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Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Editor



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Princeton Readings in Religions is a new series of anthologies on the religions of the world, representing the significant advances that have been made in the study of religions in the last thirty years. The sourcebooks used by the last generation of students placed a heavy emphasis on philosophy and on the religious expressions of elite groups in what were deemed the "classical" civilizations of Asia and the Middle East. Princeton Readings in Religions provides a different configuration of texts in an attempt better to represent the range of religious practices, placing particular emphasis on the ways in which texts are used in diverse contexts. The series therefore includes ritual manuals, hagiographical and autobiographical works, and folktales, as well as some ethnographic material. Many works are drawn from vernacular sources. The readings in the series are new in two senses. First, the majority of the works contained in the volumes have never been translated into a Western language before. Second, the readings are new in the sense that each volume provides new ways to read and understand the religions of the world, breaking down the sometimes misleading stereotypes inherited from the past in an effort to provide both more expansive and more focused perspectives on the richness and diversity of religious expressions. The series is designed for use by a wide range of readers, with key terms translated and technical notes omitted. Each volume also contains a substantial introduction by a distinguished scholar in which the histories of the traditions are outlined and the significance of each of the works is explored.

Buddhism in Practice is the second volume of Princeton Readings in Religions. The thirty-three contributors include leading scholars of Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese, Thai, Burmese, Korean, Nepalese, and Sri Lankan Buddhism, each of whom has provided one or more translations of key works, most of which are translated here for the first time. Each chapter in the volume begins with a substantial introduction in which the translator discusses the history and influence of the work, identifying points of particular difficulty or interest.

Two other volumes of the Princeton Readings in Religions are in press: *Religions of China in Practice* and *Religions of Japan in Practice*. Volumes currently nearing

versing this stage of practice that the practitioner patiently apply himself to all the disciplines prescribed by the founder and venerable teacher of our sect, the *twei-ya-pauk*, great lord abbot.

Through this transformation of the body and the subsequent attainment of the ten siddhis [powers], the practitioner transcends the level of normal human healers, and enters the excellent *twei-ya-pauk* lineage of the great lord abbot.

THE TEN SIDDHIS. After the ten siddhis have been completely developed through correct and strenuous effort, the practitioner must then cultivate the advanced stages of insight meditation with a calm and unshakable mind; for it is precisely success in this latter endeavor that will finally enable him to realize the ultimate goal of *nirvāṇa*.

The boldface passage in this last section is excerpted from a well-known Burmese religious chronicle, the *Thathana-linkara Sa-tan* (1831). Notice that in this account of the future disappearance of Gautama Buddha's relics, our author has interpolated references to *twei-ya-pauks* and the soteriological goal of the Manoseiopaḍaṅga.

THE FINAL PASSING AWAY OF THE BUDDHA'S RELICS. When, after running its course of five thousand years, the present Sāsana becomes exhausted, the Buddha relics enshrined throughout the realms of *nāgas* [subterranean deities], humans, lesser gods, and Brahmā gods will miraculously assemble under the great bodhi tree and form themselves into an exact likeness of the Blessed One. This lifelike image, seated cross-legged, will then display the "twin miracle," emitting fire and water, and radiating a six-colored light that will illumine ten thousand world systems. At that time, only the lesser and Brahmā gods hailing from these regions, and the excellent *twei-ya-pauk* masters of the ten siddhis, will have an opportunity to witness these events; ordinary human beings will not. When this miraculous apparition is finally consumed in a burst of flame, the assembled deities and immortal *weikza-dos* [masters of occult knowledge = *twei-ya-pauk*] will perform diverse acts of worship, and express their aspiration for liberation. Therefore, one should strenuously practice so as to be able to witness the final passing away of the Buddha's relics, and earn thereby the capacity to attain *nirvāṇa* in a single existence.

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Pure Land Buddhist Worship and

Meditation in China

Daniel B. Stevenson

Pure Land Buddhism was not an independent school (*zong*) of Chinese Buddhism, complete with its own centrally organized canon, system of doctrine and practice, and historical lineage. Such a model is perhaps applicable for medieval Japan, where Pure Land movements such as the Jōdo-shū and Jōdo Shinshū did indeed achieve a fully developed sectarian structure of this sort. But in China, Pure Land Buddhism approached this level of institutional organization only at intermittent points in its history. Even then, such movements tended to be localized and short-lived, rarely achieving a level of routinization that lasted longer than a few generations.

The selections below are chosen to focus more closely on the cultural systems and hierarchies of values through which Pure Land practice takes shape in the daily lives of individuals and communities in China. The three documents translated here, which are taken from Pure Land manuals for worship and meditation, concern the extended liturgical and institutional parameters that define Pure Land monastic and lay practice. In addition to providing representative examples from two important genres of Pure Land literature and lore—cult ritual and hagiography—these materials have been selected to allow discussion of the two familiar Pure Land motifs of rebirth in the Pure Land and "recitation of the Buddha's name" (*nianfo*).

These selections are by no means representative of the full range of institutions and cultural forms through which Pure Land practice insinuates itself into Chinese religious life. They are taken from canonical sources, which means that they are mainly composed or promulgated by eminent clergy and imbued with the normative views of the state-sanctioned monastic and lay elite. As such, these materials tell us a lot about Pure Land spirituality in established religion in China—both by what they prescribe and what they systematically excise or neglect. At the same time, there has been a long history in China of religious movements

among segments of the Chinese populace that felt disenfranchised by the established monastic authority and its prominent lay patrons. Much as in Kamakura-period Japan, Pure Land soteriology has often served as a focal point for alternative socio-religious visions that articulated the religious concerns of the non- or semi-literate masses. However, because of the challenge they posed to the existing monastic and political orders, such movements have usually been greeted with animosity from the Buddhist elite and outright suppression by the government. Except for a few negative remarks in Buddhist chronicles, virtually nothing remains of them in canonical sources.

Gender represents another area within Pure Land tradition that is not adequately covered in this material. As an "easy path to salvation" that was open to anyone with faith, regardless of religious status or persuasion, Pure Land appealed a great deal to persons who were either alienated from the monastic system or for whom religious pursuits outside the family compound were not an option. Interesting work is beginning on the culture of the "inner household," with the thought that it betokens a world of religious experience and expectation quite different from that of the male-centered traditions that dominated Chinese society at large. As a form of spirituality that is the unique domain of women, the Pure Land cult of the inner household offers fascinating possibilities for study, provided one can get past the norm of the exemplary female devotee espoused in the canonical sources of the Chinese monastic system.

