

her cremated remains were brought to Kōya for burial near the main hall of Kongōbuji, where her tomb still remains.

THE GROWTH OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM

Amida (Sanskrit, Amitābha or Amitāyus) Buddha, the central figure of the Pure Land faith, is one of the most popular divinities in the Buddhist pantheon, his name or that of his Pure Land appearing in more than 270 scriptures, roughly one out of every three works in the Mahāyānist canon.¹²⁷ At a very early stage in the development of Indian Mahāyāna there emerged a cult centering on Amida, that viewed him as a sort of savior who had, through his own boundless merit, created a Pure Land, or haven, offering shelter to all beings who demonstrated their faith in him by certain devotional acts. In China the Amida cult grew steadily after the year 402, when the monk Hui-yūan founded the first Pure Land association of lay and clerical devotees. Faith in Amida and his vow to deliver all beings to Pure Land became one of the dominant themes in Chinese Buddhism and was recognized as an ancillary teaching by the various Buddhist schools, whose masters often produced commentaries on the Pure Land scriptures and advocated the Pure Land faith, but always in such a way that it was subordinate to the principal tenets of their own school. In addition to these sectarian interpretations of Pure Land, however, an independent cult, which viewed Pure Land Buddhism as the only valid type of religious practice for the present age, began to take shape in the sixth century under the guiding hand of T'an-luan. This cult, known later in China and Japan as the Pure Land school, culminated in the work of Shan-tao, who, while recognizing the necessity of such traditional practices as sutra chanting, meditations, image worship, and the presentation of offerings, asserted that the vocal recitation of Amida's name was the primary devotional act leading to rebirth in Pure Land.

Although Pure Land scriptures had already been copied and studied in the Nara period and images of Amida could be found in Nara temples, it was only in Heian times that the Pure Land faith emerged as a major movement within Japanese Buddhism. In seventh- and eighth-century Japan, Amida was viewed primarily as a Buddha who could deliver the souls of the dead to his Pure Land, commonly

¹²⁷ Yabuki Keiki, *Amida Buzu no kenkyū*, rev. and enlarged ed. (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1937), p. 449.

called Paradise (Gokuraku).¹²⁸ As the inscriptions on his images indicate, Amida was worshiped most frequently by laymen seeking to ensure the rebirth of a deceased relative in Pure Land. Relatively few instances are recorded of individuals commissioning statues of Amida in the hope that they themselves might be able to enter his Pure Land after death.¹²⁹

Pure Land observances on Hiei

The systematic practice of chanting the name of Amida in the hope of attaining rebirth in his Pure Land was introduced into Japan by Ennin, who, as we have already noted, first became acquainted with the *goe nembutsu* service during his brief stay at the Chu-lin ssu in Wu-t'ai in 840. The founder of this monastery was the Pure Land devotee Fa-chao (died c. 820), who had himself devised the *goe nembutsu*, which combined the traditional meditations on Amida with the fervent invocation of his name as taught by Shan-tao. Ennin encountered the *goe nembutsu* again at the Tzu-sheng ssu, the monastery in Ch'ang-an at which he resided for almost five years. The melodious chanting of Amida's name constituted an important part of the liturgy used at the Tzu-sheng ssu.

In 848, the very year that Ennin returned from China, he built a Jōgyō zammai-dō (frequently abridged to Jōgyōdō) in the Tōtō (Eastern Pagoda) temple complex on Hiei. The Jōgyōdō, as its name indicates, was a hall exclusively devoted to the practice of the *jōgyō zammai*, a meditation lasting ninety days in which one concentrated one's thoughts on Amida while invoking his name and circumambulating his image.¹³⁰ The *jōgyō zammai*, which was one of the four basic types of meditation taught by the Tendai school, was practiced not primarily to bring about rebirth in Pure Land but, rather, to enhance the powers of concentration of the devotee by enabling him to focus his mental and physical activities on Amida. But for Ennin, who had been greatly influenced during his stay in China by the intense piety of Fa-chao, the *jōgyō zammai* was not simply a meditative exercise but an act of devotion to Amida that facilitated entry into his Pure Land. So strongly did Ennin feel about Amida worship that,

¹²⁸ Although Buddhism does not technically recognize the existence of a soul (Sanskrit, *ātman*; Japanese, *ga*), the notion of a soul, commonly referred to as *rei* or *ryō*, is widespread in popular Japanese Buddhism.

