepted, rebirth in the *deva* worlds was replaced by rebirth in the Pure Lands of the Buddhas. As a result, the emphasis on faith became stronger, and the rigorous observance of all the precepts, although not abandoned, became less stringent. Rebirth in the Pure Buddha Lands could be achieved by singleminded devotion toward the particular Buddha presiding over the respective Buddha Lands. In



the Pure Land movement, rebirth in Buddha Amita's Sukhāvatī became the direct goal (ultimately leading to the highest goal of *nirvāna*) which could be attained through *bhakti* (e.g., the practice of five devotional methods, as in Vasubandhu's commentary), emphasizing faith above ethical discipline, although the latter was not excluded. Shan-tao follows this tradition faithfully but, in contrast to other teachers, he emphasizes ethical behavior, although the right determining factor is *nien-Fo*.

# APPENDIX II

## COMPARATIVE TABLE OF THE DUPLICATE SETS OF MORAL PRECEPTS, AS CONTAINED IN THE *KUAN-CHING*

*Three Meritorious Actions (KC par. 7)*

1. *Worldy Merits*
   (a) Filiality
   (b) Respect for teachers
   (c) Compassionate mind and no killing
   (d) The ten virtuous actions

2. *Merits of Discipline*
   (a) The three refuges
   (b) The rules of discipline
   (c) The rules of behaviour

3. *Merits of Higher Practice*
   (a) Arising the *bodhi*-mind
   (b) Belief in the principle of cause and effect
   (c) Chanting the Mahāyāna sutras
   (d) Encourage other practitioners



*Different Classes of Beings Gaining Rebirth*

HIGHEST LEVEL

*Highest Grade* (22) Two categories of prerequisites are given.

I. Wish to be reborn and cherish "the threefold mind":
   i) a most sincere mind
   ii) a deep (or determined) mind
   iii) a mind which produces the vow to direct all actions toward rebirth

| II. Three classes are able to be reborn: | Corresponds with *Three Meritorious Actions* (p. 250) |
|---|---|
| i) Compassionate mind; not killing others; observe all the precepts | 1 (c) |
| ii) read and chant the Mahāyāna sutras | 2 (b) |
| iii) cultivate the six *anusmrtis* | (n.p.)* |

*Middle Grade* (23)

| | |
|---|---|
| i) Understand the truth of the *vaipulya* sutras | (n.p.) |
| ii) believe in the principle of cause and effect | 3 (b) |
| iii) not slandering Mahāyāna | (n.p.) |

*Lowest Grade* (24)

| | |
|---|---|
| i) believe in cause and effect | 3 (b) |
| ii) not slandering Mahāyāna | (n.p.) |
| iii) aspire to the Supreme Path or *bodhi*-mind | 3 (a) |

MIDDLE LEVEL

*Highest Grade* (25)

| | |
|---|---|
| i) observe the five, the eight, and all the moral precepts | 2 (b) |
| ii) not committing the five deadly sins | (n.p.) |
| iii) bring no blame or trouble upon any being | (n.p.) |

* n.p. = "no parallel" in the *Three Meritorious Actions*

*Middle Grade* (26)

| | |
|---|---|
| i) observe the eight precepts and fasting for one day and night, observe the *śrāmanera*-precepts, observe the perfect moral precepts | partially 2 (b) |
| ii) not offend against rules of behavior | partially 2 (c) |

LOWEST LEVEL

*Highest Grade* (28)

| | |
|---|---|
| i) sinners (moderate) but no repentance | (n.p.) |
| ii) not slandering the *vaipulya* sutras | (n.p.) |

*Middle Grade* (29)

| | |
|---|---|
| i) sinners, transgressing all moral precepts | (n.p.) |
| ii) stealing *sangha*-goods | (n.p.) |
| iii) incorrect teaching of *dharma* | (n.p.) |

*Lowest Grade* (30) This inferior class of beings has no exact parallels with the *Three Meritorious Actions*, except in a negative sense.

| | |
|---|---|
| i) complete the ten evil actions | (n.p.) |
| ii) commit five deadly transgressions | (n.p.) |

# CHAPTER 8

# *Recitation of the Name of Amita*

In former chapters, several references have been made to a very common practice of Pure Land adepts, namely, the oral recitation or invocation of the name of Amita as an effective means toward rebirth in his Land of Extreme Happiness. In the Japanese "True Pure Land School" or Jōdo Shinshū, founded by Shinran (1173–1262), Amita pietism reached its extreme development. The recitation of Amita's name was not considered the cause of rebirth, but rather faith in Amita's Vow. "Shinran went beyond the whole tradition in emphasizing the aspect of faith and reserving the practice of recitation for the expression of gratitude."[1]

> [Shinran] insisted on an absolute faith in Amita, not making any effort for enlightenment by oneself. One should rely exclusively and absolutely on Amita, faith alone being the cause of salvation. According to him, even the believing thought itself is the grace of the Buddha, and one's remembrance or repetition of the name of the Buddha is simply a token of free thanks-giving shown toward the Buddha.[2]

If one recalls that Shinran's master was Hōnen (1133–1212), who previously had been inspired by Genshin (942–1017), who "was especially significant in the history of Japanese Pure Land thought through his book the *Ōjōyōshū*[3] (Essentials of Rebirth)[4] Although the three famous Japanese Pure Land leaders accepted Shan-tao's authority, one may wonder through what thought processes Shan-tao's original teaching was changed. Hōnen considered him an incarnation of Amita,[5] and Shinran wrote in his *Shōshin Ge* that Shan-tao "was the only one who clarified the Buddha's real intent."[6] However, with the exception of Genshin, whose ideas seem to be close to Shan-tao's, Hōnen made a first major shift in Pure Land doctrine, in that "he went beyond Shan-tao's implied superiority of the act of recitation to stress the clear superiority of that practice."[7] His conversion to Pure Land thought is ascribed to reading a passage from Shan-tao's commen-

tary (through Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*) on the *Kuan-ching*: "Only repeat the name of Amida with all your heart-whether walking or standing still, whether sitting or lying, never cease this practice for even a moment. This is the practice which brings salvation without fail, for it is in accordance with the original vow of the Buddha."[8]

In the present chapter the accuracy of both the translation and interpretation of this text will be investigated, as well as A. Bloom's final remark on Shan-tao: "In the process of the simplification of practice in Pure Land tradition, Shan-tao contributed greatly to the establishment of the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha as the single requirement for birth in the Pure Land."[9]

That this view on Shan-tao prevails among Shinshū followers appears from the following quotation: "On reading Zendo [Shan-tao]'s commentaries we are surprised to discover through his portrayal, what a wise teacher Sakyamuni was: although first speaking to Vaidehī on the religion of Meditation and good works—as if it were final—he gradually leads her toward the religion of the Nembutsu in terms of the Larger Sūtra . . ."[10] In other words, the author holds that the *Kuan-ching* contains two strata, a superficial one concerned with meditation and good works in terms of monastic life, and a more hidden stratum which encourages the reader to embrace *nembutsu* (*nien-Fo*). It is Shākyamuni's strategy to lead his audience gradually to the practice of *nembutsu*, for he pronounced this sermon "solely to reveal the significance of the Nembutsu. All the rest is nothing but a sort of dramatic set-up for Vaidehī who presumes meditation alone to be the cause by which the Western Shore is reached."[11]

In order to understand Shan-tao's exact position with regard to *nien-Fo* (discussed later in this chapter), a preliminary study has to be made about the antecedents of *nien-Fo* in the Pure Land sutras, and in Buddhism in general.

## THE PRACTICE OF BUDDHĀNUSMRTI OR NIEN-FO

Some general remarks have been made previously about the practice of "calling the Name of the Buddha" (Chapter 1) and about *buddhānusmrti* (Chapter 2), but a more detailed examination of the terms is required to disentangle the confusions caused by lack of precision when the terms are used. *Nien-Fo* (Japanese: *nembutsu*) is the usual translation of the Sanskrit *buddhānusmrti* (Pali: *buddhānussati*). A clarification of the Sanskrit (Pali) term will come first and will be followed by a study of the Chinese *nien-Fo*.



### *Buddhānusmrti (Buddhānussati)*

In order to discover the correct significance of *nien*, and *nien-Fo*, it is necessary to go back to their Sanskrit-Pali antecedents. It is beyond doubt that the Chinese-Buddhist *nien* was used to render the Sanskrit-Pali *anusmrti (anussati)* or *smrti (sati)*; for example, the seventh constituent of the Noble Path, *samyak-smrti* or *sammā sati* (right mindfulness), is translated as *cheng-nien* whereas *buddhānusmrti (buddhānussati)* became *nien-Fo*. At first glance it appears that *smrti (sati)* and *anusmrti (anussati)* are practically synonymous. In the Pali sources *sati* means "memory, recognition, consciousness, intentness of mind, wakefulness of mind, mindfulness, alertness, lucidity of mind, self-possession, consciousness, self-consciousness."[12] On the other hand, meanings of *anussati* (which is said to be the equivalent of the Sanskrit *anusmrti*, from *anu* + *smr*) are given as "remembrance, recollection, thinking of, mindfulness."[13] When one compares these two sets of translations, given in the *PED*, one sees hardly any real noticeable difference. Still, one should be cautious and not equate the two terms without further investigation. That there is probably some shade of difference in meaning appears from the *SED*, which gives for *smrti* "remembrance, reminiscence, thinking of or upon, calling to mind,"[14] and for *anusmrti* "cherished recollection, recalling some idea to the exclusion of all others."[15] The prefix *anu* expresses some degree of intensity, or methodical order, or repetition, since it is translated as "according to, severally, each by each, orderly, methodically, one after another, repeatedly."[16]

In the *Visuddhimagga*, both *sati* and *anussati* occur in the same context (the six recollections): "Mindfulness *(sati)* itself is recollection *(anussati)* because it rises again and again; or alternatively, the mindfulness *(sati)* that is proper *(anurūpa)* for a clansman gone forth out of faith since it occurs only in those instances where it should occur, is 'recollection *(anussati)*.'"[17]

From Buddhaghosa's analysis one may conclude that *sati* and *anussati* are closely related in meaning but are not exact synonyms. The two etymologies he presents are not of equal value. The latter seems artificial and based on a play of words (*anussati*

and *anurūpa*), but the first etymology is acceptable. *Sati* is *anussati* but the latter term is somehow stronger, it is a repetitive *sati*; or *sati* practiced over and over again is *anussati*. If this explanation is correct, it does not yet exclude the possibility that *anussati* may have overtones of intensity and/or methodical order as well. Thinking of something over and over again can hardly happen without some degree of intensity.

The translators of the *Visuddhimagga* distinguish the two terms by using different English words. *Sati* becomes "mindfulness" and *anussati* is "recollection." H. Dayal says that "almost all modern scholars are now agreed in translating *smrti* (and *sati*) by this expressive English word, 'Mindfulness' . . ."[18] He also mentions that, according to M. Müller, the root *smr* originally denotes "intense thought."[19] The English term "mindful" is defined as "bearing or keeping in mind" and is akin to being "aware";[20] "recollection," on the other hand, means "quiet tranquillity of mind and self-possession; especially: religious composure." It has a further meaning of "the action, the power of recalling to the mind," and is akin to remembrance.[21] Whether the respective translations of *sati* as "mindfulness" and *anussati* as "recollection" really correspond to the contents of the Pali words has to be investigated through an analysis of different compounds in which the terms are used.[22]

***Sammā Sati (Samyak-smrti)*** This is one of the constituents (the seventh) of the eightfold Aryan Path and is usually translated as "right mindfulness."[23] Some authors prefer other translations (e.g., "mémoire pure,"[24] "présence d'esprit,"[25] "inspection").[26] What is the precise contents of *sammā sati*? In the *Dialogues of the Buddha* occurs the following description:

> And what, bhikkhus, is right-mindfulness? Herein, O bhikkhus, a brother, as to the body, continues so to look upon the body, that he remains ardent, self-possessed, and mindful, having overcome both the hankering and the dejection common in the world. And in the same way as to feelings, thoughts, and ideas, he so looks upon each, that he remains ardent, self-possessed and mindful, having overcome the hankering and the dejection that is common in the world. This is what is called right-mindfulness.[27]

A modern commentator explains "mindfulness" as follows:



> Right Mindfulness (or Attentiveness) is to be diligently aware, mindful and attentive with regard to (1) the activities of the body (*kāya*), (2) sensations or feelings (*vedanā*), (3) the activities of the mind (*citta*) and (4) ideas, thoughts, conceptions, and things (*dhamma*).
>
> The practice of concentration on breathing (*ānāpānasati*) is one of the well-known exercises, connected with the body—as modes of meditation.
>
> With regard to sensations and feelings, one should be clearly aware of all forms of feelings and sensations, pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, of how they appear and disappear within oneself.
>
> Concerning the activities of mind, one should be aware whether one's mind is lustful or not, given to hatred or not, deluded or not, distracted or concentrated, etc. In this way one should be aware of all movements of mind, how they arise and disappear.
>
> These four forms of mental culture or meditation are treated in detail in the *Satipatthāna-sutta* (Setting-up of Mindfulness).[28]

It appears thus that the object of *sammā sati* extended over four "fields," or *patthāna (upasthāna)*:

1. Mindfulness of the body *(kāya-sati-patthāna, kāya-smrty-upasthāna)*
2. Mindfulness of feelings *(vedanā-satipatthāna, vedanā-smrty-upasthāna)*
3. Mindfulness of mental states *(citta-satipatthāna, citta-smrty-upasthāna)*
4. Mindfulness of mental contents *(dhamma-satipatthāna, dharma-smrty-upasthāna)*.[29]

H. Dayal thinks that the first object (body, *kāya*) was originally the only one. The next step in the evolution of the formula was the addition of *citta* as object of *smrti*. Finally, to complete the number four, *vedanā* and *dharma* were added.[30] This hypothesis would explain why there is some ambiguity in the later (and present) commentaries about the seventh constituent of the Noble Path. Indeed, the content of "right mindfulness" consists of meditation subjects, even called "contemplation."[31] How should one distinguish these "meditations" from the subjects of the eighth constituent, "right concentration"?

The fourfold object of *smrti (sati)* forms the first group among the thirty-seven *dharmas* to be cultivated by a Bodhisattva. Besides this usage, the importance of *smrti* in Buddhist practice is evidenced by its appearance in other combinations:

> . . . It is included in several of those overlapping numerical formulae, which the Buddhist philosophers devised with an ingenuity that was worthy of a better cause. *Smrti* is reckoned as the seventh of the eight items in the time-honoured, ancient Eightfold Way. It is also the first of the seven *bodhy-angas* ("Factors of Enlightenment," . . .) and the third of the five *balas* (Powers) and the five *indriyas* (Ruling Principles). It thus appears four times on the list of the thirty-seven *bodhipaksyā dharmāh* ("Principles conducive to Enlightenment").[32]

***The "Six Recollections" and the "Ten Recollections"*** This second series of *smrti (sati)* compounds is even more significant for discovering the exact meaning of the terms *smrti (sati)* and *anusmrti (anussati)*. The *Visuddhimagga* has a list of "ten recollections" which are among the forty subjects of meditation. The *PED* says that the first six of these ten subjects to be kept in mind are a late list, which were still later expanded to ten.

If the six were later, what was the earlier form? It is now difficult to trace back the original formula and follow its gradual development, but most likely the earliest formulation of *(anu)ssati (-smrti)* developed from, or was parallel with, the Three Refuges. Nothing would be more natural than that an adept, having put his faith in and having gone for refuge to the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *sangha*, would consequently be constantly aware of the Three Jewels and keep them in mind. The testimony of the *Dhammapada* invoked as evidence for the existence of the triple reflection or three kinds of mindfulness in the Pali canon[33] is not valid, since in fact one also finds there a formula of a sixfold mindfulness: Buddha, Law, Order, body, compassion, and meditation.[34] However, this is not the usual set of six which one finds later. That in earlier times a triple *(anu)ssati* must have existed can be inferred from the fact that later (Mahāyāna) sutras have conserved the formula (e.g., the Shorter Sutra[35] and the *Kuan-ching*).[36]

After a period of "three *anussatis*," three more have been added to form the "six recollections" (*liu-nien*):

1. *Buddhānussati (Buddhānusmrti)*, recollection of the Buddha (*nien-Fo*)



2. *Dhammānussati (dharmānusmrti)*, recollection of the *dharma (nien-fa)*
3. *Sanghānussati (sanghānusmrti)*, recollection of the *sangha (nien-seng)*
4. *Sīlānussati (śīlānusmrti)*, recollection of discipline (*nien-chieh*)
5. *Cāgānussati (tyāgānusmrti)*, recollection of charity, or almsgiving, or liberality (*nien-she*)
6. *Devatānussati (devatānusmrti)*, recollection of the gods (*devas*) or the heavens (*nien-t'ien*)

As a later stage in the development, the list was again extended, first to eight (i.e., the "eight recollections," *pa-nien*), and finally reached the present number of ten (i.e. "ten recollections," *shih-nien*[37]):

7. *Ānāpāna-sati (ānāpāna-smrti)*, concentration by in-breathing and out-breathing, mindfulness of breathing (*nien ju-ch'u hsi*)
8. *Marana-sati (maranānusmrti)*, the thought or mindfulness of death, recollection of death (*nien-szu*)
9. *Kāyagatā-sati (kāyagatā-smrti)*, *sati* relating to the body, body-mindfulness (*nien-shen fei-ch'ang*)
10. *Upasamānussati (upasamānusmrti)*, *upasama*: calm, quiet, appeasement, tranquillity, recollection of peace (*nien hsiu-hsi*)

To decide about the exact meaning of *sati (smrti)* and *anussati (anusmrti)*, one needs to compare both the usage of the terms and their respective contents. In items 1 to 6, the term *anussati (anusmrti)* is always used; in items 7 to 10, there are three instances of *sati* (7, 8, 9) and only one of *anussati* (10); for item 8, the Pali term is *sati*, whereas the Sanskrit has *anusmrti*. The reason why *sati* is used for 7 and 9 (and perhaps 8), may their close relationship with *kāya-sati-tthānāni*. In Chinese, both *sati* and *anussati* are translated by *nien*, so as to make out a list of ten *nien*. But this use of *nien* is not absolute, for some items another character is equally used: *kuan* (e.g., *ānāpāna-sati)*, usually rendered as *nien ju-ch'u hsi*, is also translated as *shu-hsi kuan*. With regard to the

four fields of mindfulness, either *nien* or *kuan* is used: *szu nien-chu*, or *szu nien ch'u (kuan)*; but in the four individual compounds *sati (smrti)* is rendered by *kuan*, so that it appears that *nien* and *kuan* are almost synonyms.

In Chapter 6, the term *kuan* was translated as "inspection." Based on how some modern authors translate *sati (smrti)*, one of the proposals was also "inspection," so that it appears that in fact the two terms have a very closely related meaning. However, they are not exact synonyms, and "inspection" should be reserved for the translation of *kuan*, because both "inspection" and *kuan* signify "seeing, watching with attentiveness." The etymology of "inspection" (*in-spicere*, or seeing internally) shows that the basic meaning of the word had to do with "sight," whereas the same cannot be said of *smrti* or *sati*, which originally meant "intense thought." What then would be a correct translation of *smrti*? It is difficult to choose a satisfactory term, especially because the contents of the ten *anusmrti* have such a multiple origin, and one term probably does not fully cover each individual item. (For example, the meaning of *anusmrti* is different when it has the Buddha as its object, or when it refers to "almsgiving" or "the body" or "death".) If, however, one considers that *anusmrti* is not a visual process in the mind but rather a thought process, then perhaps a term can be chosen which is broad enough to cover the ten objects. "Mindfulness" is such a term, but does not appear to be strong enough, since it does not convey the meaning of intentness or intensity. Perhaps the terms "attentiveness" or "intentness" should be preferred, although in some cases "inspection" could still be used (e.g., "inspection of the body," "inspection of breathing"). As far as *Buddhānusmrti* is concerned, "inspection" would not be accurate, since probably the earliest form of *Buddhānusmrti* was quite different from the "inspection" used later in the *kuan* method. The latter was made possible after iconographic media were available, whereas the earliest form often consisted of meditations on the Buddha's qualities: "That Blessed One is such since he is accomplished, fully enlightened, endowed with [clear] vision and [virtuous] conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed."[38]

Another, probably later, form than the one just described was a recollection-inspection of the Buddha's life on earth: an example is found in one of the *kuan* sutras, the *KFSH*, which seems to be



rather paradoxical, but may have been inherited from earlier traditions, especially since the sutra which recommends this method appears to be rather Hīnayānastic in character (see Chapter 2). It consists of an orderly reviewing of all the events of the Buddha's life on earth.[39] Besides this method, the sutra of course also recommends the proper method of inspection of the thirty-two superior marks of the Buddha.

It appears, therefore, that the contents of *smrti (sati)* and *anusmrti (anussati)* have gradually shifted in the course of Buddhist history, and the methods of *smrti (sati)*, and so on, as well. Of course, throughout the whole course of development, the first *anusmrti*, the *Buddhānusmrti*, remained of paramount importance; but as buddhology developed, the concrete content of *Buddhānusmrti* also changed. In Chinese Buddhism, with its *nien-Fo* as a rendition of *Buddhānusmrti*, we again find much of the uncertainty about the exact connotations of the terms. Besides, in China as in Japan, the shift in meaning of *nien-Fo* continued.

### *Nien-Fo*

In Chapter 6 (on meditation), some aspects of *nien-Fo* have already been discussed. In this section, closer attention will be paid to *nien-Fo* in its relation to recitation of the name of the Buddha.

The ancient meaning of the Chinese character *nien* was "to think of"; it also was a loan character used for *nien*, "to announce."[40] In classical times it meant "to reflect, to think; to study; to learn by heart, to remember; to recite, to read." The etymology of the character indicates the idea of "having something present to the mind" (*chin* is "present," "now," and *hsin* is the mind).[41]

Concerning the modern significance of the character, several authors agree about the following connotations, and in this order: (a) "to think, to reflect, to ponder on"; (b) "to remember, to recall"; (c) "to read aloud, to chant, to intone, to recite"; (d) "to repeat from memory" (which seems a combination of b and c).[42] About the Buddhist compound *nien-Fo*, the same authors give "to repeat the name of Buddha."[43] In *DCBT* *nien-Fo* is translated as "to repeat the name of a Buddha, audibly or inaudibly."[44] This appears to be a unilateral version of the compound. One reference is more detailed: *nien-Fo* is said to mean "to invoke the Buddha's name, to pray to the Buddha, to think of the Buddha."[45] In this way, three distinct aspects of *nien-Fo* are pointed out: invocation

of the name, prayer, and meditation. (Whether this enumeration is complete will be discussed shortly.)

It appears that the Chinese *nien-Fo* corresponds fairly well to the original *Buddhānusmrti, Buddhānussati*, except for the connotation "to repeat (aloud) the name of Buddha." But since the Chinese *nien* as such included oral recitation, it was almost natural that the meaning of *nien-Fo* was eventually extended to include oral invocation, even to the point that it became the primary meaning. The actual development of this process is linked together with the translations of the Pure Land scriptures into Chinese and with the reactions they elicited in China with reference to Pure Land theory and practice.

In the Shorter Sutra no invocation of Amita's name is explicitly mentioned. What is asked for is to vow for (or wish) rebirth in Sukhāvatī, to hear the name of Amita and hold on to it, or keep it in mind from one to seven days and nights. In the Longer Sutra, as far as the Chinese translations are concerned, three groups of people who are reborn are distinguished. The first group concentrate their whole mind on Amita; the third group direct their singleminded attention toward a tenfold mindfulness, and are mindful (attentive) of Amita. There is no explicit mention of oral invocation.[46]

One section of the Longer Sutra has to be further investigated: the vows of Dharmākara. As already mentioned, the number of vows is different in the various Chinese translations, but their essential message is the same. If beings in the Ten Quarters hear the name of Amita, desire rebirth in his Land, and practice all meritorious deeds accordingly, Amita will appear before them at the moment of death, and they will be reborn in Sukhāvatī, even those who only think of him ten times.[47] With regard to this latter condition, B. Nanjio translates: "and should have say ten times thought of me (or repeated my name), . . ."[48] The Chinese text says *nai-chih shih nien*,[49] which means either "at least" (*antasas*), or "as far as" (*yāvati*)[50] and seems to put a restriction on the condition for rebirth. Those who have a sincere faith and wish to be born in Amita's Land, if they have produced such a desire at least ten times, will obtain rebirth.[51] It is quite possible that "ten times" (ten serious thoughts) is rather symbolically used. What is implied is that the wish for rebirth should be earnest and not superficial, coming and going.



Nanjio's interpretation of "repeated my name" is not founded. The "name of Amita" is frequently referred to in the sutra, but except in one case, it is always "hearing the name of Amita."[52] The exception occurs in vow 17 (*ch'eng wo ming che*), but is attributed to the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters.[53]

In the Shorter Sutra, two aspects of Amita devotionalism (besides the performance of meritorious actions) are closely combined: " . . . hear the name of the blessed Amitāyus, . . . and having heard it, shall keep it in mind . . ."[54] (It seems that *śruti* and *smrti* are here in perfect harmony.) But as was already explained in Chapter 7, the Shorter Sutra does not recommend oral invocation of Amita's name.

The first explicit promotion of name recitation in the Pure Land sutras occurs in two instances in the *Kuan-ching*, in "Meditation" 16, within the interpolation on the three lower grades of rebirth.[55]

1. Belonging to the highest grade of the Lowest Level are the persons who commit all evil deeds, except slandering the sutras. At the moment of death, these "stupid people," who had no compunction about their evil deeds,

   > may meet a good and learned teacher who will explain to them the headings and titles of the twelve sections of the Mahāyāna sutras. Through thus hearing the titles of the sutras, they will be released from the extremely evil karma of a thousand *kalpas*. The learned teacher will teach them how to fold their hands and to say in praise: "Namo Buddha Amita." Because they praised the name of the Buddha [*ch'eng Fo-ming*] they will be released from the guilt (or sins) of fifty million *kalpas* in *saṃsāra*.[56]

2. Those of the middle grade of the Lowest Level are the persons who break all the precepts (monastic rules included), preach impure *dharmas*, and feel even proud about their "achievements." They are heading right for hell, but

   > at the moment of death they may meet a good and learned teacher moved by compassion, who will praisingly explain to them the majesty of Amita's ten powers and the spiritual power of his brightness. He will also praise the precepts, meditation, wisdom, emancipation, and full knowledge resulting from emancipation.[57]

> After hearing [these words] these persons will be released from the guilt (sins) of eighty million *kalpas* in *samsāra*.[58]

In this second case, there is no reference to the name of Amita, but indirectly, *hearing* about Amita's powers has a similar effect as in the previous case.

3. Belonging to the lowest grade of the Lowest Level are the persons who commit all evils, even the five "deadly sins." They would normally sink into lower *gati* and suffer during many *kalpas*. However:

> such stupid persons may meet a good and learned teacher at the moment of death, who will offer them spiritual solace by explaining the wonderful *dharma* and teach them *nien-Fo*. But because of their pains, they will not be in a state to practice *nien-Fo*. The virtuous friend will then say: "if you are unable to practice the *nien* [Amita]-*Fo*, you should praise and entrust your life [*ch'eng kui-ming*] to the Buddha of Measureless life'. If they singlemindedly and with uninterrupted voice complete ten *nien* and praisingly [say]: "*Namo* Buddha Amita," then because of praising the name of the Buddha, at each single *nien*,[59] the guilt of eighty million *kalpas* in *samsāra* will be wiped out.[60]

Some remarks have to be made on the occurrence of name invocation in these passages. First, it must be kept in mind that the oral invocation is recommended only in these extreme cases of lifelong evildoers, who have not practiced virtue or meditation but have committed all evils and never felt sorry for them. Whereas the Longer Sutra excludes such persons from rebirth, in the *Kuan-ching* they are given a last chance. But still, there must be a serious conversion. The oral invocation of Amita's name has to be earnest: singleminded and without interruption. Ten *nien* are required, which seems to suggest a serious desire for rebirth.

Second, in the *Kuan-ching*, as in the Shorter Sutra, emphasis is also laid on "hearing." Persons of the upper grade of the Lowest Level will be released from sin by hearing the sutra titles. Those of the middle grade of the Lowest Level are saved by hearing of the spiritual powers of Amita. Although the idea of *smrti* as a result of such hearing is not explicitly stated, it seems to be implied. In



other words, whoever hears . . . and keeps in mind (and accepts in faith) what he has heard can be saved. For this reason, "hearing" has been pointed out as one of the four varieties of *nien-Fo*.[61] Third, since neither the Shorter Sutra nor the Longer Sutra (explicitly) recommends name invocation, one may wonder about the origin of *ch'eng-ming* in the *Kuan-ching*. Even in this sutra, *ch'eng-ming* does not belong to the original stratum of the Buddha's discourse. It appears that extraneous influences must have been at work. In other words, the interpolator has apparently drawn from other Buddhist sources and introduced the practice into the official teaching of the Pure Land tradition. It is not difficult to guess what these sources were. Several of the other *kuan* sutras have explicit recommendations of calling the name of a Buddha and/or Bodhisattvas. (For example, in the *KHP*, there is a *dhāranī* text which is preceded by a sixfold invocation: "*namo Buddhaya, namo dharmaya, namo sanghaya*," etc.)[62]

Another passage of the same sutra recommends praising the name of Akāshagarbha, exactly in similar circumstances as in the *Kuan-ching*: during an illness which might be fatal.[63] This sutra as a whole reflects the magical aspects of Buddhism. The *KFSH* strongly recommends not only the meditational aspects of the Buddha cult (e.g., *nien-Fo, kuan-Fo, chien-Fo* occur in the same passage),[64] but also praising the name(s) of the Buddha(s) (*ch'eng-ming*).[65] However, the *nien-Fo-samādhi* is said to be more powerful than oral invocation. "If persons take refuge in the World-honored Buddha [Shākyamuni], or praise his name, the obstacles of *kleśas* of a hundred thousand *kalpas* will be removed: How much more so if they practice the *nien-Fo-samādhi* with a correct mind."[66]

In the *KMST*, the Buddha says: "If after my *Nirvāna* disciples cultivate all meritorious virtues with energetic effort, . . . practise the *samādhis*, deeply enter into *samāpatti* (*cheng-shou*), study and chant the sutras, . . . they should with concentrated attention, visualize and inspect (*nien*) the Buddha images and praise the name of Maitreya, etc. . . . they will be immediately reborn in the Tushita heaven."[67] In a further passage the saving power of "hearing" the (glorious) name of Maitreya is repeatedly mentioned. The passage is parallel to similar ones of the *Kuan-ching*, for Maitreya will come down in welcome at the moment of the devotee's death and lead him to rebirth.[68]

These examples show that "calling the name" of Buddhas and/or Bodhisattvas was a common practice in the circles of Bud-

dhists who otherwise emphasized both meditation (*kuan* method) and cultivation of good works. The interpolator of the *Kuan-ching* must have been familiar with this tradition and in imitation of the other *kuan* sutras must have filled what he considered to be a "gap" (or shortcoming) in the *Kuan-ching*.

A final consideration is necessary to make the transition to Shan-tao's views on *nien-Fo*. The tradition of the Pure Land sutras, as well as related texts, contains "in germ" several methodological approaches with regard to Buddha worship. Besides the five "gates" described by Vasubandhu (worship; praise; resolution or wish; meditation; transfer of merit), it is possible to distinguish four aspects or methods of *nien-Fo* which are all in some way contained in the one compound *nien-Fo*: (1) *anusmrti (anussati)* understood according to the general Buddhist tradition (e.g., as in the *Visuddhimagga*, where "attentiveness" or "recollection" of the Buddha is one of the topics of meditation); (2) "hearing the name, etc., of the Buddha," often described as a powerful means in the Longer Sutra; (3) calling or praising the name of the Buddha, or oral invocation; and (4) visualizing-inspecting the body marks and so on of the Buddha, according to the *kuan* method.[69] This last method is in fact a special application, or a further, more intensive development, of the first one. All these methods are not uniquely Pure Land practice, but may be applied (and were actually applied) to any other Buddha or Bodhisattva. But because of the final success of the Amita Cult in China and Japan, *nien-Fo* became almost exclusively related to Amita. In the course of development, the two latter forms of *nien-Fo* became the almost exclusive practice. Furthermore, because of the difference in approach of both methods, gradually one or the other was emphasized exclusively. In the Japanese *Jōdo Shinshū,* oral invocation became the essential practice, and the authority on which the patriarchs (especially Hōnen and Shinran) based their view was said to be Shan-tao in his commentary on the *Kuan-ching*. The correctness of this claim has now to be investigated.

## SHAN-TAO'S INTERPRETATION OF NIEN-FO

If the practices recommended in the *Kuan-ching* are briefly recapitulated, the following image emerges:



1. Meditation on Sukhāvatī and Buddha Amita is the *essential practice*, corresponding with the intention of the primary author of the sutra. No relationship with eventual rebirth is suggested, although it was, of course, implied. Shan-tao recognizes this fact when he says that the *tsung* (basic message) of the *Kuan-ching* consists in *kuan-Fo-samādhi* and (or?) *nien-Fo-samādhi*.
2. Cultivation of the three "pure actions," or three kinds of merits (inserted by an interpolator), is said to be a condition for rebirth.[70]
3. Cultivation of the threefold mind is a necessary condition for all those who wish to be reborn in the highest grade of the Highest Level. This is another interpolation.
4. Various conditions are related to ethical conduct as well as to faith. According to the degree of perfection of merits, one obtains a higher grade of rebirth. This section is also interpolated, besides being largely a duplicate of (2).
5. Invocation of the name of Amita is an efficacious means of rebirth (in the lowest grades) for those who did not cultivate the above good roots. This method is not really recommended as the ideal practice. It only offers a last hope for those who normally would sink down into hell.

Among these five groups, only the first one is called *ting-shan*, and the substance (*t'i*) of the sutra, whereas the remaining ones are said to be *san-shan*.

When comparing Shan-tao's exegesis of these different methods, one sees beyond any doubt that the practice of meditation is praised as the most superior one. But Shan-tao is quite orthodox in holding the view that meditation leads to a vision of Amita and his Pure Land in the present life. It does not necessarily include rebirth. To obtain rebirth, several ways are open, which are basically of two kinds: ethical conduct and the threefold mind. Shan-tao somehow distorts the intention of the interpolator who inserted this passage: he says that to gain entrance to Sukhāvatī the threefold mind is necessary at *any* level of rebirth. In fact, the sutra prescribes it for the highest grade only. When further commenting on the oral invocation of Amita's name, Shan-tao seems to make another more appalling distortion, which was used by the

Japanese patriarchs to prove their thesis of oral recitation as the only necessary practice. This point has to be considered more carefully.

When Shan-tao urges his readers to cultivate unshakable faith in the words of the Buddha, he paraphrases several times one all-important sentence from the Shorter Sutra (quoted above): " . . . when hearing about Amita Buddha, they hold on to his name . . . one day . . . or seven days, single-minded without distraction . . .[71] In the first paraphrase, Shan-tao does not mention the sutra explicitly, but says: " . . . to exert themselves in their present life in concentrated "remembrance" and concentrated cultivation . . ." In a second instance, he refers to the *Amita-sūtra* (Shorter Sutra) in clear words. "The *Amita-sūtra* says: Shākyamuni praises the various adornments of Sukhāvatī, and further urges all ordinary persons. If they are singlemindedly attentive of Amita's name [*yi-hsin chuan-nien Mi-t'a ming-hao*] for one to seven days, they will certainly obtain rebirth."[72] The quotation does not exactly correspond to the sutra text (neither T. 366 nor T. 367), but has basically the same meaning. In the subsequent passage, Shan-tao is somewhat freer in his interpretation when he further quotes (or paraphrases) from the Shorter Sutra saying that all the Buddhas praise Shākyamuni for this discourse since he had the courage to preach this method of rebirth in such evil times (which is the period of the five decays): " . . . that he pointed out and praised the name of Amita, and urged sentient beings to praise and be attentive (*ch'eng-nien*) [to that Buddha Amita or to his name], so that they would certainly obtain rebirth."[73]

This is the first time that Shan-tao uses the term *ch'eng*, "to praise (to call)," but on the one hand it is combined with *nien* (which obliterates the sense) and on the other hand it has no explicit object, so that it is doubtful whether Shan-tao really has oral recitation in mind exclusively. Since the sutra does not refer to it in this passage,[74] the same may be inferred with regard to Shan-tao.

Only a few lines later Shan-tao again refers to the Shorter Sutra, when he says that all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters address sentient beings in this manner: "You, sentient beings, ought to believe Shākyamuni's words, his praise and testiminy [in favor of Amita] saying that all ordinary persons regardless of the amount or of the time period of their guilt or merits, if they only would exert themselves as much as a whole lifetime, or as little as one day to seven days, in singleminded and concentrated attentiveness to the name of Amita, then they would certainly obtain rebirth: there is no doubt about it!"[75] The key sentence here is exactly the same as the one above, which seems to indicate that Shan-tao does not paraphrase but quotes, and therefore must have used a slightly different version of the Shorter Sutra than the present versions in the Tripitaka (*Taishō*). But still, even his version does not clearly recommend oral invocation of Amita's name, although *nien* . . . *ming-hao* . . . comes very close to it, considering that one of the connotations of *nien* is "to recite, to read aloud."



Next follows Shan-tao's controversial passage on the right practice(s) (*cheng-hsing*) versus the miscellaneous practice(s) (*tsa-hsing*). The text has already been quoted in Chapter 7 but a closer view is necessary to understand its meaning as clearly as possible. The right practices recommended in the three Pure Land sutras, the *Kuan-ching*, the Shorter Sutra, and the Longer Sutra, are: (1) with singleminded attention study and chant these sutras (*tu-sung*); (2) with singleminded attention reflect on (or visualize), inspect, and remain attentive (*anusmrti*) of the twofold reward of Sukhāvatī (*kuan-ch'a yi-nien*); (3) with singleminded attention worship Amita (*li*); (4) with singleminded attention invoke and praise Amita (*k'ou-ch'eng*); and (5) with singleminded attention praise and present offerings (*tsan-t'an kung-yang*).

This list of five practices reminds one of another list of five methods for rebirth, recommended and explained by Vasubandhu in his *Sukhāvatī-vyūhopadeśa* (T. 1524). Shan-tao had commented on Vasubandhu's list in a previous work,[76] and wrote as a conclusion: "If these five methods are complete (i.e., cultivated together), one will certainly obtain rebirth. If each single method corresponds with the above threefold mind, then all the actions performed accordingly, no matter how numerous, are called authentic actions."[77] In this earlier work Shan-tao already stressed the importance of the threefold mind as a necessary quality that should vitalize all actions. If the threefold mind does not inspire one's actions, or in other words, if one's actions are not performed with sincerity, deep faith, and a firm desire for rebirth, these actions have no value whatsoever. In the context of the *Kuan-ching shu*, the new set of five actions is partially different from Vasubandhu's. Only Vasubandhu's first, second, and fourth do reappear (respectively, Shan-tao's third, fifth, and second),

whereas the wish for rebirth and transference of merits are replaced by study-chanting and oral invocation.

Shan-tao further remarks that these five right practices can be divided into two kinds: *cheng-ting-yeh* and *chu-yeh*. These terms have been translated as "right established action" and "assisting action,"[78] but the translation of the former does not seem satisfactory. The terms do not occur as such in Buddhist literature before Shan-tao. But it is possible to guess the sources that inspired him to coin the terms. In fact, two separate strains of thought seem to be combined in them. (1) With reference to the six *pāramitās*, the distinction is made between auxiliary practice (*chu-hsing*) and right practice (*cheng-hsing*): the first five *pāramitās* are said to be in function of the sixth, *prajñā*. However, the total compound is called *chu-cheng chien-hsing* (simultaneous practice of auxiliary and right *pāramitās*).[79] In Shan-tao's terminology the order is reversed but is clearly reminiscent of the Bodhisattva context, since he also uses a synonym for his compound: *cheng-chu erh-hsing*. (2) The second strain is suggested by the use of *ting*. In another context *cheng-ting* means "right *samādhi*" (the eighth constituent of the eightfold Path), but that Shan-tao would have alluded to this seems, although not impossible, highly improbable, because of the additional character *yeh*. It is more likely that the compound was influenced by and dependent on *cheng ting-chü*, which is translated as "right(ly) established state."[80] The Sanskrit is *samyaktva-niyata-rāśi*,[81] and is said to be the "state of non-retrogression."[82] However, the two are not identical, since one originally refers to arhatship, and the other to Bodhisattvahood. But practically they correspond. In the Longer Sutra, the "rightly established state" is mentioned in the eleventh vow of Dharmākara: "O Bhagavat, if in that Buddha country of mine the beings who are born there should not all be firmly established, viz. in absolute truth, till they have reached Mahāparinirvāna, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge."[83] From the context it appears that this state is indeed similar to the state of nonretrogression. The difference is perhaps only that the idea is expressed in a positive rather than in a negative way.[84]

If this dependence on *cheng-ting-chü* is correct, Shan-tao may have chosen the expression *cheng-ting-yeh* to point out that this kind of right practice is the one that leads to the "right established state." This could be translated as "right determining action," which means the right action which is determining or decisive for



rebirth in Sukhāvatī. But since it is more probable that Shan-tao summarized in *cheng-ting-yeh* both the aspect of *cheng-ting-chü* and the other aspect of *cheng-hsing* versus *chu-hsing*, a better translation would be "right *and* determining action."

After deciding the question concerned with the origin of the expression, it is not yet clear what meaning Shan-tao put into it. He describes *cheng-ting-yeh* as "with singleminded attention be attentive (*nien*) of the name of Amita. Whether walking or standing, sitting or lying, without consideration of the length of time, at each single instant (*nien-nien*) not let it go, this is called the right and determining action."[85]

This translation does not agree with the way the *Jōdo Shinshū* puts it: "If we desire to practice the Right Practice, of the two actions of the 'Right' and the 'Assisting' we should set aside the 'Assisting' and exclusively practice the 'Right Established Action'. The Right Established Action is none other but to pronounce His name. As we pronounce His name, we shall unfailingly be born in the Pure Land, because this comes from the vow of Amita Buddha."[86]

The same interpretation is given by Mochizuki, who follows other commentators and says clearly that the oral invocation of Amita's name is the only right and determining action, whereas the other four actions are auxiliary. The right action is the one that is in accordance with the original vow of Amita.[87]

However, this interpretation, although historically of great importance in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, does not do justice to Shan-tao's thought. When he writes *yi-hsin chuan-nien Mi-t'o ming-hao*, he quotes from the Shorter Sutra, which, as was said before, does not express oral recitation in this passage. If Shan-tao had wanted to make a clear and unambiguous reference to oral invocation, he would have used *k'ou-ch'eng* instead of *nien . . . ming-hao*, since he already used this expression a few lines before, when enumerating the five right practices. Moreover, it is inconceivable that after two long chapters—one on *kuan* meditation and the present one on ethical conditions—he all at once would almost reject his own theories by saying that the practice of meditation is only auxiliary, and that ethical behavior is only a miscellaneous practice. It appears much more plausible that Shan-tao understood by *nien . . . ming-hao* the practice of meditation on the Buddha and the remembrance of his name. Both are accept-

able expressions of *nien-Fo*. Oral invocation is not included here, although it may be implied.

Within the description of the ninth meditation, which is on the True Body, the *Kuan-ching* says: "The Buddha of Measureless Life possesses eighty-four thousand marks of perfection; within each mark are contained eighty-four thousand minor marks of excellence; further in each single mark there are eighty-four thousand rays of light and each of these rays universally illumines and keeps in its embrace without desisting all the sentient beings within the world-systems of the Ten Quarters, who practice *nien-Fo*."[88] Shan-tao must have found some difficulty here, for he asks the question:

> Whoever cultivates all the practices and just directs them toward rebirth, will be reborn: why is it then that the rays [emanating] from the Buddha, universally illumining, only embrace those who practice *nien-Fo*? What does this mean? Answer: it means three things:
>
> In the first place it clarifies [that there is] a condition of intimate relationship [*ch'in-yuan*]: when sentient beings start practicing, whenever they orally invoke the Buddha, the Buddha hears them; whenever they worship and honor the Buddha, the Buddha sees them; whenever in their mind they practice *nien-Fo*, the Buddha knows it. When sentient beings keep the Buddha in their remembrance, he also keeps them in his remembrance. If these three actions are not separated, then they are called the condition of intimate relationship.
>
> Secondly it clarifies [that there is] a condition of closeness [*chin-yuan*]: if sentient beings wish to see the Buddha, then the Buddha, in response to their wish, appears in front of their eyes. This is called the condition of closeness.
>
> In the third place it clarifies the dominant condition [*tseng-shang-yuan*]: when sentient beings praise and are attentive [to the Buddha] [*ch'eng-nien*], their guilt of many *kalpas* is wiped out. At the moment of death, the Buddha himself with his holy assemblage will go out to welcome and receive them. Since no evil *karma* thus binds them anymore and cannot present any obstacle, therefore it is called the dominant condition.
>
> Although all other kinds of practice are positively good, if they are compared with the *nien-Fo*, there is absolutely no comparison possible! Therefore passage after passage of the sutras broadly praise the meritorious power of *nien-Fo*: the Longer Sutra, when describing the forty-eight vows, only clarifies that through the singleminded *nien* of Amita's name one will obtain rebirth; further, the Shorter Sutra [clarifies] that through the singleminded *nien* of Amita's name from one day to seven days one will obtain rebirth. Further, the innumerable Buddhas of the Ten Quarters testify that this is honestly [true] and not false. Finally, the sections on *ting* and *san* of this sutra [the *Kuan-ching*], only point out that through singleminded *nien* of [Amita's] name, one will be reborn. There is thus more than one text to prove [my thesis] and herewith the extensive explanation of *nien-Fo-samādhi* is finished.[89]



From this text again it is obvious that Shan-tao does not limit his *nien-Fo* to a mere oral recitation of the name. If the practice of *nien-Fo* is extolled above all other actions, it is a *nien-Fo* in the sense of *Buddhānusmrti*, which manifests itself through oral invocation and worship, but is basically an action of the mind. Even the testimony Shan-tao adduces from the scriptures shows that after all oral invocation is rather secondary, and is only meritorious inasfar as it is produced from a concentrated mind, as all the scriptures have stated.

