

Genshin's *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* and the Transmission of Pure Land Buddhism to Japan.

Part III. The Third Phase of Transmission: An Examination of the Populist Methods and Ideas Introduced by Genshin

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In Part One of this study we examined the first and second phases of transmission of Pure Land teachings to Japan during the Nara [646-794] and early Heian [794-1185] periods [Andrews 1989]. In Part Two we demonstrated with a statistical survey of the works cited by Genshin's *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* [*Ōjō yōshū*]¹ that the *Essentials* had frequent recourse not only to major Pure Land scriptures, but also to the works of the Chinese Sui [581-618] and early T'ang [618-907] period populist Pure Land teachers Tao-ch'o [Dōshaku, 562-645], Shan-tao [Zendō, 613-681], Chia-ts'ai [Kazai, d. after 648], and Huai-kan [Ekan, d. 710] [Andrews 1990].² Here in Part Three of this study our task is to determine exactly which ideas and methods of these scriptures and masters was transmitted and recommended to Japan by the *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth*. We will explore those sections of the *Essentials* which set out Genshin's views on the cultivation of *nembutsu* and its benefits, briefly describe their contents, and determine the sources of these ideas as indicated by Genshin's citations and references.³

SOURCES OF THE *ESSENTIALS OF PURE LAND REBIRTH* FOR THE PROPER CULTIVATION OF *NEMBUTSU*

In Part Two we presented an outline of the *Essentials* which designated in bold print those chapters and sections with important teachings on

the cultivation or efficacy of *nembutsu* [Andrews 1990]. The first such chapter is Chapter Four which gives instructions for the comprehensive cultivation of orthodox *nembutsu*. Let us begin our examination there.⁴ Here is an outline of that chapter:

IV. The Right Cultivation of *Nembutsu*

1. The Dharma-gate of Worship
2. The Dharma-gate of Praise
3. The Dharma-gate of Resolve
 - (1) Relative vows — Conforming to relative truth
 - (2) Ultimate vows — Conforming to Ultimate Truth
4. The Dharma-gate of Contemplative Examination
 - (1) Buddha-mark contemplation
 - (2) General buddha contemplation
 - i. Contemplation of the phenomenal buddha
 - ii. Contemplation of the noumenal buddha
 - (3) Simplified buddha contemplation
 - i. Contemplation of the "wisdom-eye" buddha-mark or one's own rebirth in the Pure Land
 - ii. Extremely simplified buddha-reflection
 - (4) Buddha-reflection for those who can not contemplate
5. The Dharma-gate of Dedication of Merit

Genshin opens Chapter Four with this citation [Hanayama, 1.123]:⁵

As it says in the *Pure Land Shastra* of Vasubandhu Bodhisattva, "Those who fully cultivate the five Dharma-gates of buddha-reflection will eventually be reborn in the Land of Peace and Bliss and behold Amitabha Buddha. These five are: (1) the Dharma-gate of worship, (2) the Dharma-gate of praise, (3) the Dharma-gate of resolve, (4) the Dharma-gate of contemplative examination, and (5) the Dharma-gate of dedication of merit."

In Part Two we identified the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra* as a primary Pure Land scripture [Andrews 1990]. This work recommends the five Dharma-gate of buddha-reflection [*gonen mon*] as both the sources and expressions of the faith in Amitabha Buddha which will bring about rebirth in the Pure Land [Kiyota 1978]. Furthermore, this text was the vehicle used by T'an-luan [Donran, 488-c. 554] for his formulation of the fundamental principles of populist Pure Land piety. Thus it is significant that Genshin draws upon this primary Pure Land scripture for the organizing categories of his presentation of "right" [*shō*], i.e., orthodox, *nembutsu* cultivation.

This text, and especially its five Dharma-gates of buddha-reflection have another important link to the populist Pure Land tradition. In his preface to a collection of devotional hymns, the *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth*, the populist master Shan-tao summarized the minimum necessary Pure Land practices using these same five categories [T47.438c-439a]. However, both the order and the content of Shan-tao's five gates of buddha-reflection differ from those of the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra*. Shan-tao juxtaposes the gate of contemplative examination [*kanzatsu mon*] and the gate of resolution [*sangan mon*]. We will see shortly that while Genshin's sequence of Dharma-gates is the same as that of the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra*, his treatments of several of

these five practices were considerably influenced by Shan-tao.

Genshin's prescriptions for implementing the first two Dharma-gates, the gates of worship [*raihai mon*] and praise [*sandan mon*], do not significantly differ from those of the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra*. It is notable, though, that Genshin recommends the hymns of Shan-tao's *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth* as a suitable liturgy for the gate of worship [Hanayama 1.126]. The *Essentials* begins its presentation of the gate of praise with a citation from another primary Pure Land scripture, the "Chapter on the Easy Practice" of the *Nagarjuna Shastra on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages*. This text was very significant for the development of populist Pure Land piety because it recommends faith in Amitabha Buddha as an easy path to salvation and emphasizes the invocation of Amitabha's name as a way to express faith in this savior buddha [Ina-gaki 1983]. Introducing the gates of praise, Genshin notes [Hanayama 1.126]:

As it says in the third scroll⁶ of the *Nagarjuna Shastra on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages*, "Amitabha Buddha's original vow is as follows, 'If there are persons who reflect on me and take refuge in me by calling on my name, they will attain the status of those assured [of buddhahood] and will achieve perfect enlightenment'."

This seems to be a summary of several of the original vows of Amitabha, which are the central feature of Pure Land mythology and soteriology.⁷ In this way, the fundamental ideas of several primary Pure Land scriptures — the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra*, the "Chapter on the Easy Practice," and the *Larger Pure Land Sutra* — are woven into Genshin's presentations of the gates of worship and praise.