Nianfo or Mindful Recollection of the Buddha

If one were asked to define the single most representative feature of Pure Land practice, nianfo would probably be one's choice. As used colloquially among Chinese Buddhists today, nianfo can have two different meanings, depending on whether one takes it in its literal sense as "mindful recollection (*nian*) of the Buddha (*fo*)" or its implied sense of "intonation (*nian*) of the Buddha's name (*fo minghao*).² This divergence is not a characteristic inherent to the term's original usage but a product of its long and involved history in China. In its very ambiguity, we find a geologic record of the complex forces that shaped Chinese Pure Land in the past, as well as an emblem of the tensions that continue to animate it today.

The binome *nianfo* is originally a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit compound *buddhānusmṛti*, meaning "the recollection or the bearing in mind (*anusmṛti*) of the attributes of a Buddha." The practice of buddhānusmṛti itself has a long history in India, extending back well before the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. When the term and its practical lore were introduced to China, they came as a highly developed meditative system, with liaisons to a diversity of Buddhist scriptures and deities. Amitābha and the Pure Land sūtras represented but one among many such cultic reticulations.

The major Indian sources and early Chinese treatises on buddhānusmṛti treat

it as a complex practice involving several different approaches to contemplation. At its most basic level, buddha-mindfulness begins with visual recollection of the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor excellencies of the Buddha's glorified body of form (Sanskrit *rūpa-kāya*; Chinese *se shen*). Progressing to successively deeper levels of practice, one may dispense with recollection of the Buddha's physical form and instead contemplate his boundless spiritual powers and omniscience, until one ultimately arrives at the Buddha's formless essence of enlightenment itself—a practice known as mindful recollection of the Buddha's "body of truth or reality" (Sanskrit *dharmā-kāya*; Chinese *zhen shen*, *shixiang shen*). Thus, although buddhānusmṛti may take a particular buddha or bodhisattva (such as Amitābha) as its starting point, it ultimately grounds itself in universal Mahāyāna truths. This feature plants buddhānusmṛti firmly within the mainstream of Mahāyāna Buddhist practice, connecting it with the meditations on emptiness that we more often associate with the Perfection of Wisdom and other less devotional traditions of Buddhist scripture.

The immediate aim of buddhānusmṛti is to induce states of religious transport in which one comes face to face with the Buddha, either in his beatified body of form or as the incomprehensible reality of enlightenment itself. For this reason, the practice is frequently referred to as *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* (*nianfo sanmei*), *samādhi* being a common Buddhist term for the cultivation and experience of meditative ecstasy. Yet even though meditative concentration may be the focal point of traditional Indian and early Chinese "buddha-mindfulness" manuals, this meditative element is at the same time embedded seamlessly within a complex ritual and devotional regimen. Recollection of the Buddha's form may itself be accompanied by sustained recitation of the Buddha's name or the intoning of spells. In turn, the practice will often be set within an extended ritual cycle comprising such activities as the offering of incense, veneration and prostration before the buddhas, confession, dedication of merits, profession of the bodhisattva vow, and so forth. In India this liturgical structure was eventually organized into a formal sequence known as the *saptānuttarapūjā* or "sevenfold peerless worship." Using an earlier prototype of this sevenfold scheme, Chinese masters developed a system called the "fourfold" or "fivefold penance."³

Most Chinese sūtras and treatises of the North-South Dynasties period (317–589 C.E.) incorporate both mental recollection and vocal recitation of the Buddha's name within the general panoply of buddhānusmṛti procedure. The practices, however, are distinguished by two completely different names, the term *nianfo* being reserved for mental recollection of the Buddha and the binomes *chengming* (praising the name) or *chiming* (keeping the name) used specifically for intonation of the Buddha's name.

The Pure Land sūtras themselves are by no means unanimous on the practice of nianfo and just what it takes to achieve the Pure Land. The *Amitābha* (or *Shorter Sukhāvataṅgīyā*) *Sūtra* says to "keep the Buddha's name with single-minded and undisturbed heart." The longer *Sūtra of Limitless Life* (*Suḥāvatīyā*) says, "With perfectly concentrated attention, . . . maintain mindful recollection of the Buddha

Amiāyus and vow to be reborn in his land." At one point the *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Limitless Life* advocates "ten moments of single-minded and sustained recitation of the Buddha's name, 'Namo A-mi-tuo-fuo.'" Yet, the bulk of the sūtra consists of meditative visualizations of Amiābha and Sukhāvati, the content and thrust of which come right out of the buddhānusmṛti tradition. All of these have been taken as crucial passages bearing on the Pure Land practice of nianfo, but nowhere do the three sūtras in question provide a clear explanation of their meaning, much less details of practical procedure. To sort out these inconsistencies, Chinese exegetes of all periods have tended to draw heavily on the traditional culture of buddhānusmṛti, including its emphasis on the cultivation of samādhi.

Even for Shandao and his brethren in the Shanxi Pure Land movement buddhānusmṛti ritual and the effortful cultivation of samādhi continued to be of seminal importance. When one examines the liturgical writings of the Shanxi masters, one finds them to be heavily imbued with the ritual norms of the broader buddhānusmṛti culture. Even with the growing emphasis on Sukhāvati and the salvific power of Amitābha's grace, ecstatic meditative visions of the Buddha continue to be sought and esteemed as a confirmatory sign of one's impending rebirth in the Pure Land. In many respects, vocal nianfo itself simply becomes another means to this end. In fact, nowhere do we find concrete evidence of the sort of animus against meditative buddhānusmṛti suggested either in the secondary literature on Chinese Pure Land or the Japanese Pure Land traditions on which so much of this scholarship implicitly draws.

If we look beyond the rather limited geographical and historical confines of the Shanxi movement itself, the break is even less decisive. The two interpretations of nianfo continue to persist side by side throughout Chinese history, with little uniform agreement on the relative significance assigned to them, much less the ancillary ritual and institutional culture with which they are inseparably connected. Thus, rather than being the compromise of some mythic Pure Land orthodoxy, this symbiotic tension and ambiguity in the meaning of nianfo is a defining constituent of Chinese Pure Land culture itself—a feature that has been at the heart of the tradition since its beginning, and which has allowed it continually to revitalize and reinscribe itself in response to changing historical circumstances.

The first group of documents presented below consists of three pieces on the practice of nianfo or recollection of the Buddha. They are arranged in topical rather than chronological order, beginning with two tracts from early Song Dynasty Tiantai and concluding with a short piece by the Tang-period Pure Land master, Shandao (613–681 C.E.). The purpose of this arrangement is to begin with a statement of the basic meaning, procedure, and aims of nianfo, and gradually expand the horizon of this discussion by placing nianfo within its representative liturgical and institutional setting.