The same conclusion can be drawn from Shan-tao's commentary on the practice of the six *anusmrti*: "The so-called *anusmrti* of Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha*, the *anusmrti* of *śīla, tyāga,* and *devatā,* correspond with the above third kind of merit: the significance of Mahāyāna.[90] *Nien-Fo* means singleminded attentiveness (*chuan-nien*) . . . to the meritorious achievements of Buddha Amita performed by oral action, by bodily action, and by mental action, and similarly to [the achievements of] all the other Buddhas."[91] That *nien* here is not considered oral invocation is obvious. Its object extends to all the merits realized by Amita and other Buddhas. The same action of *nien* further comprises the *dharma*, the *sangha*, the precepts, and so on,welcome datacomp . . . which are certainly not objects of oral invocation but of attentiveness or mental consideration.

In his commentary on the Lowest Level of rebirth, Shan-tao necessarily has to be more explicit, since the sutra text itself clearly recommends the practice of oral invocation. Referring to the upper grade, Shan-tao asks the following question:

> Why is it that if one hears [the titles of] the twelve divisions of the canon, only the guilt of one thousand *kalpas* is wiped out, whereas, if one calls (praises) the Buddha only once (*ch'eng-Fo yi-sheng*) the guilt of five million *kalpas* is wiped out?[92] *Answer*:

> The hindrances of "sinners" are very serious; add to this that they are pressed by the pangs of death. Although a virtuous man explains many scriptures, the receiving mind is unsettled and distracted. Because of this mental dissipation, the removal of guilt is rather limited. On the other hand, the name of the Buddha is one. It has the ability to absorb distractions and to settle (concentrate) the mind. If [in such conditions] someone teaches the right *anusmrti* (*cheng-nien*) and how to call the name (*ch'eng-ming*), then, because the mind is strong, the guilt of many *kalpas* can be released.[93]

If Shan-tao accepts oral invocation as a device of salvation, the invocation has to be correctly performed. From the latter quotation it is obvious that name invocation has to be conditioned by right *anusmrti*, which supposes mental concentration. This is again stressed a few lines later: "When the practitioner correctly calls the name [of Amita], that Buddha will immediately send a group of created [bodies], (*hua-hsiang*),[94] who in response to the invocation will appear in front of him."[95] These created bodies will next praise the practitioner, but, says Shan-tao,

> the words of praise which the practitioner hears, viz. "we come to welcome you." only refer to his merit of calling the Buddha (*ch'eng-Fo*); they do not relate to his hearing of the sutra [-names]. Indeed, looking up to the intention of the Buddha's vows, they only urge one to make the right *anusmrti* and to call the name (*nien-Fo ch'eng-ming*). Even if one at the last moment wants to be reborn, still it cannot be gained through confused and scattered action! When this sutra and other texts in passage after passage broadly extol and urge one to call the name, then, it must be that this is an important benefit. One should know that![96]

When Shan-tao comments on the middle grade of the Lowest Level, there is almost no word referring to the present question. In the discussion of the lower grade of the Lowest Level, some additional light is thrown on it. When the pains of agony oppress the evildoer, a compassionate teacher consoles him and teaches him to perform *nien-Fo (Buddhānusmrti)*. However, in his condition it is impossible to practice *nien-Fo-ming*; then the teacher changes his method and urges him to recite orally the name of Amita (*k'ou-ch'eng Mi-t'a ming-hao*). If the invocations, whatever their number, are uninterrupted, the guilt of many *kalpas* will be wiped out and a golden flower, symbolizing Buddha Amita, will appear in welcome.[97]



Here Shan-tao clearly distinguishes between two practices. The better one is *nien-Fo*, also called *nien-Fo-ming*; the other, less recommendable but still efficacious, is to recite the name of Buddha orally (*k'ou-ch'eng ming-hao*). This is the passage in which the distinction is made most clearly. All other passages which are not so clear should be interpreted in this light.

To conclude, when Shan-tao enumerates the five right practices, he affirms that they are all based on the three Pure Land sutras. However, whereas worship and chanting are auxiliary practices, only *nien-Fo* is the right and determining action, infallibly leading to rebirth and the state of nonretrogression. The *nien-Fo* practice comprehends various aspects: hearing and calling the name, meditating on Amita. Each of these leads to rebirth if one condition is fulfilled, singleminded attentiveness, which Shan-tao in another context explains as performed from within the threefold mind: absolute sincerity, deep faith, and a true desire to be reborn.

The oral invocation is not the most recommended form of *nien-Fo*. It is, in contrast with the two Great Gates, merely the "back door" to Sukhāvatī. However, if the listed former conditions are fulfilled, rebirth is certain. Because the vows of Amita are so powerful, even lifelong evildoers have a chance to be reborn in Sukhāvatī.

From this long discussion, it once more becomes evident that Shan-tao followed a double standard. Those of weak faith are attracted to rebirth by sincere invocation of Amita's name, and the more fervent disciples are encouraged to perform better. Both ethical conduct and meditation (according to the *kuan* method) are a higher and more perfect form of spiritual practice.

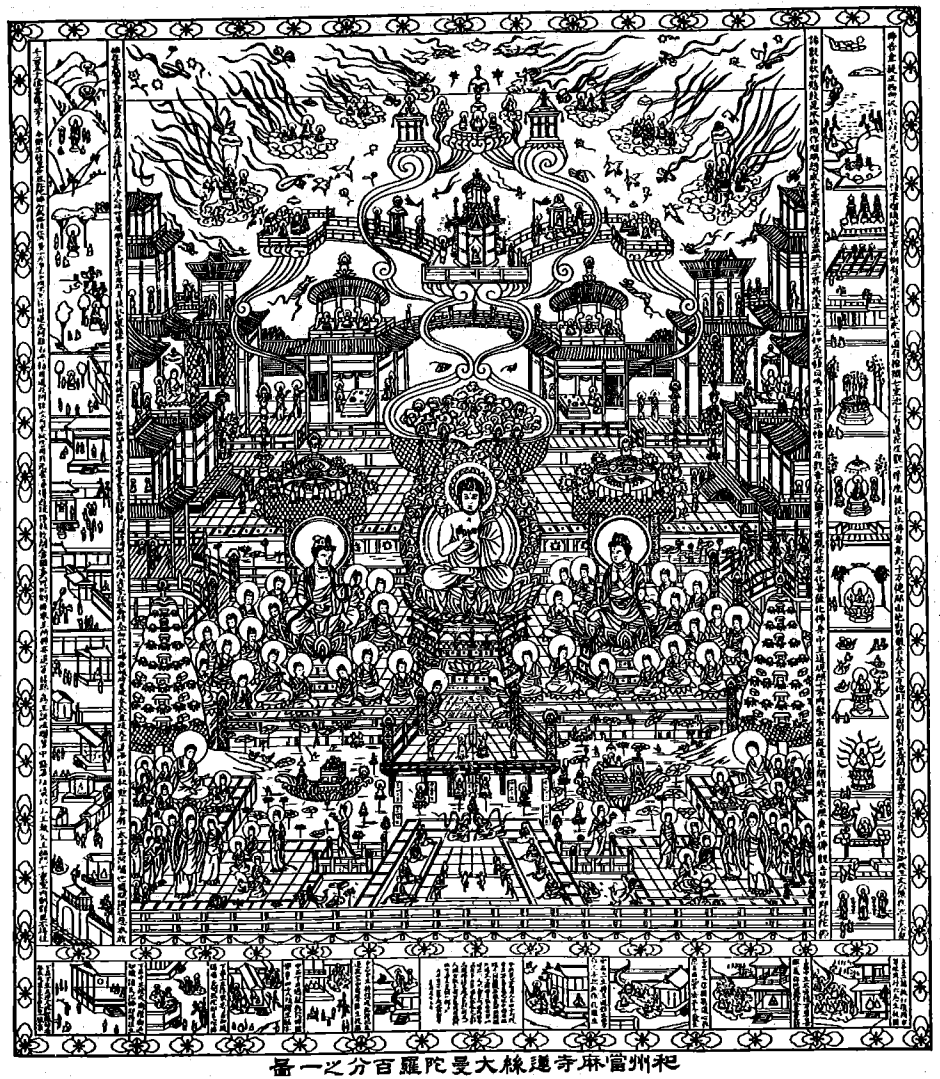


Figure 8
Drawing of Amita's Paradise, based on the Taima mandala (in Japan).
This mandala is mentioned in Ch. 3 (meditation on
the sun-disk). The small side panels all around the paradise
represent the *Kuan-ching* story.
Starting from top right (down), there are 16 panels:
16 meditation exercises recommended in the sutra.
From top left down are illustrations of the introductory part of the
sutra: Vaidehī's story and the Buddha's instruction.

# CHAPTER 9

## *Rebirth in Sukhāvatī*

In previous chapters some references to rebirth have already been made: in Chapters 6 and 7, the major methods to obtain rebirth in Amita's Land, meditation and nonmeditative action, were thoroughly discussed. Besides these two major gates, oral invocation of Amita's name (Chapter 8) was characterized as a "back door" entrance. In Chapter 5, Amita's Land was said to be of *sambogha* nature, but still within the reach of ordinary beings. This controversial matter has to be considered now in greater detail. This chapter will be devoted to the questions which naturally flow from these previous discussions: Who is "destined" to be reborn? Who is excluded from rebirth? Is immediate rebirth indeed possible, or do the so-called Pure Land practices only result in planting a seed, which will in the remote future produce its result of rebirth? These questions seem to have been very central in Chinese Pure Land thought, and hotly debated by teachers of various affiliations throughout the Sui-T'ang era. Shan-tao's contribution was to clarify the obscurities which "other teachers" had caused through their fallacies and to establish for good the right principles of Pure Land thought and practice.

There is, however, a more fundamental question, which does not concern Shan-tao's thought directly and was in all probability self-evident for him as well as for most Mahāyāna Buddhists: the bare principle of rebirth as such. Indeed, (re)birth in the Pure Buddha Land of Amita, or in any other Buddha Land for that matter, did not belong to the most ancient ideals of Buddhism. As has been explained in Chapter 7, a Buddhist householder could hardly aspire to arhatship and *nirvāna*, but by taking the Triple Refuge and observing the appropriate rules of ethics, he could hope for a happy rebirth in the *deva* worlds. Rebirth in the Buddha Lands became subsequently more attractive, since rebirth in the *deva* worlds was not leading to the ultimate goal of *nirvāna* but merely meant a pleasant interlude within the cycle of *samsāra*.

Though all Mahāyānists accepted the general principle of rebirth in the pure Buddha Lands, they disagreed considerably with regard to the practical applications of the principle. This will now be further investigated. In a preliminary section the relevant data from the Pure Land sutras will be briefly analyzed, and then Shan-tao's views will be more closely discussed.

## REBIRTH ACCORDING TO THE PURE LAND SUTRAS

The Shorter Sutra is rather modest with regard to the rebirth of those who fulfill the necessary conditions (see Chapter 8). Buddha Amita, "surrounded by an assembly of disciples and followed by a host of Bodhisattvas, will stand before them at their hour of death, and they will depart this life with tranquil minds. After their death they will be born in the world Sukhāvatī . . ."[1] There is no distinction of groups or modes of rebirth, no indication as to how beings are reborn there.

The Longer Sutra is more detailed; there is also some noticeable growth of ideology.[2] First of all, since women are excluded from rebirth, which means that they become male at the moment of rebirth,[3] all persons dwelling in Sukhāvatī are male and are born by sudden transformation from lotus flowers, since procreation, as happens in this world, is impossible there. According to Inagaki, the symbollism of the lotus (*padma*) as expressing birth was chosen because the lotus is somehow associated with procreation, in that it "represents purity and symbolizes, among other things, the female sexual organ."[4]

The Chinese versions of the Longer Sutra, as seen above in Chapter 8, clearly distinguish between three groups of rebirth: the first group after being welcomed by Amita will be reborn in Sukhāvatī "through transformation (*hua-sheng*) from (within) a lotus flower on [the surface of the] seven-jeweled lakes. They receive a body and grow up spontaneously."[5] Those of the second group are also reborn in the Pure Land, except if they have fostered doubts about Amita and rebirth. In that case, they are reborn spontaneously (*tzu-jan*) in a seven-jeweled palace on the borderland of Sukhāvatī, where they dwell for five hundred years. They are also born by transformation and grow up spontaneously.[6] Persons of the third group are reborn in Sukhāvatī, unless they have doubted about the reality of rebirth. In that case, once again they are reborn in the borderland jewel palace.[7]



In the English text, based on a late Sanskrit original, the description of the three modes of rebirth is separated from the text about those of little faith. "Those Bodhisattvas . . . who . . . entertain doubt about being born in the world Sukhāvatī, and with that thought amass a stock of merit, for them there is the dwelling within the calix. Those, on the contrary, who are filled with faith, and being free from doubt, amass a stock of merit . . . they, being born miraculously, appear sitting cross-legged in the flowers of the lotus."[8]

There is a clear difference between the mentioned Chinese translations and the Sanskrit text. The former all express the view that beings (of any of the three groups) are reborn from a lotus flower in the jewel lakes, whereas doubters are born in a jewel palace, where they have to wait five hundred years. In the Sanskrit version, all beings are born from a lotus, but whereas the sincere believers are sitting cross-legged on the lotus right from the beginning, the doubters are found enclosed within the flower and stay in that situation for five hundred years. In other words, all are reborn within Sukhāvatī, and not in some border territory, but the condition is not the same for all.

It appears that the *Kuan-ching*—in that respect—has a closer affiliation with the Sanskrit version of the Longer Sutra: among the nine modes of rebirth those of Lowest Level (the three lower grades) are also described as enclosed within a lotus flower for a lengthy period of time. However, there is a difference between the two sutras. The *Kuan-ching* relegates evil persons to the inferior modes of rebirth if they have sincerely converted themselves; doubters seem to be excluded altogether. In the (Sanskrit) Longer Sutra, as well as in the Chinese texts, the long stay within the lotus is said to be the fate of doubting persons, who otherwise have cultivated many good roots. If the two sutras are compared on that point, they seem to teach the exact opposite: merits but weak faith (doubt) in the Longer Sutra are contrasted with demerits or sinful life but sincere faith (no doubt) in the *Kuan-ching*. Similarly, the Longer Sutra excludes those from rebirth who have committed the five "deadly sins" or who have slandered the *dharma*, whereas the *Kuan-ching* gives even those evil persons a chance if they entrust themselves to Amita and foster no doubts. In the Longer Sutra (as in the Shorter

Sutra) meritorious achievements are most important. At a later stage of Pure Land development, faith has become the most essential condition for rebirth, although good works are still highly recommended and considered to be the normal way to be reborn. However, they are not unconditionally required anymore.

If the assumptions about the interpolations in the present text of the *Kuan-ching* are correct, it appears that emphasis on faith in Amita, especially at the moment of death, did not belong to the original stratum of the sutra. The change of emphasis seems to have come from a more popular trend in Buddhism.

What are the nine modes of rebirth in Sukhāvatī according to the *Kuan-ching*? The question has been answered already partially in Chapter 7, but now the particular ways and the circumstances in which rebirth is obtained have to be further explored.

*Highest Level*

*Highest Grade* Amita and his two Bodhisattvas together with numberless created Buddhas will go out in welcome and offer a diamond throne. In one fingersnap they will be reborn: the vision of Sukhāvatī is complete, the hearing of the *dharma* perfect, so that awakening is realized and the *anutpāda-dharma-ksānti* is obtained. They will pay homage to all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters and hear from them the prophecy of Buddhahood.

*Middle Grade* Amita and his two Bodhisattvas together with a great assemblage will go out in welcome and offer a throne of purple gold. In a short moment they will be reborn in the lakes of seven jewels. After one night the flower will unfold. After one week they will reach the state of nonretrogression and become destined to the *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. After one minor *kalpa* they will obtain *anutpāda-dharma-ksānti* and receive the prophecy in the presence of the Buddhas.

*Lowest Grade* Amita and his two Bodhisattvas together with numerous dependents will go in welcome and offer a golden lotus throne. They will be reborn in the lakes of seven jewels. After one day and night the flower will unfold. After a week they will start perceiving the Buddha; in the beginning the vision is not fully clear but after three weeks it will be clear and distinct. After three minor *kalpas* they will attain *śata-dharma-vidyādvāra*,[9] and be established in the stage of *pramāditā*.



*Middle Level*

*Highest Grade* Amita with his assemblage of bhiksus will go out in welcome, discourse on *duhkha, śūnyatā, anitya,* and *anātman,* and praise the practice of homelessness. Seated on a lotus throne, they will worship the Buddha and immediately be reborn in Sukhāvatī. The lotus will soon unfold and they will instantly obtain arhatship, the three insights,[10] the six supernatural powers,[11] and the *astavimoksa.*[12]

*Middle Grade* Amita with a retinue will come out in welcome and offer a seven-jeweled lotus throne. The lotus will close them in and they will be reborn in the jewel lakes of Sukhāvatī. After a week the lotus will unfold and they will obtain the first fruit of arhatship: *śrota-āpanna (sotāpanna)*. After half a *kalpa* they will becom arhats.

*Lowest Grade* These persons will hear about Amita's vows and his Buddha Land at the moment of death, and in a short moment they will be reborn in Sukhāvatī. After a week's time they will meet the two Bodhisattvas, hear the *dharma,* and rejoice. After one minor *kalpa*, they will obtain arhatship.

*Lowest Level*

*Highest Grade* The first group of evildoers will be welcomed by a created Buddha and created Bodhisattvas; seated on a jewel lotus throne, they will be reborn in the jewel lakes. After seven weeks the lotus will unfold. They will listen to the preaching of the *dharma* by the Bodhisattvas, and after the lapse of ten minor *kalpas* they will attain *śata-dharma-vidyādvāra*, and enter the first Bodhisattva stage.

*Middle Grade* This group will be welcomed by created Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In a short moment they will be reborn within a lotus flower on the lakes of seven jewels. The flower will unfold after six *kalpas*; the Bodhisattvas will preach the *dharma* and as a result they will produce the mind of attaining the supreme Path.

*Lowest Grade* This most inferior group will only see a golden lotus flower appear in front of them at the moment of death. Within an instant they will be reborn in Sukhāvatī, where they will remain enclosed in the lotus during twelve major *kalpas*. After

that long period, the flower will unfold; they will hear the *dharma* and immediately produce the *bodhi* mind.

In Chapter 7, when the various ethical requirements for rebirth on the nine levels were described, it seemed hardly possible to identify several of the nine groups with definite sectors of the Buddhist faith. However, with attention now focused on the final achievements realized in Sukhāvatī, some more identifications seem to be possible. The three groups of the Highest Level all aim to Buddhahood and Bodhisattvahood and are thus clearly indicated as belonging to Mahāyāna. Although at first it would seem that the highest and middle grades of the Middle Level are described as members of the *sangha* (either Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna), here it appears that they strive for arhatship and are therefore identifiable as Hīnayāna followers. The same is true of the lowest grade of the Middle Level, although it seems rather artificial to characterize them as Hīnayānists. Indeed, this group are laypeople who did not enter monastic life, and could perfectly well be Mahāyānists. In the Lowest Level of rebirth, the three groups described all strive ultimately toward full enlightenment and Bodhisattvahood, which implicitly makes them Mahāyāna converts, although it does not seem a priori impossible that there are also evildoers within the Hīnayāna group! However, these inferior beings are made to strive for Mahāyāna ideals because of their conversion to Amita. This reveals somehow the apologetic character of this interpolated section in the *Kuan-ching*.

In several cases, rebirth from a lotus flower in the jewel lakes of Amita's Land is explicitly cited; in other cases it seems to be implied. There is no indication at all of rebirth in a jewel palace at the frontiers of Sukhāvatī, but the effect is the same. The inferior levels of rebirth will have to wait a long time until they are able to openly enjoy the happiness of rebirth. Six and twelve *kalpas* are an enormously long waiting period, but since their original evil *karma* bound them to *samsāra* during eight million *kalpas*, they are still extremely lucky to have been saved by Amita's compassion at the moment of death.

Whatever the condition of their meritorious achievements was at the moment of rebirth, all the nine grades have one common characteristic. Amita's Land is a starting point for their final perfection: Buddhahood, Bodhisattvahood, or arhatship. There is no



danger anymore of falling backward; their progress on the Path, in the ideal circumstances of Sukhāvatī, is henceforth ensured.

## SHAN-TAO'S VIEWS ON REBIRTH

The first question to be answered is how Shan-tao identifies the nine grades of rebirth described in the *Kuan-ching*. Several commentators, understanding the *Kuan-ching* as a discourse about Bodhisattva practice, regarded the nine levels or at least the higher and intermediate levels as various stages of Bodhisattvahood and/or stages of arhatship. Shan-tao disagrees. The *Kuan-ching* is written for ordinary evil-ridden beings, who without the Buddha's help would have no chance to be emancipated from the continuous cycle of *samsāra*.

Shan-tao's refutation is given in part 1 of his commentary and consists of two arguments: first he explains the views of other teachers and refutes them ex absurdo; their views are contrary to common sense and to the basic conceptions of Buddhist doctrine. The second argument is directly drawn from the text of the *Kuan-ching*.

### *First Proof*

According to the other teachers, the nine grades of rebirth are explained as follows:

1. The *Highest Level*: The *upper grade* are Bodhisattvas on stages 4 to 7, because, so they argue, as soon as they arrive there [in Amita's Land] they obtain the *anutpāda-dharma-ksānti*. The *middle grade* are Bodhisattvas from stages 1 to 4 [exclusive], because after they arrive there, they wait one smaller *kalpa* before they obtain *anutpāda-dharma-ksānti*. The *lower grade* are Bodhisattva [candidates] from the *seed-nature* [*chung hsing*][13] to the first stage [exclusive], since after arriving there, they enter into the first stage after the lapse of three minor *kalpas*. All these three levels are positions attained by Mahāyāna saints.
2. The *Middle Level*: The *higher grade* are those who have attained the fruit of *anāgāmin*, since as soon as they arrive there, they obtain arhatship. The *middle grade* are

those who arrived at the inner [or higher] ranks of ordinary discipleship, since after arrival, they obtain the fruit of *śrota-apanna*. The *lower grade* are the ordinary people who practice goodness in secular life, who are weary of *duhkha* and seek deliverance. How do they know? Because after arrival, they wait one minor *kalpa* before obtaining *arhatship*. These three grades are only saints, etc., of Hīnayāna.

3. The *Lowest Level*: These are all ordinary people who just start out on the Mahāyāna [Path]: according to the seriousness of their transgressions, they are subdivided into three levels. They all stand on the same [low] point and though they desire for rebirth, they do not necessarily obtain it.[14]

Other commentators identified the various levels of rebirth with respectively, Bodhisattvas, arhats, and beginning practitioners of Mahāyāna because of their apparent confusion between the states of these various beings *before* and *after* their rebirth in Sukhāvatī. That the (secondary) author of the *Kuan-ching* attributes them high privileges after rebirth does not mean that these persons were entitled to them on the basis of their own merits only. In fact, the conditions enumerated for the various levels of rebirth do not even suggest a comparison with the much more demanding exertions of both Bodhisattvas and arhats. Shan-tao has rightly perceived this misconception, and basing his own views on a correct understanding of Bodhisattva and arhat discipline, he refutes the erroneous identifications of these other masters. His refutations based on the Buddhist doctrine are as follows:

1. [Regarding the Highest Level]: Above it was said that [the two highest grades] were identified [by those teachers] with Bodhisattvas from the first to the seventh *bhūmi*. [However], the *Hua-yen sūtra* says: "From the first *bhūmi* up to the *seventh* [inclusive], these are the physical bodies of the *dharmatā* (*fa-hsing sheng-shen*), the physical bodies of transformation (*pien-yi sheng-shen*), which are beyond the sorrows of transmigration. Speaking about their achievements, they have already completed two great *asamkhya kalpas* of practice in the double program of merits and wisdom [so that they realize] the *śūnyatā* of *ātman* and the *śūnyatā* of all *dharmas*. [Their realizations] are beyond thought or description. Their supernatural powers are self-existent (*svabhāva*), their transformations not limited by place. They are dwelling in *sambhoga* Lands, where they continuously hear *sambhoga* Buddhas discourse on the *dharma*. In their compassion they teach and convert the Ten Quarters, pervading everywhere in one moment."



Why then would they be anxious and even rely on Vaidehī, asking her to pray to the Buddha on their behalf to let them be reborn in Sukhāvatī? By this text I have proven my point. What the other teachers said, can it be anything but wrong?

[Further, with regard to the lower grade of the Highest Level] it was said above that they are Bodhisattva [candidates] from the seed-nature up to the first *bhūmi*. This is certainly not so! The sutra[15] says: "These Bodhisattvas are said [to be in the state of] nonretrogression. Although they are still physically within the condition of *samsāra*, they are not contaminated by it, just as swans or ducks [swim] in the water but are not wetted."

The *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* says: "Bodhisattvas belonging to this position cannot slide back because they have obtained the protection of two kinds of good and learned beings. What are these two? First, the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters; second, the great Bodhisattvas of the Ten Quarters. Because apart from their own three actions, other good *dharmas* are continuously added upon them, there is no backsliding, and therefore it is called the position of nonretrogression. Such bodhisattvas are also able to assume the eight aspects (*pa-hsiang*)[16] of a Buddha's life to teach and convert sentient beings."

With regard to their achievements, they have completed one great *asamkhya kalpa* of practice in the double program of merits and wisdom, and so possess supreme virtue.

Why then would they be anxious and even rely on Vaidehī, asking her to pray for rebirth? Through this text I have proven my point, and therefore we know that the view of these other teachers is wrong.

2. Next comes the refutation of [the wrong views with regard to] the three grades of the Middle Level. The other teachers say that the beings of the higher grade are those who have attained the fruit of *anāgāmin*. However, beings of that status are forever safe from the three unhappy ways, nor will they ever be born in the four evil destinations. Even if they create evil *karma* in their present life, it will certainly not produce any result. As the Buddha said: "persons within the four fruits will sit together with me on the coach of emancipation." Since they possess such power-

ful merits, once again, why should they be anxious and rely on Vaidehī, asking [through her] the path leading to rebirth? Since the Buddhas are full of compassion toward all those who suffer, their mind is bent on sympathy and attentiveness toward all those sentient beings who are forever drowning in the ocean of *samsāra*, and therefore exhort them to take refuge in the Pure Land. Although people who are drowning urgently need a saving hand, why should those who have reached the shore need anyone to succor them? This text proves my point, and therefore we know that the judgment of the other teachers is once again wrong. This will become clearer later on.[17]

The argument stops here and does not extend further to the Lowest Level of rebirth. That Shan-tao spends so many words to refute the views of the other commentators is understandable. It is a matter of the utmost importance for the followers of the Pure Land tradition. If the higher grades of rebirth in Amita's Land are only within the reach of saints (those who follow the hard path of self-discipline and self-exertion, either in Mahāyāna or in Hīnayāna), what future happiness is available for serious devotees in the world, who are not in the condition to leave their secular commitments altogether, but who are still willing to strive seriously for rebirth? The other teachers would be right in their exegesis if the *Kuan-ching* had been preached for the benefit of the monastic communities only, but this is not the case, as arguments taken from the text itself will further demonstrate.[18]

Shan-tao is very concerned about proving his point and starts his argument all over again in a different manner. He reviews each of the nine grades of rebirth and sees what the conditions are for the attainment of each of them according to the sutra, and then compares these conditions with the requirements asked from Bodhisattvas, etc., corresponding with the identifications made by the other teachers. However, since it would be too long to quote the whole argument, only the highest grade of the Highest Level will be quoted in full and his views on the subsequent levels summarized.

These other teachers say that the higher upper group are Bodhisattvas from stage 4 to 7. How does the *kuan* sutra say that? [It says]: "Three kinds of beings can obtain rebirth. Which three? First [are] those who keep the precepts and cultivate compassion. Second [are] those who do not observe the precepts or cultivate compassion, but who study and chant the Mahāyāna sutras. Third [are] those who neither observe the precepts nor chant the sutras, but who only practice the sixfold *anusmrti*.[19] These three kinds of people are singlemindedly diligent and are animated by a determined purpose in the performance of their actions. If they go on for one day and night or up to seven days and nights without interruption, directing their actions toward and wishing for rebirth, then, when their life is nearing the end, Buddha Amita together with a great following of created Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, will send forth rays of light and extend their hands [in welcome]. Within the moment of one fingersnap, they will be reborn in the Land. This text proves the point. Really, after the Buddha's *parinirvāna*, [even] for the most virtuous ones of the superior class of Mahāyāna, only a short period of time to perform good actions is demanded [the sutra says from one to seven days and nights]; however, a violent tempo is to be followed [the sutra asks for uninterrupted and singleminded effort!]. Still, how can these beings be identified with the above-mentioned saints? Indeed, the merits of Bodhisattvas from the fourth to the seventh *bhumi* are beyond thought and expression. How could [one hold that] relying on the goodness of one to seven days and nights they are welcomed with a flower throne and outstretched hands and reborn [in Sukhāvatī]?[20]



In a similar way Shan-tao refutes the views with reference to the middle and lowest grades of the Highest Level. The conditions for rebirth on these grades, as stipulated in the *Kuan-ching*, have nothing in common with the tremendous merits accumulated by the Bodhisattvas, so that such an identification is certainly wrong. The refutation of the views about the Middle Level follows a similar pattern. According to the sutra, the conditions for rebirth in the three grades of this level only refer to ordinary people (upper and middle), not to Hīnayāna saints; and to all ordinary people in the world (lower), not to ordinary beings who follow the Hīnayāna Path, for "when these persons spontaneously practice filiality in the world, it is not in view of emancipation that they walk on the road of filiality."[21]

With reference to the Lowest Level, Shan-tao disagrees with those teachers who hold that here the ordinary beginners of Mahāyāna are pointed out. Not at all, for these three lowest grades are only three groups of sinful people who have not even thought of following the Buddhist Path: "The persons of these three grades are lacking in the twofold good roots: They have nei-

ther [the good roots of] the Buddha's *dharma*, nor [those of] worldly goodness. They only know how to perpetrate evil."[22]

Shan-tao rightly bases his view on the *Kuan-ching* and goes on to say that each of these three groups would infallibly sink down into hell or into other evil conditions if it were not for their chance encounter with a good and compassionate counsellor at the moment of death. Because of their subsequent faith in and invocation of Amita, they are also reborn in Sukhāvatī. Shan-tao is right in denying these persons the status of beginners on the Path. It is only after their rebirth, and after a long waiting period within the lotus, that they become beginners, and start out for enlightenment.

### *Second Proof*

The first proof was based on Buddhist doctrine but could still be questioned, for after all, Buddhist teachings are interpretations of the scriptures. Shan-tao realizes this kind of relativity when he asks: "How can one know the correctness of the above refutation? It has not yet been made clear that the World-Honored One definitely [preached this sutra] for the benefit of ordinary people and not for saints. Judging from the viewpoint of human feelings it ought to be so; but also evidence from the sacred teaching is necessary."[23]

From the context of Shan-tao's commentary, it is clear that "sacred teaching" (*sheng-chiao*) means the authority of the scriptures, and especially of the *Kuan-ching*, whereas in the first proof evidence was based on Buddhist teaching, or Buddhist principles (*tao-li*) in general.[24] Shan-tao now quotes ten verses from the *Kuan-ching* to demonstrate the correctness of his interpretation:

> The defilements of sentient beings are serious, while their wisdom is shallow and shortsighted. The insight of the Buddha is comprehensive and profound: how would one dare presume to grasp it? [Therefore] I will now one by one quote from the Buddha's own words to give a clear demonstration. The textual evidence consists of ten verses [literally; sentences]:
>
> 1. I now proceed to fully expound them for thee in many parables, and thereby afford all ordinary persons (*fan-fu*) of the future who wish to cultivate these pure actions an opportunity for being born in the Land of Highest Happiness in the western quarter. [first proof][25]



> 2. I, Tathāgata, now declare the pure actions needful (for that Buddha country) for the sake of all beings (*yi-ch'ieh chung-sheng*) hereafter, that are subject to the misery [inflicted] by the enemy, i.e., passion. [second proof][26]
> 3. I, Tathāgata, now teach Vaidehī and also all beings (*yi-ch'ieh chung-sheng*) hereafter in order that they may meditate on the World of Highest Happiness in the western quarter. [third proof][27]
> 4. Vaidehī said to Buddha: "I can now see that land by the power of the Buddha, but how shall all those beings (*chu-chung-sheng teng*) who are to come after Buddha's nirvāna and who, being depraved and devoid of good qualities, will be harassed by the five worldly sufferings, how shall they see . . . the land of that Buddha?" [fourth proof][28]
> 5. At the beginning of the inspection of the sun [the text] says: "Buddha said to Vaidehī: Thou and all other beings (*chung-sheng*) besides ought to make it their only aim, with concentrated thought, to get a perception of the western quarter . . . All beings, if not blind from birth, are uniformly possessed of sight, and they all see the setting sun." [fifth proof][29]
> 6. In the inspection of the Land it is said: "Buddha said to Ananda: Thou shouldst remember the Buddha words of mine, and repeat this method of inspecting the land [of the Buddha country] for the sake of the great mass of the people (*yi-ch'ieh ta-chung*) hereafter who may wish to be delivered from their sufferings." [sixth proof][30]
> 7. In the inspection of the Flower-Throne it is said: Vaidehī said to Buddha: "I am now able, by the power of Buddha, to see Buddha Amitāyus together with the two Bodhisattvas. But how shall all the beings of the future (*chung-sheng*) obtain a vision [of Buddha Amitāyus and the two Bodhisattvas]?" [seventh proof][31]
> 8. The following is quoted from Buddha's answer: Buddha spoke to Vaidehī: "you and all sentient beings who wish to inspect that Buddha ought first to direct their thought as follows." [eighth proof][32]
> 9. The inspection of the Images says: Buddha spoke to Vaidehī: "Every Buddha Tathāgata enters into the mind of all sentient beings (*yi-ch'ieh chung-sheng*). Consequently when you have perceived Buddha, . . . " [ninth proof][33]

10. The chapters about the nine grades say one by one: "for all sentient beings." [tenth proof][34]

Although I have here above [quoted] ten different passages, still they all prove that the Tathāgata preached this sixteenfold method of inspection only for the [benefit of] sentient beings who are continuously drowning in the sea of mortality, and not for the sake of "Mahāyāna saints." If these quotations from the texts provide evidence, how could there be falsehood in [our viewpoint]?[35]

From these quotations it appears that the weight of the argument lies on the use of the compounds *yi-ch'ieh chung-sheng* or *chung-sheng* (used seven or eight times) and *fan-fu* (occurring only once). The sutra emphasizes that the discourse was given by the Buddha for the benefit of ordinary beings of the future generations, who would be living after the Buddha's *nirvāna*. Shan-tao selects these verses in which the expressions "*sentient beings*" or "*ordinary beings*" are explicitly used, but he neglects to argue from a broader perspective, which would also be more convincing. Indeed, Shākyamuni holds this whole discourse upon the request of Vaidehī, who is not a saint herself, but an ordinary person living in the world. She herself recognized her sinfulness before the Buddha, and in view of the fact that she had previously cooperated with her husband, King Bimbisāra, in an attempt to kill their son Ajātashatru right at the moment of his birth,[36] there is a serious indication that she was not what one would call a "saint." Furthermore, the sutra explicitly states that she is only an ordinary person. Just before starting his instructions on the methods of inspection, the Buddha addresses the queen as follows: "Thou art but an ordinary person (*fan-fu*): the quality of thy mind is feeble and inferior."[37] At first it seems astonishing that Shan-tao does not quote this passage to strengthen his thesis, but his commentary on the passage makes clear why he does not:

The queen is an ordinary person and not a saint; because she is not a saint, she puts her hope exclusively in the invisible help of the spiritual power [of the Buddha].[38] Although she obtained a distant vision of that Land, this only means that the Tathāgata is afraid that sentient beings would foster delusions [if] he said that the queen is a saint and not an ordinary person. If doubts arise, one would become nervous and weak. However, in fact Vaidehī is a Bodhisattva and falsely manifests an "ordinary body." We, sinful persons, have no way to compare [with her]. In order to dispel these doubts, therefore [the text] says: "You are an ordinary person."[39]



This interpretation is not only doubtful, but also surprising, when considering Shan-tao's overall understanding of the *Kuan-ching*. If he had taken the text as it was, without looking for hidden meanings, his thesis would have been much stronger. Now he weakens his position considerably, for if Vaidehī must be considered a Bodhisattva, in other words, a saint, the viewpoint of Shan-tao's rivals becomes more acceptable.

It is not clear why Shan-tao chose this interpretation when he had an excellent opportunity to prove his point more powerfully. Perhaps it was a concession to those "other teachers" like Hui-yuan and Chih-yi, who said that Vaidehī was actually a great Bodhisattva, since she received the fourth grade of *ksānti*.[40]

After considering Shan-tao's arguments in favor of identifying the nine grades of rebirth with "ordinary beings," not with "saints," a further consideration of these two terms is necessary. In general, it may be said that "saint" (*sheng-jen*) "is the opposite of the *fan-jen*, common, or unenlightened man,"[41] who is the person who has not "seen" the four Noble Truths of Buddhism and, because of his unenlightened attitude, produces *karma* that binds him forever to the cycle of *samsāra*.[42] The Buddhist "saint, holy person, noble person" is the one who has realized *prajñā*.[43] Four groups of Buddhist "saints" are recognized: arhats, pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. Their common characteristic is that they have reached their ideal status through self-effort, without reliance on the power of others. In the Pure Land system, as was said previously, two ways of reaching emancipation are distinguished: the Holy Path and the Pure Land Path. The former is the heroic Path of Bodhisattva discipline, whereas the latter consists in reliance upon the vows and assistance of Buddha Amita and is the only method available to the unenlightened sinful man in the age of decay. It is for the benefit of such persons, says Shan-tao, that Shākyamuni revealed the *kuan* sutra, thus offering them a practical way of reaching Amita's Pure Land, in which they will be enabled to strive for perfect sainthood.

Once his position about the identification of the nine grades of rebirth has been clarified, Shan-tao goes on to refute another misconception about rebirth, already mentioned in Chapter 5. This is the view of the She-lun School, which holds that ordinary persons

cannot be immediately reborn in Amita's Land but through their practice of *nien-Fo* produce a condition for rebirth at a later time.

Shan-tao's refutation is included in the first part of his commentary and follows immediately after his demonstration that the *Kuan-ching* was intended for the common man. The title of this subsection is "thorough explanation of *pieh-shih-yi*."[44] The Sanskrit compound is *kālāntarābhiprāya*.[45] The attack made by the She-lun teachers against immediate rebirth in Sukhāvatī was certainly dangerous, since it could easily discourage the Pure Land practitioners and undermine the foundations of their belief. Shan-tao realized this danger and established the right principles according to which *pieh-shih-yi* should be interpreted.

1. The *śāstra*[46] says: "If somebody [practices the] *nien* of Buddha Prabhātaratna,[47] he will immediately attain [the stage of] nonretrogression from the supreme *bodhi*."[48] Generally speaking, *bodhi* signifies "Buddha-fruit" (*Fo-kuo*);[49] it is also the "essential reward" (*cheng-pao*). In order to become a Buddha, the principles of Buddhism prescribe the perfection of the myriad practices: only then can [Buddhahood] be surely realized. How then can one through the one practice of *nien-Fo* expect realization [of Buddhahood]? This is absurd![50]

Although evidence has not yet been given, still among the myriad practices there truly is this one [unique] practice [sufficient for realization]. How do we know? The *Hua-yen sūtra* says: *Bhiksu* Gunamegha said to Sudhāna: "Among the sea [immense number] of *samādhis* [available] in Buddhism, I only know this single practice, the so-called *nien-Fo-samādhi*." Proven by this text, how can one deny that there is a unique practice? Even if one [only follows] this single practice one will never slide back again to the ocean of *samsāra* till Buddhahood is realized. Therefore the expression "nonretrogression" is used.

*Question*: If this is true, [how is it that] the *Lotus sūtra* says: "As soon as one says '*Namo* Buddha,' one has already started on the Buddha-path [*ch'eng-Fo tao*] and responsively will in the end realize [full] Buddhahood." What is the difference between these two texts? [i.e., the latter one and the above passage from the *She-lun-śāstra*].

*Answer*: When the *śāstra* says, "to praise the Buddha,"[51] [it means that] one wants for his own sake to realize the Buddha fruit. When, [however] the sutra says, "to praise the Buddha," it is intended for the ninety-five classes of non-Buddhist heretics.[52] Indeed, among the non-Buddhists there is nobody who praises the Buddha. If they are made to praise the Buddha just once, they immediately are within the realm of the Buddha path. Therefore [the text] says: "in the end . . ."



2. The *śāstra* says: "If a person only because he produces the vow to be reborn in Sukhāvatī . . ."[53] The commentators of the past have misunderstood the meaning of the *śāstra* and, wrongly quoting the lowest grade of the Lowest Level [of rebirth, according to the *Kuan-ching*], have identified the former with the latter,[54] who do not immediately obtain rebirth.[55] [They are, according to those commentators,] comparable to one piece of gold which will become a thousand pieces, but only after many days. It is impossible that it becomes a thousand pieces in just one day. [They say that] to praise the Buddha ten times is just the same: it only produces a cause for a "long-distance" life. For this reason they do not obtain rebirth immediately.

However, I declare that the Buddha spoke for the benefit of future ordinary persons, wishing to make them renounce evil and praise the Buddha. It would be deceiving talk to declare that there is rebirth, whereas in fact there is not. This is what is understood by "[rebirth] at another time" [*pieh-shih-yi*]. [Here follows the refutation of this theory.]

Why does the *Amita-sūtra* [Shorter Sutra] say: "the Buddha said to Śāriputra: If virtuous men or women hear speak about Buddha Amita, and in response hold on to his name one day or even seven days and with singlemindedness wish to be reborn, then, when their life is nearing the end, Buddha Amita with a multitude of holy beings will go out and welcome them to rebirth"? In a later passage [it says]: "The Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, innumerable as the sand of the Ganges, all produced the appearance of broad and long tongues which universally covered three thousand major chiliocosms, and pronounced the following authentic words: all of you sentient beings should receive in faith this sutra, which all the Buddhas have protected and cared for."

As to the words "protected and cared for," they refer to the above passage "to call the name of the Buddha[56] from one to seven days."

If we thus have this holy teaching as clear evidence, how is it then possible that so many practitioners of the present time do not understand its meaning, but accept with belief the arguments of ordinary Hīnayānists, whereas the sincere words of the Buddhas are perverted and falsified? What a pity! How is it possible to pronounce such intolerable statements?

> Although I would hope and wish that all sentient beings who desire rebirth would critically examine [this question] for themselves, I still prefer to attack those who in the present time have a wrong belief in the Buddha's words, rather than to hold on to the Bodhisattva theory as to a guiding compass. If one holds on to that, one deceives oneself and misleads others.[57]

This point of the controversy appears to be an eloquent example of how contradictory viewpoints in Buddhist doctrine can both be vindicated from Buddhist scriptures. According to the She-lun School, following a rather rational train of thought, rebirth in Sukhāvatī can only be the result of many lives of energetic effort, and is therefore attributed to self-power. However, Shan-tao's viewpoint can be more convincingly substantiated from the scriptures, and especially the Shorter Sutra, quoted by him. The Pure Land School, with its devotional approach of faith in and reliance on the merits and promises of Amita, rejects the rational line of thought, and holds that the Buddha's words have to be taken seriously. The solution of this dilemma lies in the acceptance that there is evolution in Buddhist doctrine, of which the T'ien-t'ai distinction between various stages of teaching was a successful method to harmonize the various and often contradictory affirmations of Buddhist teaching.[58]

After a first attack Shan-tao goes on to prove his point from a different angle. His indignation has quieted down and the following reasoning is more dignified.

> *Question*: Why would one start practicing, if it is said that there is no rebirth? *Answer*: If somebody desires to be reborn, both action and vow ought to be perfect; only then is rebirth possible. Now the present *śāstra* only speaks about making a resolve and does not talk about action. Why is that? Because "up to (or: as little as)" one *nien* cannot awaken the mind [to action].[59]
>
> *Question*: What is the difference in meaning between vow and action? *Answer*: As the sutra[60] says: "If there is only action, it is like an orphan and has no place to go. If there is only vow (or desire), it is void and has also no place to go." It is necessary that vow (desire) and action mutually support each other: then whatever one tries is going to be successful. It is for this reason that the *śāstra* just talks about making a resolve and does not mention action, so that consequently one cannot immediately obtain rebirth but merely produce the cause for rebirth in the remote future. This is the true significance.



> *Question*: If one has a wish (desire) [for rebirth], how can you say that he is not reborn? *Answer*: If someone hears other people say that the happiness in the Western Quarter is ineffable, he immediately wishes [to be reborn there], saying: "I also wish to be born there!" However, after pronouncing these words, there is no follow-up [or consistency]. Therefore this is called [mere] "wish." Now this *kuan sutra* says that the ten invocations contain ten wishes and ten actions all perfect and complete. In what respect "perfect and complete"? In that "*na-mo*" signifies "to take refuge," which also [implicitly] means to make the resolve for rebirth. Further, in that "*A-mi-t'a-fo*" refers to the actions involved. Because of this meaning [we know that] rebirth is certainly possible.[61]

By all means Shan-tao wants to convince his readers that immediate rebirth in Sukhāvatī is no illusion. After an emotionally loaded attack against his opponents, he tries to prove the legitimacy of his view in a more "rational" way, through the authority of the scriptures. Conceding one point to the She-lun teachers, that both vow and action have to be perfect in order to reach Sukhāvatī, he claims that the Pure Land practice of the "ten *nien*," as recommended in the *Kuan-ching*, does truly contain the perfection of both vow and action. However, the evidence drawn from the interpretation of the formula "*Namo A-mi-t'a-Fo*" is apparently very shaky and may only convince those who already believe in rebirth. However, Shan-tao has one more proof up his sleeve, which seems to make more sense.