¹²⁹ Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon jōdo-kyō seirisu-shi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1956), pp. 15–26.

¹³⁰ *Eigaku yōki* (ca. 1267), *kan* 1, *Gunsho ruijū*, vol. 15, p. 542a.

in his will, he instructed his disciples to begin the practice of *fudan nembutsu*, “uninterrupted contemplation of [Amida] Buddha.”¹³¹

First performed in 865, the year after Ennin’s death, the *fudan nembutsu* played a crucial role in the dissemination of the Pure Land faith among the Hiei clergy and their aristocratic lay supporters. The *fudan nembutsu* was held annually at the Jōgyōdō from the morning of the eleventh day of the eighth month through the night of the seventeenth day. The goal of the participants was to achieve rebirth in Pure Land through the practice of the *fudan nembutsu*, which it was believed had the power to destroy the effects of accumulated evil karma. The *fudan nembutsu* had three components, each signifying a different realm of human activity: (1) the continuous invocation of Amida’s name, occasionally interrupted by the chanting of passages from the *Amidakyō* extolling the merit embodied in the name; (2) the circumambulation of an Amida’s image; and (3) the concentration of one’s thoughts on Amida. These three components represented respectively the verbal, physical, and mental activities of the person, in short, the totality of human actions. By dedicating his verbal utterances, physical movement, and mental processes to Amida in this fashion, the devotee immersed himself completely in Amida, which guaranteed his rebirth in Pure Land.¹³²

The popularity of the *fudan nembutsu* grew steadily: in 893 a second Jōgyōdō was built with imperial sponsorship in the Saitō (Western Pagoda) complex on Hiei and in 968 a third Jōgyōdō was established by Ryōgen at Yokawa, the third major temple complex, thus enabling the two thousand or so monks on Hiei to take part in the annual *fudan nembutsu*. It was not long before provincial clerics who came to Hiei for training also became devotees of the *yama no nembutsu* (Amida-contemplations of [Hiei] mountain), as the *fudan nembutsu* came to be popularly called, and erected Jōgyōdō in their home regions. By the end of the tenth century Jōgyōdō could be found in such diverse places as Kyoto, Ōtsu (as an adjunct of Onjōji), Tōnomine, and as far east as the Izu peninsula. The predominance of Amida pietism on Hiei is attested in a document dated 970, which wryly observes that although novices had been expected to spend twelve years learning all four types of Tendai meditations, they now limit themselves to the practice of *jōgyō zammai* alone.¹³³

131 *Sammon dōsha ki* (early 14th century), *Gunsho ruijū*, vol. 15, p. 488a.

132 For a description of the *fudan nembutsu*, see *Sambō ekotoba*, *BZ*, vol. 111, p. 467; English translation, Kamens, pp. 342–44.

133 *Nijūrokka jō kishō*, *Heian ibun: komonjo hen*, vol. 2, p. 435a.

*The Ōjō yōshū and the dissemination of the Pure Land faith
among the aristocracy*

The appearance of Genshin's *Ōjō yōshū* (*Anthology on Rebirth in Pure Land*) in 985 marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. Its author, Genshin (942–1017), who had been a disciple of Ryōgen, won recognition early in his career for his great learning. Instead of pursuing high ecclesiastical office, as was the custom of the Hiei elite, Genshin chose to go into seclusion at Eshin'in in Yokawa, where he devoted himself to meditation and scholarship. With more than eighty extant works attributed to him, Genshin was one of the most prolific monks of the Heian period, his writing covering such diverse topics as Tendai doctrine, Hīnayāna philosophy, logic, esoteric ritual, and Pure Land teachings. Although Genshin always remained within the Tendai tradition, his interpretation of Pure Land doctrine, particularly as he presented it in his *Ōjō yōshū*, provided the impetus for the Pure Land faith that swept Japan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries resulting in the rise of the Jōdo, Jōdo Shin, and Ji schools of the Kamakura period.