The *Procedure for Mindful Recollection of the Buddha* (*Nianfo famen*), the first of our three documents on nianfo, was composed by Zunshi (964–1032 C.E.), an

eminent monk of the early Song period who is renowned in Chinese Buddhist history as both an influential reviver of the Tiantai school and as an ardent devotee of the Pure Land path. Zunshi probably wrote this tract on Mount Dongye between 1002 and 1014, this being the period when Zunshi himself developed a keen interest in Pure Land practice and produced various works on the subject for his monastic and lay followers. The monk Huaigan, whom Zunshi extols in the *Procedure for Mindful Recollection of the Buddha* as a leading exponent of vocal recitation, was a disciple of the Shanxi Pure Land master Shandao. Very few of Shandao's own writings survived the Tang Buddhist persecutions of the mid-ninth century, and those that did had very little influence on Chinese Pure Land thought of later periods. Consequently, it is through disciples such as Huaigan that the teachings of Shandao and the Shanxi movement were disseminated to later devotees. Huaigan's *Elucidation of Doubts Concerning the Pure Land* (*Shi jingtu qunyi lun*), which is itself the focus of Zunshi's *Procedure for Mindful Recollection of the Buddha*, represents one such work that enjoyed great popularity from the Song period on. In light of our foregoing discussion of buddhānusmṛti and vocal nianfo, one should pay careful attention to the way in which the practice of recitation of the Buddha's name is treated in Zunshi's essay, noting especially the emphasis that both he and Huaigan place on samādhi and ecstatic visions of the Buddha. The *Procedure for Mindful Recollection of the Buddha's Name* has itself been republished in a number of Pure Land compendia between the Song and the Qing, thereby enjoying widespread circulation among Pure Land devotees.

The second document includes selections from another influential work by Zunshi, titled *Two Teachings for Resolving Doubts and Establishing the Practice and Vow to be Reborn in the Pure Land*. The *Two Teachings* was compiled by Zunshi in 1017 at the special behest of Ma Liang (959–1031 C.E.), a prominent Northern Song official and Pure Land devotee who served as governor of Hangzhou during the time that Zunshi was abbot of nearby Tiantzu Monastery. The text itself consists of two basic parts. The first ("Resolving Doubts") is concerned primarily with Pure Land doctrine. The second, entitled "Establishing the Practice and Vow," outlines a ritual program for daily worship and recitation of the Buddha's name. The translation presented here comprises the first two sections from the latter half of Zunshi's text: the procedure for ritual veneration and repentance, and cultivation of the ten moments of mindful recollection of the Buddha's name.

In effect, the text of the *Two Teachings* is intended primarily for lay usage. The ritual format for the vow of rebirth and meditation on the Buddha's name that is presented there, however, is typical of the Pure Land liturgical routine as a whole. Although the length, intensity, and frequency of Pure Land worship will be different for the cleric and the householder, the basic structure and intent are very much the same. Zunshi's instructions for daily worship and recitation of the Buddha's name are included here in order to provide a concise yet representative example of the ritual in which Pure Land teaching finds concrete expression.

Typically, Pure Land worship takes place in a duly consecrated altar space or *daochang*. *Daochang* is a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit word *bodhimāṇḍa*,

which specifically means the "site where the Buddha attained enlightenment." By extension, it has also come to refer to any site where the Buddha (or the enlightenment that is the Buddha's essence) is ritually invoked, sought, or found. Hence, it may simultaneously describe an altar, a sanctuary or chapel, and a place of Buddhist practice. Where Pure Land worship is performed on a regular basis, there will usually be a permanent altar of this sort. However, if such a site is not readily available, a temporary altar may be prepared by ritually cordoning off a specific area or room, purifying its interior, and installing an image of the Buddha.

Once the *daochang* has been prepared, worship itself begins with a procedure known as the "incense offering," during which incense is ignited and ritually offered to the eternal essence of the three jewels throughout the universe. As the congregation chants the accompanying incense hymn, the offerer visualizes the cloud of incense, together with his or her body, spreading universally throughout the ten directions, where it produces marvelous offerings and assists the buddhas in bringing countless beings to the Buddhist path. Having thereby actualized the transcendent power of the Buddha dharma, the three jewels are then summoned into the sanctuary in the specific form of the buddhas, scriptural teachings, and saintly congregation of the Pure Land cult—that is to say, Amitābha Buddha, the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) and Mañāśāmaprāpta, and the denizens of the Western Pure Land. In their presence the core procedures of the worship sequence are then carried out.

Although individual adaptations will vary, this sequence typically devotes according to the following structure: After the buddhas are invoked and incense is offered, the worshippers offer veneration to each of the assembled deities, usually by simultaneously calling out their name and dropping to the ground in prostration. Then, imagining themselves to be standing directly before the all-seeing Buddha and his legions, the worshippers reveal and repent their sins through collective recitation of the confessional litany. Having purified the karmic defilements that separate them from the Buddha's grace, they secure their renewed connection to the Buddhist path by dedicating the merits generated from the ceremony toward the mutual salvation of themselves and all other living beings. For the Pure Land devotee, this concluding dedication and vow takes the more immediate form of a collective pledge to seek rebirth in Sukhāvatī. However, as Zunshi himself indicates in the litany for the closing vow, by being reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land, the bodhisattva quickly acquires the superpowers of a great bodhisattva and completes the path to buddhahood. Thus, salvation in the long term is still equated with the universal Mahāyāna goal of buddhahood. The service itself reenacts the paradigmatic Mahāyāna act of "arousing the bodhisattva's aspiration for perfect enlightenment," vivid examples of which can be seen in both the tale of Śākyamuni's original vow in the presence of the buddha Dīpaṅkara and the account of Amitābha's former career as the bodhisattva Dharmākara. Its ritual structure goes back to the beginnings of Mahāyāna Buddhism itself, but draws more immediately on the prototypes of the "sevenfold peerless offering"

found in the buddhānusmṛti literature mentioned earlier. Both types of material offer an illuminating comparison with Zunshi's Pure Land rite of confession and vow.

The second section from Zunshi's *Two Teachings* contains instructions for daily practice of the so-called "ten moments of recollection or mindfulness." According to the Pure Land sūtras, even the most evil person may be reborn in the Pure Land if at the time of death he or she is able to embrace the Pure Land faith and maintain single-minded and undisturbed recollection of the Buddha Amitābha for "ten successive moments." Hence, although Pure Land Buddhism ordinarily encourages that one turn to Amitābha sooner rather than later in one's life, the ten moments of mindfulness nonetheless provide a last-minute means of assuring one's salvation. The practice that Zunshi describes here is offered as both a daily meditation and a rehearsal for that fateful moment to come.