> Coming once more back to the *śāstra*, [it recommends] to praise Buddha Prabhātaratna in order to strive for the Buddha fruit, which is the "essential reward." On a lower level, if one only produces the vow and strives for rebirth in the Pure Land, this is the "accidental reward." One essential, and one accidental—how can they be considered identical? Indeed, the essential reward is hard to expect: even if one is perfect in one action, one has not reached complete perfection. [On the other hand,] the secondary reward is easy to gain, although it does not mean that by merely wishing one can enter [into the Pure Land].
>
> For instance, for border people it is easy to become naturalized, but hard to become rulers. Those in our days who wish to be reborn [in Amita's Land] are all like naturalized sentient beings. Is that not easy? Either through the superior practice of a whole lifetime, or through the inferior practice of only ten

*nien*, because of the power of the Buddha's vows, nobody will fail to be reborn. Therefore it is called easy.[62]

Shan-tao has pointed out that the basic reason why the She-lun people opposed the Pure Land view is perhaps a misunderstanding concerning the Pure Land's true teaching. The latter does not promise an easy and immediate "full enlightenment," or Buddhahood, but certain and immediate rebirth in an ideal Land where Buddhahood will be the ultimate and infallible result, even if it takes millions of *kalpas* to reach this result. If this is correct, it illustrates the painful reality that one's beliefs and conceptions are often misunderstood, misrepresented, or even falsified in order to be condemned. No wonder that Shan-tao was thoroughly upset about the whole matter and did not always succeed in controlling his disappointment and indignation.

### *Vasubandhu's Gāthās*

There is one final question to be discussed with regard to rebirth: the correct understanding of a few versus in Vasubandhu's *gāthās* in praise of Sukhāvatī, which has become a topic of debate among the Chinese commentators.[63] Before attempting an interpretation of Vasubandhu's verses, it will be useful, if not necessary, to compare the views of several Chinese writers: T'an-luan , Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, Chia-ts'ai, and finally Shan-tao.

*T'an-luan* T'an-luan was the first to interpret Vasubandhu's *gāthās*. It is probable that his conversion to Pure Land Buddhism was occasioned when Bodhiruci handed him a copy of this recently translated text ca. 529–530.[64] In his subcommentary on Vasubandhu's *Discourse on Sukhāvatī* (or *WSL*), T'an-luan explains the controversial verses:[65]

> These two couplets designate the adornment of the Method (Gate) of the Great Principle [Mahāyāna], [achieved] through the merits [of Dharmākara].[66] "Method" (Gate) means the thorough understanding of the Great Principle [Mahāyāna]. Just as in the case of men-built cities, one arrives at the gate and thereupon enters, similarly if someone obtains rebirth in Sukhāvatī, he thereupon [achieves] the Method (Gate) of the Great Principle [Mahāyāna].
>
> Why did the Buddha originally formulate this vow? He saw that although in the world there are Buddhas Tathāgatas, sages, and saints, yet because of the defilements in the world, what is one is divided into three. Some raise the eyebrows to express criticism, others point and speak to express ridicule. Therefore, he pronounced the vow, saying: "May it be, that in my Land, all shall share that one-flavored Mahāyāna, and one-flavored equality, [so that] the seed of inferior roots be in no wise reborn there, and that even the names of women and deformed ones be banned from it."
>
> Therefore [Vasubandhu's *gāthās*] say: "Within the realms of good roots of Mahāyāna, [all are] equal; it lacks the despised names of women and sense-defective persons; those of Hīnayāna are not [re]born there."[67]



After this initial explanation, T'an-luan further clarifies his understanding of the verses. That he explains *erh-ch'eng* as definitely referring to the Two Vehicles (or Hīnayāna) is made clear from the subsequent question and answer: How is it possible that the Two Vehicles are excluded from rebirth (as the *gāthā* says), whereas there are three texts which clearly state that *śrāvakas* are reborn? T'an-luan tries in various ways to smoothe away the contradiction between these sutras and Vasubandhu's *śāstra*:

> The Pure Land Sukhāvatī does not responsively contain the Two Vehicles.[68] How can we say this? It is a fact of common experience that if there is a sickness, there is [also] a remedy. The *Lotus sūtra* says: "Because the Tathāgata Shākyamuni transcends the world of five defilements, he divides the One [Vehicle] into Three [Vehicles]." Since the Pure Land is not subject to the five defilements, it clearly lacks the Three Vehicles. The *Lotus sūtra* says: "What kind of liberation have these persons [called] *śrāvakas* attained? They have merely discarded false views and call that "liberation." These people indeed have not yet attained complete emancipation, since they have not yet attained "the Supreme Path" (*wu-shang tao*). Let us examine this more thoroughly: since arhats have not yet attained complete emancipation, they must necessarily be reborn. [However] they are not reborn within the Triple World. Besides the Triple World, there is no other place to be reborn than the Pure Land(s). They are called *śrāvakas* is because they come from other places [of previous existence] to be reborn here [in Sukhāvatī] and are called *śrāvakas* because of their original designation.[69]

In other words, when *śrāvakas* are reborn in Amita's Land, they are no longer called so, but since they were previously called

*śrāvakas*, the difficulty arising from contradictory statements in the texts is solved. This interpretation set the pattern for later commentators.

Tao-ch'o did not discuss the question in his *ALC*. But two commentators on the *Kuan-ching* besides Shan-tao have stated their viewpoints.

*Hui-yuan* Hui-yuan (from the Ching-ying monastery) writes in this manner:

> *Question*: In [Vasubandhu's] *Wang-sheng-lun*, it is said: 'Two kinds of *yānas* do not obtain rebirth;[70] why does this sutra [the *Kuan-ching*] proclaim that persons of the Middle Level who follow the Hīnayāna obtain rebirth?
>
> *Explanation*: Those who only perform the practices [as prescribed] in Hīnayāna do not obtain rebirth in the true place of Bodhisattva Amita. Only if somebody, at the moment of death, produces the *bodhi* mind and relies on it, and [thus] sows the Mahāyāna seed, can he obtain rebirth.[71] This sutra considers it from the viewpoint of the beginning and [therefore] says that persons of the Middle Level who follow the Hīnayāna obtain rebirth.[72]

Hui-yuan, in order to save the trustworthiness of the two contradictory views, has made a subtle distinction. First of all, no one belonging to the two Hīnayāna groups (*śrāvakayāna* and *pratyekabuddhayāna*) can as such or formally be reborn in Amita's Land. But those who once were Hīnayānists and become Mahāyānists at the moment of death are producing a seed which results in rebirth. They are, however, not formally reborn as Hīnayānists.

Hui-yuan further asks why these "converts" to Mahāyāna, after being reborn in Sukhāvatī, are said to realize only Hīnayāna fruits. The explanation given is that they first were Hīnayāna followers, and only at the last moment turned to Mahāyāna. However, they will not remain there and will doubtlessly realize the Mahāyāna fruits in the end.[73]

Next, Hui-yuan tackles the problem of female rebirth:

> *Question*: Whereas the above *WSL* proclaims that neither women nor sense-defective persons are reborn, the *Kuan-ching* proclaims that both Vaidehī and her five hundred attendants are all reborn. What does that mean?



> *Explanation*: When the *śāstra* says that neither women nor sense-defective persons are reborn, it says so from the viewpoint of "later" [i.e., *after* rebirth has taken place, there are no such persons in Sukhāvatī]. Because those who are reborn in that Land receive a reward for their purity since they are free from desire, therefore there are no women; because the reward [manifested in] their bodies is most refined, therefore there are no sense-defective persons.[74]

Hui-yuan agrees that both groups of persons are eligible for rebirth; in this he follows the *Kuan-ching*. But, because of the authority of the *WSL*, he has to explain the difficulty of the controversial verses. He escapes the problem by shifting the interpretation, but most likely falsifies the original idea expressed in the *gāthās*.

*Chih-yi* Chih-yi's reasoning is similar to Hui-yuan's:

> *Question:* According to the *WSL*, the two vehicles do not obtain rebirth,[75] while this sutra [the *Kuan-ching*] says that Hīnayāna [followers] are reborn on the Middle Level. *Answer*: As a matter of fact, Hīnayānists are not reborn; they must at the moment of death produce the Mahāyāna [mind]; only then will they obtain rebirth.[76] Whereas the sutra speaks about *here and now*, the *śāstra* points to the beginning.[77]
>
> But if that is the case why do they realize the Hīnayāna fruits? It is because [although they produce the Mahāyāna mind at the moment of death], they have first to strive for Hīnayāna. After they arrive there [in Sukhāvatī] they hear about *duhkha, śūnyatā,* and *anitya* and obtain a basic understanding, so that they first realize the Hīnayāna fruits. Afterwards, however, they do not stick there, but of necessity turn toward Mahāyāna [fruits].[78]
>
> *Question:* According to the *śāstra* [the *WSL*] women and sense-defective persons are not reborn.[79] However, this sutra [the *Kuan-ching*] says that Vaidehī together with her five hundred attendants are all reborn. Explanation: When the *śāstra* maintains that neither women nor sense-defective persons are reborn, it speaks from the viewpoint of Sukhāvatī. Indeed, those who are reborn in that Land have cultivated pure roots and have cut off all desires. Therefore there are no women. Their roots are superior; therefore there are no persons with defective senses (roots). The sutra speaks from the viewpoint of the beginning [i.e., before actual rebirth], and therefore [says that] all those who possess a virtuous mind obtain rebirth.[80]

There is no essential difference between Chih-yi and his predecessor Hui-yuan. No new arguments have been brought forward. However, in another work, *Ching-t'u shih-yi lun*,[81] Chih-yi is more explicit in his exegesis. The promise made to Vaidehī and her attendants means that they will certainly be reborn, but not any longer as females. This agrees with one of the forty-eight vows of Dharmākara, expressed in the Longer Sutra: "If I become a Buddha and if all the women throughout the world systems within the Ten Quarters, who praise my name and despise their femininity, after they die are again born as females, then I renounce the supreme Enlightenment!"[82]

*Chia-ts'ai* Chia-ts'ai, in his *CTL*, also discusses the problem:

> *Question*: The *WSL* says: "Women and sense-defective persons and the two vehicles are not reborn."[83] Why is it then that these three groups of women, etc., also obtain rebirth?
>
> *Answer*: With regard to these three groups, there are reasons why they do not in fact obtain rebirth. If one does not belong to these three, one will certainly obtain rebirth. What are these three groups? First, in this world [i.e., this Sahā world] some persons are male, some are female. If one has sown a cause [to be born as] a female, one will certainly receive the reward of [being born as] a female. These persons, even if they cultivate the Pure Land actions, will still not be reborn [in Sukhāvatī], because in the Pure Land there are no women. This is [what is called] "determining action" [or *karma*], which nothing can change; indeed, it is hindrance of [past] *karma*. Secondly, with regard to those who are sense-defective, if somebody in this world has certainly sown a cause [to be born] blind, deaf, etc., he also cannot obtain rebirth, because the persons in the Pure Land all possess the thirty-two marks of a "great person." This also is hindrance of [past] *karma*. Thirdly, with regard to the "two vehicles." Those within the first three stages of arhatship,[84] and those who follow the path of partial [expedient] truth, sow a determining cause [to be born within] the two vehicles. They believe that there is neither Mahāyāna nor Pure Lands in the Ten Quarters. They also do not obtain rebirth, because they follow the two vehicles of the unenlightened method [i.e., Hīnayāna][85] and do not believe in the Buddhas and Pure Lands of the Ten Quarters. They are not willing to produce the vow [toward rebirth] and direct their actions [to it]. This is [what is called] determination toward Hīnayāna and hindrance of Mahāyāna. This is what the *śāstra* [WSL] clarifies as [three] kinds [of persons], or [three] kinds of determining *karma* [or action]. Only those who are free from these three kinds of determination are able to obtain rebirth.
>
> *Question*: If within this world, there are three kinds of determining *karma* [action], which do not allow for rebirth, why then does the *Kuan-ching* say that those who observe the five precepts, etc., will obtain rebirth, and once arrived there [in Sukhāvatī], hear the Four Noble Truths explained, and realize the fruit of arhatship? Is that not a kind of determination toward Hīnayāna?
>
> *Answer*: These persons are [in fact] not followers of the unenlightened method: they do believe in the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters and their Pure Lands; they produce the vow [toward rebirth] and direct their actions [to it]: [therefore] when they are reborn, they initially realize the fruit [of arhatship]; then, when the Buddha explains to them the *Lotus sūtra*, they turn their minds toward Mahāyāna.[86]



As this quotation shows, Chia-ts'ai is more rigorous in his interpretation of the enigmatic verses from the *WSL*. He does not make the distinction that the former writers made, that women and those with defective senses are not formally reborn, but are changed at the moment of rebirth. The most one can say is that this idea is perhaps implicit in his answer. However, with regard to the Hīnayāna followers, his solution is milder, although it is logically not very consistent. As his and others' comments on this question point out, a logically satisfying solution seems to be impossible if one wants to harmonize the two contradictory views.

Chia-ts'ai proves, however, to have an unusual and superior insight into another closely related question: How is it possible that "ten *nien*" at the moment of death are so effective as to induce rebirth in the Pure Land? Indeed, he says, "the evil *karma* of sentient beings is like a piled-up mountain,"[87] which hinders rebirth in Amita's Land, and cannot be removed by small merits! To this objection, Chia-ts'ai answers:

> The mind is the master of *karma*, the root which influences life. At the moment of dying the mind is like an eye able to concentrate all one's actions [*karma*]. If at the moment of death, the mind is evil, it can induce all evil *karma*, [with the result of] being reborn within an evil destiny. If, however, at the moment

of death the mind is good, it can induce all good *karma*, [with the result of] being reborn in a good destiny. It is as when a dragon becomes active, clouds follow. [So also] when the mind directs itself toward the West[ern Paradise], its *karma* also follows. This is what sutras and *śāstras* say.[88]

*Shan-tao* Finally, Shan-tao's interpretation of Vasubandhu's verses has to be analyzed. It belongs to part 1 of his commentary and is one of the final introductory questions that require his attention:

*Question*: Admitting that Buddha Amita and his Land are said to be of *sambhoga* nature, [it is also true that] *sambhoga dharmas* are of superior excellence, to which Hīnayāna saints can hardly reach. How then is it possible that ordinary, evil-defiled persons are able to enter [into Sukhāvatī]?

*Answer*: If one considers the hindrances of defilement to which sentient beings are bound, there is hardly reason to rejoice in their destiny. However, because of their reliance on the vows of Buddha [Amita], they can strengthen their condition, which enables all those within the five vehicles[89] to enter together [into his Land].

*Question*: If you say that ordinary persons and Hīnayāna saints are able to obtain rebirth, why then does Vasubandhu in his *WSL* say that "women and sense-defective persons [and] the two vehicles are not reborn"?[90] Since presently in that Land [of Amita] there appear to be [these] two vehicles, would you please clarify and explain the teaching of the *śāstra* with regard to this point.

*Answer:* If you only read the text without penetrating its principles, and moreover limit yourself through stupidity while cherishing illusions, how can there be a way for an awakening to break through? I will now quote from the Buddhist teachings to present clear evidence and dispel your feelings of doubt. What are they? [The evidence] is from the *Kuan-ching* [in the chapter on] the three grades [of rebirth] in the Lowest Level. How does one know? In the section about the highest grade [the sutra] says: "Some sentient beings often commit evil deeds but feel no repentance. These stupid people may, when the end of their life is near, encounter a good and learned teacher, who explains to them [the principles of] Mahāyāna and makes them praise Buddha Amita. While they are praising the Buddha, a created Buddha and Bodhisattvas appear in front of them, while a flower canopy of golden rays welcomes them [to be reborn] in that Land. After the flower has unfolded, Kuan-yin explains to them [the teachings of] Mahāyāna. As soon as these persons hear [the discourse] they produce the mind of [striving for] the supreme Buddha Path."[91]



At this point, there is some difficulty in following Shan-tao's reasoning. The argument is about the chances of rebirth for women and people whose sense organs are defective. The long quotation from the *Kuan-ching* has not proven anything with reference to the question. It rather goes back to the previous question concerning the rebirth possibility of ordinary persons. However, Shan-tao has not yet exhausted his whole range of proofs. But what now follows appears to be a truly Chinese way of demonstration and is almost wholly concerned with play of words (characters!) To understand the process, it is necessary to remember the enigmatic verses of Vasubandhu, especially the latter one: *er-ch'eng chung pu sheng*. Formerly some Chinese exegetes[92] played with the various meanings of *chung*, which can signify "a seed, a grain," or "a kind, a sort," or "to sow, to plant." What the Sanskrit originally expressed in these verses is unclear, but it is possible that *erh-ch'eng* did not refer to the "Two Vehicles" (Hīnayāna) at all but merely recapitulated "the two kinds" of people (women and sense-defective persons) mentioned in the preceding verse. *Chung* may also have had the same meaning (i.e., kind, group of . . .), so that the whole debate among Chinese commentators may have been a false one, due to an incorrect translation. At any rate, it is most interesting to see how Shan-tao continues and even brings to perfection the play of words with regard to *chung*. However, in a translation the flavor of the original text is greatly lost.

*Question:* What difference is there between "kind" (seed?) (*chung*) and "mind" (*hsin*)?

*Answer*: Merely speaking from the viewpoint of convenience, there is no difference in meaning.[93] When the flowers unfold, the bodies of these persons are pure and truly adequate[94] to hear the *dharma*; there is also no distinction of Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna. Merely through making them hear [the *dharma*] they immediately produce faith. Therefore, if Kuan-yin does not preach to them the Hīnayāna, but right away preaches Mahāyāna, as soon as they hear [the discourse] they greatly rejoice and forth-

with produce the mind of [striving for] the supreme Buddha Path. This is called: "the Mahāyāna kind arises" [*ta-ch'eng chung sheng*]; it is also called: "the Mahāyāna mind arises" [*ta-ch'eng hsin sheng*].

On the other hand, if Kuan-yin, at the moment when the flowers unfold, first explains Hīnayāna to them, as soon as they hear the Hīnayāna [teaching] they produce faith. This is called "the Hīnayāna kind arises" [*erh-ch'eng chung sheng*];[95] it is also called "the Hīnayāna mind arises."

So far it all refers to this grade [of rebirth].[96] The two lower grades are likewise. These three grades all "produce the mind" after they are born there. Exactly because they hear the Mahāyāna [teaching], therefore the "Mahāyāna kind" arises; because they did not hear the Hīnayāna [teaching], therefore "the Hīnayāna kind does not arise" [*erh-ch'eng chung pu sheng*]. Whoever talks about "kind," in fact points to the mind.[97]

Although Shan-tao's interpretation seems to be closer to poetry than to scientific exegesis, his point about the meaning of *chung* is quite acceptable. However, following in the footsteps of previous commentators, he explains *er-ch'eng* as referring to the two groups of Hīnayānists, whereas in the original they more likely referred to the two groups of persons not to be reborn: women and sense-defective persons. Shan-tao has few words about the meaning of this other verse: "Speaking about the meaning of 'women and sense-defective persons': [such people] are not over there [in Sukhāvatī]; therefore we may understand [the meaning of this verse]."[98]

It seems as if Shan-tao is not interested in the question and brushes it aside as obviously clear. If one accepts that in Amita's Land neither women nor persons with defective sense organs are to be found (as the Longer Sutra teaches), then there is no problem. Shan-tao seems to ignore the relevance of the whole matter, because what others had said before must have seemed to him a mere question of futile distinctions.

Shan-tao concludes this section as follows:

Further, with regard to the sentient beings of the Ten Quarters who cultivate the Hīnayāna precepts and actions and wish to be reborn [in Sukhāvatī], there is not a single obstacle and they all obtain rebirth. Only, once arrived there, they first realize the Hīnayāna fruits; after this realization, they turn right away toward Mahāyāna. Once turned toward Mahāyāna mind, they do not slide back to produce the Hīnayāna mind. That is called "the Hīnayāna-kind does not arise."

I have first explained [my views] with regard to the uncertain beginning,[99] and afterward with regard to what happens ultimately with the Hīnayāna fruits.[100] This should be clear now.[101]



To conclude, what is the relevance of Shan-tao's teaching concerning the questions of rebirth? The relevance is mainly of a pragmatic nature. Although buddhological principles are at the bottom of the controversy, here only the practical questions with regard to rebirth are of special concern.

First of all, the nine grades of rebirth in Amita's Land have nothing to do with Bodhisattva candidates. Their achievements are immensely greater when compared to the (rather simple) ethical and mental conditions prescribed for rebirth in the *Kuan-ching* (and the Sukhāvatī sutras). The nine levels are in fact various degrees of ordinary people, not saints.

Further, rebirth is believed to be immediately possible. This follows logically from the former point, and is based on the Pure Land sutras. The limitation made by She-lun teachers is based on an erroneous conception of the nature of Amita's Land. It is of truly *sambhoga* nature, but neither inferior in quality nor inaccessible for ordinary man. Otherwise, Amita's vows would be empty talk.

Finally, there is an exegetical question, elicited by Vasubandhu's enigmatic verses. The reason for confusion probably lies in an incorrect translation of the original text into Chinese or/and in the nature of Vasubandhu's writing: poetry (in translation) aggravated the difficulty. Shan-tao's viewpoint, similar to that of his predecessors but more sophisticated, is that women, persons with defective sense organs (blind, deaf, etc.), and followers of Hīnayāna are certainly eligible for rebirth, but once at the "other side" they lose these characteristics. Women are reborn as men, sense-defective persons recover a perfect body, and Hīnayānists are no longer Hīnayānists, since they realize the Mahāyāna fruits.

The question whether rebirth is in principle possible is not raised. This problem was apparently solved before the Pure Land teaching reached China. However, simple rebirth in Sukhāvatī (i.e., attainable by common people) had become questionable because of the restrictive interpretations of "other teachers."

Against them, Shan-tao vindicated what he regarded to be the true teaching of the Pure Land sutras, and it must be admitted that his interpretation is the correct one, that is, in accordance with those Pure Land texts.

# PART 3

# CHAPTER 10

# *Shan-tao's Significance*

In order to situate Shan-tao and his work within the context of the religious tradition of his time and of religious movements of all times, four different aspects will be developed in this final chapter. The first is the relationship of Shan-tao's teaching, especially his ethical doctrine, to particular aspects of Confucian ethics (e.g., filial piety and sincerity). In the second place, the sometimes presumed relationship between Shan-tao and Nestorian Christianity will be investigated. In the third place, attention will be drawn to the significance of Shan-tao in the context of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. And finally, from the viewpoint of comparative religion, it will be interesting to compare Shan-tao, a Buddhist "saint," with a saint from the Christian faith. Parallels to his method of visualization and invocation can be found in the Christian tradition.

## SHAN-TAO AND CONFUCIAN ETHICS

One of the major difficulties that any religion intent on propagation to other countries necessarily has to face is the way it comes to terms with native cultural values. As an example, the great stumbling block for Christianity in China during the period of the Jesuit presence was the question of the Chinese Rites. It was settled by Rome to the disadvantage of the Jesuit missionaries, and Christianity probably lost a unique opportunity for winning over a large number of Chinese intellectuals to the Christian faith. When, much earlier, Buddhism spread to China and gradually established itself as a major faith, the Buddhist missionaries and the locally recruited clergy, in one way or another, had to overcome serious obstacles which would normally have deterred the Chinese from accepting the foreign religion. One of the most damaging accusations against Buddhism was the religion's apparent lack of filial piety.[1] As early as the third century, Buddhist monks were accused of being unfilial to their ancestors by shaving their heads.[2] During the northern

dynasties, Buddhism was suppressed on two occasions by the government. Although the circumstances were quite different, on both occasions one of the complaints against Buddhism was its lack of filial piety, advocated by Confucianism. In 446, the northern Wei Emperor Wu took extreme measures against Buddhism, which "taught the equality and unity of all classes, withdrawal from society, exemption from taxation, and celibacy, . . ."[3] The second suppression took place in the years 574–477 under Emperor Wu of the northern Chou, who declared in one of his edicts that "Buddhism must be suppressed because it practiced unfilial conduct, wasted wealth, and instigated rebellion."[4]

However, the Buddhists had become more and more conscious of these accusations and tried to counteract them. Inscriptions in the Lung-men and other caves made during the northern Wei have frequent references to filial piety and show the change that had taken place since Buddhism was introduced into China:

> Buddhism started as a religion renouncing all family and social ties; yet in the inscriptions one meets again and again with prayers for the well-being of departed ancestors, uttered even by monks and nuns. These expressions of piety indicate that although the monks and nuns had joined the monastic order, their ties to family and ancestors still remained strong and enduring. This is a specific example of how Buddhism had adapted itself to contemporary social conditions in China.[5]

This change within Buddhism with respect to filial piety was probably not the only reason for its ultimate success in China, but certainly contributed to it. Beside the above-mentioned inscriptions, there are other examples of an emphasis on filial piety. Several sutras were translated (or composed) which emphasized filial piety as the supreme virtue.[6] In addition, several Buddhist authors developed this point in their writings. According to R. Michihata, eight Chinese Buddhists have to be specially mentioned: Fa-lin (572–640), Tao-hsuan (596–667), Shan-tao, Tao-shih (d. after 668), Tsung-mi (780–841), Ch'i-sung (1007–1072), Chang Shang-ying (1043–1121), and Tzu-ch'eng (Yuan dynasty).[7]

Shan-tao's teaching on filial piety (which has already been discussed in Chapter 7) has to be studied in its historical and literary setting if one is to discover the sources from which he drew his ideas and compare it with the traditional Confucian insistence on filiality. A priori, it would appear that Shan-tao's insistence on filial behavior shows that he was truly Chinese, and suggests the possibility that he had been trained in the tradition of Confucianism. However, in Chapter 3, Shan-tao's biography, it was said that there is no evidence that he was schooled in the Confucian classics. Because of his emphasis on filiality, there is reason to doubt this, and a closer investigation is necessary.



Recapitulating Shan-tao's teaching on the subject, it should be borne in mind that his starting point is the text of the *Kuan-ching*. The sutra lists filial piety as one of the requirements for rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Shan-tao's comments on this point may be thus summarized:

1. The importance of the parents' function in the reproduction of life; their pains (especially of the mother) with respect to rearing the child.
2. Parents are the supreme "field of merits" in worldly life; the Buddha, in the "other-worldly" life. An example is quoted from the Buddha's life story: A monk offered him food during a period of famine, but the Buddha sent him to offer it to his own parents.
3. The Buddha's example of preaching the *dharma* to his mother in the Trāyastrimśa heaven.[8]

The literary sources of Shan-tao's teaching seem to be three in number. The illustrations are in fact drawn from three different texts. With regard to the first of Shan-tao's arguments, it seems that he was inspired or even directly influenced by a small Buddhist treatise, formerly lost but rediscovered among the Tun-huang manuscripts: *Fu-mu en chung ching*.[9] Some of Shan-tao's ideas are more broadly developed in this text, but two of his main themes are very likely derived from it: the function of both the parents with respect to birth (and of the mother after birth)[10] and the ungratefulness of grown-up children toward their old parents.[11] Although Shan-tao summarizes these two themes, it would be hard to deny that he used this text or a similar one as a direct source of inspiration.[12]

The literary relationship of Shan-tao's second argument, in which he relates an event from the Buddha's life story, is more difficult to define, but is without doubt of purely Buddhist origin. So is the third argument, the story of the Buddha's ascension to heaven to preach the *dharma* to his mother Māyā out of grateful-

ness for having been his mother. Shan-tao again draws from a purely Buddhist source. It seems that he summarizes the main lines of the *Fo-sheng T'ao-li-t'ien wei mu shuo-fa ching*.[13]

Recapitulating Shan-tao's views on filial piety, it is easy to see his merits as well as his limitations. His merits consist in the fact that he was conscious of the necessity to stress the importance of filiality. He is one of the few Buddhist authors of his time to do so, and thus to provide his readers with sound Buddhist principles for practicing a virtue that was considered basic in Chinese society. His limitation, however, exists precisely in this meritorious contribution itself, for he considers the practice of filial behavior purely from Buddhist grounds. He does not fully use the given opportunity either to build a bridge between Buddhism and Confucianism or to refute the accusations from Confucian circles against Buddhism with reference to filial piety.

The above examination of Shan-tao's literary sources has shown that Shan-tao is rather eclectic and misses originality with regard to filial piety. He draws on several Buddhist sources and combines them into one long argument. However, there is nothing to show that he was familiar with the *Hsiao ching* or *Classic of Filial Piety*.[14] This short treatise was probably "written sometime between the time of Mencius and the establishment of the Han dynasty, or roughly between 350 and 200 B.C.E."[15] It became one of the Thirteen Classics during the T'ang dynasty, which shows that in Shan-tao's own time it must have enjoyed great popularity. One would expect Shan-tao to allude to the book, or even use some of its expressions (e.g., from Chapter 9: "Parents give one life; no bond could be stronger. They watch over their child with utmost care; no love could be greater").[16] That Shan-tao neglects this opportunity can be explained in two ways, which are complementary to each other. On the one hand, he was not trained in the Confucian classics and must have felt too uncertain to use their ideas and vocabulary. This is supported by the fact, mentioned in his biography, that he left home at a very early age and received all of his education in Buddhist monasteries. On the other hand, he was too convinced of the sacredness and sufficiency of the Buddhist view of life to bother with non-Buddhist (or heterodox) principles. In the Buddhist scriptures he found the necessary and sufficient arguments to establish a truly Buddhist rationale for moral behavior.



Despite this lack of a broader perspective, it was to Shan-tao's credit to have realized the necessity of commenting upon a virtue which was so cardinal for his Chinese audience. A comparison with Tsung-mi is significant. Tsung-mi had received a classical education before he entered monastic life and was thus far better equipped to harmonize Buddhist and Confucian teachings.[17]

Another theme, equally significant in Shan-tao's work and once again of central importance in Confucianism, is the discussion of "sincerity" (*ch'eng*). Shan-tao deals with it in his "part 4" when he explains the mental conditions for rebirth, among which the threefold mind (*san-chung hsin*) is the most fundamental. The actual text of Shan-tao's treatise on the threefold mind has already been extensively quoted in Chapter 7, together with a basic discussion of the literary background of this rather late Buddhist "triad." What remains to be done is to compare Shan-tao's views on sincerity with its Confucian counterpart, with the purpose of establishing eventual points of contact between them.

First of all, it seems appropriate to recapitulate Shan-tao's basic ideas on the subject inasfar as they are relevant to the present enquiry. The threefold mind consists of "(1) a most sincere mind; (2) a deeply believing mind; (3) a mind which produces the vow to direct [all actions] toward [rebirth]." As such (i.e., in this combination of three kinds of mental disposition, as they are enumerated in the *Kuan-ching*), they doubtlessly constitute a purely Buddhist creation. And, as explained in Chapter 7, they are already anticipated in various ways in older Buddhist texts. However, since this particular passage in the *Kuan-ching* has been previously (see Chapter 2) classified among the probable interpolations created by a Chinese author, it would not be surprising to find here an example of Confucian influence infiltrating Buddhist doctrine. In other words, although sincerity was already prescribed as a quality of the *bodhicitta*, usually expressed as *chih-hsin*, the Chinese interpolator made the idea more explicit by choosing the term *chih-ch'eng hsin*, which seems to be more or less synonymous with *chih-hsin*. However, because of the Confucian connotations of *ch'eng*, a major shift of meaning could be expected.

Indeed, in Confucian ideology, *ch'eng* appears to have a different meaning. The classical passages in which the term occurs are the *Great Learning (Ta-hsüeh)* and especially *Central Harmony (Chung-yung)*.[18] The character *ch'eng* is in most cases translated as "sincerity," but perhaps the English term does not cover

the full content of the Chinese. In the Chinese context, *ch'eng* does not merely point to something subjective, but also includes an objective quality. What the word "sincerity" primarily suggests is a correspondence between thoughts and actions (or words); somebody acts (speaks) like he thinks and is free from dissimulation.[19] The Chinese *ch'eng* implies something more fundamental: not only is there correspondence between deeds and thoughts (or words), but moreover, there is correspondence between reality and thinking; there is *truth* in the mind. That this idea of truthfulness is part of *ch'eng* appears from the translation of the term as given by some authors[20] and from the context in the Confucian classics (e.g.: ". . . Such is the impossibility of hiding the real (*ch'eng*)").[21] Sincerity is closely related to true knowledge, and is a link in the chain of spiritual cultivation: First, investigate things, and then knowledge is extended; as a result, "the will becomes sincere" and next "the mind is rectified." Thereupon follow cultivation of personal life, regulation of the family, ordering of the state, and peace throughout the world.[22] From this context, it appears that with sincerity a transition is made from the rather objective order (knowledge of the world) to the rather subjective order (will and mind, etc.) Sincerity itself stands at the threshold. It is partially true knowledge, understanding of reality as it is, and partially a subjective attitude inasfar as this understanding of reality becomes a norm for action. From this analysis it would appear that the translation of *ch'eng* by "sincerity" is inadequate: it overemphasizes the subjective element and neglects the objective quality; perhaps "authenticity" or "truthfulness" (cp. "wahrhaftig"[23]) would better express the richness of the Chinese.[24]

Comparing Shan-tao's comments on *chih-ch'eng hsin* with *ch'eng* or "sincerity" as explained in the Confucian classics, there is no way of seeing any direct relationship between the two. Shan-tao sees "the sincere mind" as a subjective quality of the mind: total correspondence between what is in the mind and its manifestations in words and deeds. The objective, ontological quality of *ch'eng*, the correspondence between reality and mind, is outside the scope of Shan-tao's discussion. Therefore, it appears once again that he was not trained in the Confucian classics, although it had not escaped his attention that Confucian ethics offered a valuable steppingstone to Buddhist ethics. Even if he was silent about the Confucian meaning of moral virtues such as filial piety and "sincerity," the emphasis he placed on them shows indirectly



that he was aware of their great importance in social life; but instead of arguing against the Confucian ideas or making them subservient to the Buddhist code, he just explained the Buddhist viewpoint, and so indirectly contributed to an easier acceptance of Buddhism by his contemporaries. However, if he had not ignored the Confucian ethical code but had tried to reconcile both viewpoints, his influence in this regard would in all probability have been more penetrating and durable.

## SHAN-TAO AND NESTORIAN CHRISTIANITY

The present enquiry deals with the possible relationship between Shan-tao and Nestorian Christianity in Ch'ang-an. In the first place, there is reliable historical evidence to show that while Shan-tao was most actively engaged in the propagation of his ideas and practice in the T'ang capital, Nestorian missionaries were simultaneously spreading their religion among the Chinese population of Ch'ang-an.[25] By the end of the fifth century, Nestorianism, a Christian heresy repudiated by the official church, had established itself in Persia and Mesopotamia and surrounding countries. During the sixth century it spread more eastward, and during the seventh century "Nestorian traders and missionaries made their way into Central Asia and preached the Gospel in Turkestan, Tartary and remote China. The first Nestorian missionary entered China early in the seventh century,"[26] possibly in 631[27] but certainly in 635, when the first Nestorian bishop Alopen was received in audience by Emperor T'ai-tsung and obtained permission to spread the Christian doctrine. Their evangelization efforts must have been successful, for several monasteries and a metropolitanate were established within the next hundred years. In a famous stone tablet inscription, the so-called Nestorian Monument, the early history of their mission in China has been recorded. This monument was erected in February 781 and rediscovered in 1625.

The Nestorian church remained active in China for more than two hundred years, until the persecution under Emperor Wu-tsung in 845. Although the imperial edict was mainly directed against Buddhism, the Nestorians, as well as the Zoroastrians, suffered a serious blow from which they never fully recovered. The imperial edict of 845 justified this action as a protection of the Chinese customs: "Among the monks and nuns are both natives

and foreigners. Since [the latter] make manifest foreign religions, we are returning more than 3,000 Nestorians and Zoroastrians to lay life, so that they will not adulterate the customs of China."[28]

Although the above facts are historically established, it is altogether a different matter to conclude that Shan-tao must have undergone Nestorian influence in his ideas: possibility of influence does not prove actual influence. Yet this is stated in clear words by K. L. Reichelt:

> When one recalls the fact that Shan-tao lived near the Nestorian sphere of activity and just at that time when the Nestorian Church was proclaiming its "good news" with its primitive power and strength, it is very easy to see evidence of a clear influence from the Christian mission at this point. It is also an incontestable fact that just at this period, a quiet but sure inner process began to work within Chinese Mahayana, pointing to a more monotheistic Amitabha-concept.[29]

In this quotation the author states two highly debatable "facts" with which I disagree. The first is of general scope: the evolution of Chinese Buddhism toward monotheism, which he does not seem to restrict to Shan-tao alone, but which is presented as a general tendency within Chinese Buddhism at that time. Another "fact" relates to Shan-tao in particular and consists in "evidence of a clear influence from the Christian mission." When trying to relate these two "facts," one notices that the author seems to have Shan-tao in mind also when he mentions the first "fact":

> Beginning with the work of Shan-tao (died A.D. 681) still more positive lines of thought came into the conceptions of the "Pure Land." Through his writings and poems which are preserved to us, the thought of eternal life, and of a vicarious saviour, were added to the conception of Amitabha. The expression "Ju-lai" became more common. It was used of Amitabha himself as well as of the two great revealers of his power and grace, Ta-shih-chih and Kuan-yin, respectively. The holy trinity from the West appears more distinctly. At the same time it is stated more clearly than ever before that salvation takes place through faith in the threefold "Fu."[30]

Although K. Reichelt sees "evidence of a clear influence from the Christian mission" on Shan-tao's teaching, there are several reasons to refute this viewpoint. First of all, it should be remembered that Shan-tao arrived at the capital around 648–649, less than



twenty years after the Nestorians. Although probably slow at the beginning, in the decades that followed a major Nestorian breakthrough may have occurred, so that it is reasonable to infer that Shan-tao may have heard about the first successes of the Christian mission. However, direct contact, although not impossible, is still questionable, even though H. de Lubac stresses the possibility of personal links: "Shan-tao lived right at the time of the first expansion of Christianity in the empire; Emperor Kao-tsung (r. 650–683), with whom he was in intimate terms,[31] treated the Christians favorably; as a result, ties of cooperation and friendship existed between the Christians and the Buddhists. Is that not more than is needed to explain his [Shan-tao's] preaching of a 'Savior of Infinite Light' and of 'eternal life through faith in Amitabha'?"[32]

However, a definite Nestorian influence on Shan-tao's thought seems hardly possible at this early period of Nestorian settlement in Ch'ang-an, since Nestorian influence and prestige cannot be considered to have been very significant at that time. It appears that the Nestorian missionaries were quite successful in a later period. The imperial edict of 845 mentions three thousand Nestorian and Zoroastrian monks (and nuns) to be returned to lay life, so it may reasonably be presumed that the Nestorians had large followings among the Chinese population—but not yet in Shan-tao's own time.

A more decisive argument to deny doctrinal links between Shan-tao and the Nestorians is to be found in Shan-tao's ideas. As far as Buddhist doctrine is concerned, there is no evidence that he took on Christian elements. His own teaching, as well as Pure Land teaching in general, can be fully explained from Buddhist sources. Long before Shan-tao's time, and long before the Nestorians came to China, the basic tenets of Pure Land faith had been established. The worship of a savior and salvation through faith have been described as elements of essentially intrinsic Buddhist developments (see Chapter 1). Even Shan-tao's great appreciation of ritual, which at first is rather surprising in a Buddhist context, was not exceptional, and had Buddhist precedents in China itself.[33]

A corroboration of the above arguments can be found in the weakness of K. Reichelt's further "proofs" of contact between Buddhism and Nestorianism. Although these points relate to a period after Shan-tao's time, they indirectly help to discredit the "proof" of Shan-tao's dependence on Christian thought. K. Reichelt, apparently again following P.Y. Saeki, believes that the Buddhist monk Amogha Vajra copied rituals of Nestorianism to

create the Buddhist rituals of the Yü-lan-p'en festival.[34] In this context, he also explains the rise to popularity of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha (Ti-tsang wang) as influenced by the Christian doctrine of "vicarious atonement."[35] Finally, he sees a strong doctrinal connection between Nestorianism and the Buddhist Vairocana School: "Unmistakable traces of Christian ideas meet one everywhere in this doctrine—the idea of God as the 'father of light', of Christ as the great 'light of the world' who by his work of salvation burst the 'bonds of death' . . ."[36]

All these "proofs" seem to be very questionable and are certainly not substantiated by K. Reichelt or P.Y. Saeki. Similarities between Buddhism and Christianity may exist, but here they are first simplified to the point that they look almost identical, and then it becomes easy to affirm the existence of direct influence.

With regard to Shan-tao, no Christian influence is necessary to explain his teaching. Besides, Shan-tao does not make the slightest allusion to contacts with the Christian monks. When he takes a strong stand, it is always against "other teachers" in *Buddhism*. As a temporary conclusion—which should be supported by a more detailed analysis of Nestorian texts in Chinese and by a comparison with Buddhist texts—it seems safe to maintain that if the Buddhists of the T'ang dynasty were indebted to the Nestorian Christians with reference to doctrine and/or ritual, the extent of such borrowings was rather limited and did not affect any of the essential Buddhist tenets. Rather, it appears that the Nestorians were dependent on the Buddhists, as well as on Confucianism and Taoism, because of their use of native Chinese terminology to express their own Christian ideas.[37] This shows that if borrowing has taken place between Buddhists and Nestorians, it is more likely that the latter are the ones who borrowed. From a historical perspective, it is more natural that the Nestorian Christians, who were the "latecomers in the game" of religious propaganda, would follow in the footsteps of a religion that had successfully adapted itself to the Chinese ways of life.

## SHAN-TAO'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR BUDDHISM IN CHINA AND JAPAN

Shan-tao was beyond all doubt an important figure within the Pure Land movement in China. He is often called the real founder



of the Chinese Pure Land School, and although he was not the creator of the Amita worship,[38] he made some positive contributions to it. In this, he followed in the traces of his predecessors, especially T'an-luan and Tao-ch'o, but also of Hui-yuan (Lu-shan), whose method of *Buddhānusmrti* probably did not directly inspire Shan-tao, but rather derived from a common matrix (that is, that particular school of "Buddha vision" flourishing in Central Asia, which gave rise to both Hui-yuan's practice and later on, through the *Kuan-ching*, to Shan-tao's meditational method). It appears, therefore, that Shan-tao's special merit consisted in harmonizing two tendencies of Pure Land practice. One was a pietistic and popular approach which he found in the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* and in the interpolated chapter on the Nine Modes of Rebirth of the *Kuan-ching* and which was being propagated among the common people by Tao-ch'o and probably others. On the other hand, he also proposed a more demanding method which was still within the reach of laypeople who wanted to make a special effort. This was the way of a particular kind of "meditation" consisting in visualizing and inspecting the various adornments of Sukhāvatī and the presiding Buddha and Bodhisattvas, with the aim and wish to obtain ecstatic visions of these adornments, and ultimately of Buddha Amita himself, as a preparation for rebirth after death.

Although Shan-tao's biographers mention that he copied (probably had copies made of) the Shorter Sutra over ten thousand times, still he chose to write an extensive commentary on the other sutra: the *Kuan-ching*. At first, this choice seems rather surprising, but it confirms the thesis of Shan-tao's "double standard," mentioned in Chapter 3. In the *Kuan-ching*, Shan-tao discovered the two different approaches to the Amita worship, which he considered equally relevant. As a teacher in the capital, he met many serious laymen and laywomen who were willing to strive for a religious life that was something more than simple devotionalism and that could fulfill their deepest spiritual aspirations. For them, Shan-tao proposed the method of *nien-Fo* according to the *Kuan-ching*. However, how could he limit himself by engaging only those (rather few) lay disciples? Since he himself is said to have followed the hard and arduous Bodhisattva path, his compassion for all sentient beings compelled him to reach out to those masses of rather superficial devotees who perhaps wanted to be saved from the continuous cycle of rebirth, perhaps not. To those masses, the demanding method of meditation and discipline was

not appealing. More within their capacity was the simple approach of sincere faith, resulting in oral (and mental) invocation of the Buddha. Even the worst among the evildoers, those who had broken all the moral precepts, could in this way be saved. The only condition that Shan-tao emphasized as an absolute requirement was sincere awareness of human sinfulness and faith in the saving power of Amita. Oral invocation is only effective if it is based on sincerity. If someone still has doubts in his mind, even a thousand Buddhas cannot save him.

It often happens in religious history that the true meaning of a person's message becomes distorted in later times. Although Shan-tao, in his commentary to the *Kuan-ching,* fought a stubborn battle against those other teachers who interpreted the sutra as a means of meditation for the "saints" not accessible to the laity, and was credited with victory, still it appears that this meditational approach did not long survive after him, and the emphasis shifted toward the more popular method of oral invocation. Tz'u-min (680–748), one of the most important Pure Land teachers after Shan-tao, insisted that meditation and scholarship, *nien-Fo* and morality, should all be practiced together. To practice meditation exclusively is against sound Buddhist tradition, but was becoming more popular among the adherents of the newly rising *Ch'an* School.[39] It is perhaps because of the successes of this school that fewer and fewer Buddhists were attracted to *nien-Fo.* Another possible reason for the decline is the rise of Neo-Confucianism. Whereas Buddhism had attracted to its philosophy a great majority of the intellectuals between the fourth and tenth centuries, it lost its grip on the elite of the country when Neo-Confucianism gradually assimilated Buddhist metaphysics and spiritual cultivation. Buddhism as a school of thought and as a religious movement for the cultivated laity declined after the T'ang dynasty and did not regain its earlier position of glory. This also partially explains the disappearance of the *nien-Fo* method, whereas the more popular way of invocation continued to be practiced among the masses, and was also assimilated by the practitioners of Ch'an.

When the Pure Land movement "conquered" Japan, it[40] seems that Shan-tao's devotionalism predominated. In the subsequent growth of the movement, Shan-tao's thought was further distorted because of a unilateral emphasis on some points of his teaching. Of course, religious ideas and practices are not static; if



there is life, there is growth. In Japan, Pure Land ideas flourished and resulted in various branches which still exist today. Among the most famous propagators were Genshin (942–1017), Hōnen (1133–1212), and Shinran (1173–1262). When comparing their ideas with Shan-tao's and with each other's as well, one is struck by the gradual shift of emphasis (see above Chapter 8). Still, Shan-tao is recognized by all of them as their source of inspiration.