It is in his treatments of the gates of resolve and contemplation that Genshin diverges significantly from the characterization in the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra* and incorporates ideas of the

populist Pure Land masters. The *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra* characterizes the gates of resolve and contemplative examination as forms, respectively, of the traditional Buddhist meditation techniques "concentration" [*śamata*; Skt., *śamatha*] and "contemplation" [*bīḥaṣana*; Skt., *vipaśyanā*]. Like Shan-tao, Genshin dispenses with this formulation. In his characterization of the gate of resolve, Genshin draws on the populist Pure Land master Tao-ch'o (Shan-tao's teacher), who describes resolve as arousing the aspiration for the highest enlightenment in the form of aspiration to save self and others mutually into the Pure Land. Genshin quotes the following passage from Tao-ch'o's *Assembled Passages on the Land of Peace and Bliss* [Hanayama, 1.129]:

The *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra* says, "To arouse aspiration for perfect enlightenment is to resolve to become a buddha; to resolve to become a buddha is to aspire to save all beings; to aspire to save all beings is to aspire to embrace all beings and together be reborn into a buddha-land."⁸

Genshin then proceeds to prescribe as the actual method of cultivating the gate of resolve the taking of the four universal bodhisattva vows⁹ from the perspectives of both relative and ultimate truth. Citing the *Great Concentration and Contemplation* of Chih-i as his authority for the ultimate form of the vows [*enri gan*], he insists that *nembutsu* practitioners undertake the four vows with the understanding that those saved, the savior, and resolve itself are neither existent nor nonexistent, but are identical to the Middle Way [*chūdō*] [Hanayama 1.131-132]. This is an example of Genshin's skillful integration of populist Pure Land and T'ien-t'ai positions in the *Essentials*.

Genshin concludes his exposition of the gate of resolution with a series of questions and answers exploring the feasibility and effectiveness of resolution for those seeking Pure Land rebirth. One of these is a hypothetical accusation that aspiration for

Pure Land rebirth is actually a selfish avoidance of the obligation to help other suffering beings in this world. In his response Genshin cites the *T'ien-t'ai Ten Doubts on the Pure Land* [*Jōdo jūgi ron*] to the effect that those who seek Pure Land rebirth based upon right resolution do so in order to return to the world of suffering as buddhas and thereby save beings in the most expeditious manner possible. Thus we find that the *T'ien-t'ai Ten Doubts*, a populist Pure Land work attributed to Chih-i [Andrews 1989] is also employed by Genshin to defend his populist interpretation of the gate of resolve.¹⁰

The gate of contemplative examination is for Genshin the most important of the five Dharma-gates. It can be considered the central teaching of the entire *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth*. It is here that Genshin actually describes various types of *nembutsu*, from the most rigorous to the simplest. And it is here that we find among the five gates the strongest influence of the populist Pure Land master Shan-tao. As practices of the gate of contemplative examination Genshin sets out four different methods of *nembutsu*: (1) buddha-mark contemplation [*bessō kan*], (2) general buddha contemplation [*sōsō kan*], (3) simplified buddha contemplation [*zōryaku kan*], and (4) *nembutsu* for those who are incapable of buddha-contemplation [*futan kannen*].¹¹ First we should note that this treatment of contemplation is quite different from that of the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra*, where the gate of contemplative examination consists of contemplation upon twenty-nine glories of Amitabha Buddha, his bodhisattvas, and his land. Genshin's four types of *nembutsu* conform more to the *nembutsu* of the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra* [*Kamuryōju kyō*], of Chih-i's constantly walking *samadhi* [*jōgyō sammai*], and of Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi* [*Kannen bōmon*]. Genshin presents these four types of *nembutsu* as alternatives — the first two are very arduous, the last two successively easier.

As buddha-mark contemplation, the first of the four varieties, Genshin first enjoins contemplation of the lotus blossom dais of Amitabha, then of

forty-two of his buddha-marks.¹² He concludes by noting that Shan-tao recommends, after contemplation of the series of buddha-marks, contemplation of the single buddha-mark of the Buddha's "wisdom-eye" [*byakugō*]. Genshin refers to the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* [*Dai hannya gyō*], the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra* and the *Buddha Contemplation Samadhi Ocean Sutra* [*Kambutsu sammaikai kyō*] as his sources for buddha-mark contemplation, but other influences are discernable as well, chiefly those of Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi* and Chih-i's *Great Contemplation and Concentration*.

It is very likely that Genshin's buddha-mark contemplation was influenced by Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi of Contemplation and Reflection upon the Ocean-like Features of Amitabha Buddha* because of the structural and other similarities between Genshin's exercise and Shan-tao's instructions for buddha contemplation *samadhi*. The *Methods and Merits* instructs practitioners first to contemplate twenty-four of Amitabha's buddha-marks, then the Buddha's lotus dais, and finally the wisdom-eye buddha-mark. Genshin's buddha-mark contemplation is similar in that — as we have just seen — it begins with the dais, proceeds to the buddha-marks, and concludes with a recommendation to contemplate the wisdom-eye. Also, the descriptive details of the various contemplations of both masters are based on the same texts, the *Buddha Contemplation Samadhi Ocean Sutra* and the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*. Moreover, Yagi Kōe has demonstrated numerous internal similarities and parallels between Genshin's forty-two marks and Shan-tao's series of twenty-four [1940, 196-201]. On the other hand, the constantly walking *samadhi* of Chih-i's *Great Contemplation and Concentration* also prescribes contemplation of Amitabha's buddha-marks [T46.12a].¹³ It is clear that Genshin was influenced by both of these masters. Buddha-mark contemplation was authentic *nembutsu* for Genshin because it was a method taught by the founder, Chih-i, of his mother-school, the Tendai, even

though Chih-i sought by this exercise enlightenment and not Pure Land rebirth. Shan-tao, on the other hand, provided a more detailed model for this method of *nembutsu*, and moreover a more devotional style in search of Pure Land rebirth rather than immediate enlightenment.