The original references to the "ten moments or thoughts" in the Pure Land sūtras are extremely ambiguous, leaving the entire issue open as to just what a "moment" of recollection means or entails. The *Sūbhāṣitavyūha* or *Sūtra of Limitless Life* states, "With complete and perfectly concentrated attention recollect the Buddha of Limitless Life and vow to be reborn in his land for [up to] ten [consecutive] moments [of thought]." The *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Infinite Life* says, "... ten moments of single-minded intonation of the Buddha's name, 'A-mi-to-fo.'" Pure Land exegetes themselves have never come to a uniform agreement on their interpretation. Thus, Zunshi's approach represents but one among a range of different possibilities. In light of our previous discussions of the multivalent meaning of the term *nianfo* or "recollection of the Buddha," one should note his deliberate emphasis on single-minded concentration and, especially, the role of the breath in this practice—a feature that harkens back to a classic Buddhist method of meditative concentration known as "mindfulness of the breathing." Moreover, note how the meditation on the Buddha's name itself occurs within a liturgical framework, concluding with a dedication of merits and vow of rebirth similar to that of the preceding worship service.

The third document on Pure Land practice is taken from *The Meritorious Dharmā-Gate of the Samādhi Involving Contemplation of the Oceanlike Marks of the Buddha Amitābha* (hereafter abbreviated as *The Dharmā-Gate of Contemplation*), a short work on recollection of the Buddha (*nianfo*) compiled by the Tang Pure Land master, Shandao (613–681 C.E.). Two different topics are discussed by Shandao in this selection, one a seven-day retreat for the practice of *nianfo*, the other the procedure for attending a dying person.

The Dharmā-Gate of Contemplation is often dismissed in scholarly literature as one of Shandao's less important works, mainly on the grounds that its meditative and ritualistic presentation of *nianfo* practice is at odds with the putative emphasis on faith in the original vow and vocal recitation of the Buddha's name that is characteristic of Shandao's later and more developed works, particularly his *Commentary to the Contemplation Sūtra*. Moreover, as is the case with most of Shandao's

writings, the text actually had little impact on later Chinese Pure Land devotees, since it was lost during the chaotic years of the wuchang persecutions of Buddhism (845) and the collapse of the Tang dynasty.

Be that as it may, historical evidence indicates that the seven-day rite of buddha-mindfulness described in Shandao's text was a central feature in the Pure Land movement fostered by Shandao and his master, Daocuo (562–645 C.E.), in north China. Daocuo himself is known to have promoted the seven-day rite among his lay and monastic followers, as did Jiakai, another Shanxi Pure Land figure who had close contacts with Daocuo's community. Two generations later, we find Shandao's disciple Huaigan still emphasizing the practice in his writings. Thus, regardless of what Shandao may have said about the general meaning of *nianfo*, the seven-day mindfulness retreat remained one of its most distinctive institutional expressions.

Around the beginning of the Song dynasty, three hundred years after Shandao, southeast China witnessed a great resurgence of interest in Pure Land spirituality, especially among Tiantai and Chan masters of the region. Once again, a seven-day ritual retreat for buddha-mindfulness, known as the "Amiābha Repentance" or "Pure Land Repentance," proved to be an especially popular form of Pure Land practice. Various incarnations of this same basic institution can be traced, intermittently, down through the Ming and Qing periods to the *nianfo qi* or "Seven Days of Buddha-Recollection" that is widespread among the clergy and laity of Taiwan and Hong Kong today. It is difficult to say whether Shandao's seven-day rite of buddha-mindfulness played any direct role in the shaping of Pure Land programs of later periods. Nonetheless, it does describe an institutional and ritual paradigm that has seen repeated incarnation in Pure Land communities over the centuries.

As a rule, laity have been given free access to the seven-day retreats for buddha-mindfulness. Nonetheless, such retreats are nearly always held at Buddhist monasteries and are led by the Buddhist clergy. Moreover, their strict codes of ritual and moral purity, as well as their intensive regimen of practice, are more characteristic of monastic life than they are of lay life. In this respect, the seven-day retreat represents a unique and idealized occasion for the Pure Land lay Buddhist—one in which the ordinary householder is allowed access to an intense world of religious restraint and devotion that is otherwise the domain of the Buddhist professional. Within the world of the monastery itself, the intense devotion characteristic of the seven-day retreat becomes the norm rather than the exception.

From as early as the Tang period we hear of the existence of "Pure Land Cloisters" within larger monastic complexes, where a congregation of self-professed Pure Land mendicants could pursue a collective regimen of Pure Land practice and study. Over the centuries that follow, influential Pure Land masters have periodically sought to organize individual monasteries along Pure Land lines, at times coming close to creating an independent Pure Land "school." The Ming-dynasty master Zhuohong (1553–1615 C.E.) and Republican Period master Yin-

guang (1861–1940 C.E.) represent two such figures who have had a profound impact on the monastic form of Pure Land Buddhism in modern times. Both instituted comprehensive plans for adapting traditional monastic structures and routines to the specific purposes of Pure Land devotion, including the creation of halls for the concentrated recitation of the Buddha's name that were modeled on the traditional Chan meditation hall. At the same time, monks and nuns of the Pure Land persuasion have developed a number of distinctive forms of retreat that are organized along the lines of the seven-day rite of buddha-mindfulness but apply its program to a more intensive monastic setting.

Towards the end of the Tang dynasty (ca. 908), for example, it became popular for monks and nuns in southeast China to enter isolated retreat for fixed periods of three years (or a thousand days) in order to devote themselves to intensive meditation and worship of Amiābha. By the mid-Song dynasty (960–1279 C.E.), "halls for the sixteen contemplations" specially designed for this practice could be found in monasteries throughout the region. Sources from the period describe these halls as being constructed around a central courtyard, at the north end of which stood a lotus pond and, behind it, a Buddha hall. The Buddha hall contained the trinity of Amiābha, Avalokiteśvara, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, backed by a large mural depicting the Pure Land (with its nine grades of rebirth) as described in the *Contemplation Sūtra*. To either side of the courtyard stood a long building. Each was divided into a series of eight identical apartments consisting of a small worship hall and a separate room for meditation. At six appointed times over the day and night, participants convened in the central Buddha hall for ritual worship and repentance. During the hours in between they withdrew to their individual apartments to practice concentrated *nianfo*. Thus a continuous cycle of meditation and worship was maintained over the day and night—just as in the week-long rite of buddha-mindfulness described by Shandao, but with greater intensity. The ritual purity of the participants and precincts was carefully guarded, and contact with the outside restricted, with major violations of the rules resulting in immediate expulsion.

Today the halls for the sixteen contemplations no longer exist, but the practice of the three-year *nianfo* retreat continues among Chinese monks and nuns in the form of biguan or "sealed confinement," a practice in which individuals or small groups of mendicants seal themselves in a cell or building for the purpose of uninterrupted Pure Land devotion. The Republican Period master Yingqiang entered biguan for a total of six years (two periods of three years each) at Fayu Monastery on Putuo Island, and again for a period of three years at Lingyan Monastery in Suzhou.