First of all, Genshin was instrumental in transmitting Shan-tao's thought to Japan.[41] His personality appears to have had some great similarities with Shan-tao's, for he is described as "a poet, visionary, mystic and artist"[42] who "did not restrict himself to the written word, but he made paintings of paradise and the saints."[43] In his teachings, too, Genshin seems to be very close to Shan-tao, but he is more explicit than the master in that he considered meditation to be the superior practice and recitation an inferior way, available in the degenerate age for those who are spiritually weak and unable to undertake the highly demanding monastic discipline. From a more monastic viewpoint, recitation was thought to be "a subsidiary means to realize the meditative ecstasy by which the devotee could experience the union of existence and non-existence as taught in Tendai philosophy."[44]

By saying that meditation was impossible for the common man, Genshin offered the laity only one choice: recitation of the name. Although, like Shan-tao, he stressed the necessity of profound faith, full determination, and uninterruptedness with regard to invocation, it appears that Genshin slightly modified Shan-tao's teaching, because he decided that meditation practice was inaccessible to laymen. Invocation of the name being the only other alternative, Genshin opened an alley of further evolution of practice and thought, which was readily followed by both Hōnen and Shinran.

Hōnen made the first major shift. If meditation is only good for monastic life, why not just leave it alone and instead consider recitation of the name as the superior practice? If such a conclusion does not seem logical from a theoretical viewpoint, at least it is practical. "It was the only practice which men should perform."[45] Thus far, there is no difficulty. There arises a question when this teaching is attributed to Shan-tao. According to A. Bloom, Shan-tao had already implicitly extolled the superiority of recitation. But if the interpretation of Shan-tao's views as proposed above in Chapter 8, is correct, Shan-tao did not consider the

recitation of Amita's name as superior, not even implicitly. He rather avoided making comparative statements, perhaps to avoid shaking any of his followers in their own beliefs.

Hōnen blurred Shan-tao's teaching about the threefold mind. The latter attached extreme importance to these mental conditions. Even the worst "sinner," when turning his mind to Amita at the moment of death, was required to be motivated by sincerity, deep faith, and a strong desire for rebirth. Hōnen, on the contrary, argued that the three mental states "arose naturally when one believed in the Vow and recited the name of Amida Buddha. He went so far as to virtually identify these mental states with the recitation itself . . ."[46] However, to conclude from this "that the practice of recitation was the only practice which resulted in birth in the Pure Land"[47] is a non sequitur and a contradiction, since it was said formerly that the recitation was the superior practice for Hōnen, but not the only one.

Finally, Shinran was the one who brought the Pure Land beliefs and practices to their ultimate development. In the tradition before him, since T'an-luan and Tao-ch'o, emphasis was laid on Other Power versus self-power, or on the Pure Land Path versus the Path of the Saints. In Japan, less and less emphasis was placed on self-power. Genshin and Hōnen have been shown to bear witness to this trend. Now it appears that with Shinran the element of self-power that apparently was still present in Genshin's teaching is completely removed and only the reality of Amida as saving Power remains.[48] Indeed, whether meditation, ethical behavior, or simply oral recitation of Amita's name is recommended as a means toward rebirth, the implicit idea of all these actions, at least partially, is self-power. In Shinran's viewpoint, even this last bit of self-reliance (and pride?) has to be removed in order for the "grace" of Amida to become clearly manifest. Although this extreme development is considered by A. Bloom to be the ultimate of religious experience, it is hard to say whether this way of interpreting Shinran is much more than words. For Shinran "the meaning of life consists in one's gracious response to Amida Buddha's compassion . . . ,"[49] but is this response itself not another more subtle form of self-power? It seems impossible to find the dividing line between (divine) grace and freedom, between (divine) knowledge and predestination. Words do not solve the problem: it is attitudes that are important. Whereas Shinran's attitude is perhaps one extreme and Buddha Shākyamuni's (complete



self-reliance) the other, it does not seem unjustified to put Shan-tao somewhere in the middle: both faith (sincerity!) and self-effort are balanced out and brought to a humanistic harmony.

In summary, two points have to be stressed. First, in China, Shan-tao's influence on the Pure Land movement has been extremely important but should not be overstated, since besides him many others have contributed to the great popularity of the Amita Cult. Perhaps his most distinctive contribution is that he harmonized two methods of Amita devotion, each adapted to a different type of devotee. Second, his prestige in Japan, although even more impressive than in China, does not seem wholly justified, or at least is due to a partial misunderstanding of his teaching. Even though Shinran acknowledges that Shan-tao was the only one who understood the real intention of the Buddha, it seems that Shinran himself did not really understand the intentions of Shan-tao.

If one looks for a rationale to explain this transformation, the best argument is found in Shinran's strong belief in the period of "decline of the *dharma*" (Mappō), which makes all human efforts not only impossible, but intrinsically corrupt. Only absolute faith in Amida is the way to salvation.

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY

To become a sage, a saint, an immortal, a transcendent being, seems to be the common aspiration in many religious traditions. There is something alluring in the ideal of reaching above the level of common humanity, but such an ideal is not only attractive; it is also frightening. Sainthood (or whatever other term is used) can only be reached at an extremely high price. Yet in each religious tradition, it seems, there are some exceptional individuals who reach or who are perceived to have reached this level of transcendent status.

When I studied Roman Catholic theology, I was immensely attracted by the phenomenon of sainthood. One of the reasons why the Catholic church must be seen as divinely supported and therefore of divine origin (so I learned) was the fact that the Catholic church had produced and still produces many saints. The continued flowering of saints within the church was an infallible sign of divine presence, of divine power.

When I started to study Buddhism and other great Asian traditions, I discovered a new range of "saintly" phenomena. I was astounded to see that, for instance, in Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as in Taoism, many individuals were mentioned and their biographies described who were considered "sages" or "saints" in their own circles. Later I discovered that in Islam there had been mystics who certainly qualified for sainthood, and the Confucian tradition very often quotes *sheng-jen* of old: persons of heroic stature who were literally called "saints" or "sages."

After so many experiences and years of reflection and maturation, I have abandoned my earlier Roman Catholic view that only the true Church of Christ can and does produce real saints. I now consider such a view as poorly informed, mildly intolerant, and perhaps too arrogant. There is, as I discovered in my later studies, authentic sainthood in other religious traditions. Concepts of what sainthood involves may differ and cannot be universally defined, and certainly cannot depend upon bureaucratic decisions to be verified.

In the context of this Shan-tao study, I would like to single out Buddhism and Christianity (Roman Catholicism) to present a comparative view of what is seen as sainthood. It is only a case study, but whenever possible or feasible, general principles will be invoked, so that it will become clear that these cases possibly point to a more universal concept of what constitutes a Christian saint versus what constitutes a Buddhist saint.

At the end of Shan-tao's biography in Chapter 3 it was casually mentioned that Shan-tao could be considered an embodiment of "Buddhist sainthood" and, from a different angle, was comparable to one of the modern Roman Catholic saints, Saint John Vianney, parish priest of Ars (France). Further, his method of meditation, as explained in the *Kuan-ching,* opens up another field of comparison with certain methods of Christian meditation and prayer.[50] These aspects of Shan-tao's personality and/or activities have to be discussed in order to fully evaluate his contribution to the religious life of his contemporaries and to the field of comparative religion. This section, therefore, consists of two subdivisions:

1. Christian and Buddhist sainthood
2. Christian and Buddhist meditation and prayer



These two fields of comparative study are not intended to be fully and exhaustively developed: the focus will be on the problems of authenticity of sainthood and of meditation and prayer within Buddhism as exemplified by Shan-tao. This viewpoint is being adopted because of the traditional "superiority complex" of Christianity, especially of Catholicism, toward non-Christian religions. Is such a stand legitimate, not so much from a theological perspective, but from the broader viewpoint of human experience? Shan-tao's testimony may indicate how this problem can be solved.

### *Christian and Buddhist Sainthood*

Both Christianity and Buddhism extol supreme human perfection as the ultimate end of religious life. However, beyond this basic similarity there are marked differences regarding the essence of this perfection and the means to attain it. Christian perfection consists in the full development of theological and moral virtues, resulting in intimate union with God. To be formally recognized as a saint within Roman Catholicism, one has to cultivate the virtues in a heroic way. "When, by divine grace, a person's whole being is, as nearly as possible, governed by the complexus of virtues centered about religion, that stage of heroic virtue has been attained that the Church recognizes as worthy of the title of saint."[51] Formal recognition as a saint is made through a slow and scrutinizing process of canonization. It is the final result of a canonical process "that establishes juridically the heroism of a person's virtues, as well as the truth of the miracles by which God has manifested this heroism."[52]

This idea of heroicity of virtue or of "superhuman virtue" was in fact taken over from Aristotle by Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Through them, the term found its way into scholastic theology and finally ascetic-mystical use.[53] According to P. Lambertini (later Benedict XIV), "the attainment of a heroic degree of natural virtue of one kind or another was theoretically possible to nature unaided by grace, though it was rarely, if ever, actually so attained."[54] Although "the heroic degree is, in fact, simply the perfection of virtue," or, in other words, "Heroic virtue is based upon the intensity of charity,"[55] in more recent times the emphasis has considerably shifted. "Heroicity consists in the faithful and constant fulfilment of the duties and obligations of one's state" (Bene-

dict XV), or, according to another papal document, "Heroic virtue was to be sought in the ordinary things of daily life" (Pius XI).[56]

What seems to be essential in the definition of Christian sainthood, as explained above, is from the human side, heroic virtue, and from God's side, the assistance of divine grace. Virtue in a heroic degree cannot be achieved without supernatural help, and, as a more basic presupposition, divine help is thought to be only fully available within the Christian church.

The whole problem of sainthood and the Christian conception of it can only be fully understood within the broader perspectives of the church's attitude toward the non-Christian religions. Although this attitude has changed throughout the ages, the present official stand taken by the Roman Catholic church was clearly expressed in the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions in 1965,[57] which states that the church "rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and life, those precepts and teachings which, . . . often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men."[58] A conclusion that may be drawn from this statement is that only the church possesses the *full* light or the full Truth, and therefore the full means of divine grace which lead mankind to perfect sainthood. If the church is consistent with her exclusive claims of divine revelation, sainthood achieved outside her ranks cannot be considered as fully authentic. This is an a priori position which seems inescapable.

However, "from the fruits you can recognize the tree."[59] This saying reflects the opposite approach; it is *a posteriori,* or based on observation of facts outside the church. Here we return to Shan-tao. Although it has been said that "the Christian saint is unique in human records, [that] He is quite, quite different from the Buddhist, from the Zoroastrian," that "all the good stuff that the Buddhist . . . possesses is in the saint," etc.,[60] the argument is not convincing when we consider Shan-tao as a concrete example of Buddhist sainthood. Whatever is attributed to Christian saints in the following text can, with some adjustments, be applied to such Buddhists as Shan-tao:

> Saints are *men* who are *super-natural.* Super-naturalized. Their actions, bodily or mental, thus constantly rise higher than their human source because of that added thing that is to be called Grace—God's "free gift"—which is *so* added, however, as to be infused throughout their Self . . .
>
> No question whatsoever, in a Saint, of working for his own career, or name, or wealth, or comfort. Lest he be deluding himself, he will try rather for total effacement, personal humiliation, poverty so complete as possible, nay, suffering itself.[61]



When one compares Shan-tao with one of the modern Christian saints, St. John Vianney (1786–1859, canonized in 1925), the following parallel characteristics are most striking. Born in a farmer's family, John Vianney was a poor student who was unable to learn Latin and theology and was almost refused for the priesthood. Shan-tao apparently had a brighter intelligence, but was not interested in the abstract speculations of the San-lun School. Both men had a preference for contemplative-active life, in which direct religious experience was central. Both men were characterized by the practice of common moral virtues, which they developed to the extreme: deep consciousness of their personal sinfulness,[62] extreme asceticism and poverty,[63] radical chastity,[64] total surrender to the service of others.[65] In fact, their life-styles, although in many respects quite different, are similar in that both took to the active ministry of their fellowmen (serving them for more than thirty years) and drew their energy from prayer and meditation. The example of their lives drew the people and made them believe in their respective ideals: J. Vianney was active in Ars for thirty years, and by degrees the place was completely reformed. Shan-tao worked in Ch'ang-an for over thirty years and the whole city was won over to the invocation of Buddha Amita. In order to touch people emotionally, both men used similar methods: the luster of ritual and of external media. Shan-tao's example of using Pure Land representations and of organizing "rebirth rituals" is well known, similar attitudes characterized J. Vianney: "Another attitude of the Curé . . . is significant: his affection for the externals of worship: his enthusiastic love for pictures, ornaments, decorations; for the embellishment of the church and the pomp of ceremony. He wanted to make use of everything to appeal to, to stir up hearts and minds."[66]

Further, in the realm of mystical and extraordinary experiences, it appears that both men were unusually privileged. Shan-tao's practice of *samādhi* was often accompanied with raptures and ecstasies. It appears that he had the gift of reading the minds

of others (see the incident about Tao-ch'o's threefold shortcoming), and it is also reported that he predicted his own death a few days before it took place. J. Vianney is said to have had numerous supernatural visions and ecstasies, although he was extremely reluctant to communicate these events to others.[67] It is reported that he had an extraordinary talent in knowing the thoughts and wishes of others,[68] and also predicted his death a few days before it actually happened.[69]

Finally, there is one "fact" narrated about the two men that shows how people in their immediate surroundings must have seen them. Of Shan-tao it is said that light came out of his mouth whenever he pronounced the name of Amita. With regard to Vianney, there have been several witnesses stating that they saw light shining forth from his person. One person going into the confessional "saw him wholly enveloped in a transparent and unearthly radiance."[70] On another occasion, someone observed that the priest's face "seemed to project two fiery rays, his features being so completely hidden by the brightness of their light."[71] No matter how these "facts" are interpreted, one reasonable explanation is that people who are fully absorbed in the transcendent (however understood), like these two men, become somehow transparent and shining; in modern terminology, they radiate an aura which can be seen by some witnesses, who would translate this phenomenon in terms of light. What is said about J. Vianney in this respect can probably be applied equally to Shan-tao: as he grew old there came upon his visage an ethereal spiritual beauty.

One possible conclusion of this comparison is that, notwithstanding the great difference of ideological background and the differences in circumstances and personality, a common spirit appears to have animated their lives: complete renunciation of the self, total devotion to their fellowmen, and total reliance on the transcendent. This total reliance was the source of their heroic life and the cause of their great achievements. Another conclusion is that Shan-tao's life and personality (although less furnished with historical information than J. Vianney's) show that authentic sainthood is possible in Buddhism. Finally, as a happy result of the above comparison, it has become clear that Shan-tao's person and life are even more fully understood and appreciated when compared with his outstanding Christian counterpart, St. John Vianney. One light does not obscure the other, but increases its intensity and splendor.



### *Christian and Buddhist Meditation*

Generally speaking, it can be said that Christian prayer, even when it assumes the higher forms of contemplation, is usually directed toward dialogue with the Divine Being or with Jesus Christ and may sometimes reach high levels of union. Buddhist meditation, on the other hand, is characterized by intellectual analysis at the beginning with the aim of understanding the nature of reality and eventually reaching mystical experiences of absorption. If this is true in principle, or theoretically, it does not follow that the facts always correspond with the theory. Christian meditation can also be rather intellectual, directed at the understanding of some points of doctrine, whereas in Buddhism certain forms of meditation seem to approach the Christian way of prayer.

In fact, two concrete examples of close similarity in method, and perhaps in aim and final result, are available for comparison. (1) The Buddhist "meditation" method consisting in visualization-inspection, described in the *Kuan-ching* and explained by Shan-tao in his commentary, is comparable to a particular form of Christian contemplation recommended by St. Ignatius of Loyola in his "Spiritual Exercises." (2) The oral invocation of the name of Buddha Amita is comparable to a certain way of Christian prayer, probably existing universally in the Christian church, but clearly exemplified in what is called Jesus prayer (*Herzensgebet*) in the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity.

***Amita Inspection Versus Ignatian Contemplation*** The "Spiritual Exercises" written by St. Ignatius[72] consist in a very methodical system of meditations to bring about a kind of inner conversion to God. The whole program takes four weeks to be completed. The first week is spent in mental preparation, and could be called an initial awakening of the soul. From the second week onward, most of the exercises are called "contemplation," and it is here that a striking similarity with Buddhist visualization-inspection appears. The preparatory stages in both cases are different. According to the Christian method, the meditator tries to make himself fully aware of being in God's presence and asks for his divine assistance to make a fruitful meditation possible. As Shan-tao pointed out in his commentary, the Buddhist meditator purifies himself, worships the Buddha, and, seated in the right bodily posture, concentrates his full attention on the chosen object. The exercise itself, however, is

strikingly similar in both cases. The Buddhist meditator images, visualizes, and inspects, one by one, the various adornments of Sukhāvatī to reach a climax in the vision of the Buddha and his two assistant Bodhisattvas. In the Ignatian exercise, the direct prelude sets before the meditator a general and summary view of the meditation topic, but afterwards, in the meditation itself, according to Ignatius's own words "let it [the mind] pause upon the several parts, so as to consider them and penetrate their meaning. It is as if a man should cast his eyes upon some painting, comprising a great variety of objects, and in one comprehensive view take them all in confusedly and know what the picture contains and then afterward should fix his gaze on the several particulars which are there represented, examining each in turn more fully and accurately."[73]

The usefulness of this method lies in its results. Not only are the various particulars of a given object, such as the events in the life of Christ, better understood through this application of the senses, but also a feeling of direct participation is evoked. "For by this means the Mysteries of our Lord's Life will be contemplated not as long past events, but as present realities of which we are ourselves actual spectators."[74] It is certain that this method of contemplation is much older than the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius. Many authors on spirituality in the Middle Ages had already applied and propagated it. However, it was considered an appropriate way for beginners, and not only the sense of sight was used, but, in fact, all the senses. Although some authors rejected the method as dangerous, eventually leading to wild imaginations and uncontrolled fantasies, the majority did approve it as a preparatory method to higher mysticism.[75] It is here that one can see the essential difference between the Christian and Buddhist way. In the Christian version, the application of the senses leads up to a vivid mental image of the topic under consideration; but there it stops. There is no "immersion" in it, no realization of complete union with the person, for instance, of Jesus Christ. The final phase would be a dialogue between the meditator and the divine Person, and even if a mystical experience would follow, the sense of separateness between the human and the divine is never abandoned. In the Buddhist context, however, absorption into the very essence of the Buddha, or in other words, identification with the Buddha nature, is proposed as the desired effect of the practice. Whether the meditator is always successful is a different matter, but the possibility of the experience is positively indicated as a reachable goal.



Abandoning temporarily the comparative viewpoint, what is the psychological significance of the various meditations described in the *Kuan-ching?* C. G. Jung has drawn the attention to the deep symbolical values of the various objects of "meditation."[76] Some of Jung's presuppositions are based on incorrect information, as when he says that the *Kuan-ching* "belongs to the sphere of the so-called theistic Buddhism, in which one finds the teachings on the Adibuddha, or Mahābuddha (the 'Urbuddha'), from whom proceed the five Dhyāni-buddhas or bodhisattvas."[77] This initial mixing up of two distinct cult developments warns us to be cautious. About the various symbolisms expressed in the sutra, the author offers the following interpretations: Both the setting sun (first exercise) and the water (second exercise) are allegorical presentations of Buddha Amita, the giver of immortality.[78] The sun is the source of warmth and light, and as such the giver of life. Water is another source of life. (Both symbols are equally important in Christian allegory.)[79]

The setting sun, furthermore, is perhaps chosen for its hypnotic value: the fixation of a bright object prepares for the subsequent light visions. The water as object stirs the active imagination, since no external object is used anymore. The practitioner imagines a mirroring water surface reflecting the light; the change of the water into ice is a procedure to change the immaterial sunlight into material water and hence into the solid materiality of ice. In this way, the vision becomes concretized, materialized. Based on the materiality of this world, another reality of "spiritual matter" ("seelischer Stoff") is created. Ice changed into blue lapis lazuli becomes an illuminating and transparent bottom, an absolutely real foundation.

The shape of the "Land" is octagonal, and correspondingly, there are eight lakes; the source of its water is the wishing pearl, symbolizing the highest value. The voice of the water proclaiming the basic truth of Buddhism means that ultimately the Buddha himself is the center and the source of the water.

The climax of the sutra consists in the reconstruction of the Buddha image. This leads to the insight that the Buddha is identical with the psyche of the meditator, with the meditator himself. The Buddha seated on the lotus in the center of the octagonal Amita Land "reveals" himself as the true self of the meditator.

The I-consciousness disappears, and the antipode is reached in which the world vanishes as an illusion.[80]

The last part of Jung's article analyzes the significance of the practice and compares it with Western methods. He feels that Western meditation has nothing comparable to this practice, which aims at the total penetration and understanding of the unconscious. Whereas the Western spirit seeks "Erhebung" (which seems to point toward external knowledge of the real), the Eastern spirit wants "Versenking, Vertiefung."[81] It "descends" to an inner experience of the real, leading up to the extreme point where the most inner self, the unconscious self, is clearly understood and therefore loses its own individual identity, which is experienced as absorbed in, or identical with, Buddhahood.[82] Only in the Western practice of psychoanalysis is the Oriental approach somewhat realized.

From another viewpoint, it appears that Western religion (Christianity) rather emphasizes God's transcendence and holiness, resulting in a depreciation of the self. Eastern religiosity (Hinduism, Buddhism, perhaps also Taoism) looks for the immanence of the "divine," the "Buddha nature," and so on, so that emancipation consists of becoming conscious of the true self (Hinduism) or the real "no-self" (Buddhism). If the *kuan* sutras provide a method for visualizing and inspecting the Buddhas and their transcendent realms, their ultimate aim, at least in the *Kuan-ching,* does not consist in only "seeing" the Buddhas, but in realizing that there is no Buddha beyond one's own consciousness. It appears that this was Shan-tao's understanding, obtained in his own experiences. If he did not always stress this point clearly and unambiguously, it was because of his understanding of the psychology of his followers. Not all were ready for this supreme experience. A gradual preparation was necessary from the simplest form of devotion (invocation of the name) passing through a strict discipline of ethics and meditation, until the peak could be reached in the *kuan-Fo-samādhi.*

***Oral Invocation Versus Christian "Prayer"*** That Shan-tao believed in the effectiveness of oral invocation of Buddha Amita's name is beyond question. The confusion that exists in this regard concerns his true appreciation of the practice. As I have pointed out in Chapter 8 and elsewhere,[83] *nien-Fo* means several things, and the shift in interpretation of what Shan-tao meant by it is due



to incorrect emphasis on one of its meanings. Shan-tao was not an exclusivist. He encouraged the majority of the people to recite Amita's name, hoping that some would go further and take up the more arduous task of Amita visualization and *samādhi.*

It is quite natural to believe that Shan-tao himself, although not actually engaged in the practice of the *kuan-Fo-samādhi,* used the recitation of Amita's name (*Namo* A-mi-t'a-Fo) quite often as a kind of short prayer formula. Whether he used beans or other small objects to count his invocations, as Tao-ch'o had encouraged his followers to do, is doubtful and perhaps not relevant. The presently important question is about the meaning of such short and frequent invocations, and how they compare with some Christian practices.[84] Anticipating the results of the study, it seems legitimate to state that *nien-Fo* in Chinese Buddhism (as exemplified by Shan-tao) has at least two distinct meanings with perhaps one intermediate one. First, there is the simple recitation of the name (*k'ou-ch'eng nien-Fo*), an act of oral praise, reverence, or taking refuge. In the second place, at the other extreme, there is what Japanese Buddhists have called *kuan-nien nien-Fo*, but is formulated by Shan-tao as *kuan-Fo-samādhi.* This is the basic message of the *Kuan-ching* and the highest ideal for a Pure Land "meditator." Not often explicitly mentioned in Shan-tao's work, but presumably considered important within his overall system of religious practice, is the *nien-Fo* of "remembrance" of the Buddha: the possibly or hopefully continuous consciousness of being with the Buddha, of cherishing the thought of him, or paying homage to him and being grateful to him. "When sentient beings start practicing, whenever they orally invoke the Buddha, he hears it. Whenever they worship the Buddha, he sees it. Whenever in their minds they think of the Buddha, he knows it. When sentient beings keep the Buddha in their remembrance, he also keeps them in his remembrance."[85]

Shan-tao refers to these various activities as "three actions," but in fact there are four phases. The third and fourth both refer to mind action, but there is certainly a difference in intensity. The initial activities of a devotee (a beginner) comprise oral invocation, worship, and thinking of the Buddha. When his practice becomes more advanced, he reaches the point of keeping in memory or making a (continuous) remembrance of the Buddha. This is not yet the fullest achievement, which comes only through intense concentration and is a result of the devotee's desire to "see" the

Buddha. "If sentient beings wish to see the Buddha, he responds to their wish [literally, their *nien*] and appears in front of them."[86]

What "remembrance of the Buddha" exactly means can be explained by an analogous practice recommended in Christian spirituality: "the presence of God."[87] It is a "habitual sense of God's presence."[88] which Brother Lawrence in his letters describes as walking before God, simply, in faith, with humility and love, applying oneself to think always of God. It is simple attention and a general fond regard of Him, which may be called "an actual presence of God; or, to speak better, an habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God,"[89] beyond which nothing is sweeter and more delightful, and which cannot be comprehended except by those who practice it.[90]

Such a habit is not easily obtained. It requires long and continuous effort, but once acquired, it leaves the mind open for God alone, while all other actions do not interfere with it. Hours of formal prayer are only a continuation of the same exercise, and benefit from it enormously: "When I apply myself to prayer, I feel all my spirit and all my soul lift itself up without any care or effort of mine, and it continues as if it were suspended and firmly fixed in God, as in its center and place of rest."[91]

It seems that the practice of *nien-Fo* is very similar to this Christian method. The mind's attention and the heart's emotion are in continuous contact with the Buddha, whereas the physical activities which ordinary life prescribes are in nothing different from everybody else's. This consciousness of the Buddha's "presence" can be acquired by effort, and specifically by repeated oral invocations (whether in loud or low voice, or even mentally), and if this sense of the Buddha's presence is gradually acquired, it may ultimately develop into the mystical experience of vision of the Buddha, such as is explained in Shan-tao's commentary. In this way, all the various ways of practicing *nien-Fo* are in fact internally related to each other and stimulate each other. The simple oral *nien-Fo*, if properly practiced (with sincerity, etc.), ultimately leads to a state of mystical union or *samādhi*, in which no distinction between subject and object exists any longer. It cannot be expected that all devotees reach these higher stages of mysticism. Each, according to efforts and predispositions, will reach the degree that is appropriate. But all, Shan-tao stresses, are able to be welcomed by Buddha Amita at the end of their lives, even those who have hardly started on the path.



Finally, another analogy between *nien-Fo* and a particular form of Christian prayer has to be pointed out. E. Benz[92] has drawn attention to the fact that oral invocation of Amita's name is not a unique phenomenon in religious history, but shows surprising analogies with the theory and practice of the so-called heart-prayer (*Herzensgebet*) which is found within Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Although the term *Herzensgebet* does not apparently suggest a form of oral prayer, it really is a form of prayer strikingly similar to the Buddhist *nien-Fo*, in almost all of its modalities and methods. The essential practice of *Herzensgebet* consists in the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ by means of the formula "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!"[93] Like the *nien-Fo* in Buddhism, it is essentially a lay practice. It is recommended to repeat the formula many times a day (even methods of counting are suggested), in such a way that it becomes part of the physiological process, in that the invocations are synchronized with the person's heartbeat: first beat: Lord; second beat: Jesus; third beat: Christ; fourth beat: have mercy; fifth beat: on me (us).[94] Although it is not clearly explained why this practice is called "heart-prayer," it may be assumed that this synchronization with the heartbeat is the very reason, whereas in some texts quoted by the author, another and perhaps less misleading term is used: "Jesus-prayer."[95]

As in Buddhism, where the practice of *nien-Fo* hopefully leads the practitioner to an ever-increasing degree of meditation, even to the point of mystical experiences, so too will the invocation of the name of Jesus prepare the practitioner for the highest ecstasies and union with God.[96] The problem of historical connections between the two methods of prayer has to be answered with a question mark. Although the similarities are very striking, even to the point that breath regulation and bodily posture[97] are recommended on the Christian side, there is no evidence to prove a positive influence in either direction.[98]

Whatever the historical links may be, the least that can be said is that the practice of *nien-Fo*, with its various gradations up to the higher levels of mysticism, is not a unique phenomenon in the religious history of mankind. Although the most striking parallel in Christianity is the above-discussed *Herzensgebet*, a closer investigation will probably bring to light many other forms of name invocations within various religions and thus throw a light on the spiritual needs of those who are not gifted enough or do not have the opportunity to practice strict meditation. It was to Shan-tao's

great credit that he realized this deep concern of the laypeople of his time and offered them a satisfying alternative toward salvation, which also is ultimately based on sound Buddhist principles. In this respect, his work and career are not isolated facts, but are linked closely together with many other similar tendencies in the religious quest of humanity.

# CONCLUSION

The Pure Land tradition in China, flourishing during the Sui-T'ang period, is characterized by its strong roots in northwest Indian and Central Asian Buddhism. It is hazardous to say that in China the Pure Land movement developed in such a way that it became a distinctively Chinese phenomenon. But what is beyond doubt is that, from the fifth century on, two strains of thought are noticeable within the movement: one of a devotional character and based on early translations of the Longer Sutra; another of meditational character, which probably originated in some monastic community of Central Asia, and although also suitable for householders, was yet more difficult to practice than the former method of devotion. The translation of the *Kuan-ching* was the signal for many Chinese Buddhists to follow this particular method of *nien-Fo* focused on Buddha Amita. A similar kind of meditation had previously been practiced in China but was apparently not based on the *Kuan-ching* (although the possibility cannot be excluded), but rather on its forerunner, the *PCS*. The most famous representative of this tendency is Hui-yuan from Lu-shan.

No definite links between Shan-tao and the Hui-yuan tradition can as yet be established. But whether there is a relationship is not so important as the fact that Shan-tao combined in his practice and teaching the two strains of devotionalism and meditation. This is not a real innovation in Buddhism, since before him other masters had already done so—for instance, Vasubandhu (in his five methods) and after him, T'an-luan. Even Tao-ch'o is said to have followed this method of harmonization, for on the one hand he advocated the practice of oral invocation, but on the other hand he was famous for his lectures on the *Kuan-ching*, so that Shan-tao became his disciple in order to learn more about the meditative *nien-Fo*. However, Shan-tao, more than his predecessors or contemporaries, stressed the importance of all the aspects of the Amita Cult. His commentary on the *Kuan-ching* contains

the essence of his teachings and shows that for him there is no contradiction between any of the practices; rather, there is gradation from simple toward more demanding. The simple practice of oral invocation is good enough for the weaker person and can be seen as a "back door" approach to rebirth, but even then sincerity and real faith are necessary; for if salvation is given because of Amita's promises and merits, it is essential that the adept fully believes in the reality of Amita's vows and merits. To obtain a higher level of rebirth in Amita's Land, a more serious effort has to be made: both morality (in ascending strictness) and meditation are recommended for those who desire to reach better results. If one longs for a vision in this life of the Buddha Land and of Amita himself, there is a method available, if one is willing to put up with the more rigorous demands of meditation. But even this harder practice is still not reserved for Bodhisattva candidates; one of Shan-tao's most emotional defenses consists in making this point clear to his readers: Amita vision in this life can be obtained by all.

When attempting to establish some hierarchy of values among the different practices recommended by Shan-tao, one sees beyond doubt that *nien-Fo* is for him the highest and most efficacious of all: it is the right and determining practice, leading to certain rebirth and the state of nonretrogression. Other practices also relating to Amita in a direct way are worship and praise. Through all these the mind is fixed on Amita himself. With regard to ethical behavior, this only indirectly refers to Amita, and does not continuously and not always consciously fix the mind on the Buddha. Therefore these actions, although they also lead to rebirth, are considered secondary, and therefore perhaps less important.

If *nien-Fo* is the highest practice, it must be emphasized again and again that Shan-tao's *nien-Fo* is the *nien-Fo* understood according to the Pure Land scriptures. In other words, his *nien-Fo* comprehends the various aspects of *anusmrti* or attentiveness-recollection: meditative inspection, oral invocation, and even merely hearing the name of Amita. It is clear that Shan-tao's interpretation of *nien-Fo* has been misunderstood by later commentators, who lean on his authority to prove their own viewpoints, which consisted in narrowing down the meaning of *nien-Fo* so that it was explained in terms of oral invocation only. Shan-tao was not the exclusivist that he is often said to be: he was comprehensive in his approach and firmly believed that in the various Pure Land practices there is at least one method that appeals to everyone.



Whatever the practice adopted by each individual was, Shan-tao was further very determined to uphold the absolute necessity of the threefold mind: sincerity, deep faith, and a serious longing for rebirth.

Shan-tao's personal testimony—his holy life, which was the embodiment of his own principles—as well as his appeal to persons of various capacities, made him a successful teacher in Ch'ang-an. It is impossible to measure the real impact of his contribution, but his work, together with the effort of many other Pure Land teachers throughout the T'ang era, made the Pure Land movement a very strong and long-lasting influence in Chinese Buddhism. In Sung times and later, Pure Land practices were adopted by all other Buddhist[1] schools: Ch'an monasteries had meditation halls as well as recitation halls.

Two final remarks have to be made. First, although Buddhism is basically a method toward emancipation, one easily receives the impression that its philosophy (or its many philosophical systems) prevails over its practices. Many scholars in the West have studied Buddhist philosophy while neglecting the religious aspects. The Pure Land movement is probably the least philosophical of Buddhist movements, but its religious value is certainly most important for the majority of East Asian practitioners. It has been my aim to emphasize this rather neglected aspect of Buddhism.

Second, Shan-tao's Pure Land thought was selected because in Western Buddhist studies there was a gap, or even several gaps, which needed to be filled. On the one hand, Western students are acquainted with the basic Pure Land sutras and thus know the Indian and Central Asian side of the movement (although a thorough study of the origin of the cult is still missing); on the other hand, recent studies have been made about the Japanese development of the cult (e.g., Shinran; also Genshin and Hōnen). But studies about the intermediate phase of development, the Chinese interpretations of Pure Land thought, were still missing. A complete history of the Amita Cult can only be expected when monographs have been made about T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, Shan-tao, and many others. Hopefully this study has partially contributed to a better understanding of the true significance of Shan-tao, who may be considered one of the most eminent figures in the Chinese Pure Land movement.

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *AD* | *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* (see Karlgren) |
| *ADS (KC)* | *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* (see Takakusu) |
| *ALC* | *An-lo chi,* Tao-ch'o (T. 1958) |
| *BB* | *Bibliographie Bouddhique* |
| *BEFEO* | *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* |
| *BHSD* | *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* (see Edgerton) |
| *CACJ (=CKRS)* | *Collected Articles on China in Japanese* |
| *CJS* | *Chūgoku Jōdo sansoden* (see Nogami) |
| *CKRS (=CACJ)* | *Chūgoku kankei ronsetsu shiryo* |
| *CSTP* | *Chin-shih ts'ui-p'ien* (see Wang Ch'ang) |
| *CTL* | *Ching-t'u lun,* Chia-ts'ai (T. 1963) |
| *DCBT* | *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (see Soothill and Hodous) |
| *EB* | *The Eastern Buddhist* |
| *EBW* | *Encyclopedia of Buddhist Works* (see Ono) |
| *EHB* | *Essays in the History of Buddhism* (see Tsukamoto) |
| *EHBT* | *Essays in the History of Buddhist Thought* (see Yuki) |
| *EJS* | *Encyclopedia of Jōdo Shinshū* |
| *ER* | *Encyclopedia of Religion* (see Eliade) |
| *ERE* | *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (see Hastings) |
| *FSK* | *Chung-kuo Fo-chiao shih-chi kai-lun* (see Chen Yuan) |
| *FST* | *Fa-shih tsan,* Shan-tao (T. 1979), 166 |

| | |
|---|---|
| *FTTC* | *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* (Chih-p'an, T. 2035) |
| *GCED* | *Chinese-English Dictionary* (see Giles) |
| *GSR* | *Grammatica Serica Recensa* (see Karlgren) |
| *HA* | *Hōbōgirin Annexe* (see Demiéville) |
| *HCB* | *Handbook of Chinese Buddhism* (see Eitel) |
| *HJAS* | *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* |
| *HKSC* | *Hsü kao-seng chuan* (T. 2060) |
| *HWSC* | *Hsin-hsiu wang-sheng chuan* |
| *HR* | *History of Religions* |
| *IBK (=JIBS)* | *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū,* |
| *IC* | *L'Inde Classique* (see Renou and Filliozat) |
| *IHQ* | *Indian Historical Quarterly* |
| *JAOS* | *Journal of the American Oriental Society* |
| *JA* | *Journal Asiatique* |
| *JAS* | *Journal of Asian Studies* |
| *JEBD* | *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* |
| *JHI* | *Journal of the History of Ideas* |
| *JIBS (=IBK)* | *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* |
| *JIP* | *Journal of Indian Philosophy* |
| *JRAS* | *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| *JYSC* | *Wang-sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u jui-ying shan-chuan* (T. 2070) |
| *KC* | *Kuan-ching.* Full title: *Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching* (T. 365) |
| *KCS* | *Kuan-ching shu,* Shan-tao (T. 1753) |
| *KFSH* | *Kuan-Fo san-mei hai ching* (T. 643) |
| *KHP* | *Kuan Hsü-k'ung-tsang P'u-sa ching* (T. 409) |
| *KMST* | *Kuan Milo P'u-sa shang-sheng tu-shuai-t'ien ching* (T. 452) |
| *KNFM* | *Kuan-nien fa-men,* Shan-tao (T. 1959) |
| *KPP* | *Kuan P'u-hsien P'u-sa hsing-fa ching* (T. 277) |
| *KSC* | *Kao-seng chuan* (T. 2059) |



| | |
|---|---|
| *KYWS* | *Kuan Yao-wang Yao-shang erh P'u-sa ching* (T. 1161) |
| *LAC* | *Lüeh-lun an-lo ching-t'u,* T'an-luan (T. 1957) |
| *LSCT* | *Lung-shu ching-t'u wen* (T. 1957) |
| *LSCW* | *Lung-shu tseng-kuang ching-t'u wen* (T. 1970) |
| *LSVS* | Longer *Sukhāvatī-vyāha-sūtra* or Longer Sutra (see Müller) |
| *MCB* | *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* |
| *MCED* | *Chinese-English Dictionary* (see Mathews) |
| *MEB* | *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (see Mochizuki) |
| *MEBC* | *Encylopedia of Buddhism* (Ceylon) (see Malalasekera) |
| *MS* | *Monumenta Serica* |
| *NCE* | *New Catholic Encyclopedia* |
| *NFC* | *Nien-Fo ching* (T. 1966) |
| *Nj.* | Nanjio's *Catalogue* (see Nanjio) |
| *PCS-A* | *Pan-chou san-mei ching,* sixteen chapters (T. 418) |
| *PCS-B* | *Pan-chou san-mei ching,* eight chapters (T. 417) |
| *PCST* | *Pan-chou san-mei tsan,* Shan-tao (T. 1981) |
| *PDB* | *Practical Dictionary of Buddhism* (see Kao) |
| *PED* | *Pali-English Dictionary* |
| *PEW* | *Philosophy East and West* |
| *RBS* | *Revue Bibliographique de Sinologie* |
| *RCDW* | *Chinesisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch* (see Rüdenberg) |
| *RS* | *Religious Studies* |
| *SBE* | *Sacred Books of the East* |
| *SCD* | *The Sanskrit-Chinese Dictionary of Buddhist Technical Terms* (see Wogihara) |
| *SED* | *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (see Monier-Williams) |
| *SSKD* | *Biographies of Seven Patriarchs* (see Fujishima and Nogami) |

| | |
|---|---|
| *SSVS* | Shorter *Sukhāvatī-vyāha-sūtra* or Shorter Sutra (see Müller) |
| *SZ* | *Shigaku zasshi* |
| *TAC* | *Tsan A-mi-t'a chieh*, T'an-luan (T. 1978) |
| *T.* | *Shinshu daizōkyō (Taishō* Edition of the Chinese Tripitaka) |
| *TP* | *T'oung Pao* |
| *VMN* | *Visuddhimagga.* Trans. Ñānamoli (see Buddhaghosa) |
| *VMP* | *Visuddhimagga.* Trans. Pe Maung Tin (see Buddhaghosa) |
| *WDEL* | *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* |
| *WSC* | *Ching-t'u wang-sheng chuan* (T. 2071) |
| *WSL* | *Wang-sheng lun*, Vasubandhu (T. 1524) |
| *WSLC* | *Wang-sheng lun-chu*, T'an-luan (T. 1819) |
| *WSLT* | *Wang-sheng li-tsan*, Shan-tao (T. 1980) |
| *ZDIK* | "Zendō den no ichi kōsatsu" (see Iwai) |
| *ZDMG* | *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* |
| *ZDK* | *Zendō tashi no kenkyū* (see Matsumoto, et al.) |

# NOTES

## PREFACE

1. *The Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* as expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha, translated and annotated by Ryukoku University Translation Centre, under the direction of Meiji Yamada (Kyoto, 1984).

2. Ryōsetsu Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana: The Concept of the Nembutsu in Shan-tao's Pure Land Buddhism* (Tokyo: The Kyoiku Shincho Sha, 1974).

3. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China* (1964) lists "the five main activities that could lead to rebirth in the Western Paradise": the primary activity is "uttering the name of the Buddha"; the other four (chanting sutras, meditating, worshiping, and singing praises) are seen as "auxiliary" (p. 346). K. Ch'en misinterprets Shan-tao's statement. According to Shan-tao, the primary activity is *nien-Fo,* which is not only oral invocation.

Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang* (1987) follows the same line of interpretation: "Shan-tao singles out the fourth practice, the recitation of the name of Amitābha, as the crucial instrument of salvation, . . ." (p. 72).

4. See *Ching-t'u yuan-liu, Shan-tao ta-shih, Hsiang-chi szu k'ao* (Studies on the Origin of Pure Land Buddhism, on Grand-Master Shan-tao, and on the Hsiang-chi Monastery,) essay by Sun Fou-sheng (n.p., 1979).

5. See Ch'en Ching-fu, *Hsiang-chi szu* (Xi'an: San-ch'in Publishing Company, 1986). (In the series: *Ch'ang-an Fo-chiao yen-chiu ts'ung-shu* [Collections of Research on Ch'ang-an Buddhism].)

## CHAPTER 1. THE EMERGENCE OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM

1. *MEBC* (1964): I, Part 3, 443–446.

2. Ikemoto mentions L. A. Waddell, J. Edkins, S. Beal, P. Pelliot, and S. Lévi, without, however, giving any bibliographical details. He probably has in mind J. Edkins 1878 and 1880.

3. *MEBC*: I, Part 3, 443.

4. Examples are H. Dayal 1932; A. Getty 1914 and 1928; K. Reichelt 1934; *Hōbōgirin* 1929: I, 24; E. Lamotte 1958: I, 550f.; *L'Inde Classique* 1953: II, 569f.

5. Soper 1959.

6. M. -T. de Mallmann 1948.

7. P. Mus 1934: 176.

8. M. -T. de Mallmann 1948: 85–95.

9. *LSVS*, trans. in *SBE* 49, paragraphs 31 and 34: "There rises the Buddha-son, glorious, he indeed the mighty Avalokiteshvara . . ." (para. 31). "In that Buddha country, those who are Śravakas are possessed of the light of a fathom, . . . the two Bodhisattvas, by whose light that world is everywhere shining with eternal splendor . . ." Further, the Buddha tells their names: "One of them . . . is the noble-minded Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, and the second is Mahāsthāmaprāpta by name. And . . . these two were born there, having left this Buddha country here" (para. 34).

10. This assumption seems plausible for various reasons: (1) There is the literary testimony of the Pure Land sutras, in which we find a growing emphasis on Avalokiteshvara: from no role in the Shorter Sutra and a modest role in the Longer Sutra(s) to a very prominent position in the *Kuan-ching*. A. Getty (1928: 57f. ): The beginning of the worship of Avalokiteshvara in India is not known; it became popular toward the third century of the Common Era in northern India and reached its climax in the seventh century; see also Bhattacharya (1958: 143): "The conception of Avalokiteshvara is as old as the third century B.C.. He was first ushered into existence by the Mahāsānghikas, about the time of Aśoka, in their work entitled, Mahāvastu Avadāna, where he has been characterized as the 'Bhagavan who takes the form of a Bodhisattva . . .'" (2) The particular iconographic characteristic of the Bodhisattva is that in his headdress there figures an image of Amitābha. This unique feature, together with his role as the Buddha's attendant, may very well be explained by the fact that at one moment in the cultural development he was "captured" and "subdued" by this Buddha. Since it was not easy to maintain *two* heavenly beings representing the same values—light and compassion—it seems more reasonable that one was eclipsed by the other, while their function as light deities remained intact.

11. This insight into the convergence of various internal Buddhist factors which ultimately became the Amitābha worship started to grow in my own mind through careful reading of the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* as well as the historical materials related to the development of new schools within Buddhism which ultimately resulted in the formation of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The review article of J. Ikemoto 1961, especially his summary of Mochizuki's theory, was also very stimulating. It was only after I had formed my own theory about the rise of the Amitābha Cult that Fujita Kōtatsu's 1970 exhaustive study about the formation of Pure Land Buddhism came to my attention. This work is very careful and detailed, and is so far the best and only exhaustive study on the subject existing in any language. I was very pleased to see that my own theory agrees in several details with Fujita's, although his work is more detailed. The only shortcoming that I can see is that he approaches the topic from the viewpoint of literary criticism exclusively.



12. "For centuries the three works on Amitāyus and Sukhāvatī have formed the basis of the faith of the majority of Buddhists in China and Japan." M. Winternitz 1933: II, 312.

13. These texts have become very much respected by Mahāyāna Buddhists in the Far East, and are generally well known enough in the West, both through translations and through general descriptions in Buddhist textbooks. The two versions of the *Sukhāvatī-vyāha-sūtra*, translated by Max Müller, and the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*, translated by J. Takakusu, are included in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 49. Some examples of general introductions are A. Bloom 1965: 1–6; C. Eliot 1968: II, 29–31; H. Robinson 1970: 66–68; Bhikshu Sangharakshita 1966: 351–362; M. Winternitz 1933: II, 310f.

14. See Fujita Kōtatsu. *Genshi Jōdo shisō no kenkyū*. Literary criticism of these texts is also discussed in Bagchi 1927: I; Zürcher 1959; and *MEBC*: I, 470–472.