The second type of *nembutsu* described by Genshin, general buddha contemplation, shows no influence of the populist Pure Land masters. However, its descriptions of Amitabha Buddha draw heavily on the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*, and its method of *nembutsu* upon the *Great Contemplation and Concentration*. Again, in typical T'ien-t'ai (i.e., Tendai) fashion, Genshin urges contemplation of not only the phenomenal Buddha, but also of the Buddha's noumenal Dharma-embodiment [*hosshin*]. This was the acme of meditative endeavor for the Tendai School, and for Genshin as well. But, undoubtedly because Genshin realized that this form of *nembutsu* was too difficult for most laymen, he proceeds to present two easier forms of *nembutsu*, forms designed to achieve Pure Land rebirth rather than immediate enlightenment.

The first of these, as we have indicated, is called simplified Buddha contemplation. It describes several successively simpler objects of contemplation — first contemplation of the "wisdom-eye" buddha-mark (again), then of a scenario of the *nembutsu* practitioner himself being illumined by the light from this buddha-mark, and then a scene or vision of the practitioner being reborn into the Pure Land at death. While these forms of contemplation have their paradigms in the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*,¹⁴ they are also emphasized in Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi* [T47.24b; Inagaki 1966, 20-21], and thus Genshin's choice of these forms may have been influenced as well by Shan-tao.

The last form of *nembutsu* presented by Genshin for the gate of contemplative examination is for those unable to contemplate the buddha-marks. In a well-known passage of the *Essentials* Genshin urges practitioners to just "call and reflect"

[*shōnen*] on Amida Buddha continuously and unceasingly, at all times and places, day and night with all their might, while thinking of taking refuge in the Buddha, of their own rebirth in the Pure Land (again), or of being illumined by the Buddha's glory [Hanayama, 1.191-192]. The paradigms for this *nembutsu*, both in scenes of Pure Land rebirth and in fervid continuous utterance of the invocation to Amitabha, are once more to be found in the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*, in the concluding passages of this text which urge those in the throes of death and unable to contemplate to uninterruptedly utter the Buddha's name ten times in longing for rebirth. We should not overlook probable influence again, however, from that very important text for the transmission of Pure Land devotionalism to Japan, the *Great Contemplation and Concentration*. The *Great Contemplation and Concentration's* instructions for constantly walking *samadhi* also urge the practitioner to continually call and reflect on the Buddha. And finally Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi* also emphatically urges those meditating on the Buddha to call uninterruptedly on his name as well in aspiration for rebirth into his land [T47.23b; Inagaki 1966, 11].¹⁵

To summarize our examination of populist influences upon the teachings of the *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* for proper *nembutsu*, we have found as was to be expected that primary Pure Land scriptures, those elucidated and popularized by the populist Pure Land school — the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shastra*, the Nagarjuna "Chapter on the Easy Practice," the *Larger Pure Land Sutra* and the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra* — were among Genshin's most important sources. However, we have also found that at several important points — characterization of the meanings and relationships of the gates of resolve and contemplative examination, the definition of proper resolve, and the description of authentic buddha-contemplation — the populist masters Tao-ch'ō and Shan-tao, whose ideas were hitherto virtually unknown in Japan, were also heavily drawn upon. Finally we found

prominent too as the source of central ideas and practices the T'ien-t'ai scripture *Great Contemplation and Concentration*. Thus Genshin skillfully blended an amalgam of the familiar and the new.¹⁶

SOURCES OF THE ESSENTIALS OF PURE LAND REBIRTH ON THE FAITH AND COMMITMENT NECESSARY FOR NEMBUTSU

Section Two of Chapter Five of the *Essentials* deals with the proper manner of *nembutsu* practice and the faith with which it should be cultivated. Here is an outline of that section:

2. The Manner of Practice

(1) The four modes of practice

- i. Life-long
- ii. Reverent
- iii. Ceaseless
- iv. Exclusive

(2) The three kinds of faith of the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*

- i. Sincere faith
- ii. Deep faith
- iii. Faith which dedicates all merits toward the mutual rebirth of self and others

As we can see, the major topics of this section are the so-called four modes of *nembutsu* cultivation [*Shugyō sōbō*] and the three kinds of faith which should accompany *nembutsu*. The four modes define the degree of commitment with which *nembutsu* should be pursued. It should be life-long [*chōji*], ceaseless [*onjū*], reverent [*muken*], and exclusive [*muyō*]. Genshin elucidates each of these with quotes from the *Standard Interpretations on the Western Land* and from Shan-tao's *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth*.

The second topic of this section, the three kinds of faith [*sanjin*] which should accompany *nembutsu* practice, derives from the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*. Genshin quotes the passage

of the *Contemplation Sutra* which sets these out [Hanayama 1.208]:

Question: ... When we cultivate *nembutsu*, what attitude should we have?

Answer: The *Contemplation Sutra* says, "If sentient beings who aspire to rebirth in that land arouse three kinds of faith, they will be reborn. These are (1) sincere faith [*shinjō shin*], (2) deep faith [*jinshin*], and (3) faith which dedicates [all of its merit] in aspiration [for rebirth] [*ekō hotsugan shin*]."

He then quotes Shan-tao's interpretation of these three kinds of Pure Land faith from his *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth*.¹⁷ In this way the rich meanings given by Shan-tao to these three important but cryptic notions [Andrews 1973, 71-72] are incorporated into the teachings on *nembutsu* cultivation of the *Essentials*.