In the *Amiābha* (or *Shorter Subhāvastīyāna*) *Sūtra* the Buddha at one point says, "If a good son or daughter, hearing of Amiābha, keeps his name with one-pointed and unperturbed mind for one, two, three . . . on up to seven days, when the time of death approaches, Amiābha Buddha and his saintly retinue will appear directly before that person." Although this passage more properly represents the locus classicus for the seven-day buddha-mindfulness retreat, it has often been

taken as a succinct statement of the aims of Pure Land nianfo retreat in all its forms, whether it be the seven-day or forty-nine-day versions of the Amitābha Repentance, the ninety-day pratyupanna or "constant walking" samādhi, or the three-year sealed confinement.

The ultimate goal of nianfo practice is to "forge the karmic connection or circumstances" that will eventuate in one's rebirth in the Pure Land. Recitation of Amitābha's name and the earnest wish to be reborn in Sukhavatī are central to this process. However, equally key to their success is the cultivation of "a one-pointed and unperturbed mind"—a quality that admits various interpretations, but which the monastic tradition mainly takes to mean sustained meditative concentration or samādhi. In the eyes of the clerically centered Pure Land movement, samādhi is both an essential factor in and signature of the successful forging of the karmic conditions for rebirth. The seven-day retreat and its monastic variants are designed especially for this task.

Once again, the extended tradition of Chinese and Indian buddhism is much in evidence in Shandao's *Dharma-Gate of Contemplation*. Single-minded recitation of the Buddha's name (which, incidentally, is to be accompanied by recollection of the Buddha's form) is pursued continually over the day and night, punctuated at three or six designated intervals by ritual confession and profession of vows. Shandao's *Dharma-Gate of Contemplation* gives only the barest outline of this worship service, but we may detect in it a sequence similar to the one presented in Zunshi's *Two Teachings*, as well as any number of other later ritual manuals. In nearly every case, recollection of the Buddha is integrated seamlessly within an extended framework of ritual worship and purificatory restraint, rendering it difficult to make any absolute distinction between meditative, devotional, or ritualistic aspects. Despite the rather formulaic character of Zunshi's ritual litanies, when fueled by the intense introspection and concentration of the buddha-mindfulness retreat, one can imagine that his orchestrations of obeisance, confession, and vow are capable of producing the most profound religious catharsis and reorientation.

The translations are from *Nianfo jamen* by Zunshi, included in *Lebang wenlei* by Zongxiao (Taishō 1969); *Wangsheng jingtu jueyi xingyuan er men* by Zunshi (Taishō 1968); and *Guannian A-mi-tuo-fou xianghai sanmei gongde jamen* by Shandao (Taishō 1959).

Further Reading

On the subject of lay "Lotus" or "Pure Land" societies and their relation to Pure Land-inspired popular movements, see Daniel Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976). Also, B. J. ter Hart, *The White Lotus Teaching in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992). For clerical critiques of this sort of phenomenon, see

Chün-fang Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

For examples of other forms and traditions of Chinese buddhanusmriti ritual, see Daniel Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi in Early T'ien-t'ai Buddhism," in Peter N. Gregory, ed., *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), pp. 45–97. Also, Neal A. Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), pp. 71–96, 234–48.

Convenient, but dated, translations of the Sanskrit versions of the *Shorter Sūhāvṛtṣya Sūtra* and the *Longer Sūhāvṛtṣya Sūtra*, as well as the Chinese *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Limitless Life* are available in E. B. Cowell, ed., *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts* (New York: Dover, 1969).

The Method for Mindful Recollection of the Buddha

The Enlightened Lord [Buddha] delivers animate beings by means of four basic methods. The first is by the display of [his marvelous] marks and excellencies, any of which will cause the person who contemplates them to put forth the resolution to seek bodhi [enlightenment]. The second is by preaching the dharma, the hearing of which enables beings to awaken and enter the way. The third is his display of supernatural powers, which enables those who experience them to secure all manner of benefits of the dharma. The fourth is the circulation of his name throughout the ten directions, which enables those who hear it, keep it, and concentrate their hearts on it to eliminate their sins, generate good, and achieve deliverance.

The mindful recollection of the Buddha (*nianfo*) that we refer to here [consists of two aspects]. On the one hand, one may focus on the thirty-two marks [of the Buddha's sublime form]. Through concentrating the mind [in this fashion] meditative concentration (*samādhi*) is achieved, whereupon one continually sees the Buddha [before one], regardless of whether the eyes are open or closed. On the other hand, one may simply intone [the Buddha's] name and strive to seize it firmly without letting [the mind stray]. [Through this practice] one will also be able to see the Buddha in this very lifetime.

In this day and age, most people who have experienced visitations [of the Buddha] consider intoning the name of the Buddha to be the superior [form of practice]. Dharma-master Huaigan, for example, devoted himself wholly to reciting the name of Buddha Amitābha, through which he realized samādhi and saw the Buddha manifest directly before him. As a consequence, today people everywhere teach this method of intoning the Buddha's [name].

The key is to restrain the mind and not allow it to become distracted or confused. From one moment to the next, concentrate your attention continually on the Buddha's name, as you vocally call out "A-mi-tuo-fu" over and

over. Focus your mind on the process [of recitation], keeping each syllable perfectly distinct so that mind and mouth operate in perfect coordination. So long as you are engaged in reciting the Buddha's name—whether it be for one hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand recitations, [a period of] one day, two days, or seven days, the amount makes no difference—you must always maintain a single heart and single will and [insure that] mind and mouth continuously accompany one another. When you can manage this, you will be able to "eliminate sins accumulated over eighty million eons of lifetimes in a single moment of recitation," [as it says in the *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Infinite Life*]. Otherwise, it will be exceedingly difficult to eradicate your sins.

If you fear that your mind is becoming scattered, rapidly call out the Buddha's name in a loud voice. It will then be easy to concentrate the mind and easy to realize samādhi. This is the reason why dharma master Huaigan, in his *Treatise on Resolving [the Myriad] Doubts [About the Pure Land]*, quotes the *Divya-garbhā* section of the *Mahāsamnipāta Sūtra*, where it says, "With a small recitation (*nian*) you will see a small buddha: a great recitation, a great buddha." His treatise explains this passage saying, "Small recitation means intoning the Buddha's name with a soft voice. 'Great recitation' means recitation of the Buddha's name with a loud voice. This is the teaching of the Holy One [himself]. What could be misleading about it? I respectfully urge you students today: All you need do is recite the Buddha's [name] (*nianfo*) with a bold voice and samādhi will easily be achieved. But intone the Buddha's name with a soft voice and it will simply lead to a lot mental wandering. This is something that experienced practitioners will know, but that outsiders cannot comprehend."

It is also in perfect agreement with the interpretation that Zhiyi, the grand master of Tiantai, gives to the line in the *Contemplation Sūtra* which states that the sinner, on the verge of death, can extinguish the fires of hell and attain rebirth in the pure land by ten moments of mindful recitation of the Buddha's [name]. As [Zhiyi] says, "Even though this moment [of mindful recitation] endures for only a short period of time, its strength is vigorous, and its resolve is decisive, surpassing the power of a vow held for a hundred years. Such a mentality is called the great mind. [Because they] begrudge neither life nor limb, [persons of this sort] are referred to as virile heroes."