What distinguished Genshin's approach to Pure Land doctrine from those of his Tendai predecessors was his belief that the world was on the verge of entering the *mappō* age, that is, a period of irreversible spiritual decline that called for less demanding religious exercises. Whereas in earlier periods it was possible to attain enlightenment through meditation, adherence to precepts, and cultivation of wisdom, in the *mappō* age, which Genshin believed was about to commence, these practices were exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for most people.¹³⁴ The most appropriate teaching for the *mappō* age, in Genshin's view, was that of Pure Land, which Amida Buddha had created as a refuge for all beings, both good and evil, who sought rebirth there. Although Ennin established Pure Land as a devotional practice on Hiei, he did not attempt to provide a doctrinal justification for it in any of his numerous writings. That task fell to Genshin, who, in order to lay a firm theoretical foundation for the practice of Pure Land within the Tendai school, undertook an extensive study of the Buddhist scripture as well as of the various treatises on Pure Land by Chinese scholars, as is attested in his *Ōjō yōshū*, which quotes from more than 160 different works.¹³⁵ It is par-

¹³⁴ See the opening lines of his *Ōjō yōshū*, *kan 1*, *T*, vol. 84, p. 33a.

¹³⁵ Hanayama Shinshō, trans., *Ōjō yōshū*, *Iwanami bunko*, vol. 2992–96 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1942), p. 3.

ticularly significant that among the Pure Land treatises most frequently cited are those of Shan-tao and his master, Tao-ch'ō, who laid the foundation for an independent Pure Land faith in China.

Running through the *Ōjō yōshū* was a simple theme: our present world is one of defilement and pain in contrast to the Pure Land of Amida, which is a blissful realm free from taint or suffering. By using copious quotations from the scripture that provided graphic accounts of the suffering of beings trapped in the cycle of transmigration contrasted with the ecstatic existence of the inhabitants of Pure Land, Genshin sought to warn his contemporaries about attachment to the transitory pleasures of this life and awaken within them a yearning for Amida's Pure Land. While Genshin in theory accepted the traditional Tendai emphasis on the importance of meditation on Amida as a means to achieve rebirth in Pure Land, he also recognized that in the *mappō* age such practices were difficult for most people, who could not sustain for long periods of time the demanding meditations in which one contemplated each of the thirty-two physical signs of Amida's Buddhahood, not to mention the more abstract ones in which Amida's radiant form is viewed as a manifestation of absolute truth.

For such spiritually weak people – and Genshin included himself in this group – Genshin advocated, as a last resort, *isshin shōnen*, “wholehearted invocation of Amida's name (*shō*) combined with contemplation (*nen*),” the latter referring specifically to contemplating the act of submitting oneself to Amida or to visualizing the deathbed scene in which Amida, accompanied by a host of bodhisattvas, descends from the sky to lead the dying person to Pure Land. The single most important religious practice for the Pure Land devotee was *nembutsu*, which signified not simply the repetition of the name of Amida as it did in Kamakura times and later, but also included the notion of meditating on Amida as well. To Genshin, the highest expression of Pure Land faith was *jinjō nembutsu*, in other words, the continuous practice of *nembutsu* in one's daily life. Since Genshin believed, however, that the world was about to enter the *mappō* age, he acknowledged that *jinjō nembutsu* remained more of an ideal than a practical course of action. He therefore attached particular importance to *rinjū gyōgi*, “deathbed rites,” in which the dying person, surrounded by friends and relatives urging him to think of Amida's imminent arrival, repeatedly invokes Amida's name while holding a cord attached to the hand of an image of Amida.