15. They are T. 310 (no. 5), 360, 361, 362, 363.

16. T. 366 and 367.

17. Kao in *MEBC*: I, 470–472.

18. For a more detailed study, see S. Mochizuki 1946; R. Mano 1966: 625–634; K. Fujita 1970: 165–258.

19. Winternitz 1933: II, 310.

20. Soper 1959: 142.

21. The comparison is based on the English translations by M. Müller, *SBE* 49. The numbers between parentheses refer to the respective paragraphs of Müller's translation.

22. In the present version there are forty-six vows; however, in the Chinese translations the numbers are not the same: Chih-Ch'ien's version has twenty-four, whereas both Sanghavarman and Bodhiruci list forty-eight *pranidhānas*.

23. For a detailed comparison of the use of the names given to the Buddha of the West, see I. Yamada 1968: 175–183.

24. The translator says in a footnote that the Chinese translators "take a different view of this passage." *SBE* 49: Part 2, 98. This aspect will be discussed in Chapter 8; but it is important to state right now that M. Müller's translation is erroneous and has created a mistaken view that is still commonly accepted and repeated.

25. In the Chinese translations, there is an important development concerning these Bodhisattvas: see A. Soper 1959: 143.

26. That there was a gradual development from four to six, and finally to ten Buddhas (of the various directions), is accepted by I. Yamada 1968: 132.

27. This appears from (27) and (29).

28. See Chapter 2.

29. E.g. Tsukamoto (1960: 553): "and some of the Pure Land Scriptures, . . . were written about the first century A.D."

30. D. T. Suzuki (1924–25: 288–293) gives the following six main ideas "which support the structure of the great Pure Land edifice": 1. *Amida*. 2. *The Pure Land*. 3. *The Original Vows*. 4. *The Conception of Sin*. 5. *Nembutsu*. 6. *The Moral Life*. However, this enumeration may be partly criticized. No. 6, moral life, is not really a characteristic of the Pure Land way of life; it is basically Buddhist, but it is less emphasized in this school than in other schools. No. 4 is not attested to in the sutra: this is rather "reading into" the text, because of its later importance in Shinran's Pure Land school. No. 5, formulated in Japanese, gives it a narrowly defined and sectarian version of *buddhānusmriti*. Yet Suzuki's article is of great value, in that he realized the multiple factors within Buddhism responsible for the origin of Pure Land Buddhism.

31. N. Dutt (1960: 248f.): *Saddhā* comes first in the five "dominant factors" (*indriya*) and internal strengths (*bala*); see also H. Dayal 1932: 141f.; 145–147. The author does not attempt to give a deeper analysis of the concept *śraddhā*; he only lists scriptural references.

32. H. Guenther (1957: 92f.): "*śraddhā* (Pali *saddhā*) comprises all the conceptions we express by 'confidence', 'certitude', 'reverence', 'respect', and it is precisely the feeling of respect and devotedness, in addition to confidence and certitude, that distinguishes *śraddhā* from all other terms denoting similar qualities. It certainly is not mere belief or blind faith. It is described as that by which people have confidence and respect, or that by which we ourselves have confidence and respect or simply as confidence and respect. Inasmuch as it overcomes that which is not trustworthy and which does not deserve our respect, it is 'dominance' in the sense of lordliness with respect to its own nature determination and certitude." See also N. Dutt (1945: 252): "*Saddhā* (faith) . . . is mentioned as an essential element for spiritual progress, but . . . *saddhā* was looked upon only as an antidote to inclination to non-Buddhist religious faith. It was an antidote to *vicikicchā* or doubt about the greatness of Buddha, excellence of his teaching and uprightness of his disciples."

33. For a definition of *bhakti*, see J. Gonda 1960: I, 244; F. Edgerton 1964. The relationship between Hindu and Buddhist *bhakti* is highly controversial: a definite stand on the matter is not strictly necessary as far as our general thesis is concerned. See, e.g., H. Dayal 1932: 31–34.



34. From the early beginnings of the *sangha*, the practice of taking the Three Refuges (*sarana*) was adopted as an expression of "faith" in the Three Jewels (*triratna*): the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *sangha*. It is impossible to determine with certainty when this cult started, but very likely at an early stage in the growth of Buddhism a triple profession of faith was used as a formula of initiation. See L. de la Vallée Poussin 1931–32: 65f.

35. See N. Dutt 1957: 163–179; N. Dutt 1945: 249–251.

36. N. Dutt 1945: 252–256.

37. E. Lamotte 1958: 689 (my translation). For a more detailed study, see L. de la Vallée Poussin 1929: II, 762–813. See also N. Dutt 1929: 518–546.

38. E. Lamotte 1958: 689f.

39. Ibid.: 690.

40. This is formulated in the preface to the *Mahāvastu*, attributed to the Lokottaravādins, a subsect of the Mahāsānghikas.

41. E. Lamotte 1958: 574.

42. Ibid.: 302.

43. The original Sanskrit *Samayabhedoparacanacakraśāstra* is lost and only available in Chinese translations, T. 2031, 2032, 2033; respectively, Nj. 1286, 1284, 1285.

44. T. 2031, 49: 15, B27–C4.

45. T. 2032, 49: 18, B13–14.

46. T. 2033, 49: 20, B29–C1–2, 4.

47. E. Lamotte 1958: 692.

48. A. Bareau 1955: 59; J. Masuda 1925: 19f.

49. Bareau 1955: 58.

50. *Kathāvattu*. See E. Lamotte 1958:692; A. Bareau (1955) also adds a commentary on Vasumitra's work, by K'ui-chi (632–682).

51. A. Bareau 1955: 60f.

52. There must have been two terms used in the Sanskrit original, since one Chinese text is *wu-pien-chi* and another is *wu-liang*. If *ananta* became *wu-pien (chi)*, perhaps the other term was *amita*. However, an alternative for *wu-liang* is perhaps *apramana*.

53. Masuda 1925: 19.

54. T. 2033, 49: 20, C4.

55. There is some confusion with regard to the name of Akshobhya. On the one hand, Akshobhya is translated as "The Immovable" (A. Getty 1962: 36), which is rendered as *pu-tung* in Chinese. On the other hand, the name Akshobhya is not translated, but transliterated into Chinese: *A-ch'u*, whereas another Buddha, *Acala*, who is a form of Vairocana, is translated as *Pu-tung Fo* (A. Getty 1962: 35). However, according to the *MEB*: 23C, Akshobhya is translated as *Pu-tung*, *wu-tung*, or *wu-nu*.

56. Besides, it is agreed that both the Buddha of the West and the Buddha of the East are among the most ancient *dhyāni* Buddhas. The sutra on Akshobhya, T. 313, translated into Chinese in the second half of the second century C.E., betrays its early character because of strong Hīnayāna links. See A. Soper 1959: 167–169.
57. Masuda 1925: 20.
58. A. Bareau 1955: 59.
59. E. Lamotte 1958: 686f.
60. E. Conze 1962: 197.
61. L. de la Vallée Poussin 1955: II, 739–753; 1930: II, 136–142; H. Dayal 1932.
62. H. Dayal 1932: 43.
63. Ibid.: 272.
64. Ibid.: 50.
65. Ibid.: 64.
66. D. T. Suzuki 1967: 307.
67. See I. Yamada 1968: 161.
68. Ibid.
69. Sangharakshita 1966: 462f.
70. See H. Dayal 1932: 172–193.
71. Ibid.: 174.
72. A. L. Basham 1963: 490.
73. Ibid.
74. See G. P. Malalasekera 1960: I, 355f. See also L. de la Vallée Poussin 1955: *ERE:* II, 698.
75. L. de la Vallée Poussin, "Abode," p. 699. The author gives the main texts in translation.
76. Ibid.: 700.
77. From *Rāmāyana* IV, 43, translated by L. de la Vallée Poussin, "Abode," p. 699.
78. L. de la Vallée Poussin, "Abode of the Blest (Buddhist)," *ERE*: II, 687–689.
79. See art. "Butsudo," *Hōbōgirin*: III, 198–203.
80. Ibid.: 687. Cp. also the Buddhist Tushita heaven, where Shākyamuni ruled before his last incarnation, and where now Maitreya awaits the time of his apparition.
81. I. Yamada 1968: 130.
82. A. Bareau 1955: 60f.
83. I. Yamada 1968: 131.
84. E. Conze 1959: 155. For a more detailed discussion of *Buddhakshetra*, see T. Rowell 1932–1935: 199–246, 399–431; 1936–1939: 130–176.
85. *SBE* 49: Part 2, xxii.
86. I. Yamada 1968: 69f.



87. G. Tucci 1948–1951: 173–219.
88. Ibid.: 196f.
89. Ibid.: 217f.
90. Ibid.: 218.
91. C. Eliot 1968: III, 220.
92. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 11 (6).
93. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 195 (28): reconstructed by J. Takakusu, in the *ADS*. However, E. Conze suggests "*Om Namo Amitābhāya Buddhāya*" (1959: 158).
94. A. Daniélou 1964: 348.
95. A. Bharati 1965: 131.
96. M. Eliade (1969: 212) observes "that certain tantric *mantras* are already to be found in the Brāhmanas."
97. Ibid.
98. A. Andrews 1970: 21.
99. Longer Sutra, *SBE* 49: para. 8, vows 18, 19, 33, 34, 35, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46; 26; Shorter Sutra, *SBE* 10.
100. Longer Sutra, *SBE* 49; vows 27, 28, 29; Shorter Sutra, *SBE* 49: 10, 17.
101. The *Mahāvāstu* is usually ascribed to the Lokottaravādins. See M. Winternitz 1933: 239f. It is, however, not certain whether the whole work should be considered to be of Lokottaravādin origin. Probably only the preface was written by them. See N. Dutt 1970: 81.
102. N. Dutt 1970: 247.
103. M. Winternitz 1933: 246.
104. More information about the Mahāsānghikas is given by A. Bareau 1955: 31f.; E. Lamotte 1958: 312–316; *L'Inde Classique*: II, 496f.; 559–562; E. J. Thomas 1963: 31–33 *passim*; S. Dutt 1957: 123–124; and N. Dutt 1970.
105. A. Bareau 1955: 31f.
106. Bareau's (1955: 32) hypothesis is about 300 B.C.E.
107. A. Bareau 1955: 55: From their original region of residence, Magadha (fourth–third century B.C.E.), their presence is cited in Mathura, Karle, and the region of Kabul (second century C.E.), and later in Kashmir, Andarale, North Afghanistan, Dhanakataka, and Uddiyāna (early seventh century C.E.). By the end of the seventh century C.E., they are spotted in Magadha and East India, a few in Lāta and Sindhu, a few in the north and the south of India.
108. Ibid.: 75 (my translation).
109. Lamotte 1958: 692.
110. Ibid.: 109–129.
111. Ibid.: 128.
112. Ibid.: 457–461.
113. Ibid.: 469.

114. Ibid.: 469–487.

115. W. Tarn 1938: 413–436. For a discussion of the "Interaction of Greek and Indian Civilizations," see 1938: 375–408.

116. Basham 1963: 490, 492, 495, 233; see also L. de la Vallée Poussin 1930: 239–259.

117. See J. Rosenfield 1967; B. Puri 1965; B. Gafurov 1969: 22, 4–13; D. Sircar 1960: II, 136–153; J. E. Van Lohuizen de Leeuw 1949. For a select bibliography on the Kushans, see B. Puri 1965: 255–262.

118. D. Sircar 1960: 141.

119. E. Lamotte 1958: 648.

120. D. Sircar 1960: 144.

121. Ibid.: 147.

122. See I. Yamada 1968: 132; A. Soper 1959: 167–169.

123. *A-tsuo Fo-kuo ching*, T. 313. A. Soper (1959: 168f.) discusses the contents of this sutra, which was translated by Lokakshema in the second century C.E.

124. Fujita Kōtatsu (1970: 257) speculates that both versions of the *Sukhāvatī-sūtras* were written in the northwest of India during Kushana rule, about 100 C.E.

125. G. Schopen 1977: 177–210.

126. Ibid.: 201–205.

## CHAPTER 2. THE *KUAN WU-LIANG-SHO-FO CHING* AND THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMITA CULT

1. M. Müller, *SBE* 49. J. Takakusu's translation is in Part 2 of the book, pp. 161–204. The following translations have also been made of the *Kuan-ching*:

(a) Bhikku Assaji, trans., *The Sutra of Visualizing the Buddha of Immeasurable Length of Life, Bilingual Buddhist Series I: Sutras and Scriptures* (Taipei: Buddhist Culture Service, 1962), pp. 155–192.

(b) Yoshitaka Kawagishi, trans., *Buddha-Bhasita Amitāyur Dhyāna Sutra (Meditation on Buddha Amitāyus)* (New York: American Buddhist Academy Press), 1949.

(c) Lu K'uan Yü (Charles Luk), *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation* (London: Rider and Co., 1964), pp. 85–106 ("The Sutra of the Contemplation of Amitāyus").

(d) A partial translation is included in J. Eracle, *La doctrine Bouddhique de la Terre Pure, Introduction à trois sutras Bouddhiques* (Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1973), pp. 78–88 ("Le *Sutra* de la Contemplation du Buddha de la Vie Infinie").



(e) The most recent translation was made by a group of scholars in Kyoto: *The Sutra of Contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*. (Kyoto: Ryukoku University Translation Centre), 1984.

2. B. Nanjio (hereafter abbreviated Nj.), *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translations of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), p. 58, no. 198.

3. A new hypothesis concerning the original title of the sutra can be based on a passage in Chi-tsang's commentary on the *Kuan-ching* (T. 1752, 37: 233, C5–8). The title would then be *Amitāyur-Buddhāloka-sūtra*. Chi-tsang is the only commentator who mentions the *Hu* (meaning Central Asian) title of the sutra: "According to the existing *Hu* pronunciation [the title] is: *Fo-t'o vac(a) a-li-yeh O-mi-t'o Fo-t'o su-to-lo*." This is a very interesting and suggestive passage, which not only indicates that there was a *Hu* or Central Asian text of the *Kuan-ching*, but also what its title was. At first, it seems that we have to do with a Sanskrit title, but this is not necessarily so; it could be that Central Asian languages used to translate Buddhist texts also employed Sanskrit transliterations, just as in Chinese.

Chi-tsang's father was a Parthian (Parthia borders on Sogdiana's west side). Although educated in Chinese, he may have known some elements of his ancestral language, since it is said that he possessed an exceptional memory. Therefore, when he speaks of a *Hu* transliteration, it may have been Parthian; it certainly was not Sanskrit, which in Chinese is called *Fan*. Since Chi-tsang went to study under Fa-lang in the south (Chien-yeh), ca. 555–562, where the *Kuan-ching* had been translated about one hundred years previously, it is quite possible that he found there a copy of the *Kuan-ching* in Parthian or another related language, for him a *Hu* language.

What does Chi-tsang's transliteration of the title allow us to conclude? The crucial word is *A-li-yeh* (according to *DCBT*: 288, A–B), used for the Sanskrit *ārya*.

The compound is used for *ārya* (ibid.: 288, A–B). However, there is something wrong here in Chi-tsang's description. This is the place where *kuan* should be. In his own Chinese title, there is no equivalent for *ārya*, but the character *kuan* is there. However, instead of *ārya*, another Sanskrit term may have been used: the same characters are also used for *ālaya* (ibid.: 292, A), "an abode, resting place," or according to *SED*: 154, A: "a house, dwelling; receptacle, asylum." Neither *ārya* nor *ālaya* makes sense, and it seems that no other explanation can be given than to suppose a mistake has slipped in. The best choice would then be to substitute *āloka* for *ārya* or *ālaya*. The meaning of *āloka* is "looking, seeing, beholding; sight, aspect, vision" (*SED*: 154, B; cp. *BHSD*: 106, B: *āloka* means "light" but also "to see") and would be an exact basis for the Chinese *kuan*. A confirmation is given by the name of the Bodhisattva

Avalokiteśvara: the root verb here is probably the same Sanskrit *āloka,* which is also reflected in the Chinese name: *Kuan* (shih-)yin. That a mistake may have slipped in is not amazing: it is easily explained through a lack of knowledge of Sanskrit. If the version of the title preserved by Chi-tsang is correct and if the mistaken transliteration is accepted, we must conclude that the original title (in Sanskrit or in a Central Asian language using Sanskrit transliterations) was: *Amitāyur-Buddhāloka-sūtra.*

4. See P. C. Bagchi 1927: 391ff. See also R. Shih, trans. and annot., 1968: I, 147ff.

5. *KCS*, T. 2059, 50: 343, C11–23.

6. Ibid.: 343, C13–14; R. Shih 1968: 147: "Quand il entrait en contemplation, il y restait parfois sept jours sans en sortir."

7. Now a suburb of Nanking.

8. *KCS,* T. 2059, 50: 343, C16–18.

9. Ibid.: 343, C21–23.

10. G. Ono, ed., 1968–69: 198, c.

11. Ibid.: Ono also lists sixteen earlier Buddhist canons in which the sutra text appears.

12. For instance, L. Hurvitz (1959, no. 634), says that the *KFC* is a "well-known 'spurious sūtra' of Chinese provenance."

13. Recent studies of the various opinions on this question were written by Fujita 1969: 465–472; and by Fujita, in Buswell 1990: 149–173. According to this research, some Japanese scholars, such as Nakamura and Kasugai, favor a Central Asian origin. Others, like Tsukinowa and Suzuki, are of the opinion that a Chinese origin is more probable. Fujita remains undecided (1990: 163).

14. Fujita 1969: 465. See also R. Fujimoto 1960.

15. K. Fujita 1969: 466.

16. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 180.

17. D. Seckel 1964: 62. See also S. E. Lee 1964: 132. This dates the Bāmiyān statues around the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. Fa-hsien, who traveled to India from 399 C.E. until his return to China in 414, does not mention the Bāmiyān statues in his travel account. He would probably have heard of them or seen them if they had existed at that time, since he was in the neighborhood of Bāmiyān (Gandhāra, Peshawar, Nagarahāra, and maybe even Kabul). See also J. Legge 1886 and 1965: 21–40.

18. K. Fujita 1969: 469.

19. A. Soper 1959: 143.

20. E. Zürcher 1959: 212.

21. A. Soper 1959: 143. The author does not give an exact reference, but the idea is found in T. 1509, 25: 306, A12–13, and 308, C10–14. The latter states, "The Bodhisattvas possess a *samādhi*, called '*samādhi* of inspecting (*kuan*) all the Buddhas of the Three Worlds.' When a Bodhisattva enters into this *samādhi*, he can distinctly see all the Buddhas of the Three Worlds and hear their discourses of the *dharma.*"



22. See L. Renou, J. Filliozat, et al. 1953: II, 532f.

23. Kumārajīva, trans. *Shih-chu P'i-p'o-sha lun*, T. 1521, 26.

24. Ibid.: 44, B19–20.

25. *MEB*: 4252, B; *Hōbōgirin, Ann*: 25; Nj. 73. The translations of this presumed title are various. A. Andrews (1970) renders it as "seeing All Buddhas Samādhi Sūtra." A. Soper (1959: 143) renders it as "Sūtra on the Meditation [that Brings Before One] Everything that Exists Through the Ten Quarters." These translations do not seem accurate. In addition to the short Chinese title, *Pan-chou san-mei ching*, there is a longer one given as a subtitle which appears to be a translation of the Sanskrit: *Hsien-tsai Fo hsi-tsai-ch'ien-li san-mei*, or *Shih-fang hsien-tsai Fo hsi-tsai-ch'ien-li ting.*

26. E. Zürcher 1959: 333, note 95.

27. Ibid.: 220. Another translation similar to Zürcher's is given by P. Demiéville (1954: 353): "*Sūtra* de la concentration durant laquelle apparai [ssen]t face à face le[s] Buddha[s] en présence immédiate."

28. T. 417 and 418. The former is missing in Nj.; the latter is Nj. 73. The other translations are T. 416 (Nj. 75) and T. 419 (Nj. 76). S. Mochizuki (1946: 190) suggests 179 C.E. as the date of translations.

29. E. Zürcher 1959: 35.

30. Ibid.: 332ff., note 95. According to S. Mochizuki (1946: 192), T. 416 is certainly the latest translation; among the three remaining ones, T. 419 is the oldest (four chapters), followed by T. 417 (eight chapters) and T. 418 (sixteen chapters).

31. S. Mochizuki 1946: 195.

32. Ibid.: 196. If this is correct, it would follow that the formula "from one day to seven days, keep his name in mind with thoughts undisturbed" (*SBE* 49: 99), which appears in the Shorter Sutra, and other formulas found in the Longer Sutra and the *Kuan-ching*, are all based on the *PCS* (ibid.: 196).

33. The references to Amita are in T. 417, 13: 898, A–B and in T. 418: 905, A–B.

34. Originally there must have been more than six: at least one *kuan sutra* is reported in ancient catalogues, the *Kuan-shih-yin kuan-ching.* It is mentioned in the *Ch'u san-tsang chi-chi* and the *Chung-ching mu-lu*, which states that it was translated by the Marquis of An-yang (T. 2146, 55:116, C).

35. The reconstructed Sanskrit title (Nj. 30) is *Ākāsagarbha-bodhisattva-dhyāna-sūtra(?).*

36. A. Soper 1959: 206, note 17.

37. T. 409, 13: 678, A14–B5.

38. Ibid.: 678, B6–16.

39. Ibid.: 678, C7–29.
40. Ibid.: 679, A10–11.
41. Ibid.: 679, A27.
42. The reconstructed Sanskrit title (Nj. 104) is *Buddhadhyāna-samādhisāgara-sūtra.*
43. A. Soper 1959: 184. For a discussion of the sutra, see pp. 184–192.
44. Ibid.:184.
45. Ibid.: 185.
46. No Sanskrit title is given by Nj.
47. A. Soper 1959: 215. For a description of the contents, see p. 215ff.
48. P. C. Bagchi 1927: 222. A. Soper (1959: 216) thinks that for this reason the *KMST* may have been composed at Turfan "so that it represents a provincial imitation."
49. Ibid.: 216.
50. No Sanskrit title is given by Nj.
51. A. Soper 1959: 222.
52. T. 277, 9: 389, C5–6.
53. A. Soper 1959: 223ff.
54. The Sanskrit title reconstructed by Nj. 79 is *Bhaishajyarāja-bhaishajyasamudgati* (or *-gata*) *-sūtra.* Nj. leaves out *dhyāna*, although his translation of the title includes "meditation."
55. A. Soper 1959: 203. For a general discussion of the sutra and of the underlying cult, see pp. 203–210.
56. Nj. 79.
57. See P. C. Bagchi 1927: 341–346. A. Soper (1959: 218) adds the following: "In this geographical connection, it may be noted that the Chinese monks' biographies in several instances name Kashmir as the country in which Maitreya was particularly accessible to human worshipers by the route of mystic ecstasy. The famous missionary and translator Buddhabhadra is said to have visited Tusita in a trance while he was studying in Kashmir, some time around A.D. 400."
58. P. C. Bagchi 1927: 388–391.
59. Ibid.: 221–223.
60. *Hsi-yü chih Fo-chiao*: 341.
61. See *L'Inde Classique*, II:562 (#2321). See also R. Gard 1962: 30.
62. See Liu Mau-tsai 1969.
63. "Author" in the present context always refers to the original composer of the sutra in distinction from later interpolators.
64. In the following discussion the numbers between parentheses refer to the chapters or paragraphs of the sutra as given in Takakusu's English translation.



65. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 169 (8). The Chinese text: T. 365, 12: 341, C25–27.
66. *SBE:* 175 (15). Chinese: T. 365, 12: 342, C14–15. The Chinese text of the first passage, T. 365, 12: 341, C15, is identical with the second one.
67. *SBE*: 175ff.
68. *SBE*: 176 (15). The Chinese text, T. 365, 12: 342, C20–22, almost perfectly parallels the citation in Note 65.
69. Negative since it shows discrepancy with the internal unity of the sutra.
70. Commentary on the *Kuan-ching*, T. 1753, 37: 347, C11–14.
71. H. Dayal 1932: 271.
72. Ibid.: 167.
73. *SBE*: 170 (9); Chinese text: T. 365, 12: 342, A4.
74. *SBE*: 173 (12); Chinese text: T. 365, 12: 342, B21.
75. *SBE*: 187 (21); Chinese text: T. 365, 12: 344, C6–7.
76. Compare with the scheme in Takakusu's translation:

| *The External Splendors* | *The Internal Splendors* |
|---|---|
| 1. The Setting Sun (9) | 7. The Throne (16) |
| 2. The Water and Icy Ground (10) | 8. The Images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas (17) |
| 3. The Land (11) | 9. The True Body (18) |
| 4. The Trees (12) | 10. Avalokiteshvara (19a) |
| 5. The Lakes (13) | 11. Mahāsthāmaprāpta (19b) |
| 6. General View (14) | 12. Universal View (20) |
| | 13. Joint View (21) |
| | 14. |
| | 15. Three Levels of Rebirth (22–30) |
| | 16. |

77. *SBE*: 167 (7).
78. Ibid.: 177 (16).
79. Ibid.: 178 (17).
80. Ibid.: 187 (18).
81. Following Rüdenberg, *Chinesisch Deutsches Wörterbuch*, no. 4773: 351. Cf. Mathews, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, no. 5281: 724.
82. Giles, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, Table I, p. [1].
83. See T'ang Ch'ang-ju, *Wei-chin nan-pei ch'ao shih-lun-ts'ung*, 2nd ed. (Peking: 1957), pp. 85–126. See also D. Holzman, "Les sept sages de la forêt des bambous et la société de leur temps," *TP* 44 (1956): 317–346, 324. See also E. Zürcher 1959: 44.

84. Although this system of ranking officials into nine groups may have been the direct source of inspiration for the introduction of nine modes of rebirth, the ultimate source could have been the cosmology of Chinese philosophers like Huai-nan-tzu (second century B.C.E.) who thought that Heaven consisted of "nine divisions." See Fung Yu-lan 1952: I, 399.

The division into nine ranks also had quite different applications in Chinese history, for example, the nine groups of "great imperial concubines" during the T'ang dynasty. See N. Toan and L. Ricaud, *Une Traduction juxta-linéaire commentée de la biographie officielle de l'Impératrice Wou Tsö-t'ien, d'après le texte du Hsin T'ang-shu* (Saigon, 1959), p. 83ff.; "La hiérarchie féminine à la cour des T'ang."

85. A. Soper 1959: 141–155.

86. *SBE*: 200 (32). Chinese text: T. 365, 12: 346, B9–10. For a more detailed study of the meditation aspect of the *Kuan-ching* and Shan-tao's view on it, see Pas 1974: 99–116.

87. C. G. Jung, "Zur Psychologie östlicher Meditation," *Bulletin de la Société Suisse des Amis de l'Extrême-Orient (Mitteilungen der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft der Freunde Ostasiatischer Kultur)* 5 (1943): 33–53.

88. *SBE* 49: xxi.

89. H. Dumoulin 1965: 68.

90. Biographies of Seven Patriarchs (*SSKD*); see also A. Bloom 1965.

91. It is generally held that he lived between 150 and 250 C.E. (e. g., R. Robinson 1970: 54). For a discussion of his life, see Jan Y. -h., *HR* 10 (1970), 139–155. Also Ramanam Venkata 1966: 25–37.

92. T. 1521, 26: 40–47.

93. Ibid.: 30–35.

94. This is the "quality" reached in the seventh stage of Bodhisattvahood (see *DCBT*: 44, B; *MEB*: 57, B-C).

95. The Chinese text has *ch'in-hsing ching-chin*. See *DCBT*: 396, A; 427, A.

96. T. 1525, 26: 41, B2–6.

97. Ibid.: 41, B12–13.

98. Here follows a quotation from a nonidentified *sutra: Pao-yüeh t'ung-tzu so-wen ching.*

99. T. 1525, 26: 41, B14-C10.

100. Ibid.: 41, C10–42, A14.

101. Ibid: 42, C11–12.

102. Ibid.: 42, C14ff. If the author has the same Buddha in mind, it is strange that he uses two different names: *Amita* and *Wu-liang-shou.*

103. Ibid.: 43, A9–11.

104. Ibid.: 43, C19–44, A25.



105. Ibid.: 44, A26–B20.

106. Ibid.: 44, B21–C5.

107. Ibid.: 45, A14.

108. Among the Bodhisattvas is also Mañjushri, and one whose name is the same as the Buddha of the West of the first list: *Wu-liang-ming*. Also: *Kuan-shih Tzu-tsai-wang P'u-sa.*

109. Ibid.: 45, A17.

110. Nj. 265. According to *Hōbōgirin, Ann.*: 90, the title is *Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa(?).*

111. Also titled *Wang-sheng lun.*

112. For a discussion of Vasubandhu's life, see *MEB*: 2921, C–2924, A; E. Frauwallner 1951. The author tries inconclusively to establish two Vasubandhus: the "elder," ca. 320–380, brother of Asanga and head of the Yogācāra School; the "younger," ca. 400–480, author of the *Abhidharmakośa.*

113. See, e.g., A. Bloom 1965: 8; also *The Shōshin Ge*: 8f.

114. T. 1524, 26: 230, C–231, B.

115. Ibid.: 231, B8–9.

116. Ibid.: 231, B10. Chinese: *hsiu wu-nien fa-men.*

117. Ibid.: 233, A8.

118. Ibid.: A8–9.

119. Ibid.: A20–21.

120. Ibid.: A24–25.

121. Ibid.: 233, A27–28.

122. This controversy will be resumed in Chapter 9.

123. See, e.g., J. de Jong 1968.

124. See T'ang Yung-t'ung 1962; E. Zürcher 1959; K. Ch'en 1964; Z. Tsukamoto 1968 and 1969; S. Kamata 1968; R. Michihata 1956; D. Tokiwa 1938.

125. W. -t. Chan, *PEW* 7 (1957–1958), 107–116, traces the growth of Pure Land doctrine to the very beginning of Buddhism in China. "When it entered China, it was immediately merged with the Yellow Emperor—Lao Tzu Cult" (p. 109). But the author mixes up two different things: this early worship of Buddha does not likely refer to Amita, but to Shākyamuni.

126. See A. Soper 1959: 123–139.

127. Ibid.: 136.

128. Ibid.

129. Besides, the more philosophical aspects of Buddhism, in general, were initially approached from a Taoist viewpoint and explained in Taoist terminology. See, e.g., P. Demiéville, *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale* 1 (1956), 19–38. See also W. -t. Chan 1957–1958: 100.

130. K. Ch'en 1964: 172.

131. See, e.g., K. Ch'en 1964: 342f.; A. Soper 1959: 165f.; E. Zürcher 1959: 221f.

132. K. Ch'en 1964: 343; E. Zürcher 1959: 128.

133. E. Zürcher 1959: 116.

134. Ibid.: 128.

135. For Hui-yuan's biography and thought, see E. Zürcher 1959: 204–239. His biography from *KSC* is translated on pp. 240–253. Further bibliography is given on p. 394, footnote 121. See also T'ang Yung-t'ung 1962: I, 248–271; P. Demiéville 1954: 357–359, footnote 8. See also Tsukamoto-Hurvitz 1985.

136. E. g., E. Conze (1959: 205) says: "About 350 Hui-yüan founded the Pure Land School, which taught an easy way to salvation, based on the *Sukhavati Sutra.*" In these three lines, Conze makes four mistakes. Bhikshu Sangharakshita (1966: 365) writes: ". . . Hui-yüan, . . . is generally credited with having raised the Pure Land Movement to the status of an independent school."

137. This may be the viewpoint of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist writers. See, e.g., Hsieh Meng 1969: 240.

138. Even such good scholars as A. F. Wright (1959: 49) seem to rely on erroneous information: "Hui-yüan was the first to teach the attainment of salvation through faith in Amitābha and thus laid the foundations for the great Pure Land Sect . . ."

139. T. 2035, 49: 260, C17. This view is taken over by, for example, Tsukamoto and Umehara 1968: 58.

140. Tao-an's master Fo-t'u-teng (arrived in China from Central Asia *ca.* 310) is said to have introduced one line of transmission of Pure Land faith. His successors are said to be Tao-an and Hui-yuan. See J. Takakusu 1956: 167.

141. E. Zürcher's explanation (1959: 220) of the vow of the 123 participants as "a solemn covenant . . . to help each other to reach Sukhāvatī" is contradicted by P. Demiéville's more meaningful interpretation: "Réunis devant une statue d'Amitāyus, les membres s'engageaient à 'recueillir leur esprit dans la contrée occidentale,' c'est-à-dire dans la Terre Pure d'Amitāyus, à 'voyager ensemble au pays de l'absolu'" (p. 357). "Traveling together" would not mean "to be reborn together," but refers to communal "meditation," during which the mind is "wandering" in Sukhāvatī after the model of Chuang-tzu's "wandering."

142. P. Demiéville 1954: 355, note 1.

143. K. Tanaka 1990: 15. See also Tsukamoto-Hurvitz 1985: ch. 2.

144. W. M. McGovern 1968: 129; Mukerjee 1959: 205: "A more widespread Chinese school, second only to the Dhyāna in importance, is the Amita, or Pure Land School of Buddhism, founded by Bodhiruchi, who taught in China from 692 to 727 C.E., when he died." The author mixes up two monks called Bodhiruci, and obviously the one he has in mind arrived in Lo-yang in 508–509. (See P. B. Bagchi 1927: 252–260.)



145. For instance, J. Takakusu (1956: 167–168) says: "In China the authorities of the faith are many, but the following four lines of transmission are generally recognized:

(1) Fo-t'u-teng (between 310 and 348 C.E.) . . . Tao-an . . . Hui-yüan

(2) Bodhiruci (between 503 and 535 C.E.) . . . Hui-ch'ung . . . Tao-ch'ang . . . T'an-luan . . . Ta-hai . . . Fa-shang

(3) Bodhiruci . . . T'an-luan . . . Tao-ch'o . . . Shan-tao . . . Huai-kan . . . Shao-k'ang

(4) Tz'u-min.

However, another division most current in Japan is into three lines of transmission: Hui-yuan, Shan-tao, and Hui-jih. See, e.g., Michihata 1956: 114.

146. For instance, K. Ch'en 1964: 343–347; F. Houang 1963: 101.

147. However, the *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* (T. 2035, 49: 260–271) has a different set of patriarchs: (1) founding patriarch: Hui-yuan; (2) Shan-tao; (3) Ch'eng-yuan; (4) Fa-chao; (5) Shao-k'ang; (6) Yen-shou; (7) Hsing-ch'ang (or Sheng-ch'ang?).

148. For T'an-luan's biography, see *HKSC*, no. 6, T. 2060, 50: 470, A-C; also Chia-ts'ai, *Ching-t'u Lun*, T. 1963, 47: 97, C–98, A. Secondary works are quite numerous: e.g., Z. Tsukamoto 1969: 611–654; Hsiao Ching-fen (doctoral dissertation: 1967); R. Corless (Doctoral Dissertation: 1973); *SSKD*: 51–84; S. Nogami, *Chōgoku Jōdō Sansoden (CJS)*; K. Ch'en 1964: 343–345. (See also references on Buddhism in China and on the Chinese Pure Land "School.")

149. Hsiao (1967: 31–32) doubts the usual dates and suggests 488–489 as the year of birth and 554–557 as the time of his death.

150. K. Ch'en 1964: 344.

151. (1) *Wang-sheng lun chu,* T. 1819, 40: 826–844. (2) *Lüeh-lun an-lo ching-t'u* or *Lüeh-lun An-lo-chi*, T. 1957, 47: 1–3. (3) *Tsan O-mi-t'o-Fo chieh*, T. 1978, 47: 420–424.

152. Hsiao C. -f. 1967: 67.

153. Hsiao, C. -f. 1967: 112. This quotation has to be taken "with a grain of salt": although it is correct to say that faith in Amita's vows is the basic presupposition of all Pure Land devotionalism, the quotation generalizes too much, thereby glossing over some important distinctions within the five paths. In fact, *nien* as explained by T'an-luan has more than one meaning. As T'ang, Y. -t. (1962: I, 282) points out, *nien* according to T'an-luan has three distinct meanings: (1) *dhyāna*; (2) time element, moment; (3) oral chanting, invocation. To say that *nien* "provides the reason for perception" is misleading, because what T'an-luan means

by "perception" is *dhyāna*, or more correctly, the method of visualization-inspection as explained in the *Kuan-ching*.

154. For Tao-ch'o's biography, see *HKSC*, 20, T. 2060, 50: 593, C–594, A; *CTL*, T. 1963, 47: 98, B; *WSC*, T. 2071, 51: 105, B; D. Chappell (doctoral dissertation: 1976).

155. K. Ch'en 1964: 298f.; 344f.

156. "Sect" is perhaps not a correct way to indicate this movement, since *chiao* may also mean "teaching."

157. R. Robinson 1970: 86.

158. See *ALC*: 13, C.

159. Ibid.: 13, C10–11.

## CHAPTER 3. BIOGRAPHY OF AN EMINENT MONK: CH'AN MASTER SHAN-TAO (613–681)

1. K. Ch'en 1964: 213.
2. Huang 1960: 165.
3. R. Michihata 1939 and 1956: 113.
4. A. Wright 1959:65.
5. Ibid.: See also Jan, Y. -h. 1966: 1–7.
6. The bibliography on T'ang Buddhism is very extensive: besides the general works on the history of Chinese Buddhism and general works on Chinese history, see also: R. Michihata 1967; H. Yamazaki 1971; J. Gernet 1956 and 1972; K. Reichelt 1934; P. Demiéville 1956; E. Zürcher 1964; E. Reischauer 1955; S. Weinstein 1987.
7. From now on the abbreviated title *Amita* will be used rather than the Sanskrit original titles *Amitābha* or *Amitāyus*. The title *Amita* (in Chinese transliteration perhaps sounding *Omit'o*) was the one adopted in China, and has the advantage of referring equally to both Sanskrit names of the Buddha. It also served as the model used in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism: Amida. Yet I resent the term "Amidism," often used in Western literature to refer to Pure Land Buddhism in general: its Japanese derivation is too narrow a base to include Indian, Central Asian, Chinese, and Korean phenomena. I also disapprove of the frequent use of "Amitābha" in modern writings about the *Chinese* Pure Land school. (The Chinese themselves refer to "Amita.") Examples are several articles in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by M. Eliade (1987).
8. Besides the bibliography on Chinese Buddhism in general and T'ang Buddhism in particular (mentioned above), there are many other works on the Chinese Pure Land tradition: e.g., T. Fujishima and S. Nogami 1961; M. Ishida, 1969 and 1967; H. Iwai 1957; D. Kaneko 1968; S. Nogami 1970; Ohara Sensei koki kinen 1967; H. Ono et al. 1940; D. Tokiwa 1938; Z. Tsukamoto 1933; Z. Tsukamoto *et al.* 1968.



9. R. Michihata 1956: 114.
10. See R. Mochizuki 1942 and 1964.
11. K. Ch'en 1964: 172.
12. Ibid.: This information is based on Z. Tsukamoto 1942 and 1969.
13. See below. J. Gernet 1956: 225f. follows the same line of reasoning: based on Chavannes' earlier Lung-men studies, he believes that two periods witnessed a particular intensity in sculpture: Northern Wei (494–534) and early T'ang (638–705). Confirmations are found in architecture (highest construction rate: beginning of the sixth and end of the seventh century) and in the Tun-huang manuscripts (sixth century till the beginning of the eighth: most beautiful texts). These are believed to be indications of intense Buddhist life in general.
14. Examples are K. Ch'en 1964: 346–347; H. de Lubac 1955: 93; Jan Y. -h. 1966: 31; K. Reichelt 1934: 131.
15. E. g., A. Bloom 1965: 13–17.
16. The first one is a joint work by three Buddhist scholars in Japan: B. Matsumoto, T. Sekimoto, and S. Mochizuki (1927). The second is a series of five articles by H. Iwai: "Zendo den no ichi kosatsu," *SZ* 41 (1930), 57–94, 244–257, 446–482, 528–568, 916–973. The third is by S. Nogami 1970: 137–189.
17. In the same book we find a biographical notice on Tao-ch'o, which also refers to Shan-tao and must be equally utilized.
18. Iwai 1930: 62–64.
19. Chen Yuan 1964: 26.
20. Ibid.: 27.
21. Shao-k'ang entered the monastic life at the Chia-hsiang monastery of Yueh-chou; later he resided in the Pai-ma temple of Loyang; then he went to Ch'ang-an to the monastery where Shan-tao was venerated; the area where he was most active was Mu-chou (present-day Che-kiang province) (*ZTK*: 13).
22. Tz'u-min, posthumous name of Hui-jih, 680–748 (see K. Ch'en 1964: 347f.)
23. One work by him is recorded in the Tripitaka: T. 1965, 37.
24. Chia-ts'ai, T. 1963, 47, wrote between 648 and 681: see P. Demiéville 1965: 373.
25. Jan Y. -h. 1966: 108f.
26. The *tao* in Shan-tao's name is usually spelled with radical #41 underneath. However, this work, *NFC*, is attributed to Tao-ching and Shan-tao, without that radical in the character *tao*. To distinguish the two forms in transliteration, *tǂo* will be used for the first character, and *tào* for the second one, thus differentiating the characters by the tones in pronunciation, wherever it is necessary to avoid ambiguity.

27. Since the Chinese expression *nien-Fo* or *nien-Amita-Fo* has various meanings, it will be usually given in romanization rather than translation, unless the meaning is evident.
28. *NFC*, T. 1966, 47: 125, B-C.
29. Huai-kan, author of *Shih Ching-t'u ch'ün-yi lun* (T. 1960).
30. T. 1966, 47: 123, C9.
31. Ta-hsing lived during the middle years of *ch'ien-fu* (874–880), or ca. 876.
32. According to Tsukamoto (1937), Ta-hsing would have lived during the reign of Emperor Hsuan-tsung (713–741).
33. About Chieh-chu, see H. Iwai (1957), "The Compilers of the *Ching-t'u pao-chu chi.*" Also Jan Y. -h., *ZDMG* 114 (1964), 372f.
34. Jan Y. -h. 1964: 372.
35. According to Iwai (*ZDIK*: 84, and *ZTK*: 14), the original work by Wang Ku as an independent writing is lost, but is entirely quoted in a later work, the *Wu tsu chuan*. However, since this text could not be located, the sections on Shan-tao's biographies are taken from Iwai's article, which reproduces the Chinese text (SZ 41, 1930: 247–254). The *Wu tsu chuan* is not a separate work but is incorporated into the great collection of the Japanese monk Genku or Honen (1133–1212). The Chinese section *Han-yü teng-lu* is in *chuan* 10 or chapter 17. (*MEB*: 738, B–739, B).
36. Jan Y. -h. 1964: 372.
37. Hereafter distinguished as *HWSC-A* and *HWSC-B*.
38. *ZDIK*: 947–952.
39. See *ZDIK*: 556f., where it is proven that *tǂo* and *tào* are used interchangeably when referring to the T'ang master.
40. See below.
41. See *ZDIK*: 530–532.
42. E. g., the Ch'ing work *Ching-t'u sheng-hsien lu* by P'eng Hsi-sou, ch. 2.
43. See Chen Yuan 1941 and 1958: 11. This collection was not completed by Chen Yuan himself, but has been published after extensive editing by Chen Yuan's grandson, Chen Zhichao of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing (1988).
44. Wang Ch'ang, *Chin-shih ts'ui-pien*, published in 1805 by the Ching-shun t'ang.
45. These inscriptions are discussed by Iwai, *ZDIK*: 86–88.
46. *CSTP*, *chuan* 86, T'ang 46, 3b–5a.
47. *CSTP*, *chuan* 73, T'ang 33, 7b–8b.
48. *CSTP*, *chuan* 75, T'ang 35, 2b–3a.
49. *CSTP*, *chuan* 82, T'ang 42, 2a–3b.
50. I. Seah (doctoral dissertation) 1975: 12.
51. Seah 1975: 12. He refers to *Pao-k'e ts'ung-pien*, ch. 7, 21b.



52. Seah 1975: 13. *Pao-k'e ts'ung-pien*, ch. 7, 37a, which relies on Iwai, *ZDIK*.
53. The translations are my own.
54. See, e.g., *ZDIK*: 455; *CJS*: 148; *SSKD*: 133.
55. *ZDIK*: 456.
56. *CJS*: 147.
57. *ZDIK*: 247.
58. *SSKD*: 136.
59. K. Ch'en 1964: 215. On Fu Yi's anti-Buddhist movement, see A. Wright, *JHI* 12 (1951), 33–47; Jan Y. -h. 1966: 21–24; 30f.; S. Weinstein 1987: 7–8.
60. *HKSC* 24, biography of Fa-lin, T. 2060, 50: 637, C22–24.
61. "It was only toward the years 622–3 that the noises of hungry wolves eating the bones of soldiers fallen in the war ceased to be heard in the mountain areas of Shantung and Hopei, and that a healthy color returned to the faces of people (*SSKD*: 134f.).
62. From Mi-chou, in Shantung province, Chu-ch'eng district. *SSKD*: 136.
63. See Shigenoi Shizuka, *IBK* 11 (1963), 243–246. See also *SSKD*: 136.
64. *ZDIK*: 462.
65. According to Iwai (*ZDIK*: 461), who quotes from *Fa-hsin ch'iu-tao chi.*
66. *ZDIK*: 247.
67. K. Ch'en 1964: 133.
68. In Chapter 10 this theme will be more fully developed.
69. *Sui-yuan che*, those who follow a course which is in accordance with their own karmic past.
70. *KCS*, T. 1753, 37: 246, B1–3.
71. See *DCBT*: 251 B: to receive the entire commandments, as does a fully ordained monk or nun.
72. T. 2070, 51: 105, B24–27.
73. A similar story is told about Pure Land monk Ta-hsing, by Chieh-chu (see Iwai, *ZDIK*: 56).
74. *ZDIK*:94.
75. *SSKD*: 138.
76. T. 2080, 50: 515, C14–16.
77. *SSKD*: 138.
78. Between 633, when he was twenty years of age, and 649, when he is said to have taken his residence in Ch'ang-an.
79. T. 2070, 50: 684, A12.
80. *ZDIK*: 248.
81. *JYSC*, T. 2070, 51: 105, B26.
82. For example, *SSKD*: 151; *CJS*: 158.