The one [text] speaks of "great recitation"; the other, "great mind." The one speaks of a "bold voice"; the other, "being fierce and sparing neither life nor limb." The one says that "[recitation with] a soft voice leads to much distraction"; the other that, "[great mind] exceeds the power of a vow held for a hundred years." How could they be advocating anything other than the vigorous intoning of the Buddha's name with a loud voice? Even though performed for a short time, the merits [of this practice] are numerous. But if one intones the Buddha's name with a soft voice, the merits remain meager even when it is done a lot. It is with this sense in mind that [Zhiyi says], "Ten moments [of recitation] can surpass a century [of practice]."

In this day and age, I have come across many people of the world who do not try to concentrate [their thoughts] at all, but [recite the Buddha's name]

with scattered mind and languid voice. As a consequence, we find very few persons whose efforts have succeeded during their lifetime, and occurrences of miraculous response at the time of death are [for the most part] weak. For this reason I have made a special effort to explain this practice here. I urge that whenever you perform recollection of the Buddha, you do so with one-pointed mind free of confusion, chanting the Buddha's name loudly in a steady stream of invocations. Before long your efforts will bring success.

Two Teachings for Resolving Doubts and Establishing the Practice and Vow to be Reborn in the Pure Land

This second section on establishing the practice and vow [which leads to rebirth in the Pure Land] is divided into four basic sections: Veneration and Repentance, the Ten Moments of Mindful Recollection [of the Buddha], Fixing the Mind on the Final Objective, and [Cultivating] the [Ancillary] Merits.

The reason that only these four aspects are included is because these four alone are necessary for fulfillment of the practice. Why is this? One begins by venerating the Buddha and repenting, through which one purifies karmic obstructions and cleanses the body and mind. Thus, [the practices of] the first section may be likened to cleaning [and preparing] a fertile field. Next one cultivates the ten moments of mindfulness, through which one concentrates the mind, matures the practice, establishes the essential aim of the vow, and plants the efficient cause for rebirth. In this respect, the second aspect is like sowing the seed. After that one strives to focus the mind [continually on the pure land], bringing about the germination [of the lotus of rebirth] through loving protection and constant nurturement [of the final goal]. Thus, the third aspect is like moistening the ground with enriching rain. Finally, one applies the myriad meritorious deeds to help [the lotus of one's future rebirth] put on luxuriant foliage and cause it to quickly put forth blossom and fruit. In this sense, the fourth aspect is analogous to sprinkling the plant with rich fertilizer. One should realize that being able to fulfill all four of these practices is the highest and most superior [form of cultivation]. Yet, even though they build on one another like this, if one has little time on one's hands, pursuing three, two, or even one of these practices will still bring rebirth in the [pure] land, for each of these four embraces both aspects of practice and vow and will function as the efficient cause [for rebirth].

Also, it is permissible to reserve the rite of veneration and repentance for the six [uposatha] fast days and cultivate the practice of the ten moments of mindfulness on a daily basis. However, since the ten moments [of mindfulness] are the essential element behind the efficient cause [of rebirth in the] pure [land], they absolutely must not be set aside. The last two practices should be performed as one's energy permits. Otherwise you [should] simply do what you feel is appropriate. Now I will expound on the four aspects of the practice.

THE RITE OF VENERATION AND REPENTANCE

Every morning, in a chapel (*daochang*) for regular offerings [to the buddhas], one should put on cap, sash, robe, and jewelry and, with righteous and solemn demeanor, personally offer incense before an image of the Buddha. Then, with palms joined and mind concentrated, chant the following:

Homage to all! From the bottom of my heart I do obeisance to the eternally abiding three jewels with the crown of my head.

Mentally visualize yourself offering veneration universally to the jewels of the buddha, dharma, and saṅgha of the three periods of time throughout the ten directions. When you arise from prostration, the two knees should remain resting [evenly] on the ground. Take the censer in hand and [light] incenses of high quality. Then chant [as follows]:

May this cloud of incense smoke spread throughout the realms of the ten directions, and in buddha lands without limit [produce] countless fragrant adornments, [causing beings everywhere to] complete the bodhisattva path and attain the [sublime] fragrance of a thus come one (*tathāgata*).

Having finished chanting [the incense hymn], pause for a moment and visualize with profound heart that the cloud of incense [suffuses throughout the universe, where it] presents offerings to the three jewels and perfumes living beings everywhere, causing them all to seek rebirth in the pure land. After putting down the incense censer, arise and perform one prostration. Once again stand up and, with palms joined and shoulders bent [in humble reverence], carefully visualize oneself standing directly before Amītibha and all the buddhas [of the ten directions]. Then sing the following praises:

The Thus Come One's wondrous body
Is without equal in this world;
Inconceivable and beyond compare,
I now prostrate to him in obeisance.
Inexhaustible is the form of the Thus Come One,
So it is for his wisdom as well.
His teachings [that is, dharmas] abide eternally,
For this reason I turn to him for refuge.
The power of his great wisdom and vast vow
Delivers sentient beings everywhere,
Causing them to renounce this burning and afflicted body
And be reborn in his cool and refreshing land.
Having purified the three deeds, I now
Take refuge and offer veneration and praise [to Amītibha],
Vowing, in unison with all sentient beings,
That we may be reborn together in the realm of ease and bliss.

Having finished [offering praises], then venerate the buddhas. Visualize each figure, one at a time. As you concentrate on [the buddha] before you, simultaneously chant [his name and prostrate] as follows:

With all my heart I venerate the pure and marvelous dharma-body of the Thus Come One Amītibha, which resides in the pure land of eternal quiescence and radiance, together with [the dharma-bodies] of all the buddhas throughout the dharmadhātu.

With all my heart I venerate the ocean-like body of infinite features of the Thus Come One Amītibha, which resides in the land adorned by the recompense [of the Buddha's attainment of] reality, together with those of all the buddhas throughout the dharmadhātu.

With all my heart I venerate the body adorned with the mark of liberation of the Thus Come One Amītibha, which resides in the land of expediency where saints dwell, together with those of all the buddhas throughout the dharmadhātu.

With all my heart I venerate the body of sense faculties and fields of the Thus Come One Amītibha [manifested for beings of the Great Vehicle] in the land of [highest] bliss to the west, together with those of all the buddhas throughout the dharmadhātu.

With all my heart I venerate the bodies of manifestation projected by the Buddha Amītibha from the land of [highest] bliss in the west [to realms] throughout the ten directions, together with those of the buddhas throughout the dharmadhātu.