We mentioned above that in the preface to his *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth* Shan-tao summarized the minimum necessary Pure Land practices as those of the five gates of buddha-reflection. In that preface he also summarized the faith and mode of practice necessary for rebirth as the four modes and three types of faith adopted here by Genshin. Thus Genshin has now incorporated into the *Essentials* all three components of Shan-tao's summary: (1) Faith [*an-hsin; anjin*],¹⁸ the *Contemplation Sutra*'s three forms of faith; (2) practice [*ch'i-hsing; kigyō*], the five Dharma-gates of buddha-reflection; and (3) mode of practice [*tso-yeh; sagō*], the four modes of *nembutsu* cultivation. In this way Genshin introduced to Japan one of the most important continental formulations of populist Pure Land faith and practice.¹⁹

It is also significant that Genshin cites the *Standard Interpretations on the Western Land* here. Hitherto we have treated this text as merely one of the miscellaneous works frequently cited

in the *Essentials*.²⁰ Actually it is a work strongly influenced by the *T'ien-t'ai Ten Doubts on the Pure Land* and the populist Pure Land movement in general. Like the *T'ien-t'ai Ten Doubts*, it also defends Pure Land faith and argues its superiority over other vigorous movements of the T'ang Period such as the Three Stages School [*San-chieh-chiao; Sangai kyō*], the Ch'an School, and Maitreya devotionalism. Like the *Ten Doubts* it was strongly influenced by populist Pure Land works extending all the way back to Tao-ch'o's *Assembled Passages on the Land of Peace and Bliss* [Mochizuki, 279-290 and 300-302]. And also like the *Ten Doubts* it was ascribed to a famous master, the first patriarch of the Fa-hsiang [Hossō] School, T'zu-en or K'uei-chi [Jion or Kiki, 632-682] [Weinstein 1959]. Therefore, while not a product of the populist Pure Land masters, it is a work strongly influenced by their movement.

RESOURCES OF THE *ESSENTIALS* OF PURE LAND REBIRTH FOR NEMBUTSU FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

We have examined the resources of the *Essentials* for the comprehensive cultivation of *nembutsu* and for the attitudes and faith which should accompany this practice. Let us now examine its resources for the cultivation of two special forms of *nembutsu* [*betsuji nembutsu*] — *nembutsu* for intensive sessions [*jinjō betsugyō*] and extreme *nembutsu*, i.e., *nembutsu* for the hour of death [*rinjū gyōgi*].

The *Essentials* sets out detailed instructions for two types of intensive *nembutsu* sessions — a seven-day session and a ninety-day session. Each is acquired from a continental master and presented in extensive quotations. The seven-day session is derived from Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi*; the ninety-day session is the constantly walking *samadhi* of the *Great Contemplation and Concentration* which Saichō had long before prescribed for his Tendai monks [Andrews 1989].

Both of these methods entail around the clock, intensive contemplation and invocation of Amitabha Buddha.

The *Essentials* gives instructions from three different sources for extreme *nembutsu*. The first source is the *Summary of the Four Part Vinaya* [*Shibun ritsu sho*] which purports to describe the manner in which dying monks were attended within an "Evanescence Chapel" [*mujōin*] in the Jetavana Grove during the time of Gautama Buddha. The second source is a text which we have seen Genshin turn to frequently — Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi*. Genshin quotes from this text passages which enjoin friends and relatives to assemble and assist dying aspirants to repent of their transgressions, contemplate their own rebirth into the Pure Land, and "with mind and mouth in accord ceaselessly to call and call" on the Buddha of Limitless Life [Hanayama, 1.300-301]. We may detect a similarity between these instructions of Shan-tao for dying aspirants and Genshin's instructions above for "simplified buddha contemplation" and for those unable to contemplate the buddha-marks. As we noted then, Genshin was probably influenced in his formulation of that minimal *nembutsu* by Shan-tao's instructions for extreme *nembutsu*. If so, this means that Genshin conceived of that simplest and easiest *nembutsu* primarily as a measure for the hour of death. But then, we must keep in mind that for so sincere and committed a Buddhist as Genshin, the hour of death was always at hand.

The third resource which Genshin utilizes for extreme *nembutsu* is Tao-ch'o's *Assembled Passages on the Land of Peace and Bliss*. He quotes Tao-ch'o urging the formation of *nembutsu* fellowships to prepare for the cultivation of *nembutsu* at the hour of death [Hanayama, 1.302]:

Preceptor Tao-ch'o says, "When the keen winds of death descend on them and a hundred pains fill their bodies, if they have not practiced beforehand, how can they [the ordinary, deluded mortal] reflect on the Buddha even if

they want to? They should make an arrangement beforehand with four or five like-minded persons, and on the approach of death remonstrate with one another, call on Amitabha's name, long for rebirth in the Pure Land, and continuously calling and calling, cause one another to accomplish ten reflections on the Buddha."²¹

It seems that Genshin truly took this advice to heart. The *Nembutsu-samadhi* Society of Twenty-five founded by Genshin was exactly such a group of "like-minded persons" dedicated to mutual assistance in the fulfillment of death-bed *nembutsu* [Andrews 1989].

To summarize our examination of Genshin's resources for special occasion *nembutsu*, we have found a heavy reliance on the Chinese populist Pure Land masters Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao, especially Shan-tao. Shan-tao provided models for both intensive *nembutsu* sessions and extreme *nembutsu*. In fact, a pattern has clearly emerged with respect to Genshin's resources for *nembutsu* instruction. The most prominent resources utilized by the *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* for instruction in *nembutsu* cultivation, aside from Pure Land and other sutra and shastra texts, have been the works of the Chinese master Chih-i, Shan-tao and Tao-ch'o. Shan-tao and Tao-ch'o are of course among the most important populist masters and Chih-i is the founder of the T'ien-t'ai School. Genshin not only introduced new, more populist methods of *nembutsu* to Japan, he also attempted to assure the orthodoxy of these new forms by integrating them with the traditional and revered Tendai forms.²²

RESOURCES OF THE *ESSENTIALS OF PURE LAND REBIRTH* FOR THE EFFICACY OF *NEMBUTSU*

Chapter Seven of the *Essentials* enumerates and scripturally documents the various benefits of

nembutsu cultivation [*nembutsu riyaku*]. Here is an outline of that chapter:

VII. The Benefits of *Nembutsu* [*Nembutsu riyaku*]

1. The Benefit of Extinguishing Evil Karma and Generating Good [*metsuzai shōzen*]
2. The Benefit of Receiving Protection [*myōtoku goji*]
3. The Benefit of Seeing Buddha [*genshin kembutsu*]
4. The Benefit of Pure Land Rebirth [*tōrai shōri*]
5. The Benefits of Reflecting upon Amida [*Mida betsuyaku*]

Of the ninety-three citations in this chapter, only six are of works by populist Pure Land masters [Andrews 1990]. This is a good example, however, of the inadequacy of a merely quantitative evaluation of Genshin's resources. In spite of the fact that it is cited only once in Chapter Seven, this chapter was extensively influenced by a populist work whose impact on the *Essentials* we have already encountered a number of times — Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Samadhi*. While the first section of the *Methods and Merits of Samadhi* sets out, as we have seen, detailed instructions on the cultivation of *nembutsu*, its second section, like Chapter Seven of the *Essentials*, describes and documents five benefits of *nembutsu* cultivation — (1) extinguishing evil karma [*metsuzai*], (2) receiving the protection of the buddhas and long life [*gonen tokuchōmyō*], (3) seeing the buddha [*kembutsu*], (4) being taken in to rebirth in the Pure Land [*sesshō*], and (5) assurance of rebirth [in the Pure Land for ordinary sentient beings] [*shōshō*] [T47.24c; Inagaki 1984, 24]. The titles of benefits one through four of Chapter Seven are nearly identical to these of the *Methods and Merits*, strongly suggesting that Genshin was heavily influenced by Shan-tao's formulation. Moreover, while space considerations prevent us from further consideration here of Chapter Seven,

we can point out that Yagi Kōe demonstrated in a meticulous study conducted almost five decades ago extensive influence of the *Methods and Merits of Samadhi* upon this chapter of the *Essentials* [Yagi 1940, 308-332].

In Chapter Eight Genshin further documents the efficacy of *nembutsu* cultivation, this time the efficacy of easy invocational *nembutsu*. Our quantitative survey showed that while there are no citations of populist masters in this chapter, nonetheless, primary Pure Land scriptures account for two-thirds of its references and quotes [Andrews 1990, Table 4].

Thus the influence of the populist Pure Land movement upon Chapters Seven and Eight is quite apparent. However, these chapters do not make the most important claims of the *Essentials* on the topic of the efficacy of *nembutsu*. By Genshin's age the power of *nembutsu* and other practices to bring about rebirth for those capable of dedicated cultivation and strict morality was generally accepted. What was in doubt was the savability of the ordinary undisciplined, deluded, morally flawed person [*bombu*; Skt., *prthagjana*] by *nembutsu* at the hour of death. It was exactly this radical soteriology which the continental populist Pure Land masters affirmed. And this affirmation the *Essentials* transmitted to Japan. The issue of the savability of the most destitute is taken up by the *Essentials* principally in sections one, two and five of Chapter Ten, "Discussion of Issues." Let us examine these sections.

RESOURCES DRAWN UPON BY THE
ESSENTIALS OF PURE LAND REBIRTH
TO CONFIRM SALVATION OF THE
DESTITUTE

The issue of whether or not the common mortal — deluded, passion ridden, and burdened with bad karma — could be reborn in Amida's Land of Utter Bliss by means of extreme *nembutsu* turned on the answers to three basic questions: (1) What sort of Pure Land is the Land of Utter Bliss?

(2) What sort of persons are described as being reborn there in the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*. And (3) what sort of *nembutsu* is guaranteed efficacy for rebirth in the Eighteenth Vow of the *Sutra of Limitless Life*? Section One of Chapter Ten, "The Land Utter Bliss and Its Beings," takes up the first of these concerns, the ontological status of the buddha-land, Utter Bliss.

By ontological status is meant the character of the land as identified with one of the traditional three embodiments [*sanshin*] of buddhas and their buddha-fields or land — (1) the absolute, formless, Dharma-embodiment [*hosshin*], (2) the superhuman, glorified embodiment of karmic merit, or merit-embodiment [*hōjin*],²³ and (3) the relative, historical response- or manifestation-embodiment [*ōjin* or *keshin*].²⁴ The ontological status of Amitabha's land was an important point in determining the savability of ordinary mortals, because according to the thinking of most schools of Chinese Buddhism ordinary beings could not be reborn into a genuine Pure Land, i.e., a Dharma-embodiment or merit-embodiment land, because such beings were manifestly impure. And conversely, if they could be reborn into a particular buddha-land, then that land could not by definition be genuinely pure or totally purified of delusion and inferior rebirth-paths. Such a land, the logic went, must be a mere manifested-embodiment, and therefore, even if sentient beings were reborn there, they would still reside in *samsara* and delusion.

In Section One Genshin first cites the majority opinion of two eminent doctors of the Dharma — Chih-i and Ching-ying Hui-yuan [Jōyō Eon, 523-592] — that the land Utter Bliss is a mere manifestation-embodiment.²⁵ Then he cites the minority opinion of populist Pure Land master Tao-ch'ō who refutes the views of other masters and claims that Amitabha's land is a merit-embodiment land. To resolve this dispute Genshin quotes the populist master Chia-ts'ai to the effect that all buddhas receive both merit-embodiment and manifestation-embodiment lands and that one should cease futile speculation on the status of

pure lands and just believe the buddhas' teachings, reflect on Amitabha Buddha and gain rebirth in his Pure Land Utter Bliss, with the implication that one will then apprehend a land corresponding to the quality of one's practice and understanding and ultimately gain perfect enlightenment in that land.²⁶ Finally, in an unusual, unequivocal expression of his personal opinion, Genshin heartily concurs with Chia-ts'ai's view. Thus his position on this first concern is that although the ontological status of the land Utter Bliss cannot be definitely determined, whatever the status of that land, rebirth there is a very much to be desired and will eventually lead to emancipation. Genshin has thus skillfully introduced the populist position on the superior status of Amitabha's Pure Land without rejecting the view of the founder, Chih-i, of his own Tendai School.