83. The *HKSC* reports: "He arrived at Hsi-ho where he met master Tao-ch'o who specialized in the practice of Pure [Land] action: the *nien-Amita-Fo*" (T. 2070, 50: 684, A12–13). The *JYSC* says: "Thereupon he went to Ch'an master Tao-ch'o's residence" (T. 2070, 51: 105, B27–28). The *WSC* has some more details: "In the middle years of *chen-kuan* [reign of T'ai-tsung, 627–650] he met *ch'an*-master Tao-ch'o of Hsi-ho . . ." (T. 2071, 51: 119, A26). This is repeated by *HWSC-A*. In the *HWSC-B* more legendary circumstances are added, but the fact that he went to see Ch'an master Tao-ch'o is likewise attested.

84. A. Bloom (1965: 13) refers to S. Taneuchi 1953: 119. This is also the view of *SSKD*: 148, which bases its argument on *FTTC*: 39.

85. "Further, in the Eastern capital [Loyang] there was a master [Tao-] ying who had lectured on the *Hua-yen sūtra* forty times. He went to Tao-cho's sanctuary, where he became absorbed in *samādhi* and exclaimed: 'What a shame to have wasted body and mind for so many years in empty pursuit of knowledge! How can I still hope [to reach] the inexpressible *nien-Fo*?' Ch'an master [Shan-tao] answered: 'The sutras contain authentic teaching; how could the Buddha be deceitful in his words?'" (*JYSC*: 105, C1–4).

86. *ZDIK*: 466.

87. The reasoning is based on the presumed age at which a Chinese monk "takes all the precepts," i.e., becomes fully ordained. According to Ryōchū this must have happened when Shan-tao was at least twenty years old (ibid.).

88. Biography of Tao-ch'o: *JYSC*: 105, B9.

89. *JYSC*: 105, B27–29.

90. According to *DCBT*: 155, B, *Fang-teng ch'an (hui)* is "one of the subjects of meditation . . . on the hindrances caused by the six organs of sense." It belongs to the wider practice of *Fang-teng san-mei*, which is a T'ien-t'ai method of inducing *samādhi*. *MEB*: 1834, C, speaks of *liu-ken ch'an-hui*, which is part of a *samādhi* preparation according to the *Lotus sūtra* (*Fa-hua san-mei*).

91. What this expression means is hard to verify. It is not listed by either *MEB* or *DCBT*. But a presumption can be made: it may refer to the *San-fu chiu-p'in*, of which the *Kuan-ching* speaks, and in that case probably means the practice of the moral conditions outlined in the sutra (see *MEB*: 2548).

92. T. 2071, 51: 119, A26–27.

93. *ZDIK*: 251.

94. *JYSC*: 105, B11–18; *HWSC-B*; see *ZDIK*: 250.

95. *JYSC*: 105, B21–23; *HWSC-B*, see *ZDIK*: 250

96. E. g., Z. Tsukamoto and Umehara 1968: 269–271; *CJS*: 154f.

97. *ZDIK*: 35.



98. *SSKD*: 141f.

99. T. 2060, 50: 689, A5–7 (in the biography of Fa-ch'eng).

100. E. g., during the years 572–578 (Northern Chou): Fa-tsang, P'u-an, Seng-chao, etc.; during the *wu-ti* and *chen-kuan* years of the T'ang: Tao-hsuan (596–667), Fa-lin, etc. (see *SSKD*: 142).

101. *ZDIK*: 248f.

102. About Ch'ang-an, see, e.g., A. F. Wright 1965. Also "Viewpoints on a City Chang-an (583–904) Chinese Capital and Asian Cosmopolis," *Ventures* Magazine of the Yale Graduate School 5 (1965), 15–23.

103. *ZDIK*: 251.

104. According to H. de Lubac (1955: 93), Shan-tao settled in Ch'ang-an in 649. However, it is not clear on what evidence this is based.

105. About Hsuan-tsang's life and work, see, e.g., the biography by monk Hui-li, *Ta-t'ang Ta-tz'u-en-szu san-tsang fa-shih chuan*, T. 2053. This work has been translated into English by Li Yung-hsi (1959). About Hsuan-tsang's return to China, see Li Yung-hsi. *The Life of Hsuan-Tsang the Tripitaka-Master of the Great Tzu En Monastery* (Peking, 1959): 207. See also T. Watters 1904–1905 and 1961; A. Waley 1952: 11–130.

106. Li Y. -h. 1954: 223-230. See also Jan Y. -h. 1966: 34f.

107. *SSKD*: 150. Iwai (*ZDIK*: 546) cites the Chinese text of an inscription.

108. *SSKD*: 150; *ZDIK*: 546.

109. Li Y. -h. 1961: 227.

110. *ZDIK*: 549. The first inscription is dated from 681, the second from 1012. (Iwai quotes from a Sung work by Ch'en Szu, *Pao-k'e ts'ung-pien.*) (See previous notes 50–52.)

111. *ZDIK*: 549.

112. *ZDIK*: 549.

113. *HKSC*: 684, A14–15.

114. Monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen.

115. T. 2071, 51: 119, A28-B1.

116. In *SSKD*: 153, it is said that, according to *CSTP*, ch. 86, Shan-tao went to the countryside for the purpose of preaching; in 666 he went as far as Hsiang-yang in Hupei province.

117. *Hua chu yu-yuan*: literally, "instructed all those who had a conditional link." The quotation is from *HWSC-A*, *ZDIK*: 251f.

118. *Brahmācārya*, which implies celibate life.

119. *ZDIK*: 252.

120. *ZDIK*: 251.

121. This Sung dynasty text has been translated and edited by H. Hackmann (1924).

122. Ibid.: 145f. (my translation).

123. H. de Lubac 1955: 93.

124. See Jan Y. -h. *HR* 4 (1965), 243–268. See also J. Gernet 1956: 234f.

125. *ZDIK*: 253.

126. *WSC*: 119.

127. *WSC*, B3–4 (*Ju ju suo nien, sui ju suo yuan*).

128. *SKSC*, T. 2061, 50: 738, C12–24.

129. *HKSC*: 684, A14.

130. A variant reading says that he made over three hundred paintings.

131. *JYSC*: 105, C6–7.

132. *WSC*: 119, B1–3.

133. See *MCED* no. 6497 for the meaning of *tu*: in this instance it means "a wall (of fifty cubit length)."

134. *ZDIK*: 251f.

135. *Hua ching-t'u pien-hsiang*.

136. *ZDIK*: 252.

137. Ch'en 1964: 374.

138. Among the Tun-huang manuscripts brought back to Japan by the Ōtani expedition in 1909, there is one manuscript of the Shorter Sutra bearing Shan-tao's name. One part of the scroll is reproduced in *ZDIK*: 925. Whether this is in Shan-tao's own handwriting or not, the very fact shows that during the T'ang period his influence had spread as far as Tun-huang. (See below, Chapter 4.)

139. A. Waley 1960: 246. This interpretation makes more sense than a previous one given by the same author: A. Waley 1931: xxii. Here *Ching-tu pien-hsiang* is translated as "illustrations to legends connected with Paradise." Waley's new interpretation is followed by J. Liu 1967: 210–211. Therefore, Ch'en Shou-yi's version, in *Chinese Literature* (1961: 323), where he explains *pien-wen* as a "changed composition or writing, indicating a slight deviation in the telling of the story from the version recorded in a Buddhist sutra," is not acceptable.

Victor Mair (1989) has proposed "transformation text" for *pien-wen*, which he explains as popular texts which deal with scenes of "miraculous transformation" or "spiritual transformation." These popular texts are based on canonical scriptures, rewritten in the vernacular or in popular stories. However acceptable his theory is, it is still not clear what the exact sequence may have been. I assume, inspired by Mair's theory, that first there were canonical sutras translated into Chinese, next paintings (murals as in Tun-huang) of some of the miracle stories contained in these sutras, and finally, new texts based on these murals, to explain them to the common people. In other words, the *pien-wen* were based on *pien-hsiang* and not the other way around. Eventually, as in the case of Shan-tao, not only murals of *pien-hsiang* were made, but also scrolls, for easier circulation.



In order to verify this theory, it would be necessary to have a complete list of the still-existing *pien-wen* and to compare them to the basic sutras which may have given rise to them. Unfortunately, V. Mair does not list them, but we know that among the Tun-huang murals are scenes of Amita's Paradise, scenes from the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa*, and the Mu-lien story. This repertoire would seem to confirm the hypothesis, but a more complete listing of texts is necessary for confirmation.

Not being a Sanskritist, I nevertheless would venture a new hypothesis. Could it be possible that the Sanskrit substratum of *pien* may have been *vyūha*? In Māhāyana texts, *vyūha* means "arrangement," with overtones of "marvelous, supernatural, magical arrangement, especially of Buddha-fields." *Vyūha* also implies "magnificence, splendor as well as supernatural qualities . . ." It is close to Sanskrit *vibhūti*, "supernatural manifestations." This is its meaning in the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras* and the *Ganda-vyūha*. "No English word is appropriate . . ."(Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*: 520a)

Against this interpretation, one can argue that although the Sukhāvatī texts have *vyūha* in their Sanskrit titles, none of the Chinese translations contain the character *pien* in the Chinese titles. The word *vyūha* has not been translated at all, it seems, neither by *pien* nor by any alternative. This is rather odd. On the other hand, within the texts one occasionally finds the term *pien*, especially combined with *kuang* (light) or *ming* (bright) (T. 362, 12: 300, A14–20, 21–22; T. 361, 12: 279 C5–6).

Since I have been speculating on new hypotheses regarding *pien*, another alternative would be "transfiguration" texts, implying supernatural transfiguration. This word is perhaps less ambiguous than "transformation."

140. Liu M. -t. (1969: 251, note 612) translates *pien-hsiang* as "Mandala-Bildern" and believes that it is a variation for *pien-hsiang* (a different character. Another related term is *Ching-t'u pien*, which he translates as "Paradies-Mandala."

141. Four are in the British Museum: nos. 35, 37, 70, 222; eight are in the Delhi Museum, nos. 245, 318, 427, 447, 501, 522, 528, 537.

142. B. Gray 1959.

143. In several paintings the meditations are part of the whole picture: plate 42 (about 660 C.E.) and plate 64b (eighth century). Besides these two, plates 37b (early T'ang), 46a, b (early eighth century), 47 (ca. 700) the meditations of Vaidehī are the main topic of the fresco.

144. A. Waley 1931: xxi.

145. Ibid.: xxii.

146. *ZDIK*: 252.

147. T. Sawa (1967: 25) gives a reproduction of a Pure Land scroll painting from a temple in Nara. It is divided into four greater sections, with subdivisions exactly like Shan-tao's commentary. This cannot be a coincidence, nor can the idea be ascribed to anyone else. Some Japanese writers go even further, e.g., R. Fujimoto (1960: II, 6): "According to Dr. K. Yabuki some of the *mandalas* unearthed by Stein in the caves of Thun-kwan [Tun-huang] during the present century may be ascribed to Zendo [Shan-tao]." However, it was impossible to check Yabuki's hypothesis.

148. As a story in *FTTC* (28: 288, C12) mentions, a butcher was converted suddenly when Shan-tao showed him a Pure Land painting (*ching-t'u hsiang*).

149. *ZDIK*: 87.

150. P. C. Swann 1963: 102–111; plates 39–46, pp. 112–122.

151. Ibid.: 105.

152. Ibid.: 107. This hypothesis was formulated by W. Willets 1954: 187–188.

153. *JYSC*: 105, C7–8.

154. Ibid.: 119, B6–11.

155. As Bavo Lievens notes (1987: 116, note 22), famous Buddhist masters pass away without real illness. They often choose the moment of their death, and consequently know when it will happen, as is the case here.

156. *ZDIK*: 98–100.

157. E. g., Chen Yuan 1964: 101; R. Michihata 1956: 114; *ZDIK*: 966; *SSKD*: 165; *MEB*: 2995, B; K. Ch'en 1964: 345. According to the inference from the Lung-men inscription, his death took place after 675. According to *WSC*, Emperor Kao-tsung changed the name of the temple where Shan-tao had died; although this is hardly believable, it is quite likely that the emperor bestowed some posthumous honors on Shan-tao. This had to happen before the emperor's death in 683. The reference in *HWSC-B*, second year of *yung-lung* (or 681), seems quite acceptable.

158. Their literary dependence on *HKSC* is beyond doubt.

159. On the matter of religious suicide among Buddhists, see above, note 124.

160. *ZDIK*: 252.

161. *FTTC*, 28: 288, C10–14. After all, with his business ruined, what was the purpose of living?

162. See above note 46.

163. See above note 48.

164. Weinstein 1987: 73.

165. Indirectly the sources reveal much about these aspects of the master. However, to avoid repetition, only new references directly and uniquely throwing light on Shan-tao's personality will be explicitly listed. The other indications will be taken into a more general picture.

166. *JYSC*: 105, C4–6.



167. *Pan-chou hsing-tao*. This is in Shan-tao's case the practice of Amita vision, as explained in the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* (see Chapter 2).

168. It is not unlikely that Shan-tao's strict observance of the *vinaya* rules was partially influenced by Tao-hsuan, who lived as Shan-tao on the Chung-nan mountain, and is respected as the founder of the *Vinaya* School in China. See K. Ch'en 1964: 301.

169. Compare *MCED*: 904, no. 6237. According to I. Seah, *t'i-hu* refers to a "drink extract of milk, the sweetest of all sweet things," and is considered to be very delicious (1975: 107).

170. *ZDIK*: 251f.

171. *Chin-kang fa-shih*. According to Iwai (*ZDIK*: 960f.) this is the same person Chin-kang shang-jen mentioned in *Liang-ching hsin-chi*.

172. T. 1966, 47: 125, C23f.

173. The text has *fu-yi chang*, which was used by Buddhist masters during disputes. See *MEB*: 4130, A-B; E. Zürcher 1959: 407, note 59; F. Fudui, *Chinese Culture* 10 (1969), 25–30. See also H. Welch 1967: 149, figure 28, which shows the abbot holding a crooked stick (*shuo-fa kan*) as emblem of his authority to preach.

174. T. 1966, 47: 125, C21–29.

175. The authenticity is doubted, since a similar event is told about Ta-hsing, T. 1966, 47: 125, C29–126, A11. It is not clear which of the two stories is secondary.

176. See J. Pas 1989: 75–84.

177. H. Robinson, 1970: 86.

178. *FTTC*, 26: 263, B19–21. Also repeated in *LSCT*, T. 1970, 47: 267, A4–7.

## CHAPTER 4. SHAN-TAO'S WRITINGS

1. E. g., *SSKD*: 156; Tsukamoto Z. and Umehara 1968: 156; Michihata 1967: 114; Huang, C. -h. 1967: 171.

2. Fujiwara 1954: 268–269.

3. The order adopted here is the one suggested by Fujiwara (1954).

4. *Tseng-shang-yuan*, *DCBT*: 431, B, translates the expression as "the cause, condition, or organ to advance to a higher stage." The Sanskrit is *adhipati-pratyaya*, variously translated as "predominant condition," decisive condition," etc. See *MEB*: 3070f.

5. That it is originally a different work is evident from the Chinese title itself. After the title follows the outline: evidence is given from (1) the Longer Sutra; (2) the *Kuan-ching*; (3) the Shorter Sutra; (4) the *PCS*; (5) a nonidentified *sutra*. *MEB* lists it after the five traditional works of Shan-tao, and Fujiwara (1954: 268), taking up Mochizuki's hint, says that one should perhaps talk of Shan-tao's six works in ten scrolls.

6. T. 1959, 47: 23, A10–13. This detail suggests that Shan-tao wrote the work when he was rather young and probably had to struggle himself with carnal temptations.

7. The use of images here does not seem to refer to worship alone; it seems rather that it belongs to the necessary equipment of the meditator, who uses them as visual aids.

8. *Chuan-hsin nien A-mi-t'a-Fo*. That *nien* certainly means *anusmrti* appears from the context. But at the same time oral recitation is also implied.

9. This refers to the practice of *Liu-shih li-tsan*: six daily periods of worship, etc. (*DCBT*: 135, B). See Pas 1986–87.

10. *Tso chien-Fo hsiang*. The text clearly suggests a distinction between "seeing" (*chien*) and "imagining" (*hsiang*). (See Chapter 6.)

11. *Yi-ch'ieh yeh-tao* (*shen*), according to *DCBT*: 404, B.

12. *Wu-hsin* or *Wu-hsün*, which are, according to *DCBT*: 128, A, "garlic, three kinds of onions, and leeks." The reason for this restriction is explained further when Shan-tao talks about removing persons who eat (or drink) these forbidden articles from the sick bed of a practitioner: "he would loose the right *nien*, evil spirits would disturb him; he would die suddenly and sink down into one of the evil *gatis*" (T. 1959, 47: 24, C1–2).

13. T. 1959, 47: 24, A26-B20.

14. According to *MEB*: 3932, C., *chuan-ching* is a synonym of *tu-ching, sung-ching*, etc., which mean recitation, chanting. See also *DCBT*: 469, A.

15. The meaning of *hsing-tao* is not always very clear (*MEB*: 611f.). It seems to mean "to make procession round an image, especially of the Buddha, with the right shoulder towards it" (*DCBT*: 222, B).

16. See Appendix I, texts 1–2.

17. T. 1979, 47: 428, C19–27.

18. Ibid.: 428, B28–430, B15.

19. Ibid.: 430, B16–24.

20. Ibid.: 438, A8–10.

21. Ibid.: 438, A15-B2.

22. T. 1981, 47: 448, A22–23.

23. This phrase is the refrain of the subsequent hymn.

24. *DCBT*: 337, B.

25. T. 1981, 47: 448, B9–25.

26. The hymn is in T. 1981, 47: 448, B26; 456, A8.

27. Fujiwara 1954: 269.

28. T. 1980, 47: 439, C9–441, A13. The twelve titles are in one section of the hymn, p. 440, A. The translations are in the *DCBT*: 42, B.

29. T. 1980, 47: 441, A14–442, A23. This hymn has been translated by R. Robinson, 1955: 66–69.



30. T. 1980, 47: 442, A24–443, A27. Also translated by R. Robinson, 1955: 64f.

31. T. 1980, 47: 443, A28–444, A19.

32. T. 1980, 47: 444, A20–445, B28.

33. T. 1980, 47: 445, B29–447, A7.

34. See J. Pas 1986–87.

35. *MEB*: 5057, C.

36. T. 1492, 24: 1090, A11.

37. For instance, in the *KPP*, T. 277, 9: 390, B8–9; 391, C23; 393, C5.

38. Hsuan-tsang (*Hsi-yü chi*) 1955: 22.

39. Watters 1961: 143f.

40. Hsuan-tsang (*Hsi-yü chi*) 1955: 22 and 40.

41. H. Rose, "Calendar (Greek)," *ERE*: III, 105–106.

42. For the Buddhist division, see *MEB*: 5057, C.

43. L. H. Gray, "Calendar (Persian)," *ERE*: III, 129.

44. E. Edwards, "Worship (Parsi)," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: XIII, 807f.

45. T. L. Bullock and L.H. Gray, "(Chinese) Calendar," *ERE*: III, 82–84. Also see J. Needham: III, 398.

46. Eliade 1955 and 1963; G. Vanderleeuw 1955.

47. F. Cabrol, "Divine Office," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: XI, 219f.

48. In the Shorter Sutra: ". . . a flower-rain of heavenly Māndārava blossoms pours down three times every day, and three times every night" (*SBE* 49: 95). "Three times every night, and three times every day, they [the birds] come together and perform a concert" (95f.). The theme is amplified in the Longer Sutra: ". . . when the time of forenoon has come, the winds are greatly agitated and blowing everywhere . . . [causing a rain of beautiful flowers to come down] . . . And as it is in the forenoon, so is it at noon, at twilight, in the first, middle, and last watch of the night" (*SBE* 49: 42f.).

That this is an allusion to an actual custom of worship appears clearly from the context of the Shorter Sutra. In the Longer Sutra, the ritual connotation is not obvious, although without it one can hardly explain why it is mentioned at all, since in the following passage the author says that in that land "There is no mention even of day and night." (43).

49. T. 1966, 47: (i) 123, A5; (ii) 123, A16; (iii) 123, C9–10; (iv) 133, A14.

50. T. 1966, 47: 125, C21.

51. Ibid.: 123, C9; 123, A16.

52. *MEB*: 2995, B.

53. According to the *Lotus sūtra* these are: *devas, nāgas, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras* and *mahoragas* (DCBT: 41A).

54. "Great Hero is a title of the Buddha indicating his power over demons" (*DCBT*: 96, B).

55. *MEB*: 2995, B.

56. I obtained this information from Yü Chün-fang, 1981: 42.

57. *FTTC*, T. 2035, 49: 264, B6. The same anecdote is repeated in *Lo-pang wen-lei*, T. 1969, 47: 193, B9–10.

58. Perhaps it is another version of the same work as T. 1983.

59. T. 2875, 85: 1251, B2–1252, C6.

60. *MEB*: 2995, B.

61. The text of this manuscript is reproduced by Pa Chou, 1965: 96–99.

62. *Monumenta Serindica* 1958: I, 204 (*Chinese Buddhist Texts from Tunhuang*).

63. Ibid.: 33f. The text is not always complete, since the lower part of the fragment was ruined.

64. Ibid.: 35.

65. *MEB*: 2995, B.

66. About the meaning of *shu*, see Mou, J. -s. *Lun Ju-Shih liang-chia chih chiang-ching yü yi-shu, Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao* (*HYSP*): IV, 353–415. W. -t. Chan reviews this article as follows: "The author believes that the word *shu* originally meant 'to record' the oral explanations of Buddhist scriptures and only later acquired the meaning of 'subcommentary.' In Buddhist practice the *shu* was either written down by the lecturer before he spoke or by someone who had heard his lecture. According to the author, the earliest similar Confucian practice took place in 460, after that of the Buddhists between 371 and 391. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589) the Buddhists used a platform of questions and answers during their oral explanations. All of these were soon imitated by Confucianists. The style of the *shu*, particularly its division into chapters and sections and its inclusion of questions and answers, in both the Buddhist and Confucian schools, is treated in the last part of the article" (*RBS*, 6, 1967: 302f.).

67. Ono (*EBW*: 185–205) lists sixty-five titles of commentaries and subcommentaries (in Chinese and Japanese).

68. Ono: 187, D. See also Chapter 2.

69. J. Ishida, "Fragmented Copied Manuscripts of the *Wu liang shou kuan ching tsan shu*," *Monumenta Serindica*: I, 14.

70. Included in the *Taishō*, 2760, 85: 249–253, under the tentative title *wu-liang-shou kuan-ching yi-chi*.

71. Dates unknown (cp. *RBS* 1969: 315).

72. J. Ishida, *Monumenta Serindica*: I, 15.



73. R. Etani, "Koissho Dōgin no Kanghōso no fukugen ni tsuite" (article reviewed in *RBS* 1960: 315).

74. R. Etani, "Zui Tō jidai no kangyō kenkyū shikan," *EHB*: 125.

75. In the introduction, Tao-ch'o (*ALC*, T. 1957, 47: 4, A13–16) discusses why various sutras have different titles: "e.g. the *nirvāna-sūtra*, has [some point of] *dharma* as its title; sometimes [titles] refer to similes, or to realities, sometimes to time or to place; these are all different. Now, *this meditation sutra* expresses in its title both *dharma* and man." This passage shows that he intends to comment on the *Kuan-ching*. That he does not use the technical term *shu* only shows that his book is not going to be a commentary in the technical sense.

76. This will be shown when analyzing and comparing their views with Shan-tao's; besides, the fact is acknowledged by some Japanese authors, e.g., R. Etani, "Zui Tō jidai no kangyō kenkyū shikan"; A. Takagi, "The Place of Kangyō-gengibun in Shan-tao's Buddhology"; H. Masaki, "The Practice of Buddhistic Austerities and Its Popularization in Shan-tao and Prince Shōtoku."

77. In this way he is clearly distinguished from his name-bearer, Hui-yuan from Lu-shan.

78. According to *MEB*: 264, A, Hui-yuan wrote twenty works (mostly commentaries) in a hundred *chüan*. See also Tanaka 1990: 29–32.

79. In fact, they were written by his disciples, especially Kuan-ting. Chi-yi himself was a tireless preacher (L. Hurvitz 1962: 332).

80. L. Hurvitz: 144f.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.: 114.

83. Ibid.: 62. For his biography, see *MEB*: 529–530.

84. A. Takagi 1956: 128.

85. "If the Buddha delivers a discourse, there has to be a reason" (*KCS*: 251, C17).

86. Shan-tao uses *yuan*, as opposed to *yin* (Sanskrit, *pratitya* as opposed to *hetu*).

87. The terms *san-shan* and *ting-shan* will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively.

88. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 165.

89. *The Sutra of Contemplation* 1984: 119.

90. T. 1753, 37: 253, B12–13.

91. T. 1753, 37: 253, B11-C18.

92. A third result would be a comparison between the structure of the *KCS* and the structure of the sutra itself, as translated and edited by J. Takakusu (*SBE* 49). It seems that Takakusu has followed Shan-tao's outline in dividing his translation into chapters: with two exceptions (on King Bimbisāra and the "meditations" on the two Bodhisattvas), his paragraphs correspond exactly with Shan-tao's units.

93. A recent publication by Kenneth Tanaka contains an analysis and translation of Hui-yuan's commentary on the *Kuan-ching*. This is so far the only monograph in a Western language on any of the *Kuan-ching* commentaries. Tanaka's excellent study restores a balance in correct interpretation: Hui-yuan must be considered one of the pioneers in Pure Land ideology. He "stands as the person more responsible [than Shan-tao] for 'authenticating' the Pure land tradition within the context of Indian Buddhism" (Tanaka 1990: 108). However, Hui-yuan's importance must not be exaggerated either, as is the case in a book review by Leo Pruden on K. Tanaka's book (*The Pacific World* 6, 1990: 122–123). Pruden states: "It should be noted that almost all of Hui-yuan's doctrinal thought was taken over by Shan-tao . . ." (p. 122) and he further states that in Japan Hui-yuan was overshadowed by Shan-tao "even though Shan-tao's work can best be said to be almost a total copy of Hui-yuan's writings and thought (one is reluctant to say plagiarism)" (p. 123). This bold assertion does not seem to be based on Tanaka's own interpretation and does not do justice to the Chinese texts. Hui-yuan definitely influenced Shan-tao, but Shan-tao went far beyond Hui-yuan and criticized him in many instances.

94. Ch'en, Shou-yi, 1961.

95. J. R. Hightower, *Topics in Chinese Literature*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, III (rev. ed.; Harvard University Press, 1962), 38–41; "Some Characteristics of Parallel Prose" in *Studies in Chinese Literature*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, XXI (Harvard University Press, 1965), 108–139.

96. Ch'en 1961: 189.

97. Liu, W. -c., *An Introduction to Chinese Literature* (Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 126.

98. P. E. Feifel, *Geschichte der Chinesischen Literatur, dargestellt nach Nagasawa Kikuya: Shina Gakujutsu Bungeishi* (Hildesheim, 1959), pp. vii, 147–149.

99. Ch'en 1961: 189.

100. See Appendix I, text 3.

101. E.g., *KCS*, T. 1753, 37: 263, A14–17, 17–21, 21–23; 263, B28-C7; 263, C1–4; 264, B10–11; 264, B20–21, 22–25; 265, A13–20; 270, A18-B2.

102. Ch'en 1961: 199.

103. *KCS* T. 1753, 37: 247, A23–25.

104. T. 1958, 47: 4, A18–19.

105. T. 1749, 37: 173, B2–4.

106. *KCS* T. 1753, 37: 261, B9ff.

107. In his *KCS*, Hui-yuan already used the same method, e.g., T. 1749, 37: 176, C; 178, A8.



108. *KCS* T. 1753, 37: 268, B23–28.

109. In the whole of the *KCS*, forty-one cases occur (ch. 1: 17; ch. 2: 14; ch. 3: 7; ch. 4: 3).

110. E.g., Hui-yuan in his commentary, Tao-ch'o in his *ALC*, and T'an-luan in his *WSL* use it moderately, whereas in Chih-yi's and Chi-tsang's commentaries it seems to be absent.

111. The legend of Ajātashatru is narrated in the following texts: (1)*The Vinaya of the Dharmaguptas*, ch. 4, T. 1428, 22; *Nj*. 1117. Translated by Buddhayaśas in 405. (2)*The Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, ch. 20 and 34, T. 374, 12; *Nj*. 113. Translated by Dharmarksa in 423. (3)*The Southern Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, ch. 18 and 31, T. 375, 12: *Nj*. 114. Revision of former by two Chinese *śrāmanas* Hui-yan, 363–443, and Hui-kuang, between 424 and 453. (4)The *Wei-sheng-yuan ching*. T. 507, 14; Nj. 698. Translated by Chih-ch'ien.

112. *KCS*: 246, B28-C2. The Chinese text is not so explicit and could also be translated as "I entrust my life to the measureless-life Awakening."

113. See H. Nakamura 1964: 223.

114. *KCS*: 246, C3–4.

115. *KCS*: 251, C28–252, A17.

116. See *DCBT*: 488, B.

117. Ibid.: 255, B.

118. Ibid.: 256, A.

119. *MCED*: 1016.

120. *KCS*: 247, A16–20.

121. *ALC*, T. 1958, 47: 5, A23–26.

122. Ibid.: B5–6, C7.

123. *Ch'ü* means "bias, tendency, trend,." (*MCED*: 230).

124. T. 1749, 37: 173, A11–16.

125. T. 1750, 37: 186, C1–2.

126. Ibid.: 186, C13.

127. Ibid.: 186, C18.

128. Ibid.: 188, A22–26.

129. Ibid.: 188, B5–8, 15–16; C7–8.

130. Ibid.: 188, C8–13.

131. T. 1751, 37: 234, C3, 10–15.

132. E.g., R. Yūki, "Kangyōsho ni okero Zendō Shakugi no Shisōshiteki Igi," *EHB*: 907–924; R. Etani, "Zui Tō jidai no kangyō kenkyū shikan," *EHB*: 125–135; H. Masaki, "The Practice of Buddhistic Austerities."

133. R. Etani, "Zui Tō jidai. ": 135.

134. R. Yūki, "Kangyōsho. ": 909.

## CHAPTER 5. THE HUMAN SITUATION VERSUS AMITA AND HIS LAND OF PURITY

1. E. Lamotte 1959: 657.
2. The *Mahāvaipulyamahāsamnipāta-sūtra*, T. 397, 13: 47–56; Nj. 63.
3. *ALC*, T. 1958, 47: 4, B4–8.
4. Ibid.: 4, B9–12.
5. Ibid.: 4, B16–18.
6. Ibid.: 18, B15–16.
7. According to the Chinese Buddhists of that time, the dates of the Buddha's life were 1029–950 B.C.E. (see K. Ch'en 1964: 185).
8. J. Ikemoto, *MEBC*, 1964: I, 455.
9. *ALC*, T. 1958: 12, B7–22. Tao-ch'o's distinction of "easy" and "difficult" practice is based on Nāgārjuna, who is quoted on 12, B13.
10. Ibid.: 12, B29.
11. Ibid.: 13, C6.
12. Ibid.: 13, C10.
13. See H. Masaki, 1968: 948: "But his attitude in commenting upon this sutra is far removed from his personal practice, just like Holy Path which leads to salvation through self-help."
14. See T. Kagawa 1969: 286–289.
15. *KC*, T. 365, 12: 241, C15–17.
16. Ibid.: 241, C25–27.
17. Ibid.: 260, B9–12.
18. Ibid.: 260, B28-C1.
19. Ibid.: 261, A1–2, 5–6.
20. *DCBT*: 122, A. See *BHSD*: 174, B: *kasāya*, "sediment," and hence "impurity, degradation," etc. There are five kinds, but the order varies. See *MEB*: 1259–1261.
21. For a discussion of *kalpa*, see *DCBT*: 232, A; also 5, A.
22. *KCS*: 261, A6–16.
23. *KCS*: 261, A17–22.
24. *KCS*: 261, B19–21.
25. *LAC*, T. 1957, 47: 3, C20–22.
26. *KCS*: 269, B3–5.
27. *KCS*: 272, A19–20.
28. *KCS*: 246, A20–21.
29. *KCS*: 246, A21–22.
30. The three kinds of *dāna*: "giving of goods, of the dharma, of fearlessness" (*DCBT*: 68 B.)
31. They are (i) *dāna*, "giving what others like, in order to lead them to love and receive the truth; (ii) affectionate speech, with the same purpose; (iii) conduct profitable to others, with the same purpose; (iv) cooperation with and adaptation of oneself to others, to lead them into the truth" (*DCBT*: 175f.).



32. *KCS*: 246, A21–25.
33. To start developing and germinating.
34. *KCS*: 246, A27–29.
35. The method of emancipation through knowledge.
36. "The three virtuous positions, or states, of a bodhisattva are *shih-chu*, *shih-hsing* and *shih hui-hsiang*. The ten excellent characteristics of a saint or holy one are the whole of the ten stages (*shih-ti*)" (*DCBT*: 77, A).
37. *KCS*: 246, B9–16.
38. *KCS*: 277, C23–24.
39. Although Shan-tao's works are not well known in the West, this parable has "broken the veil of ignorance" and has been incorporated in several western writings: e.g., W. M. T. de Bary, ed., *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan* (New York, 1969), pp. 204–207; and D. T. Suzuki 1924–1925: 298–302. There is also a summary of the parable in A. Bloom 1965: 15f. The parable is also discussed by J. Haas 1910: 91–93.
40. *LAC*, T. 1957, 47: 3, C10–15. A confirmation of Shan-tao's literary dependence on T'an-luan's simile is the use of exactly the same characters when describing the travelers crossing the wilderness.
41. For the text of the parable see *KCS*: 272, C15–273, A14. This parable lends itself wonderfully to iconographic representations. Till now no reference has been found to any of them in Tun-huang, but Japanese Buddhism has preserved illustrations of the parable; see, e.g., T. Sawa 1962: 28; H. Haas 1910: opposite p. 92.
42. *KCS*: 273, A14-B8.
43. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 91.
44. Ibid.: 27–28f.
45. Ibid.: 24–27.
46. Ibid.: 32.
47. Other Chinese terms often used are *An-lo* (Peace and Bliss) and *An-yang* (Peace and Nourishment). For a discussion of the Chinese-Japanese terms and the underlying Sanskrit names, see K. Fujita 1965: 56–65. See also *MEB*: 2699–2702.
48. This information is based on J. Ikemoto, *MEBC*: 446–452, and Kao, K. -j., "Amitābha-Vyūha," *MEBC*: 464f.
49. T. 361 and 362 (see Chapter 1).
50. T. 360 has forty-eight vows.
51. The T'ang text, translated by Bodhiroci ca. 693–713 (T. 310), has also forty-eight vows. The Sanskrit text has forty-six vows.
52. The Sung text, translated by Dharmabhadra ca. 982–1001 (T. 363), has thirty-six vows.

53. See J. Takakusu 1956: 109–111.

54. That Hui-yuan uses *ying-shen* as *nirmāna-kāya* is clear from his own explanation. The term, however, is sometimes used in the sense of *sambhoga-kāya* (*DCBT*: 458, A).

55. *DCBT*: 187, B.

56. T. 1749, 37: 173, B19–21.

57. Ibid.: 173, C21–26.

58. Ibid.: 179, A8–19. Cp. H. Dayal 1932: 213, 290, where the *anutpattika-dharma-ksānti* is said to be acquired during the eighth *bhūmi*.

59. T. 37, 1749: 181, C14–15.

60. T. 1752, 37: 238, A–B.

61. *DCBT*: 197, A.

62. T. 1752: 238, B22–28.

63. Ibid.: 238, A3–6.

64. "One of the three Nan-shan sects which regarded the nature of things as unreal or immaterial, but held that the things were temporally entities" (*DCBT*: 259, B).

65. T. 1752: 235, A16–19.

66. Ibid.: 241, A22–26.

67. See J. Takakusu 1956: 81–83; *MEB*: 2821–2824.

68. J. Takakusu 1956: 82.

69. It is not clear what *shih ching-t'u* means. It seems an equivalent of *shih-yung ching-t'u*. The translation given here does not really translate the meaning but only negatively contrasts the term to the previous one.

70. *MEB*: 2823. See also D. Chappell 1977: 23–53.

71. T. 1963, 47: 84, A–C. Chia-ts'ai holds that there are only three groups of Pure Land, *dharma-kāya, sambhoga-kāya*, and *nirmāna-kāya* Pure Lands. However, the second one is of two kinds: *shih-pao* Pure Land and *shih-yung* Pure Land. In this passage Chia-ts'ai often quotes from the *She-lun*.

72. J. Ikemoto, *MEBC*: 455, B. See also *MEB*: 2823.

73. See *MEB*: 4520f. This *pieh-shih yi* is one of the four *yi-chü*; see *MEB*: 1714f.

74. *KCS*: 250, B11–12.

75. *Mahāyānābhisamaya-sūtra*, T. 673, 16, translated by Jñānayashas, 570 C.E.

76. *KCS*: 250, B13–14.

77. *KCS*: 250, B14–18.

78. *KCS*: 250, B18–21.

79. *KCS*: 250, B21–25.

80. This sutra (T. 371) has been twice mentioned before in connection with this controversy. The Sanskrit title, according to *HA*, is *Māyopamasamādhi-sūtra*. According to Nj. 395, it is *Avalokiteśvara-bodhisattva-mahāsthāmaprāpta-bodhisattva-vyakarana-sūtra*. Translated by Dharmakara (?) of the Liu Sung dynasty. The text relating to the controversy is in T. 371, 12: 357, A5–7 and 357, A12–14.



81. *KCS*: 250, C1–2.

82. T. 223. Shan-tao calls the sutra *Ta-p'in ching*. The full Chinese title is *Mo-k'e pan-chou po-lo-mi ching*. Translated by Kumārajīva.

83. These are the five *skandhas* which constitute an individual: corporeality, feeling, sensation-ideation, motivation, and consciousness. This is according to H.V. Guenther 1970: 199. Cp. N. Dutt 1960: 197.

84. *Yi-ch'ieh chung chih*. This seems to be different from *Yi-ch'ieh chih*, *sarvajña*, which is Buddha wisdom, omniscience (*DCBT*: 2B) and is not intended here.

85. Which literally is a transformation-creation, and therefore is a creation.

86. Literally, *nirvāna* without illusive forms (*wu k'uang-hsiang nieh-p'an*).

87. *KCS*: 250, C3–251, A1. This quotation and the following one (footnote 89) are from *ta-p'in ching*, T. 223, 8: 415, C10–416, A14. Shan-tao says that the quotation is from *nieh-p'an fei-hua p'in*, but this section does not appear in the present *Taishō* text.

88. *KCS*: 251, A1–6.

89. T. 1524, 26: 231, B28-C7.

90. Ibid.: 232, A16–19.

91. Ibid.: 232, B7–20.

92. A comparison between the *gāthās* and the subsequent explanation seems to suggest that two different authors were involved.

93. T. 1749: 178, C9–10.

94. T. 1750: 191, C13–14.

95. T. 1752: 242, B 10–12.

96. Ibid.: 242, B13–16.

97. Ibid.: 242, B18–22.

98. Ibid.: 243, B19-C 5.

99. *KCS*: 246, C5–247, A5.

100. Ibid.: 246, C11.

101. Ibid.: 246, C26–28.

102. Ibid.: 247, A1–3.

103. Ibid.: 247, A10–11.

## CHAPTER 6. THE FIRST GATE: MEDITATION

1. "Meditation" is here used in its widest meaning and only provisionally, until a discussion of the terminology has taken place.

2. Works consulted on the subject of Buddhist meditation are M.

Anesaki and J. Takakusu, "Dhyāna," *ERE:* IV, 702–704; Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* (*VMN* and *VMP*); E. Conze, *Buddhist Meditation* (New York, 1956); P. Demiéville, "La Yogācārabhūmi de Sangharaksa"; H. Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism* (New York, 1963); N. Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism* (Calcutta, 1960); M. Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom* (2nd ed., Princeton University Press, 1969); M. Eliade, *Patanjali and Yoga* (New York, 1969); P. Grison, "Le Bouddhisme comme Expérience Spirituelle," *France-Asie* (*Présence du Bouddhisme*)16 (1959), 273–283; H. Guenther, trans., *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (London, 1959; 2nd ed., 1970); F. Heiler, *Die Buddhistische Versenkung* (München, 1918); C. Humphreys, *Concentration and Meditation* (Pelican Books, 1970); Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London, 1962); S. Spencer, *Mysticism in World Religion* (Pelican Books, 1963); D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (2nd ed., MacMillan, 1969); *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, 3 vols. (1st ed., London, 1949–1953; 2nd ed., vol. 1, New York, 1961; vols. 2–3, London, 1970); P. H. Pott, *Yoga and Yantra* (The Hague, 1966); J. Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (Honolulu 1956); R. Walpola, *What the Buddha Taught* (London, 1959; enlarged ed., 1967); E. Wood, *Yoga* (1st ed., 1959; Pelican Books, 1969).

3. See Swāmi Hariharānanda Āranya 1963; see also M. Eliade, *Patanjali,* 1969; *Yoga,* 1969; P.H. Pott 1966.

4. S. Hariharānanda, 1963: 231 (*Yoga-sūtra*, ii. 29); M. Eliade, *Yoga*, 1969: 48f.; P.H. Pott 1966: 5f.

5. For a discussion of *ahimsā*, see D. Sharma 1970: 127–132.

6. S. Hariharānanda 1963: 232 (*Yoga-sūtra*, ii. 30).

7. See S. N. Dasgupta 1963: I, 233–235. The author says (p. 234, footnote 1) that in the *Yoga-sūtras* no argument is given to prove God's existence. On the other hand (p. 235) he says that in a later work, *Kitāb Pātanjal*, "the conception of God has risen here to such an importance that he has become the only object of meditation, and absorption in him is the goal."

8. S. Hariharānanda 1963: 253–255 (*Yoga-sūtra*, ii. 46–48).

9. Ibid.: 255–272 (*Yoga-sūtra*, ii. 49–52).

10. Ibid.: 273f. (*Yoga-sūtra*, ii. 54).

11. Ibid.: 277–279 (*Yoga-sūtra*, iii. 1).

12. Ibid.: 279 (*Yoga-sūtra*, iii. 2).

13. Ibid.: 280f. (*Yoga-sūtra*, iii. 3).

14. Ibid.: 281f. (*Yoga-sūtra*, iii. 4ff.).

15. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera 1959: 242 (my translation). See also A. Bareau 1963: 13–27; J. G. Jennings 1947: cx, 19; E. J. Thomas (1969): 229. This author says that the indications in the Buddhist canon are not clear enough to make any presumptions about the teaching of the Buddha's teachers. S. Dutt (1957:37) says that all the makers of Buddha legends presume that he was a yogin who had obtained supernatural powers, as described in the *Yoga-sūtra*.



16. See S. N. Dasgupta 1963: I, 229–238. The author (p. 238) suggests the second B.C.E., against J. H. Woods, who assigns the work to the period between 300 and 500 C.E.

17. S. N. Dasgupta 1963: 39, footnote.

18. *Maitr.* vi. 8. See S. N. Dasgupta 1963: 236.

19. S. N. Dasgupta: 236.

20. *Katha*, I. iii. 3–9.

21. There are more passages in the Upanishads which emphasize either ethics or control of the senses or both as necessary to understand the highest Truth, but a complete review is not necessary here.

22. According to H. Saddhatissa 1970: 87.

23. *Yoga-sūtra*, ii. 30.

24. S. N. Dasgupta 1963: 199.

25. Right speech: *satya*; right action: *asteya*, *brahmacharya* (*aparigraha*?); right *ahimsā*.

26. S. N. Dasgupta, 1963: 237. See *Yoga-sūtra*, ii.

27. S. Hariharānanda 1963: 87.

28. S. N. Dasgupta 1963: 203.

29. W. Rahula 1959 and 1967: 75.

30. *Yoga-sūtra*, iii. 3.

31. M. Eliade, 1969: 167–173.

32. S. N. Dasgupta 1963: 271.

33. Ibid.: 271.

34. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 166.

35. T. 365, 12: 341, B29-C1.

36. *SCD*: 32 (no. 33.9); *MEB*: 2198.

37. *DCBT*: 302, A.

38. The second step on the Eightfold Path, *cheng-szu* (*samyak-samkalpa*) does not seem to be related to *szu-wei*.

39. *MEB*: 2637, A.

40. The Chinese commentators have proposed a different exegesis of the two terms, against which Shan-tao reacted (see below).

41. See N. Dutt 1960: 147 *passim*.

42. See H. Dayal 1932: 106–111; it is one of five or six *abhijñas* (supernatural powers) acquired by a Bodhisattva during his career.

43. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 168.

44. Ibid.: 166f.

45. Ibid.: 169.

46. This interpretation contradicts P. Demiéville's viewpoint: he says that the *Kuan-ching*, ch. 8 (the text just quoted) "spécifie également que la reine Vaidehī peut voir la Terre Pure sans posséder la vue divine" (1954: 355, footnote 1). If one argues that Vaidehī does not receive

divine sight, but that the Buddha makes her see, it becomes a discussion about words. Besides, that she receives this Bodhisattva power is not a unique case; she also will receive other favors usually obtained during the course of Bodhisattva training.

47. T. 365, 12: 342, A2.
48. *WDEL*: II, 1403.
49. Ibid.: I, 469.
50. C. Humphreys 1968: 17.
51. *WDEL*: I, 491.
52. T. 365, 12: 341, C27–342, A4. Cp. Takakusu's translation (*SBE* 49: Part 2, 169f.).
53. B. Karlgren 1964: 193, no. 731d.
54. B. Karlgren 1966: 236, no. 786.
55. *WDEL*: I, 1128.
56. Ibid.: II, 2558.
57. *Visuddhimagga*, trans. Nānamoli (*VMN*): 86.
58. *GSR*: 63, no. 158i.
59. *AD*: 152, no. 449.
60. *WDEL*: I, 1170.
61. T. 365, 12: 342, B1–4.
62. Ibid.: 342, B4–21.
63. *MCED*: 119.
64. Ibid.: 397.
65. T. 643, 15: 691, C12.
66. Ibid.: 691, C14.
67. Ibid.: 692, C18–19.
68. T. 365, 12: 343, C7–8.
69. Ibid.: 342, A22–24.
70. Ibid.: 343, B11–13. J. Takakusu, *SBE* 49: Part 2, 179, translates: "during this present life he obtains the samādhi due to the remembrance of the Buddha. "
71. Ibid.: 343, B28–29. J. Takakusu: 181, translates as "the Samādhi of the remembrance of the Buddhas."
72. Ibid.: 346, B9–10. A preceding passage mentions the Buddha's prophecy: that Vaidehī and her attendants would all be reborn in Amita's Land and *there* obtain the *samādhi* of seeing all the Buddhas in front of themselves. That this is an interpolation is manifest: both the contradictory statement itself and the literary context are proof of it.
73. *MCED*: 928.
74. *RCDW*: 502.
75. See, e.g., H. Dayal 1932: 233.
76. But even here the Chinese has *szu-ting* (*DCBT*: 174, A), while *szu-ch'an* (*t'ien*) indicates the four corresponding *dhyāna heavens* (ibid.: 179, A).