With all my heart I venerate the billion bodies of purple and gold of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who resides in the land of [highest] bliss to the west, together with all the bodhisattva mahāsattvas throughout the dharmadhātu.

With all my heart I venerate the body of boundless radiant wisdom of the Bodhisattva Mahāśīlāmaprāpta, who resides in the land of [highest] bliss to the west, together with the bodhisattva mahāsattvas throughout the dharmadhātu.

With all my heart I venerate the pure oceanlike congregation [of saints] who are endowed with bodies of the twin adornments [of wisdom and merit] and dwell in the land of [highest] bliss to the west, together with those of the congregation of saints throughout the dharmadhātu.

Assume the kneeling posture, with the two knees held flush. Take the censer in hand, light incense; then, with utmost sincerity, chant the following words:

On behalf of the four obligations [that is, donors, parents, monastic teachers, and sovereigns] and beings immersed in the three realms of existence everywhere throughout the dharmadhātu, I vow to eliminate the three obsta-

cles [of the afflictions, evil karma, and evil retribution]. [With this thought] I entrust my life and offer confession before you.

After arising, once again kneel down; take the censer in hand; and chant:

From the bottom of my heart I repent! Like sentient beings everywhere, I, disciple so-and-so, have been beshrouded by ignorance and deluded by inverted views since beginningless time. Through the three deeds and six sense faculties I have cultivated all manner of unwholesome habits and widely engaged in the ten evils and five heinous crimes, along with a host of other evils—so numerous as to be beyond description.

Buddhas throughout the ten directions are ever-present in this world of ours. The sound of their dharma never ceases. Their marvelously rare fragrance is all-pervading; the flavor of their dharma fills the void. Their pure radiance shines over and enfolds everything. The eternally abiding and wondrous principle [of enlightenment] fills all of space. Yet, because my six senses are internally blinded and the three activities [of body, speech, and mind] benighted, I am unable to see, hear, smell, feel, or know their presence. Because of these evil influences I revolve endlessly in cyclic birth and death, passing through all manner of evil destinies, for incalculable eons never to know a moment of release.

The *Sūtra [on the Visuddhization of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy]* says, “Vairocana [Buddha] is all-pervading. The place where this buddha dwells is called [the land of] eternal quiescence and radiance.” Thus we should realize that there is no object that is not inherently [identical with] the Buddha’s dharma. Yet, we remain incognizant of this fact and continue to flow along in ignorance. This is tantamount to seeing only impurity when one is in the very midst of enlightenment. Or producing fetters when one is already liberated.

Now, for the first time, I awaken [to my errors]. Now, for the first time, I resolve to reform them. Standing in the presence of Lord Amitābha and all the other buddhas, I confess and repent. May he cause the grave sins committed by myself and other beings to be completely purified—regardless of whether they were done in the beginningless past, in the present life, or are yet to be done in the future; whether they were committed by myself or urged on others, passively witnessed or [actively] celebrated, remembered or forgotten, committed knowingly or not, doubtful or certain, hidden or revealed.

Now that I have repented, my six senses and three deeds are pure and without blemish. The wholesome [karmic] roots cultivated through them are likewise completely purified. All of them I dedicate toward the adornment of the pure land. May I, together with beings everywhere, thereby be reborn in [the land of] ease and success. I pray that the Buddha Amitābha may always come to keep and protect me, and that he may enable my good [karmic] roots to manifest and increase, and prevent me from losing the foundational cause [of rebirth in the] pure [land]. As the end of my life

approaches, may I retain perfect mindfulness in body and mind and be able to see and hear clearly. May Amitābha and his saintly assembly appear directly before me, bringing in their hands the flower pedestal with which they will greet and lead me [into the pure land]. In a flash of thought may I be reborn in Amitābha’s presence, perfect the bodhisattva path, and [gain the ability to] save beings on a vast scale, causing them all to realize the omniscient wisdom [of buddhahood] along with me.

After repenting and making vows, one should entrust one’s life to Amitābha Buddha and the three jewels everywhere. [This procedure for confession and vows] should be repeated three times over. But if time is short and affairs are pressing, a single recitation will suffice. After that comes the procedure for ritual circumambulation [of the altar to Amitābha], which one performs for three rounds, seven rounds, or more. Then recite out loud:

Homage to the Buddha Amitābha. Homage to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Homage to the Bodhisattva Mañśrītmāprāpta. Homage to the bodhisattva mahāsattvas of the pure oceanlike assembly.

Repeat this recitation three times, seven times, or more, as you see fit. There is no requisite number. Then go before the Buddha and profess the three refuges as follows:

I take refuge in the Buddha, with the wish that all beings may directly experience the great way and put forth the peerless resolution [to achieve perfect enlightenment].

I take refuge in the dharma, with the wish that all beings may penetrate deeply into the treasury of scripture and realize wisdom [as vast as the] ocean.

I take refuge in the saṅgha, with the wish that all beings may join with the great assembly and be completely free of conflict. Homage to the assembly of saints!

After [the three refuges] proceed to a seat arranged in a separate spot in order to recite sūtras. Recite the *Amitābha Sūtra* or the *Sūtra of the Sixteen Visuddhizations [of the Buddha Amitayus]*. But if you have never committed these scriptures to memory, then single-mindedly intone the name of Amitābha Buddha instead. Stop when you think it is long enough. You may repeat the dedication [of merits toward rebirth in the pure land], if you wish, or incorporate [additional] concluding litanies.

THE TEN MOMENTS OF MINDFUL RECOLLECTION

Every morning, when the sky begins to lighten, having dressed and finished your ablutions, turn to face the west. Stand perfectly erect with palms joined [in reverence] and, in a continuous vocal stream, intone [the name of] Ami-

taḥba Buddha ("A-mi-tuo-fu"). [The time it takes] to exhaust one breath constitutes one moment of recollection. Hence, ten such breaths are what we call "ten moments of mindfulness." You should chant in accordance with the length of the breath, and not set any specific limit on the number of buddha [recitations]. Draw it out for as long as you can, taking the full span of the breath as the measure.

One's chanting of the Buddha's [name] should be neither too loud nor too soft. Nor should it be too slow nor too fast-paced, but balanced comfortably between [these extremes]. Proceeding in this way, one should string together ten [cycles of] breathing, without there being any interruption. Your attention should be focused on preventing the mind from wandering, for pure concentration is what brings success. The reason we refer to this as "ten moments of mindfulness" rests in the fact that we use the breath to discipline the mind.

After you have performed mindful recollection [of the Buddha], make the following vow and dedication [of merits]:

I, disciple so-and-so, with all my heart entrust my life to Buddha Amitābha of the realm of highest bliss. May he illumine me with his pure radiant light and enfold me in his loving vow. I have just completed ten moments of mindful recitation of the Tathāgata's name, all done with perfect mindfulness. In quest of the supreme enlightenment [of buddhahood] I seek rebirth in his pure land.