It seems likely that Genshin intended the *Ōjō yōshū* to be a practi-

cal guide for the Nijūgo zammai-e, a spiritual mutual-help society formed in 986 by twenty-five monks from the Shuryōgon'in in Yokawa who vowed to assist one another in attaining rebirth in Pure Land.¹³⁶ The monks agreed to meet on the fifteenth day of each month for a service that opened in the early afternoon with a lecture on the *Hokekyō*, after which the group began meditations on Amida, while invoking his name and chanting the *Amidakyō*. If any member of the society became ill, he would be cared for by the others, and if it seemed that he was dying, he would be brought to the Ōjōin (Chapel for Rebirth), which was a hall enshrining an image of Amida, where his colleagues would encourage him to chant Amida's name while envisioning the arrival of Amida with his retinue of bodhisattvas. In return, the dying person promised that after reaching Pure Land he would reappear in the dreams of his colleagues to describe Pure Land and strengthen their determination to reach it.

The rules of the Nijūgo zammai-e were drafted by Yoshishige no Yasutane, a devout Pure Land believer who had taken the tonsure just before the Nijūgo zammai-e was established. Earlier, in 964, Yasutane had founded the Kangaku-e (Society for the Promotion of Learning)¹³⁷ which was a Pure Land society consisting of twenty monks from Hiei and twenty laymen, most of whom had aristocratic or literary backgrounds. The Kangaku-e, which met twice yearly at temples around Hiei, contributed to the spread of the Pure Land faith among the upper classes and helped pave the way for the all-clerical Nijūgo zammai-e, whose membership soon expanded to include Genshin himself and Emperor Kazan, who had renounced his throne and taken holy orders a month after the founding of the Nijūgo zammai-e.

The *Ōjō yōshū* was well received by the aristocracy, who were deeply moved by its profound religious message and enthralled by its detailed description of the palaces, lakes, and gardens of Pure Land. The most powerful aristocrat of the day, Fujiwara no Michinaga, was an avid reader of the *Ōjō yōshū* and an admirer of Genshin, to whom he twice sent emissaries after becoming ill in 1004.¹³⁸ A de-

¹³⁶ For the Nijūgo zammai-e, see Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon kodai no kokka to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971), pp. 162–64, and the same author's *Nihon Jōdo-kyō seiritsu-shi no kenkyū*, pp. 148–49.

¹³⁷ The origins and practices of the Kangaku-e are discussed in Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon Jōdo-kyō seiritsu-shi no kenkyū*, pp. 150–52. For an early account see *Sambō ekotoba, BZ*, vol. 111, pp. 450b–51b; English translation, pp. 295–98; see also the valuable notes in Yamada Yoshio, *Sambō ryakuchū* (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1951), pp. 288–92.

¹³⁸ For Michinaga's involvement with Pure Land Buddhism, see Inoue, *Nihon kodai no kokka to Bukkyō*, pp. 165–70, and Tsuji, *Nihon Bukkyō-shi: jōsei hen*, pp. 572–73.

vout Pure Land believer, Michinaga took the tonsure in 1019 and the following year built an Amida Hall (also known as Midō or Muryōjuin), in which he installed nine 16-foot-tall gilded images of Amida, each representing this Buddha in one of the nine traditional divisions of Pure Land. Michinaga died at his Amida Hall, in the manner of Genshin, clutching a silk cord that linked him to the nine images of Amida. Michinaga's son and successor, Yorimichi, likewise built an Amida Hall, the famous Hōōdō at Byōdōin in Uji, which when viewed with its surrounding landscape was intended to be a re-creation of Pure Land in this world. The great popularity that the Pure Land faith enjoyed among the aristocracy and the powerful clans is attested by the large number of Amida Halls built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Documents of the period indicate that at least ninety-five Amida Halls were established between 1020, when Michinaga dedicated his Midō, and 1192, when Minamoto no Yoritomo built Nikaidō with its nine images of Amida at Eifukuji in Kamakura.¹³⁹