77. See *DCBT*: 254, B; 255, A.
78. Ibid.: 134, B. For a further study of the terms, see *MEB* (e.g., *samādhi*): 1161, C - 1674, C; (*dhyāna*): 2941, A–2944, A; (*ting*): 3673, A–3676, A.
79. "Teach me *szu-wei*, teach me *cheng-shou*." J. Takakusu (*SBE*: 166) translates: " I simply pray thee, to teach me how to concentrate my thought as to obtain a right vision (of that country)."
80. T. 1749, 37: 178, A 19–20. However, by means of a subtle distinction, he also says that Meditations 1 and 2 are *szu-wei*; 3 to 16 are *cheng-shou*! (Ibid.: 178, A20–22.)
81. T. 1750, 37: 191, A16–24.
82. T. 1752, 37: 234, C3–15.
83. Ibid.: 242, B6–12.
84. See R. Yuki 1964: 915f.
85. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 247, B22–23.
86. *Hsiang-hsin tou hsi* (ibid.: 247, C2).
87. Ibid.: 247, C2–3.
88. Ibid.: 247, C6–10.
89. Ibid.: 247, C6–10.
90. The question of the origin of these terms is discussed in ch. 7.
91. A. Waley (1931: xxi) translates and explains the two terms as the "two kinds of good": "(1) good which results from a state of mind, in particular from concentration; (2) good which results from action while in a normal state of diffused attention." Or: "good through concentration of thought" and "good through diffused attention."
92. See translation of the relevant text in ch. 4.
93. *Szu-chung tsui*: which are "killing, stealing, carnality, lying" (*DCBT*: 183, A).
94. *Yi-ch'an-t'i (chia)*, transliteration for *icchantika*, which is interpreted as being unable to become a Buddha, in this case, because of unbelief or lack of desire for enlightenment. The translation of the term is *tuan shan-ken che*, one who has cut off his good roots. (See *DCBT*: 9, B and 483, A.)
95. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 262, A8–13.
96. Ibid.: 261, C11–14.
97. Ibid.: 261, C14–15.
98. Ibid.: 261, C15–19. This is the only allusion Shan-tao makes to yogic *prānāyāma*, regulation of breathing.
99. Ibid.: 261, C19–262, A2. It is surprising to see that Shan-tao starts off with "four" elements (earth, water, air, fire) of the Hindu tradition, and then adds one, space, to make it "five." Yet these five do not correspond to the traditional "five agents" of China (wood, fire, earth, metal, water).
100. P. Demiéville 1954: 352–354 (my translation).

101. T. 619, "Summary Method of Using the *Sūtra of Five Gates of Dhyāna.*"
102. P. Demiéville 1954: 360f.
103. Nyanaponika Thera 1962: 66f.
104. *VMN*: 380f.
105. A. Bharati (1965): 112f.
106. *The Śūrangama Sūtra* (*Leng Yen Ching*), Lu 1966.
107. Ibid.: 130.
108. Ibid.: 132.
109. Ibid.: 133.
110. From E. Conze, ed., 1964: 276. Compare T. 619, 15: 328, C18–20.
111. E.g., M. Eliade, *Yoga*, 1969: 109f.
112. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 262, A2–8.
113. A. Waley 1931: xxii.
114. See *MEB*: 1579f.; also ibid.: 1603, C–1605, A; 2543, C–2544, C; *DCBT*: 80, A; *PDB*: 241, B.
115. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 262, A8–20.
116. Ibid.: 262, A21–27.
117. Shan-tao often uses the compound *kuan-ch'a*, literally, inspection-investigation; both characters are used in a synonymous way; in other words, the addition of *ch'a* fortifies the meaning of *kuan*.
118. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 262, A29-B1.
119. Ibid.: 262, B2–11.
120. Ibid.: 262, B2–16.
121. Ibid.: 262, B21–26.
122. Ibid.: 262, B26-C1.
123. Ibid.: 262, C5–24.
124. Ibid.: 262, C24–263, A6. The quotation is from Vasubandhu's *gāthās*, T. 1524, 26: 230, C18–19.
125. B. Watson, trans., 1963: 131f.
126. B. Watson, trans., 1970: 69.
127. T. 1753: 263, C9–18.
128. Ibid.: 266, A29.
129. Ibid.: 266, B1–21.
130. T. 365, 12: 343, A18–19.
131. Ibid.: 343, A24–25.
132. The terms used are *ju . . . hsin-hsiang*. It is not clear whether *hsiang* is understood here in the usual meaning it has elsewhere in the sutra, "visualization-imagination." It apparently has another connotation.
133. T. 365: 343, A19–24.
134. *DCBT*: 381, B.
135. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 267, A19-B13.



136. Ibid.: 267, B18-C2.
137. T. 365: 343, B7–8.
138. Perhaps not only misleading, but incorrect, because *chen-shen*, meaning "true body," refers to "the *dharma-kāya*, the Buddha as absolute" (*DCBT*: 333, B). Since such a contradiction is hardly imaginable, *chen-shen* is perhaps used with the same meaning as *chen-Fo*, "the real Buddha, i.e., the *sambhoga-kāya*" (ibid.: 331, A).
139. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 269, C25–26.
140. Since the term *kuan* is expressed in the titles of the sutras. See above Chapter 2.
141. A. Soper 1959: 144.
142. *Nien-Fo-samādhi* is to be distinguished from *nien-Fo*, which is not a state of *samādhi*. See below in Chapter 8.
143. T. 643, 15: 687, B26–27.
144. Ibid.: 688, C10–11.
145. E.g., he says "If sentient beings wish to *nien-Fo*, or wish to *kuan-Fo*, or wish to see (*chien*) the Buddha " (ibid.: 647, B24–25). It seems that he wants to differentiate between three separate activities.
146. The meaning of *chao* in this context is best expressed by "erleuchten, beleuchten" (*RCDW*: 541), or "to illumine" in the sense of "to throw light on something" in such a way that it becomes clear, visible, distinguishable.
147. *KCS*, 1753, 37: 247, A5–7.
148. See, e.g., Nyanaponika Thera 1969: 102; W. Rahula 1959 and 1967: 68f.
149. W. Rahula 1959 and 1967: 68f.
150. See L. Hurvitz 1962: 318–331.
151. Ibid.: 322.
152. Ibid.: 330f.

## CHAPTER 7. THE SECOND GATE: NONMEDITATIVE ACTION

1. J. Ikemoto, *MEBC*: 456.
2. R. Fujiwara, *ER* 13 (1986): 224.
3. E.g., A. Bloom 1965. See also F. Masutani 1965.
4. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 98f.
5. Ibid.: 101f.
6. M. Müller, *Anecdota Oxoniensia, Aryan Series*, I, Part 3, p. iii, says that "the libraries of Japan or China . . . had supplied the manuscripts of the Sanskrit text of the [Shorter Sutra]."
7. T. 366, 12: 347, B7–8.
8. Ibid.: 347, B16–17.

9. Ibid.: 348, A13, 17.
10. T. 367, 12: 349, C28; 351, A19–20, 25–26.
11. T. 366: 347, B10–13.
12. Ibid.: 350, A7–10.
13. Ibid.: 347, B9–10.
14. T. 367: 350, A4–6.
15. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 98, footnote 2. ("enjoyed" is likely a misprint for "enjoined")
16. T. 360, 12: 272, B13. Cp. with Lokakshema's version, T. 361, 12: 291, C15ff; also with Chih-ch'ien's translation, T. 362, 12: 309, C 22.
17. T. 360: 272, B12–20.
18. Ibid.: 272, B26-C3.
19. Ibid.: 272, C4–10.
20. *SBE* 49: Part 2: 45–46.
21. J. Takakusu translates "cultivate a threefold goodness." See *DCBT*: 71, B: "three (sources of) felicity." See also *MEB*: 1639, C–1640, B. The expression *san-fu* does not appear in any previous Buddhist text, but is most likely inspired by *san-fu-yeh* (*punya-karma*). See *MEB*: 1502, A.
22. J. Takakusu explains: "to observe the ten prohibitive precepts of Buddha" (*SBE*: 167, footnote). The Chinese text has *shih shan-yeh*, which, in contrast with *shih-chieh* or ten precepts (observed by the monks), is the noncommitting of the ten evils (observed by laity as well). See *DCBT*: 47, A; 50, A. Therefore it seems that Takakusu's explanation is not correct, although the translation itself is right.
23. "The complete rules or commandments: 250 for the monk, 500 (actually 348) for the nun" (*DCBT*: 250, B).
24. *Wei-yi*, "respect-inspiring deportment; dignity, i.e., in walking, standing, sitting, lying. There are said to be 3,000 and also 80,000 forms of such deportment" (*DCBT*: 299, B).
25. The Chinese expression used is *yin-kuo*, and not *yuan-ch'i*. The latter is the usual rendering of *pratitya-samutpāda* (see *MEB*: 295f.), so it is clear that the sutra does not prescribe the understanding of the philosophical principle of causality, but a more popularized version of moral cause and effect, that a good action produces a good result and an evil action produces an evil effect. This is the true meaning of *yin-kuo* used here. Cp. Shan-tao's comment on this passage (see *MEB*: 176).
26. T. 365: 341, C8–12.
27. T. 643, 15: 648, A2–4.
28. See *DCBT*: 139, B.
29. T. 277, 9: 394, A24-B5.
30. T. 365: 344, C9–345, A4. The nine grades or modes of rebirth are divided into three levels: Highest Level, Middle Level, and Lowest Level; each level contains three grades: highest grade, middle grade, lowest grade.



31. J. Takakusu, *SBE*: 188, translates thus: "First, the True Thought; second, the Deep Believing Thought; third, the Desire to be born in that Pure Land by bringing one's own stock of merit to maturity." Cp. *DCBT*: 64f.: perfect sincerity; profound resolve for it; resolve on demitting one's merits on others.
32. T. 365: 344, C12–13.
33. See *DCBT*: 64f.; also *MEB*: 1531, B–1534, B.
34. See Y. S. Hakeda, trans., 1967: 5–9.
35. Ibid.: 82.
36. *DCBT*: 275, A.
37. Ibid.: 356, B: "A mind profoundly engrossed (in Buddha-truth, or thought, or illusion, etc.)"
38. T. 1666, 32: 580, C7–8.
39. *SCD*: 79 (no. 126, 13): here *rjucittah* is translated as *hsin-chih*. See also *BHSD*: 151. The term is not given, but other closely related terms are given: *rjuka*, adj., *straight, right; rjukena*, adv., *straight out, straightforwardly, honestly*.
40. E. Lamotte, trans. and annot., *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, p. 407.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. *MCED*: 842, no. 5930. See also *BHSD*: 17f., where *adhyāśaya* is "understood as a more intensive near-synonym of *āśaya*."
44. See E. Lamotte 1962: 406f.; *BHSD*: 17f.
45. *BHSD*: 17.
46. Ibid.: 18.
47. E. Lamotte 1962: 406f.
48. See E. Lamotte 1962: one of the Tibetan translations is an (incomplete) manuscript discovered at Tun-huang.
49. Ibid.: 2–14.
50. Ibid.: 77.
51. T. 474, 14: 520, A.
52. T. 475, 14: 538, A–B.
53. T. 476, 14: 559, A–C. Hsuan-tsang has one more item than the other translations: his series starts with "production of *anuttara bodhicitta*."
54. See N. Dutt 1960: 174–176. See also *MEB*: 2101f.; *DCBT*: 178, A; E. Lamotte 1962: 116, note 66.
55. T. 360: 272, B9.
56. Ibid.: 272, B12–13; also B22, C5.
57. Ibid: 272, C8–9.
58. T. 360: 273, C27–274, A1.

59. See Chapter 8.
60. T. 365: 344, C14–17. Compare with J. Takakusu's (incorrect) translation, *SBE* 49: Part 2, 188.
61. T. 365: 345, A5–7.
62. Ibid.: 345, A22–23.
63. *DCBT*: 118, B.
64. Ibid.: 36, B.
65. Ibid.: 414, B.
66. T. 365: 345, B8–11.
67. Ibid.: 345, B19–21.
68. Ibid.: 345, C1–2. A variant reading is: *jen-tz'u*, compassion.
69. Ibid.: 345, C10–11.
70. Ibid.: 345, C27–346, A1.
71. Ibid.: 346, A12–13.
72. Or *ting-san er-shan*: the twofold goodness of meditation and distraction (nonmeditative action).
73. See below.
74. *GSR*: 62, no. 156, a–b.
75. *AD*: 232, no. 767.
76. *MCED*: 748f.
77. *DCBT*: 373, B.
78. *MEB*: 1534, B–C.
79. J. Takakusu 1956: 94. See also *MEB*: 1694f.
80. T. 1749, 37: 184, C4–8.
81. Ibid.: 178, A18–20.
82. Ibid.: 178, B9-C4.
83. T. 1750: 191, A17–18.
84. Ibid.: 193, B25–26.
85. Ibid.: 193, B26.
86. T. 1752: 241, B21–22.
87. *KCS, T.* 1753: 247, B22–25.
88. T. 1958, 47: 17, A28-B4.
89. The basic works consulted with reference to Buddhist ethics are H. Dayal, *Bodhisattva Doctrine*; N. Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism*; H. Guenther, trans., *The Jewel Ornament*; Y. S. Hakeda, trans., *The Awakening of Faith*; N. P. Jacobson, *Buddhism. The Religion of Analysis* (2nd ed.); W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught;* H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics, Essence of Buddhism*; Śāntideva, *Bodhicaryāvatāra. Entering the Path of Enlightenment*, trans. M. L. Matics; I. C. Sharma, *Ethical Philosophies of India* (rev. ed.); J. Walters, *The Essence of Buddhism*.
90. *MEB*: 1639, C. The three are also called "worldly goodness" (*shih-shan*), "goodness of discipline, precepts (*chieh-shan*)," and "goodness of [higher] practice" (*hsing-shan*).
91. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 167.



92. H. Saddhatissa 1970: 110f.
93. *DCBT*: 50, B. For a discussion of the origin and meaning of the "Decalogue of Buddhism," see H. Dayal 1932: 197–204.
94. *KCS, T.* 1753, 37: 259, A20–22.
95. This cause is *yuan,* in opposition to the efficient cause, *yin* mentioned later in the same text.
96. *Hua-sheng*, *DCBT*: 142, A; see also *szu-sheng*, 178, B.
97. Cp. *DCBT*: 404, B: *yeh-shih*: "activity-consciousness."
98. *KCS, T.* 1753, 37: 259, A25-B9.
99. Cp. *DCBT*: 138, A.
100. *KCS*: T. 276, A5–9.
101. *DCBT*: 426, A.
102. The contrasting terms are *shih-chien*, which could both mean "in this life" and "within the profane life"; and *ch'u-shih*, which may either indicate "other-worldly" or "within the religious life," i.e., within the *sangha*.
103. *KCS*: T. 259, B10-C8.
104. *DCBT*: 188, B.
105. *KCS*: T. 259, C8–11.
106. Ibid.: 259, C11–12.
107. Ibid.: 259, C12–13.
108. Ibid.: 259, C13–16.
109. Reference unknown.
110. Meaning "altruism" (e.g., Fung Yu-lan 1952: I, 372f.) or "reciprocity." The full expression is perhaps "forgive others as you forgive yourself" (*MCED*: 832, A4.) *Shu* is an important idea in Confucius' *Analects*, 4, 15 (see Fung: I, 71).
111. *KCS*: T. 259, C16–19.
112. Shan-tao's text reads *jen-tz'u*, whereas the sutra has *jen-yi*, but with the variant reading of *jen-tz'u* (T. 365, 12: 345, C2).
113. *KCS*: T. 276, A6–7.
114. *Szu-sheng*, *DCBT*: 178, B.
115. According to the T'ien-t'ai School, there are two groups of ten virtuous actions: "one of ceasing [*chih*] to do evil, the other of learning to do well [*hsing*]" (*DCBT*: 47, A). Shan-tao applies the terms in a limited sense: only referring to not killing.
116. Shan-tao uses *ch'ih*, probably as a synonym for *hsing*.
117. *Kuan-ching shu*: T. 273, B17–27.
118. Ibid.: 259, C20–23.
119. Ibid.: 259, C23–26.
120. See *DCBT*: 239.
121. *Wu-chieh, DCBT*: 118 B; *pa-chieh*, 36f.; *shih shan-chieh*, 47, A: "the ten precepts (as observed by the laity)"; *erh-shih chieh*, 27, A:

*erh-pai wu-shih chieh*. Shan-tao's 220 is perhaps a misprint; *wu-pai chieh*, 122, B; *sha-mi chieh*, 242, A.

122. *DCBT*: 74, B.
123. Ibid.: 51, B.
124. *KCS*: 259, C26–260, A1.
125. *Śrāvakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas*.
126. *KCS*: 273, B27-C3.
127. Ibid.: 275, B3–6.
128. Ibid.: 275, B6–8.
129. Ibid.: 275, C11.
130. Ibid.: 260, A1–4.
131. Shan-tao uses *hsia-yin*. Cp. *DCBT*: 205, A.
132. *KCS*: 260, A5–13.
133. For a discussion of *bodhicitta*, see H. Dayal 1932: 58–64; T. R. V. Murti 1955: 263–266; D. T. Suzuki 1967: 294–306.
134. T. Murti 1955: 264.
135. Ibid.: 264.
136. See M. L. Matics 1970: 153–156.
137. See Z. Tsukamoto 1933.
138. About Shao-k'ang, see *MEB*: 2598f.
139. See *MEB*: 4614, A and *MEB*: 2599 (Shao-k'ang).
140. Shan-tao replaces the sutra words *fa wu-shang-tao hsin* by the more or less synonymous expression *fa p'u-t'i hsin*.
141. *KCS*: 274, C19–22.
142. Shan-tao seems to have confused his logical division: he considers this as section 4, instead of section 3, point 2 (ibid.: 260, A15).
143. Another sign of the author's "distraction": in fact, there is only one point.
144. *KCS*: 260, A15–18.
145. Ibid.: 274, B4–8.
146. *DCBT*: 380, B.
147. *KCS*: 274, C12–17.
148. Ibid.: 260, A18–20.
149. *DCBT*: 58, B. f.
150. Literally, *san-hsien shih-sheng*, *DCBT*: 77 A: "the three virtuous positions, or states, or a bodhisattva . . . The ten excellent characteristics of a saint . . ."
151. *KCS*: 273, C3–8.
152. *DCBT*: 380, B.
153. *KCS*: 274, A28-B4.
154. *DCBT*: 68, A.
155. *KCS*: 260, A21–25.
156. *MCED*: 135: *chih*: "To reach; to arrive at. Very. The extreme. Greatest, best."



157. Ibid.: 36: *chen*: "True, real, unfeigned. Thoroughly."
158. Ibid.: 49: *ch'eng*: "Sincere, true, honest. To make sincere. Certainly, honestly."
159. Ibid.: 818: *shih*: "Solid; substantial; hard; Real; true; truly; really; Authentic. Sincere; genuine. Reality."
160. *DCBT*: 413, B.
161. *DCBT*: 427, A.
162. The three poisons are *t'an, chen,* and *chih* (*DCBT*: 69, A).
163. *KCS*: 270, C27–271, A9.
164. Hui-yuan: T. 1749, 37: 183, A28–B5; 184, C15–22. Chih-yi: T. 1750, 37: 193, C10–14. T'an-luan refers to a similar mental attitude: T. 1957: 1, C23–25.
165. T. 1980: 438, C4–13.
166. *DCBT*: 466, B.
167. Ibid.: 70, B.
168. Ibid.: 139, A.
169. Ibid.: 170, A.
170. Ibid.: 196, B.
171. *KCS*: 271, A10–27. This passage about "extreme sincerity for self-benefit" is not followed up by "extreme sincerity for the benefit of others," probably because both are actually treated together.
172. *DCBT*: 471.
173. *DCBT*: 31, A.
174. *KCS*: 271, A27-B27.
175. T. 365: 341, C11–12.
176. In modern treatises on Shan-tao, this aspect of "faith" is often developed out of proportion to the rest of his teachings: for example, I. Seah in his dissertation devotes a long chapter to "the nature of faith, the threefold form of faith, the practice of faith, and the exercise of faith" (Seah 1975: 268–324).
177. *KCS*: 271, B27-C2.
178. Ibid.: 271, C2–11.
179. Ibid.: 271, C11–13.
180. Ibid.: 271, C14–17.
181. *DCBT*: 20, B.
182. *KCS*: 271, C17–18.
183. *DCBT*: 20, B.
184. *KCS*: 271, C17–18.
185. Ibid.: 271, C28–272, A5.
186. Ibid.: 272, A5–7.
187. Ibid.: 272, A11–15.
188. These are, respectively, the *Kuan-ching*, the Shorter Sutra, and the Longer Sutra.
189. *KCS*: 272, A29–B13.

190. See, e.g., K. Ch'en 1964: 346; R. H. Robinson 1970: 86; D. Chappell, *ER*, 1986.
191. *DCBT*: 166, B.
192. *Tso te-sheng hsiang.*
193. *KCS:* 272, B13–23.
194. *DCBT*: 183, A.
195. *KCS:* 272, B23–29.
196. *DCBT*: 301, B.
197. *KCS:* 272, C1–15.
198. *DCBT*: 103, B.
199. *KCS:* 273, B10–12.
200. Ibid.: 273, B12–13.
201. Ibid.: 273, B13–14.
202. For the following development, see H. Saddhatissa 1970: 119f.

## CHAPTER 8. RECITATION OF THE NAME OF AMITA

1. A. Bloom 1965: 25.
2. J. Takakusu 1956: 175.
3. See A. Andrews 1973.
4. A. Bloom 1965: 17. Bloom states that Genshin introduced Shan-tao's thought to Japan (ibid.), but it was actually Hōnen who was instrumental in this process.
5. C. Eliot 1959: 158, 263.
6. *The Shōshin Ge*, 1961: 39.
7. A. Bloom 1965: 20.
8. Quoted from C. Eliot 1959: 262. The author says in a footnote that the quotation is from Shan-tao's *Kuan-ching shu*, volume 4.
9. A. Bloom 1965: 17.
10. R. Fujimoto 1960: II, 7–8.
11. Ibid.: 92.
12. *PED*: 672, B.
13. Ibid.: 45, A.
14. *SED*: 1272, B–C.
15. Ibid.: 41, B.
16. Ibid.: 31, A.
17. *VMN*: 204; cp. *VMP*: 226 (the latter translation agrees basically with *VMN*).
18. H. Dayal 1932: 85.
19. Ibid.: He refers to M. Müller's *SBE* 10: Part 1, 27.
20. *WDEL*: II, 1437.
21. Ibid.: II, 1897.



22. Provisionally the terms "mindfulness" (*sati*) and "recollection" (*anussati*) will be adopted, until the discussion has taken place.
23. W. Rahula 1967: 45; R. Robinson 1970: 26.
24. E. Lamotte 1958: 28.
25. J. Filliozat, *IC*: 519.
26. H. Guenther 1970: 229f., footnote 35.
27. Quoted from R. Gard 1962: 134.
28. W. Rahula 1967: 48.
29. N. Dutt 1960: 246f. It is most remarkable to see that *sati* in these four compounds is translated by *kuan* in Chinese: see L. Hurvitz 1962: 344. Cp. *DCBT*: 175.
30. H. Dayal 1932: 90.
31. E.g., E. Thomas 1963: 53; Nyanaponika Thera 1969: 61ff.
32. H. Dayal 1932: 86.
33. A. Andrews 1970: 22.
34. *The Dhammapada*, 1965: 45f., verses 295–301.
35. See *SBE 49: Part* 2. "When the men there hear that sound, remembrance of Buddha, remembrance of the Law, remembrance of the Church, rises in their mind" (p. 96). "And when the men hear that sound, reflection on Buddha arises in them, reflection on the Law, reflection on the Church" (p. 97). Compare with the Chinese texts: T. 366: 347, A15–16; 347, A23. See also T. 367: 349, B7–8, 21–22.
36. In this sutra the "birds of paradise" "sing out harmonious notes sweet and delicious, ever praising the remembrance of Buddha, the remembrance of the Law, the remembrance of the Church" (*SBE* 49: Part 2, 174; Chinese: *nien-Fo, nien-fa, nien-seng*; T. 365: 342, C3–4). In the subsequent paragraph the musical instruments in Sukhāvatī "emit musical sounds without being struck, which, while resounding variously, all propound the remembrance of Buddha, of the Law, and of the Church, Bhikshus, etc." (*SBE*: 175. Chinese: *nien-Fo, nien-fa, nien pi-ch'iu seng*; T. 365: 342, A8–9).
37. *PED*: 45, A; *VMN*: 112; *VMP*: 129; *MEB*: 4223, A (*pa-nien*); 2356, B–2349, A (*shih-nien*).
38. *VMN*: 206.
39. T. 643, 15: 656, B–C; 650, A.
40. *GSR*: 178, no. 670 *a–c.*
41. *AD*: 207, no. 670.
42. *MCED*: 657; *GCED*: 1024; F. Couvreur 1963: 309. In contrast, *RCDW*: 303 does not mention the first meaning "to think." He gives "recitieren; herunter leiern, immer wieder herbeten, auswendig lernen."
43. *MCED*: 657; *GCED*: 1024. (The latter adds as a second meaning of *nien-fo*: "to purr, as a cat"!)
44. *DCBT*: 258, A.

45. *RCDW*: 303 (my translation)
46. For more details, see above Chapter 7.
47. See *SBE* 49: Part 2, 15 (vows 18–19); 73f. (vows 18 and 20 of Sanghavarman's translation). Compare with A. Bloom 1965: 2–3.
48. *SBE* 49: Part 2, 73.
49. T. 360, 12: 268, 27.
50. *DCBT*: 15, B.
51. *Nien* does not seem to mean "time" here, but "earnest thought": in other words, the restriction is: if they have produced at least ten serious thoughts, "ten times" is a more convenient way to express the same idea.
52. T. 360 (vows 34,35,36,37,41,42,43,44,45,47,48); compare T. 361: 281, B27; C7 (vows 17 and 19 only); T. 362: 301, B11, 15–16 (vows 4 and 5).
53. T. 360: 268, A24–25. In *SBE* 49: Part 2, 15. The parallel text (from Sanskrit) reads: "glorify my name."
54. *SBE 49:* Part 2, 99.
55. See Chapter 7.
56. T. 365: 245, C12–16.
57. Compare *MEB*: 1288.
58. T. 365: 246, A2–6.
59. *Yü nien-nien chung*. Cp. *DCBT*: 258, B. The expression *nien-nien* may signify either *ksana*, an instant; or "thought after thought." Here the latter is preferable.
60. T. 365: 246, A15–20.
61. It is called the *nien-Fo* of hearing and faith. See R. Yoshioka 1961: 540.
62. T. 409, 13: 680, A1–3.
63. Ibid.: 678, C17–20.
64. T. 643, 15: 647, B24–25.
65. Ibid.: 660, C; 661, B6; 676, A27–28.
66. Ibid.: 687, B23–24. A similar comparison is made between *hearing* and practicing the *kuan-Fo samādhi*: 687, C10–11.
67. T. 452, 14: 420, A10–17.
68. Ibid.: 520, B.
69. See R. Yoshioka 1961: 540f.
70. If they had been prescribed as moral conditions necessary for fruitful meditation, the case would have been different: then they would fall under *niyama* (see Chapter 6).
71. T. 366: 347, B10–13.
72. *KCS:* T. 1753, 37: 272, A15–17.
73. Ibid.: 272, A18–21.
74. T. 366: 348, A17–23.
75. *KCS:* 272, A23–27.



76. *WSLT*, T. 1980, 47: 438, C14–439, A6.

| *Vasubandhu* | *Shan-tao* |
|---|---|
| 1. Worship (*li-pai*) | Study and Chanting (*tu-sung*) |
| 2. Praise (*tsan-t'an*) | Meditation-inspection (*kuan-ch'a*) |
| 3. Resolution, Wish (*tso-yuan*) | Worship (*li*) |
| 4. Inspection (*kuan-ch'a*) | Invocation (*k'ou-ch'eng*) |
| 5. Transfer of Merit (*hui-hsiang*) | Praise and Offering (*tsan-t'an kung-yang*) |

77. Ibid.: 439, A4–6.
78. K. Yamamoto 1963: 191.
79. *MEB*: 2835, C.
80. *Jōdo Wasan*: 52. In a hymn by Shinran, one reads: "The aspirants for the Land of Peace and Bliss Dwell in the Rightly Established State; . . ." See also K. Yamamoto 1963: 136.
81. *MEB*: 1540, C.
82. K. Yamamoto 1963: 136.
83. *SBE*, 49: Part 2, 13. Compare with Sanghavarman's translation, T. 360, 12: 268, A11–12.
84. Compare with vow 45 of Dharmākara, *SBE*: 22; and vow 47 in T. 360: 269, B2–3.
85. *KCS:* 272, B6–8.
86. Quoted from *Shinshū Seiten*: 167 by K. Yamamoto 1963: 191.
87. *MEB*: 2667, C.
88. T. 365: 343, B23–26. (Cp. with *SBE* 49: Part 2, 180.)
89. *KCS:* 268, A4–20.
90. This is a free interpretation, for as appears from Chapter 7, there is no such condition mentioned.
91. *KCS:* 273, C9–12.
92. In other words, one invocation is five thousand times stronger than merely hearing the titles of the canon.
93. *KCS:* 276, B20–25.
94. In Shan-tao's terminology, *hua-hsiang* means, following the *Kuan-ching:* "created [images of] Amita himself and his two Bodhisattvas" (T. 365: 345, C17).
95. *KCS:* 276, B27–29.
96. Ibid.: 276, B29-A4.
97. Ibid.: 277, B14–17.

## CHAPTER 9. REBIRTH IN SUKHĀVATĪ

1. *SBE 49*: Part 2, 99. The Chinese texts are equally scanty in their reference to rebirth: T. 366: 347, B13–15; T. 367: 350, A11–14.
2. See Inagaki Hisao 1965: 396–393.

3. See, e.g., T. 361: 301, A27–28 (2nd vow).
4. Inagaki 1965: 395.
5. T. 361: 291, C24–27. Cp. T. 362: 310, A4–7; also T. 360: 272, B15–20.
6. T. 361: 292, A13-B 1. Cp. T. 362: 310, A23-C 9; also T. 360: 272, B29-C3.
7. T. 361: 292, C9–17. Cp. T. 362: 310, C15–311, A5; also T. 360: 272, C9–10.
8. *SBE 49*: Part 2, 62f.
9. *Pai-fa ming-men*: "The door to the knowledge of universal phenomena, one of the first stages of bodhisattva progress." *DCBT*: 217, A.
10. *San-men*, *DCBT*: 66, B; explained differently.
11. *Liu-t'ung*, *DCBT*: 138, B. (Cp. 128, A.)
12. *Pa chieh-t'o*, *DCBT*: 39: liberation, emancipation in eight forms.
13. See *MEB*: 2469f.
14. *KCS*, T. 1753, 37: 247, C22–248, A7. In this summary of the views of the "other teachers," Shan-tao refers to Hui-yuan, Chih-yi, and Chi-tsang. Hui-yuan's formulation corresponds almost exactly with Shan-tao's discussion of it; see T. 1749: 182, A12-C22. For Chih-yi, see T. 1750: 193, B28-C4. For Chi-tsang, see T. 1752: 244, C2–245, A11.
15. The title is not given; possibly the *Hua-yen sūtra* is again intended.
16. *DCBT*: 38, B.
17. *KCS*: 248, A8-B6.
18. Shan-tao's view on this matter is in basic agreement with that of T'an-luan and Tao-ch'o, although the reasons he gives are more developed. T'an-luan's treatment is less apologetic, since he wrote before the She-lun teachings were known in China. (See J. Ikemoto, *MEBC*: 455.)
19. Shan-tao does not quote the *Kuan-ching* literally but gives only their substance: he summarizes the ethical standards as prescribed for the highest level of rebirth, but leaves out the threefold mind.
20. *KCS*: 248, B7–19.
21. Ibid.: 249, A5–7.
22. Ibid.: 248, A9–10.
23. Ibid.: 248, B9–11.
24. Ibid.: 248, A8.
25. *SBE 49*: Part 2, 167. Cp. T. 365: 341, C6–8. Since Takakusu's translation of this and the following passages is fairly accurate, I quote his text rather than redo the translation.
26. *SBE 49*: Part 2, 168. Cp. T. 365: 341, C15–17.
27. *SBE*: 168. Cp. T. 365: 341, C18–20.
28. *SBE*: 169. Cp. T. 365: 341, C25–27.
29. *SBE*: 169. Cp. T. 365: 341, C27–342, A1.



30. *SBE*: 171f. Takakusu's version has been slightly modified here. Cp. T. 365: 342, A26–27.
31. *SBE*: 176. Cp. T. 365: 342, C20–22.
32. *SBE*: 176. Cp. T. 365: 342, C22–23. The text quoted by Shan-tao does not correspond with the Taishō text, which says: "those who want to inspect that Buddha."
33. *SBE*: 178. Cp. T. 365: 343, A19–20.
34. No exact reference is given.
35. *KCS*: 249, B11-C9.
36. Shan-tao knew this story quite well, for he comments on this episode in Part 2 of the *Kuan-ching shu*: the meaning of the Introductory Part. See *KCS*: 253, C11–18.
37. *SBE*: 169. Cp. T. 365: 341, C23.
38. See *DCBT*: 322, B.
39. *KCS*: 260, C12–16.
40. T. 1749: 179, A19–20; T. 1750: 191, B26–27.
41. *DCBT*: 410, A.
42. Cp. *MEB*: 4706, B–C.
43. See ibid.: 2748, B–C.
44. *KCS*: 249, C10.
45. *MEB*: 4520, C.
46. The *Mahāyāna-samparigraha* (*She ta-ch'eng lun*), T. 1592–1597, 31. The quotation is from T. 1593, 31: 121, B12–13.
47. See *DCBT*: 209, A. Prabhūtaratna is the "ancient Buddha," who appears in the *Lotus sūtra*.
48. *Wu-shang p'u-t'i*, which means *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* (supreme enlightenment). See *DCBT*: 377, A–B.
49. "*Buddhaphala*; the Buddha fruit, the state of Buddhahood" (*DCBT*: 228, A).
50. This seems to be the reasoning of the opponents, according to Shan-tao.
51. Shan-tao uses *ch'eng-Fo*, whereas it should be *nien-Fo*, as in the above quotation. He probably makes this change for reasons of parallelism with the sutra passage.
52. *DCBT*: 16, A.
53. The sentence is not complete, but is supposedly so well known that Shan-tao only quotes the beginning.
54. In other words: past masters explained that the persons on the lowest level of rebirth are identical with those mentioned in the *She-lun-śāstra*.
55. Because they are said to be enclosed in a lotus flower during sixty *kalpas*.
56. Shan-tao uses *ch'eng Fo chih ming*, although neither the previously quoted text nor the Taishō text uses this expression.

57. *KCS:* 249, C10–250, A16.
58. See, e.g., K. Ch'en 1964: 305.
59. This seems to mean that the *She-lun-śāstra*, according to Shan-tao, rejects the power of "one *nien*," advocated in Pure Land practice, as incapable of stimulating the mind toward action. And if there is no action, rebirth is impossible.
60. Unidentified reference.
61. *KCS:* 250, A16–B1.
62. *KCS:* 250, B1–8.
63. See chapter 2, where the controversial verses are given in (tentative) translation.
64. Hsiao C. -f. 1967: 46–54.
65. T. 1819, 40: 830, C4–831, B3.
66. T. 1819: 830, C5. The above translation is made through comparison with the numerous similar expressions throughout T'an-luan's work. Beginning and end are always identical, but each time the middle part is changed, making clear the author's intention: all the *gāthās* express in different ways how Dharmākara's meritorious achievements (i.e., the merits accumulated by his endless practice of the virtues as a Bodhisattva) have resulted in so many glorious adornments, which are now one by one described in the *gāthās*.
67. T. 1819: 830, C5–14.
68. The correct understanding of this sentence depends on the right interpretation of *pu-ying*. R. Corless, 1973, translates as follows: "Sukhāvatī cannot have the Two Vehicles." But this is contradicted by the context itself. The above translation, on the other hand, lets open the possibility of Hīnayānist rebirth, but not "as a response," i.e., not because of a positive merit that leads them naturally to Sukhāvatī, but rather, as T'an-luan further says, because there is no other possibility.
69. T. 1819: 830, C26–831, A7.
70. *Erh-ch'eng chung pu te wang-sheng*
71. T. 1749: 184, B13–14. The third character, *ch'eng*, seems to be a misprint for *ch'ui*. (Compare with the parallel text in Chih-yi, below: 556.)
72. Hui-yuan changes the text slightly: *erh-ch'eng chung-tzu pu sheng* (ibid.: 184, B15–16).
73. Ibid.: 184, B16–21.
74. Ibid.: 184, B21–26.
75. *Erh-ch'eng pu te sheng*: T. 1750: 193, B12.
76. Ibid.: 193, B13–14.
77. That means that those who initially were Hīnayānists cannot be reborn as such (*śāstra*), but are reborn after their "profession of faith" in Mahāyāna.
78. T. 1750: 193, B12–17.



79. *Nü-jen ken-ch'üeh pu sheng* (ibid: 193, B17–18).
80. T. 1750: 193, B17–21.
81. T. 1961, 47.
82. Ibid.: 80, B17–29.
83. *Nü-jen chi ken-ch'üeh erh-ch'eng chung pu sheng* (T. 1963: 91, B4). The quotation corresponds exactly with *WSL*.
84. *Hsüeh-jen*. See *DCBT*: 447, A.
85. See ibid.: 399, B.
86. T. 1963: 91, B4–24.
87. Ibid.: 91, B27.
88. Ibid.: 91, C1–5.
89. See *DCBT*: 112, B: men, *devas, śrāvakas, pratyeka-buddhas, Bodhisattvas.*
90. The quotation is exactly as given by Vasubandhu.
91. *KCS:* 251, A6–20. The quotation by Shan-tao from the *Kuan-ching* is rather a condensation of the sutra text; however, it contains the essence of the original (see T. 365: 345, C10–24).
92. E.g., Hui-yuan, and especially Chia-ts'ai.
93. In other words, Shan-tao says that in the present context of Vasubandhu's verses *chung* can be substituted by *hsin,* with the result that the verse reads: *erh-ch'eng hsin pu sheng*, "the Hīnayāna-mind does not arise."
94. This seems to imply that they are reborn as males, and in possession of all their sense organs.
95. Literally, *erh-ch'eng* means the Two Vehicles of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, but here are summarily indicated as Hīnayāna.
96. The higher grade of the Lowest Level.
97. *KCS:* 251, A20-B1.
98. Ibid.: 251, B2.
99. The "uncertain beginning": Shan-tao said above that in the beginning it is not certain whether Kuan-yin will start with a discourse on Hīnayāna or on Mahāyāna.
100. Which means that in the end the Hīnayāna fruits are transcended because the reborn persons produce the Mahāyāna mind.
101. *KCS:* 251, B2–7.

## CHAPTER 10. SHAN-TAO'S SIGNIFICANCE

1. See H. Nakamura 1964: 268–271. See also K. Ch'en 1968: 81–97. On p. 81, the author says: "Buddhism started in India as a religion advocating departure from household life and abandonment of family, but it ended in China praising the virtue of filial piety. Such a transformation in China was engendered to a considerable extent by the desire

to accommodate itself to the Chinese scene, . . ." However, this statement is somehow misleading, since in China Buddhism did not in fact give up clerical celibacy. The said transformation lies rather in methods of emphasizing filiality and incorporating it within its set of ethical duties.

2. In the *Mou-tzu li-huo lun*. For a discussion of its date of composition, see K. Ch'en 1964: 37–38.

3. Ibid.: 149.

4. Ibid.: 191.

5. Ibid.: 179. In a further passage the author again emphasizes this change in Buddhist policy: their "espousal of the cardinal Confucian virtue of filial piety" (ibid.: 208). In the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa,* which gained great popularity in China, Vimalakīrti is "described as teaching loyalty and filial piety to the ruling princes" (ibid.). Finally, the author says, "By espousing such Confucian virtues as filial piety, congenial and harmonious family life, loyalty, moderation and self-discipline, Buddhism made itself much more acceptable to the Chinese of the age" (ibid.: 209).

6. See R. Michihata 1968: 60–121; 1967: 271–334.

7. Ibid.: 248–295.

8. These three aspects are from Shan-tao's Part 2, *KCS,* 1753, 37: 259, A24-C13. (In his Part 4, there is nothing new in this respect, except that he mentions the "six family relations" (*KCS:* 276, A5).

9. T. 2887, 85: 1403–1404. Neither author nor translator is mentioned. It is hard to say whether this is an authentic sutra or whether it was composed in China. H. Nakamura (1964: 269) is very definite in calling this text and another similar one (*Tai-pao fu-mu en chung ching*) "spurious" sutras composed in China.

10. T. 2887: 1403, B22–23.

11. Ibid.: 1403, C28–1404, A10.

12. Other texts related to this sutra are T. 684, 16: 778f; T. 687, 16: 780f; T. 16, 1: 250–252. There seems to be no relationship between those and Shan-tao's ideas. See R. Michihata 1967: 324–326.

13. T. 815, 17: 787–799; Nj. 153. Translated by Dharmaraksa. This translation is similar to T. 816: 799–816; Nj. 148.

It is surprising that Shan-tao does not refer to two Buddhist writings which were very popular during the T'ang period: the *Yü-lan-p'en ching* (T. 685) and the *P'u-sa shan-tzu ching* (T. 174). See K. Ch'en 1968: 83–93.

14. See the English translation of the *Hsiao ching* by Sister M. L. Makra: 1961.

15. Ibid.: x.

16. Ibid.: 20f.

17. For Tsung-mi's views on filial piety, see R. Michihata 1968: 267–273; K. Ch'en 1968: 92; Jan Y. -h. 1972: 1–54. In his commentary on the *Ullambana-sūtra*, "Tsung-mi claims filial piety as a supreme virtue, which should be equally honoured by Confucianists and Buddhists." Jan Y. -h. 1972: 23. See also P. Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*. Princeton University Press, 1991.



18. See W. -t. Chan 1963: 84–94 (*Ta-hsüeh*) and 95–114 (*Chung-yung*); Fung Y. -l. 1952: I, 361–377.

19. Cp. *WDEL*: 2, 2122.

20. E.g., W. -t. Chan 1961: 10: "Sincerity or being absolutely true or real . . ." In *DCBT*: 428, B, "Truthful, true, truth; real" are mentioned before "sincere, sincerity."

21. *Doctrine of the Mean*, 16, W. -t. Chan 1963: 102. See also *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20–26, 32.

22. *The Great Learning*, W. -t. Chan 1963: 86f.

23. *RCDW*: 557 (no. 6946).

24. See Fung Y. -l. 1952: I, 375f.

25. Sources of information about Nestorianism in China are as follows: P. Y. Saeki 1916, 1951; J. Foster 1939; C. Eliot 1968; S. Holth 1968: 20–29; K. L. Reichelt 1934; Kung, T. -m. 1956: 138–139; Lo H. -l. 1966.

For general information about Nestorianism, see J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and His Teaching* (Cambridge University Press, 1908); E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Monks of Kūblāi Khān, Emperor of China* (London, Religious Tract Society, 1928); A. J. Machean, "Nestorianism," *ERE*, IX (1917), 323–332; M. J. Costelloe, "Nestorian Church," *NCE*, X (1966), 343–346; P. J. Camelot, "Nestorianism" and "Nestorius," *NCE*, X, 346–348; B. Spuler, "Die Nestorianische Kirche," *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Erste Abteilung, Band VIII, Abschnitt 2, *Die Morgenländischen Kirchen* (Leiden, 1961), pp. 120–167; A. S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity* (London, 1968).

26. E. A. Wallis Budge 1928: 32.

27. According to M. J. Costelloe, *"Nestorian Church,"* p. 345. However, it is not clear that there is no confusion here with Emperor T'ai-tsung's admission of Zoroastrianism or Manicheism to the capital, for in 631 he admitted the *hsien* religion (according to J. Foster 1939: 41).

28. E. O. Reischauer 1955: 227.

29. K. L. Reichelt 1934: 132. It appears that the author has drawn most of his information from P. Y. Saeki 1916, especially from pp. 118–155. Both works have a common characteristic with regard to the problem of Nestorian-Buddhist relations: lack of exact references. Therefore it is often difficult to check their statements.

30. Reichelt 1934: 131f. These views are again based on P. Y. Saeki 1916: 148: "Shan-tao, the Chinese Buddhist, who taught salvation by faith in Amitabha and the doctrine of a Trinity . . . How Shan-tao got the idea of *A Vicarious Saviour of Unlimited Light* or that of *"Eternal Life" by faith in Amitabha* is the most important point." P. Y. Saeki's reasons for presuming Nestorian influence are: Buddhists and Nestorians in

Ch'ang-an were on good terms; they "often met at the Imperial Court of the T'ang Emperors" (p. 148); and a hundred years after Shan-tao, Buddhist monk Prajña translated Buddhist scriptures with Nestorian priest Adam.

31. No evidence of this otherwise unknown fact is provided.

32. H. de Lubac 1955: 2, 228 (my translation).

33. E.g., the ritual practiced by the T'ien-t'ai School. See L. Hurvitz 1962.

34. K. L. Reichelt 1934: 77, 89f. For a discussion of *Yü-lan-p'en*, see M. De Visser 1935: I, 58–115. For a discussion of the term itself, see ibid.: I, 58–68; K. Ch'en 1968: 86–89. I am more inclined to accept the possibility of Buddhist borrowings from Nestorianism in this later period (especially with respect to rituals for the dead) than in the early period of the mid-seventh century. See also the recent in-depth study of S. Teiser (1988).