In Section Two, "The Rank of Those Reborn," Genshin takes up the second of the three major concerns enunciated above, the soteriological path status of the nine grades of beings of the *Contemplation Sutra*. Mahayana Buddhism postulates a detailed soteriological path-structure, a hierarchy of fifty-two stages on the path of total enlightenment, buddhahood and nirvana. At the bottom are ordinary beings with unwholesome karma [*aku bombu*; Skt., *bālaprthagjana*], not yet even with-in the path structure.²⁷ Above are bodhisattva candidates, that is, those who are striving at various levels towards bodhisattvahood. Above these two kinds of ordinary beings are holy beings [*shōja*; Skt., *āryajanas*], i.e. bodhisattvas, at ten levels, and finally above them two degrees of buddhahood. In addition, the Mahayana taught that the "Hinayana" also had such a path-structure, beginning again with ordinary beings with unwholesome karma, proceeding to ordinary beings at several levels of arhat candidacy, then to three levels of arhats, and culminating in buddhahood [Haneda, 6-14; Nakamura, 367a].

The *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*, on the other hand, describes nine grades of persons [*kuhon*] who achieve rebirth in the Pure Land, the

upper grades highly disciplined and virtuous, the lower grades much less so. The issue of the savability of the most destitute of persons, i.e., those ordinary beings with evil karma not yet even on the path-structure [*aku bombu*], hinged partially on the interpretation of the soteric status of these nine grades. If the nine grades were all bodhisattvas or bodhisattva candidates [or arhat and arhat candidates] then this teaching of the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra* on the rebirth of all nine grades would be irrelevant to the issue of the savability of the deluded, karmically burdened ordinary person. On the other hand, if the nine grades were, or included, ordinary, flawed beings, then the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra* could be understood as affirming the savability of such persons through rebirth in the Pure Land.

Utilizing the encyclopedic *Interpretation of the Multitude of Pure Land Problems* of Huai-kan, Genshin first surveys the opinions of a number of eminent authorities that the upper six of the nine grades are all bodhisattvas, bodhisattva candidates, arhats or arhat candidates.²⁸ He then makes the personal judgement that whatever the status of the upper six grades, the lower three of the nine grades are all evil persons not yet even on the soteriological path. Finally, as if to clarify the import of this judgement, he poses the question, "To which of these nine grades do we (i.e., the writer and readers of the *Essentials*) belong?" He emphatically answers, "How could we belong to any other than the lower three grades?" [Hanayama, 1.403]. In other words, the nine grades of people described by the *Contemplation Sutra* as savable does indeed include ordinary, destitute persons, who are none other than ourselves. The influence of the populist Pure Land school upon Genshin's view in this regard becomes clear when in conclusion to this hypothetical exchange Genshin notes that on the basis of scriptural evidence Shan-tao, in his "Profound Meaning of the *Contemplation Sutra*,"²⁹ rejects the opinions of other teachers on the high

status of the nine grades and maintains that even the upper three grades are not necessarily of lofty rank [Hanayama, 1.404].³⁰

The deep influence of the populist school upon Genshin is further confirmed a little farther along in this section by Genshin's response to another hypothetical query. This question is posed: If ordinary, inferior persons can be reborn in the Pure Land as the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra* depicts, why is it that out of the millions who desire rebirth so few are successful? Genshin responds with a quotation from Shan-tao's *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth* which maintains that all aspirants who reflect continuously on the Buddha to the end of their lives attain rebirth, but of those who reject exclusive and cultivate mixed practices, very few are reborn [Hanayama, 1.405-406]. Genshin then comments that by exclusive practices Shan-tao meant the five gates of buddha-reflection, the three kinds of faith, and the four modes of practice, in other words, the minimal necessary Pure Land practices formulated by Shan-tao in the preface of his *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth* and introduced to Japan by Genshin in Chapters Four and Five of the *Essentials*.

The third of the three keys concerns determining the savability of ordinary beings — the nature of the *nembutsu* set out in the Eighteenth Vow of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* — is addressed by Genshin in Section Five of Chapter Ten, "The Nature of Extreme *Nembutsu*." The Eighteenth Vow of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* seems to promise rebirth for all, except those who have committed such heinous crimes as patricide and matricide [*gogyaku*], by means of just sincere faith and ten buddha-reflections [*jūnen*]. The character of this *nembutsu* was an important consideration for the savability of ordinary persons, for if it meant ten contemplative visualizations or instants of difficult contemplative *nembutsu*, then the ordinary person would be virtually excluded. On the other hand, if it meant an easier form of *nembutsu*,

such as invocation of the Buddha's Name, then even the ordinary person might be saved by this practice.

In the very opening exchange of this section Genshin poses the hypothetical question, "What kind of buddha-reflections is 'ten reflections'?" He offers two responses. The first is by means of a quote from Tao-ch'o's *Assembled Passages on the Land of Peace and Bliss* in which Tao-ch'o maintains that "ten reflections" means just meditatively reflecting [*okunen*] on Amitabha, either his general appearance or his buddha-marks, continuously for ten reflections or moments [*nen*] without admixing any other thought [Hanayama, 1.420]. This is very conservative interpretation in spite of the fact that it derives from a populist source.