The popularization of the Pure Land faith

The Amida Halls with their resplendent images and elegant gardens suggestive of the topography of Pure Land, the meditations on Amida, and the elaborate ceremonies called *mukae-kō* (welcoming services) in which young monks wearing jeweled crowns, golden masks and the raiments of bodhisattvas pretend to welcome their prestigious patrons in to Amida's Paradise had little to do with the Pure Land faith of the common man, who could neither read the Chinese in which the *Ōjō yōshū* was written nor participate in the rituals of the aristocratic Amida Halls.¹⁴⁰ His faith in Pure Land was inspired not so much by the monks of the great monasteries as by the *hijiri*, "holy men," who were typically clerics who had chosen to pursue the religious calling away from the main monasteries.¹⁴¹ Some of the *hijiri* were eccentrics who shunned clerical garb in favor of deer-skins; others spent long periods in remote mountain retreats practicing austerities while chanting the *Hokekyō*; still others lived in her-

¹³⁹ Inoue, in his *Nihon kodai no kokka to Bukkyō*, pp. 171–78, provides a detailed list of the Amida Halls of this period giving the date of construction, the name of the hall, its sponsor, and the primary sources in which the hall is mentioned.

¹⁴⁰ On *mukae-kō*, see Ishida Mizumaro, *Jōdo-kyō no tendai* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1967), pp. 130–32.

¹⁴¹ For a comprehensive study of the *hijiri*, see Hori Ichirō, "On the Concept of *Hijiri* (Holy-Man)," *Numen* 5, 2 (April 1958): 128–60; 5, 3 (September 1958): 199–232.

mitages known as *bessho*, “places apart,” which were located on the fringes of the precincts of larger monasteries; some others such as the *yugyō hijiri*, “wandering *hijiri*,” roamed the countryside preaching to the common people and soliciting small contributions from them for religious projects – a practice known as *kanjin* – which appealed greatly to members of the lower classes for it enabled them to “establish affinity” (*kechien*) with a *hijiri* and partake of his great merit.

Although *hijiri* appear in Buddhist sources as early as the Nara period, it was only after the middle of the tenth century that they became a prominent feature of Japanese Buddhism. Their religious faith, for all its intensity, was usually an amalgam of esoteric rites that were simple enough to be performed by the individual, devotion to the *Hokekyō*, and belief in Amida as a savior, coupled with a yearning for rebirth in his Pure Land. The first *hijiri* to play a major role in the dissemination of the Pure Land faith was Kūya (903–72), also known as Kōya, who had spent his early years undertaking spiritual exercises in the mountains.¹⁴² After tonsuring himself in his twenties at the Owari Kokubunji, Kūya became an itinerant proselytizer, carrying scriptures and holy images in his backpack. Like the famous Gyōki of the Nara period, he is said to have built roads, erected bridges, dug wells, and collected abandoned corpses for cremation, all activities that brought him close to the common people. Known as *Amida hijiri* because of his continuous chanting of the name of Amida – even the wells he dug came to be called “Amida wells” – Kūya settled in Kyoto in 938, spreading the Amida faith among its inhabitants and earning the appellation *ichi hijiri*, “the *hijiri* of the marketplace.” Kūya’s alienation from the established church, which was common to many *hijiri*, is evidenced by his failure to seek formal ordination on Hiei until he had reached the relatively advanced age of forty-five. Commenting on his achievements, the *Nihon ōjō gokuraku ki*, which is a late-tenth-century collection of biographies of people who have attained rebirth in Pure Land, observes that before the Tenjō era (938–47) few of the simple folk practiced Amida devotions, but thanks to the efforts of Kūya, “who invoked the name himself and made others invoke the name,” the whole of Japan came to devote itself to *nembutsu*.¹⁴³

¹⁴² The most reliable treatment of Kūya’s life is to be found in Hori Ichirō, *Kūya, jimbutsu sōsho*, vol. 106 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1963).