Long ago, the Buddha [Amitābha] made the following basic vow: "If a being, wishing to be reborn in my land, sincerely takes faith and delights in me for up to ten moments of thought, I will not accept supreme enlightenment unless that being is assured of being reborn [in my presence]. The only exceptions are those beings who have committed the five heinous crimes or slandered the true dharma."

I now resolve to myself that, from this moment forward, I will not commit the five heinous crimes or slander the Great Vehicle. I pray that these ten moments of mindfulness may enter into the ocean of the Tathāgata's great vow. And I pray that, through receiving the Buddha's loving grace, my sins may be eliminated and the foundational cause for [my rebirth in] the pure land strengthened.

When the end of my life approaches, may I be aware that the moment has arrived. May my body be free of illness and suffering, and my heart without attachment or regret. May my mind be free of confusion and distraction, as though I were entered into dhyāna concentration itself. May the Buddha and his saintly assembly, bringing in their hands the golden pedestal, come to greet me and, in a flash of thought, lead me to rebirth in the land of highest bliss. When the lotus blossom [from which I am to be born] opens, may I see the Buddha Amitābha, instantaneously manifest the wisdom of a buddha, [gain the supernatural powers necessary to] save beings on a vast scale, and fulfill the bodhi vow.

After you have made this vow, bring the practice to a close. [Additional] prostrations are not necessary. For the rest of this life you must never miss this practice, even for a single day. For only through firm resolution and irrecusable [practice] will one succeed in being born in that land.

Shandao's Instructions for the Seven-Day Rite of Buddha-Mindfulness Samādhi and Mindful Recollection of the Buddha at the Time of Death

When one wishes to enter a sanctuary (*daochang*) for the practice of [buddha-mindfulness] samādhi, one must do so in complete accordance with the procedures set forth by the Buddha. First put the ritual sanctuary in order. Install an image of the Buddha. Sweep and sprinkle [the precincts] with perfumed water. If a [duly consecrated] Buddha hall is not readily available, a clean room will suffice. Sweep and sprinkle it according to the standard procedure, and enshrine a single image of the Buddha [Amitābha] against the western wall.

Four phases of the lunar month are distinguished as auspicious times [to undertake the seven-day rite]: that is to say, the period from the first to the eighth day, from the eighth to the fifteenth day, from the fifteenth to the twenty-third day, or the twenty-third to the thirtieth day of the lunar month. Aspirants should weigh for themselves the gravity of their domestic responsibilities and, at one of these appointed times, undertake the purifications and perform the rite accordingly for anywhere from one to seven days. For the entire duration [of the retreat] they must wear purified robes. Footwear should likewise be clean and new. The [prohibitions of the] extended uposatha fast should also be observed throughout the seven days—that is, one meal a day [before noon], consisting of plain biscuits or coarse rice, with occasional sauce and vegetables. In all cases [the food] should be sparing and plain.

While in the sanctuary, the participants should strive day and night to control their minds and maintain constant recollection of the Buddha Amitābha, ensuring that mental [recollection of the Buddha's attributes] and vocal recitation [of his name] proceed together uninterrupted. One is permitted only to sit upright or stand. For the duration of the seven days sleep is forbidden. In addition, it is not necessary to observe the [usual daily] offices for veneration of the buddhas and recitation of scripture. Nor need one worry about keeping count [of one's recitations] on a rosary. Simply join the palms in reverence and, with one's attention fixed wholly on the Buddha, strive, moment to moment, to construct a mental image of the Buddha [standing before you]. As the Buddha instructs [in a sūtra], "Imagine that the Buddha Amitābha stands right before your mind's eye, his body of pure gold shining with radiant light, flawless and beyond compare." When directly engaged in recollection of the Buddha, if you [decide to] stand, perform ten or twenty thousand recollections of

the Buddha while standing. If you [decide to] sit, perform ten or twenty thousand recollections while seated.

Those in retreat are forbidden to put their heads together and whisper to one another while in the sanctuary. At either the three or the six intervals [of worship] designated over the day and night, the practitioners should ritually announce [their intentions] to the buddhas, the saints and worthies, the heavenly ministries and earthly magistracies, and all [the beings of the six] karmic destinies. [Then] they should confess and repent the multitude of sins that they have committed with body, speech, and mind since birth. The phenomenal activity [of ritual repentance] depends on genuineness. When repentance is finished, they should return once again to the practice of buddha-mindfulness according to the procedure [described above]. Any visionary experiences that may occur must not be openly discussed with others. If it is something good, recognize and accept it for what it is. If it is something bad, repent. Wine, meat, and the five pungent herbs [leek, onion, garlic, ginger, and scallion] one must swear to neither touch nor eat. Make the pledge that if this vow is broken, may your body and mouth break out with severe ulcers.

In some instances practitioners may make a vow to complete one hundred thousand recitations of the *Amitābha Sūtra*, perform ten thousand recitations of the Buddha's name each day, or recite the *Amitābha Sūtra* fifteen, twenty, or thirty times a day—as their strength permits. [Whatever the pledge may be, they should dedicate this activity with] the prayer to be reborn in the pure land and received by the Buddha.

Whether one shows signs of illness or not, when a person's life is about to come to an end, he or she should resort completely to the method of buddha-mindfulness samādhi described above. With body and mind poised in perfect attentiveness, face toward the west, concentrate the mind, and mentally visualize the Buddha Amitābha. Mind and mouth should operate in harmony, the sound of recitation after recitation following one another without break. At the same time one must imagine with absolute conviction that one is bound for rebirth in the pure land and that the assembly of saints bearing the flower pedestal is on its way to greet you and lead you [there].

A dying person who sees such signs should immediately tell those nursing him. Upon hearing what he or she has to say, [the nurses] should make a record of it, just as it was related to them. Then again, if the person is so ill as to be unable to speak, the attendants should repeatedly question the dying person about what he or she sees. If the person describes signs connected with sinful [karma], those around him or her should recite the Buddha's name on his or her behalf and urge the individual to repent together with them, thereby ensuring that the sins are eliminated. If the sins are successfully removed, the assembly of saints bearing the lotus pedestal will immediately appear before the dying person. As stipulated previously, this should all be recorded.

Furthermore, if any of the personal entourage or the six relatives come to see the sick person, they must not include in their midst any individual who

takes meat, wine, or the five pungent herbs. Should such a person be present, he or she must never be allowed to approach the patient's side. Otherwise [the dying person] will lose right mindfulness; demons and spirits will bring confusion, and the patient, dying in delirium, will plummet to the three evil destinies.

May all [Pure Land] practitioners take careful stock of themselves, accept and keep the Buddhist teachings, and together fashion the causal connection for seeing the Buddha. What is given above is the procedure for entering the sanctuary [to perform buddha-mindfulness samādhi] and the procedure for tending a dying person.