Genshin immediately offers another interpretation, however, that of "a certain person," that "ten reflections" simply means calling and reflecting [*shōnen*], "Homage to the Buddha Amitabha" [*Namu Amida Butsu*], ten times. This is of course a populist interpretation of "ten reflections" as invocational *nembutsu*. The "certain person" is Ryōgen [912-985], Genshin's master. The reference is to Ryōgen's *Meaning of the Nine Grades of Rebirth into the Pure Land of Utter Bliss* [*Gokuraku Jōdo kubon ōjō gi*] [Hanayama 2.186; *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho*, Vol. 28, 208b]. What was the source of Ryōgen's interpretation? Undoubtedly it was the description in the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra* of the rebirth of the ninth or lowest grade of beings. The *Contemplation Sutra* depicts the death-bed salvation of this patently evil person through utterance of the invocation, "Homage to the Buddha Amitabha," ten times. The implied linkage between this passage and the Eighteenth Vow of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* was obvious to the populist masters from at least the time of Tao-ch'o [T47.13c]. In both his *Methods and Merits of Samadhi* and in his *Hymns of Praise of Pure Land Rebirth* Shan-tao paraphrases the Eighteenth Vow to promise rebirth by ten repetitions of the invocation to Amitabha [T47.27a and T47.447c]. It is surprising that Genshin does not

cite these interpretations, as Hōnen did centuries later [T83.4b-c], to demonstrate that "ten reflections" of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* means ten invocations of Amitabha Buddha's name. Whatever the reason for this omission, it is apparent that Genshin comes down emphatically on the side of the populist tradition in his interpretation of the meaning of "ten reflections," and therefore on the side of the savability of the ordinary, morally flawed person.³¹

We might also note that Genshin understood the term "ten reflections" to designate extreme *nembutsu*, that is, *nembutsu* at the time of death. This is apparent from the title of Section Five, and also from assumptions he frequently makes in his treatment of this topic.³²

Let us summarize Genshin's positions on these three crucial questions for the savability of the ordinary, destitute person. Drawing heavily on the populist Pure Land tradition for confirmation, he affirms the superior ontological path status of the Pure Land, the inferior soteriological status of those who can be reborn there, and that such a rebirth is attainable by just ten invocations of the name of Amitabha at the moment of death. In this way, he introduces the radical soteriology of the continental populist Pure Land masters to Japan.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study we have attempted to survey the transmission of Pure Land devotionism to Japan, focusing on the role of Genshin's *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth*. In Part One we said that the transmission of Pure Land devotionism from the continent of Asia to Japan took place in three major phases. The first phase consisted in the transmission of major Pure Land scriptures, rituals and ideas during the Nara Period. The second phase was initiated by the introduction to Japan of a devotional style of *nembutsu* and T'ien-t'ai Pure Land works in the early Heian Period and concluded with the tentative exploration of the populist soteriology in these T'ien-t'ai works by such

thinkers as Ryōgen and Zen'yu. The third phase was dominated by what can only be called a massive introduction of the ideas and practices of the continental Pure Land masters by Genshin's *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth*.

The third phase of transmission was not accomplished entirely by the *Essentials*. Although the *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* dominated Japanese Pure Land devotionalism to the close of the Heian Period, continental Pure Land ideas were introduced as well by Japanese works composed subsequent to the *Essentials*. For example, important teachings of the populist master Shan-tao not transmitted by Genshin were later introduced in works of the Sanron School monks Yōkan [or Eikan, 1033-1100] and Chinkai [1092-1152] [Inoue, 407-428]. We could even say that this third phase finally concluded only with the thorough exploration of the implications of populist Pure Land ideas by Japanese masters such as Hōnen [1133-1212], Shinran [1173-1262] and Ippen [1239-1289].

However, it might be more accurate to say that after the composition of Genshin's *Essentials*, Pure Land devotionalism in Japan embarked upon a new epoch, an age of independent development. Building upon the foundations of the three phases of transmission studied here, Pure Land evangelists and thinkers such as Ryōnin [1072-1132], Hōnen, Shinran and Ippen were enabled to erect in Japan a grand edifice of populist Pure Land ideas, practices, and social forms new to the Buddhism of East Asia.

FOOTNOTES

1. See "References" for bibliographical information on this and other works cited in this study. In "References" and "Footnotes," "T" refers to the Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon; "T" followed by numerals, a period, more numerals and characters indicates volume, page, and page section in the Taishō collection; "T" followed by numerals without a period designates a text serial number in the Taishō edition.

2. The populist Pure Land tradition is so called because of its concern for the salvation of the most populous groups of Chinese society. By radical soteriology, we mean an assertion of the availability of Pure Land salvation for even the most spiritually destitute by the easiest of means. On these points see Part One of this study, Andrews (1989).

3. For a fuller treatment of the teachings of the *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth*, see Andrews (1973).

4. In Part Two [Andrews 1990] we pointed out that the *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* also participated in the transmission of the important notion of the advent of the age of the latter Dharma [mappō]. Genshin asserts in the Preface of the *Essentials* that his times are an age of the latter Dharma, and illustrates the adverse conditions of that age in Chapters One and Two; see Marra, 40-46.

5. In references to Hanayama, "1." indicates the translation section of Hanayama's edition; his introduction and notes, which are separately paginated, will be designated by "2."

6. Hanayama notes [2.86] that the correct scroll is the fifth.

7. The Vow as expressed here does not conform exactly to that in any of the extant versions of the *Larger Pure Land Sutra*. Vow 18 of the *Sutra of Universal Enlightenment* [Byōdō gakyō] and of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* [Muryōju kyō] establish a condition of reflecting on Amitābha, and vows 11 and 12 of these texts promise respectively the attainment of an assured state and nirvana.

8. Although Tao-ch'ō indicates that his citation is from the *Vasubandhu Pure Land Shāstra*, it is actually from T'an-luan's *Commentary on the Vasubandhu Pure Land Shāstra* [Ōjōron chū], T40.842a.

9. (1) I vow to save all beings, innumerable though they may be; (2) I vow to extirpate all passions, boundless though they may be; (3) I vow to master all Dharma-gates, inconceivable though

they may be; (4) I vow to attain perfect enlightenment, unattainable though it may be.

10. In a similar way, Genshin cites the disguised populist work *Standard Interpretations on the Western Land* [*Saihō yōketsu*] (see References) in refutation of the hypothetical objection that the rebirth promised by the *Sutra of Limitless Life* is not immediate upon death but will take place only at a much later time [Hanayama 1.158].