35. K. L. Reichelt 1934: 113, 120.

36. Ibid.: 107. See also P. Y. Saeki 1916: 124–133. According to the author (p. 125), Vairocana and Amitābha are identical: since Vairocana is said to correspond to *dharma*, "the spiritual and material principles of the universe, Vairochana is therefore an unchangeable or everlasting spiritual body, without beginning or end. Comparing this meaning with that of Amitabha, 'Infinite Light,' 'Infinite Life,' or 'the Embodiment of the Law,' we can easily see that Vairochana and Amitabha are identical, . . ."

37. This appears not only from a superficial reading of the text engraved on the Nestorian Monument (see P. Y. Saeki 1951: 53–68; pp. 1–9, from the back, gives the Chinese text), but also from technical terms taken over from Buddhism by the Nestorians, e.g., *catholicos*: *fa-chu*; *episcopos*: *ta-te*; Nestorian monks: *seng*; archdeacon: *szu-chu*.

38. As a matter of fact, Chapters 1 and 2 have furnished ample evidence that all the basic elements of the cult were already established before its introduction to China.

39. K. Ch'en 1964: 347f.

40. Although there are many Japanese studies of Shan-tao, I have drawn my conclusions in this part on Western-language discussions of this topic, among which there are several English publications written by North American scholars: Andrews, Bloom, and Dobbins and by Japanese scholars: Takakusu Fujiwara, Ikemoto, Fujimoto, Yamamoto, and others. I trust that their interpretations of what Japanese Pure Land Buddhism stands for can be rightfully accepted as sufficiently authoritative for my purpose.

41. See, e.g. A. Andrews 1971: 208f., 212f.

42. A. Bloom 1965: 18.

43. Ibid.



44. Ibid.: 19.

45. Ibid.: 20.

46. Ibid..

47. Ibid.: 22.

48. Ibid.: 25.

49. Ibid.: 88.

50. Shan-tao's own meditation experiences resulting in *samādhi* (through "vision" of the Buddha and his Pure Land) make it impossible to escape another comparative study: Christian and Buddhist mysticism. However, since this topic is too vast to be included here, it appears better to leave it out altogether rather than to give it an unfair treatment. It could become the subject of a separate study.

51. C. O'Neill 1967: 852f.

52. A. D. Green 1967: 61.

53. K. V. Truhlar 1967: 709.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. See J. L. Gonzalez 1967: 253–260; A. Gilbert 1968: 271–279.

58. J. L. Gonzalez 1967: 256.

59. *Mt.* 8: 20.

60. C. Martindale 1945: 153.

61. Ibid.: 154f.

62. Compare Shan-tao's relentless stress on the age of corruption and his rituals of confession with Vianney's intense desire to leave his ministry "to weep over his sinful life." See J. de la Varende 1959: 91.

63. Compare Shan-tao's ascetic and self-denying life with Vianney's almost cruel austerities: he gave away his furniture, slept only about two hours a day, lived on one or two boiled potatoes a day, and used iron chains and disciplines to chastise his body. See F. Trochu 1955: 155–158.

64. Compare Shan-tao's refusal to look at a woman with Vianney's equally rigorous chastity: ". . . he refused even to embrace his mother; he did not allow himself to caress a child" (J. de La Varende 1959: 88).

As religious and cultural values tend to change over time, "old" values often seem odd, even offensive. Views of sexuality and conceptions of femininity are good examples of changing values. In many religious traditions women were treated with suspicion; even contempt and extreme caution were recommended to followers of a spiritual path when dealing with female devotees. Both Shan-tao and John Vianney seem to have held such negative views concerning women. This somehow casts a shadow on their otherwise heroic cultivation of virtue, and can certainly no longer be upheld as an example to follow in modern times.

65. Compare Shan-tao's efforts to spread his teaching among the people of Ch'ang-an (his biographies indirectly make one feel his amazing efforts) with Vianney's spiritual leadership: for many years he spent as much as seventeen hours daily in the confessional. See F. Trochu 1955: 105–114.
66. J. de La Varende 1959: 112.
67. F. Trochu 1955: 526–545. Translated E. Graf 1949.
68. Ibid.: 482–512.
69. Ibid.: 554–556.
70. Ibid.: 530.
71. Ibid.
72. See, e.g., W. H. Longridge 1950: 191; A. Brou and W. J. Young, 1949; K. Rahner 1965.
73. W. H. Longridge 1950: 313.
74. Ibid.: 85.
75. A. Brou 1949: 146–167.
76. C. G. Jung 1943: 33–53.
77. Ibid.: 36 (my translation).
78. Ibid.: 37.
79. Ibid.: 46f.
80. Ibid.: 42–45.
81. Ibid.: 47.
82. Ibid.: 47–53.
83. See J. Pas 1978: 403–413.
84. It is beyond the scope of this essay to investigate in depth the meaning of *mantra* and the power of the spoken word, etc., of which the *nien-Fo* seems to be a concrete example.
85. *KCS*, T. 1753, 37: 268, A6–9.
86. Ibid.: 268, A10–11.
87. See, e.g., Brother Lawrence 1966; A. Brou 1949: 46–53.
88. Ibid.: 32.
89. Ibid.: 38.
90. Ibid.: 46.
91. Ibid.: 39f.
92. E. Benz 1960: 126–149.
93. Ibid.: 136.
94. Ibid.: 141.
95. Ibid.: 137–138.
96. Ibid.: 145. The author (p. 146) quotes from *Aufrichtige Erzählung eines russischen Pilgers* (Freiburg, 1959), p. 45: "While I experienced very intimately these and similar consolations, I noticed that the effects of the 'Herzensgebet' (heart-prayer) express themselves in three ways: in the spirit (mind), in experiences, in revelations. For instance, in the spirit: the sweetness of God's love, internal quietude, rapture of the spirit, purity of thinking, the sweetest remembrance of God; in experiences: a pleasant melting together of the heart, an infusion of all one's limbs with unnameable sweetness, a joyful surging of the intellect, understanding of the scriptures, recognition of the language of creation, being freed from all worldly vanity and recognition of all the sweetness of the inner life, certainty of God's proximity and of his love for us" (my translation).



97. Ibid.: 139f.
98. Ibid.: 148f.

## CONCLUSION

1. See Yü Chün-fang, 1981.

# GLOSSARY

Technical Terms (Mostly Sanskrit and Pali)

| | |
|---|---|
| *ahimsā* | non-violence, harmlessness; to abstain from harming any sentient beings |
| Amida | Japanese name for Buddha Amita |
| Amita(-Fo) | Chinese name for Buddha Amitābha (Buddha of Infinite Light or Splendor, and/or Buddha Amitāyus (Buddha of Infinite Life) |
| *anagamin* | never-return; third of four stages of arhatship |
| *anātman* (*anattā*) | (lit.: no ātman), without a permanent self, no "ego," no "soul," no independent individual existence |
| *anitya* (*anicca*) | impermanence; all is impermanent, transitory |
| *anutpāda-samyak-sambodhi* | full and complete enlightenment with exemption of any further rebirth |
| *anutpāda-dharma-ksānti* | endurance, or patience [which understands that] no *dharmas* [*q.v.*] come into existence; or, insight into the non-substantial nature of all *dharmas* |
| *arhat* | worthy of reverence; [Buddhist practitioner] who has attained enlightenment or *nirvāna* |
| *āsana* | bodily posture (during meditation) |
| *asamkhya* (*kalpa*) | numberless (*kalpas*) |
| *asteya* | not to take what is not given, abstention from stealing |
| *ātman* (*attā*) | (see *anātman, anattā*) |
| *avidyā* | ignorance (in spiritual matters), which takes illusory phenomena for realities |
| *aparigraha* | nongraphing, abstinence from avariciousness |
| *bhakti* | devotion to a deity (Hinduism) or a Buddha |
| *bhiksu* | most common designation for a Buddhist monk or ascetic |
| *bodhi* | supreme knowledge, proper to a Buddha (or *arhat*) |
| *Bodhisattva* | (lit.) being of enlightenment: A being very much advanced on the path toward Buddhahood, who devotes his/her efforts to save other beings |

*brahmacarya* celibate way of life, continence
*brahmā-vihāraa*(s) sublime state(s) as object(s) of and condition(s) for meditation
*buddhi* intelligence
*ching t'u* (lit.) pure country, pure land, which (here) refers to Sukhāvatī, Pure Land of Buddha Amita
*ching-t'u tsung* Pure Land school or movement of Buddhism in China
*cetya*(s) sanctuary, temple
*dhārana* concentration, fixity of mind
*dhāranī* magical or mystical formula, incantation
*dāna* giving, one of the Bodhisattva virtues
*dharma*(s) (1) second of the Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; body of the Buddha's teachings
(2) elements or constituents of existence
*dharma-dhātu* dharma-realm; the physical universe, its underlying spiritual reality, seen as ground of or cause of all things
*dharma-kāya* (see *kāya*)
*dhyāna* concentration, meditation; ecstasy, ecstatic meditation
*duhkha* (*dukkha*) (lit. suffering, pain, sorrow), interpreted as ill, "dis-ease," unsatisfactoriness, unhappiness, frustration. (Refers to First Noble Truth: everything is *duhkha*)
*gāthā*(s) (Buddhist) verse(s)
*gati*(s) (six) way(s) or condition(s) of sentient existence, including hell-beings, hungry ghosts (*pretas*), animals, *asuras* (demonic beings), humans, heavenly spirits or gods (*devas*)
*icchantika* one who is unable to be enlightened because of transgressions cutting off the potential for enlightenment
*Ishvara* Lord, name of God in (Indian) yoga
*jātaka*(s) story(ies) of previous incarnation(s) (of a Buddha)
*kalpa*(s) cosmic age, or endlessly long cycle(s) of time
*karma* action; action producing moral consequences
*kāya*(s) body, nature, embodiment, mode of being, Gestalt. Often refers to *trikāya*, threefold level of being of a Buddha: *dharma-kāya*, body of essence; *sambhoga-kāya*, body of bliss or reward; *nirmāna-kāya*, body of transformation, incarnation



*kleśa*(s) impurity(-ies), depravity(-ies), usually threefold: lust or desire, hatred or anger, delusion or ignorance
*kotī*(s) ten million (measure of time)
*ksana* moment, momentariness
*ksānti* patience, forbearance, intellectual receptivity
*kuśala* good (in moral sense), virtuous, righteous action
*kuśala-mula* roots of merit, good qualities which will produce good effects in the future
*laksana*(s) external appearance, mark(s) (often referring to a Buddha's physiological marks of excellence.
*mūdra* seal, mystical hand gesture
*nirmāna-kāya* (see *kāya*)
*nirvāna* extinction of *duhkha*, crossing over from *samsāra*, total enlightenment
*niyama* observance, discipline (in Yoga meditation)
*Omit'o(-Fo)* Chinese equivalent of *Amit'a-Fo*
*prajñā* (*panna*) wisdom, insight, discriminative awareness
*pāramitā*(s) (lit. perfection). Perfection(s) of virtue to be practiced by a Bodhisattva-candidate
*pramuditā* joy at overcoming former difficulties and at entering the path toward enlightenment
*pratyeka-Buddha* one who reaches enlightenment by and for himself, a self-styled Buddha
*prānāyāma* regulation of breath (a condition for meditation)
*pratyāhāra* sense withdrawal (a stage in meditation)
*rddhi* magic power, exempting the body from its physical limitations
*rūpa* material form
*Sahā* the (impure) world in which human beings live, and into which Shākyamuni appeared as a Buddha
*samādhi* perfect concentration; higher level of meditation; trance
*samāpatti* attainment, interpreted as complete *dhyāna* [q.v.]
*sambodhi* universal knowledge, or enlightenment, omniscience, characteristic of a Buddha
*sambhoga-kāya* (see *kāya*)
*samjñā* (see *skandhas*)
*samskāra* (see *skandhas*)
*samsāra* cycles of transmigration, endless rounds of rebirth
*samyama* combination of three stages in meditation: *dhārana* [q.v.], *dhyāna* [q.v.], *samādhi* [q.v.]

| | |
|---|---|
| *sangha* | Buddhist community, including monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen |
| *śāstra* | commentary on a sutra, treatise |
| *satya* | truth; to abstain from false speech |
| *śīla* | ethical discipline, purity; observance of ethical rules |
| *skandha*(s) | (lit. conglomerate, aggregate). Human "self" is composed of five conglomerates, classified as (1) *rūpa,* material form; (2) *vedanā,* sensations, sense impressions; (3) *samjñā,* perceptions; (4) *samskāra*, impulses, volitions; (5) *vijñāna*, consciousness, cognition |
| *śraddhā (saddhā)* | faith, confidence, trust |
| *śrāvaka* | (lit. hearer). follower of Hīnayāna Buddhism. |
| *śrota-apanna* | stream-entrant; first of four stages of arhatship. |
| *śūnyatā* | (lit. emptiness), non-existence, illusory nature of all existence. |
| *Sukhāvatī* | Realm of Bliss, "paradise" of Buddha Amita in the West |
| *stūpa* | burial mound, holding relics of the Buddha (or Buddhist monk) |
| *tapas* | austerity, asceticism; heat (generated in meditation) |
| *Tathāgata* | (lit. "thus gone"), epithet of the Buddha |
| *upāya* | skilfullness of means; convenient, expedient method; device |
| *vedanā* | (see *skandhas*) |
| *vijñāna* | (see *skandhas*) |
| *yama* | restraints (in Yoga meditation) |
| *yāna* | (lit. vehicle, method), Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, Tantrayāna |
| *yojana* | unit of distance, supposed to measure several miles |

# CHINESE GLOSSARY

## TEXTS

An-lo chi 安樂集
A-tsuo Fo-kuo ching 阿闍佛國經
Ch'i-hsin lun 起信論
Chin-shih ts'ui-pien 金石粹篇
Ching-chao chin-shih lu 京兆金石錄
Ching-t'u lun 淨土論
Ching-t'u pao-chu chi 淨土寶珠集
Ching-t'u sheng-hsien lu 淨土聖賢錄
(Ching-t'u) Wu-tsu chuan (淨土) 五祖傳
Ch'iu sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u nien-Fo ching 求生西方淨土念佛鏡
Chuan-ching hsing-tao yuan wang-sheng ching-t'u fa-shih tsan 轉經行道願往生淨土法事讚
Chung-hua ta-tsang ching 中華大藏經
Chung-ching mu-lu 眾經目錄
Ch'u san-tsang chi-chi 出三藏記集
Fa-hsin ch'iu-tao chi 發心求道集
Fa-shih tsan 法事讚
Fa-yuan wen 發願文
Fo sheng T'ao-li-t'ien wei mu shuo-fa ching 佛升忉利天爲母說法經
Fo-t'a vac(a) a-li-yeh A-mi-t'a-Fo-t'a hsiu-to-lo 佛陀槃遮阿梨耶阿彌陀佛陀修多羅
Fo-tsu t'ung-chi 佛祖統記
Fu-mu en chung ching 父母恩重經
Fu-mu en nan-pao ching 父母恩難報經
Hsiao-ching 孝經
Hsiao-tzu ching 教子經
Hsien-tsai Fo hsi-tsai-ch'ien-li san-mei 現在佛悉在前立三昧
Hsi-fang hua-tao wen 西方化道文
Hsi-fang li tsan-wen 西方禮讚文
Hsi-fang tsan 西方讚
Hsi-yu chih Fo-chiao 西域之佛教
Hsi-yü-chi 西域記
Hsin-hsiu wang-sheng chuan 新修往生傳

Hsin T'ang-shu 新唐書
(Hsü) ching-t'u wang-sheng chuan (敘) 淨土往生傳
Hsü kao-seng chuan 續高僧傳
Jen-wang ching 仁王經
K'ai-yuan lu 開元錄
Kuan-ching (shu) 觀經 (疏)
Kuan-Fo san-mei hai ching 觀佛三昧海經
Kuan Hsü-k'ung P'u-sa ching 觀虛空菩薩經
Kuan-nien A-mi-t'a-Fo hsiang-hai san-mei kung-te fa-men 觀念阿彌陀佛相海三昧功德法門
Kuan Mi-lo P'u-sa shang-sheng Tu-shuai-t'ien ching 觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經
Kuan-nien fa-men 觀念法門
Kuan P'u-hsien P'u-sa hsing-fa ching 觀普賢菩薩行法經
Kuan-shih-yin kuan-ching 觀世音觀經
Kuan-shih-yin P'u-sa shou-chi ching 觀世音菩薩授記經
Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching (shu) 觀無量壽佛經 (疏)
Kuan Yao-wang Yao-shang erh P'u-sa ching 觀藥王藥上二菩薩經
Liang-ching hsin-chi 兩京新記
Lueh-lun an-lo chi 略論安樂集
Lueh-lun an-lo ching-t'u 略論安樂淨土
Lung-shu tseng-kuang ching-t'u wen 龍舒增廣淨土文
Mi-t'a yi 彌陀義
Mo-k'e pan-chou po-lo-mi ching 摩可般舟波羅密經
Nien-Fo chi 念佛集
Nien-Fo ching 念佛經
Pan-chou san-mei ching 般舟三昧經
Pan-chou san-mei tsan 般舟三昧讚
Pao-k'e ts'ung-pien 寶刻叢篇
Pao-yueh t'ung-tzu so-wen ching 寶月童子所問經
P'u-sa shan-tzu ching (T.174) 菩薩睒字經
She-li-fei hui-kuo ching 舍利弗悔過經
She ta-ch'eng lun 攝大乘論
Shih ching-t'u ch'un-yi lun 釋淨土群議論
Shih-chu P'i-p'o-sha lun 十住毗婆沙論
Shih-fang hsien-tsai Fo hsi-tsai-ch'ien li ting 十方現在佛悉在前立定
Shih yuan p'in 釋願品
Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun 大乘起信論
Ta-ch'eng t'ung-hsing ching 大乘同性經
Ta-ch'eng yi-chang 大乘義章
Ta-ch'eng p'u-sa fa 大乘菩薩法
Ta chih-tu lun 大智度論
Ta fang-teng ta-chi yueh-tsang ching 大方等大集月藏經



Tao shen-tsu wu-chi pien-hua ching 道神足無極變化經
Ta-p'in ching 大品經
Ta-T'ang ta-tz'u-en szu san-tsang fa-shih chuan 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳
Tsan A-mi-t'o-Fo chieh 讚阿彌陀佛偈
Wang-sheng ching-t'u chuan 往生淨土傳
Wang-sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u jui-ying shan-chuan 往生西方淨土瑞應刪傳
Wang-sheng li-tsan (chieh) 往生禮讚 (偈)
Wang-sheng lun (chu) 往生論 (註)
Wu-liang-shou ching you-p'o-t'i-she yuan-sheng chieh 無量壽經優波提舍願生偈
Wu-liang-shou kuan-ching tsan-shu 無量壽觀經讚述
Wu-men ch'an-ching yao yung-fa 五門禪經要用法
Yi ching ming wu-chung tseng-shang yuan 依經明五種增上緣
Yi-hsing p'in 易行品
Yi kuan-ching-teng ming pan-chou san-mei hsing-tao wang-sheng tsan 依觀經等明般舟三昧行道往生讚
Yü-lan-p'en ching 盂蘭盆經

## PROPER NAMES

A-mi-t'a (Fo) 阿彌陀 (佛)
An-yang 安養
Chang Shang-ying 張商英
chen-kuan 眞觀
Chen Yuan 陳垣
Ch'en Szu 陳思
Chi-tsang 吉藏
Chia-ts'ai 迦才
Ch'i-chou 齊州
ch'i-sung 契嵩
Chieh-chu 戒珠
Chih-ch'ien 支謙
Chih-li 知禮
Chih-p'an 智磐
Chih-sheng 智昇
Chih Tao-lin 古道林
Chih Tun 支遁
Chih-yan 智嚴
Chih-yi 智顗
Chih-yü 志遇

Chin 進
Ching-yeh 淨業
Chin-kang fa-shih 金剛法師
Chin-kang shang-jen 金剛上人
Chin-yang 晉陽
Chu 朱
Chu-ch'eng (hsien) 諸城 (縣)
Chung-nan (shan) 終南 (山)
Fa-ch'ang 法常
Fa-chao 法照
Fa-ch'eng 法誠
Fa-hsien 法賢
Fa-hui 法會
Fa-lin 法琳
Fei-hsi 飛錫
Fo-t'u-teng 佛土澄
Genku (Honen) 源空
Genshin 源信
Honen (Genku) 源空
Hou Shan-tao 后善導
Hsiang-chi (szu) 香積 (寺)
Hsiang-yang 襄陽
Hsi-ho 西河
Hsin-hsing 信行
Hsuan-tsang 玄藏
Huai-kan 懷感
Huai-yun 懷惲
Hui-chiao 慧皎
Hui-ching 慧淨
Hui-hai 慧海
Hui-jih 慧日
Hui-li 慧立
Hui-yuan (Jap. Eon) 慧遠
Hui-yuan (Ching-ying) 慧遠 (淨影)
Hui-yuan (Lu-shan) 慧遠 (盧山)
I-ch'eng 義成
Kuan-shih Tzu-tsai-wang P'u-sa 觀世自在王菩薩
Kuan-(shih)-yin 觀 (世) 音
Kuang-ming (szu) 光明 (寺)
K'ui-chi 窺基
Li Chen-fang 李振芳
Lin-tzu 臨淄



Ling-yü 靈裕
Lung-hsing 龍興
Mi-chou 秘州
Ming-sheng 明勝
O-mi-t'o (Fo) 阿彌陀 (佛)
Pao-chih 寶志
Ryochu (Liang-chung) 良忠
Seng-han 僧含
Shan-tao (Jap. Zendo) 善導, 善道
Shan-tao (szu) 善導 (寺)
Shao-k'ang 少康
Shen-ho-yuan 神和原
Shih-chi (szu) 實際 (寺)
Shinran 親鸞
Szu-chou 四州
Szu-chuang 思莊
Ta-hsing 大行
Ta-pei kuang-ming-wang Fo 大悲光明王佛
Ta-shih-chih 大勢至
T'an-luan (Jap. Donran) 曇鸞
Tao-an 道安
Tao-ching 道鏡
Tao-ch'o (Jap. Doshaku) 道綽
Tao-ch'uan 道詮
Tao-hsien 道詵
Tao-hsuan 道宣
Tao-lin 道林
Tao-shih 道世
Tao-yin 道闇
Te-ta-shih 得大勢
Tsao-wang shen-t'ung Yen-hua-Fo 造王神通炎華佛
Tsung-mi 宗密
Tzu-ch'eng 子成
Tz'u-en (szu) 慈恩 (寺)
Tz'u-min 慈愍
Wang Ch'ang 王昶
Wang Jih-hsiu 王日休
Wang Ku 王古
Wen-kuo (szu) 溫國 (寺)
Wen-shen 文諗
Wu-chen (szu) 悟眞 (寺)
Wu-liang-ming (Fo) 無量明 (佛)

Wu-liang-shou Fo 無量壽佛
wu-te 武德
Yen-tsung 彥粽
Yuan-chao 元照

## TERMS (BY CHAPTER)

*Preface:*

ling-t'a 靈塔
Shan-tao szu 善導寺

*Chapter 1:*

a-tsuo 阿閦
Butsudo 佛土
chi-ching pu-tung 寂靜不動
kuang-ming wu-liang 光明無量
pu-tung 不動
shih-li 勢力
shou-liang 壽量
shou-ming 壽命
shou-ming wu-liang 壽命無量
shuo ju-lai se wu-pien 說如來色無邊
wei-li 威力
wu-liang 無量
wu-nu 無怒
wu-pien chi 無邊際
wu-tung 無動

*Chapter 2:*

ch'an 禪
ch'an-ting 禪定
chieh 界
ching-t'u men 淨土門
chiu-p'in chih-tu 九品制度
fan 梵
hu 胡
hui-hsiang 迴向
kuan 觀
kuan-ch'a 觀察
li-pai 禮拜



nan 難
nan-hsing 難行
nien 念
nien ju-ch'u hsi 念人出息
nien shen pu ching 念身不淨
p'in 品
shan 善
sheng-tao 聖道
shih-san kuan-men 十三觀門
shu-hsi kuan 數息觀
szu-nien chu 四念住
szu-nien ch'u 四念處
tsan-tan 讚嘆
tso-yuan 作願
wu-yu 無憂
yi-hsing 易行
yu kuan 游觀

*Chapter 3:*

cheng-nien 正念
ching-t'u chiu-p'in tao-ch'ang 淨土九品道場
ching-t'u pien-hsiang 淨土變相
fa-hsiang 法相
fa-hua san-mei 法華三昧
fang-teng ch'an (hui) 方等懺(悔)
hsi-fang pien-hsiang 西方變相
hua ching-t'u pien-hsiang 畫淨土變相
hua chu yu-yuan 化諸有緣
Jōdo shinshū 淨土眞宗
ju-yi chang 如意杖
ju ju suo nien, sui ju suo yuan 如汝所念, 遂汝所願
liu-ken ch'an-hui 六根懺悔
nien A-mi-t'a Fo (O-mi-t'o Fo) 念阿彌陀佛
pan-chou hsing-tao 般舟行道
pien-hsiang 變相
pien-hsiang 變像
pien-kuang 變光
pien-wen 變文
p'u 鋪
san-fu chiu-p'in 三福九品
shan-seng 山僧
shuo-fa kan 說法杆

sui-yuan che 隨緣者
szu-wei 思惟
t'i-hu 醍醐
tu 堵

*Chapter 4:*

ch'ang-hsing tao 常行道
cheng 正
cheng-hsin-hsü 證信序
cheng-ming te-yi fen 正明得益分
cheng-tsung 正宗
cheng-tsung fen 正宗分
chiang-shuo men 講說門
chin-ching yuan 欣淨緣
chin-fu chih yuan 禁父之緣
chin-mu chih yuan 禁母之緣
chuan-ching 轉經
chuan-hsin nien A-mi-t'a Fo (O-mi-t'o Fo) 專心念阿彌陀佛
chu-chih 主質
chung-yeh 中夜
ch'u-yeh 初夜
fa-ch'i hsü 發起序
hou-yeh 後夜
hsia-tso 下坐
hsin-kuan 心觀
hsing-tao 行道
hsuan-yi fen 玄義分
hsü-fen (yi) 序分義
hua-ch'ien hsü 化前序
jih-chung 日中
jih-mo 日沒
ju-shih wo-wen 如是我聞
kao-tso 高坐
kuan-Fo san-mei 觀佛三昧
li-ting chien chu Fo 立定見諸佛
liu-shih fa-yuan 六時發願
liu-shih hsing-tao 六時行道
liu-tu men 六度門
liu-t'ung 流通
liu-t'ung fen 流通分
li-yung 力用
Na-mo 南無



nien-Fo san-mei 念佛三昧
pan-chou san-mei le 般舟三昧樂
p'ien-(t'i)-wen 駢(體)文
san-shan hsien hsing-yuan 散善顯行緣
shu 疏
sung-ching 誦經
tan-ch'i 旦起
t'i 體
ting-shan shih kuan-yuan 定善示觀緣
tseng-shang-yuan 增上緣
tso chien-Fo hsiang 作見佛想
tsung 宗
tsung-chih 宗旨
tsung-ch'ü 宗趣
tu-ching 讀經
wu cheng-hsing 五正行
wu-hsin 五辛
wu-hun 五葷
wu-liang-le 無量樂
yan-k'u yuan 厭苦緣
yao-men 要門
yi-ch'ieh yeh-tao (shen) 一切業道(神)
yin 因
yuan 緣
yuan wang-sheng 願往生
yung 用

*Chapter 5:*

an-le 安樂
an-yang 安養
an-yang shih-chieh 安養世界
chen-shen 眞身
cheng-fa 正法
cheng-pao 正報
chi-le ching-t'u 極樂淨土
chi-le kuo-t'u 極樂國土
ching-t'u men 淨土門
ching-t'u tsung 淨土宗
fa-shen 法身
hsiang-fa 像法
hsing-k'ung 性空
kuan-kuo 觀果

kuan-yin 觀因
kung-shih chien shen 共世間身
mo-fa 末法
nieh-p'an fei-hua p'in 涅般非化品
pao-t'u 報土
pieh-shih yi 別時意
p'ing-teng fa-men chih shen 平等法門之身
sheng-shen 生身
sheng-tao 聖道
shih ching-t'u 十淨土
shih-chu 十住
shih-hsing 十行
shih-hui-hsiang 十迴向
shih-pao 十報
shih-ti 十地
shih-yung ching-t'u 事用淨土
t'a-li 他力
tzu-li 自力
wang-sheng ching-t'u 往生淨土
wu-sheng fa 無生法
yi-ch'ieh chih 一切智
yi-ch'ieh chung chih 一切種智
yi-kuo 依果
yi-pao 依報
ying-t'u 應土
ying-shen 應身

*Chapter 6:*

an-hsin 安心
ch'an-ting 禪定
chao 照
chen-shen kuan 眞身觀
cheng-kuan 正觀
cheng-shou 正受
cheng-shou san-mei 正受三昧
cheng-szu 正思
cheng-ting 正定
cheng-tso hsi-hsiang 正坐西向
chien 見
chih-kuan 止觀
chuan-hsin 專心
ch'u-kuan 初觀



hsiang 想
hsiang-hsin tou hsi 想心都息
hsiang-kuan 想觀
hsiang-yun 想蘊
hsien 現
hsien-ch'ien 現前
hsin-hsiang 心想
hsü-k'ung 虛空
ju . . . hsin-hsiang 入 . . . 心想
k'an 看
k'an-chien 看見
kuan 觀
kuan-ch'a 觀察
k'ung 空
ling-hsin chien-chu 令心堅住
men 門
san 散
san-mei 三昧
san-shan 散善
shan-ken 善根
suo kuan chieh chien 所觀皆見
szu-ch'an (t'ien) 四禪 (天)
szu chung-tsui 四重罪
szu-ting 四定
szu-wei 思惟
t'i 諦
t'i-kuan 諦觀
ting 定
ting-li 定力
ting-shan 定善
t'ing-chien 聽見
tsung 宗
tuan shan-ken che 斷善根者
yi-yi-kuan-chih 一一觀之

*Chapter 7:*

chen 眞
chen 嗔
cheng-hsing 正行
cheng-ting chih yeh 正定之業
ch'eng 誠
ch'eng-ming 稱名

chieh 戒
chieh-fu 戒福
chih 至
chih-chen hsin shih p'u-sa ching-t'u 知眞心是菩薩淨土
chih-ch'eng hsin 至誠心
chih-hsin 直心
chih-hsin (hui-hsiang) yuan-sheng 至心 (迴向) 願生
ch'ih 痴
ch'ih 持
ching-yeh 淨業
chu-yeh 助業
ch'uan-chin hsing-che 勸進行者
ch'un-yi le 純意樂
ch'un-yi le t'u 純意樂土
ch'u-shih 出世
chü-tsu chung-chieh 具足眾戒
erh-pai erh-shih chieh 二百二十戒
erh-pai wu-shih chieh 二百五十戒
fa-ch'i wu-shang p'u-t'i hsin t'u 發起無上菩提心土
fa p'u-t'i hsin 發菩提心
fa-yuan yuan-sheng 發願願生
fen-liu fa-hua 分流法化
feng-shih shih-chang 奉事師長
fu-t'ien 福田
hou-shen 後身
hsiang-yin 相因
hsiao-yang fu-mu 孝養父母
hsiao-yin 小因
hsin-chih 心直
hsing 行
hsing-fu 行福
hsing shih jen-yi 行世仁義
hsing szu-teng hsin 行四等心
hsiu hui-hsiang t'u 修迴向土
(hsiu) san-fu (修) 三福
hua-sheng 化生
hui-hsiang fa-yuan hsin 迴向發願心
hui-hsiang-hsin p'u-sa ching-t'u 迴向心菩薩淨土
hung ch'i tao-yi 弘其道意
jen-(tz'u) 仁 (慈)
k'ou-ch'eng 口稱
nei-yin 內因
nien-Fo 念佛



pa-chieh 八戒
pu-fan wei-yi 不犯威儀
p'u-t'i-hsin shih p'u-sa ching-t'u 菩提心是菩薩淨土
san-chung-hsin 三種心
san-hsien shih-sheng 三賢十聖
san-hsin 散心
san-hua 散花
san-hua nien-Fo 散花念佛
san-kui 三歸
san-luan 散亂
san-pei 三輩
san-shan 散善
san-shan wang-sheng 散善往生
sha-mi chieh 沙彌戒
shan chia hsing t'u 善加行土
shan-hsin 善心
shan-hsing yü kuo 善性於國
shang-yi le t'u 上意樂土
shen-hsin 深心
shen-hsin chih hsin 深信之心
shen-hsin shih p'u-sa ching-t'u 深心是菩薩淨土
shen-hsin yin-kuo 深信因果
shih 實
shih-chieh 十戒
shih-chien 世間
shih-fu 世福
shih shan-chieh 十善戒
shih shan-yeh 十善業
shu 恕
shu-tsa chih hsing 疏雜之行
szu-sheng 四生
szu wu-liang-hsin p'u-sa ching-t'u 四無量心菩薩淨土
szu wu-liang t'u 四無量土
t'ao-li-t'ien 忉利天
ta-pei hsin 大悲心
ting-san erh-shan 定散二善
ting-shan 定善
ting-shan wang-sheng 定善往生
tsa-hsing 雜行
(tseng)-shang-yi le (增) 上意樂
tso te-sheng hsiang 作得生想
tu-sung ta-ch'eng 讀誦大乘
tz'u-hsin pu sha 慈心不殺

wai-yuan 外緣
wei-yi 威儀
wu-chieh 五戒
wu-ch'iu yü kuo 無求於國
wu-pai chieh 五百戒
wu-shang tao 無上道
yi-hsin chuan-nien Mi-t'a ming-hao 一心專念彌陀名號
yin 因
yin-kuo 因果
yuan-ch'i 緣起

*Chapter 8:*

cheng-chu erh-hsing 正助二行
cheng-hsing 正行
cheng-nien 正念
cheng-shou 正受
cheng-ting-chü 正定聚
cheng-ting-(yeh) 正定 (業)
ch'eng Fo-ming 稱佛命
ch'eng-Fo yi-sheng 稱佛一聲
ch'eng kui-ming 稱歸名
ch'eng-nien 稱念
ch'eng wo ming che 稱我名者
chien-Fo 見佛
chin-yuan 近緣
ch'in-yuan 親緣
chu-cheng chien-hsing 助正兼行
chu-hsing 助行
chu-yeh 助業
hui-hsiang 迴向
k'ou-ch'eng 口稱
kuan 觀
kuan-ch'a yi-nien 觀察憶念
li-(pai) 禮 (拜)
liu-nien 六念
nai-chih shih-nien 乃至十念
nien 念
nien-chieh 念戒
nien-fa 念法
nien hsiu-hsi 念休息
nien ju-ch'u hsi 念入出息
nien-nien 念念



nien-seng 念僧
nien-she 念舍
nien-shen fei-ch'ang 念身非常
nien-szu 念死
nien-t'ien 念天
pa-nien 八念
san-nien 三念
shih-nien 十念
shu-hsi kuan 數息觀
szu nien-chu 四念住
szu nien-ch'u (kuan) 四念處 (觀)
tsa-hsing 雜行
tsan-t'an kung-yang 讚嘆供養
tseng-shang-yuan 增上緣
tso-yuan 作願
tu-sung 讀誦
yü nien-nien chung 于念念中

*Chapter 9:*

ch'eng-Fo tao 成佛道
cheng-pao 正報
ching-t'u shih-yi lun 凈土十願論
ch'ui 垂
chu chung-sheng teng 諸眾生等
chung 種
chung-hsing 種性
erh-ch'eng 二乘
erh-ch'eng chung pu sheng 二乘種不生
erh-ch'eng chung tzu sheng 二乘種子生
erh-ch'eng hsin pu sheng 二乘心不生
erh-ch'eng pu te sheng 二乘不得生
fan-fu 凡夫
fan-jen 凡人
fa-shing sheng-shen 法性生身
Fo-kuo 佛果
hsin 心
hsüeh-jen 學人
hua-sheng 化生
liu-t'ung 六通
nü-jen chi ken-ch'üeh er-ch'eng chung pu sheng 女人及根缺二乘種不生
nü-jen ken-ch'üeh pu sheng 女人根缺不生

pa chieh-t'o 八解脫
pa-hsiang 八相
pai-fa ming-men 百法明門
pieh-shih yi 別時意
pien-yi sheng-shen 變易生身
pu-ying 不應
san-men 三門
sheng-chiao 聖教
sheng-jen 聖人
ta-ch'eng chung sheng 大乘種生
ta-ch'eng hsin sheng 大乘心生
tao-li 道理
tzu-jan 自然
wu-shang tao 無上道
wu-shang p'u-t'i 無上菩提
yi-ch'ieh chung-sheng 一切眾生
yi-ch'ieh ta-chung 一切大眾

*Chapter 10:*

ch'eng 誠
fa-chu 法主
Ju-lai 如來
seng 僧
szu-chu 寺主
ta-te 大德
yü-lan-p'en 盂蘭盆

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# INDEX

Ajātashatru, 377, n.111
Akshobhya, 18, 29, 30, 349, n.55
Amita, 149–152, 362, n.7
Amita Cult
  Early development (Indian "Patriarchs"), 52–57
  From Central Asia to China, 57–60
  In China, 60–64
Amita-vision (in *KC*), 165–178
  Shan-tao's interpretation, 179–201
  *szu-wei* and *cheng-shou*, 181, 194
  preliminaries, 181, ff.
  scattering the elements, 183–187
  visualization of sun, 188–190
  visualization of water, 190–193
  water and mind, 192–193
  confession and repentance, 194
  perception of lotus-throne, 195
  body-marks, 196–198, 199–200
  synthesis, 202–206
Amitābha, 18, 30
Amitābha worship (cult), 12, ff.
  components, 12–21
  antecedents, 21–24
  suggestions about its rise, 26–32
  Greek influences, 28–29
*Amitāyur-Buddhaloka-sūtra,* 353–4, n.3
*Amitāyur-buddhānusmrti sūtra,* x, 35
*Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra,* x, 35
Amitāyus, 30
*ananta,* 16
*anusmriti (anussati),* see Buddhanusmrti
Avalokiteshvara, 346, n.10
*ayus,* 16

*bhakti,* 13, 14, 26, 29
Bhavya, 15
Bimbisara (King), 171
*bodhi,* 19
Bodhisattva, 18–20
  vows, 18–20
  transfer of merit(s), 20
*Buddha-kāya,* see *kāya*
Buddhabhadra, 8
*Buddhānusmrti (Buddhānussatti),* 255–261
*Buddha-kshetra(s),* 21, 22, 24, 40

Chia-ts'ai, 300–302
Chieh-chu, 77, 92, 100–101
Chi-tsang, 119, 131, 152, 159, 180, 225, 299–300
Chih-ch'ien, 8, 19
Chih-yi, 118–119, 131, 158, 180, 205, 225
*ching-t'u,* 150
*ching-t'u pien-hsiang,* 95, 368–9, n.139
comparative study (Christian and Buddhist), 323–335
  sainthood, 325–328
  meditation, 328–332
  invocation, 332–335
Confucian ethics (& Shan-tao), 309–315

*dharma,* 142
  corruption of (*mo-fa*), 141, 142, 144
  created *dharmas,* 156
Dharmākara, 10, 11, 17, 19, 20
Dharmamitra, 37

Eightfold Noble Path, 164
ethical conduct,
  in Pure Land Sutras, 209–215

ethical conduct, *(continued)*
Shan-tao's interpretation, 223–238
mental dispositions, 238–249
comparative table, 250–253
ethics (Buddhist)
western publications, 390, n. 89

Fa-chao, 102
faith (*śraddhā*), 13, 348, notes 31–32
five practices (Vasubandhu & Shan-tao compared), 397, n.76

Genshin, 253, 321

Hindu cosmology, 21
Honen, 253, 321
Hsiang-chi monastery, xiv
Hsuan-tsang, 9, 27, 89, 111
Huai-kan, 100, 101
Huai-yün, xiv, 101
Hui-yuan (Lu-shan) 60–61, 84
Hui-yuan (Ching-ying), 118, 130, 151, 158, 180, 224–225, 298–299
Hui-yuan and Shan-tao, 376, n. 93
Human situation, ch.5, 141–149

Iconography, 68, 354, n.17
in meditation, 176

*jātaka*, 11
Jōdo shinshū, 132, 266

Kālayashas, 36, 37, 43, 44
Kashmir, 44
*Kathavatthu*, 17
*kāya*, 14, 15, 151–153
*rūpa-kāya*, 15
*dharma-kāya*, 15
*nirmāna-kāya*, 15, 146
*kuan-Fo (samādhi)*, 134, 135, 203, ff.
double (multiple) standard, 93
*kuan*-sutras, 41–45
*Kuan wu-liang-shou-Fo ching (Kuan-ching)*, viii, chapter 2: 35–64
origin, 36–39, 353, n.3
stages of development, 39–45
text criticism (& interpolations), 45–51
importance, 51–52
*KC* and Buddhist art, 38
*KC* and Ch'an Buddhism, 45
translations, 352, n.1
*kuang-ming wu-liang*, 17
K'ui-chi, 18
Kumārajīva, 9, 16, 17

Lokakshema, 8
Lokottaravādins, 15, 26, 29

Mahāsanghikas, 15, 18, 26, 27
Mahāsthāmaprapta, 17
*Mahāvastu*, 26
Meditation (first gate), ch.6, 163–206 (see also Amita-vision)
yoga system, 166–168
comparative table, 168
bodily posture, 172
classification, 172–174
concentration, 173
visualization, 173, 174
absorption (*samādhi*), *174, 177–178*
imagining, 174, 175
inspection, 175
vision, 177
Shan-tao's synthesis, 202–206
western language works, 381–2, n.2
mental dispositions for rebirth, 238–247
merits,
worldly, 228–231
discipline, 232–233
higher practice, 233–238

Nāgārjuna, 40, 52–55
name
invocation of, 24–26, 135
recitation of name, ch.8, 253–275; 273



Nestorianism (in China) 315–318
references, 403, n.25
*nien-Fo (samādhi)*, 93, 134, 203, ff., 254–266, 261–266
Shan-tao's interpretation of, 266–275
five practices, 266–269
non-meditative action (second gate), ch. 7, 209–252

other-power, 142

Pai-yen, 8
Pai-yün, 8
*Pan-chou san-mei ching*, 40–41
Paramārtha, 16, 17
*pien-hsiang*, see *ching-t'u pien-hsiang*
*prabha*, 16
*prabhāva*, 16
*prabhāsa*, 16
Pure Land Buddhism,
Emergence, ch.1, 3–32
Theories about origin, 5–8
Pure Land Sutras, 8–12
Chinese patriarchs, 57–64

rebirth
in Sukhāvatī, 31; ch.9, 277–306
conditions for, 210–213; 213, ff.
three groups (*san-pei*), 212–213
three kinds of meritorious actions, 214
three Levels, 215–223; 263–266; 273–275
nine modes (grades), 215–223
rebirth in Pure Land Sutras, 278–283
Shan-tao's views on, 283–296; 302–306
recitation (of name), see name
right & determining action, 244
right practice(s), 269–272

*samādhi*, 17
Sanghavarman, 8. 19
Sarvāstivādins, 14
self-power, 142
Shan-tao
1300th anniversary of death, ix, 69
biographical sources, 70–77
stone tablets, 77–79
biography, ch.3, 67–104
early years, 80
monastic training, 80–83
"conversion" to Pure Land, 83
life of contemplation and asceticism, 84–89, 102–103
disciple of Tao-ch'o, 85–87
stay on Mt. Chung-nan, 87–88
teaching career, 89–94
"evangelism," 91
literary & artistic activities, 94–98
final years & death, 98–102
personality, a Buddhist "saint," 102–104
two Shan-tao theory, 75–76; refutation, 76–77
suicide theory, 75, 98–101
importance, 79
Shan-tao & Confucian ethics, 309–315
on filial piety, 310–313
on sincerity, 313–315
Shan-tao & Nestorianism, 315–318
Shan-tao's significance in China and Japan, 318–323
writings, ch. 4, 105–137
*Kuan-ching shu* (Commentary), 116–135
historical aspects, 117–119
literary aspects, 120
structure, 120–123
style & vocabulary, 123–125
method of exegesis, 125–129
basic ideas, 129–135
*Kuan-nien fa-men*, 105–108
*Fa-shih tsan*, 108–109
*Pan-chou san-mei tsan*, 109–110
*Wang-sheng li-tsan*, 110–112
six hymns (six time periods), 110–112

Shan-tao *(continued)*
*Nien-Fo ching,* 112–113
*Nien-Fo chi,* 113–115
other, 115–116
She-lun school, 153
Shinran, 253, 322–323
*shou-ming wu-liang,* 17
six time periods, 110–112, 373, n.48
*śraddhā,* see faith
Sukhāvatī,
concept, 20–24
nature of, 149–157
features of, 157–162; 357, n.76
rewards, 160
Visions of, x
summary, xi
*Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra(s),* 8–12, 20, 25, 209–215
Longer Sutra, 8, 10, 11, 30
Shorter Sutra, 8, 10, 11, 29–30, 149–150

Taima mandala (mandara), 96, 187
T'ang Buddhism, 67
T'an-luan, 61–63, 145, 147, 296–298
Tao-ch'o, 61, 63–64
Three minds,
in *Ch'i-hsin lun,* 216–219
in *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa,* 219–220
in *KC,* 220–221
Threefold mind (Shan-tao), 216–221, 238–242
table, 219
Three stages sect, 141
*ting-san,* 133, 223–227
*t'i,* 129–133
*tsung,* 129–133

Vaidehī (Queen), 170–172
VasubanMdhu, 55–57
five kinds of *nien,* 56
controversial verses, 57
adornments of Sukhāvatī, 157–158
*gāthās,* 296, ff.
Vasumitra, 15, 18
Vairocana
Lung-men sculpture, 68–69, 78
Vinitadeva, 15, 17
*Visuddhimagga,* 255–256
*Visualization sutra,* 35
vow(s), (also see Boddhisattva), 146

Wang Ku, 75, 92
White Path parable, 147–149, 379, n.39
worldly merits, 228–231