¹⁴³ Yoshishige no Yasutane, *Nihon ōjō gokuraku ki* (985), in Inoue Mitsusada and Ōsone Shōsuke, eds., *Ōjō den, Hokke genki*, vol. 7 of *Nihon shisō taikēi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1974), p. 9.

By the eleventh century, warriors, farmers, fishermen, and others whose occupations brought them into conflict with the Buddhist precepts increasingly viewed the practice of *nembutsu* as the principal method for achieving rebirth in Pure Land. The five *ōjō den* (biographies of people who have attained rebirth in Pure Land), written in the twelfth century, contain numerous stories of such individuals – not to mention rapacious officials, monks who had fathered children, and other assorted miscreants – who were saved through the power of the *nembutsu*. Typical is the biography of Kiyohara no Masakuni in the *Shūi ōjō den*, which claims that although “there was not an evil act that he did not commit,” he nevertheless attained rebirth in Pure Land after taking up the practice of *nembutsu* at age sixty, reciting the name 100,000 times daily.¹⁴⁴ Similarly the learned monk Jungen, “who turned his daughter into his wife,” began the practice of *nembutsu* only on his deathbed and yet was received into Pure Land.¹⁴⁵

Although in most cases the *nembutsu* was practiced in conjunction with other devotional acts not intrinsically connected with the Pure Land faith, such as chanting the *Hokekyō* or performing simple esoteric rites, the *ōjō den* indicate that some laymen and monks performed *nembutsu* alone, to the exclusion of all other types of Buddhist devotional practice. The *Go-shūi ōjō den* reports, for example, that a Hiei monk named Ryūsen (1047–1116) renounced the study of Tendai and Mikkyō early in his career to devote himself exclusively to *nembutsu*, uttering the name of Amida 120,000 times daily for thirty years.¹⁴⁶ The same work tells of an impoverished farmer from Ōmi who was too poor to make offerings, but instead continuously recited the name of Amida both when doing his daily devotions as well as when working in the fields.¹⁴⁷ As the *Konjaku monogatari* attests by its frequent use of such phrases as *nembutsu wo tonau*, “to recite the *nembutsu*,” the term *nembutsu* by the twelfth century had come to signify for many laymen and nonelite monks simply the recitation of Amida’s name without any reference to meditation.¹⁴⁸

The concept that even evil men could attain rebirth in Pure Land, the belief that practice of *nembutsu* alone was sufficient to bring about rebirth there, and the emergence of the view that the *nembutsu*

¹⁴⁴ Miyoshi Tameyasu, *Shūi ōjō den* (ca. 1111), *kan* 2, *Ōjō den, Hokke genki*, p. 339.

¹⁴⁵ *Shūi ōjō den*, *kan* 3, pp. 363–64.

¹⁴⁶ Miyoshi Tameyasu, *Go-shūi ōjō den* (1139), *kan* 1, *Ōjō-den, Hokke genki*, p. 649.

¹⁴⁷ *Go-shūi ōjō den*, *kan* 1, p. 651.

¹⁴⁸ *Konjaku monogatari shū* (ca. 1120), *kan* 15, *NKBT*, vol. 24, p. 382.

consisted primarily of reciting the name of Amida laid the foundation for the Pure Land schools that were established in the Kamakura period and that came to figure so prominently throughout Japanese religious history. Shinran (1173–1262), the founder of the Jōdo Shin school, openly acknowledged his debt to the lay tradition of Pure Land Buddhism that emerged in the Heian period by declaring that he modeled himself after Kyōshin (d. 866), a tonsured but married layman (*shami*) who expressed his deep faith in Pure Land simply by reciting Amida's name as often as possible in his everyday life.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Kakunyo, *Gaijashō* (1335), *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3 (Kyoto: Ōyagi kōbundō, 1964), pp. 67–68. For examples of Kyōshin's piety, see Yōkan's *Ōjō jū in* (1103), *Jōdo-shū zensho*, vol. 15 (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1971), pp. 375b–77a.