11. Contemplation [*kan*] as used in the *Essentials* and in this study designates a kind of meditation which attempts to form a mental image of its object, to allow or cause that image to take on a reality transcending that of sensory or empirical phenomena, and then to behold, comprehend, or unite with, that reality; see Pas.

12. The buddha-marks are traditional, distinguishing characteristics of a buddha, such as his top-knot of flesh, deep blue, almond shaped eyes, etc. The usual number is 32 major marks and 80 minor marks, but there are other enumerations as well; for several standard lists see Hurvitz, 353-361.

13. There is evidence, as a matter of fact, that Shan-tao was influenced by Chih-i; see Fujiwara, 61-62 and my forthcoming article, "Shan-tao's *Methods and Merits of Nien-fo Samadhi*, Part Two — The Scriptural Sources and Historical Antecedents of Shan-tao's Nien-fo Exercises."

14. Contemplations Nine, and Fourteen to Sixteen.

15. The term *shōnen* was also used by Tao-ch'o [T47.4b; Hanayama 1.330], and by Shan-tao in his *Hymns in Praise of Pure Land Rebirth* [T47.439b].

16. We should be aware, however, that these texts do not by any means account for all the 169 citations from 53 odd texts in Chapter Four [Hanayama, 2.44]. Our examination has drawn attention to only the most influential resources for the most important instructions of the *Essentials*.

17. Shan-tao interpreted the three kinds of faith much more extensively in the fourth chapter

of his *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, to which Genshin apparently did not have access.

18. When discussing Chinese texts and movements, we will sometimes give both the Chinese and Japanese readings of technical terms, in that order.

19. Genshin was himself aware that he had adopted this threefold formulation; see Hanayama 1.406.

20. It was cited 14 times, about 2% of all citations in the sections of the *Essentials* on the cultivation of *nembutsu* and its benefits [Hanayama 2.42; Andrews 1990, Table 4].

21. Adopted from Andrews 1973, 84. "Ten reflections" [*jūnen*] refers to the promise of rebirth by ten buddha-reflections in the Eighteenth Vow of the *Sutra of Limitless Life* and the description of death-bed rebirth by ten invocations described in the Sixteenth Contemplation of the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*.

22. Space limitations have prevented us from examining also an interesting typology of *nembutsu* derived by Genshin from Huai-kan; see Hanayama, 1.412-420 and Andrews 1973, 101-102.

23. The product of the immense good karma earned when a buddha was a bodhisattva.

24. A response- or manifestation-embodiment is a response to the needs of sentient beings by a Dharma- or merit-embodiment buddha.

25. The Chih-i citation is from the apocryphal *T'ien-t'ai Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra* [Hanayama 2.182]. However, the same evaluation of the Pure Land Utter Bliss is made in Chih-i's genuine works as well [Chappell, 32-36]. Ching-ying Hui-yuan was a namesake of the more famous Lu-shan Hui-yuan [Rozan Eon] who wrote influential commentaries on the *Sutra of Limitless Life* and the *Amitabha Contemplation Sutra*; see Chappell, 28-32, and Tanaka.

26. Chia-ts'ai had probably studied under Tao-ch'o. Actually, Tao-ch'o's overall position — that Amitabha's Pure Land is actually all three

embodiments and after rebirth in the Pure Land beings will perceive an embodiment of the land based on the degree of their understanding before rebirth [Chappell, 36-46] — was very close to this view of Chia-ts'ai.

27. Some Buddhists postulated a stage below this of *icchantika* [issendai], those so depraved as to have no possibility of ever achieving buddhahood.

28. With the exception of one anonymous authority [Hanayama, 1.401-402].

29. This work, the first chapter of Shan-tao's *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, apparently was the only portion of the *Commentary* known to Genshin [Yagi 1940, 174-181].

30. Actually, Shan-tao declares all nine grades to be ordinary beings [T37.247-249; Haneda, 252-281].

31. We should also point out that Genshin cites that closet populist Pure Land text, the *T'ien-t'ai Ten Doubts on the Pure Land*, twice in Chapter Ten in support of rebirth for ordinary mortals by just ten invocations [Hanayama, 1.409 and 1.424].

32. For example, see Hanayama, 1.423-428.

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JAPANESE AND CHINESE CHARACTERS

aku bombu 惡凡夫
 anjin (an-hsin) 安心
 bessō kan 別相觀
 betsuji nembutsu 別時念仏
 bombu 凡夫
 byakugō 白豪
 chōji 長時
 chūdo 中道
 ekō hotsugan shin 廻向発願心
 ekō mon 廻向門
 enri gan 緣理願
 futan kannen 不堪觀念
 genshin kembutsu 現身見仏
 gogyaku 五逆
 gonen mon 五念門

gonen tokuchōmyō 護念得長命
 hōjin 報身
 hosshin 法身
 issendai 一闍提
 jinjō betsugyō 尋常別行
 jinshin 深心
 jōgyō sammai 常行三昧
 jūnen 十念
 kan 觀
 kanzatsu mon 觀察門
 kembutsu 見仏
 keshin 化身
 kigyō (ch'i-hsing) 起行
 kuhon 九品
 metsuzai 滅罪

metsuzai shōzen 滅罪生善
 Mida betsuyaku 弥陀別益
 mujōin 無常院
 muken 無間
 muyo 無余
 myōtoku goji 冥得護持
 Namu Amida Butsu 南無阿彌陀仏
 nembutsu riyaku 念仏利益
 nen 念
 ōjin 応身
 okunen 億念
 onjū 怨重
 raihai mon 礼拝門
 rinjū gyōgi 臨終行儀
 sagan mon 作願門

sagō (tso-yeh) 作業
 sandan mon 贊歎門
 sanjin 三心
 sanshin 三身
 sesshō 摂生
 shijō shin 至誠心
 shō 正
 shōja 聖者
 shōnen 称念
 shōshō 証生
 shugyō sōbō 修行相貌
 sōsō kan 総相観
 tōrai shōri 当来勝利
 zōryaku kan 雜略観